

Deleuze's Practical Philosophy

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Deleuze has always described his work alone and with Guattari as "philosophy, nothing but philosophy, in the traditional sense of the word" (Deleuze 1980, 99).² *What is Philosophy?* distinguishes philosophy, science, and art as three distinct modalities of thought in terms of their different methods and products: science aims at the representation of states of affairs by means of mathematical or propositional functions, while art aims at the capture and expression of the objective content of particular sensations—affects and percepts—in a given medium. Philosophy is different in that it does not seek to represent independently existing objects or states of affairs or to express particular affects and percepts. It produces concepts, where these are a certain kind of representation distinct from those produced by the arts or the sciences. Philosophical concepts are not referential but expressive.³ According to Deleuze and Guattari, they express "pure events": to become, to de-territorialize, to capture, etc. For this reason, they are not assessed in terms of their truth or falsity but according to the degree to which they are "Interesting, Remarkable or Important" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 82). Expression is not representation in the sense that science represents physical bodies and states of affairs by recreating their "actualization" in thought. Rather, the expression of events in philosophical concepts is the counter-actualization of bodies and states of affairs by presenting them as determinate forms or "incarnations" of a given event: becoming, de-territorialization, capture, etc.

Deleuze also describes his work with Guattari as political philosophy, even though political thought does not appear as a distinct modality in this account (Deleuze 1995, 36, 170–1). The absence of any account of specifically political reason is one of the reasons that Philippe Mengue argues in his recent *Deleuze et la démocratie* (Mengue 2003) that Deleuzian political thought is fundamentally hostile towards democracy.⁴ Despite this absence, it is clear that for Deleuze and Guattari philosophy has a political vocation. On their account, the purpose of the philosophical creation of concepts is essentially pragmatic. The aim is not merely to recognize or reconstruct how things are but to transform existing forms of thought and practice. Philosophy is "utopian" in the sense that it carries the criticism of its own time to its highest point and, in doing so, "summons forth" a new earth and a new people (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 99).

What kind of political philosophy is this and what purpose does it serve? However much they borrow from Marx's analysis of capitalism,

and however much they embrace the utopian idea of a philosophy that calls for new earths and new peoples, their work does not sit comfortably alongside traditional Marxist concepts of society, history, and politics. But nor does their work employ the language or methods of contemporary liberal political philosophy. Unlike Rawls, they do not engage in the systematic reconstruction of our considered opinions on the nature of justice, freedom, and political organization. Unlike Habermas, they do not seek to provide clear normative standards for the evaluation of political institutions or society. In some respects, as I will argue, their approach is closer to a deconstructive rather than a reconstructive political philosophy.

Perhaps a useful way to approach the problem of what kind of political philosophy Deleuze and Guattari provide is to return to the tripartite division of thought outlined in *What is Philosophy?* In some respects, this resembles the division found in Kant's three Critiques: science, philosophy, and art as distinct modalities of thought correspond to the Kantian domains of theoretical, practical, and teleological reason. Kant distinguishes theoretical and practical reason by suggesting that theoretical reason is concerned with the knowledge of objects that are given to us by means of the senses, whereas practical reason is concerned with objects that we produce by means of action in accordance with certain principles. The reason for this, according to Kant, is that when we are concerned with the practical use of reason we consider it in relation to the determination of the will, which he defines as "a faculty either of producing objects corresponding to representations or of determining itself to effect such objects" (Kant 1996, 148). Deleuze and Guattari do not rely upon a concept of the will, or indeed a concept of human nature as defined by the freedom of the will and the faculty of reason. However, they do rely upon a constructivist conception of philosophy as the creation of concepts, where these are not supposed to represent pre-given objects but rather assist in bringing about new configurations of bodies and states of affairs (new peoples and new earths). In this sense, they suggest that "the concept is the contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 32–3).

For this reason I suggest that Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy must be considered a form of practical reason. This is the hypothesis I propose to examine in this paper. I want to explore some of the ways in which their conception of philosophy might be consistent with a broadly Kantian conception of practical reason, while also noting their differences. My interest in pursuing this idea is not to undertake a systematic survey of their relationship to Kant but rather to ask whether this comparison helps to answer the question raised earlier about the nature of their political

philosophy and to explore ways in which Deleuze and Guattari's political philosophy might be developed and brought into contact with other forms of contemporary normative political philosophy. For example, does it help us to see in what sense Deleuzian philosophical concepts are intended to be action-guiding rather than or perhaps as well as descriptive of past or present events? Does the distinction between actualization and counter-actualization of states of affairs correspond to the Kantian difference between representation of given objects and the production of objects (or events and states of affairs) not given in experience? Finally, with reference to Mengue's criticism, what is the relation of Deleuze's political philosophy to liberal democratic institutions and practices?

Ontology and Ethics of Deterritorialization

One obvious difference from Kant is that Deleuze and Guattari do not derive practical principles on the basis of an ontology of free and rational individual subjects. Instead they present an ontology of *assemblages* which encompasses both the assemblages of desire, language, knowledge, and affect which produce certain kinds of subjects, and the assemblages of social relations, equipment, and populations which produce certain kinds of societies. The successive plateaus within *A Thousand Plateaus* describe many different kinds of assemblage with reference to different empirical domains: machinic assemblages of desire, collective assemblages of enunciation, nomadic assemblages and apparatuses of capture, as well as ideational, pictorial, and musical assemblages. They provide a series of new vocabularies in terms of which we can describe aspects of the natural and social world. These include the terminology used to describe different kinds of social, linguistic, and affective assemblages (strata, content, and expression, territories, lines of flight or deterritorialization); the terminology employed to outline a micro- as opposed to macro-politics (body without organs, intensities, molar and molecular segmentarities, the different kinds of line of which we are composed); and the terminology employed to describe capitalism as a non-territorially based *axiomatic* of flows (of materials, labor, and information) as opposed to a territorial system of overcoding. They include a concept of the State as an apparatus of capture which, in the forms of its present actualization, is increasingly subordinated to the requirements of the capitalist axiomatic, and a concept of abstract machines of metamorphosis (nomadic war machines) which are the agents of social and political transformation.

Deleuze and Guattari do not provide any explicit defence or justification of normative principles. Rather, the elaboration of their

ontology of assemblages provides a demonstration of such principles (in the sense of presenting or showing rather than deducing these principles). The successive accounts of the different kinds of assemblage describe a world that accords systematic priority to certain kinds of movement: to becoming-minor as a process of deviation from a standard, to lines of flight or deterritorialization, to nomadic machines of metamorphosis rather than apparatuses of capture, to smooth rather than striated space, and so on. In this sense, their ontology of assemblages is also an ethics or an ethology. This ethics might be characterized in the language of one or other of the plateaus as an ethics of becoming, of flows or lines of flight, or as an ethics and a politics of deterritorialization. I argued in *Deleuze and the Political* that the concept of deterritorialization best expresses the ethico-political sense of this ontology (Patton 2000, 9, 136). How does it work?

In the concluding statement of rules governing some of their most important concepts at the end of *A Thousand Plateaus*, deterritorialization is defined as the movement or process by which something escapes or departs from a given territory (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 508), where a territory can be a system of any kind: conceptual, linguistic, social, or affective. By contrast, reterritorialization refers to the ways in which deterritorialized elements recombine and enter into new relations in the constitution of a new assemblage or the modification of the old. On their account, systems of any kind always include "vectors of deterritorialization," while deterritorialization is always "inseparable from correlative reterritorializations" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 509).

Deterritorialization can take either a negative or a positive form. It is negative when the deterritorialized element is subjected to reterritorialization that obstructs or limits its line of flight. It is positive when the line of flight prevails over the forms of reterritorialization and manages to connect with other deterritorialized elements in a manner that extends its trajectory or even leads to reterritorialization in an entirely new assemblage. As well as distinguishing negative and positive deterritorialization, Deleuze and Guattari further distinguish between an absolute and a relative form of each of these processes. This corresponds to the ontological distinction they draw between a virtual and an actual order of things. Absolute deterritorialization takes place in the virtual realm while relative deterritorialization concerns only movements within the actual. In terms of their ontology of assemblages, it is the virtual order of becoming that governs the fate of any actual assemblage. Absolute deterritorialization is the underlying condition of all forms of relative deterritorialization. It is the immanent source of transformation, the reserve of freedom or movement in reality that is activated whenever relative deterritorialization occurs. This is a Bergsonian concept of

freedom in the world rather than a Kantian concept of freedom of the will. The sense in which it amounts to an ethical principle embedded within a conception of the world becomes clear when Deleuze and Guattari describe absolute deterritorialization as "the deeper movement ... identical to the earth itself" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 143). Finally, in accordance with their method of specification of concepts by proliferating distinctions, they distinguish between the connection and conjugation of deterritorialized elements in the construction of a new assemblage.

The effective transformation of a given field of reality (actuality) requires the recombination of deterritorialized elements in mutually supportive and productive ways to form assemblages of connection rather than conjugation. Absolute and relative deterritorialization will both be positive when they involve the construction of "*revolutionary connections* in opposition to the *conjugations of the axiomatic*" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 473). Under these conditions, absolute deterritorialization "connects lines of flight, raises them to the power of an abstract vital line or draws a plane of consistency" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 510).

Absolute deterritorialization expresses the normative ideal at the heart of Deleuze and Guattari's ethics. It is a concept of abstract, non-organic, and creative life which underwrites both the deterritorialization of existing assemblages and the connection of deterritorialized elements and their reconfiguration into new assemblages. It is the freedom expressed in the creative transformation of what is, but at the same time a concept of freedom that is incompatible with liberal concepts predicated upon the continued existence of the stable subject of freedom.⁵ The molecular as opposed to the molar line of which individual and collective subjects are composed already constitutes a mortal threat to the integrity of such a subject. It is along this line that the subject undergoes "molecular changes, redistributions of desire such that when something occurs, the self that awaited it is already dead, or the one that would await it has not yet arrived" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 199). The freedom expressed in Deleuze and Guattari's third line, the line of flight or absolute deterritorialization, is positively monstrous from the point of view of the subject. Once embarked on this line, "One has become imperceptible and clandestine in motionless voyage. Nothing can happen, or can have happened, any longer.... Now one is no more than an abstract line, like an arrow crossing the void. Absolute deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 199–200).

Paradoxical Normativity

Deleuze and Guattari's concepts are normative, not merely in the sense

that any concept is normative by virtue of the manner in which it enables some inferences and disables others, but in the sense that they are the elements of a form of practical rather than theoretical reason.⁶ They provide a framework within which to evaluate the character of particular events and processes. They enable us to pose questions such as: is this negative or positive reterritorialization? Is this a genuine line of flight? Will it lead to a revolutionary new assemblage in which there is an increase of freedom or will it lead to a new form of capture or worse? (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 143–4).

Several consequences follow from the normativity of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts. First, we can appreciate why a representationalist or empirical reading does not do justice to their analyses. The descriptive character of much of their work, along with the wealth of empirical material employed in the presentation of their concepts, creates a temptation to read them as proposing an empirical account of the affective, linguistic, and social world that we inhabit. In this manner, for example, Hardt and Negri take Deleuze and Guattari's account of capitalism as control by means of an axiomatic or set of variable relationships between the elements of production of surplus value as the basis for their understanding of contemporary society. In the same way, they take their analysis of the real subsumption of labor to capital and Deleuze's concept of "control society" as the basis for their analysis of the "material transformation" of the means of production of social reality under late capitalism (Hardt and Negri, 2000, 22–5, 325–7). Thus, in relation to their analysis of the biopolitical production of subjectivity, they comment that "We are indebted to Deleuze and Guattari and their *A Thousand Plateaus* for the most fully elaborated phenomenological description of this industrial-monetary-world-nature, which constitutes the first level of the world order" (Hardt and Negri 2000, 424 n. 23).⁷

To be fair to Hardt and Negri, they do recognize that the concept of nomads is a normative rather than an empirical concept, the primary function of which is to express forces of resistance to the mechanisms of control which are "capable of not only organizing the destructive power of the multitude, but also constituting through the desires of the multitude an alternative" (Hardt and Negri 2000, 214). Nor are they alone in succumbing to the temptation to assume that Deleuze and Guattari are engaged in a form of social science. Critics such as Christopher L. Miller rely on this assumption in criticizing the empirical bases of their concepts. Miller argues that their reliance upon anthropological sources in their discussion of nomadism commits them to an "anthropological referentiality" which is compromised by the primitivist and colonialist character of those sources.⁸

Second, although the basis of the framework of evaluation is assem-

blages rather than individuals, it does carry implications for how individuals should act. Foucault drew attention to this dimension of Deleuze and Guattari's machinic ontology when he famously compared *Anti-Oedipus* to St. Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life*: "I would say that *Anti-Oedipus* (may its authors forgive me) is a book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time" (Foucault 1977, xiii). Foucault went on to suggest that *Anti-Oedipus* could be taken to offer individual guidance in identifying and avoiding all the varieties of "fascism" that entrap our desires and bind us to the forms of power that maintain systems of exploitation and domination. In this sense, he suggested, Deleuze and Guattari provide rules for the conduct of a non-fascist life: pursue thought and action by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction rather than by hierarchization and subdivision; prefer positivity over negativity, difference over uniformity, nomadic or mobile assemblages over sedentary systems, and so on (Foucault 1977, xiii–vii).

At several points in *A Thousand Plateaus*, as though in response to Foucault's provocation, Deleuze and Guattari assume the speaking position of this kind of practical ethicist, for example when they offer guidance in the construction of a "body without organs" (BwO):

You don't do it with a sledgehammer, you use a very fine file. You invent self-destructions that have nothing to do with the death drive. Dismantling the organism has never meant killing yourself, but rather opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territories and de-territorializations measured with the craft of a surveyor.... You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of signifiacance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it, when things, persons, even situations force you to; and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality... (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 160).

Immediately after setting out such rules of conduct, however, Deleuze and Guattari go on to caution the reader of the dangers these carry and the need for further discrimination. In other words, they confound the suggestion that there are straightforward, unequivocal criteria by which one can lead a non-fascist life or construct one's own body without organs. The reason is that BwOs come in many guises; they exist already in the strata as well as in the destratified planes of consistency on which

BwOs are formed, while the BwO formed on a plane of consistency can easily turn cancerous. The problem of evaluation and discrimination re-emerges at every stage: "How can we fabricate a BwO for ourselves without its being the cancerous BwO of a fascist inside us, or the empty BwO of a drug addict, paranoiac, or hypochondriac?" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 161).

For Deleuze and Guattari, this kind of ambivalence inheres in all their concepts of life, creativity, and transformation. Consider the lines of flight along which individual or collective assemblages break down or become transformed. On the one hand, insofar as we are interested in bringing about change we cannot avoid experimentation with such lines because "it is always on a line of flight that we create" (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 135). In this sense, lines of flight are potential pathways of mutation in an individual or social fabric and sources of the affect associated with the passage from a lower to a higher state of power, namely joy. On the other hand, lines of flight have their own dangers. Once having broken out of the limits imposed by the molar forms of segmentarity and subjectivity, a line of flight may fail to connect with the necessary conditions of creative development or be incapable of so connecting and turn instead into a line of destruction. When this happens, lines of flight or deterritorialization are a path to the most extreme failure and the affect associated with this passage to a lower state. They can become the source of "a strange despair, like an odor of death and immolation, a state of war from which one returns broken" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 229).⁹

Finally, we can draw a number of conclusions with regard to the kind of evaluation sustained by Deleuze and Guattari's practical philosophy. First, it will be endless since one can never be certain about the final or true character of a given event or process. Kantian evaluation of the moral character of actions is also endless, but for a different reason. For Kant, we can never be entirely sure that we have acted out of duty and not out of some self-interested motive. This is an epistemological problem rather than a consequence of the equivocal character of the actions as it is for Deleuze and Guattari. In the evaluative schema of *A Thousand Plateaus*, nothing is unambiguously good or bad. "Nothing's good in itself, it all depends on a careful systematic use. In *A Thousand Plateaus* we're trying to say you can never guarantee a good outcome (it's not enough just to have a *smooth space*, for example, to overcome striations and coercion, or a *body without organs* to overcome organizations)" (Deleuze 1995, 32). The potential danger and uncertainty associated with lines of flight is the primary justification for the essential prudence of Deleuzian politics. It is because we never know in advance which way a line of flight will turn, or whether a given set of heterogeneous ele-

ments will be able to form a consistent and functional multiplicity, that caution is necessary.

Second, evaluation will always be contextual or responsive to the character of the events and processes involved. It is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari invoke Artaud's hostility to the judgment of God: the judgment of God stratifies the BwO of the body and makes it into an organism. It makes the BwO of desire into a subject. It implies a single unilateral frame of evaluation such as we find in Kant. Actions, in the end, fall either on the side of good or evil. For Deleuze, following Nietzsche and Artaud, things are never so simple. Actions take place between finite beings in particular circumstances. They are the outcome of a specific play of forces rather than universal requirements of rationality or freedom. They give rise to specific and local forms of obligation, antipathy, or attraction.

Third, the conditions of evaluation will lead to paradox. In this sense, although they do not dwell on the aporetic character of the extreme form of the concepts outlined in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari's practical philosophy resembles Derrida's deconstructive analysis of determinations of the will in general (decision). It is not difficult to find the elements of paradox in their characterization of the ambivalence of their concepts.¹⁰ Consider the ambiguous status of relative deterritorialization which can be either positive or negative. It is negative when the deterritorialized element is immediately subjected to forms of reterritorialization that enclose or obstruct its line of flight. It is positive when the line of flight prevails over secondary reterritorializations, although it may still fail to connect with other deterritorialized elements or enter into a new assemblage. Relative deterritorialization therefore can lead either to effective change or transformation within a given territory or system or to defeat and immediate reterritorialization. Since absolute deterritorialization is the underlying condition of relative deterritorialization in all its forms, it follows that it is both the condition of possibility of change and the condition of its impossibility.¹¹

This affinity with Derridean aporia is not unrelated to the contextual character of Deleuzian evaluation. They share an ethical orientation toward the event or the emergence of the new, where this implies a rupture with present actuality and its possible future forms. As Kant showed in his analysis of genius in art, the advent of the genuinely new implies the reorganization of rules for the production and evaluation of the work in question. By definition, we cannot know in advance what form this will take. This is why Deleuzian principles of evaluation are equivocal and open-ended: they are rules for the creation of the new. If they eschew general prescription this is because they answer to a pragmatic aim altogether different from that of universalizing judgment:

"to bring into existence and not to judge.... What expert judgment, in art, could ever bear on the work to come?" (Deleuze 1997, 135).

Toward a Deleuzian Theory of Right?

Within the domain of practical reason, Kant distinguishes between the ethical, in which the incentive to act in accordance with the moral law is bound up with the very idea of such a law, and the juridical, in which external incentives are attached to publicly promulgated laws. The theory of those laws for which only external incentives and disincentives such as coercion or the threat of punishment are possible is what he calls the doctrine of right. It deals with the sum of the conditions under which the actions of individuals can be correlated in accordance with the freedom of each: "Any action is right if it can coexist with everyone's freedom in accordance with a universal law ..." (Kant 1996, 387). In turn, the theory of right may be divided into private right, which encompasses the laws regarding the behavior of individuals, which apply even in the absence of any public political authority, and which are necessary if their actions are to remain consistent with the freedom of others; and public right, which encompasses the system of laws needed in order that a multitude of human beings may live together in a civil condition (Kant 1996, 455).

In *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari do not directly address the political domain of public right. They consider the different forms of modern government only from the Marxist perspective of their subordination to the axioms of capitalist production. From this point of view, authoritarian, socialist, and liberal democratic states are considered equivalent to one another insofar as they function as models of realization of the global axiomatic of capital. They allow that there are important differences between the various modern forms of state, but provide little discussion of these differences. Equally, they point to the importance of the changes to the majoritarian order or public right that come about through struggles for civil and political rights, for equality of economic condition and opportunity, for regional and national autonomy, and so on, but offer no normative theory of the basis of such rights or the kinds and degrees of equality that should prevail. Instead, they focus on the minoritarian becomings that provide the affective impetus for such struggles (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 470–1). In their view, the source of political creativity must always be traced back to subterranean shifts in allegiance, attitude, sensibility, and belief on the part of individuals and groups. These give expression to the multitude of ways in which people deviate from the majoritarian standard against which their rights and duties as citizens are measured. At the same time, the significance of such minoritarian becomings for public

political right depends on their being translated into new forms of right and different statuses for individuals and groups: "molecular escapes and movements would be nothing if they did not return to the molar organizations to reshuffle their segments, their binary distributions of sexes, classes and parties" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 216–7).

Under the influence of Marxist approaches to politics, they focus on the conditions of revolutionary social change rather than the conditions of maintaining political society as a fair system of cooperation between its members. At the same time, they reject key tenets of Marxist social and political theory. They insist that social change is brought about by movements of deterritorialization and lines of flight rather than class contradictions. Their rejection of the organizational and tactical forms of traditional Marxist politics is definitively expressed at the end of *Dialogues* when Deleuze and Parnet abandon the concept of revolution defined by the capture of state power in favor of a new concept of *revolutionary-becoming* (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 147). Revolutionary-becoming must be understood in light of Deleuze and Guattari's concern with the emergence of the new or the advent of the truly Other, as Derrida would say. This Other is irreducible to the possible future forms of the actual present. Becoming revolutionary is therefore a matter of finding the lines of flight that undermine the existing order and trace the outlines of the new.¹²

In this manner, although they offer neither descriptive nor normative accounts of macro-political institutions and procedures, Deleuze and Guattari provide a language in which to describe micro-political movements and infra-political processes that give rise to new forms of constitutional and legal order. The concepts they invent thus bear indirectly upon the forms of public right. Concepts such as becoming-minor, nomadism, smooth space, and lines of flight or deterritorialization are not meant as substitutes for existing concepts of freedom, equality, or justice, but they are intended to assist the emergence of another justice, new kinds of equality and freedom, as well as new kinds of political differentiation and constraint.

From the point of view of political evaluation, we find in relation to these movements of becoming, deterritorialization, or the production of smooth space the same kind of indeterminacy and ambivalence that arises in relation to the ethical judgment of individual transformations. Smooth spaces are like lines of flight or deterritorialization in that, although they do not amount to spaces of pure freedom, they are nevertheless the kind of space that can lead to the transformation of existing institutions or the displacement of the goals of political conflict. Emergences of smooth spaces are conditions under which "life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches

adversaries" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 500). However, in accordance with the ambivalence which is always present in Deleuzian evaluation, we must always assess what kind of smooth space we are dealing with: is it one that has been captured by state forces or one that results from the dissolution of a striated space? Does it allow more or less freedom of movement? Above all, we should never believe "that a smooth space will suffice to save us" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 500).¹³

Becoming-Democratic

What is Philosophy? offers no more direct account of principles of public right. The focus in this book is on the political vocation of philosophy, where this is aligned with the struggle against capitalism: "Philosophy takes the relative deterritorialization of capital to the absolute; it makes it pass over the plane of immanence as movement of the infinite and suppresses it as internal limit, *turns it back against itself so as to summon forth a new earth, a new people*" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 99). Elements of Deleuze and Guattari's Marxism remain in their diagnosis of the present, for example their analysis of the isomorphic but heterogeneous character of all states with regard to the global capitalist axiomatic. From this perspective, they suggest that even the most democratic states are compromised by their role in the production of human misery alongside great wealth: "What social democracy has not given the order to fire when the poor come out of their territory or ghetto?" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 107). They maintain their commitment to the revolutionary-becoming of people rather than the traditional Marxist concept of revolution, even as they point out that the concept of revolution is itself a philosophical creation.

However, at this point something new appears in Deleuze and Guattari's political lexicon. On the one hand, the concept of becoming-revolutionary is defined in terms of people's relationship to a philosophical concept, where the primary example is not drawn from Lenin but from Kant's distinction between the bloody events that took place in Paris in 1789 and people's enthusiasm for the idea of a constitutional state which enshrined the equal rights of men and citizens.¹⁴ On the other hand, they contrast the actual universality of the market with the virtual universality of a global democratic state and call for resistance to the present in the name of a "becoming-democratic that is not to be confused with present constitutional states" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 113 translation modified). They describe their own political philosophy as reterritorialized on a new earth and a people to come, unlike those found in actually existing democracies. The many critical remarks about actually existing democracies in this book leave open the possibility that other

actualizations of the concept of democracy might be possible. In this sense, Deleuze's later political thought explicitly presupposes a concept of becoming-democratic or democracy to come.

But what does this mean and what role does this concept play? One way in which philosophy's task of counter-actualizing the world might be achieved is through the invention or reinvention of concepts such as revolution and democracy. *What is Philosophy?* does not offer a renewed concept of democracy in the light of which we might point out the ways in which present incarnations are inadequate to the pure event of democracy. However, it does suggest other ways in which a Deleuzian practice of philosophy might assist a becoming-democratic, for example through the account that it gives of the relationship between philosophy and opinion.

One of the elements of a theory of public right, according to contemporary democratic theorists, is a theory of public reason. Given that the goal of political association is to determine a collective will as the basis for laws and public policy, these principles will govern public debate with a view to such collective decisions.¹⁵ From where do these principles come? One answer, given by Rawls, is to say that the ultimate foundation for such principles lies in the considered judgments or opinions of the people concerned (Rawls 1985). For Rawls, the theory of justice and the conditions of a well-ordered society must be tested against the considered judgments of the society. These judgments are not reducible to the day-to-day opinions of citizens. They are expressed in the institutions and in the constitutional and legal settlements of the society. They set limits to the conduct of public debate and provide the normative framework within which disagreements can be settled, or at least kept within reasonable bounds so as not to threaten the political order.

Rawls' liberal conception of democratic politics therefore implies a distinction between two kinds or levels of opinion: considered judgments about right ways of acting, as embodied in institutions and historical documents, and everyday opinions on matters of current concern or public policy. Deleuze and Guattari also draw a distinction between everyday opinions on matters of current concern and the opinions embedded in the national characteristics of a people, their conceptions of right and their practical philosophy as this is expressed in political and legal institutions. In the context of their all too brief account of what they call "geophilosophy," they ask at one point whether philosophy in its present critical form is closely aligned with "the modern democratic state and human rights" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 102). In reply, they point out that there is no universal democratic state since the market is the only thing that is universal under capitalism. There are only particular "nationalitarian" philosophies reterritorialized on particular forms of

democratic state, the contours of which are determined in part by the philosophical "opinions" of the peoples concerned (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 102–4). These "nationalitarian" opinions about what is fair and just will constrain the institutional and legal actualization of democratic ideals in a given society. It follows that the form in which modern democratic states appear will be determined in part by the philosophical opinions of the people or peoples concerned. In addition, to the extent that modern democratic states function as models of realization of the immanent axiomatic of global capitalism, they will be constrained by their subordination to the requirements of this system. That is an important part of the reason why "our democracies" do not provide optimum conditions for resistance to the present or the constitution of new earths and new peoples. The consensus of opinions in these societies all too often reflects "the cynical perceptions and affections of the capitalist" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 108, 146).

The task of political philosophy is defined by Deleuze and Rawls alike in terms of its relationship with philosophical or considered opinion. However, the important question is what kind of relationship philosophy has to opinion understood in this way. One model of critical engagement with *doxa* is provided by classical Greek philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari describe this as a dialectic that constructs an ideal or tribunal before which the truth-value of different opinions can be assessed. They suggest that while this dialectic purports to extract a form of knowledge from opinions, opinion continually breaks through so that in the end "philosophy remains a doxography" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 80). Rawls' political liberalism provides another model of engagement with opinion, one that does not attempt to gauge the truth or falsity of opinions but rather seeks to reconstruct the considered opinions of an historically specific form of society in order to render them systematic and coherent. In this way, it produces a concept of a fair and just society, subject to the qualification that this concept might change as the considered opinions of the society change.¹⁶

Deleuze and Guattari's "utopian" conception of philosophy implies a more critical relation to opinion. Their conception of the political vocation of philosophy as helping to bring about "new earths and new peoples" suggests more extravagant ambitions than Rawls' realistic utopianism. It points to their focus on critical engagement with and transformation of considered opinions rather than their systematic reconstruction. That is why, in the brief exergue to *Negotiations*, Deleuze presents philosophy as engaged in a "guerilla campaign" against public opinion and other powers that be such as religions and laws (Deleuze 1995). Success in this kind of political philosophy is not measured by the test of reflective equilibrium or by the capacity to maintain a well-ordered society but by

the capacity of its concepts to engage with and assist movements of deterritorialization in the present. Deleuze's criticisms of the inequalities produced by capitalism might be understood in this light. They challenge existing opinions about what is acceptable with the aim of extending and developing equality of condition within contemporary societies. Such criticism must engage with forms of becoming-revolutionary that are immanent and active in present social and political life if they are to assist in opening up paths to the invention of new forms of individual and collective life.

The concepts of becoming-revolutionary and becoming-democratic together define the novel normativity of Deleuze's later political philosophy. Deleuze's support for "jurisprudence," understood as the invention of new rights, indicates how these two becomings might converge in effective political change: revolutionary-becomings provide the micro-political basis on which new rights may emerge. In turn, these become incorporated into the moral and legal order of existing democracies, thereby extending their responsiveness to the will of individuals and groups affected by new technologies, new therapeutic and other practices (Deleuze 1995, 169–70). Becoming-revolutionary and becoming-democratic do not specify a determinate state of affairs that we should strive to bring about, like the "just constitutional regime" which Rawls takes to be the object of political endeavor (Rawls 1993, 93). Like all the concepts that philosophy invents or reinvents in order to counter-actualize the present, these do not simply represent an actual state of affairs. They are nevertheless concepts of practical reason in the sense that they give expression to a pure event of revolution and a pure event of democracy. The "pure event" of democracy points towards future as yet unrealized forms of democracy, but also reminds us that there is no definitive form that will ever arrive. In the same way, the pure event of revolution is not reducible to the events of actual historical uprisings. In each case, it is not the concept of an actually or potentially existing democracy or revolution but rather "the contour" or "the configuration" of an event that remains perpetually to come (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 32–3).

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Notes

1. The present paper was presented at "The Living Thought of Gilles Deleuze" International Conference, Copenhagen, November 2005. It has benefitted from discussions with many of the participants, but in particular Gene Holland, Dan Smith, and Ken Surin.
2. "A philosophy is what Félix and I tried to produce in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, especially in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which is a long book putting forward many concepts" (Deleuze 1995, 136).
3. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the concept "has no *reference*: it is self-referential, it posits itself and its object at the same time as it is created" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 22).
4. For rebuttal of Mengue's charge of anti-democratic tendencies in Deleuze and Guattari, see Patton 2005a, 2005b.
5. In *Deleuze and the Political*, I call this "critical freedom" in order to distinguish it from liberal concepts of positive and negative freedom (Patton 2000, 83–7).
6. On the normativity of concepts, see Brandom 2001.

7. Similarly, Negri's review of *A Thousand Plateaus* described this book as offering "a perfectly operational phenomenology of the present" (Negri 1995, 108).

8. See Miller, "Beyond Identity: The Postidentitarian Predicament in *A Thousand Plateaus*" in *Nationalists and Nomads: Essays on Francophone African Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). This chapter is a slightly revised version of "The Postidentitarian Predicament in the Footnotes of *A Thousand Plateaus*: Nomadology, Anthropology, and Authority," *Diacritics*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1993. See also the exchange between Miller and Eugene Holland over the question of the referential status of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts in *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 34, no. 1, Spring 2003; vol. 34, no. 3, Fall 2003; vol. 34, no. 4, Winter 2003.

9. Todd May draws attention to the dangers of the different kinds of line, and to the contextual and experimental character of Deleuze and Guattari's ethico-political injunctions. He describes these as "ways to conceive ourselves and our being together that allow us to begin to experiment with alternatives. *But there is no general prescription*. There are only analyses and experiments in a world that offers us no guarantees, because it is always other and more than we can imagine" (May 2005, 152). More generally, he contrasts Deleuze's post-Nietzschean concern with the question of how we might live in the absence of any transcendent grounds of conduct with the Kantian concern with how we should act. While Deleuze does not suppose a universal framework of judgment in the manner of Kant, there is no reason to think that he would deny the importance of historical and contingent principles of public right which govern our ways of living together.

10. At one point, they refer to the "paradox" of fascism understood in terms of the ambiguity of the line of flight (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 230).

11. For further discussion of similarities between the political philosophies of Deleuze and Derrida, see Patton, 2003a, 2003b.

12. Kenneth Surin elaborates on the difference between the question of revolution posed in terms of the actual and the question of becoming-revolutionary posed in terms of the virtual in commenting on Deleuze's "Immanence: A Life" (Surin 2005). He suggests that the question of whether revolution is possible is uninteresting when posed in terms of the actual because it cannot encompass the truly revolutionary break with the actual. Only the question posed in terms of the virtual can encompass the conditions under which absolute deterritorialization is manifest in positive

form, leading to new kinds of social assemblage, new earths and new peoples.

13. Eyal Weizman provides a striking example of the political polyvalence of the concept of smooth space in "Walking through Walls" (Weizmann 2005). He describes the Israeli military tactic of literally walking through walls and presents evidence in the forms of interviews with IDF officers to show that they draw upon Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of smooth and striated space in order to theorize this tactic.

14. Deleuze and Guattari refer to Kant's discussion of this in *The Contest of Faculties* Part 2, section 6, and to commentaries on this text by Foucault, Habermas, and Lyotard (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 224 n. 13).

15. Mengue is correct to point out that this amounts to a properly political or "doxological" plane of immanence on which it is not concepts, percepts, or affects that are produced but "solidarity and consensus regarding what is to be done here and now" (Mengue 2003, 52). He is also correct to suggest that the absence of any account of specifically political reason is a shortcoming of the tripartite division of thought outlined in *What is Philosophy?*, and to point out that this absence is not necessary. Deleuzian concepts readily lend themselves to at least a descriptive account of public reason. The formation of consensus or "right opinion" can be understood as the outcome of a specific and rhizomatic play of opinions, expert advice, interests, and values such that it "operates a veritable deterritorialization of opinion" (Mengue 2003, 53). Such collective decision-making involves the reterritorialization of opinion on an idea or set of ideas of the public good.

16. Rawls admits this dependency of the principles of justice on current knowledge and the existing scientific consensus and concedes that "as established beliefs change, it is possible that the principles of justice which it seems rational to choose may likewise change" (Rawls 1973, 548).