

Abbreviations

Works by Gilles Deleuze

All texts are cited in the English language edition, unless otherwise indicated. See References for complete references in English and in French

- ABC *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, with Claire Parnet (1996)
- AO *Anti-Oedipus* (1983)
- ATP *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987)
- B *Bergsonism* (1988)
- C1 *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (1986)
- C2 *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (1989)
- D *Dialogues* (1987)
- DI *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (2004)
- DR *Difference and Repetition* (1994)
- ECC *Essays Critical and Clinical* (1997)
- ES *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1991)
- EPS *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1990)
- FB *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (2003)
- FLD *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993)
- FCLT *Foucault* (1988)
- K *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986)
- KCP *Kant's Critical Philosophy* (1984)
- LS *The Logic of Sense* (1990)
- M *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (1991)
- N *Negotiations, 1972–1990* (1995)
- NP *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1983)

ABBREVIATIONS

- PI *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* (2001)
PS *Proust and Signs* (2000)
PV *Périsclès et Verdi: La Philosophie de François Châtelet* (1988)
SPP *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1988)
TR *Two Regimes of Madness* (2006)
WIP *What Is Philosophy?* (1994)

INTRODUCTION

Gilles Deleuze, a life in friendship

Charles J. Stivale

In *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze* (*Deleuze's ABC Primer*), the eight-hour video interview with Claire Parnet filmed in 1988–89 and transmitted only in 1995, French philosopher Gilles Deleuze describes his idiosyncratic understanding of the links between friendship, creation and life. Responding to a question from Parnet (in the section “F as in Fidelity”), Deleuze hypothesizes that in order to form the basis for friendship with someone, each of us is apt to seize on a certain indication of an individual’s charm, for example, in a gesture, a touch, an expression of modesty or a thought (even before that thought has become meaningful). In other words, friendship can result from perception of the charm that individuals emit and through which we sense that another suits us, might offer us something, might open and awaken us. And a person actually reveals his or her charm through a kind of *démence* or madness, Deleuze says, a certain kind of becoming-unhinged, and as the very source of a person’s charm, this point of madness provides the impulse for friendship.

I commence with this angle of approach because, with me, the authors here offer contributions precisely in this spirit, seeking to extend the folds of friendship through which Deleuze lived, wrote, and taught.¹ Such glimmers of light and encounters with Deleuze’s writing engage readers in an exhilarating, productive, yet disconcerting process of becoming-unhinged that we come to enjoy, indeed to relish, in the energy that reading Deleuze requires. The charm of Deleuze’s writing demands of us a kind of thinking otherwise, and thus the contributors here offer to readers, *other-wise*, a guide to specific *works and concepts* developed by Deleuze from a range of disciplinary interests and

ONE

Force

Kenneth Surin

Deleuze's employment of the concept of *force* (the same in English and French) can be grasped in terms of two distinctive but somewhat overlapping phases. In the first, associated with the "historical" emphasis on the works on Spinoza and Nietzsche (among others) that marked the earlier part of Deleuze's career, force is understood primarily in terms of its relation to notions of speed and movement. In the case of Spinoza, Deleuze is particularly impressed by Spinoza's philosophical ambition to view all of life as the expression of a fundamental striving or *conatus*, so that the body becomes an ensemble consisting of those forces that it transmits and those forces that it receives. Spinoza, says Deleuze in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, "solicits forces in thought that elude obedience as well as blame, and fashions the image of a life beyond good and evil, a rigorous innocence without merit or culpability" (SPP: 4). This fundamental insight is carried through in Deleuze's work on Nietzsche, where Nietzsche is depicted as someone who follows faithfully Spinoza's injunction that we think "in terms of speeds and slownesses, of frozen catatonias and accelerated movements, unformed elements, nonsubjectified affects" (SPP: 129).¹

In the second phase, associated primarily with Deleuze's collaboration with Guattari, the notion of force is effectively generalized, so that it expresses a power that ranges over the entirety of the social order. Here another set of definitions and principles comes to the forefront, even if the earlier indebtedness to the archive associated with Spinoza and Nietzsche is retained, so that the notion of force as a movement with its characteristic speeds and slownesses is still operative for Deleuze. This time, however, the emphasis is more on a specific effect of force,

namely, *puissance* or “strength” (as opposed to *pouvoir* or “coercive power”). Each of these intellectual phases will be considered in turn.²

The physics of forces: Spinoza and Nietzsche

In Spinoza’s magnum opus, *Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical Order* (1677), each being has an essential and intrinsic disposition to preserve its own being, a tendency Spinoza terms *conatus* (Spinoza 2000: 171). For Spinoza, a being’s good is that which adds to its capacity to preserve itself and, conversely, the bad is that which militates against this capacity for self-preservation. Each being’s desire (*appetitus*) is precisely for that which conduces to its self-preservation.³ A being’s capacity for action increases, accordingly, in proportion to the strength of its *conatus*; and conversely, the weaker its *conatus*, the more diminished is its capacity for action. A being enhances its capacity for action when it actively transmits its force; its capacity for action is reduced when it is the passive recipient of some other being’s forces. Pleasure or joy ensue when the capacity for action is enhanced, and pain when it is diminished, so that for Spinoza pain is passion only and not action, whereas joy is both pleasure and action.⁴

Freedom is promoted when one’s scope for action is expanded, and this expansion is for Spinoza the outcome of a life led according to reason. In a life guided by reason, especially by knowledge of the third kind, one comes to have knowledge of oneself and of God/nature. In gaining this knowledge, one’s mind, which is part of the infinite mind of God, becomes a part of something eternal. The outcome for this kind of knower is beatitude.⁵ Deleuze explains the coincidence of power and action for Spinoza in the following terms:

all power is inseparable from a capacity for being affected, and this capacity for being affected is constantly and necessarily filled by affections that realize it. The word *potestas* has a legitimate use here ... to *potentia* as essence there corresponds a *potestas* as a capacity for being affected, which capacity is filled by the affections or modes that God produces necessarily, God being unable to undergo action but being the active cause of these affections.
(SPP: 97–8)

This distinction between *potentia* and *potestas* (or *puissance* and *pouvoir*, respectively, in French) is crucially important for the subsequent thought of Deleuze, and in particular for the formulation of a

materialist ontology of constitutive power, this being one of the primary intellectual objectives of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project. For Spinoza was, in the eyes of Deleuze (and Guattari), the initiator of this ontology’s guiding insights and principles. However, the thinker who in their view created the image of thought that made possible the comprehensive amplification of Spinoza’s principles into a full-blown ontology of constitutive power was Nietzsche.⁶

Nietzsche is, of course, credited by Deleuze with numerous philosophical accomplishments, but primary among these is Nietzsche’s method of dramatizing thought. In this staging of thought or “dramatology”, the speed and slowness with which a concept is moved, the dynamism of its spatiotemporal determinations and the intensity with which it interacts with adjacent entities in a system all become primary. As Deleuze puts it:

The state of experience is not subjective, at least not necessarily so. Nor is it individual. It is flux, and the interruption of flux and each intensity is necessarily related to another intensity, such that something passes through. This is what underlies all codes, what eludes them, and what the codes seek to translate, convert, and forge anew. But Nietzsche, in this writing on intensities, tells us: do not trade intensities for mere representations. The intensity refers neither to signifieds which would be the representations of things, nor to signifiers which would be the representations of words.
(DI: 257, trans. mod.)

The criteria and formal conditions associated with a logic premised on notions of truth and falsity, and indeed of representation generally, constitute a “dogmatic image of thought”, and thus for Nietzsche have to be supplanted by a topology, and a typology in which notions indebted to representation are replaced by such concepts as “the noble and the base, the high and the low”, and so forth.⁷ Representational thinking is constitutively superintended by the *logos*, and in place of this *logos*-driven thinking Nietzsche advances a conception of sense based on (sense-making) “operators”. To quote Deleuze (who at this point is, palpably, a follower of Nietzsche):

In Nietzsche ... the notion of sense is an instrument of absolute contestation, absolute critique, and also a particular original production: sense is not a reservoir, nor a principle or an origin, nor even an end. It is an “effect”, an effect *produced*, and we have to discover its laws of production ... the idea of sense as an

effect produced by a certain machinery, as in a physical, optical, sonorous effect, etc. (which is not at all to say that it is a mere appearance) ... An aphorism of Nietzsche's is a machine that produces sense, in a certain order that is specific to thought. Of course, there are other orders, other machineries – for example, all those which Freud discovered, and still more political and practical orders. But we must be the machinists, the “operators” of something. (DI: 137, trans. mod.)

The pivot of this Nietzschean image of thought, for Deleuze, is the concept of force (*macht*), and in particular Nietzsche's insight that “all reality is already a quantity of force” (NP: 40).⁸ At the same time Nietzsche believes the concept of force “still needs to be *completed*: an *inner* will must be *ascribed* to it, which I designate as ‘will to power’” (quoted in NP: 49). It is at this point that Nietzsche can be said to take to a certain culminating-point Spinoza's conception of the *conatus*.

The will to power (*wille zur macht*) and its relation to force can be understood in terms of the following propositions that can be extracted from Deleuze's “argument” set out in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.

- The essence of a force is its quantitative difference from other forces, and the quality of the force in question is constituted by this quantitative difference, and the will to power is thus the principle of the synthesis of forces; the will to power enables the emergence of this quantitative difference from other forces and the quality that is embodied by each force in this relation (NP: 50).
- Force and will should not be conflated; in Deleuze's words, “force is what can, will to power is what wills [*La force est ce qui peut, la volonté de puissance est ce qui veut*]” (NP: 50). Moreover, when two forces are alongside each other, one is dominant and the other is the dominated, and the will to power is thus the internal element of the production of force (NP: 51). Nietzsche understands the will to power in terms of the genealogical element of force. Chance is not eliminated by the will to power, since the will to power would be neither flexible nor open to contingency without chance (NP: 52–3). Also, depending on its original quality, a force is either active or reactive, while affirmation and negation are the primary qualities of the will to power (NP: 53–4); affirmation is not action *per se*, but the power of becoming active, it is the personification of becoming active, while negation is not mere reactivity but a becoming-reactive (NP: 54). As a result, to interpret is to determine the force that bestows sense on a thing, while to evaluate is

to determine the will to power that bestows value on a thing (NP: 54).

- Reactive forces diminish or annul the power of active forces, and every force that goes to the limit of its ability is active, while those who are weak are separated from what they can accomplish (NP: 57–61). All sensibility amounts to a becoming of forces (the will to power is the composite of these forces), and forces can be categorized in the following way: (i) *active force* is the power of acting or commanding; (ii) *reactive force* is the power of being acted upon or obeying; (iii) *developed reactive force* is the power of decomposition, division and separation; (iv) *active force becoming reactive* is the power of being separated, of undermining itself (NP: 63).
- The eternal return indicates that becoming-reactive is non-being, and it also produces becoming-active by generating becoming: the being of becoming cannot be affirmed fully without also affirming the existence of becoming-active (NP: 72). The object of philosophy is liberation, but this philosophy is always “untimely”, since it requires the abolition of negativity and the dissipative power of non-being, a task that will be coextensive with the emergence of a new kind of being, one beholden to neither of the two previous forms of being, God and Man.⁹

A Deleuzian ontology will extract one fundamental principle from these theses, namely, that desire is a kind of *puissance* and thus necessarily a type of force. With this principle Deleuze (and Guattari) are in a position to formulate the materialist ontology of political practice associated with their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project. In particular, the notion of *judgement*, and the vision of philosophy as the “science of judgement”, could now be overthrown in favour of philosophies, political and otherwise, that hinged on conceptions of desire and intensity.

The ontology of constitutive power: the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project

By the time the first volume of the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project, *L'anti-Oedipe (Anti-Oedipus)* (1972), was published, an intellectual and political context had emerged, in France at any rate, that provided enabling conditions for the emergence of the ontological framework developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* and the project's second volume, *Mille Plateaux (A Thousand Plateaus)* (1980).¹⁰

In (French) philosophy, the then regnant structuralist and phenomenological paradigms had largely run their course and reached a point of exhaustion by the late 1960s. Phenomenology never really managed to detach itself from the Cartesian model of subjectivity and self-consciousness, and when it became clear that not even Heidegger, the later Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre (to mention only some of the more eminent figures involved in this undertaking) were able to resolve or dissolve the conundrums of transcendental subjectivism, the phenomenological paradigm was increasingly perceived to have struck its equivalent of the proverbial iceberg. Structuralism was able to steer clear of the impasses that afflicted Cartesian subjectivism, but its reliance on Saussure's conception of language required it to posit the linguistic code as something of a transcendental entity in its own right; the code had to be assumed from the outset as a condition for determining meaning. When it became clear that the code could not function as a transcendental principle, and this because it effectively reduced all vehicles of meaning to utterance (images were a particular problem for structuralism because many of their properties could not be accounted for in terms of a model based on utterance), the structuralist paradigm fell into desuetude.¹¹

At the same time, conceptions of subjectivity derived from psychoanalysis were found to be problematic. Freud and his more immediate followers viewed the libidinal drives as something that had to be contained or channelled if "civilization" was to be maintained (Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930) is the canonical text here), and although some of Freud's followers did seek alternative metapsychological frameworks for understanding libidinal intensities, those who strayed too far from Freud's original metapsychological principles were soon denounced by the official Freudian establishment. Foremost among these "deviationists" was Wilhelm Reich, whose call for a "liberation" of the libidinal drives exerted a powerful influence on *Anti-Oedipus*, although it has to be acknowledged that *Anti-Oedipus* is only one of a number of contemporary French works that sought a more expansive conception of the libidinal drives, often involving an extension, more or less radically different in relation to the concept's origin, of Freud's notion of a "polymorphous perversity".¹² The late 1960s and 1970s in France represented a conjuncture in which the various post- or neo-Freudianisms were consolidated into a loose-knit movement, and the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project was part of this conjuncture, at least in so far as its vigorous polemic against Freudianism is concerned.

Also important for the conjuncture that enabled the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project (and its ontology of political practice) to emerge

was the social and political constellation associated with what came to be known as "the events of May 1968". Important for the genesis of this constellation was the perceived failure of the Soviet Communist project after that country's brutal invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968, along with the disclosures concerning Stalin's show trials and purges provided by Khrushchev at the Twentieth Communist Party Congress in February 1956. Just as significant for the French left intelligentsia of that period (the mid-1950s to the late 1960s) was the winding-down of the Bandung Project so soon after its inception in 1955; with the collapse of the Bandung Project any hope that a non-aligned Third World could serve as a repository of emancipatory potential rapidly disappeared.¹³ In political life, the post-war Gaullist institutional monopoly had pushed the French version of "representative democracy" into a gradual but seemingly inexorable sclerosis, and the post-war compromise between capital and labour, viewed as the basis of a thirty-year period of prosperity (*les trente glorieuses*) was also beginning to unravel (as it did elsewhere in the advanced industrial countries of the Western world).¹⁴ These developments marked, collectively, the transition of one phase of capitalist development to another, as the French manifestation of the social-democratic form of capitalism mutated into the globally integrated capitalist dispensation that is in place today. This particular transition is embodied in a number of registers: the emergence of a new subject of labour; the creation of new structures of accumulation; the setting-up of new axes of value; the transformation of the capitalist state; the availability of new forms of opposition and struggle; and so on. These and other parallel developments are taken by Deleuze and Guattari to indicate the need for a new ontology of political practice and constitutive power.¹⁵

All this amounted to a crisis of utopia for French Marxist and marxist thought, as the question of the transformations undergone by the regime of accumulation and mode of production became a crucial object of enquiry. In a nutshell, Deleuze and Guattari's analytical treatment of "force" helped them advance a revolutionary conceptualization of the mode of production. Their delineation of the notion of "force" enabled a central focus on the concept of a "machinic process" (*agencement machinique*), which could then be used by them to formulate a full-blown ontology of constitutive power, which in turn could underpin a new "theorization" of the mode of production.

The machinic process is a mode of organization that links all kinds of "attractions and repulsions, sympathies, and antipathies, alterations, amalgamations, penetrations, and expressions that affect bodies of all kinds in their relations to one another" (ATP: 90). The modes

of production are constituted by these machinic processes (ATP: 435). This is the equivalent of saying that the modes of production, subtended as they are by machinic processes, are expressions of desire, and thus of force (in the sense of *potentia/pouvoir*); the modes of production are the resultant of this infinitely productive desire or force. As Deleuze and Guattari would have it, it is desire, which is always social and collective, that makes the gun into a weapon of war, or sport, or hunting, depending on extant circumstances (ATP: 89–90). The mode of production is thus on the same level as the other expressions of desire, and it is made up of stratifications, that is, crystallizations or orchestrations of ordered functions, which are these very expressions of desire.¹⁶ Here Deleuze and Guattari bring about a reversal of the typical Marxist understanding of the mode of production: it is not the mode *per se* that allows production to be carried out (as the traditional account specifies); instead, it is desiring-production itself that makes a particular mode the kind of mode that it is. Deleuze and Guattari's recourse to a practical ontology of desiring-production is thus their way of accounting for the organization of productive desire. All this sounds highly recondite, but the principle framed in this part of the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project simply elaborates what Marx himself had said, namely, that society has to exist before capitalist appropriation can take place, so that a society or state with already positioned labour has to exist if the realization of surplus-value is to take place. To quote Deleuze and Guattari:

Marx, the historian, and Childe, the archaeologist, are in agreement on the following point: the archaic imperial State, which steps in to overcode agricultural communities, presupposes at least a certain level of development of these communities' productive forces since there must be a potential surplus capable of constituting a State stock, of supporting a specialized handicrafts class (metallurgy), and of progressively giving rise to public functions. This is why Marx links the archaic State to a certain [pre-capitalist] "mode of production". (ATP: 428)¹⁷

Before any surplus-value can be realized by capital there is politics, that is, force, and this is why the genealogy of force based on Spinoza and Nietzsche (although Hume and Bergson also figure in this genealogy), constructed in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project, is central and unavoidable.

While capitalism is for Deleuze and Guattari an immense set of apparatuses, operating on a planetary scale, that transcodes all reachable

spaces of accumulation, its functioning is due to more than just the operation of forces at the level of organizations and formations. The ontology of constitutive power conceptualizes force or *puissance* not just in regard to its role in creating and consolidating a planetary-wide regime of accumulation. This way of conceptualizing also encompasses two complementary facets: on one hand, the ways in which this *puissance* enables at once the emergence and consolidation of the various forms of collective subjectivity; on the other hand, the ways in which these forms make possible the means for capitalism to fashion the kinds of subjectivity (a "social morphology" in Deleuze's words [N: 158]) required for the collective functioning.

Deleuze has in several works connected the notion of force with the concept of a singularity, primarily because it takes a libidinal investment, and thus the activation of a force or ensemble of forces, to constitute a singularity.¹⁸ If the universe is composed of absolute singularities, then production, any kind of production, can only take the form of repetition: each singularity, as production unfolds, can only repeat or propagate itself. In production, each singularity can only express its own difference, its distance or proximity, from everything else. Production, on this Deleuzian view, is an unendingly proliferating distribution of all the myriad absolute singularities. Production is necessarily repetition of difference, the difference of each singularity from everything else.

Capitalism, however, also requires the operation of repetition. A capitalist axiomatics, at the same time, can only base itself on notions of identity, equivalence and intersubstitutivity, as Marx pointed out in his analysis of the logic of the commodity-form. This being so, capitalist repetition is perforce repetition of the non-different, the different in capitalism can never be more than the mere appearance of difference, because capitalist difference can always be overcome, and returned through the processes of abstract exchange, to what is always the same, the utterly fungible. Capitalism, and this is a decisive principle in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project, only deterritorializes in order to bring about a more powerful reterritorialization. When capitalism breaches limits it does so only in order to impose its own limits, which it projects as the limits of the universe. The power of repetition in capitalism is therefore entirely negative, wasteful and lacking in any really productive force. Capitalistic repetition is non-being in the manner set-out by Spinoza. Any collective subjectivity constituted on the basis of this form of repetition will not be able to advance the cause of emancipation. The challenge, at once philosophical and political, posed by the authors of the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project has therefore to do with the supersession of this capitalist repetition by

forms of productive repetition that are capable of breaking beyond the limits imposed on emancipation by those who rule us. Only force, that is, politics, which is not the same as violence (at least not necessarily), can accomplish this.

For Deleuze, therefore, the ontology of this anti-capitalist power of constitution must take the form of a genealogy of the concept of force. At any rate, it must begin with this genealogy, since Nietzsche and Spinoza were the great discoverers of the scope and nature of force's "social physics". A genealogy of the "social physics" of force adumbrated by Spinoza and Nietzsche augments, philosophically, the critique of capitalism that lies at the heart of the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project; indeed, without the first the latter would be impossible.

Notes

1. Immediately before this quotation Deleuze says that "Goethe, and even Hegel in certain respects, have been considered Spinozists, but they are not really Spinozists, because they never cease to link the plan to the organization of a Form and to the formation of a Subject. The Spinozists are rather Hölderlin, Kleist, and Nietzsche" (SPP: 128-9). Deleuze's book on Nietzsche is *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (NP).
2. An element of artificiality inevitably surrounds such attempts at periodizing an author's work. In 1989 Deleuze provided the following thematically arranged classification for his works: (1) from Hume to Bergson; (2) classical studies; (3) Nietzschean studies; (4) critique and clinical; (5) aesthetics; (6) cinematographic studies; (7) contemporary studies; (8) *The Logic of Sense*; (9) *Anti-Oedipus*; (10) *Difference and Repetition*; (11) *A Thousand Plateaus*. For this classification, see the editor's introduction to *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (DI: 292, n.1). My typology, somewhat by contrast, aligns Spinoza with Nietzsche (at least on the matter of *conatus/macht*), and separates this alignment from the treatment of force provided after *Anti-Oedipus*.
3. To quote Spinoza "to act absolutely in accordance with virtue is simply to act, live, and preserve one's being (these three mean the same) in accordance with the guidance of reason, and on the basis of looking for what is useful to oneself" (2000: 243).
4. To quote Spinoza, "The mind is averse to imagining those things which diminish or hinder its own power, and the power of the body" (*ibid.*: 175).
5. To quote Spinoza, "our salvation, i.e. our blessedness, i.e. our freedom, consists ... in a constant and eternal love for God, or, in the love of God for human beings. This love, i.e. blessedness, is called 'glory' in the Scriptures For whether this love is related to God or to the mind, it can rightly be called contentment of mind, which is not in fact distinguished from glory" (*ibid.*: 310).
6. It would, however, be a mistake to assume that Deleuze believes Nietzsche to have superseded or surpassed in whatever way the insights of Spinoza. To do this would be to controvert a fundamental Deleuzean principle regarding the relation between philosophers of different ages. Deleuze insists repeatedly that great philosophers are first and foremost creators of concepts, and that

an adequate philosophy of history consequently takes the form of a genealogy of concepts that positions concepts in terms of the ways in which they transform and "contaminate" each other, and not simply in terms of a chronology or dialectical succession (the latter being the *modus operandi* of a traditional, and for Deleuze unsatisfactory, philosophy of history). Thus it is possible for Nietzsche, or Deleuze for that matter, to employ a concept of Spinoza's in a rigorously Spinozist fashion, even though Spinoza himself would probably not have understood what Nietzsche and Deleuze were attempting to accomplish. For this principle, see the first paragraph of "Nomadic Thought" (DI: 252). Or as Deleuze said about his own collaboration with Guattari: "When I work with Guattari each of us falsifies the other, which is to say that each of us understands in his own way notions put forward by the other" (N: 126). On the collaboration between Deleuze and Guattari, see Dosse (2010).

7. See Deleuze, "On the Will to Power and the Eternal Return" (DI: 118, trans. mod.). On the "dogmatic image of thought", see *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (NP: 103-5).
8. Deleuze maintains that the key Nietzschean principle here is asserted in *The Will to Power*, where Nietzsche says that there are nothing but relations of force in mutual "relations of tension" (1968: 635).
9. Here the following passage from *Nietzsche and Philosophy* comes to mind: "Does the recuperation of religion stop us being religious? By turning theology into anthropology, by putting man in God's place, do we abolish the essential, that is to say, the place?" (NP: 88-9). In other words, a truly critical philosophy would not seek simply to reverse the fundamental oppositions God-man, theology-anthropology, and so on, but it would, more radically, abolish the very place from which these reversals emerge and from which they derive their force. Deleuze consolidates this legacy of Nietzsche's.
10. See *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze has always made it clear in his interviews that he prefers to characterize his intellectual itineraries and work in this "eventive" way rather than in terms of a more conventional approach that deals with a thinker's influences, formation, shifts of interest, trajectory of publication and so on. Besides Deleuze's *Negotiations*, see also Deleuze and Parnet's *Dialogues*.
11. This sketchy outline conforms to the narrative advanced in Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze deals with structuralism in his "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" (DI: 170-92). For a more general overview of structuralism's relation to philosophy, see Delacampagne (1999).
12. For Deleuze's critique of psychoanalysis, see, in addition to *Anti-Oedipus*, the chapter "Dead Psychoanalysis: Analyse", in *Dialogues* (D: 77-123), and "Five Propositions on Psychoanalysis" (DI: 274-80). For works by other writers in this anti- or post-Freudian vein, see Kristeva (1974) and Lyotard (1974). Also important for Deleuze and Guattari is the British "anti-psychiatric" school associated with R. D. Laing and David Cooper.
13. The Bandung Project got its name from the Indonesian city where the non-aligned movement, spearheaded by Indonesia, India, Egypt, and Yugoslavia, held its first meeting. The aim of the movement was to form an international bloc that would not be subsumed by either the capitalist "West" or the Soviet-led "East".
14. An important retrospective analysis of this French social and political conjuncture is to be found in Ross (2002). See also Kelly (1983) and Khilnani (1993).
15. Paul Patton, in his excellent *Deleuze and the Political* (2000: 103-8) correctly points out that it is possible to extract "anti-political" propositions from nearly

all of Deleuze's texts, and that these propositions show Deleuze (and Guattari) to be more concerned with generalized forms of social being rather than with capitalism *per se*. Patton insists, however, and I agree with him, that it would be a mistake to take this for the whole story, since the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project also provides an "axiomatics" for constructing assemblages that are explicitly political.

16. This point is made in Brian Massumi's useful analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's mode of production in his *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1992: 194 n.51).
17. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, it is the state that gives capital its "models of realization" (ATP: 428).
18. *Anti-Oedipus* is perhaps the *locus classicus* of this account of libidinal investment in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari.

TWO

Expression

Gregg Lambert

The concept of expression, or of "expressionism in philosophy", first appears and is fully developed in Deleuze's longer treatise on Spinoza published in 1968, the same year as the publication of his systematic study, *Difference and Repetition*. Thus, both major works can be understood together as two different approaches to the idea of difference in the history of philosophy. The problem of expression in Spinoza's philosophy concerns, first of all, the interplay between the internal thought and external bodies, and how ideas come to express this relation between inside and outside as being internal to the power of thought. The problem that Deleuze first sets out to resolve through his reading of Spinoza is precisely what is present in a true idea that makes it adequate to or "expressive" of the thing's nature "as it is in itself" (EPS: 15). The solution to the problem is found in Spinoza's radical principle of parallelism, in which the idea's expressive character is said to be immanent in things themselves, and it is the character of truth to express this immanence fully or perfectly. Although often ascribed to Spinoza's philosophy of parallelism, Deleuze derives a crucial part of this logic of expression from Stoic philosophy, and in particular, from the theory concerning the incorporeal nature of sense. However, the problem of expression is not restricted to Deleuze's commentaries on classical philosophers such as Spinoza, Leibniz, or Descartes. As I recount below, this problem also underlies Deleuze's works with Guattari on the nature of language understood as a set of "order-words" and "collective assemblages of enunciation", as well as his later meditations on the epistemological nature of power in the work of Michel Foucault.

The mystery of parallelism

What does it mean to express an idea? In one sense, it means nothing less than the power of the understanding to express itself. The emphasis is on the power that is expressed by the act of understanding, not upon the particular attribute of the idea that is expressed; as Deleuze puts it, "the material of the idea is not sought in a representative content but in an expressive content ... through which the idea refers to other ideas or to the idea of God" (SPP: 75). Here it is not the case, as it is with Descartes, that the property of an idea is "clear and distinct", but rather it is the capacity of the understanding to express its own substance adequately or inadequately. The famous subject-object dualism is subtracted from this exposition of the act of understanding, since the idea of understanding, its object and the power of the act are in fact identical. As Deleuze writes, "the traditional distinction between the sense expressed and the object designated (and expressing itself in this sense), thus finds in Spinozism direct application" (EPS: 105). Therefore, understanding understands itself and this expresses its essential property, which Spinoza calls its substance. *What* the understanding understands is defined as a mode, which is necessarily infinite. "The attributes turn about in their modes" is a phrase that Deleuze often employs to describe this new determination. "The attribute [of understanding] is expressed 'in a certain and determinate way,' or rather in an infinity of ways which amount to finite existing modes" (EPS: 105).

In Spinoza's philosophy of expression, moreover, to have an adequate idea does not mean a correspondence between an object and the idea that represents it, but rather refers to the power of the idea to "explicate" fully the essence of something, and for this, it must "involve" a knowledge of the cause and must "express" it (EPS: 133). If I have an idea of the illness that devastates my body, for this idea to be adequate it must fully express the cause of this illness, by the same manner in which a physician links or connects effects (symptoms) to one another in a chain, with one idea becoming a complete cause of another. Deleuze argues that "only adequate ideas, as expressive, give us knowledge through causes, or through a thing's essence" (EPS: 134). In a philosophy of expression the emphasis is placed on the creation of concepts that are fully expressive, and that completely explicate causes. "Real knowledge is discovered to be a *kind* of expression: which is to say that the representative content of ideas is left behind for an immanent one, which is truly expressive, and the form of psychological consciousness is left behind for an 'explicative' logical formalism" (EPS: 326). Consequently, for Spinoza as well as for Leibniz, a philosophy of

expression first of all concerns itself with a being determined as God, in so far as God expresses himself in the world; second, the philosophy of expression is concerned with ideas determined as true, in so far as only true ideas express both God and the world. As Deleuze shows, the concept of expression in this philosophy has two possible sources and areas of direct application: ontology, relating to the expression of God and the world; and logic, relating to "*what is expressed by propositions*" (EPS: 323).

In Spinoza's logic, however, attributes are names, but they are verbs rather than adjectives. Later in Deleuze's thought, this logic of expression explicitly informs the concept of "becoming" in such expressions as "becoming-woman", "becoming-animal" and "becoming-molecular". In each case, the name functions not as a noun, or proper name, but rather as a verb, or as a process of modification. As Deleuze shows, it was the Stoics who first showed the two different planes of sense by separating the sense that belongs to states of bodies from the sense of statements. They are independent of one another.¹ For example, "When the scalpel cuts through the flesh" (LS: 5), or when food or poison spreads through the body, there is an intermingling of two bodies, but the sense is different from the statement "the knife is cutting the flesh", which refers to an incorporeal transformation both on the level of the bodies and the level of the sense of the statement (ATP: 86). This third sense that lies between the two different senses, between the depth of the body and the surface of the proposition, is what Deleuze defines, following the Stoic theory of the incorporeal, as the event of sense itself. As Deleuze remarks,

The question is as follows: is there something, *aliquid*, which merges neither with the proposition or the terms of the proposition, nor with the object or with the states of affairs that the proposition denotes, neither with the "lived," or representation or with the mental activity of the person who expresses herself in the proposition, nor even with concepts or signified essences?

(LS: 19)

Sense would be irreducible to all these determinations, signalling an extra-being that belongs neither to the order of words nor to the order of things. This dimension is called expression.

On the one hand, therefore, sense does not exist outside the proposition that expresses it. *The expressed does not exist outside its expression.* On the other hand, sense cannot be completely reduced to the content of the proposition either, since there is an "objectivity" (*objectité*) that is

very distinct and does not resemble its expression. As an example of this paradox, in *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze employs the phrase “the tree greens”. What this phrase expresses is the sense of the “greening” of the tree, the sense of colour that is the pure event of its “arbrification”. But here, the attribute of the thing (the tree) is the verb, “to green” or, moreover, the event that is expressed by this verb. But this attribute is not to be confused with the state of physical things, nor with a quality or property of things. As Deleuze argues, “the attribute is not a being”, but an extra-being that is expressed by the proposition and this sense of “greening” does not exist outside the proposition that expresses it (LS: 21). Here, we can refer again to the two planes that are brought together in the expression, but which continue to remain distinct from one another, as two faces that coexist without becoming identical in their sense. Yet, as Deleuze remarks, this does not produce a circular reasoning or tautology, but rather an idea of difference that subsists or insists in the proposition and on the surface of things. “*The sense is both the expressible or the expressed of the proposition, and the attribute of the state of affairs*” (LS: 22), but what this sense expresses is the event of sense itself as a frontier that runs between propositions and things, statements and bodies, as the extra-being that first expresses their relation, a relation that does not exist outside the genesis of the expression. However, although the event of sense (or the “sense-event”) is bound up with language, one must not conclude from this that its nature is purely linguistic in such a manner that language would function as its cause. The frontier does not pass between language and the event on one side, and the world or state of things on the other, but occurs on both sides at once, and, at the same time, distinguishes itself from the sense that occurs or manifests itself within each order, as if sense each time distinguishes itself from the sense of the proposition and the sense that belongs to the world of objects, causing a paradoxical difference to appear (see Zourabichvili 2003: 36). According to Deleuze, this difference would be the *sense* of sense itself.

Free indirect discourse and the collective assemblages of enunciation

What is the difference between a code and a language? As Benveniste recounts this distinction (1971: 53), a bee has a code and is capable of encoding signs that designate a message, but does not have a language. This distinction rests upon the fact that the bee cannot communicate to a second or third bee what it has not seen or perceived with its

senses, while human beings are capable of what Deleuze defines as “free indirect discourse” (ATP: 77–80). As Deleuze and Guattari argue in *A Thousand Plateaus*, “the ‘first’ language, or the first determination of language is not the trope or the metaphor, but *indirect discourse*” (ATP: 76–7). We might ask why so much emphasis is placed on this distinction and on the determination of language as free indirect discourse. But, free from what if not from the subject as the first determination of language? As Humpty Dumpty says, “when *I* use a word, it means what *I* want it to, no more and no less ... the question is which is to be master ... and that’s it” (LS: 18). Therefore, we might understand that Deleuze and Guattari’s entire theory of language is made to answer this provocation, to prove that the subject is not master of the word it chooses to express its beliefs or its desires. As they argue:

It is for this reason that indirect discourse, *especially “free” indirect discourse*, is of exemplary value: there are no clear, distinctive contours; what comes first is not an insertion of variously individuated statements, or an interlocking of different subjects of enunciation, but a collective assemblage resulting in the determination of relative subjectivation proceedings, or assignations of individuality and their shifting distribution within discourse. (ATP: 80)

Deleuze and Guattari go to great lengths to deny the existence of “individual enunciation”. They write, “There is no individual enunciation. There is not even a subject of enunciation” (ATP: 79). Consequently, language is primarily social and is made up by statements and order-words. Thus, the speech-act repeats what was already implicated in the order, but not in the manner of a code that is deciphered, or information that is communicated to a passive subject. One does not speak as much as one repeats, the emphasis here being placed on the redundancy of statements as well as on the effect of the relative identity (or stability) that corresponds to the subjectivity of speech-acts; “the relation between the statement and the act [in language] is internal, immanent, but it is not one of identity” (ATP: 79). Therefore, if the subject (or “I”) is the effect of the redundancy that already belongs to language, and which determines the intersubjectivity of communication, then the collective assemblage of enunciation refers to the redundant complex of acts and the statements that accomplish this redundancy. The notion of the collective assemblage of enunciation takes on a primary importance in Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of language and speech-acts because it will account for the social character of all language. The primary

meaning of language is social and the so-called individual speech is only the effect of a more primary repetition at the level of statements and performatives (or "order-words") that define a given social field. As they write, "The only possible definition of language is the set of all order-words, implicit presuppositions, or speech acts current in a language at a given moment" (ATP: 79).

In order to account for the real definition of the collective assemblage, that is, the causality that determines the redundancy in statements and the institution or order-words in language, Deleuze and Guattari return again to the Stoic theory of expression as the effect of incorporeal transformations both at the level of the sense of statements and at the level of bodies. We recall that the incorporeal was defined as an extra-being that occurs between the sense of the statement and the plane occupied by real bodies. It is the particular nature of this extra-being that will determine the event of transformation in sense on both planes instantaneously. Here, it is important to notice that order-words are not explicit statements and do not always take the form of imperatives, but are rather defined as immanent relations between statements and acts that are internal to the speech-act and constitute its "implicit and non-discursive presuppositions" rather than its explicit and external assumptions by which a statement refers to another statement or to an action. What transforms the accused into the convict is the incorporeal attribute that is the expressed of the judge's sentence; again, the expressed cannot be separated from its expression, and neither can the attribute be located in the body of the convict to account for this transformation in sense. The logic of expression addresses precisely these transformative events both at the level of sense and at the level of bodies, or rather, the event that occurs at once both at the surface and in the depth. Thus, assemblages of enunciation do not speak "of" things, but rather speak at the same time on the level of things and on the level of contents.

For example, as Deleuze writes, bodies have age and mature according to a biological process, but the statement "you are no longer a child" transforms the expressed sense of the body as well as the meaning accorded to age into a moral category of subjection. By comparison, the statement "you are only a girl" expresses a similar transformation of the body's sense that is inserted into a set of other order-words that determine the social meaning of gender. Likewise, we might say that the colour of the body may *appear* as an attribute, but the inscription of race in the statement "you are a black man" or "you are a white male" introduces an incorporeal transformation that changes and determines the body's specific social meaning. It is only on the basis of the statement

that "black" or "white" *expresses* a meaning that cannot be determined simply from the attribute of whiteness or blackness that is the property of the body. In both statements what each attribute expresses, although differently, is an incorporeal transformation that is applied directly to bodies and is inserted into the subject's actions and passions. In short, it subjects the body to an "order".

A society is composed of these order-words that pin meaning to bodies and cause them to be individuated or to correspond to their social meanings. As Deleuze and Guattari write, "There is no significance independent of dominant significations, nor is there subjectivization independent of an established order of subjection. Both depend on the nature and transmission of order-words in a given social field" (ATP: 79). Society can thus be defined by the order-words that define the intermingling of bodies, actions and passions; collective assemblages of enunciation in a given society "designate this instantaneous relation between statements and the incorporeal transformations or non-corporeal attributes they express" (ATP: 81). It is in these moments that language becomes truly expressive, that is, when it becomes capable of expressing real attributes and applying these determinations directly to bodies and to states of affairs that compose the social field at any given moment.

As Deleuze and Guattari argue, although the above transformation applies directly to bodies, it is still incorporeal or internal to enunciation. For example, anyone can say "I declare war!" However, it is only a variable belonging to the situation that can cause the social field composed of bodies to enter into a general conflagration, thereby transforming the whole of society. "There are variables of expression *that establish a relation between language and an outside, but precisely because they are immanent to language*" (ATP: 82). This is why the incorporeal is sometimes defined as an extra-being that cannot be accounted for simply from the state of things (or bodies) or a non-linguistic being that does not originate from the sense of the statement (or language), but which first causes these two planes of being to become related and to express the event of their immanent joining. Thus, what causes the order-word (such as "you are sentenced to death", "I declare war!" or "I love you!") is "an extra something" that "remains outside the scope of linguistic categories and definitions", as Bakhtin (as Volosinov) also argued (Volosinov 1986: 110), but which expresses the condition of the sense of the statement and, at the same time, expresses a real determination of the states of bodies and intervenes directly into the actions and passions that define them (ATP: 82). Thus, what Deleuze and Guattari define as the order-word cannot be equated with language in all

its functions (description, designation, nomination, etc.); rather, it is what "effectuate[s] its condition of possibility" (or what they call the "super-linearity of expression") (ATP: 85). In other words, it is what causes language to become expressive of the sense that is immanent to the plane of bodies. Without this variable, language itself would remain purely virtual, lifeless, and would not become a nominative order that refers to real transformative events on the plane of being.

Abstract machines

Finally, what is the relation of the problem of expression to the process of abstraction, which is proper to the power of philosophy, and refers to the plane on which concepts appear and are organized into complex diagrams of statements and visibilities that "explicate" the plane of being? Deleuze and Guattari define the relation of content and expression in a diagram that has four different levels, arranged both vertically and horizontally. First, on a horizontal axis, an assemblage comprises two segments, of content and expression. On the level of content, it is a machinic assemblage of bodies and states of bodies in various degrees of interaction; on the level of expression, it is an assemblage of enunciation, of acts and statements, and incorporeal transformations directly attributed to bodies. Then, on a vertical axis, the assemblage has what Deleuze and Guattari call "territorial sides", which stabilize it, as well as "*cutting edges of deterritorialization* which carry it away" (ATP: 88). We can see how this diagram works by illustrating how both content and expression, bodies and statements, are "taken up" by a movement of either territorialization (which give an assemblage form, stability or relative fixity), or deterritorialization, in which case the formal property of the assemblage becomes an edge that is given motion and cuts through both bodies and statements. Only exceptional states of language cause language to enter into variation, or continuous variation, which is expressive of a state of the body as becoming.

As Deleuze and Guattari argue, language depends on its abstract machines and not the other way around. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, their overt polemic with the science of modern linguistics is an argument against an abstract machine that determines the representation of language without taking into account the specific causality of what they have defined as "non-linguistic factors" that are still internal to enunciation itself. By divorcing language from the social side of meaning, or by describing its categories as neutral and quasi-universal frameworks or structures, the abstract machine invented by modern linguistics only

achieves an intermediate level of abstraction, allowing it to consider linguistic factors by themselves and in isolation from their social sense. By contrast, Deleuze and Guattari seek to re-invest their description of language with a pragmatic and political sense in order to correct the representation provided by the former. "From this standpoint," they write, "the interpenetration of language and the social field and political problems lies at the deepest level of the abstract machine, not at the surface" (ATP: 91). Thus, the question proposed in the beginning, "What does it mean to express an idea?", returns from this perspective as a problem of pragmatics.

What are the conditions necessary for the idea to become transformative both at the level of sense and at the same time a transformative event "intervening" into the states of affairs and of bodies (defined in the broadest sense)? What is the causality of the incorporeal transformation of sense both on the level of acts and statements and bodies? In other words, what is the origin and specific causality of new order-words? Recalling our discussion of the philosophy of expression in Spinoza, one can see here that the emphasis is placed again on the "cause" of this linking between statements and bodies, which it is the object of a pragmatics to fully "explicate". However, this explication is not restricted to speech-acts alone, but also to certain signs that circulate historically and determine or punctuate a duration of events, or which introduce a transformation before and after. In one sense, this accounts for their interest in certain dates that have become expressive, or which indicate the transformation of a nominative reality as well as the arrival of a new social order and a new collective assemblage of enunciation. Take "the night of 4 July 1917, or 20 November 1923", for example. The first date, of course, refers to the Russian Revolution; the second to the inflationary crisis and the collapse of the reichsmark that precedes the rise of National Socialism in Germany. But the real question, for them, is "What incorporeal transformation is expressed by these dates, incorporeal yet attributed to bodies, inserted into them?" (ATP: 86-7).

To further illustrate this problem of expression, we might consider a more recent date: 11 September 2001. What is the incorporeal transformation expressed by this date? What is the sense it expresses that is directly attributed to bodies, inserted into them? We cannot conclude that its meaning is limited to the chain of events that took place on the morning of 11 September, but rather to a transformation that continues to inform an interpenetration of new order-words and the intermingling of acts, bodies and statements. "A terrorist crashes an airliner", "an Arab is stopped at the border and questioned", "a prisoner of war is tortured for information", "a president declares war on terror", "a heightened

state of alert is announced”; what these statements now express is a variability with regard to the former meaning of the signs expressed, which Deleuze and Guattari call “cutting edges of deterritorialization” (ATP: 88). Here, the sign that expresses the act of war becomes deterritorializing with regard to the former conflict between nation-states, just as the legal and juridical codes that define a state of war are placed in flux and can no longer determine the specific situations of the intermingling of bodies outside their former definitions (for example, the captive from Afghanistan is not entitled to the protections of the Geneva Convention, or the President’s declaration of war is not obliged to adhere to international treaties concerning the treatment of prisoners). In just a few of these instances, we might perceive that the date, 11 September, expresses an incorporeal transformation that is directly applied to bodies, or as Deleuze and Guattari write, “intervene or insert themselves into contents” (ATP: 87), that is, into the framework of order-words that define the body as a site of individuation. Hence, the body of the prisoner or of the suspected terrorist corresponds to a new set of meanings that subject it to a new set of rights and procedures, and the new order-words that define these specific sites of individuation will produce unforeseen and transformative effects within other bodies and social subjectivities as well. This transformation would be the object of what Deleuze and Guattari define as political pragmatics, which concerns itself “with the variation of the order-words and non-corporeal attributes linked to social bodies and effectuating immanent acts” (ATP: 83). According to this transformational research, a statement of the kind “The president declares war on terror” must be analysed “only as a function of its pragmatic implications, in other words, in relation to the implicit presuppositions, immanent acts, or incorporeal transformations it expresses and which introduce new configurations of bodies” (ATP: 83).

Deleuze often cites the phrase “There will be a naval battle tomorrow” in order to pose the question of the internal factor that would cause this sentence to express the sense of a date or an order-word (ATP: 86). Nevertheless, Deleuze also cautions, we are never presented with an interlinkage of order-words and the causality of specific contents (or events), but, instead, seem to constantly pass from order-words to the “silent order of things” (Foucault, cited in ATP: 87). Consequently, in *Foucault*, Deleuze shows that power relations designate “that other thing” that passes between discursive statements and non-discursive visibilities (FCLT: 83). In other words, “power” today assumes the name of that extra-being that runs between two different orders and yet expresses their relation, or that causes their relation to come into view

as a problem of knowledge. However, if earlier in Spinoza power was unified by the idea of one substance expressing itself, today power can only be determined as an encompassing field of forces, or as a multiplicity of “nomadically distributed differential elements” (Canning 2001: 311–13). The question, here again, is how these elements combine to give rise to each other mutually, which is a question of their “virtuality”, as well as of the immanence of power relations to the terms that express these relations at any given moment. As Deleuze writes,

If power is not simply violence, this is not only because it passes in itself through categories that express the relation between two forces (inciting, inducing, producing a useful effect, etc.) but also because, in relation to knowledge, it produces truth, in so far as it makes us see and speak. (FCLT: 83)

With this final statement, we can perceive the relation of the concept of power to the problem of expression, since it is identified as that extra-being that lies at the frontier of both propositions and bodies and that first produces a relation to truth: “It produces truth as a problem” (*ibid.*: 83).

Notes

1. For a complete account of the Stoic theory of incorporeals, see “The Third Series of the Proposition” in *The Logic of Sense* (LS: 12–22). Deleuze’s own source for this theory, however, is primarily drawn from Bréhier (1928). For current discussions of the concept of expression in Spinoza, see also May (2005), and Thomas Nail (2008).

THREE

Difference, repetition

Melissa McMahon



Introduction

Deleuze's notions of difference and repetition are developed within a project that has both a negative and a positive component. The negative or "critical" aspect is the argument that philosophy, in its very conception, has laboured under a "transcendental illusion", which systematically subordinates the concepts of difference and repetition to that of identity, mostly within what Deleuze calls the "regime of representation". The illusion is "transcendental" (the term comes from Kant) in so far as it is not simply an historical accident that can be corrected with the right information, but forms a necessary and inevitable part of the operation of thought, and thus requires a perpetual work of critique. Part of Deleuze's project consists in diagnosing this illusion, and showing how it falsifies the "true" movement of thought. In this movement, difference and repetition, in and for themselves, would be appreciated as the ultimate elements and agents of a thought "of the future": not a historical future, but the future as the essential object of a vital and liberated philosophy, implicit even in philosophies of the past.

The positive component of Deleuze's project can already be glimpsed here, if only by default. We find a more direct expression in Deleuze's essay on Bergson's concept of difference, where the stakes of a philosophy of difference are firmly tied to a definite vision of the true goal of philosophy: "If philosophy is to have a positive and direct relation with things, it is only to the extent that it claims to grasp the thing itself in what it is, in its difference from all that is not it" (DI: 32). It is the goal of *precision* that Deleuze assigns to philosophy here: that of grasping

things in their utter "thisness", a motif that recurs throughout Deleuze's work on this subject. Thus, in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze asks whether the concept of difference, rather than being an intermediary notion, is not "the only moment of presence and precision" (DR: 28). And in the same book, when introducing his notion of repetition, he contends that repetition is a "necessary and justified conduct" only in relation to what is singular and irreplaceable (DR: 1): precisely the thing in its difference from all that is not it.

The goal of "grasping things in their being" is an ancient and even defining task of philosophy. Plato's dialogues are commonly understood as engaged in the task of identifying an essence corresponding to the question "What is x?" (the Good, the Just, the Beautiful, and so on), and Aristotle defined metaphysics as the discipline that addresses the problem of the essential attributes of things, or "that which is *qua* thing-that-is".¹ But in both cases this activity seems to turn on a conceptual notion of essence as simple identity. And, returning to the critical part of Deleuze's project, it is the concept of identity – and the concepts of difference and repetition that make them a function of identity – that on Deleuze's account is especially inadequate for accounting for the singular object of thought.

The regime of identity: re-presentation

The function of the concept of identity, as Deleuze presents it in *Difference and Repetition*, is essentially that of "managing" difference. Thus, for example, a concept subordinates differences by picking out qualities or things as "the same" or identical across (and despite) different cases; such are our general concepts of, for example, "redness" or "dogs". In another way, difference is made relative to the concept of identity as a mode of its "division" or "specification". The classical model here is the Aristotelian one of genera and species, where a concept-genus is divided according to the difference of contrasting attributes; the difference of being "rational", for example, divides the genus "animal" into "human" and "non-human" species. The explicit or implicit assumption is that whatever differences may exist outside the concept, these cannot be thought without being referred to a concept of identity, and, "ceasing to be thought, difference dissipates into non-being" (DR: 262). The problem here is not only that the notion of difference is understood only as a function of a concept of identity, and thus not "in itself"; it is also a certain *kind* of difference that is excluded on this model. The conceptual method defines an essence or *nature*, and thus differences

that are “accidental” or “contingent” – those belonging to space and time, to what “happens” or the individual case – fall outside the general purview of the concept or the limits of its division.

There have been attempts in philosophy, to which Deleuze refers, to extend the limits of the concept so that, in principle at least, it includes even the most contingent details of an individual thing. Thus Leibniz maintained that all differences, including ones of space, time and accident, were included within the concept of a thing. This thesis – the “principle of sufficient reason” – meant that there was, in principle, only one thing that corresponded to a given concept, properly comprehended, and vice versa. The ultimate identity of concept and thing, however, is only able to be grasped by the infinite mind of God; we use it in order to assume the rationality of all existence for the purpose of scientific study, but our notions of things are always incomplete. The case of Leibniz nevertheless raises a series of important questions bearing on Deleuze’s project, which also gives an initial indication of how the notion of repetition is intimately entwined with the problem of difference.

The first question is whether a concept that applies only to one thing, being wholly individual, is still in fact a concept. In other words, our concepts seem to exist precisely in order to designate a set of things with common characteristics, to abstract from the particular case in order to form general – that is, repeatable – statements. What is the use of a concept that only applies to “this”? How is such an individual thought communicable (again, repeatable), and is there thought without communicability? In what sense is a grasp of the thing precise if it cannot be formulated in recognizable concepts? These are issues raised in one of the most famous modern objections to the desire of philosophers to capture the singularity that pertains to a contingent moment in space and time: Hegel’s critique of the alleged “richness” of “sense-certainty” at the beginning of his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977).² He takes the example of the immediate sense-data of our consciousness, which, as a concrete case of “thisness”, appears to be the most authentic and real form of knowledge. When it comes to formulating this knowledge in concepts, however, we are reduced to the most empty and abstract terms: simply an “I”, “this”, “here” and “now” that could apply to any experience and thus say precisely nothing of “this” one.

From Deleuze’s perspective, the problem with the case of Leibniz and with Hegel’s example is that the identity of the concept is still retained as the central reference point for thought, according to the model of thought as representation. The “regime of representation” is the system whereby the concept of identity – whether general or individual – forms

the meeting point between a nature of things and a nature of thought. In challenging this conception, Deleuze is not only challenging the idea that (on the objective side) there is a “nature of things”, expressed in an ordering of essential properties, and that (on the subjective side) the concept forms the basic unit of intelligibility; he is also contesting the notion of identity in its role as the ideal or intended relationship between thought and its object. That is, he challenges the notion that the aim of thought is to re-present, to make explicit or conceptualize what already exists in a non-conceptual form. Deleuze does not challenge this notion from a position of “fact”: that “in fact” our representations do not coincide with a nature of things, being inadequate or unsuitable for such a purpose. Rather, he challenges the notion on the level of the very conception it presents of the goal and function of thought; from the standpoint of “right”. For Deleuze, representation, as well as related ideals such as “reflection” or “communication”, present a false “image” of the purpose and activity of philosophy.

It is not that the representation and identification of objects through concepts have no currency in the world. On the contrary, this defines the main sphere of everyday experience – what Deleuze calls the realm of “common sense” – where we recognize and order objects in relation to ourselves according to the requirements of habit. But for this very reason Deleuze finds this “commonsensical” notion inadequate as an image of thought, which would rather imply a disruption or exception to the regular course of affairs. In the same way, on the level of society as a whole, philosophy implies a challenge to the established order of things, which in any case has no need of philosophy in order to function: “if philosophy refers to a common sense as its implicit assumption, what need has common sense of philosophy, given that it shows, alas, every day that it is capable of forming one of its own?” (DR: 134–5, trans. mod.). Deleuze is not only making a political argument here. He is also making the claim that if representation works within a given order, or within a given consciousness, as its habitual mode of operating, it does not account for how that order comes about, nor for how it evolves. When common sense and the system of representation posit an underlying order of things and a natural direction of thought whose work is simply to make this implicit arrangement explicit, it simply presupposes itself, in another form, as its own condition of possibility, and gives no account of its actual process:

if it is a question of rediscovering at the end what was there in the beginning, if it is a question of recognising, of bringing to light or into the conceptual or the explicit, what was simply known

implicitly without concepts ... the fact remains that all this is still too simple, and that this circle is truly not tortuous enough. The circle image would reveal instead that philosophy is powerless truly to begin, or indeed authentically to repeat. (DR: 129)

For Deleuze, thought occurs at the “edges” of a given system as the principle of its initiation and revolution: thought occurs not “naturally”, but when we are forced to think. We could also say, putting it another way, that whereas the image of thought as re-presentation assigns a passive or speculative role to the thinker as *spectator*, for Deleuze the thinker is an *actor*, with all that this implies of being at the juncture of an *event* and being engaged in a *drama*.

The order of the Idea: dramatization

“Dramatization” is, in fact, the name that Deleuze gives to the model of thought that he presents as an alternative to the system of representation through the concept. Rather than ask the question “What ...?” in order to grasp the essence of a thing, we should rather ask the questions: “Who ...?”, “How ...?”, “When ...?” and “Where ...?”³ In philosophy, such questions tend to be denigrated as indicating only the empirical examples or circumstantial manifestations of an essence, rather than “the thing itself”, and thus miss the point of the philosophical enterprise. For Deleuze, however, this objection again maintains the concept of identity as the sole principle of essential unity, which places the “one-ness” of the conceptual essence on one side, and its multiple manifestations on the other. In contrast, Deleuze posits his notion of the *Idea* or *problem* as the fundamental element of thought that integrates these coordinates and gives them a scope beyond the empirical in its ordinary sense. Deleuze’s notion of the Idea owes something to Plato, whose dialogues, Deleuze argues, function more effectively if we understand them as “dramatizations” of a central problem rather than simply an incidental detour to answering the question “What is ...?” More narrowly, the distinction that Deleuze draws between the concept and the Idea can be traced to Kant. Kant distinguishes concepts, which combine with sensible experience to form the basic elements of our *knowledge* and the general unity of our objective representations, and Ideas, which form a horizon of unity and principle for our *actions*, and which cannot be *known*, but only *thought*. While concepts define the domain of possible experience, the proper tendency of Ideas is to exceed the bounds of possible experience, hence their special role in

Kant’s philosophy as an index of our freedom. The distinction between *knowledge* and *thought* is one carried by Deleuze into his own development of the opposition between concept and Idea. In *Difference and Repetition*, for example, Deleuze maintains that *learning*, rather than knowledge, is the ultimate and self-sufficient goal of thought, pertaining not to a preparatory stage in a process that would be fulfilled by knowledge, but to a different order altogether (DR: 164).

Deleuze builds on Kant’s description of the Idea as “problematic” (because unknowable) in order to develop his thesis of the Idea as itself a “problem” (DR: 168–70). We are awakened to the problem by an encounter with a “problematic object” or event, which exceeds our representative capacities, but for the same reason provokes the exercise of all our powers, creating a relay between sense, memory, imagination and thought. This object or “sign”, on the one hand, serves as the index of a virtual horizon for thought: “objective” (in the sense of “coming from outside”) but “indeterminate”. On the other hand, it presents a set of singularities that form the coordinates or “constructive template” for an actual case of resolution.⁴ What Deleuze here calls the “singularities” of a problem are precisely those coordinates suggested by the questions “Who ...?”, “How ...?”, “Where ...?” and “When ...?” These questions, however, now form the conditions of actuality of a problem rather than the sensible manifestation of a concept. Thus Deleuze’s ultimate response to Hegel’s argument against the “richness” of immediacy is that the significance of the singular – “this”, “here”, “now” – is only grasped within the context of a problem, a “drama” of thought that gives it sense, in the absence of which it is effectively impoverished.

Hegel substitutes the abstract relation of the particular to the concept in general for the true relation of the singular and the universal in the Idea. He thus remains in the reflected element of ‘representation’, within simple generality. He represents concepts, instead of dramatizing Ideas: he creates a false theatre, a false drama, a false movement. (DR: 10)

What it means for the singular to be “thought” here is not to be represented or comprehended through a concept, but to be aligned along the trajectory of an action or event.⁵ There is no identity or resemblance that underlies the passage from the unthought to the thought (any more than a solution resembles its problem): thought is both a response to the absolutely new and itself creates something new.

It is this *difference made by* thought as a response to – *repetition of* – a unique or singular event that is at the core of Deleuze’s understanding

of these notions. Deleuze presents this activity of thought as the *determination* of the *indeterminate*. The “object” or “horizon” of thought is indeterminate in two senses. In the first place, the horizon of thought is indeterminate “by default”, because thought does not presuppose any determined or determining “nature of things” as its foundation. In the second place, it is the positive apparition of indeterminacy in the world, in the form of the problematic object or sign, that provokes thought into action. This dual indeterminacy contrasts with the system of representation, which is based on the concept serving as a meeting point or “happy medium” between a predetermined thought and being. For Deleuze, however, thought marks a disjunction and a struggle between itself and *what* is thought. Thought emerges in the confrontation with its “outside”, which grips and spurs on its response, but there is precisely no common measure or mediation between the two. Confronted with this absolute difference – what Deleuze calls the “transcendental Difference between the Determination as such and what it determines” (DR: 86) – thought *cannot but make* a difference. Thought is thus always shadowed by the unthinkable as both its *raison d'être* and its impossibility, its ground (*fond*) and its “ungrounding” (*effondement*). **This unthinkable difference, that is, the non-identity of the unthought and thought, is in effect the highest object of thought for Deleuze:**

How could thought avoid going that far, how could it avoid thinking that which is most opposed to thought? With the identical, we think with all our force, but without producing the least thought: with the different, by contrast, do we not have the highest thought, but also that which cannot be thought? (DR: 266)

We mentioned above the tendency of the Idea in Kant to always “go beyond” limits, and in Deleuze this is the maintenance or “insistence” of the Idea-problem beyond any actual case of resolution. This maintenance of indeterminacy on the “objective” side of thought is matched, on the “subjective” side, by the fact that the act of determination is subject to certain conditions, and in particular *time* as thought’s “form of determinability”. Just as, in the system of representation, the concept of identity served as the pivot for a mediation between the subject and object of thought, the “pure and empty” form of time serves here as the place in which the conditions of thought and the “excess” of the Idea meet, in their *disparity*, however, rather than their identity.

Deleuze’s ideas here are complex, and are again based on a “dramatic” or even “tragic” conception of thought whereby the two “halves” of an action – its conditions and its effects – are unable to be reconciled:

they do not “match up” or “rhyme”, but reveal a “sublime” force that transforms and goes beyond the actor (DR: 87). The pure and empty form of time is the marker of the *future* in the event of thought, or what Deleuze calls, after Nietzsche, the “untimely”. Despite Deleuze’s dramatic imagery, however, events in thought are not to be gauged according to the standard historical criteria of scale and significance. Events belong equally to a “micro” regime of “imperceptible” happenings (to use the later language of Deleuze and Guattari): “Underneath the large noisy events lie the small events of silence, just as under the natural light there are the little glimmers of the Idea” (DR: 163).

Repetition in difference: the community and communication of thought

Deleuze’s model of thought rejects all notion of a common ground – in the form of a general concept, a shared reality and even between thought and its object – that would normally form the conditions of thought and its communicability. In one sense, this means thought is a necessarily solitary activity; in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze presents the voice of thought as the emergence of “isolated and passionate cries” (DR: 130), and later says, “When you work, you are necessarily in absolute solitude” (D: 6). On the other hand, Deleuze also promotes the collective aspects of thought in his work – which he put into practice in his coauthored books with Guattari – and throughout his philosophy he emphasizes the importance of the process of teaching and learning, some of which is indicated above and is reaffirmed in *What Is Philosophy?*, where he assigns philosophy the task of a “pedagogy of the concept” (WIP: 12).⁶ It is thus not a romantic or esoteric model of thought that Deleuze produces, which would disregard the problem of its transmissibility or restrict its scope. There is nothing “exclusive” about the solitary nature of thought for Deleuze; as he himself adds, **this solitude is “extremely crowded”, populated as it is by multiple “encounters”, a merging of “movements, ideas, events, entities” (D: 6, trans. mod.).**

In fact, the conditions of thought as Deleuze presents them already contain the principle of its perpetuation, in the sense that they comprise elements that necessarily go beyond the individual thought. In affirming this, we dedicate our thought to an ideal **of its repetition, which, in the absence of an underlying or ideal of identity, can only be its differentiation.** The relationship of one thinker to another, of one thought to another, as Deleuze presents it, reproduces the configuration involved

in the initial event of thought. Indeed, “reproduces” is redundant here, as there is nothing “secondary” about a philosophy, a person or a book serving as the “problematic object” or event, a complex set of singularities that sets off a chain of thought. Thought is transmitted through a form of relay where the injunction is to repeat what cannot be represented, and (thus) repeat as different. There is a tangential relationship between thoughts, where the component of one problem becomes a component of a new, and necessarily different, problem. Each instance is animated by the “spirit” of the first, from a wholly different position, and at the same time refers to a future from which another will arise. It is this “disjointed” temporality, which is neither eternal nor historical, that expresses the aforementioned sense of the “untimely”, following Nietzsche’s imperative to “act in an untimely manner, thus against the time, and in this way on the time, in favour (I hope) of a time to come” (quoted in NP: 107, trans. mod.).

This form of communication (or “transmission” if we want to avoid the connotations of “commonality” in the former term) is what Deleuze and Guattari later expressed as “rhizomatic”. This is opposed to the “arboreal” (tree-like) form, where parts are related to each other only through their relationship to a common root, and whose importance is measured according to their distance from the root. In contrast, the rhizome spreads horizontally through leaps where each germination marks a new root system and one cannot assign an origin or end-point. The rhizome is a term taken from botany (grass is an example of a rhizome), but is no less a philosophical concept in Deleuze and Guattari’s hands than the “tree-system”. For this latter concept has a long pedigree in the history of philosophy, whether explicitly in Aristotle’s model of conceptual division (represented in “Porphyry’s Tree”), or implicitly in any philosophy that assigns a central principle (even “being” itself) in order to organize around it a series of secondary orders, tertiary orders and so on. As with most of Deleuze’s notions, there is a political resonance here as well as a philosophical one, pertaining to the institutional hierarchy of philosophy. In so far as each act of thought is a new beginning, emerging from the set of contingencies that make up our problem, we think *with* the thinkers of the past (not “after” or “like”), as our contemporaries and companions, and look ahead as they did.

Conclusion

In his essay on difference in Bergson, Deleuze states that the problem of difference is both “methodological and ontological” (DI: 32): we

cannot separate the being of difference from the mode of its pursuit and development – its differentiation. Thus difference is defined as both the “particularity that is” and an “indetermination, newness which creates itself” (DI: 48), and this double aspect of difference is what we understand as its repetition. It is for this reason that the question of precision in philosophy does not consist in the isolation of a conceptual essence, but incorporates the coordinates of a problematic apparatus. In response to the question “What is ...?”, we must “determine its moment, an occasion and circumstances, its landscapes and personae, its conditions and unknowns” (WIP: 2). These factors, unique in any given case, are unlimited in scope, as they are the conditions of a creative thought animated by a will to transform, whose product goes beyond the thinker.

The critique of the Western philosophical *logos* is a project shared by many twentieth-century European philosophers. But Deleuze’s determination to produce a constructive model of thought in the face of declarations of philosophy’s “end” – what he himself called his “naiveté” (N: 89) – is perhaps what most distinguishes him among his contemporaries and what constitutes his most original contribution to philosophy. While Deleuze recognized the existence of threats to thought in his time, from both inside and out, there is an insistent tone of optimism in his work, in virtue of his commitment to the “micro” realm of the contingent as the site of production and revolution; that “most difficult thing ... to make chance an object of *affirmation*” (DR: 198).

Notes

1. See Deleuze’s analysis of Plato (NP: 75–6; DR: 188) and Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (1998: book G, ch. 1, 1).
2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977: §A, I: “Sense-certainty: or the ‘this’ and ‘meaning’”).
3. Deleuze introduces this notion of a “method of dramatization” in his book on Nietzsche (NP: 75–9), and it forms the topic of his paper “Method of Dramatization” (DI: 94–116). The series of questions Deleuze proposes resembles the Latin hexameter once used as a tool for instructing students of criminology: *quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando* (who, what, where, by what means, why, how, when). They summarized what were called in rhetoric “the circumstances”: the person, the fact, the place, the means, the motives, the manner and the time. In the Preface to *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze compares works of philosophy to “a very particular species of detective novel”, thus emphasizing the way thought forms a response to an indeterminate “happening”, and develops its concepts in order to intervene and “resolve local situations” (DR: xx). For different perspectives on this “method” and other aspects of *Difference and Repetition*, see Hughes (2009) and Williams (2004).

4. In this context, Deleuze speaks of the *differentiation/differenciatio*n of the Idea-problem. The *differentiation* of the Idea-problem refers to the complex of singularities it presents in its virtual or potential state. The *differenciatio*n of the Idea-problem is its dramatization or resolution in an actual state of affairs (see DR: 206–10).
5. There is a mathematical sense to the “singular” here, as also to the terms “integration” and “differential” used by Deleuze, from the language of the calculus, invented not coincidentally by the philosopher Leibniz (at the same time as Newton).
6. What Deleuze calls a “concept” here is not the concept of identity in representation but more a reformulation of his previous notion of the Idea.

FOUR

Desire

Eugene W. Holland

The aim of this essay is not to explain what desire means, but to show how the concept gets constructed and how it works. Creating concepts is the principal task of philosophy, and part of what this entails is extracting elements or dynamics from the works of other philosophers and combining them in new and productive ways. Perhaps surprisingly, but in fact like much in his work, Deleuze’s concept of desire has its source in Kantian philosophy. But its construction also draws on elements from Bataille, Marx, Nietzsche, Spinoza and, of course, Freud and Lacan. Moreover, Deleuze historicizes the concept of desire in a manner that is crucial to the way it works.

Kant defines desire as “the faculty which by means of its representations is the cause of the actuality of the objects of those representations” (1911: 16). Whereas pure reason is concerned with how we can know objects, practical reason, Kant says in the second critique, “is concerned not with objects in order to know them, but with its own capacity to make them real” (2002: 14). At first glance, this is a bizarre claim for Kant to advance. How could practical reason alone possibly involve turning mental representations into reality? In what he calls its “pathological” mode, he acknowledges that it really can’t; all it can do is produce a hallucinatory or delirious impression of reality. But transmuted into a higher form, which Kant calls the will, desire can intervene in reality; and in fact, it is the concept of will that enables Kant to posit the rational individual as a free causal agent in the real world. Desire gets transformed into “a will which is a causal agent so far as reason contains its determining ground” (Kant 2002: 114). In order to convert desire into a will that has rational causal agency in the real world,

however, Kant must invoke three transcendent Ideas (God, the Soul, and the World), and this is where Deleuze parts company with him.

How does Deleuze maintain a causal relation between desire and reality without ending up with either unreal, pathological delirium or a reality guaranteed only by transcendent ideas? Part of a solution is derived from Spinoza and Nietzsche. Spinoza's concept of *conatus* entails a will that strives to realize itself immanently rather than in obedience to transcendent law. Meanwhile, Nietzsche's concept of will to power effectively erases the Kantian distinction between desire and will, freeing desire as incarnated in the artist or noble superman to become a creative legislator of reality, rather than a legislator subject to a transcendent reality principle (as in Kant's first critique) and an equally transcendent moral law (as in his second critique). Another part of a solution is derived from Marx: his concept of species-being highlights the ability of humans to picture objects in the mind before producing them in reality, rather than producing them instinctually (as bees and spiders do, for example). Drawing on Kant, Nietzsche and Marx, then, Deleuze defines desire simply as the production of reality: "desire produces, [and] its product is real" (AO: 26). And where Kant subjected the desire-reality relation to a categorical and hierarchical distinction between the pathological-delusional and the moral-rational, Deleuze invents a concept of desire that includes both the creative and the productive, before any socially defined "reality principle" supervenes to draw the distinction between them. Nature, as Marx put it, is first and foremost the "inorganic body" of humankind (1975: 328). But the function of social representation is precisely to separate desire from reality (to separate a body from what it can do, as Spinoza characterizes the effect of superstition), to retrospectively inject so-called "needs" and scarcity and lack into a desire-reality relation that is immediate and full on the unconscious, species-being level. The result is that individuals and groups come to believe consciously that they lack or need something: a something that had in fact been produced by desire itself, but that subsequently gets taken from them by social order. As Deleuze and Guattari explain in *Anti-Oedipus*, "Marx notes [that] what exists in fact is not lack but passion, as a 'natural and sensuous object.' Desire is not bolstered by needs, but rather the contrary; needs are derived from desire: they are counterproducts within the real that desire produces" (AO: 27). As Georges Bataille had also argued in *The Accursed Share* (1988), need and utility get introduced into an economy that is itself characterized by super-abundance. For Deleuze, then, desire produces reality, even though social representation and belief deprive us of much of that reality *ex post facto*.

The relation between desire and social order is not, however, unchanging. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari introduce a conceptual distinction between desiring-production and social production in order to take the historical variability of this relation into account. They are two sides of the same coin. Arguing once again with Kant, they insist that:

there is no such thing as the social production of reality on the one hand, and a desiring-production that is mere fantasy on the other. ... The truth of the matter is that *social production is purely and simply desiring-production itself under determinate conditions.*
(AO: 29)

But even though they are identical in nature, they always operate under different regimes. And it is under capitalism that this identity in nature but difference of regime becomes the most pronounced and visible.

Under capitalism, desiring-production and social production get categorized as libido and labour-power respectively. This categorization is both true and false: it is on the order of an objective illusion. Marx had already explained that labour-power appears for the first time under capitalism as the abstract subjective essence of wealth, as the activity of production in general, because capital strips labour of any previous determinations in putting it to work on privately owned means of production, which impose their own determination on it; as a commodity, labour-power takes the form of an abstract quantitative exchange-value, before being endowed with qualitative use-value and particular determinations (such as skills, discipline and so on). Wealth is henceforth understood not in terms of qualities of objects produced, but in terms of quantities of labour-power invested in them. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the exact same thing is true of the concept of libido in Freud: "His greatness lies in having determined the essence or nature of desire, no longer in relation to objects, aims, or even sources (territories), but as an abstract subjective essence – libido or sexuality [in general]" (AO: 270). And just as labour-power as the "abstract subjective essence" of economic value appears as the result of the privatization of production, libido as the abstract subjective essence of erotic value appears as the result of the privatization of reproduction: the result of the isolation of reproduction from society at large in the institution of the "private sphere" of the nuclear family. This is one of the reasons why Deleuze and Guattari argue that psychoanalysis is a strictly capitalist institution: capital privatizes reproduction in the private sphere at the same time that it privatizes ownership of the means of production in the

economic sphere. And each sphere develops a corresponding discourse or mode of representation: psychoanalysis, political economy. So the two spheres don't just *appear* separate; under capitalism, they *are* in fact separate. The difference of regime between desiring-production and social production is so great because of the privatization and segregation of production and reproduction into two separate spheres.

Even though capitalism segregates reproduction from social life, it nevertheless delegates to the nuclear family the task of forming subjectivity in its own image. Because of its isolation from society at large, the nuclear family traps desire in a very restricted system of representation, which psychoanalysis will then reproduce in its theory of the Oedipus complex. For children growing up within the confines of the nuclear family, the objects closest to them – other family members – are precisely the ones that the incest taboo forbids them to desire. Social forms where relations of reproduction are imbricated with relations of production and with social relations in general don't trap desire in this kind of straitjacket. The nuclear family thus appears as a perfect training ground for asceticism, by denying desire the objects nearest and dearest to it. So when Deleuze and Guattari echo Spinoza and Reich in asking how it is that people can desire their own repression, the answer is, for capitalism anyway, that the capitalist mode of reproduction breeds asceticism into its subjects literally from birth.

The determinate conditions under which capitalist social production shapes desiring-production also help explain why desire becomes so abstract under capitalism. Not only is it denied its closest objects, but these objects no longer represent concrete social functions, but merely abstract familial ones. Social life outside the family is rife with variegated social roles, which the nuclear family reduces to just three: child, mother and father; subject of desire, object of desire and castrating mediator of desire. This structure of Oedipal desiring-production, it turns out, mirrors term for term the structure of capitalist social production: the workers as subject of labour, the commodities they produce as the object of labour and capital itself as the prohibitive mediation between the one and the other. The nuclear family thus programs its members to submit, as good docile subjects, to prohibitive authority – the father, the boss, capital in general – and to relinquish until later, as good ascetic subjects, their access to the objects of desire and to what Marx calls their “objective being” – the mother, the goods they produce, the natural environment as a whole (“mother earth”). No specific social roles or functions need be passed from one generation to the next; indeed, the concrete requirements of social production change too fast for the family to play much of a role in job-training,

just as fashion and lifestyle fads change too fast for parents to play an adequate role in consumer training. What the Oedipal nuclear family produces is quite abstract, but perfectly sufficient as such: obedient ascetic subjects programmed to accept the mediation of capital between their productive life-activity and their own enjoyment of it, who will work for an internalized prohibitive authority, no matter what the specific job or field, and defer gratification until the day they die. The Oedipus complex of the nuclear family thus appears as though it had been “fabricated to meet the requirements of ... [the capitalist] social formation” (AO: 101), even though – or perhaps precisely because – those requirements are purely abstract.

And so it is the very isolation of both production and reproduction from the nexus of social relations that makes labour-power and libido so radically indeterminate and abstract, revealing their identity in nature as productive activity in general, before being assigned determinate objects, spheres and modes of representation in two very different regimes. Deleuze and Guattari thus liken Freud's position in the history of theories of desire with the position of Adam Smith and David Ricardo in the history of theories of labour: each discovered the indeterminacy of productive activity, but then re-alienated that activity onto a private territory and mode of representation – the nuclear family and capital. Marx transformed bourgeois political economy into a revolutionary materialism by refusing the subordination of labour to determination by capital; in the same way, Deleuze and Guattari transform bourgeois psychoanalysis into a revolutionary materialism by refusing the subordination of libido to determination by the nuclear family and the Oedipus complex. Just as the aim of universal history in Marx is to free labour-power from the last and most abstract of its external determinations, its alienation by capital, the aim of universal history for Deleuze and Guattari is to free libido from the last and most abstract of its external determinations, its alienation by the Oedipus complex. And for Deleuze and Guattari, these are one and the same project, although it gets represented in two separate spheres due to the dual privatizing operations of capital, segregating production and reproduction.

The radical indeterminacy of desire, then, is the key to the concept of universal history propounded by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*. Schizophrenia is the name they assign to desiring-production in its absolutely indeterminate, free state, even though desiring-production always takes place under determinate conditions where social order constrains desire by prescribing certain objects and aims, and proscribing many others. These prescriptions and proscriptions are carried out by processes of coding and overcoding that assign qualitative value

(desirable/undesirable and so on) to various objects and behaviours. Capitalism, however, is unlike previous social forms in that its basic institution – the market – is inimical to coding of any kind. The abstract calculus of the “cash nexus” instead decodes by assigning only quantitative (cash) value to objects and behaviours. Capitalism thus fosters schizophrenia as the free form of desire not only by segregating production and reproduction from society at large, but also by subjecting social life itself to the abstract quantification of the market, thereby freeing desiring-production from social coding. Of course, capitalism also must and does re-code as best it can, so as to prevent capitalist social life from becoming completely chaotic (decoded); the nuclear family, state schooling, job training and consumer training (advertising) all serve this purpose. Indeed, the conflict between decoding and recoding can be considered the central drama of capitalism, according to Deleuze and Guattari, even though they suggest that the basic historical tendency of capitalism is to decode, and thus to free desiring-production from social order. It is on the side of decoding, in other words, that capitalism puts the realization of schizophrenia as the free form of desire on the agenda of universal history.

The drama between decoding and recoding takes place on what Deleuze and Guattari call (borrowing from Antonin Artaud) the Body without Organs (BwO). As we have said, desiring-production is by nature indeterminate, but at the same time subject to determination by social institutions and representations, which impose order, objects and aims on it. The BwO stages the struggle of desire to escape determination – whether instinctual, habitual or social; it thus designates the human potential for freedom. True, the BwO is the locus of coding, where social representations capture desire and assign it determinate aims and goals, via what Deleuze and Guattari call the synthesis of recognition-conjunction: “ah-ha: so *that’s* what I need!” But the BwO is also the locus of decoding, where desire exceeds or subverts any and all socially imposed representations, via a synthesis of inclusive disjunction: “actually, I’d like either this, or this, or that ...”. Whereas previous social forms used the BwO to impose codes and overcodes on desire, capitalism tends instead to unleash free-form desire on the BwO through decoding, and thus foster widespread schizophrenia – whence the subtitle of *Anti-Oedipus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. The BwO appears as such and in its potential for freedom, Deleuze and Guattari therefore insist, only with capitalism toward the end of universal history, opening the prospect of a post-capitalist market finally subordinating social production to desiring-production, rather than the other way around. Indeed, the relation

between desiring-production and social production is crucial to the way the concept of desire works here: for *desiring-production provides immanent criteria by which to judge the adequacy or inadequacy of various historical forms of social production*.

Here again we must return to Kant, although to a Kant corrected, as it were, by Marx and Artaud. For here, too, Deleuze and Guattari take Kant’s critique of metaphysics as a starting-point for their own critique of capitalist society and of the role of psychoanalysis within it. Speaking in the name of reason, Kant had asserted that the conscious mind utilizes a set of processes (called syntheses) to arrive at knowledge, and insisted that whatever did not conform to those processes would be condemned as metaphysical. Of crucial importance to Kant (and thence to Deleuze) was the idea that, since these processes were constitutive of conscious thought, they provided immanent criteria for judging something to be either knowledge or metaphysics, depending on whether it was based on legitimate or illegitimate use of the syntheses. In a similar way, but speaking not in the name of reason but in the name of desire and especially of schizophrenic desire, Deleuze and Guattari insist that the unconscious, too, operates according to a set of constitutive syntheses (connective, disjunctive, conjunctive) in order to process or constitute experience in such a way as to guarantee the free play of desire; and they insist that psychoanalysis must either be shown to conform to these processes or else be condemned as metaphysical.

Moreover, inasmuch as psychoanalysis is a strictly capitalist institution, its system of representation is understood as merely an expression and reinforcement of the capitalist social order. Hence, the Oedipus complex expresses, first, the privatization of reproduction in the nuclear family in a decoded social order and, second, the delegation to the family of certain recoding functions – notably the abstract training in asceticism diagnosed above. These functions are necessary to, but excluded from, the wider social field by the privatization of production and the rampant decoding of social relations by the market. Deleuze and Guattari will therefore call not just for psychoanalysis, but even more so for the capitalist social relations of which it is an expression to conform to legitimate use of the syntheses of the unconscious. Their concept of desiring-production thus serves as a revolutionary fulcrum for social critique as well as for the critique and transformation of psychoanalysis into what Deleuze and Guattari call schizoanalysis. Society itself must conform to the “logic” of the syntheses of the unconscious, or else be condemned as repressive. Universal history, in fact, depends on the prospect that legitimate uses of the unconscious syntheses will prevail over illegitimate uses on the BwO, that schizophrenic desiring-production

will determine the conditions of social production, instead of being determined by them.

This version of universal history, it must be said, gets subjected to considerable irony in the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia, A Thousand Plateaus*. Here, the apparently random and certainly achronological dating of the plateaus appears to poke fun at the one-dimensional linearity of the universal history propounded in the first volume. By this time, no doubt, the problem confronting Deleuze and Guattari had changed. Perhaps "universal history" had already accomplished its work, but in any case the new problems were "geographical" rather than historical in conception; "globalization" and lateral differences are henceforth what matter, rather than linear "progress" surmounting "underdevelopment". Not that the problem of underdevelopment has actually been solved, but it now gets conceptualized in a different way, as actively produced contemporaneously by advanced capitalism, rather than as some kind of temporal "holdover from the past". In brief, for what Deleuze and Guattari in their last collaboration (*What is Philosophy?*) call "geophilosophy", universality pertains to the capitalist world market as a multiple network of simultaneous (although uneven) relations rather than to capitalist history as a single line of temporal development. The concept of the BwO, however, continues to serve as a focal point for Deleuze and Guattari's reflections on desire, and in fact occupies an entire plateau in *A Thousand Plateaus* ("Plateau 6: November 28, 1847: How do you make yourself a Body without Organs?").

In the context of the later collaborations (*A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?*), the BwO – now often called a "plane of consistency" – appears as one plane among several, including the plane of immanence of philosophy, the plane of reference of science, the plane of composition of art and music, and so on. Each plane is characterized by a specific type of activity (thought takes place on the plane of immanence, knowledge on the plane of reference, affects and percepts on the plane of composition), and desire is what takes place on the BwO: "The BwO is desire; it is that which one desires and by which one desires" (ATP: 165). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, the BwO becomes a matter of technique as well as diagnosis or therapy, as the very title of the plateau suggests. And at the same time, the historical optimism of *Anti-Oedipus* gives way to considerable caution in *A Thousand Plateaus* about the relation of desire to the BwO. Earlier, the BwO staged the struggle between decoding and recoding, between schizophrenia (desire freed from coded meaning) and paranoia (the ascription of fixed meaning under conditions – notably capitalist decoding – where meaning

no longer applies). Now the battle is couched in terms of the plane of consistency versus stratification on the plane of organization, and the dangers confronting desire are more numerous. Desire can overproliferate like a cancer, or it can break loose and plunge into the void. Utmost care is required for desire to occupy the BwO freely, without over-coagulating and becoming fixed, on one hand, and without becoming wildly chaotic, on the other. Under pressure from physiologically based instinct and socially induced habit, the BwO can succumb to organization: instincts and habits bind perception and action to the (conjunctive) recognition and accomplishment of pre-assigned objects and tasks in order to satisfy "needs" and "duties" as defined by social order. But desire is inimical to any and all organization of this kind: it seeks always to dis-organize and free itself from instincts and habits so as to experiment with new modes of perception and action, new modes of existence.

That is why Deleuze and Guattari insist, somewhat surprisingly, that desire is opposed as much to gratification as it is to repression. Fixation on some poor-substitute symptom arising from repression is little better or worse from this perspective than fixation on "true" objects of gratification: both shut down desire (whether by blockage or evacuation), instead of giving desire free reign to fully invest the BwO and explore its plane of consistency. The examples Deleuze and Guattari propose of such desire on the BwO – masochism, courtly love, and so on – show that, unlike pleasure and need, the aim of desire is to maintain and pursue investment of the BwO indefinitely and indeterminately. Comparison with Lacan's concept of the "metonymy of desire" is instructive here (although the comparison actually gets made in *Anti-Oedipus*). For Deleuze and Guattari, the loss of the "object a" is not a tragedy precipitating humans into a vain attempt to restore a former fullness of being; it is rather joyful deliverance from fixation on any "naturally", socially or neurotically imposed object or activity. It is this deliverance that enables desire instead to remain invested in the BwO and explore a constantly renewed open set of trajectories upon it. So the play of desire on the BwO, as long as it doesn't fixate on codes or spin off in the void, operates as a *difference-engine*, continually forming, deforming and reforming modes of passionate attachment to reality.

As such, it takes its place alongside a number of other difference-engines highlighted by Deleuze and Guattari, most notably capitalism, which itself promotes differentiation by subordinating qualitative codes to the quantitative calculus of the cash nexus, as we have seen. Capitalism is not the only difference-engine, however: evolution is another, and expression is yet another. In all these cases, there exists

(what can loosely be called) a “dialectic” of differentiation and capture. In the capitalist economy, the market differentiates both production (through the division of labour) and consumption (through consumerism), from which surplus-value is captured. In the case of life, random genetic mutation multiplies differences, from which natural selection then consolidates (or “contracts”) organs and species. In the case of expression, what Peirce calls “infinite semiosis” generates differential relations among signifiers and signifieds, which are then consolidated or captured in the sign-function by sedimented habit, codification, and representation. In all three arenas, desire on the BwO favours the moment of differentiation over the moment of contraction: as an expression of life, free-form desire dis-organizes the organization of the organism; in alliance with market decoding, schizophrenic desire frees productive activity from external determination; in the domain of expression, desire decodes representation and puts the process of semiosis into continual variation.

Deleuze constructs a concept of desire, then, so as to combine the notions of free will operating immanently, will to power operating creatively, and species-being operating productively in the real world.

PART II

Encounters

becoming. For Deleuze, the event is never One, because any event is singular, a unique intense reverberation through all events as one great Event, but not their reduction to unity or identity. Even as death, the event is not a return to the One but rather transference from identity and selfhood to a singular expression of the communication of all events in one great Event.

The event is, then, never a unit for Deleuze. It springs instead from disjunctions and double series. The importance of events for his philosophy is therefore confirmed by the role of this duality at the heart of *Difference and Repetition*. There, Deleuze seeks to define problems, the genetic matrix for his account of the relation between ideas and solutions, in terms of events:

In this sense, it is correct to represent a double series of events which develop on two planes, echoing without resembling each other: real events on the level of the engendered solutions, and ideal events embedded in the conditions of the problem, like the acts – or, rather, the dreams – of the gods who double our history.
(DR 189–90)

Every event is an internal vibration between series. This echoing is not closed by an external logic of resemblance, or any other restricting logic. The event is openness and chance in the present. It is guided by the future and the past, not assumed as burdens, but welcomed as gifts to be worthy of.

SEVEN

Assemblage

J. Macgregor Wise

Assemblage, as it is used in Deleuze and Guattari's work, is a concept dealing with the play of contingency and structure, organization and change; however, we should also keep in mind that these pairs of terms are false alternatives (D: 99).¹ The term in French is *agencement*, usually translated as "putting together", "arrangement", "laying out", "layout" or "fitting" (Cousin *et al.* 1990: 9–10). It is important that *agencement* is not a static term; it is not *the arrangement* or *organization* but the *process* of arranging, organizing, fitting together. The term as it is used in Deleuze and Guattari's work is commonly translated as *assemblage*: that which is being assembled.² An assemblage is not a set of pre-determined parts (such as the pieces of a plastic model aeroplane) that are then put together in order or into an already-conceived structure (the model aeroplane). Nor is an assemblage a random collection of things, since there is a sense that an assemblage is a whole of some sort that expresses some identity and claims a territory. An assemblage is a becoming that brings elements together.

We can get a sense of the term assemblage by seeing how it is used in different contexts. In the field of geology it refers to "a group of fossils that, appearing together, characterize a particular stratum" ("Assemblage" n.d.). There is a contingency to the elements in that the fossils present are somewhat random depending on what poor creature perished how, when, at what particular time and in what place and manner to be preserved here. Of course it is not completely random because only certain animals existed in that form at that time in that location. There is also a contingency to the arrangement itself for the same reasons. But these fossils do not just appear together in strata; they

constitute a *group* and they express a particular *character*. The term is used in a similar sense in archaeology, palaeontology and ecology (“a group of organisms sharing a common habitat by chance”) (“Assemblage” n.d.). Likewise, the idea of assemblage has roots and uses in art and architecture.

These examples illustrate that an assemblage is a collection of heterogeneous elements, but what is especially important is the relation between the elements. These elements could be diverse *things* brought together in particular relations, such as the detritus of everyday life unearthed in an archaeological dig: bowls, cups, bones, tile, figurines and so on. This collection of things and their relations express something, a particular character: Etruscanness, for example. But the elements that make up an assemblage also include the *qualities* present (large, poisonous, fine, blinding, etc.) and the affects and effectivity of the assemblage: that is, not just what it *is*, but what it *can do*. To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari, we do not know what an assemblage *is* until we find out what it *can do* (ATP: 257), that is, how it functions. Assemblages select elements from the *milieus*,³ and bring them together in a particular way. “We will call an assemblage every constellation of singularities and traits deducted from the flow – selected, organized, stratified – in such a way as to converge (consistency) artificially and naturally; an assemblage, in this sense, is a veritable invention” (ATP: 406). The elements of an assemblage to which Deleuze and Guattari refer are not just things because things themselves are qualities, speeds and lines.⁴

An example from Deleuze and Guattari may help illustrate this point. Re-reading a case of Freud’s, they describe a child moved by the sight through his window of a horse pulling an omnibus. The horse has collapsed in the street and is being whipped by the driver. Most probably, this horse is about to die. Deleuze and Guattari describe this scene as an assemblage. On the one hand, the assemblage is horse–omnibus–street (a collection of objects in a particular relation), but it is also:

a list of active and passive affects in the context of the individuated assemblage it is part of: having eyes blocked by blinders, having a bit and a bridle, being proud, having a big peepee-maker, pulling heavy loads, being whipped, falling, making a din with its legs, biting, etc. These affects circulate and are transformed within the assemblage: what a horse “can do.” (ATP: 257)

Assemblages create *territories*. Territories are more than just spaces: they have a stake, a claim, they express (my house, their ranch, his

bench, her friends). The dying horse claims a territory, it does not simply occupy space. Territories are not fixed for all time, but are always being made and unmade, reterritorializing and deterritorializing. This constant making and unmaking process is the same with assemblages: they are always coming together and moving apart. Assemblages face the strata, where they come into being and become organized (literally: this assemblage of artifacts is found in a particular stratum, a particular layer of a particular type of soil or rock). But Deleuze and Guattari write that assemblages also face the Body without Organs – the unfixed, shifting mass of movement, speed and flows – where they become dismantled and their elements circulate. But while assemblages are fluid and contingent, they can also be tenacious and recalcitrant.

Let us take an example of a particular type of territory or territorial assemblage: home. “Discover the territorial assemblages of someone, human or animal: home” (ATP: 503–4). Home is how we make a place our own, how we arrange artifacts, qualities and affect to express us.⁵ I do not mean this in the bourgeois “I-am-my-home-décor” way, but rather how to express a space of comfort for ourselves. Deleuze and Guattari describe a child, alone and afraid in the dark (ATP: 311). The child hums or sings a little tune, a little refrain to comfort itself. That singing of a tune creates a space of comfort: home. And one need not be fixed in one’s dwelling to create home: an airline seat, a stroll in the neighbourhood, a car for daily commuting, a space on a lawn at a picnic or on a beach. Home is thus not a pre-existing space; it is not the house. It is the continual attempt to create a space of comfort for oneself, through the arrangement of objects, practices, feelings and affects (see Wise 2003).

Let us consider another example. Recently I flew to an academic conference where I was to meet up with a good friend of mine and one of her colleagues at the airport. Since my friend’s colleague had never met me, she gave him a brief description to recognize me. The traits in this partial description constitute an assemblage, a set of somewhat random elements, which collectively and yet partially make me up, express qualities, or in this case a form of identity. The point here is that this assemblage does not have to consist of these particular elements, or even similar ones: I was not dressed in my usual manner and had grown a full beard. Rather, despite the absence of these specifically assembled elements, the colleague found other traits – movement, demeanour – to reassemble into the same sort of thing: me (or an iteration of me).

Assemblages (and homes and what we take for identities) are less objects and qualities than lines and speeds. My identity-assemblage is

a collection of slowness, viscosity, acceleration and rupture (ATP: 4), gaits, patterns, tics, habits, rhythms (the tapping foot, the slow stare, the pacing of the pace – and the pace of pacing).

But there is another dimension to assemblages. In addition to the systems of things, actions and passions that we have been discussing (which Deleuze and Guattari refer to as *machinic assemblages*), assemblages are also systems of signs, semiotics systems (ATP: 504). That is, assemblage elements include discourses, words, “meanings” and non-corporeal relations that link signifiers with effects. Deleuze and Guattari call this a *collective assemblage of enunciation*. Archaeological assemblages are not just the things that are dug up and their qualities and relations, but the discursive assemblages through which the things, qualities and relations are expressed through nomenclature, jargon and the semiotics of the dig: the semiotic system that transforms a cup into a bucchero cup.⁶ Home-assemblages, then, are not just collections of objects, practices, feelings and affects, but also take up particular languages, words and meanings. The earlier description of my self consisted also of patterns of speech, vocal tics, collections of words, expressions, and meanings: in short, signifiers.⁷

We can enter into an assemblage through a process of taking up or taking on the particular relation of speed, slowness, effectivity and language that makes it up. Thus one could enter into another’s sense of home, or identity (which is quite different from either walking into someone’s house or imitating their mannerisms). It is not a process of imitating but of *becoming*. Little Hans, the child watching the dying horse, wishes to enter that assemblage. For Deleuze and Guattari, “The question is whether Little Hans can endow his own elements with the relations of movement and rest, the affects, that would make it become horse, forms and subjects aside” (ATP: 258). As a caveat, although I find it productive to talk about entering into an assemblage (as if it were a voluntary act), we should keep in mind that we are always caught up in and constituted by multiple assemblages.

To summarize, Deleuze and Guattari write that assemblages have two axes. One axis is the creation of territory, on strata, thus moving between making (territorialization) and unmaking (deterritorialization) on the Body without Organs. Some lines of deterritorialization “open the territorial assemblage onto other assemblages ... Others ... open it onto a land that is eccentric, immemorial, or yet to come” and so on (ATP: 504–5). The other axis is content and expression, “a machinic assemblage and an assemblage of enunciation” (ATP: 504), technology (“a pragmatic system”) and language (a semiotic system). Assemblages are made and unmade along each of these dimensions.⁸

Technological assemblages

In this second part of the essay, I wish to show how the concept of assemblage can help us better understand a particular issue in technology studies: the relation between the technological and the human (see Slack & Wise 2002, 2005). Since the ways that this relation has traditionally been posed are not productive, and indeed are overly simple, the concept of assemblage presents a more emergent way of thinking about the complexity of human–technology relations. In this section of the essay I shall delineate and critique three common approaches to the human–technology relation (the received view, the contextual view and the view of articulation), using the example of the mobile telephone to illustrate each perspective. By reviewing this human–technology issue, we shall see how assemblage can animate thinking about this problem and make new connections.

The most common formulation of the relation of human and technology, which Slack and Wise (2005) have called “the received view of culture and technology”, posits the human and the technological as specific things that are completely different and that could act on one another. According to this view, I may be surrounded by technologies (phones, calculators, spreadsheets) but they are external to myself: mere tools. Technologies are not human and human beings are not technologies. Those who hold this view, then, get rather uneasy when technologies and humans begin to merge: either human beings becoming more like technologies or technologies becoming more human, or technologies becoming a part of human beings through implants. This received view leads to seemingly endless debates about whether technologies are controlling human beings (technological determinism) or whether human beings completely control technologies (social determinism). Either way, technologies and human beings are seen as being discrete entities (to be studied separately or in relation).

For example, if one were to study mobile telephones from this perspective, one would study the development of the technology itself, and how today’s mobile phones have transformed in function, power and size (and one might even find oneself saying that mobile phones have “evolved” in certain ways). One would also study the effects of the technology on humans or society, usually posed in terms of “impact” as in *the impact of mobile phones on notions of public and private*, or how these phones have imposed an imperative on users to be accessible at all times, or how they have increased feelings of safety or danger. Or one could study the effects of society and social needs on the technology of the phone (for example, noting how the mobile phone viewed

as a business technology emphasizes particular functions and features, whereas the mobile phone viewed as a personal technology emphasizes others). Either way, this perspective views mobile phones as discrete objects with identities of their own, which can be studied by themselves in isolation.

The second perspective on the human–technology relation argues that we need to examine these technologies in context. Technologies are not separate from their context, and nor are human beings. We cannot, then, consider a technology in isolation; it is always in use in context somewhere. A study by Philip Howard of Internet use takes up this perspective, which he refers to as an *embedded media perspective*, arguing that “new media mechanisms are also culturally laden tools for communication grounded in social contexts” (2004: 22). Howard argues:

Communication technologies became deeply embedded in personal lives very quickly, mediating our interactions with other people and the way in which we learn about our world. Understanding society online requires that we study media embeddedness – how communication tools are embedded in our lives and how our lives are embedded in new media. (Howard 2004: 2)

The two advantages of this approach for research, says Howard, are that such study is of the “local and immediate” rather than the abstract, and that human beings and technologies constrain each other: “Communication tools provide both capacities and constraints for human action and ... individual users are responsible for taking advantage of capacities and overcoming constraints in daily use” (*ibid.*: 24–5). Note that this approach sees social determinism or technological determinism as contextual rather than absolute. However, if something is said to be “embedded” in something else, can it not also be “disembedded”? If so, then this approach still posits technologies and humans as separate and unique.

To return to our example of the mobile phone, the embedded perspective would focus more on everyday uses of the technologies: who uses the technology, when, and for what purposes? These are questions not to be answered in the abstract or as a generality, but through attention paid to actual everyday practices (*these* people in *this* context use *these* features of mobile telephony). For example, research has focused on how teenagers in Japan, Scandinavia, Korea and elsewhere use the text messaging features of mobile phones to keep in contact with peers throughout the day, to keep parents updated of their whereabouts and activities, to monitor and control communication and establish “face”,

to flirt and to play games, and there are other uses (see Katz & Aakhus 2002; Rheingold 2003; Yoon 2003). Taking this perspective, one can see the phone as simply one aspect of the rhythms of a teenager’s everyday life, and see how these users have exploited certain features of the phones and carefully crafted communication patterns and language to cope with the limitations on message length. But although the mobile phone is something that gets used in certain ways, and has become at times an essential part of everyday sociability and cultural practice for these groups, this perspective still treats the mobile phone as a singular entity, something that was not a part of the context, that was introduced to the context, and is now used in the context. In other words, the mobile phone is something that can be disembedded.

A third approach to the human–technology relation is that of articulation. The concept of articulation is the idea that different elements can be connected (articulated) or disconnected in order to create unities or identities. Stuart Hall (1986) uses the image of an articulated lorry (a semi-truck in which the cab and trailer are separable). Different cabs can be articulated with different trailers. Each combination results in a particular unity: a truck, but a different truck each time. In response, in part, to the contextual view outlined above, Jennifer Slack argues that the concept of context is, in her words, “a substantial theoretical problem” (1989: 329) since multiple researchers would probably define the relevant context quite differently. In contrast, Slack presents a model of articulation that sees the context as being *constitutive* of the technology and vice versa. Technologies cannot be disembedded. In terms of a broader theory of articulation, Slack argues:

The unities forged and broken in this expanded universe are not simply physical objects, such as trucks, but complex connections of elements that are themselves articulations. These elements or identities might be social practices, discursive statements, ideological positions, social forces, or social groups ... The unities they form can be made up of any combination of elements.

(1989: 331)

Any articulation is historically contingent. Articulations must be made, sustained, transformed and unmade in particular concrete practices. Thus, to articulate, to make or break connections between objects, between ideas, between objects and ideas, takes power: “Power not only draws and redraws the connections among the disparate elements within which identities are designated, but in the process, power designates certain of these articulations as dominant and others as subordinate”

(*ibid.*: 333). Technology, too, can be viewed as an ongoing series of articulations, as can being human.

If we look at the study of mobile phones from the context of articulation, we get a very different set of questions from those posed in the examples above. How has mobile phone technology been articulated to particular functions and uses (text as well as voice, plus a calculator, web browser, videogame, stopwatch, and other features)? How has the mobile phone been articulated to discourses of progress, convenience, efficiency, and style? How has the mobile phone been articulated to particular populations (youth, the business class)? How does the mobile phone articulate to discourses and policies of neoliberalism (stressing individual self-expression)? How has the mobile phone been articulated to discourses and practices of gender and to gendered bodies? What are the mobile phone's articulations to the economy? Of what articulations does the mobile phone itself consist (as a unity it must be the result of particular articulations)? Close to this approach, although not fully drawing on articulation, are those studies grounded in the social construction of technology perspective. For example, Mizuko Ito writes:

[W]e argue against the idea that variable technology use is an outcome of a universal technology (the mobile phone) encountering a particular national culture (Japan); both technology and culture are internally variable and distinctive. Japanese *keitai* use is not a transparent outcome of Japanese culture but emerges from a historically specific series of negotiations and contestations within and outside of Japanese society. (2005: 15)

The discussion of articulation gets us part way back to assemblage; perhaps assemblage is a more complex model of articulation. It, too, involves combinations of heterogeneous parts into provisional, contingent wholes. However, assemblage differs from articulation in a number of ways. First, assemblages are not just things, practices and signs articulated into a formation, but also qualities, affects, speeds and densities. Second, assemblages work through flows of agency rather than specific practices of power. That is, articulation is a practice, assemblage is a becoming. And third, whereas articulation emphasizes the contingent connections and relations among and between elements, assemblage is also about their territorialization and expression as well as their elements and relations. That is, articulation stresses complexity, assemblage stresses the event.

So, to continue with the mobile phone example, and in contrast with the other approaches to this technology that we have covered,

from the perspective of assemblage, we would talk about the thumb-key-software-transmission assemblage. This is more than just saying that the hand and the phone are articulated in particular ways, but that the hand is becoming phone and the phone is becoming hand on the way to create this assemblage. The texting teenagers of Japan are called the *oyayubisoku*, the Thumb Tribe, and in Finland mobile phones are referred to as *känny*, a diminutive form of the Finnish word for hand (Rheingold 2003: 4, 12). Although they are not Deleuzians, anthropologists Heather Horst and Daniel Miller's description of their study of the mobile phone in Jamaica echoes the idea of assemblage as mutual becomings:

[T]here is no fixed thing called a cell phone or fixed group called Jamaicans. Rather, this book will seek to find out what Jamaicans have become in the light of their use of the cell phone and what the cell phone has become in the light of its use by Jamaicans. (2006:7)

Assemblages of mobile phones should also include being present elsewhere, phatic communication (i.e. texting for its own sake, to maintain an affective bridge), becoming private publicly, grasping, having an expensive phone, and what the assemblage does: how it shapes space, transforms behaviour, rings, bothers, emotes. Assemblages are particular arrangements of elements, organized, which have their own patterns of movement and rest; picture the person on the pavement with the mobile phone, walking and talking in a particular way. But the assemblage is not just the milieu, the block of space-time, the person-phone-pavement-moment, but a territory that extracts something from that milieu and draws it into relation with other milieu. Assemblages disperse, elements moving into different relations and configurations (phone in pocket, changes in movement and regard relative to those around one). Then the phone rings and one enters the assemblage again, reterritorializing, but in a different way.

Abstract machine

Although these examples (archaeological digs, dying horses and mobile phones) have been fairly local and specific, with assemblages appearing relatively personal (my assemblage, your assemblage, and so forth), it is important to focus at once on the specificities and contingencies of an assemblage, and also on large-scale assemblages and the ways

that assemblages work across multiple sites. “Assemblages may group themselves into extremely vast constellations constituting ‘cultures’ or even ‘ages’”, say Deleuze and Guattari (ATP: 406), and they use the example of Foucault’s (1977) work on discipline and the prison. If we focus just on one specific facet, namely the disciplinary functioning of the prison assemblage, we miss the larger connections, the criss-cross of links between it and other assemblages, for example, the system of education, the workplace and the hospital, to name but three (see e.g. ATP: 67). Deleuze and Guattari give the additional examples of the war machine and state apparatuses as two larger-scale assemblages.

To return again to the mobile phone example, focusing on just one person or group’s use of phones obstructs the ways those particular assemblages may express a broader set of functions or principles. Deleuze and Guattari refer to such functions or principles as the *abstract machine*. In the mobile phone example we can point to an abstract machine that we might call, borrowing from Raymond Williams’s (1975) discussion of television, a regime of *mobile privatization*. That is, television developed, according to Williams, within a social complex that emphasized the private sphere of the home, but also the mobility of the new suburbs of the 1950s. We might identify an abstract machine similar to mobile privatization that emphasizes mobility, autonomy, privatization, and individual empowerment through neoliberalism (see Rose 1999; Hay 2000). That abstract machine composes itself and then informs assemblages: “within the dimensions of the assemblage, the abstract machine, or machines, is effectuated in forms and substances” (ATP: 511). And so we are not just dealing with an assemblage, but a regime of assemblages, which, in the case of the new form of mobile privatization, includes not only the mobile phone and other mobile devices (cf. Goggin 2011), but also the array of self-service or self-check assemblages and many others.⁹ But each assemblage is entered into locally: I pick up the mobile phone and flip it open; my body changes speed, path and consistency; I enter into an assemblage of language, a collective assemblage of enunciation – acts, statements, “incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies” (ATP: 88) – which makes some statements possible and others not. That collective assemblage of enunciation is brought into a particular relation with “bodies, actions, passions” (ATP: 88), that is, the machinic assemblage. By entering into this assemblage (but never arriving, always in process), I am enacting the abstract machine of mobile privatization, and it is enacting me.

The concept of assemblage shows us how institutions, organizations, bodies, practices and habits make and unmake each other, intersecting and transforming: creating territories and then unmaking

them, deterritorializing, opening lines of flight as a possibility of any assemblage, but also shutting them down. I swipe a card through one slot and I am admitted to (or excluded from) entry or access, and at the same time, my location may be mapped, unless I am deliberately unmaking the process by switching cards, falsifying the process. In one of his final essays, Deleuze writes, “we’re at the beginning of something new” (N: 182), a new regime of assemblages, which he refers to as a control society. “We’re moving toward control societies that no longer operate by confining people but through continuous control and instant communication” (N: 174): continuous education, flexible and mobile workspaces always in touch with the office, continuous remote monitoring of parolees, constant accumulation of purchasing habits and preferences. We should not get distracted by the technologies themselves, the machines such as the mobile phone and the self-service kiosk: “the machines don’t explain anything, you have to analyze the collective apparatuses of which the machines are just one component” (N: 174). That is, you have to analyse the assemblages we enter into and create, or that catch us up or constitute us. We need to be able to hear “the sound of a continuous future, the murmur (*rumeur*) of new assemblages of desire, of machines, and of statements, that insert themselves into the old assemblages and break with them” (K: 83). Resistance to control-assemblages needs “to be assessed at the level of our every move” (N: 176).

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Notes

1. Indeed, the dominant way that the term “assemblage” has been taken up is to use it as a way of both retaining and challenging structure in social theory, of playing emergence off structure. As George Marcus and Erkan Saka (2006) have pointed out, this usage fits more with the modernist trajectory of social theory than with the alternative modernity of Deleuze and Guattari’s project. It ignores, for example, the relation of the assemblage to the event (Phillips 2006). For example, Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson (2000) use the idea of

- assemblage to theoretically challenge dominant models of surveillance derived from the work of Foucault and Orwell. While they effectively use the term to describe the heterogeneous nature of bodies and systems (flesh, information, machine) and rhizomatic rather than hierarchical relations of power, dimensions of territory, affect, and event crucial to the idea of assemblage are absent. Cf. William Bogard's (2006) nuanced extension of Haggerty and Ericson's thesis.
2. On the problems of this translation, see Phillips (2006). One key problem, for me, is that the term "assemblage" slips too easily into becoming a notion of static structure. One needs to keep in mind the French verb *agencer*, that is, an ongoing process of juxtaposing and assembling.
 3. The milieu are "the sum of the material relations within a particular space-time, densely filled material blocks of time-space" (Grossberg 2010: 31).
 4. Cf. Elizabeth Grosz (2001) on things and fluidity; and Jane Bennett (2004) on things and vitality.
 5. For the specificity of Deleuze's use of "affect", see Gregory J. Seigworth's contribution to this volume (Ch. 14).
 6. See, for example, Bruno Latour's (1999) description of how soil and vegetation samples are articulated to scientific apparatuses and naming systems. Although assemblage is not a term Latour uses, the Amazonian forest and savannah and the scientists studying them consist of a number of assemblages.
 7. For example, in their investigation of Kafka's writings, Deleuze and Guattari ask if the character, K, is the same in all three novels (*The Trial*, *The Castle* and *Amerika*). They write about K not as an identity or subject, but as part of an assemblage. "K will not be a subject but will be a general function that proliferates and that doesn't cease to segment and spread over all the segments" (K: 84). And later they write: "Ultimately, it is less a question of K as a general function taken up by an individual than of K as a *functioning of a polyvalent assemblage of which the solitary individual is only a part*" (K: 85).
 8. We should be cautious, however, not to oversimplify assemblages, a danger Manuel DeLanda (2006) runs into in his quite influential, but overly schematic and formalist, book on assemblage and social theory. Bogard warns: "Deleuze and Guattari are not interested in creating a formal typology of assemblages" (2006: 104). Lawrence Grossberg (2010) sees DeLanda's approach as ultimately too Hegelian, relying on notions of interiority and exteriority inconsistent with Deleuze and Guattari (see *ibid.*: 297-8).
 9. Self-service assemblages are the machines that allow you to check out library books, scan and pay for groceries and check in for a flight without having to deal with actual people. The ATM is a forerunner of such machines, as are machines that dispense drinks and snacks.

EIGHT

Micropolitics

Karen Houle

But where do doctrines come from, if not from wounds and vital aphorisms which, with their charge of exemplary provocation, are so many speculative anecdotes? (LS: 148)

Exemplary provocation

Tuesday morning. My "Introduction to Women's Studies" class. A perpetually politicized space. Roughly 100 blank or hostile faces. Mostly white, mostly women, mostly middle-class. This week's topic: "Gender-based Violence". After reading the article "Keeping Women in Our Place: Violence at Canadian Universities" (Harris 1999), students must complete an anonymous assignment: "Honestly and thoroughly describe the ways in which gender-based harassment has affected your life". Each of them will put their typed report in an envelope, and take another's out. And read it. And "respond" to it, even if just to sign their name.

Thursday morning. Completed assignments, including my own, go into an envelope. I have told the class that I will do this exercise too, since gender-violence carves itself into my life, and the lives of people I know and love. And the work that I do which I call feminism is not incidentally related to that carving. Each of us draws out an innocent-looking sheet to respond to.

Thursday, late afternoon. Today, I have seen ten students. Not a blank face among them. Nine females. One male. Each one eventually got around to telling me about having been sexually assaulted. How they

Becoming-woman

Patty Sotirin

The concept of becoming-woman is both intriguing and controversial. While becoming-woman exemplifies the radical contribution and creativity of Deleuze's (and Guattari's) thought, it has provoked harsh criticism, particularly from feminist scholars. I preface my discussion of becoming-woman with a brief introduction to the concept of becoming. Then I address becoming-woman in two contexts, both described in *A Thousand Plateaus*: becoming-woman in the context of feminism and becoming-woman in the context of the girl.

Becoming

With the concept of becoming, Deleuze counters our fascination with being and power. Being is about those questions that have engaged philosophers, scientists and theologians alike for centuries: what is the essence of life? What makes us human? What does it mean to exist, biologically, culturally, historically, spiritually? Our fascination with power engages us in questions of control, possession and order: how is life, organic and inorganic, but especially human life, ordered, classified, distributed and managed? How can we control what happens, shape our possibilities, counter forces that hinder us from realizing our needs, ambitions and dreams?

For Deleuze, such questions fail to engage the constant unfolding of what is becoming and the vitalities, energies and potentialities of a life. Becoming moves beyond our need to know (the truth, what is real, what makes us human); beyond our determination to control (life, nature, the

universe); and beyond our desire to consume/possess (pleasure, beauty, goodness, innocence). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari posit a line of becomings beginning with becoming-woman: "on the near side, we encounter becomings-woman, becomings-child ... On the far side, we find becomings-elementary, -cellular, -molecular, and even becomings-imperceptible" (ATP: 248). They add, "becoming-woman, more than any other becoming, possesses a special introductory power" (ATP: 248). As I shall discuss, this special role for becoming-woman has inspired considerable feminist debate. In order to frame these debates, I briefly attend to five animating dynamics of becomings: Deleuze's "positive ontology"; the "block of becoming"; the importance of thresholds; immanence; and becomings as non-representational.

"Positive ontology"

Deleuze's work is often applauded for the "positive ontology" it pursues. By this, scholars acknowledge that Deleuze is concerned with unfettering possibility to experiment with what a life can do and where a life might go. In other words, Deleuze affirms the possibilities of becoming something else, of affirming difference itself, by opening "new pathways down which thinking and living can travel" (May 2003: 151), beyond the avenues, relations, values and meanings that seem to be laid out for us by our biological make-up, our evolutionary heritages, our historical/political/familial identities, and the social and cultural structures of civilized living. There is in this a radical affirmation of possibilities for becoming that we cannot think of in logical or moralistic terms: becomings that can only be felt or sensed or conjured, that require us to take risks and experiment in ways that affirm the vitality, the energies and the creative animations of a life.

For some feminists, this positive ontology is quite compatible with the animating force of feminism. Beyond recovering and reclaiming women's histories, lives and possibilities, many feminists are dedicated to opening new ways of living, thinking and loving beyond what we have heretofore imagined. For example, Claire Colebrook endorses the Deleuzian "spirit of positive becoming" for feminist thought: "This might provide a way of thinking new modes of becoming – not as the becoming of some subject, but a becoming towards others, a becoming towards difference, and a becoming through new questions" (2000a: 12). Such becomings, she suggests, resonate to:

the peculiar modality of feminist questions and the active nature of feminist struggle. When confronted with a theory or body of

thought feminism has tended to ask an intensely active question, not “What does it mean?”, but “How does it work?” What can this concept or theory do? How can such a theory exist or be lived? What are its forces? (*Ibid.*: 8)

The positive ontology of becoming may be well allied with the active, immanent nature of feminist questions.¹

The block of becoming

A line of becomings that begins with becoming-woman suggests a progressive transformation of identities and invites a misdirected focus on Woman in general or women as material beings. We might be tempted to think of becoming in terms of where or who we were when we started and where or who we are when we end up. But becoming is not about origins, progressions and ends; rather, it is about lines and intensities, “modes of expansion, propagation, occupation, contagion, peopling” (ATP: 239). Becoming is “always in the middle” and in-between (ATP: 293). The concept of a block of becoming diverts attention from becoming as a transformation from one identity to another and attends instead to what Deleuze and Guattari call “multiplicities” composed of heterogeneous singularities in dynamic compositions.

To put this another way, Deleuze and Guattari have described the movement of becoming as “rhizomatic”, a term that refers to underground root growth, the rampant, dense propagation of roots that characterizes such plants as mint or crabgrass. Each rhizomatic root may take off in its own singular direction and make its own connections with other roots, with worms, insects, rocks or whatever, forming a dynamic composition of “interkingdoms [and] unnatural participations” (ATP: 242) that has no prescribed form or end. It is important to note here that roots, rocks and insects each have their own “molar” or insular configuration, their own distinctiveness that sets them off and apart from each other. But such “molar” configurations are composed of an infinity of particles; lines of becoming may break off particles, recomposing them, deterritorializing them from their proper place in a molar configuration. Just so, becoming-woman is not about the transformation of women so much as rhizomatic recompositions. For example, feminist theorists exploring the becoming-woman of sexuality may map lines of affective intensities and sexual energies moving through and beyond heteronormative configurations to recompose sexuete couplings inhabiting new worlds of sexualization.

The importance of thresholds

Thresholds are zones “in-between” two multiplicities, what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as “zones of proximity”, where the elements of multiplicities enter into, and pass through and between each other. Thresholds precede the bifurcations and distinctions that mark off one multiplicity from another. As Deleuze and Guattari observe, “the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities” (ATP: 249). While we might think of the self as that which is ours, the site of our uniqueness and that which most distinguishes us from others, in this observation Deleuze and Guattari cast the self as preceding these forms and functions of self-organization. So the importance of thresholds is that these “in-betweens” are becomings. When we are “in-between”, on the threshold, what keeps us distinct from this or that can become indiscernible or indistinct or imperceptible. Notably, Deleuze and Guattari advance the concept of the girl as a threshold in-between other becomings. Feminist response to this concept has often focused too adamantly on the politics and experience of girlhood and girls and overlooked the importance of the threshold. As I shall discuss shortly, there is value in engaging with the Deleuze–Guattarian girl, although not to the neglect of sociohistorical girls as such.

Immanence

Thus far, I have emphasized the radical creativity and dynamic vitality of becoming. But it is the immanence of becoming that is the most critical aspect of becomings. Deleuze’s philosophy is often called a philosophy of immanence because it is concerned with what a life can do, what a body can do when we think in terms of becomings, multiplicities, lines and intensities rather than essential forms, predetermined subjects, structured functions or transcendent values. Such forms, subjects, functions and values constitute planes of organization, hidden structures that can be known only through their effects, for example, the “nuclear family” with its underlying patriarchal structure, heteronormative subjects, reproductive functions and Judaeo-Christian values. In contrast, a plane of immanence has no structure and does not produce predetermined forms or subjects; instead, there are “relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness ... molecules and particles of all kinds” (ATP: 266). Deleuze and Guattari refer to this plane as a Body without Organs, a BwO: a body that is not organized in accord with Oedipal relations, biological functions, organic forms, or cultural–historical values. Rather, a BwO

deconstructs these seemingly inviolable arrangements, deterritorializing particles, intensities, energies in molecular lines of flows, thresholds and becomings.

Deleuze and Parnet explain the movement of a plane of immanence as “proceeding by thresholds, constituting becomings, blocs of becoming, marking continuums of intensity, combinations of fluxes” (D: 130). Multiplicities, thresholds, becomings are intersected, traversed and brought into coexistence, like the vibrations of different sounds, the sound of a bird, a rainstorm, a thunderbolt, a child’s cry, that are brought together in the immanence of a moment, becoming a single sound, so that the singularity of each vibration becomes imperceptible even as this imperceptibility is just what is heard. This is a description of a life: multiplicities, thresholds, lines and intensities come into coexistence in “the indefinite and virtual time of the pure event” (Smith 1997: xxxv). This simultaneous collapse and expansion of spatiotemporal dimensions into pure events or “haecceities” comprise the “thisness” that is our immanent existence.

Becoming as non-representational

Finally, becoming is non-representational: “Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something; neither is it regressing-progressing; neither is it corresponding, ... [nor] producing ... Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own” (ATP: 239). For Deleuze and Guattari, becomings are processes of desire. When they talk about becoming-woman, they are adamant about this non-representational process of movement, proximity and desire:

What we term a molar entity is, for example, the woman as defined by her form, endowed with organs and functions and assigned as a subject ... [Becoming-woman is] not imitating or assuming the female form, but emitting particles that enter the relation of movement and rest, or the zone of proximity, of a microfemininity, in other words, that produce in us a molecular woman, create the molecular woman. (ATP: 275)

Becoming-woman does not have to do with being a woman, being like a woman or standing in for a woman. Rather, Deleuze and Guattari offer becoming-woman as a key threshold for a line of flight that passes through and beyond the binary distinctions that define and confine our lives. Becoming-woman is the first threshold because becomings are always molecular deterritorializations, that is, effects destabilizing

dominant molar forms and relations. The “molar entity par excellence” is man, the rational, white, adult male (ATP: 292). Hence, there can be no “becoming-man” because becomings resonate to the subordinate figure in the dualisms constituted around man as the dominant figure: male/female, adult/child, white/non-white, rational/emotional and so on. As Colebrook puts it, becoming-woman is “a privileged becoming in so far as she short-circuits the self-evident identity of man” (2000a: 12). Becoming-woman disrupts the rigid hierarchies of sexual binaries such as male/female, heterosexuality/homosexuality, masculinity/femininity that organize our bodies, our experiences, our institutions and our histories. Both men and women must become-woman, Deleuze and Guattari argue, in order to deterritorialize the binary organization of sexuality; sexuality then becomes “the production of a thousand sexes, which are so many uncontrollable becomings” (ATP: 278). This is the unleashing of desire, the opening of a life, and the threshold to imperceptibility.

Becoming-woman: feminist politics and women’s talk

Becoming-woman offers a critical alternative to traditional feminist politics focused on confronting, denouncing and dismantling the oppressive power relations inherent to binary oppositions such as woman/man, female/male, feminine/masculine, mother/father, nature/culture and emotion/reason. While they acknowledge that women’s struggles for definition and control over their own bodies, histories and subjectivities are certainly necessary, Deleuze and Guattari warn that continually confronting “the great dualism machines” of history, society, philosophy and science will only emphasize and reinforce binary relations rather than liberating women from them. Instead, they urge women to conceive of a molecular political movement that “slips into molar confrontations, and passes under or through them” (ATP: 276). In other words, a vital feminist politics must become rhizomatic rather than confrontative and must make of itself a BwO, a Body without Organs, so that feminism is no longer confined to the subject of women’s rights, bodies, histories and oppressions, to an identity-based, representational mode of politics. By becoming rhizomatic, feminist politics can engage in a “contagious” micropolitical movement “capable of crossing and impregnating an entire social field” (ATP: 276). And yet, if a molecular women’s politics is rhizomatic, a rampant process of desire without plan or logic that “slips into and through” confrontations between molar identities towards becoming-imperceptible, then what becomes of feminism as a political force?

Feminist scholars have long warned that by casting “becoming-woman” as a privileged and undifferentiated phase of becomings, Deleuze and Guattari risk enervating the political force of feminism and denying the sexual specificities of becoming a woman. One of the first extended feminist critiques of becoming-woman was Alice Jardine’s (1982, 1984, 1985), in which she accused Deleuze and Guattari of a (male) poststructuralist appropriation of the feminine that in its neglect of the specificities of sexual difference and its reinvigoration of gendered stereotypes was ultimately irrelevant to feminist struggle and thought. Subsequent feminist suspicion of becoming-woman has produced a litany of concerns about the Deleuzian concept of becoming-woman.² Among these are charges that becoming-woman neutralizes sexual difference, specificity and autonomy (Grosz 1993: 167);³ affects phallic appropriation and exploitation, of women and the feminine subject (*ibid.*: 177) in the service of “a male project toward alterity” (MacCormack 2001); and in the move beyond subjectivity and identity, undermines feminism’s political force, “finally result[ing] in women’s disappearance from the scene of history, their fading-out as agents of history” (Braidotti 1991: 119). An allusion to such concerns seems to have become requisite in Deleuzian feminist scholarship, prompting Jerry Fliieger’s apt admonishment, “Is Deleuzian feminism an oxymoron?” (2000: 39).

At the same time, becoming-woman has energized feminist thinking and activism in the work of Rosi Braidotti, Claire Colebrook, Moira Gatens, Pelagia Goulimari, Camilla Griggers, Elizabeth Grosz, Tamsin Lorraine, Dorothea Olkowski and others.⁴ For example, Grosz (1994: 174) argues that the BwO offers feminism a volatile body, one that resists traditional hierarchies, oppressions and dualisms to enter into micro-struggles, micro-particularities in wild, unpredictable trajectories and relations. Becoming-woman escapes the binary organization of sexuality, creating “a thousand tiny sexes” through the “releasing of minoritarian fragments or particles of ‘sexuality’ (sexuality no longer functions on the level of the unified, genitalized organization of the sexed body), lines of flight which break down and seep into binary aggregations” (Grosz 1993: 176). Becoming-woman in such renditions entails a critical affirmation of feminism’s relevance and radical future.⁵

A thoroughly Deleuzian development involves taking up with various established – and some of them adamantly anti-Deleuzian – feminist philosophers such as Hélène Cixous,⁶ Judith Butler,⁷ Donna Haraway,⁸ Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva.⁹ For example, there has been ongoing interest in reconciling the sexual becomings of Deleuze and Irigaray.

Notably, Tamsin Lorraine (1999) draws on Irigaray to redress the masculinist oversights and appropriations of the Deleuze–Guattarian becoming-woman; after all, she observes, “the project of becoming-woman is going to be radically different for women and men”, a possibility addressed in Irigaray’s “positive characterization of a feminine subject able continually to incorporate fluid transformation in concert with others” (*ibid.*: 186).¹⁰ Yet Irigaray, whose own project to think sexual specificity beyond masculine subjectivity has long informed feminist theory, argues that a line of flight from masculinity fails to engage the material verities of sexual life that necessitate radical refigurings of masculinity and femininity as “each one and together” (Irigaray & Howie 2008: 73–83).¹¹ Deleuze’s conception of becoming-woman, Irigaray opines, “was not really respectful of the efforts of women to liberate themselves” (Irigaray & Howie 2008: 79).

Along with these “perverse” articulations are myriad recent animations of becoming-woman in the service of diverse feminist projects.¹² It is beyond the scope of this chapter to document them all; suffice it to say that becoming-woman has inspired feminist suspicion and wariness but also a radical rethinking of what feminist theorizing can do (Braidotti 2002). As Conley asserts, the intensification of global consumer capitalism in control societies warrants this embrace of becoming-woman by feminist scholars: today it is “all the more important for women to remain vigilant, to avoid a becoming molar of feminisms, to turn away continually from present contexts and to continue to draw new lines of flight” (2000: 36; see also Braidotti 2006a: 44–58).

The becoming-woman of women’s small talk

I offer an extended example of becoming-woman by considering women’s small talk: chatter, gossip, girl-talk, bitching. The labels belong to a molar identity: feminine, feminized and feminizing; signified as denigrated and denigrating (see Bergmann 1993). The intensities of such talk – the pettiness, nastiness, nosiness, cattiness – are often ascribed to aspects of women’s embodied, essential nature: menstruation, hormones, monthly irritabilities, and perpetual insecurities, jealousies and resentments (Pringle 1988: 238). Further, the careful focus on mundane details and relationships is often attributed to women’s biologically and sociohistorically ascribed responsibilities for taking care of the minutiae of our familial, domestic and emotional lives. Finally, the pleasures of small talk are bound to patterns

of women's sociality and oral culture: intimate conversations, friendship pacts, secret alliances and petty victories (see Jones 1990). It is little wonder that such talk is often seen as a performance of innate femaleness (see Ashcraft & Pacanowsky 1996).

I contend, however, that women's small talk – gossip, bitching, girl-talk, chatter – does not “represent” women, either as an expression of women's essential biochemical, psychic or sociocultural nature or as a mode of capitulation or resistance to their gendered subordination. In Deleuze–Guattarian terms, small talk is a threshold, a becoming-woman moving imperceptibly within but all too perceptibly unsettling quotidian relations. To paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari, we can be “thrown into becoming” by the “most insignificant of things” (ATP: 292), including the trivialities and pettinesses of small talk. It is not small talk *per se* but the affects, energies, flows and alliances – what small talk can do – that constitute its becoming-woman: the speed and linkages through which opinions, confidences, insults, and judgments are dispersed through a social group; the affective flows that deterritorialize conventional relations of propriety, hierarchy and reason with impulsive, often illogical, sometimes destructive energies; the coexistence of intense affects – dissatisfactions, pettinesses, trivialities; and the heterogeneity of all such micro-level impulses that threaten to overrun the quietude of everyday life.

The concept of becoming-woman allows us to think women's small talk differently, in terms of how it works and what its forces are. Feminists need not recuperate, reclaim, nor apologize for women's small talk (see Sotirin & Gottfried 1999). Rather, the becoming-woman of women's small talk opens possibilities for a contagious microfeminism that does not “take a stand” on any particular identity or issue so much as create wild lines of resonance and intensity through and beyond the binary relations of domination and oppression that structure the molar positions of conventional gender politics.

As Deleuze and Guattari remind us, there is no deviation from the majority without “a little detail that starts to swell and carries you off” (ATP: 292); the becoming-woman of small talk entails such little details: a hormonal shift, the snideness of an off-hand comment, a pang of resentment, a shrill tonality – these are the little details that might carry one off along rhizomatic lines of becomings. Such details are not mimetic; they do not perform or reiterate particular feminine traits. Rather, these affects and intensities are lines of becoming. So the sounds of women's chatter are a threshold to a line of becoming-animal, the vibrations and tonalities linking women and hens – clucking, scolding, “hen-pecking” – or cats – hissing, spitting, yowling. The

tonal qualities of clucking and hissing can be thought of as particles of affective intensity that move with considerable speed through women's social networks and pass under and through the nature/culture binary that undergirds these stereotypes of women's talk. In this line of becomings, becoming-woman, becoming-animal, these particles do not imitate, express, reiterate or parody the heteronormative and anthropomorphic codes and narratives of molar identities and distinctions. Instead, the becoming-woman of small talk can create new lines of alliance, opening sociality to new configurations beyond the asymmetries and allegiances of commonplace living.

The core of small talk, especially of gossip, bitching and girl-talk, is the secret: having secrets, telling secrets, keeping secrets, but mostly passing secrets along. Deleuze and Guattari seem to have women's small talk in mind as they describe the secret:

Men alternately fault [women] for their indiscretion, their gossiping, and for their solidarity, their betrayal. Yet it is curious how a woman can be secretive while at the same time hiding nothing, by virtue of transparency, innocence, and speed ... There are women ... who tell everything, sometimes in appalling technical detail, but one knows no more at the end than at the beginning; they have hidden everything by celerity, by limpidity. (ATP: 290)

According to Deleuze and Guattari, there are three becomings of the secret: a becoming-child in having a secret (as in the playground taunt, “I have a secret”), whereby it loses its content; a becoming-feminine as the secret becomes transparent, a secret everyone knows, whereby it loses its form as a secret; and a becoming-molecular as the content becomes so many contiguous particles and the form becomes a “pure moving line” (ATP: 290). In the becomings of the secret, women's small talk disarticulates elements of the petty, the mundane, the everyday, the here-and-now, actualizing these elements within an immanent plane of affects, intensities, sounds and vibrations. Secrets shared through gossip are notoriously unaccountable to the truths and realities of civil life; the spread of secrets moves rhizomatically through communicative networks, a rapid affective contagion, overwhelming reasonable or ethical considerations. At the same time, small talk is forever recuperated or reterritorialized; as common wisdom would have it, small talk keeps women in their (molar) places.

Perhaps the most poignant example of the work of the secret is in what popular treatises have dubbed “the secret culture of adolescent girls”: a web of intense affects and energies, where small talk, especially

secrets, moves through dense packs of schoolgirls, creating and destroying popularity, friendship and self-worth.¹³ Secrets, innuendos, and lies move contagiously through such packs, becoming molecular particles of betrayal, aggression, loyalty and affection, becoming pure moving lines, thresholds between isolation and inclusion, self-coherence and dissolution. These are lines that can spin off into the black holes of depression, fear, anxiety and self-destruction; they carry as well the risk of "turning into lines of abolition, of destruction, of others and of oneself" (D: 140), saturating the event of girlhood. Such is the risk of becomings.

Becoming-woman: the girl

It is not casually that I introduce the figure of the girl. Deleuze and Guattari's descriptions of becoming-woman highlight the girl and both the reasons for this emphasis and the concerns that have been raised about it are important to appreciate. The girl is a becoming, say Deleuze and Guattari; she is a becoming-molecular, a line of flight, "a block of becoming that remains contemporaneous to each opposable term, man, woman, child, adult" (ATP: 277). There is, in the girl, an "in-between" to all of the most pernicious dualisms that constitute us as subjects and that give significance to our most fundamental relationships. Becoming-woman is the introductory segment of becomings because the girl is the autopoietic force of becoming: "Girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order, or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes; they produce *n* molecular sexes on the line of flight in relation to the dualism machines they cross right through" (ATP: 277). The girl is an experiment, constantly traversing borderlines of childhood and adulthood, innocence and disenchantment, naivety and wisdom, conformity and perversity. She is not becoming a woman; she is always a becoming-woman, not on the basis of budding womanly attributes but as "pure relations of speeds and slownesses, and nothing else" (ATP: 271).

Deleuze offers an intriguing example of the immanence of the girl in an interview with Claire Parnet. He describes a young provincial girl's first encounter with the sea: she stood dumbstruck, mindless, losing herself in the sublime, grandiose spectacle (ABC: "E as in *Enfance*"). I bring this up not in deference to Deleuze's childhood memory but as a figure of affective intensity: the girl is moved beyond language and cognition, beyond the conventional modes of differentiation and identity; the rush of girlhood is slowed in the encounter with the "timeless"

sounds, energies, rhythms, and expansiveness of the sea. The girl as such is becoming-imperceptible, at the threshold of a world apart, "pushing beyond something unbearable to a new, oceanic sensibility and logic" (Buchanan 2000: 93).¹⁴

However, there are aspects of the girl-becoming-woman that feminists have rightly decried. First, although Deleuze and Guattari object to the fact that the girl's body is "taken from her" in that she too often becomes the object of masculine desire and the property of a patriarchal economy, the notion that the girl is nothing but "speeds and slownesses" seems also to "take away" her body. Second, the necessity for both women and men to become-woman denies any gender specificity to the girl. By rendering the specificities of the girl's sexuality moot, becoming-woman denudes a feminist perspective of a standpoint for critique and intervention. Third, since becoming-imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming-woman, the girl seems to unwittingly replicate the subordination and suppression of girls culturally and historically, their imperceptibility within a patriarchal economy denying or justifying women's oppression, and the most egregious practices of sexual discrimination and oppression (infanticide, genital mutilation, child molestation). Girls too often slip imperceptibly under the radar of public policies, institutional safeguards, community concerns and familial priorities.

Yet these objections take the girl representationally and neglect the value of this figure for feminist politics and theory. The girl is neither a representation nor the starting-point for becoming-(a-)woman. Rather, the girl is the force of desire that breaks off particles from the molar compositions (i.e. our constitution as women and men; young and old; sexualities such as hetero-, homo- or bi-, transsexual, and/or queer), and instead creates lines of rampant propagation and contagion and a "diversity of conjugated becomings" (ATP: 278). Put in Deleuze-Guattarian terms, the girl knows how to love: "Knowing how to love does not mean remaining a man or a woman; it means extracting from one's sex the particles, the speeds and slownesses, the flows, the *n* sexes that constitute the girl of *that* sexuality" (ATP: 277). The vision of love in this description is not about carnal lust, Oedipalized desire, or misogynist romance. "Knowing how to love" is not about being in love, being loved or making love. Rather, the flows and conjugations of the girl constitute a dynamic affective composition that runs imperceptibly but with great force through everybody/everything. Thus, "knowing how to love" is the "immanent end of becoming". And since everybody/everything is the aggregate of molar entities, becoming everybody and everything, that is, becoming-imperceptible and

indiscernibly in-between, is to make a different world (ATP: 280). The girl is the rhizomatic line and the threshold into this alternative world. This is a compelling conception of love, life and what might become of the world.

Conclusion

Becoming-woman and the girl are creative and exciting Deleuzian concepts. And yet, there is need to attend to the serious concerns that feminists and others have raised over the masculinist bias of becoming-woman, notably the dissipation of feminist political force that it portends and the dangers of black holes and imperceptibility that are seemingly ignored in the conception of the girl as the threshold of becoming-woman. Still, to give over the concept of becoming-woman to these concerns would be to reterritorialize the possibilities that it offers and domesticate the animating potential of becoming. I have argued that becoming-woman opens creative possibilities, provides a powerful alternative to feminist molar politics, and engages with theoretical feminism's most vital impulses and sensibilities. As philosophical concepts, becoming-woman and the girl allow us to think differently, imagine new modes of becomings, animate forces of desire, and open doors and thresholds to new worlds.

Notes

1. Jerry Flieger (2000: 59–62) contends that immanent, material, subversive feminisms are readily allied with Deleuze–Guattarian molecular becomings.
2. See Grosz's summaries of these feminist concerns. Her introduction to "A Thousand Tiny Sexes" (1993) is useful although largely developed on readings of Deleuze's work prior to *A Thousand Plateaus*. Her discussion in *Volatile Bodies* (1994), Chapter 7, "Intensities and Flows", reiterates this summary but is informed by *A Thousand Plateaus*.
3. For a recent philosophical variant on this concern, see Howie's (2008) critique of Deleuze's failure to radically engage sexual differentiation owing to the transcendental empiricism of becoming-woman.
4. Many of these scholars have participated in the emergence of "Australian feminism's" corporeal hybrid theorizing in which Deleuze and Guattari have figured critically. See the overviews by Colebrook (2000b) and MacCormack (2009).
5. In this regard it is worth noting recent "corrections" to feminist conceptions of becoming such as May's (2003) tracing of Deleuze's early development of the concept of becoming and the relation to specific becomings, including becoming-woman or Burchill's (2010) argument for a more "immanent"

- conception of the radical spatiotemporality of becoming-woman as a contribution to feminist theories of women and time.
6. For recent work linking Deleuze with Cixous, see Conley (2000) and Zajac (2002).
 7. Butler admits that she has opposed Deleuze for his failure to address the philosophical/psychoanalytic problem of negativity, fearing that "he was proposing a manic defense against negativity" (2004: 198). For recent work linking Butler with Deleuze, see the essays in Farber (2010); Hickey-Moody & Rasmussen (2009); Shildrick (2004, 2009) and Watson (2005).
 8. For recent work linking Deleuze with Haraway, see Braidotti (1994b, 2006b), Pisters (1997) and Haraway herself, despite her caustic remarks about *A Thousand Plateaus*. She finds particularly offensive the disdain for sentimental old women with small house dogs: "I am not sure I can find in philosophy a clearer display of misogyny, fear of aging, incuriosity about animals, and horror at the ordinariness of flesh, here covered by the alibi of an anti-Oedipal and anticapitalist project". Advancing a concept of becoming-woman in such a context "took some nerve" (2008: 30).
 9. For recent work linking Deleuze with Kristeva, see Driscoll (2000a), MacCormack (2000) and Margaroni (2005).
 10. Lorraine notes that the same argument has been made by Braidotti (1991, 1994a,b, 1996), Grosz (1994), and Olkowski (1999). While she admits that there are significant differences between Irigaray and Deleuze, she emphasizes the resonances between them in order to affect a synthesis. For additional work linking Deleuze with Irigaray, see Braidotti (2003), Grosz (2002, 2005), Martin (2003) and Olkowski (2000).
 11. Irigaray has not developed any extended critiques of becoming-woman but has long dismissed this concept for its metaphorical appropriation of feminine difference and desire; note the passage in *This Sex Which Is Not One*: "And doesn't the 'desiring machine' still partly take the place of woman or the feminine? Isn't it a sort of metaphor for her/it, that men can use? ... Since women have long been assigned to the task of preserving 'body-matter' and the 'organless,' doesn't the 'organless body' [body without organs] come to occupy the place of their own schism [schiz]?" (1985: 140–41).
 12. See, for example, feminist ethics (Berman 2004); the politics of corporeality and affect (Blackman 2009; Crawford 2008; Gambis 2005; MacCormack 2006; Markula 2006); transfeminism (Corsani & Murphy 2007); feminist pedagogy (Twomey 2007); feminist fieldwork (St. Pierre 2000); and even organizational theory (Ball 2005).
 13. Such popular treatises include *Odd Girl Out* (Simmons 2002), *Reviving Ophelia* (Pipher 1994), *Schoolgirls* (Orenstein 1995) and *Queen Bees and Wannabes* (Wiseman 2003). In a Deleuzian informed analysis of teenage and tweenage girls' talk, Renold and Ringrose decry these popularized "sanctioning and pathologizing" "psychoeducational discourses of bullying". Their analysis identifies the "molecular micro movements" and rhythms within girls' everyday talk that negotiate the "prevailing heteronormative horizons" of girlhood and create ephemeral ruptures in performances of "culturally intelligible femininity" (2008: 332).
 14. Are such flows and oceanic sensibilities beyond gender? Or does this affective encounter recall the girl to essentialist metaphors of maternal and feminine fluidities? The questions are similar to those that have been levied against the comment in *A Thousand Plateaus* about the molar subject of feminist politics

“which does not function without drying up a spring or stopping a flow” (ATP: 276); and the questions that have been articulated around the figure of the girl. For an example of the Deleuzian girl in girl studies, see Driscoll’s chapter “Becoming: The Girl Question from de Beauvoir to Deleuze” (2002: 191–200).

TEN

The minor

Ronald Bogue

In a lengthy diary entry dated 25 December 1911, Kafka outlines the characteristics of small literary communities, such as those of East European Yiddish writers or the Czech authors of his native Prague (Kafka 1977: 191–5).¹ In such minor literatures, Kafka observes, there are no towering figures, like Shakespeare in English or Goethe in German, who dominate the landscape and thereby discourage innovation or invite sycophantic emulation. Literary discussions are intense in a minor literature, political and personal issues interpenetrate, and the formation of a literary tradition is of direct concern to the people. In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that Kafka’s diary entry is less a sociological sketch of particular artistic milieus than a description of the ideal community within which he would like to write. Despite his adoption of German as his medium, they claim, Kafka’s aspiration is to create within the major tradition of German letters a minor literature, one that experiments with language, ignores canonical models, fosters collective action and treats the personal as something immediately social and political. What Kafka’s example ultimately discloses for Deleuze and Guattari is an approach to writing that may be extended to literature as a whole.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that in a minor literature “language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization” (K: 16), everything “is political”, and “everything takes on a collective value” (K: 17); hence, they conclude, “the three characteristics of minor literature are the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation” (K: 18). That minor literature connects the individual and the political