

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

Permanent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/170364>

Copyright and reuse:

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it.

Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk

Subject and Subjection: Deleuze,
Guattari, and the Problems of Liberalism

by

Alex Underwood

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

University of Warwick, Department of Philosophy

July 2021

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	1
Abstract.....	2
List of Abbreviations	3
Introduction The Problems of Liberalism.....	4
I. Research Statement.....	4
II. Methodology and Overview.....	6
III. Statement of Originality and Synopsis	19
Chapter 1 Life, Representation, and the Problem of Freedom.....	24
I. Transcendental Empiricism.....	26
II. Multiplicities and Destiny	31
III. Return and Revolution.....	41
IV. A New Politics.....	53
Chapter 2 Reason, Capture, and the Problem of Sovereignty	63
I. Subject to Reason.....	66
i. Locke and Universal Truth.....	67
ii. Kant and Universal Justice.....	70
iii. Hegel and Universal Right	72
II. Two Problems of Political Analysis	77
III. Signifiante and Capture.....	84
IV. Cruelty, Enslavement, and Despotic Sovereignty.....	90
V. Subjectification, Subjection, and Judicial Sovereignty.....	95
VI. Agency and a ‘Minor’ Strain of Liberalism	100
Chapter 3 Micropolitics, Minoritarianism, and the Problem of Revolution.....	109
I. Kafka’s Way Out	112
II. Nomadism and Rhizomatics.....	122

III. Connect, Conjugate, Continue: Rhizomatics and Vitality.....	128
IV. From the French Revolution to May '68	135
i. The French Revolution and Universal Minority.....	135
ii. May '68 and Subjective Redeployments	149
Chapter 4 Appropriation, Rights, and the Problem of Law.....	154
I. Law and the War Machine.....	156
II. The Smooth Spaces of Liberalism.....	162
i. Rawls: Reflective Equilibrium	163
ii. Habermas: Deliberative Equilibrium.....	168
III. Against the Rechtsstaat.....	172
IV. The Dangers of Desire.....	181
Chapter 5 Capitalism, Control, and the Problem of Security	195
I. The Global Capitalist Axiomatic	197
II. Unequal Exchange and Molecular Insecurity	206
III. Nationalism, Subjection, Enslavement, and Control.....	214
IV. The Age of Minorities and the New Proletariat	221
Conclusion Freedom and a Task of Freedom: Towards a Deleuze-Guattarian Political Analysis	239
I. Summary	239
II. Concluding Remarks	241
Bibliography.....	253

Acknowledgements

Connect, conjugate, continue – this quote has come to epitomise this thesis, which has evolved through a number of false turns, dead ends, and points of exhaustion. It would not have been possible without the singular generosity of a great number of people.

I would firstly like to thank my supervisor, Miguel de Beistegui, for his time and patience; my parents, Sandra and Nicholas Underwood, for all their support; and to all those who have filled these last few years with colour, notably Polina Khanova, Jo Delyse Packwood, Roxana Baltaru, Maria Mourtou Paradeisopoulou, and my colleagues at the University of Warwick Library.

A special thanks also to Ash Finn, Kynthia Plagianou, and Thomas Waterton for their comments and advice in the final stages, an act of great kindness which made the unbearable bearable.

Finally, to my strange band, without whom I'd have no orientation in the world: to Filip Niklas, singular and anomalous; Josephine Taylor, war machine and marvellous producer of signs; and the beautiful Clelia Furlan, without whose grace I'd long since have fallen into a black hole.

Abstract

This thesis seeks to establish a productive contrast between the political philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari and the Liberal tradition. I conceptualise the latter as a historical development uniting theoretical and political practices justified by models of subjectivity or of harmonious intersubjective association, from which they draw principles of individual freedom and subjection taken to apply in general. I argue that Deleuze and Guattari's politics of 'problematization', by contrast, is focused on the singular and the potentials embodied by concrete individuals and collectives, and so cannot be reduced to formal institutional practice.

I develop the opposition through a series of problems which highlight these different approaches: freedom, sovereignty, revolution, law, and security. In each case, I argue that Liberal philosophies formulate and solve such problems via general and abstract principles, whilst Deleuze and Guattari insist they be reopened by actual individuals and communities as part of their development of new ways of thinking, acting, and living.

Further, I use Deleuze and Guattari's work to contextualise the Liberal tradition within the history of state and capital, arguing that the 'universal' principles of subjectivity or association it produced have been internalised by the populations of capitalist democracies, separating them from their capacity to constitute problems and providing nation states with a pliant citizenry and adaptable labour force. I argue that Deleuze and Guattari's 'minor' socialism enables concrete populations to produce their own conception of what it means to be subject to capital, lending itself to internationalism and continuous experimentation with new values and orientations.

The original contribution of this thesis lies in its presentation of a Deleuze-Guattarian perspective on Liberalism, which complements existing studies of their conception of the development of the state and capitalism, as well as in its development of 'problematization' as a politics and ethics of the singular.

List of Abbreviations

AO: Anti-Oedipus

ATP: A Thousand Plateaus

B: Bergsonism

DR: Difference and Repetition

ES: Empiricism and Subjectivity

WIP: What is Philosophy?

Introduction | The Problems of Liberalism

A Thousand Plateaus, which I regard as a major philosophical work, seems to me at the same time a catalogue of unsolved problems, most particularly in the field of political philosophy. Its pairs of contrasting terms—process and project, singularity and subject, composition and organization, lines of flight and apparatuses/strategies, micro and macro, and so on - all this not only remains forever open but it's constantly being reopened, through an amazing will to theorize, and with a violence reminiscent of heretical proclamations... But I seem sometimes to hear a tragic note, at points where it's not clear where the “war-machine” is going.¹

—Antonio Negri

I. Research Statement

Despite the extensive influence of the political philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, questions remain regarding the tradition into which their work best fits.² In response to Antonio Negri's point regarding the indeterminacy of their collaborative ‘war machine’, Deleuze insists that they remained Marxists, if in different ways, through their mutual belief that political philosophy must centre on capitalism and its historical development: an ambiguous response which leaves the problem open, particularly in light of the many Marxist concepts to which their work makes no reference.³ Their refusal to proscribe a universal political program has led some to connect their thought to the autonomist tradition with which Negri himself is often associated, as well as to the radical democratic politics of *Empire*, which marks perhaps the most influential redeployment of their politics to date.⁴ As avowed critics of the state

¹ Gilles Deleuze, “Control and Becoming,” in *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2005), 171.

² For an excellent, if now dated, elaboration on readings of Deleuzian-Guattarian politics (along with a rare discussion of Liberalism) see Jeremy Gilbert, “Deleuzian Politics? A Survey and Some Suggestions,” *New Formations* 68 (January 2010): pp. 10-33, <https://doi.org/10.3898/newf.68.01.2009>. Notable texts which focus explicitly on the political dimensions of Deleuze and Guattari's corpus, and which are not otherwise referenced below, include: Philip Goodchild, *Deleuze and Guattari: An Introduction to the Politics of Desire* (London: Sage, 1996); Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London: Routledge, 2000); Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000); John Protevi, *Political Physics: Deleuze and Derrida on the Body Politic* (London: Athlone, 2001); Phillipe Mengue, *Deleuze et la question de la démocratie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003); Peter Hallward *Out of this World: Gilles Deleuze and the philosophy of creation* (London: Verso, 2006); Iain Mckenzie and Robert Porter, *Dramatizing the Political: Deleuze and Guattari* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Joshua Ramey, *The Hermetic Deleuze: Philosophy and Spiritual Ordeal* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2012); Nathan Widder, *Political Theory After Deleuze* (London: Continuum, 2012); Janae Sholtz, *The Invention of a People: Heidegger and Deleuze on Art and the Political* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

³ See Jean-François Lyotard, “Energumen Capitalism,” in *Accelerate: the Accelerationist Reader*, ed. Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014), 169ff.

⁴ Nicholas Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2003); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*

who forsake class analysis in favour of a ‘micropolitics’ focused on the immanent association of ‘masses’, excellent arguments have also been presented for their intersection with anarchism.⁵ While sympathetic to both these positions, this thesis concerns their relation to a very different tradition.

References to Liberalism are noticeably absent from Deleuze and Guattari’s work, though several *prima facie* oppositions are apparent between their politics and the values with which it is typically associated. These include their explicit criticisms of ‘states of law’, human rights discourse, and the democratic communication of opinion; their rejection of the essentialist notion of identity central to humanist individualism; and their emphasis on the importance of ‘war machines’, arrangements of social forces defined by their ‘exteriority’ to any state. These factors have led many to present their politics as opposed to Liberalism, with varying degrees of explicitness.⁶ Other readings might however suggest this to be premature: most prominently, Paul Patton has read the instruction of *What is Philosophy?* to ‘become-democratic’ as representing a ‘new turn’ towards normativity and representational politics;⁷ most explicitly, Nicholas Tampio has described Deleuze as both a ‘cutting edge Liberal’ and social contract theorist.⁸

This thesis aims to clarify this discrepancy, and extend the reach of existing Deleuze-Guattarian critiques of neoliberalism and Liberal humanism, by developing a positive conception of ‘Liberalism’ against which their politics can be productively contrasted. It achieves this by outlining problems I believe to be shared by Liberal political philosophies and their institutional correlates and differentiating them from those entailed by the ‘problematisation’ I believe to animate Deleuze and Guattari’s work. In its approach to Liberalism as

(New York: The Penguin Press, 2009); *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011). See also Félix Guattari and Antonio Negri, *Communists Like Us: new spaces of liberty, new lines of alliance*, trans. Michael Ryan (New York: Semiotext(e), 1990).

⁵ Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); *Deleuze and Anarchism* ed. Chantelle Gray van Heerden and Aragorn Eloff (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019). See also Daniel Colson, *A Little Philosophical Lexicon of Anarchism: from Proudhon to Deleuze*, trans. Jesse Cohn. (Colchester: Minor Compositions, 2019).

⁶ Rosi Braidotti in particular has argued for Deleuze and Guattari’s opposition to the individualism implied by ‘Liberal’ humanism. See for example Rosi Braidotti and Patricia Pisters, “Introduction,” in *Revisiting Normativity with Deleuze*, ed. Rosi Braidotti and Patricia Pisters (London: Bloomsbury, 2012). For a critique of Paul Patton and Phillipe Mengue’s reading of Deleuze and Guattari in the normative terms of representative democracy, see Thomas Nail, *Returning to Revolution: Deleuze, Guattari, and Zapatismo* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 9-11. For a critique of Liberalism as an essential dimension of capitalist subjectification which draws directly on Deleuze and Guattari, see Maurizio Lazzarato, *Governing by Debt*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e) 2015), 91ff. For a critique on attempts in Deleuze and Guattari scholarship to reclaim their work for Liberalism, see Andrew Culp, *Dark Deleuze* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 41-43.

⁷ Paul Patton, “Becoming-Democratic,” in *Deleuze and Politics*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Nicholas Thoburn (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2008), 178; *Deleuzian Concepts: Philosophy, Colonization, Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

⁸ Nicholas Tampio, *Deleuze’s Political Vision* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

a tradition tied to the development of the population's investment into the norms of particular states, and thus part of the development of capitalism, it can be seen as a complement to investigations into Deleuze and Guattari's stipulated relation between state institutions and subjectivity, such as Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc's *State and Politics: Deleuze and Guattari on Marx*, as well as to works which extend Deleuze and Guattari's analysis along these lines, such as Éric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato's *Wars and Capital*.⁹

II. Methodology and Overview

Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is complex: it features no designated entry point, has no foundational axioms to be judged according to validity, and makes no attempt to cultivate a particular readership or remain within disciplinary limits. What it offers instead is an incredible proliferation of concepts, their meaning constantly reopened through application rather than systematically elucidated. The interpretative difficulty this raises is compounded on turning to their politics because, though avowedly political philosophers who theorise both capitalism and the state, they make no attempt to answer the traditional normative questions of political philosophy or proscribe particular courses of action.¹⁰

This refusal does not reflect an ambivalence to concrete political issues, however, but rather a cautiousness regarding the hierarchical implications of the distinction between theorist and theorised. From their perspective, the concepts and categories through which we understand ourselves and the world are fundamentally tied to existing forms of power, making politics a battle that 'precedes being'.¹¹ Their work is an intervention into this struggle, and does not provide a plan so much as conceptual tools, even weapons, the content of which remains indeterminate until their application by concrete individuals or communities within a given context: an application and determination which necessarily transforms them. It does not proscribe particular actions because it does not appeal to already-present demographics, nor to the interests of people, citizens, or rational subjects 'in general', but rather orients itself towards peoples 'yet to come'; that is, to forms of subjectivity and association currently 'larval' or latent in the social field, their emergence ward off by an existing distribution of power and unrecognisable according to the assumptions of any political theory that falls under its influence. To the extent these potentials remain obscured by such assumptions, they can be concretised only through a turn to 'problematization' on the part of actual individuals and communities, who, by re-establishing the sensible and conceptual differentiations by which

⁹ Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc, *State and Politics: Deleuze and Guattari on Marx*, trans. Ames Hodges (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2016); Éric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Wars and Capital* (London: Semiotext(e), 2016).

¹⁰ See *AO*, 380.

¹¹ *ATP*, 203.

they engage with the world, alter the ‘problems’ to which their thought and action both individually and collectively responds.

As Nietzsche once put it, ‘all concepts in which an entire process is semiotically concentrated defy definition; only something which has no history can be defined’.¹² The openness of Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts to transformative application invites selection rather than systematic interpretation, and as such I have not attempted to produce an exhaustive reading of their work. Instead, I have aimed to chart a new and original line through it, oriented by the task of reconstructing ‘problematization’ as an ethics and politics necessitating the creation of new ways of living, thinking, and associating from potentials embedded in the present.¹³ This conceptual thread begins, I argue, with Deleuze’s first attempts to follow Nietzsche in ‘overturning Platonism’, develops through the ‘schizoanalysis’ of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, informs the opposition to ‘universals’ in *What is Philosophy?*, and continues through the political considerations of Deleuze and Guattari’s later interviews and articles. As such, equivalent focus is not given to Guattari’s independent work, though this is not to efface his contribution:¹⁴ as I explore in chapter one, ‘problematization’ begins with Deleuze, and while many of the concepts I adopt are developed in more depth elsewhere, I do not believe this additional complication would alter my conclusions significantly.

The most significant development in the concept of problematization is, I would argue, that between critique and construction. The former is most prominent in *Difference and Repetition* and *Anti-Oedipus*, which deploy the concept as a means of ‘clearing the ground’ of hermeneutic and structuralist attempts to uncover fixed principles behind the determination of phenomena and instead affirm the ‘multiple’, that is, the diffuse associations of heterogeneous elements such principles only contingently order; while the latter

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality’ and other writings*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, trans. Carol Diethe. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), §14.

¹³ Texts are therefore selected for inclusion solely according to their capacity to contribute to this ‘approximation’ of the concept. I would argue that the lack of periodisation or the differentiation of the relative importance of published texts and interviews is justified by the potentially productive nature of establishing ‘transversal’ connections between their concepts, though this is not to deny the value of readings which seek to unearth contradictions, as with Arjen Kleinherenbrink’s recent *Against Continuity: Gilles Deleuze’s speculative realism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

¹⁴ Note that I also avoid distinguishing between Deleuze and Guattari as individual political actors, though one might productively do so: while Guattari was more politically engaged in the direct sense, a member of the PCF and self-described ‘communist’, Deleuze, more reticent with the term, nevertheless always presented himself as ‘à gauche’, remained actively engaged with support for Palestinian liberation, and was working on a text on Marx at the time of his death. While I believe neither can be reduced to ‘state philosophers’, both also had interactions with the ministries of François Mitterrand’s socialist government. See François Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2010). Though they each performed Marxism in different ways, I believe their politics to be indiscernible in the shared insistence not only that political analysis account for capitalism and its history, but also that such analysis be ‘problematizing’, turning on the singular and its creative potential.

comes to the fore from *A Thousand Plateaus* onwards, where the problem turns to how the open structure of the multiple can be made and sustained.¹⁵ It is this development that leads me to draw Deleuze and Guattari's thought into connection with Liberalism. In an interview with Claire Parnet, Deleuze claims that his books were each driven by a certain necessity, beginning with a singular moment in which a concept imposed itself as essential to his thought, and developing in connection with those who had previously adopted it.¹⁶ The historical claim of Liberal political philosophy to undermine and replace the arbitrariness inherent to previous distributions of power with rational institutions offers a political approach to critique and construction that can be brought into a productive contrast with problematisation.

Any reference to Liberalism immediately poses a further problem, however, as the concepts by which it is typically understood are as slippery as anything Deleuze and Guattari employ. As Friedrich Hayek notes:

Terms like "liberalism" or "democracy," "capitalism" or "socialism," today no longer stand for coherent systems of ideas. They have come to describe aggregations of quite heterogeneous principles and facts which historical accident has associated with these words but which have little in common beyond having been advocated at different times by the same people or even merely under the same name.¹⁷

Though it seems essential to begin with a definition of the tradition to which I oppose Deleuze and Guattari, such a task risks derailing the thesis before it has even begun. The term has been extended to revolutionaries and technocrats, governments and rebels; it has been contested by such diametrically opposed theorists as Hayek and John Maynard Keynes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Edmund Burke. This diversity makes strict theoretical definitions tied to propositional content either hopelessly nebulous or counterintuitively and polemically exclusive, and raises questions of historicity without definite answer: was there, for example, a 'Liberalism of the ancients', or are modern conceptions of freedom a unique product of modernity?¹⁸ Are figures on the cusp of Liberalism, such as Hugo Grotius or Thomas Hobbes, proto-Liberals for their secular reconsiderations of sovereignty, or are all Liberals of the Enlightenment illiberal for

¹⁵ *ATP*, 6. See Nail, *Returning to Revolution*, 19 for a study of the scholarly attention to this development.

¹⁶ 'If there is no necessity to create a book, that is, a strongly felt necessity by the person writing the book, then it would be better not to do it. So when I wrote on Leibniz, it was necessary for me. Why was it necessary? Because a moment arrived for me - it would take too long to explain - to talk, not about Leibniz, but about the fold. And for the fold, it was at that time fundamentally linked to Leibniz'. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, "R," trans. Charles J Stivale, Gilles Deleuze: The ABC Primer, Lecture Recording 3 - N to Z, 3 June 1989 (The Deleuze Seminars), accessed May 18, 2021, <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/gilles-deleuze-abc-primer/lecture-recording-3-n-z>.

¹⁷ Friedrich Hayek, *Studies on the Abuse and Decline of Reason: Texts and Documents*, ed. Bruce Caldwell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 47.

¹⁸ Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (London: Basic Books, 1968).

their views on slavery and suffrage? Can the Dutch, English, American and French Revolutions be described as Liberal in any real sense? Are contemporary ‘neoliberal’ practices a continuation of, or break from, the Liberal tradition proper? Such problems could be avoided by specifying a particular theoretical position against which to oppose Deleuze and Guattari, but my aims in this case are broader.¹⁹ Specifically, I aim to examine Liberalism not as a particular set of propositions held by a number of different political theorists and philosophers, but rather as a process which has developed through a number of theoretical positions, political actions, and institutional practices.

In presenting Liberalism in this way, I join a diverse lineage of theorists who have attempted to conceptualise it as an unfolding historical tradition. Pierre Manent characterises it as a political turn towards more secular grounds for sovereignty, beginning with the ‘politico-theological problem’ posed to states by the Catholic Church’s claims to universal authority and transforming, following the French Revolution, into a series of attempts to establish a stable order to contain the new ideas and emotions it released;²⁰ Alan Ryan, by contrast, presents it as a family of doctrines collectively defined by their opposition to threats to individual freedom, beginning with Protestant resistance to Catholic dogma and mutating alongside the forms of resistance necessitated by subsequent tyrannies.²¹ Michel Foucault points to an evolving organisational and discursive practice seeking the appropriate internal limits for government, part of a

¹⁹ The diverse nature of the different Liberal traditions has led some to demand that any critique specify the exact theoretical positions to which one refers. See for example Martha C. Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 57: ‘Many critiques of liberalism are really critiques of economic Utilitarianism, and would not hold against the views of Kant or Mill. Some feminist attacks oversimplify the tradition, and in responding to them I run a grave risk of oversimplification myself... any critique of liberalism that cannot be taken seriously as a criticism of Kant or Mill probably is not worth discussing’. While I refuse both to specify a particular theoretical principle as the object of critique, and to distinguish this rigidly from utilitarianism in the economic sphere, I do not believe the argument is weakened for it. Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of theorematic politics can be directly applied to both the ‘common principles’ Nussbaum identifies between the Kantian and Millian Utilitarian traditions (notably the formal equality of subjects, their capacity to make ‘moral’ choices, and their treatment under law) and those of economic utilitarianism due to its rejection of any politics grounded solely in a formal conception of the subject. This is not to argue that these traditions are equivalent or ascribe the same content to subjects, but that they both rely upon a formal presentation of subjectivity which abstracts from the singularity of concrete subjects, and so share an ‘Image’ of thought as homogenous amongst individual political agents. To examine in depth the exact details of the varied formal presentations which characterise the different Liberal traditions would in this case be redundancy, not rigor. This is however not to argue against the value of direct comparisons of Deleuze and Guattari with particular Liberal thinkers: such a project would be worthwhile in itself, in particular for adding nuance to our understanding of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory and its potential application. For an example of such a comparative study, see Eugene W. Holland, *Nomad Citizenship: free-market communism and the slow-motion general strike* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011) which productively examines Deleuze and Guattari’s work alongside that of Hayek, and the studies of Alexandre Lefebvre’s *The Image of Law: Deleuze, Bergson, Spinoza* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

²⁰ Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, trans. Rebecca Balinski (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

²¹ Alan Ryan, *The Making of Modern Liberalism* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), 21-42.

historical development from sovereign to disciplinary power;²² a thread more recently explored by Miguel de Beistegui, who presents it as a governmentality of subjectivation, an evolving practice of control which reproduces itself by shaping the desire of citizens.²³ Though the differences in content selected and connections drawn make it hard to argue that these positions possess the same object in all its details, I take each to, like myself, approximate ‘Liberalism’ anew by unearthing connections between a particular array of theoretical and corporeal entities (propositions, revolutions, governance practices, desire...). I thus present this thesis as their complement, rather than their rival. As Ryan puts it, any ‘Liberalism’ is ‘an artifact, not a brute fact’: that is, a constructive selection, one which ought to be judged for its insight rather than for its ability to exhaustively summarise a tradition which has reached a point of relative completion.²⁴ While some inclusions and connections within it may appear to diverge from those readers may usually associate with the term Liberalism, and while some may be taken aback by its lack of immediate reference to their preferred understanding of its guiding ‘ethos’, a deviation from at least some existing intuitions is the inevitable result of any attempt to ‘reconstruct’ the Liberal tradition, aiming to reveal something concrete regarding its development and the influence it has upon the present. Rather than question-begging, I would thus argue that my selection ought to be seen as a form of problem-formation: an analysis of diverse yet interconnected elements which intentionally avoids tracing a structure to ‘explain’ them in an ossified fashion, but instead incorporates them according to the effect they realise upon the present and the potential for thought and action implicated within it.

Specifically, this new selection is oriented by concepts drawn from the works of Deleuze and Guattari. This new application goes beyond their explicit statements, though in a way I believe to be firmly grounded in their work, with any creation on my part deriving solely from the new connections I forge between these concepts.²⁵ In particular, the selection by which I approximate the development of Liberalism is guided by their ‘schizoanalysis’, an examination of subjects and societies as comprised of singular ‘multiplicities’ of heterogeneous elements and connections irreducible to particular examples of a ‘human nature’ or sociality in general. As I explore in chapter two, Deleuze and Guattari argue that all such principles derive from

²² Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–79*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Michel Senellart (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 1-20.

²³ Miguel de Beistegui, *The Government of Desire: A Genealogy of the Liberal Subject* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

²⁴ Ryan, *The Making of Modern Liberalism*, 2.

²⁵ In this, I also follow Deleuze. See Gilles Deleuze, “On Philosophy,” in *Negotiations* 136: ‘Philosophers introduce new concepts, they explain them, but they don’t tell us, not completely anyway, the problems to which those concepts are a response... The history of philosophy, rather than repeating what a philosopher says, has to say what he must have taken for granted, what he didn’t say but is nonetheless present in what he did say’.

existing forms of social organisation, within which they serve to reinforce the sensible and conceptual differentiations required by established forms of power. This means that the theoretical dimension of Liberalism must be examined from a ‘pragmatic’ perspective, that is, one which accounts for the concrete effects it has realised on institutions and subjects, rather than restricting the analysis to a fixed set of abstract principles or values determined in advance. Simultaneously, however, it is essential to maintain the specificity of this theoretical dimension, and so I avoid defining Liberalism simply as the ideological consequence of bourgeois class interests and, by extension, the material conditions which would thereby become the explanatory principle of all history. From a Deleuze-Guattarian perspective, Liberalism involves both a theoretical and a material development, neither reducible to the other.

This means also that there is no single pre-determined ‘form’ against which historical theorists and states can be compared to determine their inclusion within the tradition. My own forays into Liberalism will therefore be selective and demonstrative, establishing a history which remains ‘singular, ironic, and critical’ in the sense Deleuze and Guattari establish in *Anti-Oedipus*:²⁶ singular, in the sense that it results from specific, yet diverse, inclusions; ironic, in that it recognises this development as contingent; and critical, in that it aims to ‘approximate’ the contingent processes, realised through these inclusions, that inform present potentials for thought and action. In the place of fixed principles, I therefore argue that Liberalism can be conceptualised via a series of shared ‘problems’ each Liberal theorist and state can be taken to both complicate and solve: these being problems of freedom, sovereignty, revolution, law, and security. Though the way in which they understand these problems differs, often dramatically, what remains continuous is the recognition that their solution requires a ‘theorematic’ approach, that is, one which begins with some ‘constant’ already present in the world.

As Deleuze and Guattari present the concept in *A Thousand Plateaus*, a theorematic or ‘royal’ science involves the syllogistic progression of thought ‘by specific differences from a genus to its species, or by deduction from a stable essence to the properties deriving from it’:²⁷ that is, it involves abstracting from appearances to general principles, seeking conditions and categories for their differentiation. Where I describe Liberalism as ‘theorematic’, specifically, I refer to the reliance of its principles on a general conception of the individual, which serves as an axiom on which a formal political structure can be grounded. This reliance is most apparent in its theoretical development, and remains continuous where the values espoused by particular Liberal theorists and philosophers differ. The nature of the individual is taken

²⁶ *AO*, 140.

²⁷ *ATP*, 362.

to be defined by certain universals which apply equally to all: either universal dimensions of subjectivity or thought, as with the conceptions of 'reason' which defined a number of Early Modern Liberal positions, or the 'intersubjective' universals of communication or collective action which have become more prevalent today.

Of course, Liberalism is far from the only 'theorematic' political conception to establish a general conception of the individuals who populate society, and far from the only tradition to consider such problem as the establishment of freedom or the appropriate form of sovereignty. Where it distinguishes itself is in its focus on the freedom which pertains to these general individuals, formulated in terms of rights or a potential for choice entailed by their fixed qualities or nature: something which can be guaranteed only through the establishment of certain obligations or laws establishing limits on individual thought and action. Liberalism therefore presupposes the existence of a unified state vested with given powers and realised by particular institutions, tying all individuals in advance to a social structure to which they are necessarily subject. I would therefore argue that Liberal philosophies can be identified not only by their shared problems, but through their development of solutions to these problems via three concepts which become essential to and mutually justify one another: the individual, the freedom that pertains to them, and the social subjection necessary to realise this freedom. This presupposes no particular content on the part of these concepts, implying only their centrality, mutual implication, and universal application. The components of 'freedom' differ between 'negative' and 'positive' presentations of the concept, as articulated by Isaiah Berlin; the concept of the subject is not equivalent when defined by reason or the moral right to self-determination; and the law justified by utility is not conceptually equivalent to one grounded in its ability to mediate conflicting interests in a pluralistic society: but in each case, the concepts entail one another, their mutual justifications establishing a formal consistency upon which a methodical approach to politics can be grounded.

Like many others, I therefore define Liberalism as a state-centred politics of the individual and of individual freedom: but, as I argue throughout, such conceptions are never neutral, and serve to maintain the power of an existing institutional arrangement and dominant class. In terms of practice, I argue that Liberal political philosophy's grounding of universal obligations has resulted in its deployment in support of a number of concrete states, the sovereignty of which it vests with a formal necessity drawn from its abstracted notion of the individual. The institutions of these states are then formally justified in their regulation and redeployment of ideas, people, resources, and production, with their ultimate legitimacy deriving from the general notion of the individual, but their authority from the particularity of existing conditions and of populations recognised in aggregate: as schools gain their 'authority' from the 'universal' importance of a

general education and the supposed nature of students as a particular variant of subjects in general, and democratic institutions from the simultaneous plurality of preferences and ‘universal’ interest in a unified and stable society. Liberal states are those which justify their laws and institutions on this theoremtic basis, even if the circumstances and populations they recognise lead them to fall short of the spirit of these principles in practice.

This can be clarified with some examples, which serve also to introduce something of the development I aim to chart. John Locke, the supposed ‘father’ of Liberalism, grounded freedom in the natural and inalienable rights which pertain to subjects as the necessary means for their preservation or survival, a position inspired by the English and Glorious Revolutions and the opposition of a landowning class to despotic monarchy. Subjects are defined by their capacity to use reason in pursuit of their own interests, this including the acquisition of property; this requires their collaboration, and so a minimum of constancy in social relations; a common law is thus necessary to enable the association of free and industrious thinkers, with concrete states judged as ‘rational’ to the extent they do so without themselves threatening the security necessary for the realisation of interest. Though Locke’s conception of freedom might seem warped today, particularly in light of the limited suffrage and colonial expropriation it served to justify, he can be considered ‘Liberal’ under my definition due to his beginning with a formal conception of the subject, from which he derived the model of a ‘legitimate’ state capable of concretising rights, and the collective subjection to reason and law necessary for its operation.²⁸ The constitutional monarchies which became increasingly prevalent following the Glorious revolution can likewise be considered to have their own position within the history of Liberalism, if perhaps as ‘proto-Liberal’ institutional practices, for their distribution of power between a centralised monarchy and the authority of institutions justified by noble or natural rights, which referred back to a conception of subjectivity and law in general whilst limiting the power of the sovereign with reference to particular aggregates of subjects. This means, also, that these states remained ‘Liberal’ despite their ongoing involvement in colonialism and its very illiberal horrors.

As I argue in chapter three, the French revolution and the bourgeois republics that emerged in its wake can be considered specifically ‘Liberal’ due to their freeing of wealth from its ties to noble and church land and the population from the particularised identities of the Feudal structure, whilst simultaneously establishing new republican and free market institutions for their organisation and regulation. These institutions and the formal sovereignty to which they are tied drew their authority from their capacity to realise universal

²⁸ See Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, trans. Geoffrey Elliott (London: Verso, 2011), 21-27, and Éric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Wars and Capital*, 56-65.

rights grounded in the dignity of the human subject, this including the right to property and free expression. As I continue in the fourth chapter, the Liberal philosophy which correlated with this development, associated with figures such as Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill, was more concerned with the establishment of a just society within which conflict could be minimised, protecting the individual's freedom of thought as much from the tyranny of the majority as that of the monarch. This shift in emphasis does not constitute an absolute break, however: as Mill put it, 'whatever crushes individuality is despotism, by whatever name it may be called, and whether it professes to be enforcing the will of God or the injunctions of men', and the centrality of individual freedom remains, opposed to the potential irrationality of the populace yet grounded in their individual personality and capacity for expression.²⁹

Finally, contemporary variants of Liberalism often aim to dispense with explicit notions of 'human nature', personality, or the good life, instead aiming to provide conditions within which individuals can act upon their preferences, opinions, or interests harmoniously despite their inherent plurality. This also produces only a relative break from previous iterations, on my view, as they continue to consider individuals in the formal terms of some general capacity such as interest maximisation or rational communication. Where Hayek, for example, opposes views grounded in the 'individual human reason' of which he remains so sceptical, he relies upon the homogeneous image of individuals as possessed of particular interests and capacities, and thus a 'zone of responsibility' marking the appropriate domain of their freedom. On this conception, any direct exercise of control over the distribution of resources can be no more than arbitrary due to our individual inability to think beyond these domains: we must therefore use our knowledge of this limitation to distinguish between 'freedom under the law and the use of the legislative machinery, whether democratic or not, to abolish freedom', restricting government to the provision of the minimal information necessary for individuals to identify and master their zone of responsibility within an open market.³⁰ In the same way, modern democratic capitalist states can be considered the inheritors of the Liberal tradition despite the fact that the democratic or market institutions they deploy to guarantee human rights or the potential for choice take the formal capacities or characteristic activity of political actors, such as interest maximisation or productive dialogue, as their ultimate justification, rather than some essential facet of human nature or a particular 'comprehensive' moral view of the good life: despite presupposing difference through a pluralistic conception of interest or opinion, they limit and homogenise this difference with

²⁹ John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty" in *On Liberty, Utilitarianism and Other Essays* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2015), 62.

³⁰ Friedrich Hayek. *Studies on the Abuse and Decline of Reason: Texts and Documents*, ed. Bruce Caldwell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 63.

reference to further constants, these being necessary preconditions for the production of consensus and the maintenance of the unity of the state. Once again, this theorematic approach also means that they can be considered Liberal despite the web of state and corporate interests which so often disables or subverts these supposedly universal rights in practice.

It will be objected that conceptualising Liberalism according to its association with a theorematic approach to politics results in the inclusion of a number of philosophers, theorists, and political actors some might wish to exclude to an opposing tradition, including Hegel, Burke, Habermas, and the bourgeois revolutionaries of 1789.³¹ Against this, I would specify that my particular reconstruction of Liberalism purposefully examines it in the broad sense in order to capture something specific about the current historical juncture.³² Each of the figures I introduce have contributed significantly to the process or tradition which informs the capacities of both contemporary Liberal theory and the democratic capitalist states typically defined as ‘Liberal’: a process defined more by the internal variation which characterised its organic development as from its formal and negative ‘opposition’ to other ideologies. This is not to dismiss the real differences which have defined this tradition, such as those which separated Parliamentary Liberals from the Conservatives and Radicals with whom they shared their institutions, but rather to highlight what remained continuous despite these differences, and the influence this has upon the present. If one fails to recognise ‘Liberalism’ in the process or tradition approximated by this thesis, preferring to establish an alternative and more restrictive selection, I believe my arguments against a theorematic politics of individual freedom would continue to hold against it.

This leads naturally to a second potential objection, which is that the association of Liberalism with a theorematic politics of individual freedom risks excluding some of the more radical theorists who have adopted its mantle, instead focusing on its more prominent representatives, or those with the greatest influence on the governance of concrete states: a move out of sync with Deleuze and Guattari’s own explicit focus on the ‘minor’. To this, I would reply that, while a tradition of ‘problematizing’ Liberals certainly exists, opening the theorematic limitations of Liberalism onto a turn towards the singular, these positions have thus far resolved the inevitable tensions associated with a problematising politics through institutional solutions established on a theorematic basis, something which would ultimately restrict the cultivation of further sensible and conceptual differentiations to a given form tied to established forms of power. In particular, I would associate this aborted problematisation with a ‘fearful’ Liberalism that one might

³¹ I am grateful to Nathan Widder for highlighting the necessity of the following clarifications.

³² For an enormously successful examination of Liberalism in these broad terms, see Losurdo’s *Liberalism: A Counter-history*.

associate with the work of Judith Shklar or Richard Flathman, in whose work a recognition of the threat to individual freedom posed by institutional power leads to the promotion of an individual capacity for judgement or to establish productive collective associations as a foil to the formal power of sovereignty, as well as with variations of Liberalism which encourage re-engagement with the sensible and conceptual differentiations which underpin society, something I associate with the ‘ironic bourgeois Liberalism’ of Richard Rorty and the *vita activa* of Hannah Arendt. As I argue in chapters two and three, each of these ‘problematizing’ Liberalisms can remain such only by limiting this capacity of individuals to cultivate new values, forms of association, or sensible and conceptual frameworks with reference to common obligations. They thus abstract from the particularity of concrete groups to produce a more general notion of self-determination, with any problematisation serving to reinforce the unity of a theorematologically-justified state.

This means also that I oppose all attempts to associate Deleuze and Guattari’s thought with a potential development of this ‘minor’ Liberal tradition, a project I associate with the work of Patton, Tampio, and William E. Connolly. Though Deleuze and Guattari would be the first to argue that concepts can be drawn into any number of planes, and while it seems plausible that one could legitimately present them as ‘Liberals’, should one conceptualise Liberalism according to a different set of problems from those I employ here, I would argue that any conceptual extension sweeping enough to include Deleuze and Guattari would represent a deviation significant enough as to efface any specific reference to the singular positions and developments which have, until now, been associated with the label, and which I consider critical to understanding the limitations imposed on our capacity for thought and action in response to the crises that we face today.

Understanding this limitation returns us to the critical distinction that exists between these problems and those of Deleuze and Guattari. Where a theorematological Liberal problem, for example, might take the form ‘how can conflict best be reduced?’, implying a search for general principles which presupposes the formal equivalence of subjects and entailing the necessity of the state from the outset, Deleuze-Guattarian problematisation, by contrast, seeks to ground the concepts of political philosophy in the singular individuals, communities, and conditions to which they are applied. The problems with which Deleuze and Guattari are concerned are ‘ballistic’, forcing us to adapt our way of thinking to a world which resists and exceeds the formal conceptions by which we differentiate it.³³ Such problems hinge upon the singular, relating to questions such as ‘who?’ or ‘how many?’: not how might conflict be reduced in general, but how might we, as a particular community, deal with a particular violence, one with a name and face? To argue

³³ *ATP*, 395.

that politics is a matter of such problems is to present it as an ‘active experimentation’ with a changing reality, rather than a theoretical engagement with ahistorical questions:³⁴

[politics] proceeds by experimentation, groping in the dark, injection, withdrawal, advances, retreats. The factors of decision and prediction are limited. It is an absurdity to postulate a world supergovernment that makes the final decisions. No one is even capable of predicting the growth in the money supply.³⁵

From Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, our collective knowledge is unable to predict even the most basic facets of the future, such that any laws or principles we construct can only be beneficial within a limited and fragile context. The problems which animate theorematic politics, in the sense that they are divorced from the specifics of a concrete situation, are ‘false’, constituting a lesser truth which requires given conditions be maintained by an established power, which uses them to ‘trace’ an abstracted model onto a resistant reality. This marks the first critique of Liberalism deployed in this thesis: that the Liberal state, and the Liberal philosophy deployed within it, must be seen as part of the ‘hidden violence’ by which states separate populations from their ability to constitute problems, instead limiting them to formal conceptions of the individual or of social aggregation which maintain the power of existing institutions. This critique is outlined in the first two chapters, with the Deleuze-Guattarian alternative presented in the third and fourth. This also leads into a second critique, deployed primarily in the fifth chapter, which concerns the relation between Liberalism and capitalism. On Deleuze and Guattari’s account, the free movement of international capital has established ‘axiomatic’ geopolitical conditions in which the theorematic principles and rights on which contemporary democratic states are supposedly founded are continually disabled or subverted by the requirements of commodity production. As I mentioned above, in his earliest works Deleuze follows Nietzsche in identifying his enemy as ‘Platonism’, a philosophical tendency which, in brief, can be described as the differentiation of the world according to fixed principles, providing a form of constancy which makes it the suitable object of judgement and establishes the authority of those who exercise it. In later writings, Deleuze argues that this began as a response to the chaos of the Greek *agon*, with the philosopher serving to arbitrate disputes amongst claims to authority by different discourses over a given domain of life due to their contemplation of transcendent, ahistorical Forms: as they might decide, for example, if the poet or the strategist has the ‘right’ to discourse on the nature of war. Critically, Deleuze then argues that Platonism

³⁴ Deleuze and Parnet, “Many Politics,” in *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2007), 137.

³⁵ *ATP*, 460.

continues today in the ‘role of philosophy in the economy of our democratic world: the field of immanence of “capital”; the society of brothers or comrades, to which every revolution appeals (and the free competition amongst brothers; and the reign of opinion)’.³⁶ In short, the concepts provided by philosophy to the modern democratic state, this including the equivalent formal identity of subjects and the importance of an institutionalised democratic production of consensus, establishes a constancy which not only reinforces the sovereign power of these states, but also serves to maintain the capitalist economy of which they are now part as a field without opposition or outside. As this thesis argues, the branch of political philosophy most associated with this general conception of the subject and these formal institutions can be named Liberalism, which legitimises the democratic and market institutions which separate individuals from their capacity to constitute problems and so prevents them from threatening the commodity production which ultimately underlies the worst crises we face today.

As Brian Massumi famously put it, concepts are for Deleuze and Guattari like bricks, in that they can be used to build a courthouse of reason, or can be thrown through its windows.³⁷ Everything turns on whether the courthouse or the anarchist throwing it are the problem demanding resolution. Rather than a state technician finessing general categories and the rights supposedly essential to them, the goal of their philosophy ‘is not to answer questions, it’s to get out, to get out of it’, ‘it’ referring to the problems which maintain a given historical order, and in this case the ‘axiomatic’ established by capitalism.³⁸ As they argue in *What is Philosophy?*, concepts ‘are only created as a function of problems which are thought to be badly understood or badly posed’, and their proliferation of concepts can, on my account, therefore be seen as leading to very different problems than those which underpin Liberal capitalist democracies.³⁹ Where Liberalism seeks a stable ground on which to build a method of statecraft, the subjects Deleuze and Guattari discuss are not subjects in general, possessed of equivalent qualities and legitimising an equal law within a generic, ideal state, but the necessarily unequal, those who have had the problems which orient their lives taken from them by state and capital. Collectively, they are, Deleuze and Guattari argue, the ‘proletariat’: but where Marx defined the proletariat in the formal terms of a relation to the means of production, they present it in the Spinozist terms of a ‘mass’ drawn together not by shared qualities or interests, but by a problem embedded in their collective experience, being thereby singular and radically heterogeneous in a way the formal conceptions of Liberal political philosophy could never fully articulate.

³⁶ Gilles Deleuze, “Plato, the Greeks,” in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 137.

³⁷ *ATP*, xii.

³⁸ Deleuze and Parnet, “A Conversation: What is it? What is it For?,” in *Dialogues II*, 1.

³⁹ *WIP*, 16.

The politics of problematisation is thus a kind of ‘sorcery’, which involves turning individuals and communities away from the abstractions which limit their capacity to engage with the world and back to an experimental approach with their lived conditions: what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘believing in the world’ or in ‘this life’, as something imbued with ‘movements’, ‘intensities’, and new ‘modes of existence’.⁴⁰ While doing so is ‘our most difficult task, or the task of a mode of existence still to be discovered’, it nonetheless remains essential.⁴¹ Discovering and cultivating this potential involves the formation of a ‘war machine’, a productive but non-totalising association of all that is exterior to the state, which unites these larval revolutionary subjects in a collective reclamation of the capacity to constitute problems. Forming such a ‘transversal’, non-totalised unity is the ‘direct’ problem of their politics:

the direct political problem for us is more or less this: until now, revolutionary parties have constituted themselves as syntheses of interests rather than functioning as analyzers of mass and individual desires. Or else, what amounts to the same: revolutionary parties have constituted themselves as embryonic State apparatuses, instead of forming war-machines irreducible to such apparatuses.⁴²

Past revolutions failed due to their ‘theorematic’ attempts to establish an overall synthesis of interests within a unified sovereign body, an aim modern Liberalism recuperates through the mechanisms by which it manufactures consensus, limiting the problems to which their populations can respond. Deleuze and Guattari, by contrast, aim to undermine such formal continuity through a constructive experimentation reshaped by the demands of singular individuals and communities. For this reason, their politics must be opposed to the Liberal tradition. Anything less would be to miss its most vital and revolutionary impulse, the force it directs against the present and its values.

III. Statement of Originality and Synopsis

I make two primary claims to originality in this thesis. The first is that, while previous work has argued that Deleuze-Guattarian political theory is compatible or incompatible with elements of the Liberal tradition, broadly construed, this represents the first full-length study of the relation between Deleuze and Guattari’s

⁴⁰ Ibid., 74-75.

⁴¹ Ibid., 75.

⁴² Gilles Deleuze, “Five Propositions on Psychoanalysis,” in *Desert Islands and other texts 1953-1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina (London: Semiotext(e), 2004), 280. Similar phrasing appears in Deleuze’s “Preface: Three Group Related Problems,” in Félix Guattari, *Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Texts and Interviews 1955-1971*, trans. Ames Hodges (London: Semiotext(e), 2015), 16.

politics and Liberalism, as well as the first attempt to use their work to explicitly conceptualise Liberalism as an unfolding tradition with its own role within the history of capitalism.

The second is that, aside from establishing useful continuities between texts, adopting ‘problematization’ as a guiding thread through Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari’s thought has the advantage of shedding light on some difficult questions of interpretation. It provides a strong basis from which to explore Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of experimentation and revolution, something I explore in chapter three in terms of the concepts of connection, conjugation, and continuity and the essential notion of ‘universal minority’; as well as the relation between the state and the war machine, the first of which I explore primarily in the second chapter, the latter in the fourth. Elucidating these concepts is essential to understanding the exact forms of political activity Deleuze and Guattari promote and the context within which they believe they ought to be deployed, as well as specifying their exact view of democracy, markets, and the other institutions promoted by Liberalism as a means of establishing stability and consensus.

This allows me to provide explicit answers to Negri’s question regarding the ‘direction’ of Deleuze and Guattari’s collaborative war machine. Through the problematic of freedom explored in chapter one, the notion of vitality and the plane of consistency explored in chapter three, the ‘dangers’ of desire explored in chapter four, and the concrete examples which conclude chapter five, it presents what I consider to be a clear statement of how Deleuze and Guattari’s work can be used to develop an experiential politics concerning the specific position of one’s self or community into an internationalist politics aiming for the overthrow of capitalism.

Each chapter of this thesis opposes a theorematized ‘problem’ of Liberalism to a problematizing alternative drawn from the work of Deleuze and Guattari. A summary is available in the conclusion.

Chapter one examines problematization in Deleuze’s independent works, opposing it to the formal and institutional solutions to the problem of freedom characteristic of Liberalism. I argue that Deleuze’s ‘transcendental empiricism’ dissolves subjective interiority within the ‘multiplicities’ of forces and relations presupposed by specific thoughts and experiences, complicating both freedom and ethics by denying the homogeneity of thought amongst subjects. Devoid of this formal consistency, universal conceptions of moral or political law are replaced with an ethical demand that individuals and communities uncover their unique capacity to act, orienting thought to the singular ‘problems’ which emerge from their lived experience and overturning the ‘false’ problems imposed by established power. This makes Deleuze’s problem of freedom that of a ‘transcendental anarchy’ and creative ‘destiny’ exceeding the norms of any given state.

Chapter two turns to the problem of sovereignty, aiming to demonstrate the fundamental opposition between problematisation and the ‘theorematic’ production of political structures appropriate to the nature of subjectivity in general. With reference to Locke, Kant, and Hegel, I argue that early Liberal political philosophy introduced a ‘sad’ Image of thought as homogeneous amongst subjects as a means of uncovering the conditions for a legitimate sovereignty. Deleuze and Guattari, by contrast, present every individual and community as singular, and in particular as shaped by the institutions, norms and ‘semiotic coordinates’ of the concrete social ‘assemblage’ which invests their ‘desire’, this being the diffuse potential for connection which constitutes their capacities and way of differentiating the world. When consolidated into a state, this investment establishes both a ‘despotic’ sovereignty which unifies or totalises the social field, and a ‘judicial’ or ‘authoritarian’ sovereignty which diffuses power through hierarchical institutions which regulate the supposedly autonomous activity of subjects. I argue that Liberal philosophy reinforces sovereignty, firstly by presenting the unity of the state and the authority of institutions as the only means by which universals such as truth, right, or justice might be made concrete, and secondly by producing an image of subjectivity in general which, once internalised by subjects, prepares them for the ‘social subjection’ by which they are moulded to an economic or political structure. Finally, I argue that more agency-focused variants of Liberalism, despite incorporating a greater awareness of the potential and sometime necessity of opposition to existing institutions and semiotic regimes, maintain the presupposed necessity of sovereignty and thus can aim for no more than its re-establishment in more ‘judicial’ terms.

The third chapter examines Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of revolution as a ‘liberation’ of desire from particular investments through problematisation, contrasting this with its Liberal presentation as a constitution of a state more aligned with the population’s interests or tendencies. Using Franz Kafka’s literary machine as a guiding example, I argue that political experimentation necessitates the ‘nomadic’ establishment of connections independent of state determination, forms of ‘resistance’ which maintain this independence despite the necessity of some connection to the organised state, and a ‘political sorcery’ which aims to concretise potentials for thought and activity currently restricted by this organisation. I present this political experimentation as equivalent to the construction of a ‘rhizome’: a fluid consolidation of heterogeneous elements associated according to their potential to realise new productive connections, rather than according to an established form or existing qualities. I then dramatize this experimentation with reference to the French Revolution, May ’68, and the thought of Hannah Arendt, arguing that revolutionary events can be considered crystallisations of ‘universal minority’, a collective social identity through which each individual or community is able to problematise their own experience. In this way, they organise themselves as a ‘war machine’, a consolidation of those forces that remain ‘exterior’ and resistant to

the unity of any state. Incorporating this revolutionary aim makes Deleuze-Guattarian politics an immanent pragmatism essentially distinct from Liberalism, which aims instead to synthesise interests within more rational or reasonable concretisations of the state-form.

In the fourth chapter, I contrast the Liberal problem of law as the implementation of the fixed principles and obligations necessary for a just society with the ‘creative’ jurisprudence proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. Where the former attempts to establish judicial control over those resistant flows which comprise the state’s ‘exterior’, I argue that the latter entails ‘taking charge’ of one’s own desire and its investment by cultivating productive connections to such flows and so reconstituting the problems to which ones thought and action responds. I begin by elaborating on the ‘war machine’, with specific attention to its potential ‘appropriation’ by the state, which establishes its ‘judicial’ sovereignty by redeploying problematizing forces within predetermined limits. With reference to John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, I argue that the democratic or dialogic spaces of Liberalism constitute just such an appropriation, serving to translate the desire of the population into formally homogenous positions unable to change the established political order. I then present Deleuze and Guattari’s criticism of ‘human rights’, and argue against Patton’s suggestion that Deleuze-Guattarian politics be extended in a normative direction, arguing that their criticism of ‘states of right’ precludes a philosophy that aims to elucidate or impose particular norms. Finally, I argue that their immanent pragmatism is necessitated by the continually changing nature of desire, a potential for connection which, by proceeding through the immediate interactions of actual subjects and institutions, can potentially undermine even the most rigid theorematic system and subvert it towards totalitarian or destructive ends.

In the final chapter, I analyse Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of capitalism as a global ‘axiomatic’, a web of connections amongst states, corporations, institutions, and individuals which translates all activity into the production of immanent ‘axioms’, temporary ordering principles produced by a compromise of forces. These establish the laws which particularise rights within democratic societies, ensuring the universal principles of Liberalism are concretised in ways compatible with the needs of commodity production and problems of ‘security’ tied to supposed political and economic necessities. I argue that such problems are in fact illusory, as the ‘security’ and peace produced by the axiomatic is conjoined with the peripheralization and exclusion of nations, communities, and individuals from specific forms of organisation, such that the global population is constantly subject to immediate forms of ‘insecurity’ moderating their activities and leading to intractable crises of resource distribution. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the universal minority capable of transversally uniting both global and localised peripheries is not the reasonable subject of Liberalism, a generic figure associated with given interests, rights, and obligations, but the revolutionary

figure of the 'global working class', proper to a new and 'minor' socialism, which I present as a fragmented unity of all those who aim to reclaim their capacity to constitute problems from state and capital. I conclude the chapter by introducing the Paris Commune as a 'symbol' which might orient Deleuze-Guattarian inspired political sorcery in future, examining a number of concrete examples of how their analysis might be applied to a number of micro- and macro-political actions.

In the conclusion, I recontextualise these points with reference to Deleuze and Guattari's views on the 'appropriation' of philosophy by the state, arguing that Liberalism and its development can be understood as intertwined with that of capitalism. Arguing against Nicholas Tampio's argument that *A Thousand Plateaus* justifies a left pluralism that dispenses with revolution in favour of the cultivation of a tolerant 'garden' of competing political positions, I argue that Deleuze and Guattari demand philosophy connect to actual forms of problematising resistance to the axiomatic, constituting a continuous 'sorcery' which aims always to realise a people yet to come rather than the judgement of existing political positions and interest groups.

Chapter 1 | Life, Representation, and the Problem of Freedom

If you want to have good laws, burn what you have, and create new ones.

—Voltaire⁴³

Deleuze turned to the philosophy of René Descartes and Immanuel Kant in both his independent works and his collaboration with Guattari, identifying in their work an attempt to free philosophy from groundless assumptions which resonated with his own desire to critique contemporary forms of ‘common sense’: as Kant, for example, presents his critique as the only means by which the ‘despotism’ of dogmatic metaphysics might be overcome without adopting the anarchic ‘nomadism’ of those sceptics, such as David Hume, whose refusal to cultivate a ‘permanent’ metaphysical field threatened its ‘civil unity’.⁴⁴ But though Deleuze possessed a similar desire to think without presupposition, he did not believe these philosophers to be any less ‘dogmatic’ than their predecessors, arguing that they replaced the ‘objective’ presuppositions regarding concepts which characterised scholasticism with ‘subjective’ alternatives regarding thought itself.⁴⁵ Specifically, they made philosophy a ‘world of representation’, as Foucault once put it, grounding their attempt to dispense with opinion in the cohesion of supposedly universal mental faculties in conscious representation.⁴⁶ Though no ultimate agreement was found on the nature of this cohesion, they shared an ‘Image’ of thought as a self-contained and harmonious arrangement of mental functions, common amongst subjects and naturally aligned with truth. As I argue in this chapter and the next, the effects of this Image have been felt far beyond philosophy.

Deleuze’s independent works can be seen as his differentiation of an alternate philosophical lineage of ‘nomadic’ thinkers who broke from this Image, instead adopting a ‘positive’ metaphysics focused on the singular, that is, on actual experiences and ‘events’ understood in themselves rather than as examples of something more general.⁴⁷ This culminates in a radical conception of empiricism in which each impression

⁴³ Voltaire, “Laws,” in *Political Writings*, ed. and trans. David Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 20.

⁴⁴ “In the beginning, under the administration of the dogmatists, [metaphysics’] rule was despotic. Yet because her legislation still retained traces of ancient barbarism, this rule gradually degenerated through internal wars into complete anarchy; and the skeptics, a kind of nomads who abhor all permanent cultivation of the soil, shattered civil unity from time to time”. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. and trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 99 [Aix].

⁴⁵ *DR*, 129.

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

⁴⁷ See Gilles Deleuze, “Letter to a Harsh Critic,” in *Negotiations*, 6: “I myself “did” history of philosophy for a long time, read books on this or that author. But I compensated in various ways: by concentrating, in the first place, on authors who challenged the rationalist tradition in this history (and I see a secret link between Lucretius, Hume,

is considered as a production in itself, presupposing a ‘multiplicity’ of heterogeneous elements and relations extended over time rather than a universal form of cognition. I argue in this chapter that he also aims to break from the moral and political consequences of the Image, consequences I associate with the development of Liberalism.⁴⁸ By grounding subjection to law in the nature of thought and the subject, philosophers such as Locke or Kant were able to introduce the Enlightenment project to political thought, using the light of reason to disperse the superstition that justified despotism and establish a rational procedure in its stead. Where laws had been ‘established by the self-interest of the legislator, short-term need, ignorance and superstition’, as Voltaire put it, the subject and its formal capacity for judgement offered a firm foundation for their reconstitution.⁴⁹ On Deleuze’s account however, these models of rational judgement obscure a ‘moral’ differentiation of legitimate and illegitimate applications of thought that undermines their claims to promote liberty.

As I mentioned in the introduction, Deleuze argues that the task of contemporary philosophy is the overturning of ‘Platonism’, the philosophical imposition of a rigid order onto being, grounding the judgement of appearances and thus the authority of the appropriate judge. He argues that the ‘classical’ and ‘modern’ philosophies that followed Descartes and Kant developed this ‘Platonism’ by attributing the power of judgement to all subjects, but tying it to a pre-established model of ‘good sense’ which designated how it ought to be utilised, subjecting individuals to principles supposedly entailed by their own reason.⁵⁰ By contrast, Deleuze’s rejection of formal conceptions of the subject makes his problem of ‘freedom’ that of individuals and communities redetermining their sensible differentiations on the basis of their own experience, recovering their singular potential to act from the limits imposed by dominant forms of opinion, whether they derive from the nature of concepts or of subjectivity itself.

This chapter focuses primarily on *Difference and Repetition*, of which I can here offer only a selective reading, drawing on those elements most relevant to the current thesis: the constitution of subjectivity from experience, the ‘problems’ which orient thought and form the proper object of critique, and the

Spinoza, and Nietzsche, constituted by their critique of negativity, their cultivation of joy, the hatred of interiority, the externality of forces and relations, the denunciation of power... and so on)’.

⁴⁸ In this, I heavily contest the position of Slavoj Žižek, who argues: ‘not a single one of Deleuze’s own texts is in any way directly political; Deleuze ‘in himself’ is a highly elitist author, indifferent toward politics’. Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies* (London: Routledge, 2004), 20. The essential role of problematisation makes ethics and politics essential dimensions of Deleuze’s thought from *Empiricism and Subjectivity* onwards, though as I explore in chapter four Deleuze at first considered it as a problem of law.

⁴⁹ Voltaire, “Laws,” 20.

⁵⁰ Note that Deleuze adopts the periodisation of the world of representation developed by Foucault, in which Kant marks a point of transition from the ‘classical’ to the ‘modern’ episteme.

consequences this holds for ethics and politics. The aim is to introduce the concepts of ‘problematization’ and ‘multiplicity’, and demonstrate that they possess an essential opposition to formal political systems and the presupposed ‘good sense’ on which they rely. In the first section, I introduce the basic principles of Deleuze’s ‘transcendental’ empiricism, including the importance of past encounters and habitual connections to the ‘problems’ which orient our activity and imbue our lives with ‘sense’. In the second, I explore these problems as complications of forces which condition the determination of new objects and appearances, each differentiating the past by realising the effects of a particular selection of past events, such that all determined ‘beings’ must be considered as moments within a flow of ‘becoming’ exceeding their determined form. Lived experience, that is, the impressions we gain from the sensible and the connections we draw between these experiences over time, allows us to produce approximations of these problems in thought, engendering new capacities: making the problem of freedom that of ‘destiny’ and the cultivation of a singular life, one irreducible to general conceptions of the subject or its supposed nature. In the third section I examine Deleuze’s reading of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* and Nietzsche’s concept of the eternal return to demonstrate the consequences of this for ethics, in particular arguing that it demands the replacement of ‘false problems’ which lack connection to our own experience with new forms of selection, introducing a necessarily political, even revolutionary, opposition to formal conceptions of moral and political law. Finally, I examine how the classical Image of thought contributes to the reproduction of an existing distribution of power by reducing life and thought to the general and reproducible. I conclude by differentiating Deleuze’s demand for a ‘new politics’ from the Liberal demand for institutions open to democratic intervention from within an established polity, arguing that the experiential demands of the former demand the constant problematization of any law or institution.

I. Transcendental Empiricism

In a preface written for the English translation of *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, Deleuze argues that one of Hume’s most significant contributions to philosophy was his ‘laicisation’ of knowledge, his revelation that it constitutes no more than belief attributed a quasi-theological absoluteness.⁵¹ Hume argues that each time our knowledge goes beyond immediate experience, the leap is grounded not on reason, but on a sensible impression, the ‘vivacity’ of which derives from our past experiences.⁵² We are adamant that the sun will rise tomorrow because we have been subject to repeated encounters which have strengthened this impression

⁵¹ *ES*, *i*.

⁵² David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J Norton, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 82-83.

within us; where we acquire evidence to this end, we rely on the impression that reality operates in a uniform fashion. On Deleuze's reading, Hume thus argues that the principles of causality, resemblance, and contiguity by which we transcend experience refer to contingent repetitions rather than objective laws of nature, with reason always a 'slave' to the passions which precede its application.⁵³

This does not mean that we abandon all hope of attaining truth, but that we adapt what this entails. Deleuze argues that Hume's empiricism proceeds according to a 'dualism' in which the given is doubled by a faculty of 'imagination', which draws upon the emergent relations of otherwise atomistic experiences to form a web of habitual associations. Rather than attempting to discover fixed principles of cognition, Hume thus posits the study of habit and the singular set of associations which define a particular imagination as the only legitimate human science.⁵⁴

We start with atomic parts, but these atomic parts have transitions, passages, "tendencies," which circulate from one to another. These tendencies give rise to habits. Isn't this the answer to the question "what are we?" We are habits, nothing but habits - the habit of saying "I." Perhaps, there is no more striking answer to the problem of the Self.⁵⁵

Examining such associations entails a turn to 'problems' because, lacking a suprasensible principle, it is only in relation to a given purpose that we are able to associate ideas consistently.⁵⁶ We experience and believe things from a situated perspective, with association gaining its 'direction' and 'sense' from our 'projects, goals... practical life and affectivity'.⁵⁷ This notion of truth and subjectivity as constructed on the basis of the 'problems' to which our thought and action responds was to remain a fixture of Deleuze's work, finding its greatest expression in the 'transcendental empiricism' of *Difference and Repetition*, where it is supplemented with an analysis of the genesis of experience.⁵⁸ This first section elucidates the basic principles of transcendental empiricism and the relation of problems to experience.

It is important to begin by noting the way in which this empiricism is transcendental. Where Kant's 'transcendental idealism' institutes a Copernican turn from unknowable things in themselves to the conditions of possibility for appearances in general, Deleuze goes further, in a sense 'completing' the turn by

⁵³ For an excellent study of what Deleuze takes to be Hume's central problems, see Jeffrey Bell, *Deleuze's Hume: Philosophy, Culture and the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020).

⁵⁴ *ES*, 21.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, x.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁵⁸ See Daniela Voss, *Conditions of Thought: Deleuze and Transcendental Ideas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 7.

seeking the conditions presupposed by specific thoughts and experiences. He characterises these conditions as the ‘unconscious’, referring thereby not to an obscured or censored dimension of interiority, as in Freudian psychoanalysis, but to everything which remains ‘unthought’ in the production of specific thoughts and conscious experiences. A visual perception, for example, presupposes the repeated striking of our retina by a number of rays of light in succession: these elements are ‘contracted’ in the conscious experience of a quality, something not contained within any of the immediate atomistic elements, but instead produced by their repetition. Such contractions further presuppose the homeostatic repetitions necessary to maintain sensory organs and the brain, with perception no more the product of any one of these organs than it is contained within the elements it contracts.⁵⁹ Whether a thought is a perception or something more complex, it does not exist simply ‘in the head’ of whatever is thinking it: each contraction involves a singular combination of heterogeneous elements extending beyond the limits of interiority or particular moments in time.⁶⁰

Deleuze suggests that contraction takes place in a ‘qualitative’ and ‘temporal’ domain distinct from the contracted elements themselves, naming this the ‘imagination’. The imagination is qualitative in the Kantian sense that it informs our sensible lived experience, but is not ‘present’ in the way that objects or appearances are present; it is temporal in that it synthesises past moments into the ‘projection’ of sensible impressions, without being limited to a quantifiable ‘moment’ of time. Unlike the Kantian imagination however, a spontaneous or active synthesis of intuitions into a temporal ‘manifold’ under the guidance of fixed categories, this process of accumulation, contraction, and projection is uninterrupted and passive, with the qualitative impression produced inside the mind by the repeated intuitions without the mediation of any cognitive process. This marks a ‘transcendent’ or ‘liminal’ operation of sensibility, a point at which thought opens onto something irreducible to the conscious mental representation of given qualities, or what Kant would call apperception, being instead an accumulated effect of past repetitions which can only be sensed.

Each such produced impression is an ‘expectation’, equivalent to the vivacity of Hume’s psychology, as well as a ‘sign’, a pre-reflective and immediate form of awareness which orients ‘active’ or conscious mental processes. For example, a sensory experience of thirst might lead an animal to instinctually approach flora which grow in wet conditions, though this presupposes no reflection on their part: rather, their perception of thirst is imbued with a pre-reflective sign of need, and their perception of plants with a sign of its expected satiation, these orienting effects having been produced by the passive synthesis of individually

⁵⁹ *DR*, 73.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 165.

imperceptible units of perception and organic signals deriving from their ‘cellular heredity’.⁶¹ While humans (at least) are capable of producing similar results through active calculation, Deleuze argues that this is always a secondary operation presupposing the effect of signs, which imbue the world with a qualitative ‘sense’ preceding rational reflection, doubling the ‘I’ of conscious awareness with a passive and unconscious ‘self’ constituted by and altering alongside new encounters.

The various contractions which constitute this ‘self’ and the ‘sense’ with which the world is imbued can be described as a field of ‘problems’ which orient the subject’s thought and action.

The whole domain of behaviour... the intervention of instinct and learning, memory and intelligence, shows how the questions involved in contemplation are developed in the form of active problematic fields. To the first synthesis of time there corresponds a first question-problem complex as this appears in the living present (the urgency of life).⁶²

Deleuze thereby ‘dissolves’ subjective interiority within a series of repetitions and relations extending into the past. As Guattari describes it later, this involuntary and unconscious dimension of thought can properly be described as ‘machinic’, rather than structural, entailing as it does passive relations of production and their imparted effects.⁶³ But machinic does not mean mechanistic, and these ‘problematic fields’ should be considered to determine the conditions within which thought and action take place rather than specific thoughts and actions themselves. To give another example, learning to swim does not entail representing a ‘method’ of swimming to consciousness and simply carrying out its proposals exactly and in equivalent fashion each time: rather we accumulate habits and reflexes, synthesising experiences at a threshold beneath the level of consciousness, passively gaining a capacity to respond to the sensible impressions produced by our interactions with the water. Theory or instruction can guide us to engage with the water in a certain way, cultivating particular experiences, but it is their passive, ‘machinic’ synthesis which constitutes learning, complicating the ‘problem’ by which we associate impressions, lending them new ‘sense’ and so enhancing our capacity to act.

Processes of learning imply the development of more complex or nuanced forms of sense, something Deleuze clarifies with reference to cases of ‘involuntary memory’. He refers in particular to the famous scene of Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* in which the narrator tastes a madeleine, only to experience something inexplicable, as if of a reference just beyond the reach of consciousness. Struggling to identify it, a

⁶¹ Ibid., 73.

⁶² Ibid., 78.

⁶³ See Félix Guattari, “Machine and Structure,” in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*.

‘sign’ of his childhood home of Combray appears unbidden in his mind: not as a particular memory of a time he ate such a cake in the town, or any other empirical event which his present experience resembles, but ‘absolutely, in a form that was never experienced, in its ‘essence’’.⁶⁴ While the example is fictional, the capacity of experience to envelop such references is liable to be familiar, as when a specific event seems to ‘sum up’ or epitomise a particular period of one’s life, or art evokes a connection impossible to explain in propositional terms. Deleuze argues that this connective tendency is not some aberration of our mental functioning, but rather a clue regarding the unconscious. Where the taste of a cake or the sound of the word ‘rosebud’ evoke one’s childhood, they do not refer to childhood as a concept any more than they represent the totality of all events which occurred between one’s birth and adolescence: rather, the experience ‘resonates’ with a ‘sense’ of childhood that has developed over time, and which may not have been apparent before this experience. Deleuze argues that such a sense implies a particular ‘selection’ of experiences from the subject’s past, this being a second synthesis which occurs amongst signs themselves and which further complicates their problematic field. This selection constitutes a ‘transcendent’ use of memory, irreducible to the empirical memory of particular past experiences or to any other representation, which opens it onto something which can ‘only be remembered’: the immediate, unmediated production of the past within lived experience.

These connections between signs are, as Guattari conceptualises, ‘transversal’, maintaining the heterogeneity of the singular experiences they ‘complicate’.⁶⁵ Unlike the application of a general concept under which any number of possible experiences might be subsumed, such connections are always singular and tied to specific signs produced by our encounters, with any additional complication constituting a new selection that might transform their imparted sense. This establishment of signs within given transversal connections is known as their ‘interpretation’, but, unlike what Paul Ricœur famously named the hermeneutics of suspicion, this does not entail uncovering an essential structure or economy of forces underlying human experience.⁶⁶ Where Freud uncovered a libidinal economy, and Marx the development of productive processes, Deleuze’s ‘interpretation’ involves unearthing within our experience problems to

⁶⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs: the complete text*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Continuum, 2008), 8.

⁶⁵ The term ‘transversal’ appears in the second edition of *Proust and Signs* as a concept utilised by Proust himself (see *Ibid.*, 168) added by Deleuze after his collaboration with Guattari had begun.

⁶⁶ Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (London: Yale University Press, 1977). Note that Ricœur included Nietzsche in the list of ‘suspicious’ hermeneuticists, and a common reading of Nietzsche may indeed reduce the conflicting forces of the will-to-power to a determined underground economy rather than an open multiplicity. As I explore in the next section, Deleuze’s ethical reading of Nietzsche ensures the ultimate ‘ungroundedness’ even of the Ideas from which actual phenomena are determined, with the complication of forces in the will-to-power always a singular arrangement.

which we, as specific subjects, might respond, distributing our encounters into ‘apprenticeships’, processes of attunement to the pre-reflective connections which inform their sense and so form the horizons of our potential activity. The ‘urgency of life’ can therefore be said to extend to a drive to interpret signs within the appropriate practical context. Artists, such as Proust, are particularly adept at this, condensing the ‘lost time’ of their past into concrete works of art which reimpart particular forms of sense: but whether swimming, talking, or simply walking around, we are all constantly synthesising experience, forming new connective ‘series’, and transforming our potential for action.

II. Multiplicities and Destiny

It is important to emphasise that problems are not simply a subjective ‘mapping’ of connections onto an independent reality, but machinic productions arising from the interconnection of both signs and bodies, which ‘condition’ the way we differentiate our lived experience, informing the connections we are able to draw between events and the pre-reflective qualities objects and ideas possess for us. Though problems can be produced or reproduced as the result of our thoughts and actions, this production entails far more than the willed action of a conscious subject, establishing, as I argue in this section, a complex and indirect problem of freedom. In combination, a problem and its conditioned ‘solutions’ are what Deleuze calls an ‘Idea’, a concept which parallels, but significantly diverges from, both the ‘Forms’ presented by Plato and the Ideas of reason identified by Kant, which ground the judgement of appearances according to their correspondence to a stable essence or cognitive principle respectively. As the contrast is instructive, I outline both before turning to Deleuze’s presentation of Ideas as a self-determining ‘being of the sensible’, and to how this informs his problem of freedom.

For Plato, the Forms are ideals or essences which transcend determinate entities and ground their qualities.⁶⁷ However, there exist also ‘simulacra’ which imitate the appearance of the Form without embodying its more authentic qualities, as in the painting of a bed, which produces only an aesthetic likeness without reproducing the solidity it would be provided by a carpenter. This introduces the ‘problem’ of distinguishing those who are able to produce true ‘copies’ of the Form from imitators who produce only false appearances: as with the Socratic *elenchus*, which ‘problematizes’ the opinions of sophists in order to reveal the simulacry.⁶⁸ As Deleuze argues, such an impulse can only be moral:⁶⁹ and as Miguel de Beistegui

⁶⁷ Plato, “The Republic,” trans. G.M.A. Grube and rev. C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato Complete Works* ed. John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), §596B.

⁶⁸ *DR*, 63.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 265. See also Deleuze, “Plato, The Greeks.”

notes, it is also immediately political, legitimising the philosopher with access to the forms as the authority on virtue, politics, art, and thought.⁷⁰

Though Deleuze will maintain this ‘para-doxical’ weaponization of problems against opinion, he aims to do so whilst rejecting, even ‘reversing’, this moral dimension.⁷¹ In this he finds a strange ally in Plato himself who, by taking this paradoxical function to its natural conclusion, was also the first to show how Platonism might be escaped.⁷² At the end of the *Sophist*, the Eleatic stranger turns judgement against simulacra and their production, distinguishing between imitators that use false speech to hide their ignorance and those whose falsity takes the form of ‘short speeches in conversation [which] force the person talking to him to contradict himself’:⁷³ that is, those who, like Socrates, feign a particular attitude in order to coax opponents into contradiction. The ‘legitimate’ statements of the philosopher are no longer distinguished from simulacra by their connection to a stable transcendent, but rather by their paradoxical orientation. Deleuze will continue this project by turning ‘problematization’, the differentiation of problems on the basis of the capacities, or better, ‘potential’ they engender in the lived present, against what I call in the next section ‘false problems’ or common opinions which limit our capacity to think and to act.

Deleuze finds a similarly ambiguous interlocutor in Kant, who presents Ideas as the products of reason, a faculty which continually searches for the ‘conditions’ of appearances at greater levels of abstraction.⁷⁴ This search inevitably leads reason to posit ‘unconditioned’ totalities of all such conditions: as the search for subjective conditions results in the psychological Idea of the soul as a persistent and unified ‘substratum’ for all appearances, and the search for objective conditions leads to the cosmological Idea of the world as a coherent entity. Such Ideas fall beyond the limits of possible experience, being thus ‘transcendental illusions’ which lead reason towards irresolvable problems wherever it considers them as actual objects of knowledge: as where our consideration of the world as a totality leads to antinomy, as reason is unable to resolve the problem of whether it is finite or infinite. Escaping such illusion means restricting reason to a ‘regulative’ role, using its Ideas to establish problems which orient our theoretical activities without taking them to be ‘constitutive’ of any given object: as science must be guided by some notion of systemic totality

⁷⁰ Miguel de Beistegui, “The Deleuzian reversal of Platonism,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze* ed. Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 56-62.

⁷¹ *DR*, 59.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 68.

⁷³ Plato, “The Sophist,” trans. Nicholas White, in *Plato Complete Works*, §268b.

⁷⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 673 [A797/B825]: ‘Reason is driven by a propensity of its nature to go beyond its use in experience, to venture to the outermost bounds of all cognition by means of mere ideas in a pure use, and to find peace only in the completion of its circle in a self-subsisting systematic whole’.

when pursuing its experiments, but falls into error where it claims the universe is necessarily lawlike.⁷⁵ It is thus not appearances themselves which are legitimate or illegitimate, but rather the problem by which they are associated.

While Deleuze adopts this critical turn from appearances to problems, he aims to do so without reference to the 'legitimate' operation of a faculty supposedly common amongst subjects. As discussed in the last section, Deleuze criticises Kant for conceptualising the synthesis of appearances as a spontaneous operation of subjectivity upon external intuitions, one which already implies the imposition of an unchanging set of categories as the condition for possible experience: making the 'problem' orienting the philosopher that of identifying general principles of cognition rather than the genesis of actual intuitions, which Kant abandons to the unknowable or noumenal.⁷⁶ Once again however, Deleuze finds inspiration in the philosopher he criticises, arguing that the potential recovery of this singularity is revealed in the 'furtive and explosive moment' Kant turns to the determination of inner sense. Kant argues that the inner sense in which intuitions are synthesised is time itself, as an a priori form of intuition: in their 'unschematised' form, that is, in themselves, they are undeterminable. This introduces 'a kind of disequilibrium, a fissure or crack in the pure Self of the "I think," an alienation in principle', in that the active 'I think' of transcendental apperception necessarily operates upon a receptive 'self' constituted by intuition, corresponding to the 'doubling' of the active self discussed above.⁷⁷ Though Kant fills this fracture by assigning synthesis to the 'active' imagination, such that experience is always mediated by static categories, 'for a brief moment' this introduces a 'schizophrenia in principle which characterises the highest power of thought, and opens Being directly on to difference':⁷⁸ that is, it reveals the possibility of an immanent and passive process of production, unmediated by cognition, that 'dissolves' the fixed identity of objects and of the subjects that apprehend them by making them moments in its constant progression, this being the operation of the imagination and the establishment of transversal connections described in the previous section. Such a

⁷⁵ See *Ibid.*, 520 [A509/B537], which demonstrates the origins of the distinction between a theorematism and a problematising approach to thought adopted by both Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari: 'Since through the cosmological principle of totality no maximum in the series of conditions in a world of sense, as a thing in itself, is **given**, but rather this maximum can merely be **given as a problem** in the regress of this series, the principle of pure reason we are thinking of retains its genuine validity only in a corrected significance not indeed as an **axiom** for thinking the totality in the object as real, but as a **problem** for the understanding, thus for the subject in initiating and continuing, in accordance with the completeness of the idea, the regress in the series of conditions for a given conditioned'.

⁷⁶ *DR*, 130. See Miguel de Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis: Philosophy as Differential Ontology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 248ff. and Beth Lord, "Deleuze and Kant," in *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, 86-89.

⁷⁷ *DR*, 58.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* See also Lord, "Deleuze and Kant," 89.

process can ‘only be thought’, being involuntarily produced in thought through the constitution of ‘problems’.⁷⁹

This requires significant elucidation. For Deleuze, the ‘Ideas’ which ground appearances are neither transcendent essences nor universal principles of cognition, but rather ‘multiplicities’, singular arrangements incorporating both the appearances themselves and a ‘problem’ which conditions them. The concept of multiplicity is adapted from its use by Henri Bergson, who defines ‘intensive’ multiplicities as complications of forces understood through the ‘duration’ of their interaction, contrasting this with ‘extensive’ multiplicities of determined entities.⁸⁰ The latter, or what Deleuze names the ‘actual’, is like a system frozen at a given moment, such that it can be considered a formal totality established amongst given parts: as where one might consider a car moving at a particular speed at a given space and time, relative to further determined objects which populate its environment. Considered in itself however, such a frozen system occludes a further set of ‘intensive’ differences, or ‘intensities’ which, in contrast to ‘external’ or comparative differences between determined identities with particular qualities, as in differences of size or shape, can be understood only by examining a system as it proceeds through singular moments of determination. The connections between these singular moments and the elements they complicate establish the ‘problems’ to which new elements constitute a produced ‘solution’.

Acceleration, for example, is an ongoing process of change with very ‘real’ effects upon the ‘actual’ elements of a system, but one which remains implicit to the extent that only particular moments of determination are considered: to be calculated, reference must be made not only to the present speed, but also to its speed at a particular past moment, establishing a ‘difference between differences’ or a transversal relation of the singular.⁸¹ An ‘intensive’ or continuous multiplicity incorporates such intensity by associating these singular determinations, and thus the effects of the processes they realise over time, as with the different speeds of the car. To complicate the example however, it is also important to note that any given acceleration presupposes a number of further factors which influenced these particular speeds, involving everything from the motivations of the driver, the road conditions, and so on, all of which are included within the multiplicity according to their contribution to the ‘intensity’ in question. Rather than a collection of given things, an intensive multiplicity is thus ‘an organisation belonging to the many as such, which has no need

⁷⁹ *DR*, 141.

⁸⁰ de Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis*, 249ff.

⁸¹ *DR*, 56-7.

whatsoever of unity in order to form a system', associating elements from both past and present according to their contribution to a specific intensity.⁸²

At the heart of Deleuze's metaphysics is the argument that all forms of stable identity derive from such intensities, such that every 'object, every thing, must see its own identity swallowed up in difference', becoming a moment at the intersection of ongoing processes.⁸³ Rather than their 'being' as actual entities, that is, their identity at a given moment, this concerns them in their 'becoming', as moments at the intersection of a number of processes which proceed through such determined states, continually reimposing the force of past and present productions and relations onto new developments. Within the actual present, this 'becoming' remains implicit, but is nonetheless 'real' for its informing present identities, each of which will 'implicate' singular complications of past connections which their present form presupposes, and will have a particular 'potential' established on this basis. It is, as Deleuze puts it, 'virtual'.

In itself, the virtual is the 'pure past', a complication of all past events and connections which serves as the precondition for every actual determination. But while ultimately all past moments of determination could be described as being 'implicated' by an actual entity, certain intensities, and so particular past moments of determination, will have a greater or lesser degree of influence depending on the elements under consideration. These complications of past and present moments of determination are the 'problems' to which actual entities correspond, and which condition their 'actualisation' or 'differentiation': that is, their determination as specific entities within the actual. Every actual body or occurrence thus 'emerges like the act of solving such a problem, or—what amounts to the same thing—like the actualization of a potential and the establishing of communication between disparate', with a number of different elements drawn together according to their contribution to this intensity, or 'potential' for production.⁸⁴ Each problem is thus a 'selection' of singular moments of determination, or 'singularities', from the otherwise 'pure' past, 'differentiating' it in a given fashion according to the relative influence of particular past connections in the actualisation of a sign or body.

Rather than the stable 'essence' of a Form or a static principle of cognition, every appearance corresponds to a problem, that is, 'an inequality by which it is conditioned', and every change to 'a difference which is its sufficient reason'.⁸⁵ In the place of an unchanging transcendent therefore, Deleuze posits the singular

⁸² Ibid., 182.

⁸³ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 246.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 222.

association of elements within the multiplicity, crystallised by the ‘event’ of their association, which imbues the present with intensities:

If one insists, the word ‘essence’ might be preserved, but only on condition of saying that the essence is precisely accident, the event, the sense; not simply the contrary of what is ordinarily called the essence but the contrary of the contrary: multiplicity is no more appearance than essence, no more multiple than one.⁸⁶

The event is what one might call a ‘transcendence’ which is nonetheless immanent to and enveloped by the real: a contingent, mobile ground constituted by the actual elements it grounds. Unlike the ‘possible’, the potential or intensity it crystallises is always itself a singular production associating elements without regard for their formal division, replacing such binaries as that between appearance and essence with a single production of intensities. Unlike Plato, who establishes an absolute distinction between the Forms and the copies which participate in their qualities, and unlike Kant, who establishes the transcendental division between the being of things in themselves and the ‘appearances’, already mediated by static principles of cognition essentially divided from the intuitions on which they operate, the intensive multiplicity crystallised by the event can incorporate any number of different entities according to their influence on a particular moment of production: as a ‘sign’ can interact with the body of the swimmer in the ‘actualisation’ of a given movement, or an idea can be produced with reference to a memory produced by the subject’s encounters with a town. Deleuze thus replaces all formal transcendence and division with a metaphysics that turns upon the singular, with past and present, subject and object all being considered in terms of their intensive contribution to a particular ‘event’ which establishes the conditions for, and the actualisation of, signs and bodies, producing both the world and the sense with which it is imbued by differentiating a univocal ‘world of differences implicated one in the other... a complicated, properly chaotic world *without identity*’.⁸⁷

This can be clarified further with reference to the Idea of colour, which Deleuze argues has three ‘dimensions’, constitutive of a particular problem: hue, lightness and saturation, each a spectrum of difference from which actual colours are ‘selected’.⁸⁸ What maintains these particular dimensions is not some essential Form or common principle of cognition, but rather the way disparate forces have been

⁸⁶ Ibid., 191.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 56.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 182. Deleuze does not specifically identify these dimensions. In this assumption I follow Levi R. Bryant, *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze’s Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence* (Evanston (IL): Northwestern University Press, 2008), 169-170.

established into a particular set of relations over time, as realised by the structure of the human eye, which conditions actual colours and defines the extent of their potential variation without thereby determining them. Each actualisation is in itself ‘a genuine creation’, caused by the singular ‘event’ of an encounter between a particular retina and a light source, but can be considered to ‘repeat’ the conditions the Idea consolidates, concretely realising a potential which implicates any number of factors necessary for that particular light source and that type of retina to be produced.⁸⁹

As the last section demonstrated, problems are not simply facts about the world to be learned by rote, and require an active attunement or habituation on the part of subjects, who thereby learn to differentiate their experiences in a practical context. Hue, lightness, and saturation are of course impossible to encounter in themselves: we know them only via the actualised colours that ‘repeat’ them. To interpret our experiences in light of the ‘problem’ of colour, Deleuze insists that we should not simply build a general, discontinuous category inclusive of the specific examples of colours we have encountered according to their external differences: as Bergson puts it, such a concept would be ‘an affirmation made up of negations, a form circumscribing vacuum’ blending our singular experiences into ‘a common obscurity’.⁹⁰ Instead, truly grasping the problem necessitates our facilitation of a ‘true unification’ by directing colours through a lens, recombining them into the ‘white light’ from which each is refracted, and which complicates within itself the potential they actualise: allowing us to think not only the actual colours we have encountered, but the process of refraction itself, and the other colours that might therefore be realised under present conditions.

Though perhaps an inexact analogy, this example is instructive regarding the approach to problems Deleuze suggests, and thus his ‘problem’ of freedom. In themselves, problems are indeterminate, being ‘determinable’ only with reference to the sensible impressions through which we encounter their actual solutions, making them, in Deleuze’s terms, ‘the noumenon closest to the phenomenon’.⁹¹ The problems implicated by particular signs can be determined only ‘by analogy’ with the states they condition, that is, through the accumulation of experience and the formation of transversal connections.⁹² To produce problems thus does not involve examining the actual for qualities shared by actual entities, but instead engaging in an indirect process of ‘integration’, an act akin to the mathematical integration of a differential

⁸⁹ *DR*, 212.

⁹⁰ Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: an Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2007), 245.

⁹¹ *DR*, 222.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 169. For an examination of intensity as an ‘inequality’ cancelled with each new production, see Daniel W. Smith, “The New: The Conditions of the New,” in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 253-254.

relation through the approximation of a tangent. In the same way that infinitesimals are ‘vanishing’ differences, indeterminate in themselves but determinable as the continual approach to zero realised by the distinct points of a curve, so too can we produce an ‘approximation’, in thought, of a particular intensity or potential that cannot be directly represented in propositional terms.⁹³

Our continual accumulation of experiences, differentiated into the apprenticeships discussed above, establishes the problems to which we can respond, each of which is a creation in its own right: unique to a life, but nonetheless produced by a multiplicity rather than a discrete interiority. But, to complicate matters, it is also essential to note that every lived moment is conditioned by a seemingly infinite number of problems, which inform the particular contents of our experience and the different forms of sense it is possible for us to draw. Effectively navigating the world demands not only attuning ourselves to problems, but subjecting them to a further selection, this being a ‘problem of thought... tied not to essences but to the evaluation of what is important and what is not, to the distribution of singular and regular, distinctive and ordinary points’.⁹⁴ To give another example, one might be struck by an instinctual sense of warning at the sight of a bright red in nature, a ‘sign’ implicating a problem involving colour alongside further organic dimensions. This does not contradict the Idea of colour examined above, but rather refers us to a different problem, one which ‘has the solution it deserves in proportion to *its own* truth or falsity – in other words, in proportion to its sense’, and, through this, to the relevancy it has to our lives and practical purposes:⁹⁵ after all, identifying berries through their chromatic intensity would be a grave stupidity if not supplemented by the instinctual sense that fruits of certain hues ought not be eaten.

The problem, for Deleuze, is therefore never ‘what’ a thing is, that is, the identity it possesses, and through this to a judgement of whether it corresponds to a particular essence or the legitimate operation of a faculty, but instead the problem to which it connects, the potential with which it is thereby imbued, and the adequacy of this potential to the demands of our lived present. Where Plato problematised those false appearances which lacked the qualities of the Form, and Kant the illegitimate, constitutive use of reason, Deleuze’s critique is turned against problems which lack connection to the purposes of most importance to us, as reflected by the ‘urgency’ of the sensible:

[L]earning evolves entirely in the comprehension of problems as such, in the apprehension and condensation of singularities and in the composition of ideal events and bodies. Learning to swim

⁹³ Ibid., 170.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 189.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 159.

or learning a foreign language means composing the singular points of one's own body or one's own language with those of another shape or element, which tears us apart but also propels us into a hitherto unknown and unheard-of world of problems.⁹⁶

Where we learn to swim, we produce and continually reproduce an orienting problem specific to our own life and experience. While swimming may entail actual dimensions common to every swimmer, these dimensions will also be incomparable to the extent that we are always discussing singular individuals with their own bodies and purposes, with different collations of past experiences informing the sense with which their impressions are imbued. This does not make swimming 'subjective', but rather a selective truth derived from an involuntary, passive process of encounter and synthesis: something which 'tears us apart' because it draws thought to the limit of its potential, which changes with each new encounter. The problem of thought is thus that of beginning to think anew, producing orienting problems tied to practical demands which emerge from experience. To present thought itself as a problem in this way is to argue against its presentation as common amongst subjects, something which, through willed operation, could be used to isolate universal problems common to all subjects: instead, the 'interpretation' of signs is a singular and inherently creative process of selection.

It is therefore also a problem of life, as understood in what Deleuze calls a 'spiritual' or virtual sense. Deleuze argues that the moments of a life are united by their expression of a single 'destiny', giving the impression that they each play out the same 'story' despite their variation.⁹⁷ While this might lead one to seek parallels with narrative and hermeneutic presentations of identity, such as that given by Ricœur, Deleuze instead argues that destiny

implies between successive presents non-localisable connections, actions at a distance, systems of replay, resonance and echoes, objective chances, signs, signals and roles which transcend spatial locations and temporal successions.⁹⁸

Destiny is not a fixed or predetermined transcendent, nor a subjective 'narrative' consolidating memory into a particular order, but instead an intensive multiplicity, an evolving consolidation of forces both 'cancelled out' and continually renewed in the production of each lived present. We differentiate our own destiny

⁹⁶ Ibid., 192.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 83.

⁹⁸ Ibid. In particular Deleuze's conception could be productively contrasted to that given in Ricœur's later work *Oneself as Another*, in which life is comprised of an 'idem' self or character which is produced through habitual repetitions and an 'ipse' or narrative self comprised of a configuration of the past as a series of events within an ongoing narrative, replaying the Kantian division of passive and active self. See Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

through our encounters, continually tracing home the ‘blind impress all our behavings bear’ through a process of interpretation and selection, such that we can never truly ‘walk the length’ of the mind, nor list its contents and capacities as a totality.⁹⁹

Deleuze therefore claims that destiny accords not with determinism but with freedom, which consists in ‘choosing the levels’ of the virtual, differentiating it into problems relevant to our experience and so enhancing our capacity for thought and action.¹⁰⁰ Each life complicates the same pure ‘past’, but does so in a unique fashion according to the encounters which define it, being therefore irreducible to the general form of subjectivity and equivalent only as selections from the virtual:

Since each is a passing present, one life may replay another at a different level, as if the philosopher and the pig, the criminal and the saint, played out the same past at different levels of a gigantic cone. This is what we call metempsychosis. Each chooses his pitch or his tone, perhaps even his lyrics, but the tune remains the same, and underneath all the lyrics the same tra-la-la, in all possible tones and all pitches.¹⁰¹

Freedom, for Deleuze, is not a matter of will or rational decision, but instead of experimentation and problematisation: a freedom to turn our past experiences into a lens into the complicated forces which have shaped our actions and encounters, and within which we might uncover potentials which as yet remain unrealised. As he writes in *Bergsonism*: ‘Duration, Life, is *in principle* memory, in principle consciousness, in principle freedom. “In principle” means virtually’.¹⁰² Thought, life, and freedom are all forms of reminiscence: the repetition or return of particular series of experiences which can be remembered or regained only through our apprenticeship to signs and the cultivation of new problems. The problem of freedom is therefore that of returning to the singularities which form the ‘being of becoming’ and differentiating them anew, realising potentials already embedded in the present and so opening us onto a new future.¹⁰³

As de Beistegui argues, Deleuze’s independent metaphysics can therefore be considered dual: on the one hand, it presents an ontogenetic theory regarding the determination of the actual, finding behind determined identities the intensities which condition them; on the other, it presents itself in the decidedly

⁹⁹ Philip Larkin, “Continuing to Live,” in *Collected Poems* ed. Anthony Thwaite (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), 94.

¹⁰⁰ *DR*, 83.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

¹⁰² *B*, 106.

¹⁰³ *DR*, 41.

ethical terms of life, the ‘experience, and the experimentation, of the real’.¹⁰⁴ The vital or ethical problem is a matter of experimentation and the selective pursuit of those problems which best allow us to make sense of our lives, rediscovering our true capacity to engage with the world. It is therefore also an essentially political problem affecting both individuals and collectives, as our freedom to produce such orientations is often infringed upon by our position within an existing social field. In the next section, I therefore turn to the specifically political dimensions of problem-formation.

III. Return and Revolution

As the last section demonstrated, multiplicity is neither singular nor plural, instead drawing together heterogeneous elements through the duration of their interaction in a way which incorporates their acquisition or loss of the particular connections which establish their identities at each moment. The problem of freedom therefore applies to communities as much as individuals, and in comparably singular terms: though the orienting problems will still be mediated by individual sensibility, the accumulation of an experience particular to a given community can also transform the ‘sense’ by which they orient themselves, realising a collective potential. In this, multiplicity can be connected to the Spinozist conception of the ‘multitude’, a political body united by a shared form of existence, and thus shared problems, rather than by their specific qualities or relation to sovereign power. As argued by Negri in *The Savage Anomaly*, for which Deleuze would later write the foreword, the multitude is a concept that expresses ‘the intensity of the Renaissance legacy’ and, specifically, ‘the sense of the new dignity of the subject’. It does so, however, with reference to their ‘constructive’ power, their capacity to establish singular collectives, and so situates ethics ‘at the threshold of the comprehension of the radical immeasurability of the development in progress’.¹⁰⁵ The multitude is, as Negri argues, ‘human nature’, but specifically as constituted and constitutive, making reference not to an ‘essence’ taken to hold across all times and places, but instead the ‘event’ of a particular association. It therefore differs from terms such as ‘the people’, which refer to the formal equivalence of individuals within a commonwealth: rather it refers to a ‘living reality’ which is only ‘contained within determined limits’ by the external intervention of politicians and rulers.¹⁰⁶

Though Deleuze does not utilise the concept, I include it here as a useful tool for understanding how problematisation can be collective, and specifically because it makes it easier to differentiate the creative

¹⁰⁴ Miguel de Beistegui, *Immanence: Deleuze and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 55.

¹⁰⁵ Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The power of Spinoza's metaphysics and politics*, trans. Michael Hardt (University of Minnesota Press: Oxford, 1991), 8.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 187.

power proper to this ‘multitude’ from that of institutions: a distinction essential for fully understanding the political consequences of *Difference and Repetition*, but one not fully conceptualised until Deleuze’s collaboration with Guattari. For Spinoza, this emergent power of the multitude, which he names *potentia*, but which Deleuze and Guattari will later translate as *puissance*, is the limit of the formal institutional power (by contrast, *potestas*, translated *pouvoir*) of the sovereign to write laws and declare war.¹⁰⁷ All individuals and communities without distinction possess a ‘natural right’ to exercise *puissance*, that is, to maintain themselves in being and act according to their ‘nature’, which I read in the ‘constituted’ sense of Negri.¹⁰⁸ I wish to argue that Deleuze’s conception of freedom, both in *Difference and Repetition* and in collaboration with Guattari, concerns *puissance* and the singular potentials of particular individuals or collectives realised by events: or in other words, it concerns the constitution of problems themselves in relation to experience, something which cannot be realised through the formal *pouvoir* of institutions and the state. To support this argument, I turn in this section to two further influences on Deleuze’s conception of freedom, Marx and Nietzsche, associating it with the revolutionary ‘reposing’ of social Ideas.

For Marx, ‘Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past’.¹⁰⁹ Freedom is always a matter of selecting from amongst possible responses to the world one encounters, guided by interests already established by one’s position within it. The selection

¹⁰⁷ See Baruch Spinoza, “Political Treatise,” in *Complete Works*, ed. Michael L. Morgan, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), 687 [2:17].

¹⁰⁸ Baruch Spinoza, “Theological-Political Treatise,” in *Complete Works*, 527: “Thus the natural right of every man is determined not by sound reason, but by his desire and his power. For not all men are naturally determined to act in accordance with the rules and laws of reason’. Arguing that desire precedes the reason that would enable ‘virtuous’ behaviour, Spinoza provides the foundation for the Deleuze-Guattarian opposition to conceptions of sovereignty grounded in reason, something I examine in the next chapter. Of course, one could note that Spinoza himself is often classified as a Liberal philosopher, privileging as he does a society in which every individual is capable of free judgement and ‘nothing is esteemed dearer or more precious than freedom’. (Ibid., 390). This might lead one to believe Deleuze, influenced as he was by Spinoza, to adopt a similarly institutional approach to politics. My reading here, by contrast, correlates with that of Negri, who argues that ‘Spinoza has too often been thrown into that mixed-up “democratic” soup of normative Hobbesian transcendentalism, Rousseauian general will, and Hegelian *Aufhebung* - functioning, in effect, to fortify the separation between production and constitution, between society and the State. But this is far from the case: In Spinozian immanentism, in the Spinozian specificity of politics, democracy is the politics of the “multitude” organized in production, and religion is the religion of the “ignorants” organized in democracy’ (Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly*, xviii.). Ultimately, I would argue that, even if one were to read Spinoza as providing an ‘institutional’ solution to the problem of freedom, it is specifically his focus on *potentia* and his turn to the singular that inspires Deleuze, rather than any institutional solution he might otherwise provide. The role of Spinoza, as indeed for Hume, within Deleuze’s alternative lineage of philosophy is essentially tied to the refusal of general notions of subjective interiority and a turn to the singular: and in my terms therefore precisely the ways in which they ground an ‘open’, rather than a closed, society, which can never be fully encapsulated by a formal political structure.

¹⁰⁹ Karl Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” in *Marx and Engels Collected Works Volume 11: Marx and Engels 1851-1853* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1979), 103.

is, however, never framed as such. Marx argues that past revolutionary movements have been successful only where they have justified their activity with reference to historical narratives capable of both motivating themselves and attracting a greater proportion of society to their cause than their limited class interests could galvanise. The bourgeois revolutionaries who dominated the Estates General, for example, found

in the classically austere traditions of the Roman republic... the ideals and the art forms, the self-deceptions that they needed in order to conceal from themselves the bourgeois limitations of the content of their struggles and to keep their enthusiasm on the high plane of the great historical tragedy.¹¹⁰

By invoking Brutus and Cicero in their speeches and modelling themselves after the senate, the revolutionaries were able to present themselves as successors to a lineage of republican liberty, a narrative which could inspire the popular support required to take control of the state.¹¹¹

Once the bourgeoisie had consolidated their power, however, their true interests became apparent, and drew them down a similar path to that once taken by the elite of Rome. They eliminated the still-revolutionary factions active within the Commune, the ‘sections’ of which provided the *sans-culotte* with a space to directly formulate and act upon demands for change, and instead reinforced the National Convention, a representative body which restricted participation to official delegates, the great majority of which were drawn from the bourgeoisie. This suppression of the other classes continued through the ‘White Terror’ of the Thermidorean reaction, before Napoleon Bonaparte completed the re-enactment by overthrowing the revolutionary government and adopting the role of ‘consul-for-life’.¹¹² Marx argues that this was not a defeat for the bourgeoisie, however, as Napoleon served to establish their dominance on firmer ground than they themselves were able by channelling the revolutionary desire of the population into imperialist war.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 104-105.

¹¹¹ As Marx argues, this narrative was no cynical ploy, but rather an earnest self-deception. Camille Desmoulins describes the revolutionaries as ‘young men, who, fed with the lectures of Cicero in the colleges, had because of this become passionate about freedom’ and there is little reason to question the sincerity of the claims made by such figures as Robespierre and Danton to desire liberty and the public good. Camille Desmoulins, *Histoire des Brissotins ou Fragment de l’histoire secrète de la Révolution* (1793), in Jules Claretie, ed., *Oeuvres de Camille Desmoulins*, vol. 1, p. 309, footnote 1, translation mine. See also Mortimer N. S. Sellers, “The Roman Republic and the French and American Revolutions,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

¹¹² Marx, “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” 105.

These events were themselves ‘repeated’ by the failed July Revolution and the rise to power of the unimpressive Napoleon III, both of which were presented as restorations: the first of the revolution itself, the latter of the glory of Empire. In contrast to 1789 and the first Brumaire coup, however, Marx argues that these events were not ‘revolutionary’ because they resulted more from inertia amongst bourgeois factions than any genuine contradiction between classes, and so could not transform the material structure of society. As the famous reference to Hegel puts it, historical figures and events could therefore be said to repeat twice: first as a transformative ‘tragedy’ in which actors adopt the garb of a historical predecessor in order to resolve a material contradiction, and second as a ‘farce’ in which they use suggested parallels to justify self-interested actions without inducing such transformation. The difference, Marx argues, is that between ‘finding once more the spirit of revolution’ and simply ‘making its ghost walk again’.¹¹³

Though Deleuze agrees with Marx that the ‘repetition’ of past events is a necessary prerequisite for revolutionary action, he presents this as more than self-deception.

It is not the historian’s reflection which demonstrates a resemblance between Luther and Paul, between the Revolution of 1789 and the Roman Republic, etc. Rather, it is in the first place for themselves that the revolutionaries are determined to lead their lives as ‘resuscitated Romans’, before becoming capable of the act which they have begun by repeating in the mode of a proper past, therefore under conditions such that they necessarily identify with a figure from the historical past. Repetition is a condition of action before it is a concept of reflection.¹¹⁴

On this account, the revolutionaries’ imitation of the Republic was not driven by a desire to return to the actual reality of the Roman polis, but simply to be other than they were, though they lacked the forms of representation necessary to express how this might be realised and so could represent this potential transformation only symbolically, turning to a way of life with which their collective experience appeared to share some resonance and which hinted at a sense to which they were not yet fully attuned.

To connect to a past event in this fashion is not to engage with it as an actual occurrence, in terms of concrete actions carried out at specific times and places by particular individuals, but as a ‘virtual’ event, something ‘embedded in the conditions of the problem’.¹¹⁵ While it is clear that, over time, significant changes have occurred in the processes involved in the determination of the actual elements which make up human societies, this including subjectivity and the collectives into which subjects associate themselves,

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ *DR*, 90.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 189.

these can never be exhaustively characterised by specific changes in these actual entities, implicating as it does a becoming which exceeds the formal elements which characterise society at any given time and ties present potentials to an entirely singular development. Using terminology drawn from Friedrich Hölderlin, Deleuze describes these ‘virtual’ or ‘ideal’ events as caesuras, ‘cuts’ which are ‘adequate to the totality of time’ in the sense that they divide it into an incommensurable before and after.¹¹⁶ Being unrepresentable in terms of actual entities and qualities, such transformations in the social problematic are necessarily ‘symbolic’, being thereby approximations which stand in for such absolute transformations in thought.¹¹⁷ This means that the revolutionaries’ imitation should not be considered their attempt to realise a given quality the republic possessed or reproduce the revolutionary conditions that preceded it, but rather to repeat its transformation of the social problematic, something which is in itself ‘unrepeatable’ and could be repeated only by becoming equally singular.¹¹⁸ They achieved this singularity by treating history as a ‘theatre’ from which particular roles could be selected, ‘differentiating’ the past into a new multiplicity of unfolding connections which revealed new potentials in the present.¹¹⁹ Engaging with the past in this way means that time ‘itself unfolds... instead of things unfolding within it’, with the everyday conception of history as a uniform chronological development being replaced by a more vital conception of an ongoing process of transformation.¹²⁰ Farce therefore precedes any tragedy: while not in itself a revolutionary transformation, experimentation and the cultivation of a ‘revolutionary’ lineage led the revolutionaries to realise a singular potential which had previously been obscured.

Deleuze associates this obscuration with ‘false’ problems which impose a particular conception of identity and associated potential onto social actors. In this, he once again follows Bergson, who associates the organised or ‘closed’ dimension of society, that is, the laws and formal institutions of the state, with a ‘story-telling function’ or ‘fabulation’ which replaces instinct with a body of religious or otherwise fictitious representations, tricking the intelligence of individuals into believing submission to social obligations to be in their interest.¹²¹ It does this by means of institutions, which transmit ‘order-words’, statements with the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 89.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ See Ibid., 1: ‘To repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent... This is the apparent paradox of festivals: they repeat an ‘unrepeatable’. They do not add a second and a third time to the first, but carry the first time to the ‘nth’ power... as Peguy says, it is not Federation Day which commemorates or represents the fall of the Bastille, but the fall of the Bastille which celebrates and repeats in advance all the Federation Days.’

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 91.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 88.

¹²¹ *B*, 108-109. Deleuze’s reading here continues a thread which began with Hume and the distinction between ‘philosophical’ and ‘non-philosophical’ beliefs, that is, between those which rely on associations of Ideas valid

functional effect of imposing a particular order by restricting the problems through which subjects interpret their experience:

We are wrong to believe that the true and the false can only be brought to bear on solutions, that they only begin with solutions. This prejudice is social (for society, and the language that transmits its order-words, “set up” ready-made problems, as if they were drawn out of the “city’s administrative filing cabinets,” and force us to “solve” them, leaving us only a thin margin of freedom). Moreover, this prejudice goes back to childhood, to the classroom: It is the school teacher who “poses” the problems; the pupil’s task is to discover the solutions. In this way we are kept in a kind of slavery. True freedom lies in a power to decide, to constitute problems themselves.¹²²

This also repeats Spinoza, who presents the multitude as vulnerable to ‘superstition’ and to an associated fear which separates them from their *puissance*, induced by priests and sovereigns whose *pouvoir* relies upon this separation.¹²³ The issue here is not so much tyranny, at least in the sense of the direct imposition of power, but rather the reduction of thought to a ‘radio-quiz’ of answers to ‘supposedly given problems’ rather than ‘a method of invention’ appropriate to their constitution. Where the population accepts that problems are universal and unchanging, they are prevented from orienting themselves in the way which best realises their capacity to act, with their behaviour instead restricted to the norms required to reproduce existing institutions.¹²⁴

according to probabilistic reasoning, and those based on the repetitions of hearsay or religious dogma. Bergson specifically defines false problems as those which rely upon negative conceptions of identity defined according to a form of lack which must be compensated for, or those which otherwise subsume the different in kind within ‘badly analysed composites’ derived from the common use of language (*B*, 18-19). See Audrey Wasser, “How Do We Recognise Problems?,” *Deleuze Studies* 11, no. 1 (2017): pp. 48-67, <https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2017.0251>, 59.

¹²² *B*, 15.

¹²³ Spinoza, “Theological-Political Treatise,” 388ff. See in particular the famous quote that inspires Deleuze and Guattari’s problem of desire, as examined in the next chapter: ‘Granted, then, that the supreme mystery of despotism, its prop and stay, is to keep men in a state of deception, and with the specious title of religion to cloak the fear by which they must be held in check, so that they will fight for their servitude as if for salvation, and count it no shame, but the highest honour, to spend their blood and their lives for the glorification of one man’ (*Ibid.*, 389-390). This conception of deception or superstition also appears in the work of Hume, who connects it to the ‘non-philosophical beliefs’ that derive from the repetition of ‘hearsay’ or church dogma. (See Hume, *Treatise*, 70.) These conceptions of ‘superstition’ are to be distinguished from that employed by Locke, as presented in the next chapter, because they do not presuppose the content of the power from which the subject is separated, while Lockean superstition is necessarily a barrier to the application of otherwise universal reason.

¹²⁴ *DR*, 150 and 161.

Deleuze deploys the Marxist concept of fetishism to characterise false problems as ‘transcendental’ illusions ‘born out of the conditions of social consciousness in the course of its actualization’.¹²⁵ As we might confuse relationships between people with relations among things, so too can we confuse the sense implicated by our experience, and thus our potential for action, with the supposedly fixed possibilities imparted to us by education. Unlike individual cases of error, these ‘false’ problems are particularly pernicious for their intimate relation to life:

There are those for whom the whole of differentiated social existence is tied to the false problems which enable them to live, and others for whom social existence is entirely contained in the false problems of which they occupy the fraudulent positions, and from which they suffer.¹²⁶

To give an example, the problem of employment is often presented as an absolute given, a necessary orientation to which one’s thought and activity ought to respond: nevertheless, it possesses an unquestionably social basis and presupposes that existing conditions be continually reinforced, this including the constant imposition of the problem itself through education.¹²⁷ This does not make the problem illusory, so much as it reveals its origins to be extraneous to subjects and their actual experience: for those that need to work to live, attunement to the problem of labour remains an unavoidable prerequisite for survival, though it will never reveal their other capacities to act.

Identification with the ‘symbolic’ transformations of the past is thus necessary not for their provision of particular ways of thinking or living which might be imitated, nor even for the gravitas they lend, but for their revelation that the problems which presently define the subject and society are not fixed and inescapable. Revolution, an experimentation which aligns the present with a vital lineage of singular and ‘virtual’ events, is thus ‘the paradox of society, the particular wrath of the social Idea’, bring sociality to the ‘transcendent’ or liminal point at which false problems are discarded in favour of a direct engagement with experience.¹²⁸ It is important to note, however, that this ‘transcendent’ operation, as with the transcendent

¹²⁵ Ibid., 208.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ This has obvious resonance with the concept of the Ideological State Apparatuses introduced by Louis Althusser, by means of which institutions ‘interpellate’ subjects into the distinct form necessary for the reproduction of the modes of social production by ‘hailing’ them. See Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2014). Deleuze shares with Althusser a desire to go beyond the immediacy of subjective perception to the wider social field within which such perception is constituted and, as I discuss in the next section, makes several references to the ‘ideology’ of the bourgeoisie. However, as I explore in the next chapter, Deleuze and Guattari both ultimately reject ‘ideology’ as a produced consequence of economic conditions, instead referring to a number of independent assemblages of expression which must be considered in singular terms.

¹²⁸ *DR*, 208.

operation of sensibility and memory described above, is not a return to experience ‘as it really is’, free of some ideological distortion, but rather the point the ‘social’ faculty, that is, our capacity to associate with one another, opens onto the flow of becoming constituted by our collective encounters. This flow produces in social life a qualitative transformation that cannot be directly represented, but must instead only be ‘lived’:

Take the social multiplicity: it determines sociability as a faculty, but also the transcendent object of sociability which cannot be lived within actual societies in which the multiplicity is incarnated, but must be and can be lived only in the element of social upheaval (in other words, freedom, which is always hidden among the remains of an old order and the first fruits of a new).¹²⁹

This ‘transcendent’ object of the social faculty thus includes not only the identities and relations which usually define social life, but also an ‘anarchy’ through which the multitude is always escaping the limited identities and problems which constrain them, this being the excess or becoming which can only be approximated as we learn to better interpret social experience.¹³⁰

In short, the revolutionary reposing of the problem is never the repetition of a past empirical event it ‘resembles’, but a repetition of difference itself, a caesura through which the present, in all its singularity, opens onto a new multiplicity extending into the future. The bourgeois revolutionaries were led to engage in an experimentation with new potential social roles and actions by a desire to exceed the limits which supposedly pertained to their collective identity, guided by a historical parallel which ‘symbolised’ the singular transition they desired. Where they succeeded, becoming ‘equal to the act’, they instituted a return not to republicanism, but to revolution, as an irrevocable and unrepeatable change in the social

¹²⁹ Ibid., 193. This appears to repeat a quote of Alexis de Tocqueville: ‘In 1789 the French tried harder than any other people has ever done to sever their past from their future... They imposed all sorts of constraints on themselves so that, in fashioning the people they were to be in the future, they would not resemble their fathers. *They spared no effort to make themselves unrecognizable.* In this singular enterprise I have always thought that they were far less successful than people outside France generally believe and than the French themselves believed initially. I was convinced that, unbeknownst to themselves, they had taken from the *Ancien Régime* most of the feelings, habits, and ideas that guided the Revolution which destroyed it, and that, without intending to, *they had built the new society out of the debris of the old.*’ Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution*, ed. Jon Elster, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1, emphasis added. The ‘remnants’ and ‘first fruits’ which mark the positive content of revolution are for Deleuze not the earliest days of the new regime, but more the transition between regimes, where the ideal, intensive, or virtual content of revolution itself returns: something which must be distinguished from any consequences within the actual. As I discuss in chapter three, Deleuze and Guattari believe the French Revolution to have involved the bourgeoisie imposing their own false problems in turn, ‘overcoding’ the revolutionary desire of the peasantry and *sans-culotte*: but unlike de Tocqueville, who emphasises the continuity between the two regimes, they argue that they do so on the basis of a different set of problems to that of their ‘despotic’ predecessors.

¹³⁰ DR, 143.

problematic, and so in the way individuals conceived of themselves, their capacities, and their social relations. More than a change to some specific set of laws, it was a clearing of the ground, a rectification overturning the social identities and assumptions upon which the *Ancien Régime* relied, reconstituting the multitude with reference to a singular *puissance*. Although they then proceeded to establish a system of representation incorporating the false problems, identities and values of a new order, the ‘symbol’ of the French Revolution has repeated and will repeat with every cry of *liberté* which farcically attempts its imitation.

Following Pierre Klossowski, Deleuze believes Nietzsche’s concept of the eternal return to formulate this problem of freedom as a fundamentally ethical principle. The eternal return is the possibility that one will live one’s life:

once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence.¹³¹

This would, Nietzsche argues, be the ‘heaviest weight’ unless one experienced a ‘tremendous moment’ allowing for its affirmation. Deleuze formulates this as an ethics of the event, ‘which turns upon itself and causes only the yet-to-come to return’, in the sense that it discards all fixed notions of identity pertaining to the actual in favour of becoming and a ‘repetition’ of the pure past, differentiated in an immanent fashion free of the limits established by false problems and fixed notions of the actual.¹³² As Deleuze puts it,

the war of the righteous is for the conquest of the highest power, that of deciding problems by restoring them to their truth, by evaluating that truth beyond the representations of consciousness and the forms of the negative’.¹³³

This entails not only the overturning of fixed conceptions of identity, but also of anything that demands a given thought or behaviour be repeated on the basis of a supposedly universal subjectivity. For Kant, for example, morality is grounded in the ‘selection’ of the categorical imperative, a totalising idea of practical reason which frees us from our subjection to empirical desire by subjecting us to duties demanded by reason itself; but the eternal return ‘overturns Kant on his own ground’ by introducing singularity as a higher

¹³¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), §341.

¹³² *DR*, 91.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 208.

principle of selection, one constantly renewed in relation to the event and its reconstitution of problems.¹³⁴ Freedom and ethics are thus united in problematisation, an evaluation that turns upon the singular and the mobile ground of becoming which, immanent and self-differentiating, is enveloped by present identities and forms, and which we reveal through our experimentation with experience.

This return to becoming establishes a ‘coherence between event and act’ which ‘excludes that of the self’, which becomes no more than a moment in the flow of becoming.¹³⁵ The real revolutionary actors are therefore never actual individuals and their willed actions, but instead a virtual ‘double’ which adopts their identity as a moment and determines its potential: a figure ‘without name, without family, without qualities, without self or I, the ‘plebeian’ guardian of a secret, the already-Overman whose scattered members gravitate around the sublime image’.¹³⁶ Becoming is the secret of the mass, an amorphous collective exceeding the determinate forms of actual individuals and communities, which returns anew with each moment of transition. This focus on a becoming which exceeds concrete identity has invited two criticisms of Deleuze, which Thomas Nail has dubbed ‘virtual hierarchy’ and ‘political ambivalence’ respectively.¹³⁷ The first argues that a hierarchical distinction exists between those subjects capable of exceeding the limits of their formal identity, and those which remain confined to these limits, being thereby no more than contributors to a creative process ultimately at the direction of others. Alain Badiou in particular has identified an ‘elitist’, even ‘aristocratic’ dimension to this metaphysics, presenting Deleuze’s virtual as a ‘One-All’, which ‘traverses’ subjects in its process of actualisation, ‘choosing’ those agents with the capacity to choose, making thought a ‘power, won only with the greatest difficulty *against oneself*, of being constrained to the world’s play’.¹³⁸ In short, where Deleuze claims that ‘things reside unequally in equal being’, Badiou argues that we should understand this to fundamentally privilege those individuals determined as capable of reposing problems, a position which undermines any possibility of a truly collective freedom.¹³⁹ Further, a pure determination of capacities by the virtual would mean that Deleuze would remain ‘politically ambivalent’, and specifically ‘indifferent to the politics of this world’, as Peter

¹³⁴ Ibid., 7. In *Difference and Repetition*, the thought of the Eternal Return is described at points as the ‘suspension’ of ethics, in the sense that it suspends the general moral principles of Kant. But as Keith Ansell-Pearson argues, we see in *The Logic of Sense* that this is only to provide an affirmation of the only true ethics: an ethics which goes beyond the human and beyond subjective, rational decision making. See Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Germinal Life: the Difference and Repetition of Deleuze* (London: Routledge, 1999), 103-104.

¹³⁵ DR, 89.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 90.

¹³⁷ Nail, *Returning to Revolution*, 14-15.

¹³⁸ See Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* 11: ‘The outside, as agency of active force, takes hold of a body, selects an individual, and submits it to the choice of choosing: “it is precisely the automaton, purified in this way, that thought seizes from the outside, as the unthinkable in thought”’.

¹³⁹ DR, 37.

Hallward suggests, with actual political struggles irrelevant relative to the greater drive towards creation realised by these singular individuals, and creation itself, with its potential to realise both disastrous and positive changes, remaining the only driving concern.¹⁴⁰

The strongest argument against these critiques, as presented by Nail, would rely on the ‘constructivist’ dimension of Deleuze and Guattari’s politics introduced in *A Thousand Plateaus*, which I explore in chapter three as a matter of revolutionary ‘continuity’.¹⁴¹ However, I believe Deleuze’s independent works to already provide a line of thought capable of disarming them, something which can be understood with one final reference to Bergson. For Bergson, the tension between the ‘fabulation’ of the closed society and the ‘collective’ intelligence which both constitutes and remains subject to it creates an inescapable tension, from which emerges ‘creative emotion’: an affective movement which forces certain individuals away from current restrictions, as if they ‘have no choice’ but to be otherwise.¹⁴² This affectivity passes ‘from one genius to another’, with figures such as artists, mystics, and philosophers becoming ‘adequate to the whole movement of creation’ by following a form of ‘intuition’ which counters fabulation by cultivating a connection to the dynamic processes which escape the formal limitations imposed by false problems.¹⁴³

These explicitly ‘privileged’ souls would, on Badiou’s reading, be those ‘selected’ or ‘crowned’ by the virtual as capable of going beyond themselves: but rather than abandoning others to their existing repression, Deleuze argues that, through the medium of given ‘disciples’, they produce an ‘excitement’ in the general population, something which leaves them ‘open’ to new relations with humanity rather than constrained to their existing partisan associations. This constitutes what Spinoza would call the *puissance* of the multitude, something which continues alongside the formal power of sovereignty, convention, and law, continually inducing new potentials capable of effecting societal change.¹⁴⁴

The ‘geniuses’ at the heart of this ‘open society’ are not given a place of authority or judgement for their exemplary application of a thought common to all; rather, they are individuals or communities whose way of living or of thinking constitute a point of rupture, an undermining of the general categories and problems to which we are all in some way subject:¹⁴⁵ something which, as I explore in chapter three, artists

¹⁴⁰ Hallward, *Out of this World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*, 163.

¹⁴¹ See Nail, *Returning to Revolution*, 18ff.

¹⁴² *B*, 110.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 111.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Bergson’s use of the term ‘open society’ must not be confused with the now more famous use of the term by Karl Popper in his *The Open Society and its Enemies*. As Popper puts it, where Bergson makes a ‘religious distinction’ between the open and closed, his is based upon ‘a *rationalist distinction*; the closed society is characterized by the belief

and revolutionaries are particularly adept at due to their desire to interact with the social field in its ‘objectivity’ rather than through the medium of general categories. It is therefore not that the difference of the entire social field is exhausted in the ‘selection’ of these agents: though they sit ‘unequally’ in equal being, this is only in relation to a given intensity, tied to a particular event and multiplicity. Simultaneously, they each contribute to a contingent lineage of singular points with which others might connect, such that one might describe them, like the Revolution, as ‘symbols’ allowing others to realise their own singularity.

I would therefore argue against notions of ‘virtual hierarchy’ that the virtual does not exceed, but instead progresses through the actual, such that every moment of every struggle is a contribution to its development, a genuine creation capable of transforming it. This can be seen in light of the influence of Gabriel Tarde, who Deleuze praises for developing a ‘microsociology’ focused not on the ‘Ideas of great men’, but the ‘little ideas of little men, the little inventions and interferences between imitative currents’.¹⁴⁶ This firmly opposes any notion of the ‘great thinker’ as one with a superior capacity, and instead points to the alliance of an immanent host of individual divergences within the general flow of repetition, from which both concrete struggles and artistic or philosophical creation draw, each inducing their own return to singularity which might resonate with others. Artists, philosophers, and revolutionaries are in this respect no more ‘privileged’ by Deleuze’s philosophy than communities suffering particular forms of repression. Experimentation is a potential to which all could turn, if not always with the same alacrity and style, and to the extent that this requires not our subjection to existing circumstances, but rather our engagement with it, all realisations of difference contribute to the overall progression of becoming, even as they actualise particular inequalities differentiated from it, repeating circumstances given and transmitted from the past. Further, I would argue against accusation of ‘political ambivalence’ that Deleuze has already established an ethical means of selection that can inform our political actions, with the potential to induce an ‘excitement’ which opens the population to further relations being opposed to the false problems which constrict it, or to further false problems which might limit thought and action to the constants required for a new historical order. In order to further develop this larval politics of *Difference and Repetition*, I turn now to

in magical taboos, while the open society is one in which men have learned to be to some extent critical of taboos, and to base decisions on the authority of their own intelligence (after discussion)’. See Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 512-513. Popper’s conception of the open society is of a Liberal democracy in which reason, a product of both individual capacity and communication, triumphs over illusion. This corresponds to the ‘intersubjective’ universals of communication on which modern models of the Liberal state are based, and which I examine in chapter four.

¹⁴⁶ *DR*, 313. For a study of Tarde’s influence on Deleuze, see David Toews, “The New Tarde,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 20, no. 5 (2003): pp. 81-98, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764030205004>.

the ‘new politics’ Deleuze believes necessary to overturn false problems and the ‘dogmatic Image of thought’ to which they are tied.

IV. A New Politics

As I argued at the start of this chapter, Deleuze believes ‘Platonism’ to have found new life in the ‘world of representation’, which introduced an ‘Image’ of thought as defined by subjective interiority and mental representation. Deleuze argues that this Image ‘subjects’ difference to discrete or ‘negative’ conceptions of identity, divorcing subjects from ‘the virtuality which they actualise, and from the movement of their actualisation’ by presenting all appearances as necessarily mediated by pre-determined forms of representation.¹⁴⁷ The supposed fixity of the relation between the subject and object makes interiority a ‘site of transcendental illusion’, one which grounds a supposedly ‘legitimate’ operation of thought which can be used to reinforce the seeming universality of false problems: a moral origin its proponents ‘more or less forget’.¹⁴⁸ In this section, I begin by outlining this ‘dogmatic’ Image of thought and its relation to false problems, before differentiating Deleuze’s politics of freedom from its Liberal formulation as a problem of *pouvoir*.

The first ‘postulate’ or presupposition of the Image of thought is that of ‘good’ sense: the assertion that thought is equivalent amongst subjects and naturally aligned with truth, when unhindered by external factors. Descartes’ philosophy, for example, continually refers back to the persona of *Eudoxus*, an individual of mediocre (and thus representative) intelligence who, by relying only on their natural capacity for reason, avoids being led astray by the presuppositions of contemporary culture.¹⁴⁹ This also grounds his sceptical philosophical method, which aims to prevent the possibility of error by rigorously subjecting all appearances to doubt, stripping away the fallible to reveal the one universal and self-evident truth: that one

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 267.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 265.

¹⁴⁹ René Descartes, “The Search for Truth by means of the Natural Light,” in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes Volume II*, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 399-420. See also the opening passage of the *Discourse*, which provides the foundation for much of Deleuze’s conception of the Image of thought: ‘Good sense is the most evenly shared thing in the world, for each of us thinks he is so well endowed with it that even those who are hardest to please in all other respects are not in the habit of wanting more than they have. It is unlikely that everyone is mistaken in this. It indicates rather that the capacity to judge correctly and to distinguish true from false, which is properly what one calls common sense or reason, is naturally equal in all men, and consequently that the diversity of our opinions does not spring from some of us being more able to reason than others, but only from our conducting our thoughts along different lines... it is not enough to have a good mind, rather the main thing is to apply it well’. René Descartes, “Discourse on the Method of Properly Conducting One’s Reason and of Seeking the Truth in the Sciences,” in *Discourse on the Method and The Meditations*, trans. R.E. Sutcliffe (St. Ives: Penguin Books Ltd., 1998), 27.

is a thinking thing, *res cogitans*, that wills, doubts, and so on. In short, the proper application of thought reveals its true nature, this being something that ‘everybody knows’ or can easily guarantee upon reflection.¹⁵⁰

The second is that of ‘common sense’: the presupposition that thought consists of an array of faculties which exist within a harmonious accord, which ‘appears not as a psychological given but as the subjective condition of all ‘communicability’’, in the sense that objects can be communicated from one to another, as Kant holds intuitions received by sensibility to then be synthesised by the imagination.¹⁵¹ This feeds into the further postulate of ‘recognition’, which presents thought as primarily concerned with the judgement of appearances according to their correspondence with one another or to a category or concept. Each of the faculties can thus provide analogous perspectives on a given object: as whether we see, remember, or imagine a table, for example, in each case we recognise our mental representation as correspondent to the same concept, or recognise a person across a number of encounters.¹⁵² Recognition thus provides common sense with ‘a philosophical concept’, in the sense that the unity implied by this harmonious interaction grounds the self-contained identity of phenomena through the diversity of their appearances.

It is for this reason that, though Kant takes the ‘substantial’ existence of the soul to be illusory, his transcendental idealism can be considered a ‘supreme effort to save the world of representation’:¹⁵³ the unity of apperception and its distinction from intuitions serves to ground not only the primacy of active thought, but also the cohesiveness of the world of appearances to which it applies. For ‘Kant as for Descartes’ therefore, ‘it is the identity of the Self in the ‘I think’ which grounds the harmony of all the faculties and their agreement on the form of a supposed Same object’, this mutual constitution of fixed identity being ‘a single Image in general which constitutes the subjective presupposition of philosophy as a whole’ despite the varying presentations of the relation between subjectivity and the external world.¹⁵⁴

On Deleuze’s presentation, this Image is ‘dogmatic’ because the philosophy which draws upon it always relies on the preconceptions of existing subjects and what they would supposedly recognise as self-evident,

¹⁵⁰ *DR*, 130. See also Descartes, “Discourse on the Method,” 10: ‘For it is so self evident that it is I who doubt, who understand and who wish, that there is no need here to add anything to explain it’. See also Alberto Toscano, “Everybody Thinks: Deleuze, Descartes and Rationalism,” in *Radical Philosophy* 162 (July/August 2010): pp. 8-17. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/everybody-thinks>.

¹⁵¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Kant’s Critical Philosophy: the Doctrine of the Faculties*, trans. Barbara Habberjam and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2008), 18.

¹⁵² Descartes demonstrates this through the famous example of a piece of wax which, when burned, loses its contingent qualities: a fact which does not prevent our ‘recognition’ of it as a continuous identity. René Descartes, “Meditations on the First Philosophy,” in *Discourse on the Method and The Meditations*, 108-109.

¹⁵³ *DR*, 87.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

should they follow a rational method itself grounded in this preconceived notion of thought. In this sense they fail to find a true foundation for philosophy, as will anyone that turns to the universal or ahistorical: as the last section explored, ‘the true philosophical beginning, Difference, is in-itself already Repetition’ demanding constant renewal in relation to experience.¹⁵⁵ Deleuze’s conception of the transcendental application of the faculties rejects the postulates of common sense and recognition, positing ‘transcendental’ objects which can only be sensed, remembered, thought, or lived, remaining unrecognisable by the other faculties and so absolutely singular.

From this perspective, the Image obscures the singular potential of actual subjects by enforcing a particular conception of thought and its legitimate operation, making it essentially moral: as Deleuze puts it, the postulate of recognition ‘has never sanctioned anything but the recognisable and the recognised; form will never inspire anything but conformities’, with the supposedly ‘legitimate’ forms of thought leading subjects inexorably to submit to given norms.¹⁵⁶ The limitations of the innate ‘natural light’ of reason, for example, ultimately led Descartes to support absolutism, a factor common to other ‘proto-Liberal’ figures of the period who possessed the classical Image without extending this into a politics of individual judgement.¹⁵⁷ With Kant, by contrast, where the capacity for practical judgement is affirmed, reason is fundamentally aligned with individual freedom, even to the extent that duty demands we question the dominant moral and political wisdom of our time, *sapere aude!* However, and as I explore in more detail in the next chapter, it also legitimises in advance the state to which one is already subject, excluding all rebellion as irrational.¹⁵⁸ By vesting individuals with the capacity to exercise judgement on their own account, but retaining the

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 129. For example, though Hegel criticised Descartes for this exact failure, Deleuze in turn believes that the ‘pure’ being which opens *The Science of Logic* becomes such only by ‘referring all its presuppositions back to sensible, concrete, empirical being’ (Ibid.).

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 135.

¹⁵⁷ Though it may be true that Descartes’ rationalism made him the ‘Grandfather of the Revolution’, as Nietzsche claims (Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, ed. Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), §191), Descartes himself makes it clear that the indistinctness of social and ethical ideas means that both are best left to the management of those selected by God rather than the judgement of common reason (Descartes, “Discourse on the Method,” 78). This can be clearly seen in the first ‘moral’ principle by which Descartes rules himself where clarity is unavailable, pledging ‘to obey the laws and customs of my country, firmly preserving the religion into which God was good enough to have me instructed from childhood, and governing myself in all other matters according to the most moderate opinions’ (Ibid., 49). A similar logic was also followed by other proto-Liberal absolutists: though Deleuze does not mention Hobbes in this context, it is clear enough from his conception of reason, which is both universal amongst subjects and entails a good method. See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group, 2018), 36-37: ‘The first cause of Absurd conclusions I ascribe to the want of Method... all men by nature reason alike, and well, when they have good principles. For who is so stupid, as both to mistake in Geometry, and also to persist in it, when another detects his error to him?’

¹⁵⁸ Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?,” in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.), 17 [8:35].

unitary nature of interiority and the moral consequences of common reason, Kant could be said to have ‘everything—a tribunal of justices of the peace, a registration room, a register—except the power of a new politics which would overturn the image of thought’.¹⁵⁹

A ‘new politics’ is necessary because, wherever philosophy adopts a fixed ‘Image’ of thought, it establishes the implicit assumption that there is but one way of thinking, one set of facts to be learned by rote, and thus a pre-determined, ‘legitimate’ list of problems by which one ought to orient oneself:

how derisory are the voluntary struggles for recognition. Struggles occur only on the basis of a common sense and established values, for the attainment of current values (honours, wealth and power). A strange struggle among consciousnesses for the conquest of the trophy constituted by the *Cogitatio natura universalis*, the trophy of pure recognition and representation.¹⁶⁰

False problems are the very fabric upon which society’s order is based, being continually reproduced by existing institutions and values, as well as the struggles to which these are tied. To break from such presuppositions thus demands more than a refined notion of thought: it demands overturning the dominant forms of representation, including both the supposedly universal conceptions of the subject and the objective presuppositions justified on this basis, in order to engage with the singular: a task which, I would argue, necessarily entails conflict with the concrete social mechanisms which produce them.

Deleuze argues that overturning the Image of thought, and thus Platonism, begins with the ‘ill-will’ of one who ‘neither allows himself to be represented nor wishes to represent anything’: a ‘surly interlocutor’ who turns ‘stupidity’ against the dogmatic Image. This is not the stupidity of *Eudoxus*, an affected ignorance of current opinions in favour of one’s ‘good sense’, nor the stupidity of one who confuses the singular and the regular, but rather of one

who recognises himself no more in the subjective presuppositions of a natural capacity for thought than in the objective presuppositions of a culture of the times, and lacks the compass with which to make a circle. Such a one is the Untimely, neither temporal nor eternal.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ *DR*, 137.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

Rejecting both common opinion and formal notions of subjectivity, Deleuze insists that we develop ‘the logos of the private thinker’, one who problematises life in singular terms.¹⁶² In place of the presuppositions of this dogmatic Image, Deleuze instantiates his own: that “‘Everybody” knows very well that in fact men think rarely, and more often under the impulse of a shock than in the excitement of a taste for thinking’.¹⁶³ Thought is a passive production resulting from the urgency, even the ‘violence’ of our encounters. By privileging singularity and the event, ‘Crowned anarchies are substituted for the hierarchies of representation; nomadic distributions for the sedentary distributions of representation’.¹⁶⁴ The distribution of singular and ordinary becomes ‘nomadic’, its contingent realisation shifting in relation to the demands of the present, and the problems which orient life become open to continual renewal.

Deleuze thus argues that there are two approaches to difference and contradiction.

In very general terms, we claim that there are two ways to appeal to ‘necessary destructions’: that of the poet, who speaks in the name of a creative power, capable of overturning all orders and representations in order to affirm Difference in the state of permanent revolution which characterizes eternal return; and that of the politician, who is above all concerned to deny that which ‘differs’, so as to conserve or prolong an established historical order, or to establish a historical order which already calls forth in the world the forms of its representation.¹⁶⁵

Where the ‘politician’ seeks either to preserve the existing order or to establish a new system of representation, establishing set values which presuppose a common form of subjectivity, Deleuze privileges those ‘poets’ that seek to connect to the permanent revolution entailed by the eternal return of the difference or anarchy which continues beneath their surface of the particular sensible and conceptual differentiations by which we approach life and the world at each moment.

The shape of the ‘new politics’ Deleuze’s believes to impart such an ill-will or creative destruction remains somewhat obscure, even potential, in *Difference and Repetition*. One reading has been provided by Michael Hardt, who associates it with an ‘immanent’ conception of democracy. Hardt’s argument, in brief, is that because problem formation ought not to be constrained to abstract ends, society itself must remain open to redetermination. The form of social organisation which best matches this aim is a democracy which allows

¹⁶² As Deleuze and Guattari will clarify in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the Nietzschean term ‘private thinker’ is perhaps misleading, as the consideration here is more an introduction of the ‘outside’ to thought in a production extending beyond any interiority (*ATP*, 376-377). The logos in question is not one of the individual but of the ‘thinker-comet’, a force which pre-exists and rejects any imposed subjectivity.

¹⁶³ *DR*, 132.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 278.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 53.

for the formation of ‘multitudinous’ political associations in response to the event, allowing people to ‘discover their own ends, invent their own constitution’.¹⁶⁶ Hardt compares this radical democracy to Liberalism:

To an extent, this vision of democracy coincides with that of liberalism. Perhaps the most important single tenet of liberal democratic theory is that the ends of society be indeterminate, and thus that the movement of society remain open to the will of its constituent members. The priority of right over good is thought to ensure that the freedom of society’s development is not constricted or closed by an externally determined *telos*.¹⁶⁷

According to this line of argument, Deleuze’s aims coincide with those of ‘Liberal’ democracy in that both demand the ends of society be left open to redetermination; they differ to the extent that Liberalism forsakes ontology in favour of a deontological conception of political right.

My aim for the remainder of this chapter is not to disagree with Hardt’s reading on this point: though I do not believe even an ‘immanent’ democracy fully exhausts the ethical turn to singularity Deleuze demands, the potential to form new political associations free of fixed deontological principles is certainly essential to it. Rather, I aim to reinforce the distinction between Deleuze’s politics of problematisation and the formal commitments I take even the most democratic ‘Liberalism’ to entail. Where a pre-determined institutional form exists for determining new social ends, it mediates the singularity of the population’s experience, maintaining false problems which obscure a differentiation of power. If Deleuze believes in a society with indeterminate ends, and democracy as an alternative to tyranny, it is a very different conception of society to which he turns, and a different tyranny that concerns him.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Michael Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: an apprenticeship in philosophy* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 121.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

¹⁶⁸ It could be argued that Deleuze argues for the superiority of democracy over tyranny in the essay “Instincts and Institutions”, differentiating them as follows: ‘tyranny is a regime in which there are many laws and few institutions; democracy is a regime in which there are many institutions, and few laws. Oppression becomes apparent when laws bear directly on people, and not on the prior institutions that protect them.’ (Gilles Deleuze, “Instincts and Institutions,” in *Desert Islands*, 20). In this, Deleuze furthers an argument which began in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*, which holds ‘institutions’, such as justice, to emerge from convention and repetition, replacing the immediate determination of instinct with ‘oblique’ means to satisfy our ‘tendencies’. *Empiricism and Subjectivity* is unique amongst Deleuze’s published works for this support for an institutional solution to the problem of freedom, emphasising Hume’s belief that they serve to ‘correct’ our behaviour through the pre-determination of circumstances to better align our individual desires with the ‘general interest’: a manipulation Deleuze describes as ‘the principle of all serious political philosophy’ and as ‘critical to the entire eighteenth century’ (*ES*, 50). However, in “Instincts and Institutions” Deleuze has already developed a conception of institutions as freeing us from instinct only to ‘subject’ us to another milieu, imposing ‘a series of models on our bodies, even in its involuntary structures, and [offering] our

Specifically, I would argue that Liberal democracy is inextricable from what Deleuze calls the politics of ‘good sense’, which he presents as the ‘ideology of the middle classes who recognise themselves in equality as an abstract product’:¹⁶⁹ a strikingly political dimension of his independent work that remains largely unexamined in the literature. As discussed above, good sense is a model of a supposedly legitimate form of thought, independent of objective presuppositions. Deleuze argues that this assumption is ‘by nature eschatological, the prophet of a final compensation and homogenization’, with the belief in a supposedly universal ‘method’ of thinking reinforcing a desire to establish a milieu which ‘corrects’ difference through its cancellation or compensation relative to others.¹⁷⁰ Deleuze’s presentation of such a ‘thermodynamic’ system is worth quoting at length:

Good sense... dreams less of acting than of constituting a natural milieu, the element of an action which passes from more to less differentiated: for example, the good sense of eighteenth-century political economy which saw in the commercial classes the natural compensation for the extremes, and in the prosperity of commerce the mechanical process of the equalisation of portions. It therefore dreams less of acting than of foreseeing, and of allowing free rein to action which goes from the unpredictable to the predictable (from the production of differences to their reduction). Neither contemplative nor active, it is prescient. In short, it goes from the side of things to the side of fire: from differences produced to differences reduced. It is thermodynamic. In this sense it attaches the feeling of the absolute to the partial truth. It is neither optimistic nor pessimistic, but assumes a pessimistic or optimistic tint depending upon whether the side of fire, which consumes everything and renders all portions uniform, bears the sign of an inevitable death and nothingness (we are all equal before death) or, on the contrary, bears the happy plenitude of existence (we all

intelligence a sort of knowledge, a possibility of foresight as project’ which leaves humanity a species ‘decimating itself.’ (Deleuze, “Instincts and Institutions,” 21). This ‘foresight’ already foreshadows the prescience of the ‘politics of good sense’ I examine later in this section, and which Deleuze explicitly associates with the eighteenth-century economics which drew so heavily on Hume. Though oppression is ‘made apparent’ by the negative restriction of the law onto individuals, the institutions which shield them are already considered to be problematic, leading Deleuze to raise the Nietzschean point that we must question whether, in each specific case, they serve the needs of the people or of ‘bureaucrats’ and a ‘privileged class’ (Ibid., 20). Though one might also point to other early engagements with Liberal formulations of the problem of freedom as ‘immanent’ forms of politics (including the ‘new utilitarianism’ and ‘creative legislation’ of Deleuze’s lecture course on Rousseau, in which the general will is realised through the production of new laws), following *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, no positive mention will be made of the ‘general interest’ or the use of institutions to ‘correct’ desire. When he returns to the question of law, as I examine in chapter four, it will be as a ‘jurisprudence’ which maintains the positive and immanent dimensions of the original reading without reference to formal institutions.

¹⁶⁹ *DR*, 225.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

have an equal chance in life)... it recognises difference just enough to affirm that it negates itself, given sufficient extensity and time.¹⁷¹

In short, the presupposition that judgement is only legitimate to the extent it follows a particular method results in political structures subject to the ‘prescience’ of supposedly ‘reasonable’ subjects, not in the sense that they will foresee actual occurrences and produce a structure appropriate to their particularity, but rather because they impose a particular set of norms into whose limited terms all emergent differences are then translated: as where a market equalises activities by assigning them a wage value according to their relation to production and exchange, tied to the predetermined output of ownership, profit, and loss. This ‘politics of fire’ thereby consumes difference, transposing it into a ‘diversity’ of formally equivalent entities which the possessor of good sense can judge according to their correspondence to pre-established norms.

Though Deleuze never specifies such, this politics of ‘abstracted equality’, of commerce, and of the middle-classes is, I would argue, an excellent description of Liberalism: not just because of these circumstantial connections, but in a more significant sense because, as I argued in the introduction, Liberal political theories presuppose a conception of the subject as political actor, such that their thought and action can be judged legitimate or illegitimate according to compatibility with a political structure whose principles are drawn from the supposed nature of their subjectivity: either because of their possession of a universal ‘reason’, as I explore in the next chapter, or because of universal norms of ‘reasonable’ behaviour appropriate to any participant within society, as I examine in chapter four. Liberalism thus maintains the image of the possessor of good sense in the figure of the theorist who remains essentially distinct from the actual political agents who engage within market or democratic structures, seeming to do no more than reinforce the supposedly universal principles which frame commercial or political activity. In the case of a democracy specifically, the formal equality provided is of participation in its institutions, as with the ability to join or form a political party. The addendum to this is that the institutional structure is justified in advance as the ‘reasonable’ means by which one engages in political action, preventing any particular group from realising a lasting change in the system itself: this being the counterpart to their ‘equal chance’ to participate within it. The politics of good sense, and, I argue, Liberalism, must thus be associated with the maintenance of a given historical order.

As I explored above, social transformation is, for Deleuze, something that must be lived: the immediacy of his immanent politics can thus never be tied to a particular institutional apparatus, but exists instead as a poetic critique of the present, grounded in lived experience and the ‘unground’ of becoming. Rather than a

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

‘politics of fire’, Deleuze’s ‘new politics’ is grounded in the constantly shifting ‘unground’ of the eternal return, which ensures the continuation only of those problems which enhance a particular population’s capacity to think and act. A society ordered according to fixed forms of representation, by contrast, is itself a form of fetishism, a seat of transcendental illusion which emerges naturally from our attempts to navigate a shared world and which restricts our potential to a set of pre-determined responses to the problems it imposes. Deleuze diagnoses such a stasis when he discusses the ongoing domination of the ‘bourgeoisie’. In something of a departure from Marx, he presents this dominance as maintained by ‘contradiction’, that is, through the imposition of negative conceptions of discrete identity and the false problems with which they are associated.

That is why real revolutions have the atmosphere of fêtes. Contradiction is not the weapon of the proletariat but, rather, the manner in which the bourgeoisie defends and preserves itself, the shadow behind which it maintains its claim to decide what the problems are. Contradictions are not ‘resolved’, they are dissipated by capturing the problem of which they reflect only the shadow. The negative is always a conscious reaction, a distortion of the true agent or actor.¹⁷²

As everyone but the middle-class politician knows, equality, abstracted from the specifics of given cases, does no more than distort the image of subjects, prolonging a social problematic long after its conditions dissolve, consuming anything that might threaten the existing distribution of power. To provide a formal mechanism for the burning and rewriting of existing laws, without overturning the false problems and general conceptions of the subject from which they derive, will therefore never lead to freedom. As I explore in chapter five, liberty, for the proletariat, thus entails dissipating the shadow cast by the bourgeoisie by reclaiming the right to constitute problems themselves, adopting the ‘ill-will’ which refuses present conceptions of ‘good sense’, including, as I argue throughout the thesis, those on which formal conceptions of democracy rely.

This is, however, not to deny the potential inherent within democracy: as unlikely as it may seem, it may even be that a creative openness is realised via the actions of a political party acting within the Liberal thermodynamism, should they approach the social field like ‘poets’ rather than ‘politicians’, that is, in relation to singular conditions and the true potentials of the population. To quote de Beistegui once again, if Deleuze’s thought is ‘going to have anything to do with democracy, it will be as a result of the radical heterodoxy for which it stands’:¹⁷³ in other words, though the expression democracy allows may be useful

¹⁷² Ibid., 268.

¹⁷³ de Beistegui, *Immanence*, 10.

for achieving political difference within certain concrete situations, the immanence of Deleuze's politics is not to be equated with any formal democratic procedure, which would in itself be a societal 'end' imposed by a dominant model of good sense. Freedom is something we reclaim in connection to a changing world, not a structure to be established in order to facilitate a hypothesised future capture of the state on the part of subjects who resemble ourselves.

As with the Liberalism identified by Ryan, Deleuze seeks a politics which mutates along with the tyranny it faces; but as I have argued in this chapter, he poses the problem of freedom, and of its limitation, very differently. Where Liberalism seeks to discover the law capable of guaranteeing the freedom of subjects in perpetuity, a freedom of diversity which negates itself through compensation relative to an established 'good sense', Deleuze seeks the means by which subjects might reclaim the capacity to pose problems in direct relation to their own experience, seeking the help of those mystics, revolutionaries, poets, or philosophers, past and present, who light the way to new potentials. For Deleuze, freedom is a problem of life and of thought, with any laws constantly burned and rewritten in the eternal return of revolution: any system, on this model, must be subject to constant problematisation, while any freedom worthy of the name must continue the 'transcendent anarchy' of becoming, coexistent with but exceeding formal laws and institutions.¹⁷⁴ If there is ambiguity here, it is because this remains always an indeterminate politics, one we must determine ourselves in relation to the world we encounter.

¹⁷⁴ As Bruce Baugh has commented, this notion of the 'open society' can be considered a 'democracy': though explicitly only in the sense of a 'people to come'. See Bruce Baugh, "The Open Society and the Democracy to Come: Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari," *Deleuze Studies* 10, no. 3 (2016): pp. 352-366, <https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2016.0231>.

Chapter 2 | Reason, Capture, and the Problem of Sovereignty

I want to inquire whether there can be some legitimate and sure rule of administration in the civil order, taking men as they are and laws as they might be.

— Jean-Jacques Rousseau¹⁷⁵

As I argued in the last chapter, Deleuze associates freedom with problematisation, an experimentation enabling individuals and collectives to escape the false problems to which they are presently subject and attune themselves to their singular potential. To better understand the social origin of these problems and their relation to political philosophy, I turn now to Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and to their presentation of the state as a 'capture' limiting the population to the limited social identities required to maintain a formal differentiation of power, or what I called in the last chapter *pouvoir*. Though this concerns social reproduction, they do not present this capture in terms of an imposed 'ideology', a concept they take to efface the singularity of the semiotic frameworks through which populations are led to understand the world in a particular way, but rather the production of particular conceptions of what it means to think, presuppositions which can then be tied to whichever norms presently define the state.¹⁷⁶ I therefore examine Liberalism not as the manifestation of dominant class interests, but instead as the vehicle for a 'sad Image of thought' leading subjects to recognise the state as the 'rational' consequence of their own nature.

Deleuze and Guattari present the state not as a particular set of institutions, but as society itself wherever it adopts a totalised form defined by *pouvoir* and the coterminous nature of sovereignty, law, and territory.¹⁷⁷ State-centred political philosophies present effective political action as realisable only through such sovereignty, formulating problems in terms of the *de facto* power and *de jure* right of bodies to establish laws holding over a territory and population; Liberalism distinguishes itself from the dogmatism of its predecessors by formulating the latter in terms of a legitimacy ascending from the governed population rather than descending from the divine. While this may entail establishing the actual consent of a given population through the formation of a democratic consensus, a problem I examine in the fourth chapter, even this presupposes the formal existence of a state of some kind, demanding an absolute legitimising condition that holds despite all variance in the interests, opinions, and values of subjects. Whether conferred

¹⁷⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2019), 2.

¹⁷⁶ *ATP*, 376.

¹⁷⁷ This follows the definition given by Max Weber. See "The Profession and Vocation of Politics," in *Political Writings*, ed. Peter Lassman, trans. Ronald Spiers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 310-311.

by the capacity to guarantee inalienable rights, to realise the general will, or simply to produce the conditions in which collective action can realise its inherent rationality, in each case Liberal conceptions of legitimacy derive this constancy from ‘men as they are’: that is, with reference to supposedly invariant dimensions of subjectivity or personhood.

As the last chapter demonstrated, Deleuze rejects both general notions of the subject and the *pouvoir* they ground, instead privileging the singular *puissance* of multitudes realised in relation to particular events. Deleuze and Guattari continue this opposition through ‘schizoanalysis’, their answer to psychoanalysis and other attempts to uncover a continuous structure or principle behind human thought and behaviour, which rejects ‘any idea of pretraced destiny, whatever name is given to it—divine, anagogic, historical, economic, structural, hereditary, or syntagmatic’.¹⁷⁸ In the same way that problematisation in *Difference and Repetition* opens thought onto a ‘schizophrenia in principle’ by continually reconstituting it in relation to experience, the figure of the ‘schizo’ refers to an ‘intensive’ progression which exceeds fixed conceptions of identity, and ‘schizoanalysis’ to the recovery of singularity from the generalities of representation. This recovery adopts a variety of names depending on the context, including ‘cartography’, ‘stratoanalysis’, and ‘pragmatics’, which I examine below, and ‘rhizomatics’, ‘diagrammaticism’, and ‘micropolitics’, to which I turn in the next chapter: but in each case, it involves examining subjects and social fields as complications of ‘lines’ or ‘vectors’, processes and developments exceeding established forms and the forces they implicate.¹⁷⁹ As such, I use the general term ‘analysis’ to refer to the approach to, and experimentation with, the intensive potentials implicated by singular individuals and collectives.

A central concern of such analysis, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is the way these individuals and collectives come to ‘desire’ their own oppression. This is not to argue that people in general prefer life under tyranny, consciously or otherwise, but rather to point to their willing submission to, and reproduction of, all manner of social norms. This variance leads them to argue that the ‘fundamental problem of political philosophy’, and one might say their problem of sovereignty, is that posed by Spinoza:¹⁸⁰ why do people fight for their oppressors as if they represented salvation? History is often presented in terms of the conflict and competition of nation states, but it is also the history of people submitting to and dying for governments which know them only in a general sense, and are just as much a source of their suffering as protection from it. This is not a problem resolved by the modern Liberal state, as even the most principled social democracies

¹⁷⁸ *ATP*, 13.

¹⁷⁹ See Deleuze and Parnet, “Many Politics,” 125: ‘What we call by different names - schizoanalysis, micro-politics, pragmatics, diagrammatism, rhizomatics, cartography - has no other object than the study of these lines, in groups or as individuals’.

¹⁸⁰ *AO*, 38.

fail in practice to guarantee the wellbeing of some elements of their citizenry, such that it remains ‘astonishing’ that ‘those who are starving do not steal as a regular practice, and all those who are exploited are not continually out on strike’.¹⁸¹ Such restraint implies an overriding ‘investment’ in established norms, one with a greater degree of specificity than any legitimising condition or ideology could account for. It is this investment that analysis aims to interrogate, reaching beyond general conceptions of subjectivity to examine populations as they truly are, that is, in the singularity of the problems, ‘semiotic coordinates’, and institutional norms they accept, as well as their potential to think and live otherwise. Rather than the conditions under which sovereignty in general can be considered legitimate, their problematic turns to the ways in which a given sovereignty produces the conditions for its own legitimacy by restricting its population to formal limits.

I begin this chapter by examining the early development of Liberalism as the political consequence of a ‘sad Image of thought’, arguing that Locke, Kant, and Hegel each provide the state with an ‘absolute consensus’ by presenting subjectivity as a universal form defined by reason. I then turn to the concepts of ‘desire’ and ‘assemblage’, analytic tools for identifying the collective investment through which limited conceptions of identity and false problems are reproduced. The third section examines ‘despotic’ sovereignty, which Deleuze and Guattari identify as a unity established amongst ‘signs’, qualitative differentiations marking the limits and functions of a given domain, subject, or object within particular contexts. In the fourth, I then argue that this ‘capture’ correlates to the emergence of quantitative ‘coordinates’ of property, labour, and monetary value, in relation to which all social phenomena become relative and comparable, arguing that this means that every state, Liberal or otherwise, imparts a ‘lawful’ cruelty or violence separating a population from their capacity to constitute problems. I turn to their presentation of a ‘judicial’ sovereignty, which extends *pouvoir* through processes of ‘subjectification’ or normalisation embedded within institutions, establishing a ‘social subjection’ which adapts the population to the state’s political and economic structures. I argue that the ‘sad’ Image of thought I associate with early Liberalism enabled the extension of this subjection by producing a general conception of subjectivity which, once channelled through educational institutions, proved essential to separating populations from their existing identities. Finally, I examine variants of Liberalism with a greater focus on individual and collective agency, understood as an ‘excess’ which might be used to compensate in some fashion for the ‘despotic’ pole of sovereignty, arguing that this ‘judicial’ solution to the problem falls short of the requirements of Deleuze-Guattarian problematisation.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 29.

I. Subject to Reason

The ‘dogmatic’ Image of thought examined in the last chapter is presented again in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where it is attributed two dimensions. On the one hand, the nature of thought in general is established as a foundational *mythos*, a term which, as Ronald Bogue notes, has strong resonance with the ‘fabulation’ Bergson takes to establish the ‘closed’ society.¹⁸² On the other, its application becomes grounded in *logos*, an ‘organon’ defining the ‘goals and paths, conduits, [and] channels’ of its legitimate operation.¹⁸³ Though in ‘constant interference’, these dimensions are like ‘the State-form developed within thought’, with representation like a sovereign establishing unity amongst a system of faculties which subject intuitions to fixed cognitive principles.¹⁸⁴

Deleuze and Guattari describe the Image as ‘sad’, in the Spinozist sense of a ‘sad passion’ decreasing a body’s capacity to act, as they believe it to serve an essential role in subjecting populations to *pouvoir*.¹⁸⁵ Though this influence largely relates to the internalised presupposition that one is a ‘subject’ equivalent to others and so rightfully subject to general laws, a ‘subjectification’ I examine in the fourth section, the philosophers who first adopted the Image made the presupposition explicit within ‘theorematic’ conceptions of politics, introducing the subject in general others would come to internalise. As argued in the introduction, a ‘theorematic politics’ is one which develops from base axioms: to describe the politics which derived from the Image as ‘theorematic’ is thus to point to its attempt to abstract from particular populations and interests with reference to a constant principle derived from subjectivity, allowing it to present all subjects as rightfully subject to sovereignty.¹⁸⁶ The *mythos* of thought and the *logos* of its proper application are thus joined with the *mythos* of the state’s absolute legitimacy and the *logos* or law by which it regulates the behaviour of its subjects.

¹⁸² Ronald Bogue, “Fabulation, narration and the people to come,” in *Deleuze and Philosophy*, ed. Constantine Boundas (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 214.

¹⁸³ *ATP*, 374.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 375.

¹⁸⁵ See Gilles Deleuze, “A Thousand Plateaus III: Continuous Variation,” trans. Timothy S Murphy and Charles Stivale, *The Deleuze Seminars*, accessed July 25, 2020, <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/node/189>: “This conception will allow Spinoza to become aware, for example, of a quite fundamental moral and political problem which will be his way of posing the political problem to himself: how does it happen that people who have power [*pouvoir*], in whatever domain, need to affect us in a sad way? The sad passions as necessary. Inspiring sad passions is necessary for the exercise of power. And Spinoza says, in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, that this is a profound point of connection between the despot and the priest—they both need the sadness of their subjects’.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 376.

This places the politics of the world of representation within a lineage of philosophical justifications for the state, one which began with ‘logos, the philosopher-king, [and] the transcendence of the Idea’ and to which modern philosophy contributes ‘the interiority of the concept, the republic of minds, the court of reason, the functionaries of thought, [and] man as legislator and subject’.¹⁸⁷ Where the philosophy of Plato could be said to have established a foundational *mythos* of transcendent Forms and the *logos* by which the philosopher differentiates copies from simulacra, the *mythos* of a rational cogito and the *logos* of a method freeing thought from objective presupposition established reason as the source of all authority, the proper application of which provides principles that hold for all despite their contingent interests or opinions. Deleuze and Guattari describe this as the presentation of subjects as always already established within a ‘republic of free spirits whose prince would be the idea of the Supreme Being’: a community of homogeneous thinkers united by the shared reason which establishes them as such, and which, as with Maximilien Robespierre’s Cult of the Supreme Being, entails an ultimately normative imperative to cultivate not only judgement, but also civic virtue.¹⁸⁸

The purpose of this section is to elucidate the theorematic philosophy which first made the Image explicit, something Deleuze and Guattari take to begin with Descartes but to be ‘most notably the great operation of the Kantian “critique,” renewed and developed by Hegelianism’.¹⁸⁹ Each of these philosophers associated reason with a formal conception of universality, these being the true, the just, and the right respectively, allowing for the judgement of all thoughts and actions as legitimate or illegitimate according to their compatibility with a unified sovereignty. To the extent that the latter two present the state as the only possible means of realising freedom, and the universal of ‘truth’ is used to this end in other thinkers after Descartes, I believe them to constitute a decidedly Liberal politics. Though Deleuze and Guattari do not discuss him specifically, I therefore begin not with Descartes, but with Locke, in whose thought the universality of ‘truth’ grounds a conception of sovereignty necessitated by the individual capacity to judge one’s own interests.

I.i. Locke and Universal Truth

As with Descartes, Locke searches for an apodictic ground for philosophy in ‘a Survey of our own Understandings’, aiming thereby to identify ‘those Measures, whereby a rational Creature... may, and ought

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 24.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 375.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 376.

to govern his Opinions'.¹⁹⁰ As with the innate capacity to judge 'clarity and distinctness' Descartes believes all individuals to have been granted by God, Locke establishes the *mythos* of reason as a 'divine Candle' enabling individuals to judge the accordance of ideas abstracted from experience, a faculty which naturally aligns with 'truth' should they follow a rigorous method of reflection.¹⁹¹

Being homogeneous amongst and immediately 'intelligible to all rational Creatures', as well as innate and 'no-where to be found but in the minds of Men', such reason also proves a suitable beginning for political philosophy.¹⁹² In order to isolate his subjective presuppositions and their political consequences, Locke follows Hobbes in turning to the 'state of nature', a presentation of society without sovereignty.

The *state of nature* has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges everyone: and reason which is that law, teaches all mankind who will but consult it, that being all *equal and independent*, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions.¹⁹³

Due to the nature of subjectivity and their divine origin, both immediately available to reflection, individuals are necessarily beholden to a natural law demanding respect for one another's autonomy: an apodictic ground from which the legitimacy of the state necessarily follows. Specifically, Locke argues that the state of nature lacks the security necessary for individuals to make full use of the resources they appropriate through labour. After the invention of money makes wealth durable, and accumulation a more essential concern, he argues that reflection leads subjects to recognise the benefits of a common law regardless of their circumstances, and so to willingly subject themselves to a 'social contract' consolidating the power of coercion in defence of property and other natural rights: this unless they should be 'biased by their interest, as well as ignorant for want of studying it'.¹⁹⁴ When, or even if, a social contract was actually agreed is irrelevant, as reason itself necessitates that it be formed wherever humans associate in significant numbers. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, in such a conception it is 'as if the sovereign were left alone in the world... and now dealt only with actual or potential subjects', with the fabulated state of nature

¹⁹⁰ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 45-46. As Peter Schouls puts it, 'It is Locke's position that each human being is rational by nature, and that the meaning of "rational," remains constant: "rational," always designates the human power of reasoning and the human willingness to act in accordance with the dictates of one's reason'. See Peter A. Schouls, *Reasoned Freedom: John Locke and Enlightenment* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2018), 43.

¹⁹¹ Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 45. As Locke argues in the *Conduct*, 'truth is always the same; time alters it not'. See John Locke, *Locke's Conduct of the Understanding* ed. Thomas Fowler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), 51.

¹⁹² John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 155 and 160.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

homogenising individuals according to their capacity to reach truth via reflection and establishing the ‘fiction’ of the state-form’s ‘de jure universality’.¹⁹⁵

Reflection thus reveals a unified sovereignty as a higher interest supplanting our more immediate concerns, but specifies nothing about its content. I would argue that Locke believes this specificity to also be provided by reflection, which makes it rational to submit to hierarchical distinctions present within the concrete state to which one is subject. This is because he takes an active engagement in reflection to be necessary for effective voluntary action, such that those ‘who are blind, will always be led by those that see, or else fall into the Ditch’, while its potential misdirection is a constant threat to freedom, as ‘he is certainly most subjected, the most enslaved, who is so in his Understanding’.¹⁹⁶ Locke argues that women and the working poor, whose ‘opportunities of knowledge and inquiry are commonly as narrow as their fortunes’, lack the security and leisure necessary for this reflection and its discernment of truth and superstition, such that their interests can only properly be realised through the guidance of propertied men.¹⁹⁷ Likewise, he justified the forced requisition of territory in the Americas on the basis that land was reserved by God for the ‘industrious and rational’, a category from which the colonised peoples were excluded due to their lack of the enclosure required for private property. As such, they could rightfully be put to work by their more ‘efficient’ masters or killed should they resist, demonstrating an irrationality which left them no better than ‘wild savage beasts, with whom men can have no society nor security’.¹⁹⁸ The *logos* of reflection thus presents subjects as necessarily subject to the concrete hierarchy of the actual state which claims them, with any resistance immediately irrational or animalistic: the only exception being where the propertied, their conscience prompted by God, judge the concrete state as tyrannical and so a threat to their security, necessitating a rebellion to restore the social contract.¹⁹⁹

As the example of Locke demonstrates, a universal conception of reason leads inexorably to sovereignty as the only means of guaranteeing the freedom proper to a rational being. Where this is realised as a ‘truth’ accessible to all, particularly as regards their interests, some scope exists for concrete states to be judged

¹⁹⁵ *ATP*, 375.

¹⁹⁶ Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 710.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 707.

¹⁹⁸ Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, 104. For a reintegration of Locke’s role in colonial government within a historical perspective on his philosophy, see *Wars and Capital*, 56-65 and Domenico Losurdo *Liberalism: a Counter-History*, 23-25.

¹⁹⁹ See Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, 417: ‘The end of government is the good of mankind: and which is *best for mankind*, that the people should be always exposed to the boundless will of tyranny; or that the rulers should be sometimes liable to be opposed, when they grow exorbitant in the use of their power, and employ it for the destruction, and not the preservation of the properties of their people?’

illegitimate, notably where they infringe upon natural rights. Later associations of reason and the state are more encompassing, something particularly notable in the work of Kant.

I.ii. Kant and Universal Justice

As I explored in the last chapter, Kant takes freedom to entail the subjection of desire to the universality of the categorical imperative. This duty is supplemented in Kant's political writings with the imperative that one's actions be subject to those principles which would establish equivalent freedom for all, thereby taking the form of right. As with Locke, Kant uses the foil of a state of nature, arguing that the only right established by nature alone is that of freedom from coercion, allowing one to follow moral imperatives.²⁰⁰ As even this is impossible to uphold in the state of nature, where 'human beings, peoples, and states can never be secure against violence', individuals are led by reason to sacrifice objective freedom to an 'external constraint that can coexist with the freedom of everyone in accordance with universal laws'.²⁰¹ that is, a general legislative will, vested with *pouvoir*. Unlike Locke however, Kant argues that this 'original' contract is not a historical event made inevitable by reason, but rather a regulative Idea which can be used to judge which laws are 'just', containing nothing which systematically disadvantages any particular group or infringes on the capacity of individuals to follow the moral law, these being the preconditions for universal consent.²⁰²

Kant's notion of justice is formal and so unaffected by empirical particulars: where they judge a law to fulfil these conditions, those subject to it are obliged to act as if they had consented to it, even where doing so infringes upon their happiness or welfare. This is because the true 'well-being' of the state, and its legitimacy, relates to its unity, this being the necessary prerequisite for the existence of any concrete rights.²⁰³ Further to this however, Kant also argues that subjects 'cannot and may not judge otherwise than as the present head of state wills [them] to', having 'a duty to put up with even what is held to be an unbearable abuse of supreme authority'.²⁰⁴ Although individuals remain free to use reason in the judgement of laws, in practice Kant presents the *logos* of judgement as limited by the necessity of maintaining the unity of the state, with the actually existing sovereign, however flawed, being the only barrier between subjects and the state of nature. Any rebellion, by contrast, could only ever be clandestine and so hidden from public reason,

²⁰⁰ Immanuel Kant, "The Metaphysics of Morals," in *Practical Philosophy*, 393 [6:237].

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 456 [6:312] and 389 [6:232].

²⁰² Immanuel Kant, "On the Common Saying: that may be correct in theory but it is of no use in practice," in *Practical Philosophy*, 296. [8:298].

²⁰³ Kant, "The Metaphysics of Morals," 461 [6:318].

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 462-463 [6:319-320].

introducing a contradiction which made some element of ‘the people, as subject, by one and the same judgment sovereign over him to whom it is subject’.²⁰⁵ This means that ‘resistance to the highest legislation can never be regarded as other than contrary to law, and indeed as abolishing the entire legal constitution’, changes to which can legitimately only be ‘carried out only through reform by the sovereign itself’.²⁰⁶ The actually existing state is the only possible solution to political problems, even those which it itself causes, and can legitimately be opposed only through limited forms of civil disengagement aiming to foster ‘a true reform in one’s way of thinking’.²⁰⁷ Thus, even the French Revolution, which Kant admired for its inspiration of a ‘wishful *participation* that borders closely on enthusiasm’ for more rational forms of governance, was legitimate only in that sovereignty had already passed to the Estates-General when they became representatives of the will of the people, rather than for any empirical consequences.²⁰⁸

I would argue that, by differentiating subjects via the universality of justice, rather than truth, Kant goes further than Locke: he presents submission to the concrete state not only as in the interests of subjects, but as a duty, on the condition that it does not infringe upon private morality.²⁰⁹ This is what I take Deleuze and Guattari to mean when they argue that the Image establishes a differentiation of legitimate and illegitimate subjects which effaces all other particularity:

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 463 [6:320]. See also Kant, “On the Common Saying,” 299 [8:300]: ‘For suppose that the people can so judge, and indeed contrary to the judgment of the actual head of state; who is to decide on which side the right is? Neither can make the decision as judge in its own suit. Hence there would have to be another head above the head of state, that would decide between him and the people; and this is self-contradictory’.

²⁰⁶ Kant, “The Metaphysics of Morals,” 463 [6:322].

²⁰⁷ See Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?,” 18 [8:37]: ‘A revolution may well bring about a falling off of personal despotism and of avaricious or tyrannical oppression, but never a true reform in one’s way of thinking; instead new prejudices will serve just as well as old ones to harness the great unthinking masses’. See also H. S. Reiss, “Kant and the Right of Rebellion,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 17, no. 2 (1956): pp. 179-192, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2707741>.

²⁰⁸ Immanuel Kant, “An old question raised again: Is the human race constantly progressing?,” trans. Mary J. Gregor and Robert Anchor, in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 302 [7:86] and Kant, “The Metaphysics of Morals,” 464 [6:321].

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 504-505 [6:371]: ‘That one who finds himself in possession of supreme commanding and legislative authority over a people must be obeyed; that obedience to him is so rightfully unconditional that even to *investigate* publicly the title by which he acquired his authority, and so to cast doubt upon it with a view to resisting him should this title be found deficient, is already punishable... there is a categorical imperative, *Obey the authority who has power over you* (in whatever does not conflict with inner morality)’. Note that Kant suggests the right to passive non-compliance with laws that break with individual morality, though this never goes so far as to justify rebellion. See also Paul Formosa, “The Ends of Politics: Kant on Sovereignty, Civil Disobedience and Cosmopolitanism,” in *Politics and Teleology in Kant*, ed. Patrone Tatiana, Paul Formosa, and Avery Goldman (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014), 44-48.

It is no longer a question of powerful, extrinsic organizations, or of strange bands: the State becomes the sole principle separating rebel subjects, who are consigned to the state of nature, from consenting subjects, who rally to its form of their own accord.²¹⁰

These ‘extrinsic organisations’ and ‘strange bands’ are the singular multitudes united by a collective *puissance*. To the extent these multitudes remain ‘clandestine’ and driven by problems they constitute themselves, independently of any state, they would, on Kant’s model, be judged as illegitimate and contrary to freedom, which can only arise in the form of universal right as concretised by the existing state. The only two positions possible on Kant’s system are those of legitimate and illegitimate subjects, with the former defined by their willing subjection to the laws which supposedly follow from their own reason.

In so-called modern philosophy, and in the so-called modern or rational state, everything revolves around the legislator and the subject. The state must realize the distinction between the legislator and the subject under formal conditions permitting thought, for its part, to conceptualize their identity. Always obey. The more you obey, the more you will be master, for you will only be obeying pure reason, in other words yourself.²¹¹

From Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, Kant’s ‘critique’ of reason thus goes no further than the ‘consecration’ of its legitimate functions, which ensure subjects are always already subject to the state.

I.iii. Hegel and Universal Right

Deleuze and Guattari argue that this association of individual and state is further developed by Hegel, who presents reason as developing through a social and historical process. Hegel dispenses with the notion of a social contract, arguing instead that humans are necessarily collective, becoming determinate only alongside others. As he argues in *The Philosophy of Right*, every individual is always already embedded within social relations which gain their character from the particular ‘substance’ that defines their people and historical milieu. Substance consolidates the collective customs and norms of these people, that is, their ‘spirit’, the character of which becomes increasingly explicit as conflicts between individual needs, passions, and characteristics result in the production of concrete laws and institutions. Though individual motivations are ‘the sole springs of action’, rather than any ‘liberal or universal’ aims, substance gradually becomes concrete in ways which realise the ‘universality’ that comes from the collective recognition of such laws and institutions, and thus a unified state, as expressive of this particular people, guided only by what Hegel calls

²¹⁰ *ATP*, 375.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 376.

the ‘cunning’ of reason.²¹² Individuals and the societies they inhabit are thus both moments in reason’s development towards universal self-consciousness, or ‘absolute spirit’: a process which necessarily continues through the state-form.

As Stephen Houlgate notes, though there is a tradition of Hegel criticism which associates his rejection of the ‘classical Liberal’ conception of freedom as the capacity to make choices without external restriction with a total subjection of the individual to the state, it would be a mistake to understand his position as opposed to freedom *tout court*.²¹³ Rather, he follows Kant in his insistence that freedom can only be made concrete in the form of right, ‘which commands our recognition’ as appropriate to all free beings and so entails particular obligations.²¹⁴ The ‘negative’ conception of freedom as unrestrained choice introduces contradiction, Hegel argues, as we do not choose, in each case, what it is we will. True freedom can only derive from the will’s affirmation of itself as a free being, understood as ‘formal universality’, such that it produces a ‘correspondence between what it is in its existence and its concept’ by acting with the self-conscious recognition of others not in the external terms of a potential restriction or means to an end, but as equivalent free wills.²¹⁵ By acting in accordance with right, a content that derives from its own being, the will thus passes to a rational, self-determinative freedom ‘for itself’, this being the ‘*absolute* determination... of the free spirit’.²¹⁶ Though the *mythos* of reason established by the absolute is very different from that of Locke or Kant, I would therefore argue that it nonetheless remains within the bounds of the Liberal tradition I established in the introduction, introducing as it does a conception of the individual in general (as will, both in-itself and for-itself) which entails a *logos* of duty subjecting these individuals to right, and so to laws and institutions taken to be necessary to facilitate their freedom. The difficulty many have in placing Hegel within the Liberal tradition can be seen as the result of his position at its limit, as he introduces an approach to the singular which is ultimately subsumed within a more general conception of particularity.

Hegel’s explication of right proceeds through several stages, beginning with a legal recognition that rights ought to be made concrete in an equitable fashion, and continuing through a moral recognition that others possess an equal right to moral self-determination and personal satisfaction that must be respected and promoted. Ultimately, however, both are revealed as moments of an ‘ethical’ recognition of the good as

²¹² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, ed. and trans. John Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 20.

²¹³ Stephen Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 181. A notable critic in this regard is Karl Popper in *The Open Society and its Enemies*.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

²¹⁵ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54 [§23].

²¹⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 57 [§27]; 59 [§30].

‘universal and objective’, that is, as beyond subjective moral evaluation and encountered in the world.²¹⁷

The ethical will finds this objective good in the productions of free self-determining individuals, and more specifically within the laws and institutions of the state. Hegel’s conception of the state is, as Houlgate puts it, that of ‘a body of people held together by consciously willed general laws, rather than mere force or natural association’, possessing a collective sense of their own character or history which allows them to recognise laws as proper to their community, and so applied to them by right.²¹⁸ The state thereby subsumes the immediate subjective bonds of the family and the collective associations of civil society within a unified and rational system.

The rationality of the state relates to its position as substance become self-conscious of itself as being ‘made *concrete* by subjectivity as *infinite form*’, establishing ‘laws and principles based on *thought* and hence *universal*’ and cultivating citizens to self-consciously claim these rights as their own.²¹⁹ Rather than an external imposition or something ‘alien’ to its nature therefore, right leads the ethical individual to affirm the state as ‘*its own essence*, in which it has its *self-awareness* and lives as in its element which is not distinct from itself’.²²⁰ The ethical individual not only recognises the state’s authority as superior to their individual capacity for moral judgement, they do so because they acknowledge its laws and institutions to be the direct expression of their nature as subjects, and the means by which they realise the self-consciousness necessary for freedom.²²¹

I would therefore argue that where Deleuze and Guattari consider Hegel to ‘renew and develop’ the Kantian association of reason and the state, they mean to draw attention to his supplementation of the moral duty to submit to the unity of the concrete state with the ethical recognition that freedom can only be realised through a process of explication that necessarily takes place by means of such unity, such that it takes precedence over any other interest or preference they might possess. For Hegel, the ethical individual acknowledges the state, as ‘the *rational* in and for itself’, as ‘an absolute and unmoved end’ possessed of ‘the highest right’ in relation to them, such that their ‘highest duty is to be members of the state’.²²² This formal unity becomes their ‘true content and end’, while their ‘destiny’ is to live a specifically ‘universal’ life in

²¹⁷ Legal conceptions remain from Hegel’s perspective too tied to abstract, contingent, and mechanistic rules; while morality internalises and exceeds this mechanism, establishing a higher sphere in which individuals are seen as subjects with their own merited viewpoints, this is likewise taken to be insufficient due to the subjective nature of the judgement, which remains ‘free’ to affirm itself over any objectivity and so leads to evil (Ibid., 167 [§139]).

²¹⁸ Houlgate, *Introduction to Hegel*, 20.

²¹⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 189 [§144] and 276 [258].

²²⁰ Ibid., 191 [§147].

²²¹ Houlgate, *Introduction to Hegel*, 196.

²²² Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 275 [§258].

accordance with right regardless of any other particularity.²²³ The modern nation state, as ‘spirit in its substantial rationality and immediate actuality’, is ‘the absolute power on earth’, demanding recognition of its ‘primary and absolute entitlement to be a sovereign and independent power’.²²⁴

From Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, this ensures that the state, understood in the formal terms of the technical rationality of laws and institutions and the reasonable obligations to which all free wills are subject by their own nature, subsumes or supplants all other forms of subjective determination, with the singularity of concrete states and the collectives they incorporate relativised in relation to the absolute progression of spirit. As they put it:

The particularity of states becomes merely an accident of fact, as is their possible perversity, or their imperfection. For the modern state defines itself in principle as “the rational and reasonable organization of a community”: the only remaining particularity a community has is interior or moral (the spirit of a people), at the same time as the community is funneled by its organization toward the harmony of a universal (absolute spirit).²²⁵

The *logos* by which individuals come to recognise themselves as free beings particularised by a given substance limits the particularity through which they are able to express themselves to the pre-determined moral forms of the family and civil society, each compatible with the sovereign *pouvoir* necessary to concretise right. This criticism of Hegel ought not to be confused with the typical accusation that his political philosophy entails a ‘slavish submission of oneself to society’, therefore:²²⁶ it is not that the obligations demanded by right are more encompassing than those of truth and justice, but rather that the concept serves the same purpose as these predecessors, namely, to limit all particularity to forms compatible with the state.

Though each of the positions discussed thus far formulate the universal in a different fashion, they each use it to formalise subjectivity and so provide constants on which the state’s absolute legitimacy can be grounded.²²⁷ Deleuze and Guattari oppose them all, though not because they propose an alternative

²²³ Ibid., 276 [§258].

²²⁴ Ibid., 366-367 [§331].

²²⁵ *ATP*, 375.

²²⁶ Houlgate, *Introduction to Hegel*, 195.

²²⁷ Far from a historical artifact, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the classical Image continues through a ‘Hegelianism of the right’ which ‘lives on in official political philosophy and weds the destiny of thought to the State’, justifying any abuse of the state’s technical rationality by elites as justified by the fact that ‘the rational-reasonable cannot exist without a minimum of participation by everybody’, specifically referencing Alexandre Kojève and Eric Weil as its ‘modern representatives’ (*ATP*, 376, ft. 42). As I argue in chapter four, further variants of Liberalism can also be seen

conception of truth, justice, or right: the question, they argue, is not whether such positions have failed to accurately identify the proper ends of state ‘rationality’ or the ‘reasonable’ norms by which it or its subjects ought to be limited, but rather ‘whether the very form of the rational-reasonable is not extracted from the State, in a way that necessarily makes it right, gives it “reason”’.²²⁸ Formal *pouvoir* necessarily precedes the philosophy which seeks to justify it, being the only possible source of the ‘gravity’ needed to make a particular conception of thought appear universal.²²⁹ This is as much to say that the formulations of universality which define the Liberal positions above are not natural consequences of reason, whether this be seen as static and common amongst subjects or as a universal progression driving them towards the absolute: where subjects are ‘rational’ or recognise certain norms as ‘reasonable’, Deleuze and Guattari argue, it is because both they and the world they inhabit have been constituted in particular ways by an actual political order. The problem with the theorematic political conceptions of Locke, Kant, and Hegel is not that the ideal model of the state they produce in theory would lead to some disastrous result in practice, but rather that the model derives from the state and serves a functional role within it: that of establishing its legitimacy and producing subjects who willingly submit to its norms. For Deleuze and Guattari therefore, the problem of sovereignty is not that of establishing its theoretical legitimacy, but rather unearthing the singular mechanisms by which it maintains its power. Rather than the philosophical elucidation of a formal freedom proper to subjects in general, their analysis deploys reason as an immanent and problematising force, tied to a given social field and the particular circumstances realised within it: what one might call a practical reason, though one closer to the ‘private thought’ of Spinoza or Nietzsche than to Locke, Kant, or Hegel.²³⁰

to continue the universals of truth, right, and justice in a specifically ‘intersubjective’ form, most notably through the ‘truth’ provided by market dynamics, the ‘justice’ that derives from adherence to reasonable principles of discourse, or the ‘rights’ which guarantee the security of this discourse and its inevitably positive effects.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid., 375.

²³⁰ *WIP*, 93. See also Gilles Deleuze, “Seminar on Anti-Oedipus and Other Reflections, Lecture 1, 27 May 1980,” trans. Charles Stivale, *The Deleuze Seminars*, accessed online 25th July 2020, <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/anti-oedipus-and-other-reflections/lecture-1>: ‘Hence the splendid definition by Spinoza when—there he changes everything—he keeps the very classic word, “reason”. I would like to close on this, always with this appeal for you to beware how a philosopher can use concepts that seem very traditional and, in fact, he renews them. When he says, “You have to live reasonably”, he means something very specific. He winks at himself because when he seriously defines reason, he defines reason in the following way: “the art of organizing good encounters”, that is, the art of taking oneself aside in relation to encounters with things that would destroy my nature, and on the contrary, the art of provoking good encounters with things that comfort, that increase my nature or my power of action (*puissance*). As a result, he creates a whole theory of reason subordinated to a composition of powers of action. And that’s what will not escape Nietzsche when Nietzsche, in *The Will for Power*, recognizes that the only one that preceded him was Spinoza. Reason becomes a calculation of powers of action, an art of avoiding bad encounters, of provoking good encounters’.

II. Two Problems of Political Analysis

As the last section concluded, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the supposed constants of subjectivity on which theorematic political theories are based are in fact extracted from the state, being part of a process by which sovereignty produces the conditions for its own legitimacy. In this section, I introduce their concepts of desire and assemblage as analytic tools which recontextualise such constants by charting the singular 'lines' or processes in development of which they are part, revealing how subjects are made complicit in their own oppression.

As I argued in the last chapter, *Difference and Repetition* presents a vision of thought at the limit of the faculties, each incorporating in their 'transcendent' objects a singular process of becoming that they alone can realise. The same might be said to apply to a faculty of desire, as, at the limit, subjects are driven not by particular needs and interests which exhaust themselves in the acquisition of given objects, but by a positive and 'problematizing' force which exceeds them:

It is true that the unconscious desires, and only desires. However, just as desire finds the principle of its difference from need in the virtual object, so it appears neither as a power of negation nor as an element of an opposition, but rather as a questioning, problematising and searching force which operates in a different domain than that of desire and satisfaction.²³¹

Empirical desire must make way for a more profound relation to the world: but rather than an enlightened yet nonetheless fixed self-interest entailed by their supposedly fixed nature, Deleuze turns to the mobile ground of experience attuning subjects to the event. This thread is taken up again in *Anti-Oedipus*, where 'desire' replaces the 'pure past' as their term for the singular precondition for determined thoughts and experiences: a development comparable to that between Kant's first Critiques, in that it represents a shift in emphasis from the potential for thought realised by experience to the potential for interaction realised by the connections individuals and collectives establish within a social field.²³²

The absolutely singular nature of these connections means that philosophy cannot have recourse to representations of the subject or thought in general, these being themselves forms into which desire can be invested and so intimately tied to particular social and historical milieus. Reason, for example, is a selection,

²³¹ *DR*, 106.

²³² See Daniel W. Smith, "Dialectics: Theory of Immanent Ideas," in *Essays on Deleuze*, 118; de Beistegui, *Immanence*, 120.

‘a region carved out of the irrational’ by a dominant system of power, underneath which lies ‘delirium, and drift’:

Once interests have been defined within the confines of a society, the rational is the way in which people pursue those interests and attempt to realize them. But underneath that, you find desires, investments of desire that are not to be confused with investments of interest, and on which interests depend for their determination and very distribution: an enormous flow, all kinds of libidinal-unconscious flows that constitute the delirium of this society.²³³

The social delirium can never be fully explained by the limited conceptions of the subject and its capacities upon which particular societies rely because it incorporates new potentials for connection and engagement which can, in the right circumstances, lead subjects beyond the bounds established by existing institutions and social practices. This means that, ‘in reality’, history is not the history of states, but of ‘desire’, a positive, problematising, and absolutely singular force constituted by the actual relations which take place within a social field over time.²³⁴ This ‘abstract subjective essence’ can be invested into supposedly constant interests or needs, but can never be exhausted by them, proceeding instead through singular ‘events’ of determination determining both the ‘desiring-production’ of individual affects and perceptions and the ‘social-production’ of institutions and practices.²³⁵ In short, desire is not a collation of the needs or interests which presently concretise it, but a ‘flow *in general and without distinction*’ which progresses through and necessarily exceeds them.²³⁶

Deleuze and Guattari wanted the term flow ‘to remain ordinary and undefined’, using it to refer to the repetition of particular connections regardless of nature or complexity.²³⁷ It is joined by the term ‘machine’, which refers to anything which ‘causes the current to flow’ or otherwise ‘cuts’ and redirects it, as a mouth is a ‘machine’ which diverts flows of food and air.²³⁸ As they put it, any encountered “‘object” presupposes the

²³³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “On Capitalism and Desire,” in *Desert Islands*, 262-263. See also Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, “Intellectuals and Power,” in *Desert Islands*, 211: ‘Perhaps it has to do with *investments*, as much economic as unconscious: there exist investments of desire which explain that one can if necessary desire not against one’s interest, since interest always follows and appears wherever desire places it, but desire in a way that is deeper and more diffuse than one’s interest’.

²³⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, “On Capitalism and Desire,” 263.

²³⁵ *AO*, 302.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 308.

²³⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Flux,” in *Chaosophy*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. David L. Sweet, Jarred Becker, and Taylor Adkins (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 73. For more information of flows, machines, and desire in *Anti-Oedipus*, see Daniel W. Smith, “Flow, Code, and Stock: A Note on Deleuze’s Political Philosophy,” in *Essays on Deleuze*.

²³⁸ *AO*, 38.

continuity of a flow; every flow, the fragmentation of the object', with every flow or machine a 'partial-object' necessarily realised within a multiplicity of further connections which, like the conjunction 'and', combine elements without dissolving their heterogeneity.²³⁹ The desire of specific individuals or communities is a flow 'produced' by a 'passive synthesis' of these connections, 'production' here meaning no more than 'to rearrange fragments continually in new patterns or configurations'.²⁴⁰ The necessarily singular nature of such multiplicities means that the analysis of any subject or community must turn on the particular 'desiring-machines' or flows that differentiate their delirium or 'machinic unconscious', this being understood as no more than 'the emission of any flows whatsoever' and uninformed by preconceptions regarding human interest or nature;²⁴¹ likewise social analysis must begin with 'a generalized theory of flows' rather than a presupposed understanding of society or its supposed function.²⁴²

These connections do not exhaust the concept of desire, however. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the connections which produce these multiplicities constitute developing associations which are nonetheless irreducible to them: as life could be said to exceed the individual organisms and species which constitute it at each moment. They argue that this association cannot be explained with reference to a shared concept or transcendent 'essence', being instead a singular production of the associated connections themselves: something they enigmatically term the 'body-without-organs'. 'Organ' here refers to any stable arrangement of flows: as a heart is an organ of the body, schools 'organs' of society, or faculties 'organs' of thought. The body-without-organs which associates such organs necessarily exceeds them, being continually 'inserted' into their production as the 'antiproduction' by which they dissipate: as life proceeds via the death of individual organisms and the extinction of species. This ensures that any systemic and continually reproduced arrangement defined by a particular set of connections, or what they call an 'organism', necessarily 'suffers from being organized in this way, from not having some other sort of organization, or no organization at all', requiring constant reinforcement if it is to be sustained.²⁴³

The body-without-organs allows for the association of diverse connections and 'returns' through their dissolution because it is desire in a 'disorganised', 'undifferentiated', 'formless' or 'intensive' state, both produced alongside and implicated by them. As I explored in the last chapter, intensities are 'vanishing' differences remaining implicit within any given moment, such that they can be understood only through the approximation of an ongoing process, as in changes in acceleration. Such processes and the elements

²³⁹ Ibid., 6.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 7.

²⁴¹ Deleuze, "Seminar on Anti-Oedipus and Other Reflections, Lecture 1, 27 May 1980."

²⁴² *AO*, 262.

²⁴³ Ibid., 8.

which concretise them can now be described as being associated by a body-without-organs, an unproductive, unformed, and singular ‘excess’ produced by the interaction of heterogeneous bodies over time, which conditions, but does not determine, their specific products. Each such production, be it corporeal or ideal, can therefore be considered an equivalent form of intensity, specified to a particular ‘degree’ according to the complication of forces involved in its determination:

The body without organs is the matter that always fills space to given degrees of intensity, and the partial objects are these degrees, these intensive parts that produce the real in space starting from matter as intensity = 0. The body without organs is the immanent substance, in the most Spinozist sense of the word.²⁴⁴

The body-without-organs is an ‘immanent substance’ which exceeds and resists the productive connections which nonetheless realise it: it therefore implies no transcendence, being rather a singular association emerging alongside and progressing through the specific connections that constitute its modes.

The specific degrees of intensity constituted by a body-without-organs, and thus the accumulation of forces it associates, constitutes a second, ‘disjunctive’ passive synthesis which conditions production by determining breaks between flows. The effect of connections can only be ‘recorded’ via a series of such disjunctions, which provide ‘co-ordinates serving as points of reference’, as with the breaths or bites which constitute the flows diverted by a mouth-machine.²⁴⁵ Previous to the imposition of any particular social organisation, Deleuze and Guattari argue that disjunctions are ‘inclusive’, in the sense that they are determined immanently by the immediate connections of relevant elements: a body-without-organs they associate with the Earth, in that the only force imparted upon production is that of their fragmented unity, equivalent to the planet itself. The state, by contrast, is defined by ‘exclusive disjunctions’, which totalise production by limiting the forms through which it can be ‘recorded’ to particular ‘molar’ aggregates.²⁴⁶

The term molar is drawn from the unit of chemical measurement, which subsumes molecules into an aggregative constant upon which further calculations can be based. In the same way, molar forms are ‘statistical formations’ established through the organisation of actual, singular, or ‘molecular’ elements

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 326-327.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 4. Deleuze and Guattari describe these disjunctions as taking the form ‘either... or... or...’ (AO, 8). As de Beistegui argues, this risks a potential linguistic confusion, as the English ‘either/or’ is a binary choice delimiting discrete possibilities, whereas this is not the case for the French *soit... soit...*. The ‘inclusive’ disjunctions discussed below correspond to the continual openness of *soit*, whereas the ‘exclusive’ or biunivocal disjunctions of social reproduction could be represented as a binary either/or. See de Beistegui, *Immanence*, 126.

²⁴⁶ AO, 105.

according to given principles.²⁴⁷ These principles are not conceptual associations, but actual distributions continually reproduced by particular mechanisms which limit the potential of these molecular units: as ‘classes’, for example, can be considered ‘molar’, possessed of distinct qualities and interests which result from given economic relations and continue for as long as these relations remain. By establishing mechanisms which maintain such conditions, the states ensure that any connections produced by these individuals can only be ‘recorded’ to the extent it corresponds to particular forms of identity, alongside the limited conceptions of interest or need with which these are associated: a ‘colonization’ of subjectivity Deleuze and Guattari name ‘Oedipus’, after the Freudian complex which reduces subjects to particular examples of the one process of infantile sexual development.²⁴⁸

Though the cultivation of these exclusive disjunctions is the ‘art of a dominant class’, they do not constitute an ideological ‘deception’ obscuring some more profound interest on the part of these groups.²⁴⁹ Though individuals and communities may lose sight of their ‘true’ interests and needs, the desire which is invested through such relations ‘can never be deceived’, only produced by social conditions which pre-exist and condition the relevant subjects, leading them to establish some connections rather than others.²⁵⁰ Any analysis of a subject or society must therefore not only examine the singular connections that presently constitute it, but also attempt to uncover the mechanisms which limit how these connections are recorded, ‘discovering how social production and relations of production are an institution of desire and how affects or drives form part of the infrastructure’ without accepting these limitations as essential or inescapable.²⁵¹

Deleuze and Guattari thus argue that any social field can be seen from two perspectives, ‘depending upon whether the desiring-machines are regarded from the point of view of the great gregarious masses that they form, or whether social machines are considered from the point of view of the elementary forces of desire that serve as a basis for them’.²⁵² Where the study of interests relies upon already established forms of ‘molar’ identity with supposedly fixed connections to further molar identities and institutions, the analysis of desire turns to the ‘molecular’ connections which emerge between specific individuals, communities, and institutions, and which are funnelled by existing social practice into particular forms. This establishes a critique which does not deny the very real power of existing investments so much as it contextualises them within an ‘intensive filiation’, an ‘inclusive disjunction where everything divides, but into itself, and where

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 279.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 190.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 28.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 257.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 63.

²⁵² Ibid., 30.

the same being is everywhere, on every side, at every level, *differing only in intensity*'.²⁵³ From this perspective, and despite their imposition of the negative, even exclusive disjunctions and the false problems associated with them are positive productions, realising intensity under a 'determined set of conditions'.²⁵⁴ This makes analysis a 'cartography' or mapping of 'lines', these being the ongoing processes and implicated potentials which animate the various problems of a social field:²⁵⁵ lines which shore up molar forms and organisms, and 'lines of flight' through which desire is continuously liberated from the exclusive disjunctions in which it is presently invested, a revolutionary consideration to which I turn in the next chapter. Without such critique, we risk becoming invested in those problematics which maintain existing social conditions, forgetting the inherent variability from which they emerge.

This critical function led Deleuze to later reflect that *Anti-Oedipus* is Kantian in spirit, deploying the concept of multiplicity in the 'conditioned' form of desire and the machinic unconscious in order to 'clear the ground' of fixed conceptions of self and society; *A Thousand Plateaus*, by contrast, is post-Kantian, developing multiplicities as 'unconditioned' substantives known as 'assemblages', which incorporate subjectivity as one dimension amongst others.²⁵⁶ While assemblages remain 'fundamentally libidinal and unconscious' and 'compositions of desire', being in this sense a 'singular' alternative to the Freudian 'complex', desiring-investment is but one example of the order which is continuously established and escaped at every level of reality.²⁵⁷ This does not negate the arguments of *Anti-Oedipus* so much as it supplements them, with analysis passing beyond desire and its investment to consider the further forms of order, or 'strata', with which such investment is entwined.

²⁵³ Ibid., 154.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 38.

²⁵⁵ Gilles Deleuze, "Seminar on Anti-Oedipus and Other Reflections, Lecture 1, 27 May 1980," 'analysis cannot be either an interpretation or a signifying operation; it's a cartographic outline. If you can't find the lines that compose someone, including their lines of flight, you do not understand the problems that occur or that he/she poses for him/herself... for me, schizo-analysis is only this: it's the determination of the lines that make up an individual or a group, the outline of these lines. And this concerns the entire unconscious'.

²⁵⁶ Gilles Deleuze, "Preface for the Italian Edition of *A Thousand Plateaus*," in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006), 308-311. One could also point to Deleuze's comments in "Seminar on Anti-Oedipus and Other Reflections, Lecture 1, 27 May 1980," that, while he continued to approve of its conception of the social field as a 'delirium', *Anti-Oedipus* was ultimately a failure for having remained too 'individualized'. I believe the concepts of assemblage and abstract machine to be solutions to this problem of individualism.

²⁵⁷ *ATP*, 36 and 399. On the connection between the concept of assemblage and the Freudian 'Komplex', see Ian Buchanan, "Assemblage Theory and Its Discontents," *Deleuze Studies* 9, no. 3 (2015): 383, <https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2015.0193>.

As has been widely noted, the translation of *agencement* as ‘assemblage’ is misleading in many respects, and in particular must be distinguished from the implications of ‘joining’ associated with the English term.²⁵⁸ Assemblages are not unities, but ‘multiplicities of multiplicities’, emergent associations including molecular elements, the molar aggregates into which they are ordered, and the ongoing processes through which both are conditioned and produced.²⁵⁹ They are therefore the ‘minimal real units’ available once the presupposed identity of objects, subjects, words and concepts is dissolved in the lines of which these elements are part, with the ‘intensive’ body-without-organs, the determined structures it currently associates, and the lines by which these forms are in the process of forming and dissolving each considered as ‘co-functioning’ yet heterogeneous dimensions, none of which transcend the others:²⁶⁰

One side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless make it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a *body without organs*, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate, and attributing to itself subjects that it leaves with nothing more than a name as the trace of an intensity.²⁶¹

‘Strata’ are described variously as ‘acts of capture’, ‘black holes’, and ‘belts’ of mutual determination.²⁶² In each case, the term refers to limited forms of formal ‘consistency’ which restrict the ‘intensities’ of the body-without-organs to particular sets of connections. ‘Stratification’, the emergence and reinforcement of such order, is a prerequisite for the stability both of organs and totalising ‘organisms’, constituting ‘a continual, renewed creation’ of the world from chaos by developing the physical, organic, and social relations necessary for determined phenomena and fixed identities of every kind.²⁶³

This means that strata can be determined in an immanent fashion open to redetermination, enabling intensity to ‘pass’ or ‘circulate’ into new formal arrangements as new ‘molecular’ productions emerge, or they can establish limited and continually replicated formal structures which preclude such redetermination. In either case, new productions are conditioned by a ‘map’ of lines or processes extending

²⁵⁸ See Thomas Nail, “What is an Assemblage?,” *SubStance* 46, no. 1 (2017): pp. 21-37, <https://doi.org/10.3368/ss.46.1.21, 22..> I opt for ‘assemblage’ for the sake of simplicity. For a further discussion of contemporary debates regarding ‘assemblages’ in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, as well as assemblage theory more generally, see Paulo de Assis, *Logic of Experimentation: reshaping music production in and through artistic research* (Leuven University Press: Leuven, 2018), 73-101.

²⁵⁹ *ATP*, 34.

²⁶⁰ Gilles Deleuze, “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature,” in *Dialogues II*, 51 and 69.

²⁶¹ *ATP*, 4.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 502.

into the past, which Deleuze and Guattari here describe as a ‘diagram’ or ‘layout’ which is ‘*simultaneously* developed on the destratified plane it draws, and enveloped in each stratum whose unity of composition it defines’.²⁶⁴ The accumulated effect of forces and their products over time establish the potentials which define a particular ‘concrete assemblage’ of determined entities: potentials both to maintain existing order and to escape it, such that each new production constitutes an ‘effectuation’ or selection determining ‘which variables will enter into constant relations or obey obligatory rules and which will serve instead as a fluid matter for variation’.²⁶⁵ As these accumulated conditions can be described as ‘cutting’ into the flows and relations which constitute the social field at any given moment, they are also described as a ‘machine’, one which is ‘abstract’ in the sense that it abstracts from existing formal divisions, including the distinction of being and appearance, past and present, and, as I examine in the next section, corporeal and ‘expressive’, by incorporating them as equivalent parts of the same intensive and immanent ‘filiation’. Far from abstracting from the particular, each abstract machine is ‘singular, and creative, here and now, real yet nonconcrete, actual yet non-effectuated’: a singular set of consolidated conditions, operative yet implicit and potential within the present.²⁶⁶

The abstract machine and its ‘effectuation’ are complex concepts which could be elaborated at far greater length. All that is necessary for the present discussion is the potential for ‘effectuation’ to exclude potentials that might realise the concrete assemblage in new ways, in particular once an assemblage has become ‘stratified’ by the state, a formal and limited consistency which consolidates the relations of further strata. Analysis must therefore be not only a cartography, but also a ‘stratoanalysis’ that examines those structures that contribute to the ‘sad’ limitation or colonisation of the subject, this including theoretical structures such as psychoanalysis, and, as I argue, Liberal political philosophy, as well as the concrete institutions through which such limitations are effectuated. It is to these strata that I now turn.

III. Significance and Capture

In this section I explore Deleuze and Guattari’s presentation of the state as a ‘stratum’, an encompassing formal unity established by *pouvoir*. I argue that this consolidation of power corresponds to an ordering of ‘signs’, forms of qualitative differentiation which delimit the relations of elements within a given assemblage. I present Deleuze-Guattarian analysis as a ‘pragmatism’ which looks past the supposed meaning of statements to their function within assemblages, and in particular to the way they reinforce the

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 70.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 100.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 510.

presupposition that all appearances can be judged according to pre-established metrics: a ‘capture’ which establishes the unity of the state. Understanding this unity and the ‘arborescent’ discourses and institutions which reinforce it is essential to understanding the function I believe Liberalism to hold within the state.

Stratification operates through two distinct yet interconnected processes, the first of which is ‘coding’, the establishment of matter into particular forms. This corresponds broadly to the ‘connections’ discussed above, in the sense that coding refers to the way the ‘periodic repetition’ of elements differentiates ‘blocks of space-time’ or ‘milieus’, yet also complicates the concept by pointing to the twofold nature of any such ‘articulation’.²⁶⁷ On the one hand, every code has a ‘content’ constituted by an existing material and the general tendencies exhibited by its ‘aleatory’ relations; on the other, its ‘expression’ refers to the way these tendencies consolidate into ‘functional structures’ defined by ‘relative invariance’: as the flow of a river produces certain tendencies in the detritus upon its bed, the disparate densities of which are ‘expressed’ as layers of sediment. While expression can be immanently determined by existing relations, as in this example, it can also be restricted to particular forms, or ‘overcoded’, by ‘machinic’ elements which introduce ‘phenomena of centering, unification, totalization, integration, hierarchization, and finalization’:²⁶⁸ as in gene ‘expression’, through which the aleatory connections of protein strands are ‘translated’ by ribosomes into the pre-determined genetic structures needed by organelles, or where markets convert the immediate drives of individuals into specific forms of economic activity.²⁶⁹

Following André Leroi-Gourhan, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the human capacity to manipulate their environment introduces uniquely ‘alloplastic’ strata, which consolidate existing physical and organic strata into a homogenous, manipulable content then ‘expressed’ by means of ‘signs’ embodied by their facial expressions, gestures, and language.²⁷⁰ Where previously expression concerned the structure that coded milieus adopted, ‘signs’ establish expression as a matter of qualitative differentiation, developing the

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 313.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 41.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 42.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 60-61. Note that neither Leroi-Gourhan nor Deleuze and Guattari believed alloplastic strata to be specific to homo sapiens, being instead part of a process of gradual evolution. See *ATP*, 60: ‘What some call the properties of human beings—technology and language, tool and symbol, free hand and supple larynx, “gesture and speech”—are in fact properties of this new distribution. It would be difficult to maintain that the emergence of human beings marked the absolute origin of this distribution’. While the capacity for manipulation and abstract expression transforms the strata, this ought not to lead to presentations of human transcendence over a homogeneous ‘nature’ defined only by its susceptibility to this manipulation and expression. Such transcendence is, Deleuze and Guattari argue, an illusion produced by human language and the consolidation of ‘significance’ described below. See Ibid., 63: ‘The abstract machine begins to unfold, to stand to full height, producing an illusion exceeding all strata, even though the machine itself still belongs to a determinate stratum. This is, obviously, the illusion constitutive of man (who does man think he is?). This illusion derives from the overcoding immanent to language itself’.

concept from its presentation in *Difference and Repetition*. Though the term continues to refer to singular qualitative differences which implicate both corporeal elements and further signs, they are now contextualised as a specifically collective production.

Specifically, signs inform expression by introducing thresholds of ‘territorialization’ through which elements gain particular functions and relations, this being the second dimension of stratification. To say that a milieu is ‘territorialized’ is to point to a further, ‘qualitative’ differentiation which distinguishes it from equivalent milieus: as where one distinguishes between one’s own house and those of others. In this case, the ‘content’ of bricks, mortar, and so on is no longer simply expressed as a building, but as a particular building, within which given standards of behaviour are expected. Signs also introduce thresholds of ‘relative deterritorialization’ or ‘incorporeal transformation’, points of transition at which assemblages open onto one another, allowing elements to pass between them: as where a house is purchased, or an accused party convicted of a crime, passing from a judicial to a carceral assemblage.²⁷¹ The signs which operate within a given society are not purely subjective attributions of meaning, but ‘collective’ productions, forming an entire ‘assemblage of expression’ which includes everything from traffic lights to the contracts which establish ownership and the transition of items between parties. In themselves therefore, signs are not ‘signifying’, that is, subjectively apprehended ‘signs of a thing’, but rather ‘signs of reterritorialization and deterritorialization’ constantly effected within a parallel assemblage of concrete bodies.²⁷²

This is not of course to deny that signs can be signifiers, adopting a ‘representative’ function, but rather to suggest that this signifying relation is a later development, one tied to the operation of the state. Deleuze and Guattari argue that signification is only possible where signs are organised into a particular ‘regime’, known as ‘signifiante’, which carries with it the fundamental presupposition, or ‘ultimate signified’, that every content can be expressed via a ‘symbol’ with a place within this order.²⁷³ This reinforces an absolute formal distinction between content and expression, in the sense the symbols taken to constitute the latter gain their ‘meaning’ purely from their relation to further symbols, being thus ‘relatively deterritorialized’, a second meaning of the term referring to their abstraction from particular territories; at the same time, the contents they signify are likewise relatively deterritorialized, homogenised as generic examples of categories established by the symbols which overcode them. Deleuze and Guattari describe assemblages which adopt such ‘semiotic regimes’ as ‘arborescent’ because they differentiate phenomena into categories defined by ‘covalent’, ‘mechanical’, and ‘biunivocal’ relations at varying levels of generality, forming hierarchical

²⁷¹ Ibid., 80-81.

²⁷² Ibid., 67.

²⁷³ Ibid., 66.

structures reminiscent of trees.²⁷⁴ Arborescence thus ‘striates’ the concrete assemblage, overcoding it with a ‘rigid’ order of molar ‘segments’ into which actual individuals and territories are translated: as a business might have the pre-determined roles of manager or clerk, or a school a particular distribution of subjects and age groups.

Significance is therefore a prerequisite for any differentiation of ‘legitimate’ signs, which can be considered those with the appropriate connections within an overall symbolic order, and by extension these arborescent structures: thus, while we may produce signs to establish our ‘ownership’ of any given territory, for example, it is the legal deed that carries weight due to its being the symbol which properly ‘represents’ ownership, as established by its connections to the judiciary and police. *Pouvoir* relies upon the unity of the symbolic order, as a plethora of different types of impossible sign would undermine the general applicability of law and the rigid segmentation imparted by institutions.²⁷⁵

This unity is reinforced by discourses which unearth supposedly constant principles amongst signifiers or their connection to signified contents, as psychoanalysis unearths the principles of a libidinal unconscious ‘signified’ by every thought or action, or Chomsky’s universal grammar the supposedly innate principles by which cognition parses propositions. Each such discourse is thus ‘fundamentally political’, even and especially where its proponents claim it holds no relevance to politics, because their stratification of signs reinforces the substratum upon which *pouvoir* is based.²⁷⁶ Rather than disputing the validity of these principles, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the models which unearth them are both ‘too abstract and not abstract enough’, abstracting from singular cases to present forms of stratification whilst missing the potential for the abstract machine to effectuate the assemblage in other ways.²⁷⁷ Despite insisting on the importance of a ‘stratification’ concerned with the particular forms of order operative within a social field, therefore, they also reject ‘the idea of an invariant immune from transformation’, instead recontextualising

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 335.

²⁷⁵ The presupposition that the unity of language is fundamentally connected to that of the state is perhaps most explicit in Hegel’s philosophy of history, where he argues that it was only through the establishment of formal record keeping, required for commerce and enabled by the state, that a collective self-consciousness was possible. This meant that any ‘nomadic’ exterior to the state was excluded from the true progression of history, which is necessarily attached to the self-recognition of a people: ‘The periods— whether we suppose them to be centuries or millennia— that were passed by nations before history was written among them— and which may have been filled with revolutions, nomadic wanderings, and the strangest mutations— are on that very account destitute of objective history, because they present no subjective history, no annals... Only in a State cognizant of Laws, can distinct transactions take place, accompanied by such a clear consciousness of them as supplies the ability and suggests the necessity of an enduring record’. See Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 61.

²⁷⁶ ATP., 101.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 148.

these stratic principles within an intensive filiation which reveals their order to require constant reinforcement.²⁷⁸

This means looking beyond the ‘meaning’ of the statements uttered within any given assemblage, that is, their reference to further symbols within an established signifying order, turning instead to the practical or, as J.L. Austin put it, ‘perlocutionary’ effects they produce.²⁷⁹ As the assemblage is the most basic unit of analysis once one looks past the supposed fixity of existing identities, so too is the statement the most basic unit of expression, featuring both a semantic reference to a symbolic order and a perlocutionary effect which is ‘redundant’ in relation to the assemblage which lends it power, rather than some objective domain of knowledge.²⁸⁰ Turning to the perlocutionary makes analysis a ‘pragmatics’, a term which, as Jeffrey Bell argues, is not to be confused with a study of language games, being instead the examination of the particular concrete assemblages of bodies and collective assemblages of signs which enable ‘statements’ to realise particular effects.²⁸¹

In the case of modern states, for example, public educational institutions are particularly important for imposing the unity of signification onto subjects, a functional role obscured by theoretical justifications which turn on the ‘universal’ conception of the subject. Deleuze and Guattari therefore characterise schools not according to the information they transmit, but, as in *Bergsonism*, by their ‘order-words’, incorporeal transformations that impart a given structure. Specifically, schools lead students to accept an original set of biunivocal distributions of ‘semiotic coordinates’, these including those of ‘masculine-feminine, singular-plural, [and] noun-verb’, reinforcing the presupposition that everything is representable within the established symbolic order.²⁸² This is not to suggest that the information transmitted is ‘false’, but that this semantic content is only the vehicle for the incorporeal transformation of children into subjects compatible with further social institutions, with each order-word ‘a little death sentence’, a stripping of potential preparing them for their submission to false problems.²⁸³ Also essential are institutions legitimised to carry

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 139.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 77.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 7.

²⁸¹ See Jeffrey A. Bell, “Postulates of Linguistics,” in *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*, ed. Henry Somers-Hall, Jeffrey A. Bell and James Williams (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2018), 67-68.

²⁸² *ATP*, 75.

²⁸³ Ibid., 76. This position is similar to that developed by Althusser, who identified schools and similar institutions as ‘ideological state apparatuses’ which ensure the reproduction of capitalism by cultivating subjects in ways which facilitate their acceptance of the norms necessary for labour. Where they differ, however, is in their insistence that analysis remain pragmatic and tied to the singularity of such institutions. From their perspective, to replace the parallelism between singular ‘regimes of signs’ and the concrete institutions in which they are embedded with ‘a pyramidal image’ in which the economic base of society becomes a homogeneous content ‘expressed’ by

out interpretation, which ‘fixes the signified and reimparts signifier’ wherever a content appears to deviate from the limits they establish, as where psychoanalysis ‘traces’ Oedipal coordinates onto behaviour which deviates from established conceptions of rationality.²⁸⁴ Together, signification and interpretation produce a ‘reterritorialization internal to the system’, a force restricting new productions to established territories:²⁸⁵ something effected by all ‘subjected, arborescent, hierarchical, centered groups’, including everything from ‘political parties, literary movements, psychoanalytic associations, families, conjugal units, etc.’, which ‘neutralize in advance any expressions or connections unamenable to the appropriate significations’ and to the segments they trace onto the world.²⁸⁶ This ‘shatters’ the ‘continuums of intensity’ which would otherwise result from the immanent determination of form by new relations, enabling signification to reign ‘over every domestic squabble, and in every State apparatus’ as an imposed power which remains continuous despite any activity on the part of concrete subjects.²⁸⁷

As with Hegel therefore, Deleuze and Guattari see the state as potentially embodied by any number of collective associations, defining it as the ‘perpetuation and conservation of organs of power’ without presupposing their content.²⁸⁸ Despite the attempt by Liberal philosophies to present *pouvoir* as the natural consequence of subjectivity or collectivity in general, in practice states necessarily involve an imposition or overcoding which subjects a social collective and whatever ‘wood, fields, gardens, animals, and commodities’ fall within their reach to a particular set of coordinates.²⁸⁹ They name this consolidation ‘capture’, arguing that it establishes a unity which lies at ‘the horizon of all systems or States’.²⁹⁰ This unity maintains territories within a striated ‘space of interiority’ or ‘forced aggregate of coexistence’ which limits their potential to predetermined forms of interaction and so constitutes a formal totality or stratum.²⁹¹

The state... is a phenomenon of *intraconsistency*. It makes points *resonate* together, points that are... very diverse points of order, geographic, ethnic, linguistic, moral, economic, technological particularities... It operates by stratification; in other words, it forms a vertical, hierarchized

superstructure and the ideology of a dominant class, as Althusser does, not only reinforces the presupposition that the state is the only form of political expression, but also effaces the singular nature of the institutions that actually operate within a given social field, the way in which they invest desire, and thus the means by which individuals are constantly subverting or deviating from these coordinates, a potential for resistance examined in the next chapter (*ATP*, 68).

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 126.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 115.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 116 and 168.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 117.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 357.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 385.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 427.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 453.

aggregate that spans the horizontal lines in a dimension of depth. In retaining given elements, it necessarily cuts off their relations with other elements, which become exterior, it inhibits, slows down, or controls those relations.²⁹²

This means that the differences between concrete states relate solely to the organs which realise the hierarchical distinction between *pouvoir* and the territories it orders: to the extent that both rely upon given institutions and regimes of signs which continually reinforce the conditions necessary for its reproduction, the diffusion of power by the market desired by libertarians and the centralisation of a military dictatorship both presuppose a pre-existent capture, the formal unity of a symbolic order, and a rigid distribution of social segments.²⁹³ As the following sections demonstrate, this fundamentally undermines the claims to voluntarism made by Liberal states.

IV. Cruelty, Enslavement, and Despotic Sovereignty

As the last section demonstrated, states are defined by capture, a differentiation of power which maintains the unity of a symbolic order and the legitimacy of the institutions which maintain the proper connections within it. From this perspective, the arborescent institutions and semiotic regimes of concrete states both draw their power from and reinforce capture, leading to antinomies where one considers its origin. The social contract, for example, is like a statement incorporeally transforming a population into an organised social assemblage: it therefore presupposes that this population already be subject to a semiotic regime in which it would make sense and a consolidation of power capable of effecting it.²⁹⁴ Pragmatic analysis resolves this contradiction by refusing the false presupposition that the state is opposed to a disorganised state of nature within which it would need to spontaneously coalesce, instead arguing that ‘there has always

²⁹² Ibid., 432.

²⁹³ This points to a paradox of free markets essential to understanding the development of what has come to be known as ‘neo-liberalism’. Deleuze and Guattari would agree with Karl Polanyi’s argument that a centralised state, with its own apparatus of power and violence, is necessary to establish and maintain the artificial social conditions within which markets are considered ‘free’ of government interference, conditions which could never have emerged spontaneously. See Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); de Beistegui, *The Government of Desire: A Genealogy of the Liberal Subject*, 54-55.

²⁹⁴ ATP, 81. Though Deleuze and Guattari are specifically discussing the formulation posited by Rousseau, the same logic holds for Locke’s conception. While such presentations of the state of nature are thought experiments rather than empirical hypotheses, they suggest a similar problematic is at work in some ethnological attempts to identify the ‘first’ state, which continual push the proposed origin further back into history with every new archaeological discovery, each of which suggest the pre-existence of an organised social field (Ibid., 428). As Sibertin-Blanc argues, the problem here is the association of any ‘trace’ realised upon history with the state-form, which is presumed in advance to be the only entity capable of producing it, whilst alternative social formations are excluded to a necessarily ‘untraceable’ state of nature. Sibertin-Blanc, *State and Politics*, 29.

been a State, quite perfect, quite complete':²⁹⁵ not necessarily as an empirical state, but as a line or 'vector' inherent to sociality, corresponding to a potential investment of desire which, as with Locke, Deleuze and Guattari associate with accumulation.

Accumulation, they argue, is a vector inherent to social activity, but one which cannot be made concrete without signification, as accumulation requires the recognition of a 'surplus': something which only becomes possible where goods are considered in abstraction from the specific territories they occupy, being recognised according to their correspondence to a general value which might therefore be maximised.²⁹⁶ Reversing the Marxist presentation of primitive accumulation, Deleuze and Guattari argue that surplus thus presupposes an existing 'stockpile', a point of accumulation distinct from particular territories yet relating to them all: a contingent 'threshold' likely passed multiple times throughout history by the 'chance intermixing' of social groups.²⁹⁷ Wherever such a differentiation appears, however, it immediately proliferates, uniting territories by subjecting them to 'serial' forms of expropriation.²⁹⁸ The first of these 'apparatuses of capture' is that of rent:

Ground rent homogenizes, equalizes different conditions of productivity by linking the excess of the highest conditions of productivity over the lowest to a *landowner*: since the price (profit included) is established on the basis of the least productive land, rent taps the surplus profit accruing to the best lands... This is the very model of an apparatus of capture, inseparable from a process of relative deterritorialization.²⁹⁹

The mutual connection of territories to a stockpile allows their relative productivity to be compared on the basis of their relation to an accumulable surplus, 'relatively deterritorializing' or overcoding them with a common referent and so incorporeally transforming them into property. In parallel fashion, public works projects and taxation constitute further apparatuses of capture which overcode activity and commerce, establishing general coordinates of labour and monetary value. Deleuze and Guattari thus describe capture as the 'semiological operation par excellence', with the formal distinction of a stockpile 'subjugating' matter

²⁹⁵ *ATP*, 360.

²⁹⁶ Specifically, Deleuze and Guattari argue that individuals not yet subject to a state would orient themselves via an immanent and 'pre-signifying' semiotic which would 'ward off' the desire for the accumulation of resources or power beyond the limits established by immediate need (*Ibid.*, 120). In this they follow Pierre Clastres, arguing that this would involve the development of specific mechanisms to ensure that resources which exceed the social body's use would be consumed rather than stored, as with the potlatch; similarly, the continual reconstitution of signs and their restriction to a particular territory would realise a number of different centres of power, continually re-established by a 'fabric of immanent relations', reflective of singular *puissance* rather than *pouvoir* (*Ibid.*, 357-358).

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 429.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 359.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 441.

into an ‘equalized, homogenized, compared content’ through the imposition of a dominant set of general categories, ultimately rooted in a desire to maximise accumulable surplus embodied within a centralised institution or set of institutions.³⁰⁰

This also imparts the first molar division of subjects, establishing both the ‘interests’ possessed by landowners, entrepreneurs, and financiers, and those who owe them rent, labour, or tax. Once the general coordinates of property, labour, or money are made collective, social actors can always already be considered subject to the formally continuous bodies to which they owe these ‘universal debts’ simply in virtue of their living within given territories, engaging in activity, and attempting to acquire the goods necessary for survival. The capture which exists on the horizon of all concrete states is therefore a ‘magical’ operation that *‘contributes from the outset to the constitution of the aggregate upon which the capture is effectuated’*:³⁰¹ in other words, it is dogmatic, establishing a ‘despotic’ dimension of sovereignty which appears always to precede both the actual institutions which embody it and the population subject to it.³⁰² This means that any attempts by Liberal political philosophies to legitimise it as a collective agreement necessitated by reason are illusory: sovereignty is a unification which begins and is maintained by the imposition of power, mediated through institutions which establish and reinforce the semiotic coordinates on which it relies, including those which specify the ‘rational’.

Deleuze and Guattari conceptually isolate this despotic aspect of sovereignty by describing, in quasi-mythical terms, ‘archaic’ states in which surplus rents, labour, and tax accrue to a single centralised power rather than to different individuals or institutions: a state they describe as a ‘megamachine’ or ‘machinic enslavement’, arguing that it would directly impose given aggregations and functions onto subjects, making them ‘constituent pieces... under the control and direction of a higher unity’.³⁰³ Rather than a former

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 445.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 446.

³⁰² Deleuze and Guattari develop the concept of despotic sovereignty with Hegel clearly in mind, most notably with reference to his conception of the ‘princely power’, the embodiment of sovereignty by ‘which the different powers are united in an individual unity which is thus the apex and beginning of the whole’ (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 308 [§273]). The princely power is, as Houlgate puts it, a ‘logical’ beginning for the state, if not its actual origin, as it establishes society as a specifically self-relating, self-determining unity: a role necessarily concretised within an individual selected by hereditary monarchy, such that they maintain an absolute independence from the actual production of laws (Stephen Houlgate, “Hegel’s Idea of the State,” in *Hegel’s Philosophy of Spirit: A Critical Guide*, ed. Marina F. Bykova (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) 191ff.).

³⁰³ *ATP*, 448. The distinction between archaic and modern can be misleading, as Deleuze and Guattari define the modern state specifically in terms of its inclusion of the second pole of sovereignty and the management of a private or ‘exterior’ form of appropriation, something which predates even the city-states of Ancient Greece (Ibid., 388). The ‘archaic’ state is modelled on the great Imperial centres which preceded the Bronze Age collapse, notably in the Middle East, Egypt, and Mesopotamia (Ibid., 450). Deleuze and Guattari draw here on the Hegelian ‘Oriental’ or Marxist

iteration of the state which was later supplanted by more ‘rational’ models however, they argue that this enslavement is the very essence of the state, constituting a cruelty or violence which is obscured and mediated by modern institutions and semiotic regimes, but nonetheless realised by them.

Though it differs across ‘different regimes and economies’, Deleuze and Guattari argue that ‘cruelty’ is characteristic of both states and non-state societies.³⁰⁴ It ‘has nothing to do with some ill-defined or natural violence that might be commissioned to explain the history of mankind’, as with the state of nature, but is instead to be found in ‘the movement of culture that is realized in bodies and inscribed on them, belaboring them’, making ‘men or their organs into the parts and wheels of the social machine’.³⁰⁵ Deleuze and Guattari thus argue that humans have always, in one respect or another, lived relative to societies which impose particular codes upon them. Where the state-form distinguishes itself is not in the elimination of cruelty through the security of common law, as argued by Locke, but rather in its mediation of cruelty through semiotic coordinates which legitimise it, presenting it ‘as preaccomplished, even though it is reactivated every day’:

State policing or lawful violence is... an incorporated, structural violence distinct from every kind of direct violence. The state has often been defined by a “monopoly of violence,” but this definition leads back to another definition that describes the state as a “state of Law” (*Rechtsstaat*)... There is lawful violence wherever violence contributes to the creation of that which it is used against, or as Marx says, wherever capture contributes to the creation of that which it captures. This is very different from criminal violence. It is also why, in contradistinction to primitive violence, state or lawful violence always seems to presuppose itself, for it preexists its own use: the state can in this way say that violence is “primal,” that it is simply a natural phenomenon the responsibility for which does not lie with the state, which uses violence only against the violent, against “criminals”—against primitives, against nomads—in order that peace may reign.³⁰⁶

As the quote suggests, Deleuze and Guattari do not believe the state’s monopolisation of violence to have dispensed with cruelty: whether surplus is owed to an imperial centre or to the landowners, entrepreneurs

‘Asiatic’ state, and more specifically the ‘hydraulic’ state presented by Karl Wittfogel. See also Sibertin-Blanc, *State and Politics*, 33. Note also that in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari expand the notion of the megamachine to include the territorial, non-state social assemblages, explicitly linking this to the ‘cruelty’ which is inherent to all social existence in the form of the direct imposition of certain codes (*AO*, 141). By *A Thousand Plateaus* they have returned to the ‘strict sense’ of Lewis Mumford’s original use of the term, emphasising the centralization of power that arises only with the threshold of the state (*ATP*, 428). It is the second I deploy here.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 425.

³⁰⁵ *AO*, 144.

³⁰⁶ *ATP*, 447-448.

and banks of the modern state, capture produces the subjects on which its violence is effected, resulting in a 'sad' population which is born 'crippled and zombielike', 'mutilated' in their capacity to constitute problems by an existing symbolic order and differentiation of power.³⁰⁷ This cruelty, to the extent it is acknowledged, is always justified in advance for its provision of the security required for the realisation of individual interests, for justice, or for rights, and so ultimately by the criminality, insecurity, and irrationality it claims to ward off at each moment, these being monsters it generates to consolidate everything that deviates from signifiacance and escapes interpretation.³⁰⁸

This demonstrates Deleuze and Guattari's fundamental opposition to the Liberal conception of sovereignty as a necessary prerequisite for freedom, and so as something to which subjects ought to voluntarily subject themselves.

The State is assuredly not the locus of liberty, nor the agent of a forced servitude or war capture. Should we then speak of "voluntary servitude"? This is like the expression "magical capture": its only merit is to underline the apparent mystery. There is a machinic enslavement, about which it could be said in each case that it presupposes itself, that it appears as preaccomplished; this machinic enslavement is no more "voluntary" than it is "forced."³⁰⁹

Machinic enslavement is magical, producing the subjects upon which it is effected by controlling the semiotic coordinates and problems into which they invest their desire: this means that the state is not aligned with freedom, except to the extent it produces particular conceptions of freedom as part of this investment. From a pragmatic perspective, one which dispenses with its signifying presentations of the subject, freedom, and the state, Liberalism must be seen as a reformulation of enslavement, which by imposing a biunivocal distinction of rational and irrational provides a further ground to the unity of signifiacance, obscuring the abstract machine and its potential to be effectuated in alternate ways. Just as the subjective presuppositions of the last chapter were shown to proceed from the dogmatic assumptions of empirical subjects, the Liberal positions discussed above do not unearth essential features of subjectivity upon which governance can be grounded, but rather draw from existing stratifications an Image of thought

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 425.

³⁰⁸ As Deleuze and Guattari argue, 'It is not the slumber of reason that engenders monsters, but vigilant and insomniac rationality': not the failure to think appropriately that leads one to ignorance and evil, but rather the need to designate an excluded outside to establish the formal unity necessary for its presentation as universal (*AO*, 112). This also resonates with Deleuze's suggestion in *Difference and Repetition* that vitality, as a multiplicity rather than an imposition of common sense, must incorporate within its transcendent object the 'monstrosity' which exceeds the particular forms taken to constitute 'life', parallel to sociability's incorporation of 'anarchy' (*DR*, 143).

³⁰⁹ *ATP*, 460.

which justifies the violence by which the state separates individuals from their potential to constitute problems. By turning to an ideal model of the ‘state of rights’, Liberalism demands a form of justice essentially distinct from any Deleuze and Guattari would accept, tied in advance to a stratification of the social field: a problem to which I return in later chapters.

V. Subjectification, Subjection, and Judicial Sovereignty

In this final section, I turn to a second, ‘judicial’ or ‘authoritarian’ pole of sovereignty identified by Deleuze and Guattari, related to the diffusion of *pouvoir* by ‘law and the tool’:³¹⁰ that is, through the institutions necessary to maintain a legal and economic structure. Rather than reinforcing ‘the classical alternative “repression or ideology”’, as presented by Althusser, Deleuze and Guattari argue that this judicial sovereignty represents a further ‘relay’ of enslavement, continuing its restriction of subjects to particular semiotic coordinates and problems via ‘processes of normalization, modulation, modeling, and information’ which shape their ‘language, perception, desire, movement, etc.’ rather than directly imposing a role upon them.³¹¹ Institutions are thus able to establish a system of ‘social subjection’ in which subjects become ‘workers’ or ‘users’ moulded to the requirements of an ‘exterior object, which can be an animal, a tool, or even a machine’.³¹² As I argue in this section, the Liberal positions discussed above reinforce subjection by providing a conception of subjectivity in general which, once internalised by a population, overrides any particularities they might otherwise possess.

Social subjection operates via a second kind of semiotic regime, known as ‘subjectification’. Though the two operate in combination within given institutions, subjectification contrasts with signifi-ance in its particularity, referring to the relation between a given subject or community and a ‘sign or packet of signs’ which establishes their ‘destiny’ or ‘reason for being’.³¹³ These ‘points of subjectification’ can be anything, from the sacred texts which drive a religious community to worship, the idea of freedom which motivates a revolutionary group, or even the crime around which a criminal’s life revolves: in each case the relation is ‘expressed more as an emotion than an idea, and more as effort or action than imagination’, constituting a ‘passion’ or affect which colours their ‘subjective’ or mental reality, transforms their self-perception, and leads them to perform particular actions.³¹⁴

³¹⁰ Ibid., 424.

³¹¹ Ibid., 458.

³¹² Ibid., 456.

³¹³ Ibid., 121.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

These actions are specified, Deleuze and Guattari argue, by ‘subjects of enunciation’, individuals vested with a privileged position in relation to the point of subjectification, which lends them the ‘authority’ to impart order-words onto those who possess a particular identity, these being ‘subjects of the statement’ whose particularity leads them to form certain ‘pacts’, ‘contracts’, or ‘alliances’.³¹⁵ Teachers, for example, are authorised to impart semiotic coordinates onto a particular class and engage in given disciplinary proceedings wherever students deviate from pre-determined norms of behaviour, part of a ‘contract’ each has already made by virtue of joining the class. Though the justification for this authority refers back to an existing symbolic order and the molar identities of teachers and students established within it, its practical foundation lies once again in the educational assemblage in relation to which their statements are redundant.³¹⁶

While the enunciative position can be immanently determined and so provide the means for individuals or communities to transition to an as yet unrealised social assemblage, a liberatory potential I examine in the next chapter, arborescent institutions operate by imposing ‘various forms of education or “normalization”’, each of which lead individuals to ‘change points of subjectification’ and model their actions to a pre-established ideal, as with the model of the ‘good’ student embodied by structures of reward and discipline.³¹⁷ This transforms *pouvoir* from a despotic imposition into a force which ‘melds with the “real”’, being dispersed through processes which establish the pre-reflective appearance of the world to the subject, who no longer needs to have a role directly imposed upon them:³¹⁸ a development which parallels Foucault’s posited shift from sovereign to disciplinary power.

Examined from a ‘pragmatic’ perspective, I would argue that the conceptions of reason developed by the Liberal positions examined above were an essential prerequisite for the more particularised processes of subjectification which characterise the modern state. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the cogito is itself a subjectification, the subject of enunciation of which is reason itself, an internalised authority realised through a pre-reflective notion of the behaviour proper to a ‘rational’ being. This makes reason the ‘coldest’ and ‘most self-interested’ of passions, establishing our ‘slavery’ to whichever processes of scepticism, reflection, and universalisation with which we associate it.³¹⁹ Where this Image is internalised, subjects

³¹⁵ Ibid., 80.

³¹⁶ Statements thus ‘do not have as their cause a subject which would act as a subject of enunciation, any more than they are related to subjects as subjects of utterance’ being ‘redundant’ in relation to an assemblage. See Deleuze, “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature,” 51.

³¹⁷ *ATP*, 129.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 130.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

perceive themselves as participating in a universal form already subject to given obligations, the particularities of which derive from an existing signifying order. This takes the notion of the ‘contract’ to the ‘extreme’ by producing a subject which ‘binds itself, and in so doing renews the most magical operation, “a cosmopolitan, universal energy which overflows every restriction and bond so as to establish itself instead as the sole bond.”³²⁰ In the place of their existing particularities and passions, the subject is able to recognise themselves as members of a global community subject to common obligations, a universal ‘cosmopolitanism’ which abstracts from their existing particularity and encourages them to mould themselves to coordinates designated as ‘rational’ by the dominant symbolic order.

The cogito, as with all subjectifications, needed to be imparted on the population by means of processes of normalisation, a fact which might explain the historical connection between Liberal political philosophy and public education. For Locke, for example, education was essential for ‘the Welfare and Prosperity of the Nation’, with the inculcation of the ‘habit’ of reflection providing the self-consciousness necessary to overcome empirical desire and defend against ‘superstition’, these being essential prerequisites to profitably realising both one’s own interests and those of the state.³²¹ This universality was not without immediate particularisation however, with education specified as ‘the Gentleman’s Calling’ due to the practical barriers to reflection faced by the women and the unpropertied, as discussed in the first section:³²² a limitation which was not taken to be a problem, because ‘if those of that Rank are by their Education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into Order’.³²³ As Alliez and Lazzarato note, Locke intended the gentlemanly education to operate in conjunction with ‘workhouses’, ‘industry schools’, and the threat of indentured servitude or forced deportation to keep the poor in check, their submission to the appropriate class segments being more important to the concretisation of reason than their engagement in reflection.³²⁴ Though subjects are established in formal and universal terms by the *mythos* of common reason, the *logos* of legitimate thought leads them to find their freedom in very different forms of subjection: one to the ‘ideal’ of the gentleman, whose cold rationality provides access to the truth needed to act as a subject of enunciation upon his estate; the other the ideal of the worker, whose limited access to reflection made submission to external direction entirely rational. Reason thus grounds a biunivocal distinction, tied to an economic structure, by which all other particularity is overcoded, despite all subjects perceiving themselves

³²⁰ Ibid., 460.

³²¹ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* ed. John W. Yolton and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 80.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ See Alliez and Lazzarato, *Wars and Capital*, 62; John Locke, “On the Poor Law and Working Schools,” in *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 182-198.

as 'subjects' in the general sense: a differentiation which, as I explore in chapter five, continues today in the distinction of capitalist and proletariat.

As I explore in chapter four, contemporary accounts of the subject have often dispensed with the loaded notion of reason, instead turning to 'intersubjective' universals and a cogito of 'communication' which relates to the nature of collectives. Despite this, the internalised conception of a subjectivity in general remains firmly entrenched, being continually reimposed not only by educational institutions but by other arborescent bodies, including the courts and police, who derive their authority from presentations of the subject in general, but who nonetheless realise particular differentiations of power. Deleuze and Guattari dramatize this with reference to Althusser's example of a police officer, who 'interpellates' a subject by calling 'hey you!': a hail to which the subject immediately responds in a subservient manner because they have been cultivated to recognise themselves as a subject in general, one already subject to authority of the police.³²⁵

As Nathan Widder argues, it is the signifying uniform of the police officer which imparts this effect, having become 'facialized' in a way the subject recognises pre-reflectively as invested with authority.³²⁶ For Deleuze and Guattari, faciality refers to the stratification of subjectivity, which becomes overcoded by the general coordinates established by signifiacance and the hierarchical structures of the state, this including the division of labour, gender, and so on, and then particularised by subjectification, which establishes the relation of particular aggregates to these general coordinates. This particularisation, they argue, always takes the form of a biunivocal differentiation: not in the sense that the state reduces identity to simple binaries, but rather that it 'recognises' or categorises each identity as either correspondent to, or deviant from, pre-determined norms, such that every individual corresponds in advance to a specifiable aggregate.

The binary relation is between the 'no' of the first category and the 'yes' of the following category, which under certain conditions may just as easily mark a tolerance as indicate an enemy to be mowed down at all costs. At any rate, you've been recognized, the abstract machine has you inscribed in its overall grid.³²⁷

Though always an example of subjectivity in general, subjects never 'speak a general language' but rather 'one whose signifying traits are indexed to specific faciality traits', their statements always mediated by their identity as 'child, woman, mother, man, father, boss, teacher, police officer' etc. and their position within

³²⁵ ATP, 130

³²⁶ Nathan Widder, "Year Zero: Faciality," in *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*, 117.

³²⁷ ATP, 177.

these binaries.³²⁸ These coordinates always pre-exist the subject, which doesn't 'so much have a face as slide into one', ensuring that their mental reality is made to conform 'in advance to a dominant reality'.³²⁹ as both the 'gentlemen' and labourers in Locke's proposed model of education would be 'subjectified' in relation to pre-established coordinates which encouraged them to deploy thought in very different ways, but in each case within the limits of a framework established by signification.

Without calling into question the universality of subjectivity, faciality thus establishes a hierarchical differentiation of power between 'major' identities and those 'minority' identities which are determined through their 'deviance' from an ideal, as where their circumstances prevented the working class from properly realising their 'universal' capacities. 'Major' in this sense does not refer to a quantitative 'majority', but to a 'state of power and domination' as reinforced by arborescent institutions.³³⁰ as 'whiteness', for example, could be considered the 'major' identity in South Africa under apartheid, despite the minority white population, because institutions incorporated processes of subjectification which guaranteed a structural advantage to those closer to the ideal even where this was not made explicit in law. This reflects what Deleuze and Guattari call the first 'deviance' by which individuals have been structurally differentiated in Europe and Anglophone countries, this being the biunivocal distribution of 'white' and 'non-white', with 'white' referring not to a particular Caucasian line of descent, but to a norm against which singular identities are contrasted to different degrees.³³¹ After race, further degrees of deviance are established in relation to the 'major' norms of masculinity, able-bodiedness, heterosexuality, and stable legal and employment status, which collectively form an amorphous *gestalt* against which all identity is relativised: what Deleuze and Guattari call the 'Face', which in Western democracies takes the form of 'the White Man' or 'typical European'. Rather than a 'universal', the Face is described as '*facies totius universi*':³³² an amalgamation of the privileged or 'major' norms dominant within society, through which all further forms of identity are recognised according to their deviance.

I would argue that this fundamentally contradicts the claims of Liberal political philosophy to universality. Examined in a functional or pragmatic sense, the subjectification of the cogito it introduced into the social field entailed the subjection of the population to the state as the necessary consequence of their reason,

³²⁸ Ibid., 168.

³²⁹ Ibid., 177 and 129.

³³⁰ Ibid., 105.

³³¹ Ibid., 178.

³³² Ibid., 176. The Latin phrase is drawn from a letter written by Spinoza (Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Letters*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1995), 299.), who uses it to refer to the nature of the physical universe, which he takes to remain a totality despite the fact its 'parts—that is, all the constituent bodies—vary in infinite ways' (Baruch Spinoza, "The Ethics," in *Complete Works*, 255.

whilst effecting a differentiation of legitimate and illegitimate action which made any direct opposition to the ‘contingent’ disadvantages faced by those recognised as deviant from major norms fundamentally irrational. As I argue in chapter four, this provision of an ‘identity in general’ justifying sovereignty as the only ‘rational’ political form continues today through specifically intersubjective conceptions of universality, including the potential for productive, reasonable dialogue: but despite this difference, it maintains the same function, providing an abstraction through which subjects can recognise themselves and so see the ‘rationality’ of the state and the authority of its institutions as precedent over their potential to problematise their lived conditions.

VI. Agency and a ‘Minor’ Strain of Liberalism

Though it may seem intuitive how the criticisms outlined in the previous sections may apply to those Liberals who emphasise the role of the state as a necessary prerequisite for our enjoyment of particular freedoms, there are other theorists who would argue that their conception of Liberalism is in fact closer to the Deleuze-Guattarian conception of ‘problematism’ outlined in this thesis. In particular, proponents of variants more focused on individual ‘agency’ might argue that their fundamental scepticism of the constants which usually underpin state and institutional authority allows them to account and compensate for the dangers associated with both the ‘despotic’ and ‘judicial’ dimensions of sovereignty, resulting in the most suitable balance between institutional power and individual freedom. In such cases, the potential for individuals or groups to reject the problematics imposed upon them by established governments becomes central, taking on many of the qualities of Deleuze-Guattarian ‘problematism’. My aim for the remainder of this section is to expand upon this ‘minor’ strain of Liberalism, using Judith Shklar, Richard Rorty, and Richard Flathman as demonstrative examples, whilst insisting that the attachment to the formal necessity of sovereignty results in these positions remaining theorematism in the last instance.

Shklar grounds her political theory on a utilitarian notion of cruelty, defined as ‘the deliberate infliction of physical, and secondarily emotional, pain upon a weaker person or group by stronger ones in order to achieve some end’.³³³ Such cruelty is something which all ‘reasonable’ people seek to minimise, and the *summum malum* of Liberalism, a tradition which can itself be defined through this opposition. As with her classical predecessors, Shklar believes the unity of the state and its consolidation of violence to be the only means of limiting this cruelty, but supplements this with the need for a constant ‘fear’ of, and thus

³³³ Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear,” in *Liberalism and the Moral Life* ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum (London: Harvard University Press, 1991), 29.

distancing from, the concrete states invested with this ‘unavoidable evil’.³³⁴ Resolving this tension can only come through the cultivation of ‘well-informed and self-directed adults’ capable of establishing a ‘multiplicity of politically active groups’ which would then diffuse power throughout the social field and prevent government from imparting its own cruelty against minorities.³³⁵ This begins with education, Shklar argues, to the extent that it cultivates individuals in such a way that they are ‘free to interact politically’, and then continues through their participation within voluntary associations, which habituates them to wielding collective power independently of the state.³³⁶ Civil society, then, as the set of all institutions operative on a voluntary basis, is thus presented as an ‘exterior’ to the state, and a means of limiting the power of its technical rationality to a ‘reasonable’ set of norms.

While Deleuze and Guattari would agree on the importance of cultivating certain potentials in the population, something which, as I explore in the next chapter, they perceive as the only means to escape the dominant semiotic coordinates, they would present these as necessarily singular and thus irreducible to a general capacity for ‘free association’. Further, and more significantly, I would argue that they would consider it at best naïve to assume that institutions could be produced specifically for this purpose without being themselves enveloped within the complex symbolic connections on which *pouvoir* relies, and thus as much a part of ‘sovereignty’ as the executive and legislature. To the extent that the authority embedded within institutionalised education is justified with reference to a general notion of the subject tied to the existing symbolic order, it necessarily serves to reinforce the presuppositions which provide dominant institutions with their power: that there is a legitimate means to think and act as a subject, and that this informs the forms of authority to which particular subjects ought to be subjected, or to subject themselves. To the extent that subjects could be produced as ‘free’ and inclined to form collective associations, they would already operate according to a pre-existing notion of what such freedom entails, led to form particular ‘voluntary’ associations according to a self-perception developed in relation to a dominant symbolic order.

Schools and civil associations, to the extent they remain ‘arborescent’ and tied to further institutions by pre-established relations legitimised by the dominant symbolic order, are therefore sources of cruelty no less than the ‘repressive’ apparatuses of the state, where this is understood as a separation of the subject from their capacity to constitute problems: something obscured where one defines cruelty in strictly utilitarian terms which presuppose the net benefits of sovereignty. What Shklar identifies then is that Liberalism must

³³⁴ Ibid., 32.

³³⁵ Ibid., 33.

³³⁶ Ibid., 35.

at times oppose the despotic pole of the state, as concretised within a given set of institutions; but she fails to realise that the free associations which comprise its judicial pole must be connected to one ‘despotic’ set of signifiers or another.

Following Shklar, Richard Rorty also defines cruelty as the *summum malum* of Liberalism, but complements this with a belief in the potential for self-creation via narrative redescription. Such ‘irony’ can be considered akin to problematisation in the sense it refuses the supposed certainty of meta-narratives and instead encourages a pursuit of the good life via an ongoing experimentation with established values and collective identities. Such redescription is also essentially tied to the formation of new collectives, Rorty argues, because it is impossible to truly identify with a generality such as ‘humanity’ or ‘rational beings in general’. Rather, it is the specific (perhaps, minor) group associations we contingently possess which provide the only true source of any obligation.³³⁷

This problematisation remains steadfastly Liberal, however, in that Rorty believes the collective identity provided by a position within ‘Western’ democracies entails an obligation to limit any such redescriptions in advance to constants established by the greater goal of establishing a society in which cruelty is minimised. Irony, as a practice of experimentation with individual or collective minority identity, is ‘largely irrelevant to public life and to political questions’.³³⁸ Our experimentation with existing narratives can itself be a form of cruelty, taking away from other subjects the identifications which orient their lives; it can thus rightfully be limited by public reason, a project he explicitly believes to have reached its conceptual conclusion with Mill and the harm principle.³³⁹ As Rorty puts it,

The compromise advocated in this book amounts to saying: *Privatize* the Nietzschean-Sartrean-Foucauldian attempt at authenticity and purity, in order to prevent you from slipping into a political attitude which will lead you to think that there is some social goal more important than avoiding cruelty.³⁴⁰

Understood in this way, both philosophy and any ironic redescription ought to be considered as existing ‘*in the service of democratic politics*’ and as a contribution to what John Rawls calls ‘reflective equilibrium’:³⁴¹ a concept, examined in chapter four, which refers to the improvement of the potential equivalence which exists between our contingently held yet fully considered beliefs as Western, democratic subjects. The aim

³³⁷ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 190.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 83.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 196.

of thought and experimentation is the expansion of ‘solidarity’, as understood within our particular historical milieu: a project which has no final foundation, but which imposes obligations onto individuals regardless. As this necessarily includes recognition of the legitimacy of the democratic institutions which offer the best means by which solidarity might be extended over our capacity to redescribe existing conceptions of interest and value, to be a ‘Liberal’ ironist is to ‘call “true” (or “right” or “just”) whatever the outcome of undistorted communication happens to be, whatever view wins in a free and open encounter’, so long as such a production does not undermine the identifications which allow others to live,³⁴² and so long as it does not undermine the constants of Liberalism itself.

For Deleuze and Guattari, this could mean little more than that subjects remain ‘free’ to choose between points of subjectification already determined by a dominant reality and established distribution of power, with Rorty’s seeming turn to ‘problematization’ in fact little more than an obfuscation of state capture and the cruelty inherent in its imposition of pre-determined problems. Once the minimisation of cruelty is established in absolute terms as the contingent aim proper to existing democratic states, becoming a ‘contingent’ yet efficacious part of their *mythos*, the extent of the ironist’s redescription or creative *logos* is limited in advance by whichever ‘truths’ should result from public discourse. This means that the authority of whichever institutions are deemed necessary to maintain these constants will take precedence over the individual capacity for redescription, with any judged to deviate from the norms already ‘established’ within Western society rejected as a threat to the solidarity to which sovereignty is tied. They would reject such ‘problematization’ as no more than an appropriated tool of the democratic state, one which reinforces the supposed voluntarism of society whilst simultaneously stripping subjects of their true capacity to pose problems.

Flathman identifies both Shklar and Rorty as important examples of an ‘agency’ Liberalism he wishes to promote and develop, this referring to positions which emphasise the individual capacities of agents as opposed to some ideal of public or intersubjective reason. He notes, however, that they also oppose it in some respects due to their reification of ending cruelty as a value at least partially distinct from the actually existing desires and ends of a given population, recognising the limitations to freedom such ‘constants’ might impose.³⁴³ His alternative is of a ‘willful’ Liberalism that follows a number of non-Liberal sources, most notably Nietzsche, to propose a form of ‘strong voluntarism’ in which the highest ideal is that of ‘self-

³⁴² Ibid., 67.

³⁴³ Richard E. Flathman, *Reflections of a Would-Be Anarchist: Ideals and Institutions of Liberalism* (Minneapolis, ME: University of Minnesota Press, 1998)

making or enactment'.³⁴⁴ This entails emphasising the 'the irreducible diversity of divergent, incommensurable, and perhaps interpersonally or intersubjectively inexplicable goods, ends, and especially ideals' that human beings might adopt.³⁴⁵ In the place of 'Reason' and the fundamentally knowable and homogenous operation of thought which characterises the subjects of the Early Modern positions examined in the first section, he therefore presents the 'will' as a faculty and capacity for thought and action which is possessed by all subjects, but which remains ultimately 'mysterious', providing no pre-determined content to how this capacity ought to be realised.³⁴⁶ In contrast with the tendency of mainstream Liberal theories to 'tolerate' difference and diversity only to the extent individuals accede to reasonable principles or other such constants, whether universal or specific to the 'settlements' of 'Western' democratic societies, he instead presents a Liberalism oriented by the adoption and promotion of certain *virtús*, by which he means orientations or 'virtuosities' such as magnanimity and liberality.³⁴⁷ Promoting these *virtús* allows him to affirm divergent 'idiolects' as expressions of self-enactment rather than according to their correspondence, or divergence, from any form of thinking required by the existing state. This 'self-enacting individuality', which he terms 'singularity', is a potential for difference which can be 'espied—even if dimly—in human affairs as we actually know them' yet exceeds the aspirations and interests of existing human communities, being something which requires development through individual experimentation with the traditions and language games through which we currently engage with the world.³⁴⁸ This means that the ideals of Flathman's Liberalism are 'always and necessarily underdetermined' and 'can never be reduced to formulae or rules' applicable to subjects in general.³⁴⁹

Flathman's Liberalism is, in Deleuze-Guattarian terms, supposedly non-theorematic, privileging a necessarily indeterminate set of *virtús* according to their capacity to enable self-enactment or cultivation in relation to singular conditions. Noting his own position on the peripheries of Liberal theory, Flathman describes himself as a 'would-be anarchist' because the centrality of this 'problematization' leaves him critical of the notion that any arrangement, rule, principle, or person can be considered 'authoritative' in the strict sense. Specifically, Flathman maintains the sceptical view that institutions, even when supported theoretically by institutionalisms, will limit individuality and freedom wherever those in authority collude with one another rather than with those they exercise authority over, a problem as common as it is immune

³⁴⁴ Ibid., xvii.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., 13.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 23.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 45.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

to an institutionalised solution.³⁵⁰ The rule of law, institutionalised policing, and ‘vocational’ or goal-oriented forms of education are all evils which impose particular conceptions of the good onto subjects (particular conceptions, that is, with more content than the formal goods of individuality and freedom). Instead, Flathman turns to the potential compatibility with the principles individuals themselves adopt, while guided by the essential *virtús*, as a means of assessing what is good about these institutions, and what requires the Liberal to adopt a hostile stance.

In the case of the rule of law, for example, he remains critical of those who would attempt to ground the law in supposedly unchanging truths, whether these be conceptions of the good or of subjectivity. An essential task, falling particularly to Liberal theorists, is that of disputing this ‘highest pretention’ of the ‘Law’, understood as a meta-doctrine that defines in rigid terms the ‘delineation or prescription of the criteria that do or ought to govern what law is’ and thus how individual laws ought to be judged independently of all historicity and interpretation.³⁵¹ This entails exposing the contingency which is necessarily introduced through the actual application and enforcement of law, and rejecting the claim that fidelity to a particular formal structure will necessarily banish arbitrariness from such application.³⁵² Such a view aims to weaken the hold the Law possesses upon our thinking, that is, the self-regulation that results from our blind respect for individual laws because of this higher (if implicit) justification, such that we are prepared to act against existing laws and authorities where they stand in the way of self-enactment. Bearing in mind the discord that inevitably appears between the application of the law and our actual values allows one to avoid placing one’s thought and action too firmly in the service of the politics which energises the state.³⁵³

While he differs from more statist variants of Liberalism in his continual suspicion of these institutions and ‘institutionalisms’, and in his willingness to promote their (potentially violent) rejection where they lead subjects to slavishly place their thought and action in the service of its authority rather than their own self-enactment, Flathman stops short of an antinomian or anarchistic rejection of all law. He insists, correctly, that he remains Liberal, in that he continues to believe that institutions, supported by ‘institutionalisms’ (that is, established ideologies or discourses, taken to be authoritative and to justify institutional practices) remain essential to human well-being.³⁵⁴ On his presentation, anarchism is a position of ‘despair’ which fails to account for the fact that all acts are in some way reliant on implicit presuppositions, including shared concepts, beliefs, dispositions, capacities and skills which result naturally from engagement in a particular

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 82.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 91.

³⁵² Ibid., 94.

³⁵³ Ibid., 100.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., *xvi*.

activity or practice.³⁵⁵ This introduces the possible compatibility of certain institutions with individuality and freedom, though only to the extent that subjects take into account what Michael Oakeshott names ‘adverbial rules’ when deciding on new actions.³⁵⁶ These adverbial rules are enunciated by laws and less formal principles, and include such virtues as politeness, temperance, fastidiousness, resoluteness, forthrightness, morality, legality, and civility.³⁵⁷ Where individuals willingly adopt these principles and submit their imagination of desirable outcomes and potential courses of action to the ‘discipline’ they provide, the ‘rule of law’ suggests an association which unites subjects into a community through shared norms of conduct rather than a pre-existent set of recognisable qualities, and enables all individuals to realise their freedom and creative potential to the greatest extent possible.

Flathman also insists, however, that societies organised by such adverbial self-discipline are inherently vulnerable and rarely last for long, instead devolving into the direct imposition of authority and a ‘blind’ adherence to existing rules on the part of citizens. This means that Liberalism must take a measured approach which accepts the absolutely essential role of formal institutional and legal authority to the preservation of any polity in the long term: something which leads him to promote, alongside the willingness to resist laws and institutions which fail to accord with our considered notions of the principles we believe ought to govern social life, a form of policing which limits, to the extent possible, the ‘disciplining’ aspects of the police, that is, the ways in which they regulate and delimit behaviour in advance and without the direct imposition of violence.³⁵⁸ It means that we must resist both egoism and the weakness of imagination that leads one to unquestioningly follow the direction of the state, cultivating *virtù* whilst taking into account the virtuosities and principles which already inform the ‘language games’ underpinning one’s society: leading Flathman to endorse a ‘Liberal’ education, that is, an institutionalised and rigorous social or cultural training in the various ‘languages’ that have evolved into modes or traditions of thought and sensibility, coupled with a tendency towards the self-discipline and a suspicion towards government itself.³⁵⁹ As such education concerns *virtùs*, rather than a distinct set of values or given norms of behaviour, it is distinct from models of education oriented by instrumental aims, and particular that of social reproduction via the cultivation of subjects with a particular set of beliefs and values beyond the capacity for self-enactment.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 91.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 95.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 99.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 134.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 14-15 and 164.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 160.

I would argue that this ‘would-be’ anarchism and rueful acceptance of formal institutions represents a limit point of Liberalism, a threshold beyond which it would fundamentally transform. In terms of the privileging of individual autonomy and the potential for self-enactment, Flathman goes beyond Rorty by rejecting the submission of thought and its creative potential to the ‘settlements’ already achieved within the discourses and language games of ‘Western’ democracies.³⁶¹ In terms of his suspicion of the state and of organised institutions, he goes beyond Shklar’s Liberalism of fear (which Flathman references favourably, alongside Franz Neumann and members of the Critical Legal Studies movement, for their rejection of any legal absolutism)³⁶² by establishing the basis by which institutionalism itself might be challenged on the basis of collectively constituted, largely implicit principles which emerge organically in our normal interactions with institutions and one another. He nevertheless remains Liberal, in that he draws his conception of freedom from a notion of the subject in general and establishes a *logos* proper to such ‘willful’ subjects. Though he attempts to remove as much of the formal content from these institutions as possible, the attachment to common *virtús* returns his thought to a consideration of ‘good’ subjects or citizens in general which would provide a foil to any ‘singularity’ or ‘idiolect’ they might uncover.

This ‘threshold’ position is particularly revealing regarding the tensions inherent within Liberalism itself. On the one hand, Flathman appears to affirm a strong conception of problematisation, in the sense that these *virtús* must be taken up anew by each individual and collective, who, through application and attunement, could be said to continually develop what these conceptions mean within their specific context: a process which necessarily exceeds both dominant institutions and the ‘institutionalisms’ or semiotic regimes which reinforce their *pouvoir*. On the other, however, he is unable to shirk the presupposition that such *pouvoir* is necessary for the protection of individuality, freedom, and so on. There can be no continuous problematisation, approximating absolute deterritorialization through a transformation in relation to charted circumstances: instead, any such experimentation must resolve itself into an institutional form, maintaining the unity of the state through an adaptation of its judicial pole. This colours the specific *virtús* Flathman presents as demonstrative examples (civility, magnanimity, forthrightness, and liberality), each of which are loaded conceptions tied to the Liberal and democratic traditions which inform modern Western states. Even *virtús* that must be taken up anew each time introduce too much in the way of content that might be distorted by established conceptions of value, such that our judgement of the beneficial nature of a given institutions (a law, a police station, a school) might be limited by that of a community who understand such terms through the lens of established semiotic

³⁶¹ Ibid., 27.

³⁶² Ibid., 101.

coordinates. Whilst it is supposedly up to subjects themselves how the *virtús* must be realised, Flathman's insistence on the judicial pole of sovereignty means that any 'idiolect' liable to be promoted by the individuals and collectives who accept his Liberalism will be tied in advance to very similar institutions to those already in place.

As Deleuze and Guattari have shown, it is only when we complete our 'Copernican' turn to the singular that we can escape the turn to authority inherent in political approaches which centre general conceptions of the subject, necessitating our adoption of a form of anarchism or antinomianism: if a 'transcendental' one, which recognises all institutional *pouvoir* and the semiotic principles upon which they rely as 'pseudoconstants' which might serve a practical role in our experimentation in a given circumstance, but may also pass as absolute deterritorialization draws us from one singularity to another. As I explore in more detail in chapter four, even those institutions with the most rigorous stipulations regarding the rights or capacities of the citizens they manage remain vulnerable to the whims of the individuals who maintain specific positions of authority within them, and the sensible and conceptual distinctions by which they differentiate the acceptable difference of opinion from the criminal or arbitrary struggles of the radical. Only problematisation, freed from the presuppositions of any established political language, can be affirmed without risk: a return to the 'unground' of becoming that can lead individuals and communities not only to new presuppositions, but also to revolutionary ends.

As I have established in this chapter, sovereignty is dual, its power both consolidated into a symbolic order and diffused through processes of normalisation which cultivate a population according to the needs of a political and economic structure. The early Liberalism which emerged from the 'classical' Image of thought established the former as a necessary consequence of subjectivity itself, and provided the latter with a 'universal' notion of the subject which, when imparted onto the population, led them to adopt the hierarchised identities of the state as their own. In the next chapter, I expand upon the central role of 'judicial' sovereignty in Liberalism, arguing that its history can be traced through additional diffusions of power, each of which served to 'reterritorialize' flows of people, ideas, and resources which slipped beyond the control of the state during revolutionary events. By contrast, I present Deleuze and Guattari's revolutionary politics as one which seeks to connect with these flows as a means of disrupting the fixed identities and segments of the state.

Chapter 3 | Micropolitics, Minoritarianism, and the Problem of Revolution

I am told that there is no danger because there are no riots; I am told that, because there is no visible disorder on the surface of society, there is no revolution at hand. Gentlemen, permit me to say that I believe you are deceived. True, there is no actual disorder; but it has entered deeply into men's minds... Do you not see that there are gradually forming in their breasts opinions and ideas which are destined not only to upset this or that law, ministry, or even form of government, but society itself, until it totters upon the foundations on which it rests today?... I believe that we are at this moment sleeping on a volcano.

—Alexis de Tocqueville³⁶³

As I argued in the last chapter, even the most Liberal states presuppose an element of despotism, an imposed set of semiotic coordinates separating individuals and collectives from their capacity to constitute problems. This 'limit' of the state is then mediated and in part obscured by the operation of institutions, the authority of which is drawn from the aggregates which differentiate a population: a differentiation they further reinforce and regulate according to the requirements of an economic and legal structure. These two 'poles' of sovereignty are not without tension, particularly in cases of tyranny, which Deleuze describes in "Instincts and Institutions" as the direct exercise of state power without institutional mediation, and which he might have described alongside Guattari as a resurgence of 'enslavement' and the direct impartation of the 'codes' of the state.³⁶⁴ The threat of opinion overcoming established proceduralism and becoming directly imposed as law, either as the result of the tyranny of the majority or the monarch, is a problem which divides Liberal political philosophy: is it the case, as Locke and Thomas Jefferson once argued, that 'when injustice becomes law, resistance becomes duty'? Or, as Kant suggested, does duty demand our patience with states we judge to fall short of rational ideals?

Answers to this problem vary greatly depending on where the Liberal theorist demarcates the 'arbitrariness' that must be warded off. For example, where Thomas Paine justified resistance to the tyranny of the monarchy, nobility, and church on the basis of natural rights, Edmund Burke attacked the 'irrational, unprincipled, proscripting, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy' that

³⁶³ Alexis de Tocqueville, "Address to the Chamber of Deputies, 29th of January 1848," in *Recollections of Alexis de Tocqueville*, ed. J. Mayer, trans. Alexander Teixeira de Maltos (London: The Harvill Press, 1948), 12.

³⁶⁴ See Gilles Deleuze, "Instincts and Institutions," 20.

emerged from the French Revolution for its unthinking disposal of these same institutions.³⁶⁵ Both opposed arbitrariness and presupposed the necessity of the state-form: but where Burke considered the population to be incapable of realising through judgement a more rational society than had evolved organically, Paine saw the powers that had so evolved as barriers to a constitution that would allow the population to rationally manage their own interests. The problem therefore turns on what one considers the best means of maintaining the unity of sovereignty and its maintenance of freedom: a reinforcement of existing structures as a buffer to the irrationality of the masses, or its re-establishment in a more judicial form capable of moulding their tendencies into a regular *logos*. The Liberal problem of revolution is thus how it might be prevented or used to establish a more rational state, a formulation which derives from the association of reason with sovereignty, which entails that desire must always be invested into a stable form possessed of the regularity necessary to justify *pouvoir*.

Desire, as explored in the last chapter, is a positive force constituted by, yet exceeding, the various connections of a social field, this including everything from individual affects to the self-perception of particular collectives. The state ‘invests’ this desire into semiotic constants tied to ‘molar’ conceptions of identity and to institutional practices justified on this basis, consolidating a population and territory into a ‘striated’ or ‘overcoded’ unity. As Deleuze and Guattari note, however, where individuals and collectives adopt a problematising approach, re-establishing connections in response to the ‘event’ rather than according to a pre-determined method, they ‘liberate’ desire from this imposed regularity, ‘scrambling’ social codes by ‘never recording the same event in the same way’.³⁶⁶

If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society: not that desire is asocial, on the contrary. But it is explosive; there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire

³⁶⁵ Edmund Burke, “Substance of the Speech of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, in Thr [Sic] Debate on the Army Estimates, in the House of Commons, on Tuesday the 9th Day of February, 1790: Comprehending a Discussion of the Present Situation of Affairs in France,” (Oxford Text Archive). Accessed 12 August 2019. From Burke’s perspective, the error of the revolutionaries was not so much for having opposed the *Ancien Régime*, which had clearly failed to establish the security required for liberty, but rather for their destruction of the traditional institutions that might have guaranteed the same. Burke’s opposition to the Revolution and theoretical support for established institutions, such as the church and monarchy, has led him to be named the Father of modern conservatism, a position usually opposed to both Radicalism and Liberalism, in line with both the divisions which typically characterised the Parliaments of the 17th and 18th Century as well as the contemporary division of centre-right and left which predominates in democratic capitalist states today. For my purposes, however, both Burke and Parliamentary conservatism can be seen as part of the broader Liberal tradition, seeking a balance between tradition and present concerns which would better guarantee rational governance in the long term. On Burke’s own insistence on the importance of Liberty, as well as support for the American colonies in their resistance to British ‘despotism’, see Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-history*, 9ff.

³⁶⁶ *AO*, 15.

social sectors. Despite what some revolutionaries think about this, desire is revolutionary in its essence—desire, not left-wing holidays!—and no society can tolerate a position of real desire without its structures of exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy being compromised. If a society is identical with its structures—an amusing hypothesis—then yes, desire threatens its very being... Desire does not “want” revolution, it is revolutionary in its own right, as though involuntarily, by wanting what it wants.³⁶⁷

Deleuze and Guattari’s association of revolution with problematisation makes it more encompassing than a transfer of sovereignty following a conflict between rival claims to represent the population or their interests.³⁶⁸ In line with Deleuze’s comments on ‘virtual’ events in *Difference and Repetition*, they argue that they should be considered novel associations of the processes implicated in the determination of social phenomena, or, in other words, with a collective escape from the molar aggregates and institutional constants from which all codified ‘interest’ derives.

The problem of revolution is therefore not a matter of judgement, in which the failures of a concrete state to realise such interests, maintain rights, or ensure justice are recognised to demand correction: rather it remains always a matter of ‘desire, not duty’, in the sense that it continues a flow of becoming which exceeds the particular investments on which such ideals rely.³⁶⁹ In the place of supposedly fixed conditions of legitimacy, Deleuze and Guattari therefore turn to ‘analysis’, which, as I explored in the last chapter, involves examining individuals, communities, and societies in terms of the specific relations of which they are part, the ongoing processes their present existence implicates, and the potential with which they are thereby imbued. Like volcanologists, they reach beyond the surface of molar identities and interests to ‘molecular’ flows of affects, perceptions, encounters, and associations, in pursuit of those ‘eruptions’ at which subjects deviate from molar limits and so reveal capacities which have begun to crystallise in their hearts and minds, but remain obscured by dominant forms of representation. Identifying and realising such potential is the revolutionary problem of Deleuze and Guattari’s politics, which aims always at allowing individuals and communities to orient themselves in ways which better realise their capacity to interact with one another and the world.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 120.

³⁶⁸ See Charles Tilly’s definition in *European Revolutions, 1492-1992* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), 8: ‘a forcible transfer of power over a state in the course of which at least two distinct blocs of contenders that make incompatible claims to control the state, and some significant portion of the population subject to the state’s jurisdiction acquiesces in the claims of each bloc’.

³⁶⁹ *AO*, 344.

My purpose in this chapter is to explore Deleuze and Guattari's problem of revolution as that of liberating desire, to defend the 'minoritarian' politics they take to achieve this, and to contrast this with the Liberal problem of how such 'lines of flight' might be 'recoded'. In the first section, I examine Deleuze and Guattari's presentation of 'revolutionary' activity through the lens of Franz Kafka, whose experimentation took the form of a 'minor' literature generative of new potentials for expression drawn from specific deviations from the molar aggregates and institutional procedures which characterised Austro-Hungarian society. In the second, I explore their 'minoritarian' politics in terms of the construction of a 'rhizome', an immanent association of elements proceeding through singular 'events' rather than through the imposition of continuous forms. I argue that their politics must be seen in terms of its promotion of 'nomadism', the cultivation of connections which deviate from the formal differentiations established by the state and its semiotic regimes, contrasting this to the forms of recognition to which theorematic politics is directed. In the third, I argue that the construction of a rhizome requires a 'variable' approach incorporating both the establishment of new connections and a tactical 'conjugation' or adoption of existing institutional and semiotic constants, as well as a 'sorcery' which draws on potentials presently obscured by the dominant forms of representation to establish such constants anew. In the final section I turn to the French Revolution and May '68, two 'irruptions of becoming' which produced new ways of thinking, living, and associating despite the failures of the states which followed in their wake. Discussing the former, I argue that revolution demands maintaining problematising movements in their heterogeneity, firstly by establishing a conception of universal 'minority' and a transversal organisation Deleuze and Guattari name the 'war machine', an approach which contrasts with the universal conceptions of the subject and the unified sovereignty characteristic of Liberalism. Discussing the latter, I turn to Deleuze and Guattari's comments on 'subjective redeployments' to argue that the continuation of the rhizome often demands the establishment of new institutions more compatible with experimentation, but that the maintenance of these institutions cannot be considered the end of their politics.

I. Kafka's Way Out

As Deleuze writes, 'The act of resistance has two faces. It is human, and it is also the act of art'.³⁷⁰ Resistance, in the Deleuze-Guattarian sense, refers to more than simply opposing the power of the state and its institutions. Rather, it concerns the cultivation of forms of expression which deviate from the dominant molar aggregations, providing the conditions needed to realise 'a new humanity' potential within existing

³⁷⁰ Gilles Deleuze, "What is the Creative Act?," in *Two Regimes of Madness*, 324.

social activity and prevent its subsumption within the molar aggregates upon which the state relies.³⁷¹ It is therefore unsurprising that they present artists in comparable terms to more traditional revolutionary subjects, as both could be described as recovering singularity from the obscuration of false problems.

Revolutionaries, artists, and seers are content to be objective, merely objective: they know that desire clasps life in its powerfully productive embrace, and reproduces it in a way that is all the more intense because it has few needs.³⁷²

In other words, art and political struggle both involve a 'sobriety' in which subjects engage directly with experience, free of the 'supplemental invariance' of dominant forms of representation.³⁷³ As with the 'open society' I examined in the first chapter, the problem of revolution is therefore that of creation, problematisation, and the cultivation of transversal connections, rather than a capture of the institutions of the state.

Though it is often difficult to engage with the world in such singular terms, it is essential to remember that all elements and interactions remain genuine creations; conditioned, but not determined, by the multiplicities of which they are part. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, with each new interaction of forces and moment of production, 'something becomes detached':³⁷⁴ a 'residuum' of intensity which makes them singular and unrepeatable 'events' despite the influence of established disjunctions and molar forms. Despite the continuous nature of the strata and any restriction they might impart, the assemblage 'consumes' or synthesises such intensities as 'stationary, metastable states through which a subject passes'.³⁷⁵ This is, of course, not an empirical subject, but, as de Beistegui puts it, the 'subject of desire in the strong and real sense':³⁷⁶ a 'schizophrenic' agency of production itself, proceeding through singular moments of determination. While empirical subjects usually understand the world as mediated by general semiotic coordinates, they can approximate this 'intensive filiation' by freeing their lived experience from the dominant forms of representation, establishing their problems in an immanent fashion:

Nothing here is representative; rather, it is all life and lived experience... Nothing but bands of intensity, potentials, thresholds, and gradients. A harrowing, emotionally overwhelming

³⁷¹ *AO*, 19.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 27.

³⁷³ *ATP*, 6.

³⁷⁴ *AO*, 26.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

³⁷⁶ de Beistegui, *Immanence*, 128.

experience, which brings the schizo as close as possible to matter, to a burning, living center of matter.³⁷⁷

Where Deleuze and Guattari describe a process as revolutionary, they can therefore be taken to suggest that it involves a concrete individual or collective establishing new connections which deviate from the possibilities outlined by the molar categories and institutional norms of state *pouvoir*, and so re-establishing the problems which orient their thought and activity. This ‘fluid and slippery’ process ‘consumes’ each encounter as if in ‘response to the new situation’ rather than as a variant of a continuous, pre-established form, and so allows them to attune themselves to capacities that might otherwise have remained obscured.³⁷⁸

Whilst various forms of art can provide the conditions needed for such revolutionary ‘sobriety’, Deleuze and Guattari pay particular attention to its appearance in literature. Writing, they argue, is a process drawing on far more than an individual writer’s reason or imagination: in the sense that it synthesises affects, percepts, and images drawn from the wider social field, it can be said to dissolve such interiority amongst a multiplicity of ‘lines’ or processes in development.³⁷⁹ It becomes revolutionary where this approximation charts connections which disrupt the ‘impasses’ at which concrete groups are forced to adapt their thought and behaviour to norms developed on the basis of representations with little to do with their specific experience.³⁸⁰ As Deleuze and Guattari explore in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, the Prague Jewish community of which Kafka was part faced such an impasse due to their position as a minority within the already minority Czech population of the Austro-Hungarian empire, such that they constantly risked subsumption within broader categories of recognition. Finding their singularity impossible to express through the norms, tropes, and themes of the German or Czech literary traditions, writers from this community were led to produce a ‘cramped’ literary field of their own, one which introduced a sensible differentiation better attuned to their lived reality.³⁸¹

As this literature did not pre-exist the actual texts which concretised it, as with the consolidated tropes and canonical references of established literary traditions, its form remained open to individual intervention, such that each new publication altered the ‘assemblage of enunciation’ with which it was associated, that is, the particular array of qualitative differentiations its language imparted. This meant that texts were not pure

³⁷⁷ *AO*, 19.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 and 12.

³⁷⁹ *ATP*, 194.

³⁸⁰ *K*, 58.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

productions emerging *ex nihilo* from the individual subjectivity of authors, but rather immediately collective statements which reflected the singular position of the community. This ‘collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation’ allowed writers to foster an ‘active solidarity’ amongst the Jews of Prague, not by imposing a particular conception of what membership in this community entailed, but by providing the means by which they might better differentiate their experience, or even ‘express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility’.³⁸² Deleuze and Guattari follow a note from Kafka’s diaries to name this a ‘minor’ literature: not so much a new genre as a set of ‘revolutionary conditions... within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature’, that is, the potential for its meaning and tropes to be subverted to ‘express’ the singular, and so reveal capacities not detailed by established forms of representation.³⁸³ Defining oneself through such deterritorialized signs enables one to express the singular nature of one’s connections to further elements of the social field, becoming thus ‘minor’ in turn.

Deleuze and Guattari’s focus on the ‘minor’ places their politics in stark contrast to the theorematized Liberal politics discussed in the last chapter. Liberal theory can be described as ‘majoritarian’, not because they lack concern for the potential ‘tyranny’ of quantitative majorities over ‘minorities’, but in the sense that they are justified by notions of ‘subjectivity in general’ tied to major norms and recognised deviances. Deleuze-Guattarian politics, by contrast, is minoritarian, focused exclusively on the concrete reality of particular individuals and collectives. It is therefore irreducible to a generally applied political method seeking to identify and promote the rights and obligations appropriate for subjects in general or for a particular ‘molar’ aggregate, and instead proceeds through individual and collective forms of experimentation, to the extent these involve a process of ‘becoming’ minor, a continuous development of new connections drawing subjects beyond the molar identities into which they are aggregated. Instead, it presents concrete examples of experimentation, this including certain ‘revolutionary’ individuals, that others might take up as a means of orienting their own activity without thereby making these examples models to be imitated exactly. Their text on Kafka, whose writing was ‘defined by internal criteria, and not by a publishing project’, provides an exemplary example of this focus.³⁸⁴

While he both drew upon and contributed to the communal literature, Kafka maintained further connections that distinguished him as a ‘minor’ figure in his own right. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the ‘motor force’ of this production came from his letters, which allowed him to resist significations that would

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Ibid., 18.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., 40.

have translated his experience into the general and points of subjectification that would otherwise lead him to adopt predetermined forms of activity.³⁸⁵ Redeploying his experience in an exaggerated or fictionalised form in his letters allowed Kafka to serve as his own ‘subject of enunciation’, establishing the order-words to which his fictionalised double was subject, and from whose trials the tropes and impasses of social life could be extracted and experimented with. Those he received in return from friends and lovers provided him with the affects and percepts induced by institutions and social practices with which he could otherwise have engaged only by submitting to the processes of subjectification embedded within them.³⁸⁶ He thus ‘deterritorialized’ and repurposed friendship and love within his literary machine, using them to cultivate an affective ‘anxiety’ of the obligations associated with established molar aggregates without succumbing to their determination.³⁸⁷

Though this anxiety provided sufficient motivation for Kafka’s ‘line of flight’ to begin, it remained still too individualised, with further experimentation requiring a flexibility and capacity to repurpose elements the epistolary medium could not provide. He turned to fiction ‘either to give an image of the danger or to exorcise it’, redeploying the molar aggregates and general representations to which his anxiety responded in a literary form open to further experimentation.³⁸⁸ Rather than adopting an existing genre or style, this entailed ‘deterritorializing’ both the content of his work and the language in which it was expressed by incorporating specifically ‘decoded’ elements. Decoded elements are not so much lacking a given code as they are ‘no longer contained’ within it, ‘escaping’ such regularity by maintaining an openness to new connections which makes their form inherently variable.³⁸⁹ In terms of language, for example, Kafka adopted ‘tensors’ particular to his ‘Prague’ dialect, these being points at which it strained German’s grammatical and syntactical structures and introduced ambiguities which could only be resolved in context, through an actual application which established a particular connection of elements. Drawing out such ‘decoded’ words and phrases enabled him to produce a ‘stuttering’ form of communication filled with ‘cries, shouts, pitches, durations, timbres, accents, [and] intensities’ without pre-existent meaning and

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 30.

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 32.

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 29. See also *ATP*, 36, regarding Kafka’s engagement to Felice Bauer: ‘For Kafka, Felice is inseparable from a certain social machine, and, as a representative of the firm that manufactures them, from parlograph machines; how could she not belong to that organization in the eyes of Kafka, a man fascinated by commerce and bureaucracy? But at the same time, Felice’s teeth, her big carnivorous teeth, send her racing down other lines, into the molecular multiplicities of a becoming-dog, a becoming-jackal... Felice is inseparable from the sign of the modern social machines belonging to her, from those belonging to Kafka (not the same ones), and from the particles, the little molecular machines, the whole strange becoming or journey Kafka will make and have her make through his perverse writing apparatus’.

³⁸⁸ *K*, 35.

³⁸⁹ *ATP*, 449.

reference, which could then be repurposed to produce a qualitative differentiation capable of expressing singular elements without presupposing their form or nature.³⁹⁰

In terms of content, Kafka begins by reproducing the social impasses and obligations he feared. Though this has made his work popular fodder for Freudian or Marxist readings, which take this content to be symbolic of the unconscious or alienation, Deleuze and Guattari argue that any such search for meaning is 'stupid' unless one examines where the 'system' as a whole is going, and specifically the function these symbolised 'constants' of human nature play within an ongoing process of experimentation.³⁹¹ While they do not deny their presence in his work, as they do not deny the 'stratic' effectuation of the abstract machine, they argue that Kafka 'holds out the bait' to such interpretations without taking the principles he identifies to be inescapable.³⁹² His aim is not simply to reveal the oppression associated with the family or workplace, but to make their impasses 'proliferate', 'magnifying' their effects until they form 'a geographic, historical, and political *map* of the world'.³⁹³ For example, they argue that the much-interpreted *Letter to the Father* purposefully exaggerates the oppressions of the nuclear family, extending this to every aspect of the protagonist's life and to the Jewish people as a whole; in *The Metamorphosis*, the Father is temporarily replaced by the chief clerk, with bureaucratic oppression encroaching on the familial setting. This magnification reveals each impasse as part of an 'underground network' which, whilst appearing inescapable, in fact continues through particular encounters, interactions, and experiences, the result of which is a desire which is '*already submissive and searching to communicate its own submission*'.³⁹⁴

Apprehended as part of the infrastructure of desiring-investment, the 'lines' which reproduce this 'sad' or 'neurotic' investment of desire are prepared for 'an upheaval in which they fall into new lines of intensity'.³⁹⁵ Kafka's experimentation aims to uncover potentials for escape in 'decoded' connections which deviate from the limits established by the dominant strata. Deleuze and Guattari name the establishment of such connections 'becoming-animal'.

To become animal is to participate in movement, to stake out the path of escape in all its positivity, to cross a threshold, to reach a continuum of intensities that are only valuable in themselves, to find

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 104.

³⁹¹ *K*, 7.

³⁹² Ibid., 45.

³⁹³ Ibid., 10.

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 6.

a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, and signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of nonsignifying signs.³⁹⁶

Rather than the ‘false liberty’ of a literal flight from the state and its institutions, such ‘intensive’ flight opens ‘a line of escape or, rather, of a simple way *out*, “right, left, or in any direction” as long as it should be as little signifying as possible’.³⁹⁷ Gregor Samsa, for example, is deterritorialized by the strange movements and sounds of an insect, connections which make him impossible for the bureaucratic web of labour to incorporate; the ape in *Report to the Academy* deterritorializes in connection to human mannerisms and costumes, which provide him access to the human spaces through which he escapes confinement. These connections are not ‘mere fictions’ emerging *ex nihilo* from Kafka’s imagination, but rather synthetic productions drawing the individual encounters through which the strata are effectuated into contact with elements which exceed their biunivocal forms, revealing the limits of the dominant signifying order and the rigid segmentarity with which it is associated. As Deleuze argues later, ‘writing is always writing for animals, that is, not to them, but in their place, doing what animals can’t, writing, freeing life, freeing life from prisons that men have created, and that’s what resistance is’.³⁹⁸ Writing can be a form of ‘resistance’ in the sense that it produces connections which might not appear within the actual social field, but which can nonetheless chart a path by which existing stratification might be escaped. In so doing, it concretises potentials obscured by existing molar aggregates, including that of ‘man’ or the reasonable subject, and so gives voice to ‘animals’.

These becoming-animals have their limits, however. While they reveal singular potentials for escape, these ‘lines of flight’ also seem impossible to sustain, playing out either in the death of the protagonist or their reincorporation within a signifying system: as Gregor is killed by the apple thrown by his father, who expels the bureaucrats and reunifies the Oedipal structure, and the ape becomes assimilated by the human social assemblage. I would argue that these failures can also be seen as reflective of the limits of lived resistance to the state, which demands more than individual deviations from norms to be successful: one could escape the office by crawling up the walls, for example, but this wouldn’t solve the problem of what to do next, or how to ameliorate the suffering likely to befall oneself and any dependents; one could find an alternative point of subjectification, but this may involve simply trading one authority for another. A truly

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 13.

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 6.

³⁹⁸ Deleuze and Parnet, “R.”

revolutionary enunciation, by contrast, is one which makes flight continuous, allowing it to adapt to further impasses as these are encountered.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that achieving such continuity requires making the creative process even less individualised by converting tendencies or ‘methods’ already present in the social field into ‘procedures’, one might say ‘vectors’, which approximate an ‘infinite virtual movement’ or ‘process’ of becoming.³⁹⁹ He achieves this through the literary redeployment of

complicated social assemblages that, through the employment of human personnel, through the use of human parts and cogs, realize effects of inhuman violence and desire that are infinitely stronger than those one can obtain with animals or with isolated mechanisms.⁴⁰⁰

The novels involve a further proliferation of ‘constants’, here exaggerated from the institutions of the state, allowing for the particular interactions and encounters by which their *pouvoir* is maintained to be better explored. *The Trial*, for example, extends a legal procedure into a ‘map’ of the entire social field, bringing each of its ‘segments’ under the microscope: this including not only the molar functions of judges, lawyers, and guards, but also the singular connections possessed by the actual individuals who fill these roles, including their family lives, their patronage of art, their relation to the washerwomen presupposed by their signifying uniforms, and so on. Deleuze and Guattari argue that, through this ‘magnification’, Kafka reveals the immanence not of law, judgement, and guilt, but rather of the desire of which they are but the stratified pole: from the judges to the defendants of *The Trial*, or from the functionaries of *The Castle* to the villagers that live on its periphery, all are connected not through some eminently human (and thus general) suffering, but by the ‘molecular’ underground apparatus of singular relations through which desire is invested, something they both shape and are shaped by in turn.

Kafka thus leaves behind the ‘the abstract machine of the law that opposes law to desire, as body is opposed to spirit, as form is opposed to matter’ in order to realise ‘the mutual immanence of a decoded law and a deterritorialized desire’, an intensive filiation or ‘continuous variation’ within which *pouvoir* is simply another degree of intensity.⁴⁰¹

Power is not pyramidal as the Law would have us believe; it is segmentary and linear, and it proceeds by means of contiguity, and not by height and farawayness (hence, the importance of the subalterns). Each segment is power, *a* power as well as a figure of desire. Each segment is a machine

³⁹⁹ *K*, 48.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

or a piece of the machine, but the machine cannot be dismantled without each of its contiguous pieces forming a machine in turn.⁴⁰²

This is not to deny that *pouvoir* is not realised within a 'pyramidal' structure differentiating between those with authority and those upon whom it is imposed, but rather to insist that any such transcendence or stratification is itself the production of individual actions and passions implicating the entire social field, an immanent fabric of relations within which any stratified power is a contingent and changeable production. This means also that a different set of connections might alter these strata, releasing 'machines' or procedures which could then transform the existing array of institutions or differentiated molar aggregates.

Deleuze and Guattari thus present Kafka as engaged in 'an entire micropolitics of desire, of impasses and escapes, of submissions and rectifications'.⁴⁰³ 'Micropolitics', like the 'microsociology' of Tarde, is a minoritarian politics focused on the actual individuals and encounters of a social field rather than the molar. Kafka reveals potentials obscured by such aggregates by dramatizing an 'active dismantling' of existing social segments, an experimentation which consists

in prolonging, in accelerating, a whole movement that already is traversing the social field. It operates in a virtuality that is already real without yet being actual (the diabolical powers of the future that for the moment are only brushing up against the door). The assemblage appears not in a still encoded and territorial criticism but in a decoding, in a deterritorialization, and in the novelistic acceleration of this decoding and this deterritorialization.⁴⁰⁴

Such a micropolitics must be distinguished from a 'critique' of society and its negative comparison with a utopian ideal. Rather than producing the blueprint for a society in which truth, justice, or right might be better realised, using this as a regulative principle to guide revolutionary or reformist action towards an alternative coding and territorialization, Kafka sets out to experiment with the decoded and deterritorialized elements already present within his society, reproducing the lines or vectors they implicate. Each novel presents a unique 'assemblage of enunciation', a particular set of qualitative differentiations through which the effects of presently implicit vectors might be expressed, and thus approximating paths society might take in future by revealing not only their potential to transform the social field, but also to impose new forms of oppression. The success of this experimentation is demonstrated by their uncanny prescience regarding

⁴⁰² Ibid., 56.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 48.

future political developments: *Amerika* foreshadowing the later development of capitalism, *The Trial* Soviet bureaucracy, and *The Castle* the Reich.⁴⁰⁵

Micropolitics constitutes an immanent means of orienting oneself in relation to present potentials and their associated dangers, a revolutionary ‘politics of desire that questions all situations’ in stark contrast to the theorematized search for fixed principles.⁴⁰⁶ In *The Trial*, K becomes increasingly attuned to the fact he will find ‘justice’ only by refusing legal representation and instead representing himself, that is, by subjecting his desire to an immanent selection that forsakes existing forms of representation and the *logos* to which they are tied.⁴⁰⁷ In the same way, Kafka himself could be said to have freed his creative potential from the inhibitions that would otherwise be placed upon his subjectivity by molar aggregations and false problems by complicating a number of ‘lines’ within his work, attuning himself to and concretising potentials already embedded in the world beyond his interiority. The aim of Deleuze-Guattarian politics is to produce an experimentation which ‘repeats’ such unrepeatable re-engagements with the actual elements of a social field, forsaking supplementary representation.

Once again, Deleuze and Guattari’s focus on the ‘singular’ figures of artists, revolutionaries, or mystics must be distinguished from an ‘aristocratic’ conception that privileges those capable of creation. As they put it, ‘It should not be said that the genius is an extraordinary person, nor that everybody has genius. The genius is someone who knows how to make the whole world a becoming’.⁴⁰⁸ Artists, mystics, and revolutionaries are not simply particularly good examples of an application of thought possible for all, nor the first to uncover problems to which we must all address ourselves. Rather they are points of accumulation which draw upon the decoded elements produced by art, the sciences, and concrete political struggles, uncovering the vectors which animate them and establishing connections which realise their potential. By connecting to such vectors, rather than methodically interacting with the world on the basis of dominant forms of representation, they contribute to an ‘open society’, or, to use the terminology I adopt in the next section, a ‘form of exteriority’ which constitutes the transformative and ‘vital’ dimension of any social field.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 12. This prescience has also been attributed to *A Thousand Plateaus*: ‘In rereading *A Thousand Plateaus*... what is most impressive is the incredible capacity of anticipation which is expressed there. The development of computer science and automation, the new phenomena of media-society and communicative interaction, the new paths followed by the natural sciences and by scientific technology, in electronics, in biology, in ecology, etc.’ Antonio Negri, “On Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*,” trans. Charles T. Wolfe, in *Deleuze and Guattari: Critical assessments of leading philosophers Vol. III* ed. Gary Genosko (Routledge: London, 2001), 1187.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 50. ‘Justice’, they argue, ‘is no more than the immanent process of desire’ and so, as I argue in chapter four, entirely divorced from any *logos* or formal conception of the law. (Ibid., 51).

⁴⁰⁸ *ATP*, 201.

Artistic ‘geniuses’, then, are just one example of actors to whom we might connect as part of our own experimentation, becoming thus ‘minor’ in turn. If Kafka has a ‘symbolic’ function in this regard, in the sense given in the first chapter, it is for his capacity to remain resolutely singular despite the many signifying and subjectifying impasses of modernity, and the consistent micropolitics by which he maintained his capacity to pose problems. ‘A little bit like an animal that can only accord with the movement that strikes him, push it farther still, in order to make it return to you, against you, and find a way out’, Kafka instructs us:⁴⁰⁹ find the points of connection, intersection and difference that imbue the present with potential, and follow them beyond the limits of the everyday.

II. Nomadism and Rhizomatics

The operation of Kafka’s literary machine can be considered exemplary of Deleuze-Guattarian micropolitics, outlining certain ‘principles’ which must be reconstructed according to the specific circumstances of our own experimentation. On the one hand, successful micropolitics entails escaping signification and subjectification by adopting a problematising approach which opens one to the ‘contamination’ of the decoded and deterritorialized, or what I call in this section ‘nomadism’, and finding thereby the means to become minor; on the other, one must aim to concretise potentials presently obscured by these semiotic regimes, a ‘sorcery’ I examine in the next section. There is, Deleuze and Guattari argue, ‘an entire politics of becomings-animal, as well as a politics of sorcery, which is elaborated in assemblages that are neither those of the family nor of religion nor of the State’, but rather constituted by ‘minoritarian groups, or groups that are oppressed, prohibited, in revolt, or always on the fringe of recognized institutions’.⁴¹⁰ In this section, I present this ‘minoritarian’ politics as a ‘constructivism’ which aims to produce an immanent association of elements remaining open to further redetermination, or a ‘rhizome’. I then contrast this with the Liberal aim to construct a codified democratic structure or procedure which enables new interests to be added to an existing consensus.

The ‘rhizome’ is a further horticultural allegory for association which contrasts with the rigid hierarchy of arborescence. Unlike trees, which possess a prefigured distribution of specialised organs, rhizomes are roots which select potential points of growth on the basis of available nutrients, their shape developing in relation to their environment. In a similar fashion, ‘rhizomatic’ associations are multiplicities which incorporate elements on the pragmatic basis of the effects they realise rather than their place within a symbolic order, such that their ‘modes of individuation’ proceed via singular ‘events’ rather than ‘by form’ or ‘by the

⁴⁰⁹ *K*, 59.

⁴¹⁰ *ATP*, 247.

subject'.⁴¹¹ They are therefore always 'in the middle, between things', constituting only a 'fuzzy aggregate' which imposes no additional invariance onto the associated elements.⁴¹² The body-without-organs of such an association, which I presented in the last chapter as the singular, intensive, and undifferentiated 'excess' which emerges from productive processes and conditions the determined entities they produce, acts not as an imposed grid by which past and present connections restrict new productions to pre-determined disjunctions, but rather as a 'component of passage' which establishes the conditions for 'a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality' with each new determination.⁴¹³

A rhizome can therefore be considered an assemblage which effectuates the abstract machine in its full sense: as a contingent collation of lines or processes in development, the stratified pole of which is constituted only by 'optional rules that ceaselessly vary with the variation itself' rather than fixed principles.⁴¹⁴ A rhizome dissolves all such principles within a continuous variation 'without beginning or end':⁴¹⁵ that is, within an intensive development which 'subordinates' all form to variation, which 'becomes identified with creation' rather than the production of further examples of a general model.⁴¹⁶ Rather than examining determined elements and the place they hold within a given assemblage according to their formal qualities, a rhizome charts the development of the assemblage itself as it proceeds 'from one singularity to another following a nondecomposable, nonsegmentary line', swept up in an 'absolute' deterritorialization which, unlike the 'relative' examples considered in the last chapter, exceeds the 'spatiotemporal and even existential coordinates' of any given array of strata.⁴¹⁷

When considering social assemblages, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that a rhizome is an association that 'ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organisations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles', that is, between the strata and these rich sources of 'decoded' elements, which constitute the assemblage's potential for absolute deterritorialization.⁴¹⁸ *A Thousand Plateaus* thus supplements the 'critique' of strata with a demand that analysis become 'constructive', oriented towards the production of immanent associations in which the strata are no more

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 507.

⁴¹² Ibid., 25.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 142.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 100.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 94.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 95.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., 55-56

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., 7.

than ‘pseudoconstants’, while our openness to new connections is not so diffuse as to prevent our effecting real change within the existing order.

Schizoanalysis, or pragmatics, has no other meaning: Make a rhizome. But you don’t know what you can make a rhizome with, you don’t know which subterranean stem is effectively going to make a rhizome, or enter a becoming, people your desert. So experiment.⁴¹⁹

As the quote suggests, experimentation begins with a search for encounter, and in particular for ‘decoded’ elements which remain exterior to the strata: something Deleuze and Guattari name ‘nomadism’.

As noted in the first chapter, Kant refers to sceptics such as Hume as ‘nomads’ for their refusal to adopt the ‘permanent cultivation of the soil’, that is, the constancy of a formal philosophical method. Deleuze and Guattari adopt and develop this refusal, demanding thought reject any dogmatic *mythos* regarding its nature or *logos* concerning its appropriate application and instead adopt the mobile ground of problematisation. Specifically, ‘nomadic’ thought involves cultivating problems which ‘chart’ flows and processes in development, developing the sensible and conceptual distinctions through which they are understood in an immanent fashion rather than by ‘overcoding’ elements with a pre-determined form. It thus relates to a ‘form of exteriority’ in stark contrast to the ‘striated’ interiors established by strata.⁴²⁰ The form of exteriority is a non-totalised set of elements, the association of which allows them to remain ‘exterior’ to the rigid symbolic order on which institutions and laws rely. In the place of a fixed Image and constants of application, it situates thought within a ‘smooth space’ continually reconstituted through encounter and the emergence of ‘transversal’ connections, remaining thus outside the limits established by already-signifying conceptions of interiority.

A “method” is the striated space of the *cogitatio universalis* and draws a path that must be followed from one point to another. But the form of exteriority situates thought in a smooth space that it must occupy without counting, and for which there is no possible method, no conceivable reproduction, but only relays, intermezzos, resurgences.⁴²¹

Deleuze and Guattari draw on Anne Querrien’s presentation of Gothic architecture as an example of a ‘nomadic science’ establishing such a smooth space. Driven by a desire for ever-taller spires, guilds of journeymen abandoned the formal consistency which characterised the Romanesque in favour of a more dynamic relation to available resources, adopting an ‘Archimedean’ geometry which established calculations

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., 251.

⁴²⁰ Ibid., 362.

⁴²¹ Ibid., 377.

on the basis of available materials.⁴²² Further, the cutting of homogeneous bricks from fixed quarries was replaced with an ‘ambulant’ or ‘itinerant’ approach in which the journeymen established their workspaces according to the availability of materials and the potential for payment.⁴²³ Such ‘itinerancy’ subordinates thought to a search for singularities and to problems which can be solved only via a ‘real-life operation’ rather than the application of general principles, and so establishes a continuous relation to the exterior, making nomadism ‘concrete’.⁴²⁴

However, it is important to note that itinerancy operates within a world already striated by states, which establish ‘constants’ to which any problematisation must adapt: as the Gothic journeymen, for example, were restricted by the borders between cities. ‘Pure’ nomads thus ‘remain an abstraction, an Idea, something real and nonactual’, with any form of exteriority more a ‘vector’ concretised by problematising investments of desire than some distinct social realm.⁴²⁵ The itinerant bodies which realise it always remain ‘twin’ formations, in the sense that they maintain their nomadic ‘connections’ alongside a ‘conjugation’ with the state, that is, a selective adoption of its constants: as the Gothic stonemasons continued to engage with the states which paid them, and as Kafka continued to work in insurance.⁴²⁶ Alongside a problem of thought therefore, nomadism is a problem of resistance, as it requires itinerant bodies to incorporate concrete behaviours which prevent ‘the installation of stable powers... in favor of a fabric of immanent relations’.⁴²⁷ As Deleuze describes it in “Control and Becoming”,

what counts in such processes is the extent to which, as they take shape, they elude both established forms of knowledge and the dominant forms of power. Even if they in turn engender new forms of power or become assimilated into new forms of knowledge. For a while, though, they have a real rebellious spontaneity.⁴²⁸

To maintain their nomadism, for example, the journeymen selectively deployed the ‘active and passive’ powers of ‘mobility and the strike’, which allowed them to maintain their openness to encounter despite a consistent interaction with the states which paid them.⁴²⁹ To this, one might also add the literature of the Jews of Prague, a collective practice which maintained their singular enunciation despite their interactions

⁴²² Ibid., 364.

⁴²³ Ibid., 368.

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 373-374.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 420.

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 415.

⁴²⁷ Ibid. 357.

⁴²⁸ Deleuze, “Control and Becoming,” 176.

⁴²⁹ *ATP*, 368.

with institutions which recognised them with reference to more general forms of identity, and Kafka's epistolary assemblage.

In line with my arguments above, I would suggest that the progression of 'micropolitical' experimentation through the 'exterior' relations between minor individuals and multitudes and elements in their experience means that it must be opposed to a theorematic operation, in the sense that it rejects any grounding in general notions of the subject and instead turns to the singular. However, it could also be argued that a theorematic politics might be used to produce the conditions within which nomadism might flourish, formalising the 'resistant' behaviours or mechanisms which enable multitudes to remain minor. Markets and democratic institutions, for example, are often presented as 'smooth spaces' independent of the centralised power of the state, forming an essential part of an 'exterior' civil society within which individuals are able to associate on the basis of shared interests and so effect changes in the distribution of goods and resources or in the effective laws and institutions. However, and as I argue in more detail in the next chapter, I would argue that such 'smooth spaces' are in fact subject to a wider striation, most notably through the general coordinates of signifiacance and subjectification, which shape the perceptions of actors and the collective interests of the molar aggregates into which they are subsumed, limiting the connections that can be realised and the forms of change such groups can effect. Any 'theorematic' determination of institutions on the basis of a general axiom could therefore never be guaranteed to promote itineracy, as the axiom upon which it was based would remain informed by established conceptual and sensible differentiations, as well as the values and problems with which these are associated. To constitute a truly 'nomadic' itineracy, individuals and multitudes must find a means of escaping these impasses and so becoming minor, a project that might proceed alongside and even through their 'macro' political struggles within dominant institutions but could never be exhausted by it.

This 'spiritual' dimension of experimentation is described, as in *Difference and Repetition*, as a matter of 'destiny', a cultivation or selection which frees subjects from the limits established by general conceptions of identity:

if human beings have a destiny, it is rather to escape the face, to dismantle the face and facializations, to become imperceptible, to become clandestine, not by returning to animality... but by quite spiritual and special becomings-animal, by strange true becomings that get past the wall

and get out of the black holes, that *make faciality traits* themselves finally elude the organization of the face.⁴³⁰

As I explored in the last chapter, ‘faciality’ refers to a stratification of subjectivity, one that ensures that all identities become ‘recognised’ according to the traits by which they deviate from ‘major’ norms. The ‘minor’, by contrast, is not constituted by the ‘objectively definable... states of language, ethnicity, or sex’ possessed by given molar aggregates, but rather, and as I argued above, by a process through which the constants that define such identities are subverted and used to express the singular.⁴³¹ Its power is not a capacity ‘to acquire the majority’ in order to ‘install a new constant’, nor otherwise to allow specific minorities to ‘make themselves felt within the majority system’ by demanding certain rights or concessions from the state.⁴³²

This is not, however, to denigrate these struggles, and Deleuze and Guattari are adamant on their continued importance. As they put it:

Molecular flows achieve nothing if they do not result in the transformation of consistent assemblages, and thus a redetermination of the molar, returning to the molar organizations to reshuffle their segments, their binary distributions of sexes, classes, and parties.⁴³³

Concrete macropolitical interventions into the molar aggregates which define the state, examples of which include ‘women’s struggle for the vote, for abortion, for jobs; the struggle of the regions for autonomy; the struggle of the Third World; the struggle of the oppressed masses and minorities in the East or West’, are not only essential for their amelioration of concrete forms of suffering, but are also ‘determining’, in the sense that they establish the conditions within which any micropolitics takes place.⁴³⁴ Despite this, however, these struggles remain always ‘indexes’ of the molecular and the revolutionary progression of becoming engaged in by concrete individuals and groups, which decides their ultimate efficacy and the extent to which they can be considered ‘liberatory’. It is essential to remember that the rights and concessions macropolitics can win can only adapt *pouvoir*, modifying its present array of laws and institutions without overturning the hierarchies always established in advance by faciality, and that further forms of oppression might be established on their basis.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 171.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 106.

⁴³² Ibid., 106.

⁴³³ Ibid., 216-217.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 471.

Minor bodies are not distinct ‘interest groups’, but rather vectors of becoming concretised by individuals and collectives as they ‘chart’ the elements of their encounters and associate them within an immanently-determined smooth space, becoming ‘indenumerable’ by exceeding the particular qualities or interests by which they might be aggregated and instead continually realising themselves anew:

What distinguishes them is that in the case of a majority the relation internal to the number constitutes a set that may be finite or infinite, but is always denumerable, whereas the minority is defined as a nondenumerable set, however many elements it may have. What characterizes the nondenumerable is neither the set nor its elements; rather, it is the connection, the “and” produced between elements, between sets, and which belongs to neither, which eludes them and constitutes a line of flight.⁴³⁵

To become minor, in short, is to return to singularity, in the sense I established in the first chapter: it is to free one’s individual or collective identity and potential for connection from fixed representations and false problems, instead reconstituting it in relation to a continually-renewed ‘event’. By establishing a continuous relation to the ‘exterior’, remaining open to the contamination of decoded elements, and maintaining a mechanism through which to avoid subsumption within the confines of signifying conceptions of identity, individuals and communities become ‘unrecognisable’ and ‘clandestine’, unassimilable within the limited forms of expression which define the state and so divorced from its pre-established unity, whether this be mediated by democratic institutions or otherwise. Micropolitics, to the extent it remains such, cannot then be oriented towards the establishment and maintenance of institutions, and must instead be realised anew through the subversion of the coordinates which define the molar.

III. Connect, Conjugate, Continue: Rhizomatics and Vitality

Devoid of the permanent axiomatic ground provided by general conceptions of the subject, of freedom, and of obligation, Deleuze and Guattari’s pragmatic micropolitics requires an alternative means of determining what is to be done. In this section, I examine the immanent means of selection Deleuze and Guattari find in connection and conjugation, or, more accurately, in their potential to constitute a rhizome which connects to a ‘plane of consistency’.

While nomadism undermines the fixed markers of identity imparted by faciality, this does not mean that the actors involved lack such qualities, at both the individual and collective level, nor that they completely ‘drop out’ of the state: as the Jews of Prague, though singular and irreducible to the collective identities ascribed to

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 470.

Czech and Jewish members of the Austro-Hungarian empire, maintained many of the qualities by which these molar aggregates were recognised, by, for example, attending synagogues. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that a pure 'flight' from the state and faciality is an impossibility: instead, nomadism continues within 'striated' spaces through the subversion of existing constants, including existing 'faciality traits', by minor individuals and multitudes, who find thereby a means of expressing what is singular about their individual or collective position within the social field. What distinguishes the minor is that, where signification and subjectification are adopted, it is not as a certain, unchanging principle, but instead a form of 'mimicry' which allows their nomadism to continue:

You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of signification 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. Mimic the strata.⁴³⁶

As I introduced in the last section, itineracy complements the connections which establish a 'nomadic' approach to the social field with a 'conjugation' with the state, a selective adoption of its constants distinguished from a direct overcoding by a concrete behaviour or mechanism which ensures this selection remains oriented by immanently-determined problems. In the more general sense, 'conjugation' refers to an ordering of flows, introducing a degree of consistency to heterogeneous elements and their interaction. The secret to experimentation, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is an approach to life 'all the more profound for being variable', incorporating both a 'hardening' against and a 'submission' to particular constants according to the circumstances at hand, and according to their potential to maintain a 'virtual line... the essential element of the real beneath the everyday'.⁴³⁷ By incorporating a concrete mechanism of resistance, as the Gothic journeymen had their mobility and the Jews of Prague their literature, this pragmatic 'selection' can prevent conjugation from becoming total, whilst enabling an individual or collective to maintain the limited forms of consistency necessary to continue.

Whilst adopting the mechanisms which maintain this variable relation to life is essential to micropolitics, it does not exhaust it. At times, a more direct intervention can be called for, producing a new 'conjugation' to which flows can adapt: a project Deleuze and Guattari name 'sorcery'. A sorcerer, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is one who feels 'responsible' before animals, a term which, as I discussed above, they use to refer to

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 106.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 110.

potentials currently inhibited by dominant forms of recognition.⁴³⁸ Specifically, sorcery refers to the identification and realisation of ‘multiplicities with heterogeneous terms, cofunctioning by contagion’, that is, singular multiplicities or ‘strange bands’ which remain ‘decoded’, possessing a potential for redetermination in given circumstances that leaves them inassimilable to the molar aggregates of the state.⁴³⁹ A sorcerer draws from these bodies a singular *puissance*, unrecognisable according to the dominant forms of representation and the institutions with which these are associated, capable of realising an incorporeal transformation not found within the state’s existing assemblage of enunciation: a relative deterritorialization, one might say, that opens onto an absolute deterritorialization, a transition between singular determinations of the assemblage. In other words, the sorcerer transforms ‘compositions of order into components of passage’ by connecting them to a singular *puissance*.⁴⁴⁰ Alongside its identification of existing concrete semiotics and their effectuation of the abstract machine, this provides pragmatics with a second, ‘transformative’ function as ‘a politics of language’ which can be used to realise subjective potentials currently obscured, and so concretise a ‘people yet to come’.⁴⁴¹

In an enlightening example, Deleuze and Guattari point to Lenin, who they argue produced ‘an incorporeal transformation that extracted from the masses a proletarian class as an assemblage of enunciation *before* the conditions were present for the proletariat to exist as a body’, effectuating this transition with the order-word ‘all power to the soviets!’.⁴⁴² It was not the case that Lenin simply galvanised an aggregate that already existed, nor that he produced a particular conception of the working class upon which individuals could model themselves, but rather than he uncovered a singular political potential, already embodied within the immanent or aleatory relations and activity of the working class, which remained obscured by the molar aggregates into which these were funnelled. By invoking the power of the soviet as an absolute force with authority which encompassed that of the representative Duma, he effected ‘a veritable transformation that created an original semiotic’, producing a new set of qualitative differentiations which made the true capacities of the working class to interact with one another and the means of production apparent.⁴⁴³

Such sorcery is not a process without considerable danger. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the deterioration of Lenin’s assemblage of enunciation into the ‘mixed semiotic of Stalinist organization’ was ‘inevitable’, as the proletariat were overcoded once again by the *mythos* already nascent within the supposed universality of

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 240.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., 242.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 110.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 139.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 83.

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 139.

their class interests and the *logos* which established the vanguard's authority to represent them in a time of war, superseding the power of the soviets.⁴⁴⁴ In the sense that such sorcery involves establishing a new set of constants into which flows can be translated or production 'recorded', it also constitutes a 'conjugation', which forms the first step towards their overcoding:

"Connection" indicates the way in which decoded and deterritorialized flows boost one another, accelerate their shared escape, and augment or stoke their quanta; the "conjugation" of these same flows, on the other hand, indicates their relative stoppage, like a point of accumulation that plugs or seals the lines of flight, performs a general reterritorialization, and brings the flows under the dominance of a single flow capable of overcoding them.⁴⁴⁵

Through their conjugation of flows, the sorcerer is just as capable of rallying 'to the cause of despotism' and the order required by a new state as they are of realising new concrete potentials for experimentation.⁴⁴⁶

Conjugation presents a constant danger to experimentation, as both our 'mimicry' of existing signifiacance and subjectification and our production of new semiotics risks introducing forms of totalisation which restrict the singular connections of individuals or communities to pre-determined forms. This leads Paul Patton to find in the distinction of connection and conjugation a decidedly ethical principle of selection, or, in the words of Dan Smith, 'an immanent normative criterion for evaluating the modes of interaction between processes or flows'.⁴⁴⁷ This distinction is simple and effective: that which enables new connections, and so constitutes the potential for an 'absolute' deterritorialization of the assemblage between singular states, ought to be realised; that which closes off this potential and relativises it through the reproduction of a given form is a danger to be avoided.

In contrast to this, however, I would argue that it is essential to emphasise the ambiguity of conjugation. As I argued above, conjugation is a necessary complement to the connections which concretise nomadism, and thus plays a necessary role in problematisation: to take connections alone as the end of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic experimentation would thus be to miss the caution that constructivism introduces to the concept, as well as the practical importance they attribute to the analysis of present circumstances and strata. It would also be to miss the dangers they associate with these connections, when not properly attenuated with a selective mimicry of established strata. As they argue, even nomadism and the connections

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 220.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 248.

⁴⁴⁷ Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze and the liberal tradition: normativity, freedom and judgement," found in *Essays on Deleuze*, 350; Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, 102.

which comprise smooth spaces ‘do not have an irresistible revolutionary calling but change meaning drastically depending on the interactions they are part of and the concrete conditions of their exercise or establishment’.⁴⁴⁸ While the formation of new connections which diverge from existing social codes remains a necessary dimension of any transformation, in that ‘struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries’, they are not ‘in themselves liberatory’, and do not ‘suffice to save us’.⁴⁴⁹ Even the immanent association of the rhizome can introduce ‘despotic formations of immanence and channelization’ which prevent concrete bodies from maintaining the consistency necessary to establish new connections, a problem I examine in the fourth and fifth chapters in light of Deleuze and Guattari’s comments on the ‘cancerous’ operation of Fascism and capitalism.⁴⁵⁰

A higher principle of selection is thus necessary to ground an immanent selection from amongst potential connections and conjugations, one as much opposed to a destructive rhizome as to the knots of arborescence that might restrict it to a set form. When asked in 1980 whether *A Thousand Plateaus* contains an ethics, Deleuze replies:

Some lines are segments, or segmented; some lines get caught in a rut, or disappear into “black holes”; some are destructive, sketching death; and some lines are vital and creative. These creative and vital lines open up an assemblage, rather than close it down... Real abstraction is non-organic life.⁴⁵¹

Deleuze and Guattari argue that, given a concrete assemblage, ‘the most important problem of all’ is its ‘relation of effectuation with the abstract machine’.⁴⁵² There are ‘lines’ or vectors which, when concretised, close off the assemblage, leaving it ‘deterritorialized in the void’ by reinforcing the ‘black holes’ of existing strata:⁴⁵³ as, for example, with a protest movement that, despite an apparent radicalism, does little to challenge existing social roles and the dominant norms of expression with which they are associated, excluding the possibility of real change. Some others realise real forms of social change, but in a continuous fashion which results in nothing beyond the ultimate dissolution of all connections: as with the ultimately destructive ‘innovation’ of capitalism I examine in the fifth chapter. Finally, some allow the assemblage to be renewed by subsequent determinations, with the immanent interaction of forces resulting in the

⁴⁴⁸ *ATP*, 387.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 500.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁵¹ Gilles Deleuze, “Eight Years Later: 1980 Interview,” in *Two Regimes of Madness*, 178.

⁴⁵² *ATP*, 71.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 334.

reproduction of the problems and molar categories through which they realise their effects, without imparting a restriction upon subsequent forms of thought and activity. This latter category constitutes the continually renewed aim of all problematisation, which grounds itself on the 'event' of a specific abstract machine and assemblage, free of the bounds imposed by existing strata.

Such a potential is described as 'vital', but it is essential to note that Deleuze and Guattari's is a very atypical 'vitalism', despite the influence of Bergson's *élan vital* on their thought. The potential to connect change to the renewal of the assemblage and its strata is a vitalism which remains 'all the more powerful for being anorganic', related to the 'vital' potential to alter established forms of order inherent within reality itself rather than to any specifically organic potential.⁴⁵⁴ 'Vital' lines are those which take place upon 'a single liberated matter that contains no figures [and] is deliberately unformed', in the sense that they exceed the formal distinctions imparted by existing or potential strata.⁴⁵⁵ They therefore operate in relation to an undifferentiated 'outside of all multiplicities' which associates past and present, content and expression, thought, being, and appearance as coexistent and equivalent realisations of intensity, with any stratification a matter of emergent 'pseudoconstants' which remain contingent and could ultimately be dissolved by further transformations.⁴⁵⁶ While this 'outside' is equivalent to a body-without-organs acting as a component of passage, as discussed above, the potential for even such immanent transitions and the 'smooth spaces' through which they pass to ultimately realise a wider striation leads Deleuze and Guattari to distinguish a 'vital' immanence as a 'plane of consistency', a 'land that is eccentric, immemorial, or yet to come' for being concretised within the present only as the potential to be oriented towards the constitution of an immanent and open future, free of the restrictions imparted by both present and potential strata.⁴⁵⁷ As with the Eternal Return, the plane of consistency acts as a continually renewed means of selection, with commensurability with further experimentation and immanent determination being 'the only criterion to prevent [connections] from bogging down, or veering into the void'.⁴⁵⁸

Both order and escape, connection and conjugation, exist upon the plane of consistency: but what is 'retained and preserved, therefore created, what consists, is only that which increases the number of connections at each level of division or composition', even if this should form a localised reterritorialization.⁴⁵⁹ As Deleuze and Guattari argue, the 'problem' which orients micropolitics is ultimately

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., 503.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 109.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 505.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 251.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 508.

how one might ‘tip the most favorable assemblage from its side facing the strata to its side facing the plane of consistency or the body without organs’.⁴⁶⁰ that is to say, it is that of identifying, from amongst the assemblages operative within society, those which foster the greatest potential to open a ‘line of flight’, a development or process which might be extended into a transformation of the social field and the dominant strata of the state without thereby imparting a restriction of its own. This selection must be constantly renewed as the demands of the present are always in flux: what was once revolutionary becomes in turn a restriction or impasse, such that freedom and ‘vitality’ can be maintained only through a continuous experimentation on the part of concrete individuals and collectives. Such experimentation involves both the existing strata and the ‘exterior’ they chart through their encounters, and proceeds through the constant interrogation of the ‘internal variables of enunciation’ through which they differentiate the world, aware that these might too easily establish the overcoding of a mixed semiotic.⁴⁶¹

In other words, micropolitics proceeds always in response to the event, though guided by ‘concrete rules of extreme caution’.⁴⁶² It neither divests itself of organisation, signifiante, and subjectification entirely, nor aims for the theorematization of a formal political order that would enable the population to ‘experiment’ within given limits: rather, it promotes careful analysis on the part of concrete political actors to pursue the effectuation of an abstract machine which ‘conjugates all of the assemblage’s cutting edges of deterritorialization’, that is, its various potentials for transformation, in ways conducive to further transformation.⁴⁶³

This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO. Connect, conjugate, continue: a whole “diagram,” as opposed to still signifying and subjective programs.⁴⁶⁴

The continuity of experimentation is thus the ultimate ethical principle, one which provides an alternative to the Liberal pursuit of a continuous formal *pouvoir*.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 135.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁶² Ibid., 503.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 141.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 161.

IV. From the French Revolution to May '68

In this final section, I aim to make these arguments more concrete by examining Deleuze and Guattari's comments on the French Revolution and May '68. Addressing the former, I argue that the 'success' of any revolution is not to be found in its empirical consequences, but instead in the new potentials which result from a 'universal' conception of minority that emerges from the overturning of established molar aggregates and institutions by a 'war machine', a form of exteriority or collection of decoded flows conjugated in such a way as to transform established strata. Discussing the latter, I argue that while the continuation of experimentation requires 'subjective redeployments', these being concrete interventions within the institutions and 'molar' determinations of the state, this ought not be taken as the ultimate goal of Deleuze-Guattarian politics. I conclude with a discussion of how these events can inform experimentation today.

IV.i. The French Revolution and Universal Minority

As de Tocqueville comments on the French Revolution, 'Nothing is more apt to remind philosophers and statesmen of the need for modesty... for no event was greater or longer in the making or more fully prepared yet so little anticipated'.⁴⁶⁵ Despite their seeming inevitability when examined retrospectively, revolutionary events feature a heterogeneity and seeming spontaneity which defies prediction.⁴⁶⁶ Deleuze and Guattari argue that this unpredictability derives from their being caused by connections that were 'unrecognisable' according to the dominant forms of representation which maintained the previous historical order. As they argue, the actual individuals, interactions, and encounters which make up a social field constitute a 'supple' dimension of society which continues beneath the general categories through which it is generally understood: as the law is defined by the molar roles of judge and accused, guard and lawyer, but also by the singular individuals who take up these roles and their face-to-face interactions. This 'supple' dimension is differentiated by subjects through 'fine segmentations that grasp or experience different things, are distributed and operate differently', extending to the 'entire world of unconscious micropercepts [and] affects' usually lost in any recounting of events, and particularly within the narratives through which historians reproduce the past as an object of present consideration.⁴⁶⁷ This 'supple' segmentarity or 'molecularity' constitutes a decoded 'excess' filled with potentials for problematisation obscured to the

⁴⁶⁵ de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*, 11.

⁴⁶⁶ Today, a number of models presenting general preconditions for revolutions exist, including explanations drawn from cognitive psychology, structuralist analyses of resource or power inequality, and pluralist theories regarding the division of sovereignty amongst competing interest groups. For a classic study of the three 'generations' of revolution studies, see Jack A. Goldstone, "Theories of Revolution: The Third Generation," in *World Politics*. v. 32. no. 3 (1980): 425-453.

⁴⁶⁷ *ATP*, 213.

extent one considers only the molar aggregates and their associated capacities, enabling ‘a bureaucratic perversion, a permanent inventiveness or creativity practiced even against administrative regulations’ and ongoing, if often imperceptible, transformations at the level of both institutional practice and subjective potential which continue within even the most rigid institutions.⁴⁶⁸ As Deleuze and Guattari argue, the cumulative effects of such transformations are often dismissed in the vague terms of ‘a “change in values,”’ or the contingent actions of ‘deviant’ minorities such as ‘the youth, women, the mad, etc.’ until dominant molar aggregations are no longer able to properly account for them, resulting in periods of revolutionary upheaval.⁴⁶⁹ Despite this initial dismissal, they afterwards appear inevitable as historians reimpose molar aggregation retrospectively as a means of explaining what occurred.

Foresight regarding revolutionary upheaval is not unheard of, however: as the chapter’s epigraph demonstrates, de Tocqueville himself predicted the revolutions of 1848 that were soon to follow, if not in their exact details.⁴⁷⁰ From a Deleuze-Guattarian perspective, this prescience might be considered the result of his approach to history not in terms of its ‘most famous personages’, but rather through ‘the way in which public business was conducted, how institutions actually worked, how the various classes truly related to one another’, and in particular to ‘the condition and feelings of those segments of the population that still could be neither seen nor heard’.⁴⁷¹ Like Tarde, he focused not on the politicians who acted as subjects of enunciation, nor to general interests pertaining to classes or other molar identities, but to the supple relations of molecular individual communities, aiming to unearth the ‘vectors’ by which the *Ancien Régime* was ultimately unmade. In their own analysis of the French Revolution, Deleuze and Guattari likewise avoid posing problems which presuppose molar aggregation, such as ‘what were the interests of the peasantry?’, and instead turn to singular questions such as ‘which peasants, in which areas of the south of France, stopped greeting the local landowners?’⁴⁷² This is not to dismiss the collective interests realised by ‘classes’ and other molar aggregates, but rather to supplement them with the examination of the ‘masses’,

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 214.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 216.

⁴⁷⁰ One might also look to Rousseau before the French Revolution: ‘You reckon on the present order of society, without considering that this order is itself subject to inscrutable changes, and that you can neither foresee nor provide against the revolution which may affect your children. The great become small, the rich poor, the king a commoner. Does fate strike so seldom that you can count on immunity from her blows? The crisis is approaching, and we are on the edge of a revolution’. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. Barbara Foxley (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005), 77.

⁴⁷¹ de Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*, 2.

⁴⁷² ATP, 220.

the ‘molecular collectivities’, or, as one might say, ‘multitudes’ of actual individuals by which they would ultimately be transformed.⁴⁷³

Of particular importance were the ‘mass’ of the urban bourgeoisie, who Deleuze and Guattari argue were ‘decoded’ by their connection to commercial flows, which provided a number of new potentials for connection with which they could experiment: as with their capacity to purchase titles and official positions, to engage with the problems of Rousseau and Montesquieu, and to spend weeks in debate halls and political clubs. As increasing numbers of individuals adopted a ‘nomadic’ approach to these connections, ‘charting’ their developments and uncovering new potentials to exceed the limits associated with their molar class, the mass became deterritorialized, engaged in a process of becoming where other collectives were, by contrast, relatively fixed within their molar aggregations: the nobility by the necessity of maintaining their increasingly tenuous feudal privileges, the Church by the division between wealthy bishops and the clergy, and the peasants and *sans-culottes* by feudal obligations and poverty. Through their uniquely variable position, the bourgeoisie ‘conjugated or capitalized a domain of knowledge, a technology, assemblages and circuits into whose dependency the nobility, Church, artisans, and even peasants *would enter*’, with individuals from other social segments becoming reliant on the ‘circuits’ the bourgeoisie established to connect with new financial institutions, scientific, artistic, and philosophical productions, and ultimately political associations.⁴⁷⁴ By providing a means by which individuals from other social collectives could connect to these new sources of ‘decoded’ flows, they an effective vehicle by which any number of individuals might establish their own ‘decoded’ connections through which to realise their desire: this including a number of ‘Liberal’ nobles, dissatisfied lower-ranking members of the clergy, and wealthier members of the rural peasantry. The bourgeoisie thus served as a ‘cutting edge’ or point of accumulation, one which conjugated a number of further revolutionary flows by providing them with the means of constituting a *puissance* which exceeded the capacities attributed to them by the dominant forms of representation associated with their molar aggregations. This *puissance* was a necessary prerequisite for the new assemblage of enunciation the Revolution introduced, and the incorporeal transformation of existing molar aggregates it made possible.

At first, I would argue, this conjugation did not constitute an overcoding, largely because the mass of *sans-culotte* found their power in the terror they induced in the bourgeoisie, as well as the opportunity to increase factional influence a connection with the mob presented: a contamination which accelerated the political

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 275.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 221.

class further down their line of flight and prevented the reterritorialization of the Estates General back into a constitutional monarchy.⁴⁷⁵ More specifically, the first Paris Commune and the revolutionary ‘sections’ provided the *sans-culotte* with a direct connection to the legislature, whilst also providing the Jacobins with the force necessary to overthrow the government of Paris. At this early stage of the revolution, the bourgeoisie could be said to both connect and conjugate the ‘aleatory’ flows which emerged from the sections without imposing a particular form upon them, providing an essential vehicle through which any *sans-culotte* or *enragé* could engage in their own problematisation and so an ‘active dismantling’ of the old order without imposing the divisions of the new.⁴⁷⁶

This was not to last, however, as Deleuze and Guattari argue:

it is precisely the most deterritorialized flow, under the first aspect, that always brings about the accumulation or conjunction of the processes, determines the overcoding, and serves as the basis for reterritorialization under the second aspect... It is precisely because the bourgeoisie was a cutting edge of deterritorialization, a veritable particle accelerator, that it also performed an overall reterritorialization.⁴⁷⁷

As the Committee of Public Safety consolidated institutional *pouvoir*, they turned upon the flows which had brought them to power, reinforcing the representative National Convention as a means of challenging and limiting the Commune’s power: a reterritorialization that would ultimately lead to the downfall of Robespierre and Saint-Juste, if not the more ‘judicial’ state they conjugated. As Deleuze argued in *Difference and Repetition*, the bourgeoisie reposed the social Idea: but rather than allowing the revolutionary flows to continue their experimentation by facilitating their own constitution of problems, such that they each formed a vector or procedure capable of transforming the social field, the political institutions established by the bourgeoisie overcoded the population with a new set of exclusive

⁴⁷⁵ This was notably the case with insurrections such as the Women’s March on Versailles, which enabled the more radical elements of the bourgeoisie to come to the fore. The bourgeoisie itself was also far from a homogeneous, molar identity, with their internal disputes decided by the connections each group was capable of forming with the provinces, with the peasants, and more than anything with the *sans-culottes* adjacent to them in Paris, as with the connections enabled by the Jacobin clubs.

⁴⁷⁶ This is something about which the revolutionaries themselves were keenly aware, though the consequences of this analysis might be said to have become obscured by their own molar conceptions of ‘the people’ and their interests. See for example this surprisingly Spinozist quote from Robespierre: ‘A people does not judge as does a court of law. It does not hand down sentences, it hurls down thunderbolts; it does not condemn kings, it plunges them into the abyss; such justice is as compelling as the justice of courts’. Maximilien Robespierre, “3 December 1792,” in *Regicide and revolution: speeches at the trial of Louis XVI*, ed. Michael Walzer, trans. Marian Rothstein (Columbia University Press: Oxford, 1992), 133.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 220-221.

disjunctions and molar categories. It is for this reason that Deleuze was later explicit in his rejection of the bourgeoisie as a revolutionary class:

The bourgeoisie imposes a new code, both economic and political, so you might think it was revolutionary. Not in the least... The bourgeoisie never mistook its real enemy. Its real enemy was not the previous system, but that which had escaped the control of the previous system, and the bourgeoisie was resolved to control it in its turn. The bourgeoisie owed its power to the dissolution of the old system; but it could exercise this new power only by considering the other revolutionaries as enemies. The bourgeoisie was never revolutionary. It had the revolution carried out for it.⁴⁷⁸

Though the decoding of the bourgeoisie and the sorcery it enabled consolidated the revolutionary flow which dissolved the old order, this same consolidation ultimately led the masses towards a new, authoritarian state.

I would argue that this ‘recoding’ is the reason the French Revolution is so often presented as a turning point in the history of Liberalism.⁴⁷⁹ As explored in the introduction to this chapter, Liberal theorists and philosophers conceptualise revolution as legitimate, if at all, where it replaces an arbitrary or irrational centralisation of power with an alternative better attuned to the free thought and activity of the population: as the English and Glorious revolutions, for example, are often considered precursors to the later developments of Liberalism due to their limitation of despotic monarchy in favour of constitutionalism, despite the fact they did not introduce a more comprehensive system of universal rights or collective suffrage. Even where such ‘Liberal’ revolutions are disapproved of, as de Tocqueville would decry the Terror that followed the French Revolution, it is not for their lasting consequences, most notably in the codified systems of rights that they ultimately enabled, but rather the ‘despotic’ means by which they were achieved. A Liberal history can thus be charted from the English Revolution through those of the Dutch, American, and French, ultimately resulting in modern Liberal states which, having corrected the arbitrary governance that preceded them, could then dispense with revolution in favour of democracy and procedural reform. From Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, however, the authoritarianism that immediately follows revolutions and the more ‘judicial’ states which ultimately result are part of the same process of overcoding. They argue, for example, that the ‘authoritarianism’ of Cromwell ordered the ‘pure line of subjectification’ that conjugated the decoded flows of the English Revolution, providing the groundwork for the distribution of power between Parliament and the King that would ultimately

⁴⁷⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, “On Capitalism and Desire,” 268.

⁴⁷⁹ See for example chapter two of Helena Rosenblatt, *The Lost History of Liberalism: from Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

overcode them;⁴⁸⁰ in the same way, the authoritarianism of the Terror found its successor in Napoleon, who spread the new assemblage of enunciation throughout Europe.⁴⁸¹ Both the initial period of authoritarianism and the theorematologically justified state which follows must be opposed to the ‘revolution’ they seek.

Maintaining the revolutionary potential of any collective movement means preventing its association with the ‘authority’ of any particular group, drawn from a generic notion of the subject, the population, or their interests. This does not mean, however, that the various problematising flows are disconnected and localised struggles. Revolution requires organisation, Deleuze and Guattari argue: but rather than a hierarchical, arborescent organisation, it requires the transversal structure of a rhizome.

Clearly, a revolutionary machine cannot remain satisfied with local and occasional struggles: it has to be at the same time super-centralized and super-desiring. The problem, therefore, concerns the nature of unification, which must function in a transversal way, through multiplicity, and not in a vertical way, so apt to crush the multiplicity proper to desire.⁴⁸²

Deleuze and Guattari state that ‘vertical’ unification is the failure of all past revolutions: each involved revolutionaries constituting themselves as ‘syntheses of interests rather than... analyzers of mass and individual desires’.⁴⁸³ The bourgeois revolutionaries were in this respect no different: rather than attempting to uncover and promote the potentials obscured by the dominant forms of representation, they established themselves as a necessary authority, tied to an image of the population whose interests they could then claim to represent and defend against traitors at home and the great powers abroad.

⁴⁸⁰ On Deleuze and Guattari’s account, the English revolution was a ‘betrayal’ of the despotic signification established by divine right, organised by the ‘authority’ of Oliver Cromwell (*ATP*, 125). The fundamental issue of the English Revolution was the relative weight of the nobility’s secular right to resist unjust taxation practices as compared to the monarch’s divine right to demand them: one might say that the mass of the nobility reformed themselves and gained new potentials through their claiming of these rights, leading to a shift in subjectivity which took root throughout the population and continued even through the reterritorialization of the Restoration, laying the groundwork for both the Glorious revolution and the later development of Parliamentary Liberalism. Further, they argue that similar ‘betrayals’ characterised ‘the great discoveries of Christendom’ (that is, the early explorations of the age of discovery) and the Reformation, which made Christianity ‘humanist’ (Ibid., 126). While none of these events are ‘Liberal’ in terms of the principles which motivated them, all have been presented as potential origins of Liberalism, which can thus be seen as a historical succession of reterritorializations establishing more ‘judicial’ models of sovereignty.

⁴⁸¹ See Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, “G,” trans. Charles J. Stivale, Gilles Deleuze: The ABC Primer, Lecture Recording 2 - G to M, 4 February 1989 (The Deleuze Seminars), accessed May 18, 2021, <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/gilles-deleuze-abc-primer/lecture-recording-2-g-m.>: ‘The [French] revolution failed, all revolutions fail, everybody knows this, and now people are pretending to “rediscover,” that. They really have to be dimwitted. As a result, everyone is getting lost in this, this contemporary revisionism. There is [François] Furet who discovered that the French Revolution wasn’t as great as had been thought. Well, sure, fine, it failed too, everybody knows that. The French Revolution gave us Napoleon!’

⁴⁸² Deleuze, “Preface: Three Group Related Problems,” 16.

⁴⁸³ Deleuze, “Five Propositions on Psychoanalysis,” 280.

Another way of phrasing this failure is that past revolutions conjugated flows into ‘embryonic State apparatuses’ rather than ‘war-machines irreducible to such apparatuses’.⁴⁸⁴ As Widder argues, the concept of the war machine can be seen to encapsulate the forces which remain resistant to the state-form within Hegel’s theory of the state, and in particular those elements of civil society which have no place within the ‘rational’ form of order.⁴⁸⁵ The concept of the war machine refers to an association of various flows drawn from a ‘form of exteriority’ into a process which ‘cuts’ into existing relations and constants and so ‘unites’ nomadic and problematising bodies into a line of absolute deterritorialization or induced change in an assemblage without thereby totalising them in turn.⁴⁸⁶ As mentioned in the introduction, Deleuze and Guattari describe the formation of such a war machine as the ‘direct’ problem of their politics; further, Deleuze describes it as their problem of revolution:

There is no revolution without a central, centralizing war-machine. You can’t brawl, and you don’t fight with your fists: there must be a war-machine that organizes and unites. But until now, there hasn’t existed in the revolutionary field a machine that didn’t reproduce something else: a state apparatus, the very institution of repression. Hence the problem of revolution: how can a war-machine account for all the escapes that happen in the present system without crushing them, dismantling them, and without reproducing a state apparatus?⁴⁸⁷

The war machine, as the association of deterritorialized and decoded elements, does not impose obligations on the problematising individuals and multitudes which concretise it, becoming the ‘metamorphoses’ through which it passes, but rather provides them with their ‘weapons’, that is, with the problems by which they cut into existing constants.⁴⁸⁸ It is a relation to exteriority which allows problematisation to begin, and so every turn to problematisation involves contributing to a war machine to which others might connect in turn:

each time there is an operation against the state—insubordination, rioting, guerrilla warfare, or revolution as act—it can be said that a war machine has revived, that a new nomadic potential has appeared, accompanied by the reconstitution of a smooth space or a manner of being in space as though it were smooth... when a State does not succeed in striating its interior or neighboring

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ Nathan Widder, “Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘War Machine’ as a Critique of Hegel’s Political Philosophy,” *Hegel Bulletin* 39, no. 2 (July 2018): pp. 304-325, <https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2018.13>.

⁴⁸⁶ *ATP*, 354.

⁴⁸⁷ Deleuze, “Five Propositions on Psychoanalysis,” 280.

⁴⁸⁸ *ATP*, 358.

space, the flows traversing that State necessarily adopt the stance of a war machine directed against it, deployed in a hostile or rebellious smooth space.⁴⁸⁹

A politics of the war machine is an immanent pragmatism of the singular, aiming to realise the unrecognisable minor divergences presently obscured by molar conceptions of identity, to the extent these flows do not themselves harbour a secret repression that would prevent problematisation in future. A revolutionary sorcery is one which discerns the potentials to revive the war machine and establish the transversal connections through which it proceeds, introducing new conjugations conducive to a collective turn to problematisation. Such a task has nothing to do with molar interests or the ‘rights of man’, and is necessarily opposed to those ‘men of the State’ who aim to maintain ‘a legislative and constituent primacy’ for theorematic conceptions of thought over the nomadic:⁴⁹⁰ and thus, I would argue, with Liberalism, which aims always to enclose revolutionary flows within a state grounded in fixed notions of the subject or the intersubjective.

As the formation of a state marks the failure of any revolution, their practical consequences are always dire, with the ‘judicial’ or rational nature of the states which follow being poor markers for judging their relative success. Instead, they argue that such success derives from the new potentials realised by the crystallisation of decoded flows before they were once again subject to a mixed semiotic: or what they call the ‘people’s revolutionary becoming’.⁴⁹¹ To put this another way, though they disagree with Kant’s view that such development is moral and necessarily conjoined with the development of more ‘just’ states, they argue in *What is Philosophy?* that he was correct to argue that the success of any revolution lies ‘in the “enthusiasm” with which it is thought on an absolute plane of immanence, like a presentation of the infinite in the here and now, which includes nothing rational or even reasonable’.⁴⁹² Rather than an action to be judged according to its establishment of a state more compatible with the interests, rights, or justice entailed by the nature of the individual, Deleuze and Guattari argue that a revolution can be considered successful only through this enthusiasm, constituted by ‘the new bonds it installs between people, even if these bonds last no longer than the revolution’s fused material and quickly give way to division and betrayal’.⁴⁹³

As the last section demonstrated, individuals and collectives united by a singular *puissance* or shared problems become revolutionary not by recognising their interests, the nature of justice, or the rights

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 386.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 367.

⁴⁹¹ Deleuze, “Control and Becoming,” 169–176.

⁴⁹² *WIP*, 100.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., 177.

pertaining to human dignity, but rather by investing the signifying constants of the state ‘for the purpose of making it minor’, adopting them to the extent they prove capable of expressing their singularity.⁴⁹⁴ As any such turn to the ‘minor’ involves the establishment of new connections to the ‘decoded’ exterior, this being the only means of resisting the stratification associated with states and the semiotic regimes which maintain them, becoming-minor necessarily involves a mutual relation with the problematisation of other individuals and collectives, a relation Deleuze and Guattari present as vital to the extent that it establishes such minoritarianism as a ‘universal figure’ of consciousness, alternatively called ‘autonomy’:

It is certainly not by using a minor language as a dialect, by regionalizing or ghettoizing, that one becomes revolutionary; rather, by using a number of minority elements, by connecting, conjugating them, one invents a specific, unforeseen, autonomous becoming... There is a universal figure of minoritarian consciousness as the becoming of everybody, and that becoming is creation. One does not attain it by acquiring the majority. The figure to which we are referring is continuous variation, as an amplitude that continually oversteps the representative threshold of the majoritarian standard, by excess or default. In erecting the figure of a universal minoritarian consciousness, one addresses powers [*puissances*] of becoming that belong to a different realm from that of Power [*Pouvoir*] and Domination... Becoming-minoritarian as the universal figure of consciousness is called autonomy.⁴⁹⁵

The ‘success’ of any revolution lies in a collective form of problematisation in which all can participate in their own terms, engaging with one another not as ‘subjects’ particularised in relation to major norms, but as part of a continuous variation, that is, according to their mutual contribution to a becoming which does not itself impart formal restrictions. Each heterogeneous individual or collective is thus able to contribute to a single ‘calculus of problems’ through which any number of minor movements can engage with the ‘revolution’ as part of their own experimentation.⁴⁹⁶ A relation to this indeterminacy, or ‘the undecidable’, is ‘the germ and locus par excellence of revolutionary decisions’ and of a resistance ‘operating by the determination of the conditions of the problem and by transversal links between problems’.⁴⁹⁷ On my account, the Commune could be said to have established conditions of ‘universal minority’ because it enabled an indefinite number of minor groups (the bourgeois factions, the *sans-culotte* of the various

⁴⁹⁴ *ATP*, 105.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 461.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 473.

sections, the peasantry, etc.) to re-establish problems in their own terms and in relation to the singularity of the situation they faced without reliance on imposed forms and molar conceptions of identity.

In this way, a focus on ‘problematization’, as an ethics and politics, provides additional context for understanding an essential yet underexplored dimension of Deleuze and Guattari’s political philosophy. Subverting Hegel’s famous suggestion that philosophy paints its ‘gray on gray’ only after a way of life has made itself explicit and so recognised by the subjects which possess it, Deleuze and Guattari argue that such becoming is ‘for one who knows how to be nobody’, involving specific individuals and communities becoming unrecognisable by constructing their own destiny through their actual encounters, and so painting their own intensive ‘gray’ upon the undifferentiated field of intensities with which they engage.⁴⁹⁸

In this way, one

becomes like everybody, but in a way that can become like everybody. One has painted the world on oneself, not oneself on the world... One has entered becomings-animal, becomings-molecular, and finally becomings-imperceptible.⁴⁹⁹

To paint the world on oneself, or make the world a becoming: this is the ‘genius’ of revolutionaries, artists, and all others who chart decoded flows in such a way that their revolutionary movement or their art encourages these flows in their divergence, without allowing their original enunciation to fall into the mixed semiotic proper to an extant minority or a new state.

Though ‘gray’, I would argue that this ‘figure’ of universal minoritarian consciousness is never truly undifferentiated, in the sense of ‘subjectivity in general’ or the ‘society of brothers’ or formal equivalents which grounds the modern state.⁵⁰⁰ Rather, it appears as a collective subjectification, the constants of which remain open to repurposing by each individual or community as part of their own expression of a collective ‘autonomy’. Deleuze later describes both the Russian and American Revolutions in these terms, arguing that they induced a subjectification that remained, at least for a while, minor and transversal, fostering an active solidarity which allowed experimentation to continue without devolving into the mixed semiotic and formal order of a nation state:

they presented themselves worse than... or better than a new nation, they went beyond nations exactly like Marx spoke later of the proletariat: they went beyond nations, nations are finished!

They bring forth a new people, they have a true revolution. Just as the Marxists count on universal

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 197. See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 23.

⁴⁹⁹ *ATP*, 200.

⁵⁰⁰ Deleuze, “Plato, the Greeks,” 137.

proletariatization, the Americans counted on universal immigration, the two sides of class struggle. This is absolutely revolutionary, it's the America of Jefferson, of Thoreau, of Melville... it's a completely revolutionary America that announces the "new man" exactly like the Bolshevik revolution announced the "new man."⁵⁰¹

Rather than an abstracted and formal conception of the human subject, tied in advance to the delimited interior and formal hierarchy of a state, both revolutions progressed via a 'universal' subjectification which nonetheless remained singular, in the sense that it remained tied to the particular potentials for action which anyone could adopt in their own way and within their specific circumstances. But despite these fortuitous beginnings, both revolutions were 'blown', their vitality lost to the failures of Stalinism and the mixed semiotic of a new state, and modern capitalist democracy, with its 'cancerous' and ultimately destructive transformation.⁵⁰²

Though Deleuze and Guattari never make this particular connection, one might describe the figure of universal minority which emerged during the French Revolution as the *citoyen*, a figure which joined peasant and bourgeois alike in a collective flight from existing Faciality, establishing a revolutionary flow without a predetermined association with particular forms of authority or given obligations. As the bourgeoisie established themselves as the 'authority' proper to the nature of these citizens via the National Assembly and the other theorematic political institutions which guaranteed the rights which supposedly pertained to them, this minor identity became a relative deterritorialization which undermined all particularity, and the *mythos* of a new, and decidedly Liberal, mixed semiotic: less 'gray on gray' than a blank canvas then particularised by race and class.

A direct comparison with another thinker of revolution and authoritarianism is instructive here. As with Deleuze and Guattari, Hannah Arendt rejects the philosophical tendency to consider human beings in abstract, forgetting that 'men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world'.⁵⁰³ Instead, Arendt turns to the actual conditions within which human lives are lived: these being conditions of plurality, in the sense that human beings can be considered equivalent only in the sense that each is capable of thinking and acting independently. The defining aspect of human subjects is therefore not their capacity for labour, activity forced upon them by necessity, nor their capacity for work, activity driven by utility, but instead their capacity for action, that is, their power to 'begin something new' on their 'own initiative', something which

⁵⁰¹ See Deleuze and Parnet, "G".

⁵⁰² Ibid.: "The British Revolution resulted in Cromwell, the American Revolution's results were worse, the political parties, Reagan, which does not seem any better to me".

⁵⁰³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 7.

discloses their identity as ‘unique and distinct’.⁵⁰⁴ This capacity for action, being rooted in human ‘natality’ or their potential to create something distinct from existing conditions, makes them absolutely, radically free, and hence inassimilable into a formal model. While action is always ‘interaction’, taking place with others and within a pre-existing web of opinions and actions, the capacity to break off and establish new productive relations means that sovereignty must be continually renewed through concerted action by particular individuals if it is to be sustained, and the political remains a question that can always be reopened.

Activity, and the *vita activa* with which Arendt associates it in *The Human Condition*, can thus be described as equivalent to ‘problematization’, in the sense that it involves concrete agents acquiring a singular *puissance* in relation to the demands of the present. And, as with Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of universal minority, the aim must ultimately be to make this capacity for action available to all. As she argues in *On Revolution*, this possibility is the ‘treasure’ of past revolutions, as manifested in non-hierarchical spaces of public freedom, which she refers to as ‘councils’, within which any individual can adopt the responsibility of public life and directly pursue the public good: examples including the soviets of the Russian Revolution, and indeed the first Paris Commune. Though widely divergent in their formal qualities and relative success, these councils share in ‘the absence of continuity, tradition, and organized influence’, possessing no given formal content beyond their facilitation of action.⁵⁰⁵

Though some clear *prima facie* parallels exist between the two accounts of revolutionary success, I believe that significant differences emerge where these theorists consider how this ‘treasure’ is to be sustained. Arendt argues that to be successful, revolutions must not only liberate, but also construct a ‘new house where freedom can dwell’.⁵⁰⁶ The failure of the French revolution, for example, related to its direction by the ‘social question’ of poverty, which meant that actors were driven by necessity rather than a desire to concretise a lasting form of political freedom. Where Robespierre and the other revolutionaries abandoned the attempt to use their power to defend liberty, in the form of the ‘rights of man’, and instead made their aim the provision of the ‘rights of the *sans-culotte*’ to food, clothing and so on, they lost the historical opportunity to produce an institution that might preserve freedom indefinitely by establishing a constitutional law distinct from the people which formed the source of its power.⁵⁰⁷ The inability to convert the social questions of poverty and welfare into strictly political problems established in the abstract terms

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 179-180.

⁵⁰⁵ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1990), 262.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 60.

of freedom ensured that the Commune and its sections remained no more than the 'first organs of a republic which never came into being', with the concepts of 'the people' or 'the revolution' becoming forces of absolutism no less than the monarchy they replaced.⁵⁰⁸ The same would be true of any revolution in which the 'appropriate institutions' failed to appear, as the revolutionary 'spirit of beginning something new' would become subject to present needs and interests and an authoritarianism justified by their supposed necessity.⁵⁰⁹

This is as much to say that Arendt rejects any suggestion that the 'constitutions and the fever of constitution-making' which follow revolutions represent either their defeat or a limitation of their 'full development'.⁵¹⁰ Rather, constitutions and institutions which protect liberty in formal terms mark the only possible concretisation of freedom, and it is freedom, not liberation, which provides the true marker of revolutionary success. She thus considers the American Revolution to have been far more successful than the French, something she attributes to its being carried out by a population 'which knew nothing of the predicament of mass poverty' and 'who had a widespread experience with self-government'.⁵¹¹ Rather than turning to the social question and that of the constitutive power that ought to underline their constitution, the American colonists could turn to the structure of largely independent townships they had already developed, and seat power in 'the organized multitude whose power was exerted in accordance with laws and limited by them', rather than the people and their interests in abstract.⁵¹² Their one failing, Arendt argues, was to have not preserved this spirit by providing citizens with a public space in which they could enjoy the strictly active and direct role of citizen, instead restricting their freedom to the 'private capacity' of the ballot box.⁵¹³ It is perhaps because of this failing that the American people became increasingly subject to social questions, a problem she ascribes in more direct terms to immigration:

the struggle to abolish poverty, under the impact of a continual mass immigration from Europe, fell more and more under the sway of the poor themselves, and hence came under the guidance of the ideals born out of poverty, as distinguished from those principles which had inspired the foundation of freedom.⁵¹⁴

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 246.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., 280.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 142.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 157.

⁵¹² Ibid., 166.

⁵¹³ Ibid., 253.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 138-139.

As I explored earlier, Deleuze presents this immigration as the truly revolutionary aspect of the American revolution, specifically because it provided a new and indeterminate subjective form with which concrete groups could experiment. Through immigration, anyone could become an American citizen and follow ‘the American dream’, devoid of any content save for that which they produced themselves. Arendt, by contrast, identifies this same singularity as reliant on contingent and self-interested notions of economic gain, each a distraction and a barrier to the formal content of freedom as public debate and action.

For Arendt, in contrast to Deleuze and Guattari, freedom can only come where law and power are separated, and an institution exists within which individuals can act in concert to realise political change. What we see in Arendt’s problem of revolution is not therefore a departure from Liberalism, but another of its thresholds, a point beyond which it would transform. Its utopianism appears as the most extreme possible rejection of its despotic dimension in favour of a ‘judicial’ space of political deliberation, with the general or formal conception of the subject it adopts, and thus the *mythos* upon which the unity of sovereignty rests, involving the minimal content of plurality and the capacity for action. As no revolution has produced a sustainable council organisation appropriate to such subjects, however, Arendt’s thought can go no further than the hope for a ‘people’s utopia’ that might be established ‘in the wake of the next revolution’, based upon ‘a completely different principle of organization, which begins from below, continues upward, and finally leads to parliament’.⁵¹⁵

From Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, a purely judicial state is an impossibility, as the authority which organises the decoded flows of any state is inseparable from a ‘despotism’, present within dominant forms of representation and of sensible and conceptual differentiation, upon which such authority necessarily relies. Any ‘council’, understood in the concrete terms of a given institution populated by singular groups, would institute an authoritative hierarchy between those who take up the ‘mantle’ of political action and those who are not present; and those who reject its authority or fail to frame their desires in terms of the rights or interests its members believe to apply formally to all subjects will be deemed irrational in advance, excluded from consideration and subject to decisions in which they have played no part. Deleuze and Guattari’s turn to universal minority, by contrast, does not posit a hypothetical, utopian revolution that would produce a state appropriate to ‘problematization’, understood in general and abstract terms, but instead provides us with a concrete means of identifying and preserving the gains of the ‘revolutionary’ experiments of minor individuals and multitudes, these being the potentials realised in their overcoming of

⁵¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Crises of the Republic* (London: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1972), 232.

existing restrictions, which may be political, economic, or otherwise, and which may take the form of a direct democracy or open parliament, but might also take the form of a private, clandestine struggle.

IV.ii. May '68 and Subjective Redeployments

Though facilitating a war machine is the direct problem of Deleuze and Guattari's politics, it is essential to also emphasise the role of macropolitics to its continuation: something which can best be understood with reference to a more recent revolutionary event. Deleuze and Guattari began their collaboration in the wake of May '68, which they describe as 'a demonstration, an irruption, of a becoming in its pure state'.⁵¹⁶ In France, events began with demonstrations against capitalism and the Vietnam war, proceeded through student-led occupations and a subsequent general strike, and ultimately resulted in spontaneous actions without direct input from, and ultimately in opposition to, the leftist parties and unions that purported to represent the people.

The politicians, the parties, the unions, many leftists, were utterly vexed; they kept repeating over and over again that "conditions" were not ripe. It was as though they had been temporarily deprived of the entire dualism machine that made them valid spokespeople.⁵¹⁷

Having internalised a dualistic conception of the people as the lesser part of the biunivocal distinction of vanguard and proletariat, the leading figures of the communist party could only assume that the individuals engaged in the spontaneous strikes were not, in fact, 'the people', but rather an unacceptable aberration. This recognition led them to join the government in calls for an election, ultimately contributing to the dissolution of the remaining revolutionary fervour.⁵¹⁸

Despite this election resulting in victory for the Gaullist government, Deleuze and Guattari did not consider May '68 to have been a failure in its becoming. As they argue in the interview "May '68 Did Not Take Place", it was as if 'society suddenly saw what was intolerable in it and also saw the possibility for something else', with a collective affect, a certain 'shame' induced at the molar aggregates into which they were

⁵¹⁶ Deleuze, "Control and Becoming," 171. For a recent study of May '68 and its relation to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the event, see Vincent Jacques, "Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's Conceptualisation of the Event in the Light of May '68," trans. Ann-Marie Kilgallon, in *Revolutions for the Future: May '68 and the Prague Spring* ed. Jana Ndiaye Berankova, Michael Hauser, and Nick Nesbitt (Helbich: Suture Press, 2020).

⁵¹⁷ *ATP*, 216.

⁵¹⁸ For example, the leader of the Communist party, Georges Marchais, suggested that the strikes were organised by 'sons of the upper bourgeois - contemptuous of working class students - who will quickly put their "revolutionary flame," on the back burner to run Papa's business and exploit workers in the best traditions of capitalism'. Georges Marchais, "De Faux Révolutionnaires à démasquer," in *L'Humanité*, May 3rd 1968, translation mine.

funnelled leading the ‘masses’ of students, workers, women, and others to seek the means to become minor, reassessing their potential to engage with the social field and so recreating what was possible.⁵¹⁹

The possible does not pre-exist, it is created by the event. It is a question of life. The event creates a new existence, it produces a new subjectivity (New relations with the body, with time, sexuality, the immediate surroundings, with culture, work...).⁵²⁰

As with all such irruptions, however, these revolutionary conditions ultimately gave way to order, as the population’s submission to the pre-determined activities of representative democracy led to their subsumption back into the molar segments on which these same institutions relied. The order-words of European society, that is, the potential forms of identity and the conditions necessary to move between them, remained the same, failing to mitigate for the new forms of subjectivity that had crystallised. Unlike the French Revolution, the problem was not that the new institutions through which the population re-established their potential to engage with the social field introduced a new overcoding, but that no such institutions emerged, such that the ‘constants’ of subjectivity remained the same, and the old institutions they justified retained their position as the only ‘rational’ means by which the population might channel their desires. The new conjugations needed to continue the rhizome were lacking.

This leads Deleuze and Guattari to argue for the necessity of ‘subjective redeployments’, these being macropolitical developments through which a population might develop their potential: examples being the American ‘New Deal’ and the Japanese post-war ‘economic miracle’.⁵²¹ Though possessed of their own ‘ambiguities and even reactionary structures’, these economic developments were able to realise their associated states in ways capable of ‘responding to the demands of the event’ and accounting for new subjectivities that had begun to take hold.⁵²² Rather than a late turn towards a state-centred politics, I would argue that this position should be understood as a continuation of the arguments of *A Thousand Plateaus* regarding the importance of conjugation to experimentation. Whilst this must be prevented from leading to a final overcoding, to privilege only the cuts of the war machine would be, to paraphrase Robespierre, to desire ‘revolution without a revolution’, points of individual deviation which failed to coalesce into lasting

⁵¹⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, “May ’68 did not take place,” in *Two Regimes of Madness*, 234.

⁵²⁰ Ibid.

⁵²¹ Ibid. There ambiguous comments on this point can be compared to the far more critical view later expressed by Hardt and Negri, which present the New Deal as the origin of a new form of ‘Imperialism’. C.f. Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 176-179.

⁵²² Deleuze and Guattari, “May ’68 did not take place,” in *Two Regimes of Madness*, 234.

change: a determined macropolitics, geared towards the establishment of new and more open institutions, is therefore an essential correlate to revolution, as I explore in more detail in chapter five.

Establishing such institutions cannot, however, be the final aim of politics, as in the theorematic models of Liberalism. As I have argued throughout, such theorematic models can never be guaranteed to align with the needs of experimentation, meaning that any institution or associated ‘constants’ of subjective identity or action would need to be taken up in more revolutionary terms should they become tied to particular forms of authority and a given *logos* which prevents experimentation being taken up anew. This is the true spirit behind the politics of ‘the Left’ Deleuze proposes in *L’Abécédaire*: a micropolitical pragmatism which never ‘has anything to do with government’ despite often being ‘more subtle than becoming-revolutionary’, and which remains always wary of the institutional struggles of democracy.⁵²³

So, I can say quite literally, the majority is no one, the minority is everyone, and that’s what being on the Left is: knowing that the minority is everyone and that it’s there that phenomena of becomings occur. That’s why, all thinkers, regardless, they have doubts concerning democracy, concerning what we call elections.⁵²⁴

As previous sections have demonstrated, there is no ‘method’ of revolution for Deleuze and Guattari, nor conditions for determining its legitimacy: rather, a politics of the left must always begin again, depending on the potentials currently ‘objective’ in the social field. This does not mean that institutions are to be rejected outright, but rather that their adoption must remain a form of ‘mimicry’, indexed to a struggle which can arise only at the level of the minor. The institutions Deleuze and Guattari would accept must be distinguished from ‘government’ and any other theorematic structure which abstracts from singular, lived conditions.

This means that any institution so adopted must serve as the solution to a singular problem. Adopting such a pragmatism, and ultimately becoming revolutionary, requires turning to the singular events and figures of the past, adopting them not as models to be imitated or the source of principles by which we might more successfully engage in revolution, but rather as part of a revolutionary lineage imbuing the present with potential. As they later reflect, continuing the argument regarding ‘virtual’ events seen in *Difference and Repetition*: ‘an event can be turned around, repressed, co-opted, betrayed, but there still is something there that cannot be outdated... even if the event is ancient, it can never be outdated. It is an opening on to the

⁵²³ Deleuze and Parnet, “G”.

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

possible'.⁵²⁵ Revolution engages with the past not as a succession of states with common principles or qualities, as with the Liberal succession of more 'judicial' states, but instead as an intensive field in which singular events co-exist with one another, outlining problems to which our current experimentation can attend:

History is not experimentation, it is only the set of almost negative conditions that make possible the experimentation of something that escapes history. Without history experimentation would remain indeterminate and unconditioned, but experimentation is not historical. It is philosophical.⁵²⁶

Rather than establishing a philosophical history, Deleuze and Guattari present history as the condition for an experimentation with life and thought, allowing concrete groups to escape the weight of dominant molar categories and the causal chains with which they are associated and instead constitute a revolutionary lineage to inform their present problems.

Seen in this light, the passage from the French Revolution to May '68 is certainly instructive. I would argue that, where once the notion of the 'citizen' may have been a revolutionary becoming, freeing the population from the relative deterritorializations of Feudalism, Deleuze and Guattari take the democratic institutions and general conceptions of the citizen which resulted to now present an impasse preventing the decoded flows revealed by May '68 and more recent insurrections from being made concrete. As I explore in more detail in the fifth chapter, this leads them to propose the figure of the 'proletariat' as an alternative to the citizen, with problems of survival or security inherent to the capitalist organisation of the world economy establishing a 'universal' condition for becoming-minor. Before turning to this contemporary revolutionary potential, however, I turn in the next chapter to the relation between the state and law, contrasting the figure of the citizen and the 'rights' or obligations associated with the fixed 'universals' of contemporary Liberalism with the singular experimentation Deleuze and Guattari propose.

In this chapter, I contrasted the 'exteriority' of Deleuze and Guattari's revolutionary politics of the 'minor' with the theorematic and 'majoritarian' politics of Liberalism, arguing that the former aims to realise potentials restricted by the dominant molar aggregations of states in ways conducive for a collective turn to problematisation, whilst the latter involves the recoding and reterritorialization of such 'decoded' flows within a further array of institutions. In the next chapter, I turn to the problem of law, contrasting the

⁵²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, "May '68 did not take place," 233.

⁵²⁶ *WIP*, 111.

‘appropriation’ which defines this judicial overcoding with the immanent constitution of law characteristic of war machines.

Chapter 4 | Appropriation, Rights, and the Problem of Law

Authority that does not exist for Liberty is not authority but force.

—Lord Acton⁵²⁷

As I argued in the last chapter, Liberalism's association of the state with reason or reasonability leads it to oppose any flow which resists the specific formal co-ordinates which underlie the state, branding them irrational and excluding them, or, where this fails, introducing new semiotic and institutional constants which return them to regularity. Its history can thus be charted alongside revolutionary 'irruptions' of becoming and the alterations in the law which compensated for them. Where proto-Liberal documents such as the Magna Carta quelled internal tensions by establishing the rights of noble subjects, for example, complementing monarchical despotism with legal procedure, the revolutionary upheaval of the following centuries could be tempered only by a population that saw itself as in some way the source of the law, a development of modern philosophy then concretised by constitutions such as the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*. The different Liberal approaches to the problem of revolution seen in the previous chapter can thus be seen as reflective of a break within the Liberal tradition proposed by Pierre Manent, who takes the French Revolution to divide a first 'wave' of Liberals, such as Locke, whose primary concern was the replacement of arbitrary governance, from a second wave, who aimed to 'absorb the shock produced by the complex of events, feelings, and ideas' released by the French Revolution through such innovations as the division of powers, the strengthening of civil society, and increasingly universal forms of suffrage.⁵²⁸ Either way, the aim remains the control of decoded flows: but once the law had been established on the solid ground provided by a formal conception of the subject or citizen, such control was seen as best realised through alterations in the institutions whose processes of subjectification channelled the activity of the population into the norms required by the state, rather than with their overthrow.

It may be objected that the modern nation states which represent the culmination of this process truly do establish a connection between the population and the law which binds them, restricting laws to those compatible with a fundamental system of rights, included in which is the right to participation in the democratic institutions from which laws derive. Even if this somewhat idealistic picture is not accepted, it could be argued that prominent variants of post-war Liberal theory represent a means of achieving this in future due to their identification of the particular system of rights or institutional structures which would

⁵²⁷ John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, "The Anglo-American Tradition of Liberty," in *Essays in religion, politics and morality*, ed. J. Rufus Fears (Liberty Classics, Indianapolis, 1988), 34.

⁵²⁸ Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*, 80.

allow us to continually reproduce consensus in the pluralistic modern world. As I argue in this chapter, however, while modern Liberal political philosophies may present themselves as devoid of any ‘metaphysical’ speculations regarding human nature or the good life that would pose a barrier to the formation of consensus, they continue to impose a hidden differentiation of legitimate and illegitimate thought and action.⁵²⁹ As Acton puts it, the enemy of Liberalism remains ‘force’, that is, any authority not appropriately grounded in ‘liberty’, as defined via established semiotic coordinates and associated with a particular *logos*. Unlike their predecessors, however, the *mythos* they present is ‘intersubjective’, a universal tied to the potential for ‘reasonable’ political dialogue and a reflexive state which adapts to changes in the population’s opinions, values, and interests.

As I argue in this chapter, Deleuze and Guattari develop a very different conception of the law, one which refuses presupposed notions of both rationality and reasonability. As Deleuze comments in later interviews, his first practical concern was law, not politics, a problem first encountered in *Empiricism and Subjectivity*.⁵³⁰ Though Hume ultimately turns to the authority of ‘magistrates’ legitimised to ‘correct’ the specific interests of the population by aligning them with the interests of all, his presentation of specific laws as developing through convention and the habitual behaviour of particular communities parallels his theory of knowledge by presenting it as an ultimately groundless process oriented by emergent practical aims. This would later inform Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of a law which gains its power from the specifics of the event rather than a formal political structure.

My aim in this chapter is to interrogate these different formulations of the problem of law, and to defend Deleuze and Guattari against the prospective charge of arbitrariness in the politics or ethics they promote. In the first section, I expand upon the concept of the war machine, associating the diffusions of power which extend the reach of judicial sovereignty with their ‘appropriation’ as institutions of the state. In the second, I examine the role of law with reference to the work of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, two theorists of rights who offer diverging procedures for acquiring consensus. In the third section, I explore Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of human rights, and argue against Patton’s suggestion that their political philosophy ought to be developed in a ‘normative’ direction, arguing instead that Deleuze and Guattari’s creative conception of law replaces normativity and the formal ‘rights of man’ with an ethics of resistance focused on the creation of immanent ‘rights of life’. Finally, I expand upon the inability of a theorematic politics to defend against negative investments of desire, arguing that the potential dangers of an

⁵²⁹ Widder, *Political Theory after Deleuze*, 2.

⁵³⁰ Deleuze, “Control and Becoming,” 169-170 and Deleuze and Parnet, “G”.

experimental and pragmatic micropolitics do not negate its essential role in maintaining the vitality of a social assemblage.

I. Law and the War Machine

Deleuze and Guattari argue that the despotic dimension of the state can never truly establish itself as total, despite its efforts to ‘capture’ the social field through the relative deterritorializations of property, labour, and money, because the very act of capture establishes conditions for the emergence of decoded connections and the subversion of established constants: as monetisation, for example, allows commercial networks of towns to maintain a consistency independent of the surrounding countryside, producing flows of goods and money the state struggles to control through taxation.⁵³¹ The state is therefore from the beginning faced with an exterior it seeks to regularise and regulate by establishing new institutions.

As I argued in the previous chapter, nomadism is necessarily concretised by ‘ambulant’ bodies which ‘conjugate’ with selected constants of the state. The striated ‘interiority’ of the state and the war machine are not therefore distinct domains to be considered in abstraction from one another, but rather ‘vectors’ in *‘coexistence and competition in a perpetual field of interaction’*, being ‘equally present in all social fields, in all periods’ and partially merged within specific institutions and associations.⁵³² In the same way that nomadism can be concretised by bodies which selectively submit to constants, Deleuze and Guattari argue that stratification can ‘appropriate’ bodies which adopt a restricted form of problematisation, using these redeployed war machines as a means of reinforcing its ultimate unity. This appropriation entails establishing ‘civil and metric rules that strictly limit, control, [and] localize’ ambulant bodies, assigning their experimentation a given ‘territory’ circumscribed by the state, and so preventing them from realising ‘repercussions throughout the social field’.⁵³³ As Deleuze argues in a contemporaneous lecture, this territorialization can take the form of either ‘colonies, or internal territories’. The first refers to the ‘encastment’ of an existing nomadic body by ‘financial, economic and territorial correlates’ which incentivise an existing nomadic movement to adopt a particular set of constants, as with the hiring of a mercenary band or the selective distribution of funding to a research group; the second to a full appropriation in which the state reproduces the conditions which induced a problematising movement

⁵³¹ *ATP*, 449.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, 360.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 363.

within determined limits, as with the military and counter-intelligence institutions which reproduce the organised violence and clandestine activity the state is otherwise led to quash.⁵³⁴

To continue the example from the previous chapter, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the Gothic journeymen were encasted as the borders between states became reinforced, forcing them to adopt fixed workspaces; over time, architecture became a fully appropriated profession tied to an educational assemblage, separating the ‘content’ of manual labour and the sourcing of materials from an intellectual ‘expression’ which could then overcode production.⁵³⁵ Architects thus became a ‘special body’ with an authority which doubled that of the state, ensuring production occurred according to a regular procedure:

the special body is an invention proper to the war machine, which states always utilize, adapting it so totally to their own ends that it becomes unrecognizable, or restituting it in bureaucratic staff form, or in the technocratic form of very special bodies, or in “esprit de corps” that serve the state as much as they resist it, or among the commissars who double the state as much as they serve it.⁵³⁶

Appropriation ‘reimparts’ smooth space ‘in the wake’ of striation and organisation, producing collective bodies whose ‘problematizing’ approach becomes subject to a hierarchical or authoritative differentiation and devoted to maintaining the constants that define a given territory.⁵³⁷

Deleuze and Guattari present appropriation as being the ultimate source of the institutions which make up judicial sovereignty, such that the war machine is ‘located between the two heads of the State’ and is ‘necessary in order to pass from one to the other’.⁵³⁸ In other words, the state is not creative, and is unable to source for itself a problematising approach to a given phenomenon: instead, it appropriates and redeploys the ‘war machines’ which break from its ‘despotic’ imposition of semiotic and institutional constants. This marks a first transformation in the nature of the law, corresponding to the birth of ‘modern’ states which, as explored in the second chapter, Deleuze and Guattari take to refer to Ancient Greece and Rome as much as to modernity.⁵³⁹ With the incorporation of institutional power and the contracts and conventions of

⁵³⁴ Gilles Deleuze, “A Thousand Plateaus V: The State Apparatus and War-Machines II, Lecture 01, 6 November 1979,” trans. Christian Kerslake and Charles Stivale (The Deleuze Seminars), accessed March 28, 2020, <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/thousand-plateaus-v-state-apparatus-and-war-machines-ii/lecture-01>.

⁵³⁵ *ATP*, 368.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 393.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 387.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 354-355.

⁵³⁹ Where Hegel posits a teleological development of the state-form from an ‘Asiatic’ to more modern determinations, the immanence of decoded flows and local conjunctions to capture leads Deleuze and Guattari to present the ‘Archaic’ or purely despotic states and Modern states as contemporaneous, their form determined more by local conditions than by self-consciousness. They argue that Bronze Age Mycenae, for example, was defined primarily through its

subjectification, the law became defined less by despotic imposition and more by localised or ‘topical’ forms of authority, establishing the ‘public-private mixes constitutive of the modern world’:

The bond becomes personal; personal relations of dependence, both between owners (contracts) and between owned and owners (conventions), parallel or replace community relations or relations based on one’s public function. Even slavery changes; it no longer defines the public availability of the communal worker but rather private property as applied to individual workers... The law in its entirety undergoes a mutation, becoming subjective, conjunctive, “topical” law: this is because the state apparatus is faced with a new task, which consists less in overcoding already coded flows than in organizing conjunctions of decoded flows as such.⁵⁴⁰

These relations between institutional ‘centres’ of power and the flows of people, goods, and resources they regulate have historically appeared in the ‘most diverse forms’: under Feudalism, for example, an essential segmentation was that of lineage, which maintained its distribution of power through the conventional loyalties of the peasantry to local nobility, and that of religion, which established a wider collective subjectification affecting the devout. While the ‘cutting edge’ of the bourgeoisie dissolved many of these bonds, it established further conjugations in turn, as private entrepreneurship ordered the newly deterritorialized labour force into factory labour, and the open market did the same for the requisitioned property of the church and nobility. Today, as I explored in chapter two, local conjugations continue through the diverse array of property agreements, employment contracts, and financial institutions which constitute social subjection, and which separate people from their capacity to pose problems no less than the Feudal state.

These institutions can at times appear to blur the line between the interior and exterior of the state by maintaining something of their nomadic origins, something apparent in ‘an industrial innovation as well as in a technological invention, in a commercial circuit as well as in a religious creation’ as well as all other

conjugation of maritime flows, using raids and trade to extract from the stockpiles of their centralised Asiatic rivals without constituting one of their own. This model of the state allowed artisans and merchants a greater potential to establish connections on their own terms, ‘prefiguring a middle class’ and inducing a relative deterritorialization of subjectivity into the homogenous form of the ‘friends’ or ‘rivals’ of the Greek city-state. See *ATP*, 450-451; *WIP*, 87. As I explore in the conclusion, Deleuze and Guattari also associate this ‘relative deterritorialization’ with that induced by the classical Image and the modern state of rights, establishing Liberalism within a historical, one might say Platonic, lineage of state reincorporation. It is perhaps because of the predominance of subjectification and the judicial pole of sovereignty in Ancient Greece and Rome that Liberal theorists so often add these regimes to a historical lineage leading directly to contemporary Liberalism: see for example the defence of the neo-Roman theory in Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁵⁴⁰ *ATP*, 451.

‘flows and currents that only secondarily allow themselves to be appropriated’.⁵⁴¹ Though essential to the maintaining the unity of the state, the indeterminate nature of these connections will ‘continually cause it problems’ as they exceed the codified limits which restrict them to a regular operation.⁵⁴²

it seems that in many of these collective bodies there is something else at work that does not fit into this schema. It is not just their obstinate defence of their privileges. It is also their aptitude—even caricatural or seriously deformed—to constitute themselves as a war machine, following other models, another dynamism, a nomadic ambition, over against the State... There are always periods when the State as organism has problems with its own collective bodies, when these bodies, claiming certain privileges, are forced in spite of themselves to open onto something that exceeds them, a short revolutionary instant, an experimental surge. A confused situation: each time it occurs, it is necessary to analyze tendencies and poles, the nature of the movements.⁵⁴³

As I explored in the last chapter, problematisation continues in the ‘supple’ or molecular connections of actual individuals, a development which can lead parts of even the most rigid institution to forge connections in excess of the formal limits established by their position within the state’s interior. Where these connections establish an operation or procedure obscured by the molar aggregations and institutional constants, they can be described as a ‘fringe’ element, maintaining a potential for variation not fully incorporated in the institution’s overall structure. This variability introduces the potential, as revealed by analysis, for ‘strange bands’, multitudes defined by *puissance* and a shared drive towards problematisation, which utilise a war machine and continuous relation to the exterior to become minor and revolutionary.

Problems are the ‘affects’ or ‘weapons’ of the war machine, and they are, as I said in the introduction, ‘ballistic’:⁵⁴⁴ they cut elements from the conventions, contracts, methods, and norms which stratify them, allowing them to establish new connections and so transform themselves. The violence of the war machine, unlike the ‘legal’ violence of sovereignty, is dynamic and ‘potentially unlimited’, being continually reconstituted by a *puissance* redundant in relation to the rhizome or event rather than the *pouvoir* associated with a stratified assemblage, and realises another kind of justice.⁵⁴⁵

[The warrior] *unties the bond just as he betrays the pact*. He brings a *furor* to bear against sovereignty, a celerity against gravity, secrecy against the public, a power [*puissance*] against

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 360.

⁵⁴² Ibid., 355.

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 366-367.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid., 394.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 395.

sovereignty, a machine against the apparatus. He bears witness to another kind of justice, one of incomprehensible cruelty at times, but at others of unequaled pity as well (because he unties bonds...). He bears witness, above all, to other relations with women, with animals, because he sees all things in relations of becoming, rather than implementing binary distributions between “states”.⁵⁴⁶

The immanent law by which the war machine operates is described as *nomos*, a ‘customary, unwritten law’ Deleuze and Guattari associate with smooth space and oppose to formal *logos*.⁵⁴⁷ Where the latter is regular and ‘apodictic’, the former is continually reconstituted by the elements in play, associated transversally according to their contribution to a form of difference or potential for transformation. Bearing witness to a ‘justice’ constituted by such a law can never operate through the methodical application of principles derived from discrete conceptions of identity, and instead requires a pragmatic and problematising approach to the social field which ‘charts’ or approximates processes obscured by such categories and distinctions. I would therefore argue that such *nomos* is anathema to Liberalism. The ‘violence’ of the war machine, by ignoring the constants on which Liberalism grounds sovereignty, would, from the perspective of Liberal theory, be judged an irrational or arbitrary threat to the unified sovereignty needed to realise truth, justice, or right.

Regarding this violence, it is important to note that *Machine de Guerre* is idiomatic, referring colloquially to an interlocked collection of moving parts rather than specifically to a tool of destruction. In terms drawn from Paul Virilio, Deleuze and Guattari describe the war machine as defined by ‘speed’, arguing that, like the ‘hunted animal’, it involves ‘acceleration’ in reaction to the specific actions of an opponent rather than a formal opposition to them.⁵⁴⁸ In this sense, it has ‘nothing to do with war’ but rather with the ‘particular way of occupying, taking up, space-time, or inventing new spacetimes’ characteristic of nomadism, establishing a smooth space in which existing semiotic coordinates and institutional coordinates can come undone.⁵⁴⁹ Because the war machine arises within an already striated social field, however, such that it necessarily appears within ambulant bodies that ‘conjugate’ with the state, its appropriation is described as

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 352.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 312 and 369. A full discussion of this term would require critical comparison with the sense of the term adopted by Carl Schmitt, and how the latter’s critique of Liberalism differs from the one offered by this thesis. I leave this complex issue to one side to avoid complicating the problem further. See Carl Schmitt, *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*, ed. and trans. G. L. Ulmen (New York: Telos, 2006).

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 396.

⁵⁴⁹ Deleuze, “Control and Becoming,” 172. Deleuze lists the Palestine Liberation Organisation as a particular example of ‘creative’ resistance.

‘a vector traversing nomadism from the very beginning, from the first act of war against the state’:⁵⁵⁰ that is, from when decoded elements first begin to forge connections exterior to the state and in excess of its established constants, threatening the unity upon which signifiacance rests. As I discussed in the last chapter, this necessitates that these bodies introduce ‘mechanisms’ of resistance in compensation for the state, incorporating some degree of formal opposition and so a form of ‘guerrilla warfare, minority warfare, revolutionary [or] popular war’, which conform with the creative ‘essence’ of the war machine to the extent that they enable the body to ‘*simultaneously create something else*, if only new nonorganic social relations’.⁵⁵¹ The ‘justice’ of the war machine is thus simultaneously that of the ‘production of the real’, the ‘creation of life’, and the search for ‘a weapon’ to turn against the state.⁵⁵²

As the war machine is driven by a creative, rather than a destructive aim, Deleuze and Guattari describe it as ‘hesitant’ to convert its speed into the establishment of new constants which restrict flows to particular coordinates, as with the formation of new institutions and ‘subjective redeployments’ allowing experimentation to be taken up by others.⁵⁵³ In light of my comments in the previous chapter, it can be assumed that this refers not to the ambulant bodies which concretise nomadism, but the mutual acceleration by which they further one another’s escape from the established constants of the state. While ‘conjugation’ with the established constants of the state or new constants of expression is necessary for the continuation of the war machine, it is not its necessary consequence, and must derive from one or more of the bodies which concretise it. It is this ‘hesitation’ of the war machine as a whole to develop such constants which allows for appropriation, as even where an ambulant body incorporates mechanisms of resistance allow it to escape one set of constants, it is unable to prevent new forms of authority from emerging, as with the bourgeoisie of the French Revolution.

The state can thus ‘be caught by surprise once, but not twice’, ‘learning’ from what resists it as new forms of authority emerge to order decoded flows, establishing arborescent structures which redeploy them as ‘counterguerrilla’ forces:⁵⁵⁴ as a ‘minor literature’, for example, could become encasted by publishing houses

⁵⁵⁰ *ATP*, 420.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 423.

⁵⁵² Deleuze, “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature,” 49. In both this essay and *ATP* 204, Deleuze and Guattari quote George Jackson: ‘I may be running, but I’m looking for a gun as I go’. The original quote appears as ‘I may run, but all the time that I am, I’ll be looking for a stick!’ George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: the prison letters of George Jackson* (Lawrence Hill Books: Chicago, 1994), 328. For a productive assessment of the lack of proper reference to *Soledad Brother* in Deleuze and Guattari’s work, see Taijia McDougall, “Left Out: Notes on Absence, Nothingness and the Black Prisoner Theorist,” *Anthurium A Caribbean Studies Journal* 15, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.33596/anth.391>, 8.

⁵⁵³ *ATP*, 418.

⁵⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 422.

devoted to such ‘special interests’, establishing its experimental tropes as a formula taken to be definitive, simultaneously restricting a minor community to the recognised bounds of a minority. It is only at this point, once nomadic forces ‘enter into conjunctions or a general conjugation that appropriates them for the State’, that their purpose can become destructive, as the surveillance and counter-terrorism apparatuses might be considered distortions of ‘clandestine’, conspiratorial and secret societies, exchanging the ‘positive’ or productive nature of these singular associations for the negative aim of neutralising anything that threatens the institutions of the state.⁵⁵⁵ In the next section, I associate the institutions of Liberal democracy with a ‘neutralisation’ of their own.

II. The Smooth Spaces of Liberalism

Deleuze and Guattari argue that one ‘notable’ form of appropriation involves the state’s reconstitution of a ‘smooth space’ defined by problematisation and the immanent transformation of elements, but subject to a wider striation which ensures that ‘opposing forces’ within the space ‘can come to an equilibrium’.⁵⁵⁶ In such cases, the capacity of particular bodies to ‘cut’ into and subvert the established constants of the state is limited by further bodies with the same capacity: as where the invention of the machine gun ‘immobilised’ armies, with the destructive capacity it lent forcing armies to adopt the rigid constants of trench warfare. As I explored in the last chapter, smooth spaces and problematisation do not have an inherently revolutionary character: in this case, the capacity to deterritorialize established a wider ‘equilibrium’, something which could be escaped only with the invention of the tank, a ‘change of speed’ or ‘counterattack’ which reconstituted the battlefield as a truly smooth space.⁵⁵⁷

Liberalism, I would argue, can be considered to promote several such equilibriums or striated ‘smooth spaces’. The most obvious of these are free markets, which allow for some limited ‘problematisation’ in the rational pursuit of individual interests, but also establish in advance the forms through which such interests can be recorded, restricting any such experimentation to the exclusive disjunctions of labour and profit. Markets could then be said to legitimise the established order by producing a ‘truth’ independent of particular interests: presupposing a universal conception of truth no longer associated with individual reason, as in Locke, but rather with the inherent rationality of supply and demand, such that ‘authority’ is

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 459.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 397.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

vested in the actions of the collective rather than a capacity for thought.⁵⁵⁸ However, in this section, I turn to the more controversial issue of democratic theory, using two illustrative examples to present democracies as equilibriums which convert desires that might otherwise become problematising into a regular form always compensated for by others. Though this can be seen as an extension of Deleuze and Guattari's explicit statements on the topic, I consider it to be entailed by their critique of political philosophies of 'communication', which reduce the role of philosophy to that of establishing the rights necessary to instantiate a 'reasonable' dialogue from which a just consensus naturally follows.⁵⁵⁹ I argue that this critique can be directed not only against Jürgen Habermas, its most obvious target, but also John Rawls, in the sense that both associate legitimate political action with a formal procedure devoted to collective consensus-building rather than problematisation, such that their proposed models remain 'syntheses of interests' restricted to and reinforcing a particular set of disjunctions.⁵⁶⁰

II.i. Rawls: Reflective Equilibrium

For Rawls, the problem of politics is that of establishing the society best placed to ensure justice in a collective divided in terms of their interests and conceptions of the good. His solution comes in the form of a social contract which limits potential laws to those minimally acceptable to all, providing the conditions for a possible consensus. Though he agrees with Hegel that human beings are by nature collective, such that there exists no 'pre-social' nature on which to ground the state, he also follows his contractarian predecessors by utilising an act of reflection which abstracts from the values and beliefs of the present.⁵⁶¹ This reflection or thought experiment is that of an 'original position', a stance adopted by individuals in advance of their deciding, through dialogue, the rules that will govern their society. In the original position, individuals consider a 'veil of ignorance' to bracket knowledge of their particularity, including their culture,

⁵⁵⁸ See Friedrich von Hayek, *Hayek on Hayek* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 80: 'the market [is] a system of the utilization of knowledge which nobody can possess as a whole, which... leads people to aim at the needs of people whom they do not know, make use of facilities about which they have no direct information; all this condensed in abstract signals... that our whole modern wealth and production could arise only thanks to this mechanism is, I believe, the basis not only of my economics but also much of my political views. It reduces the possible task of authority very much if you realize that the market has in that sense a superiority, because the amount of information the authorities can use is always very limited, and the market uses an infinitely greater amount of information than the authorities can ever do'.

⁵⁵⁹ *WIP*, 6-7.

⁵⁶⁰ See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "We invented the Ritorrello," in *Two Regimes of Madness*, 378: 'We're not attacking Habermas or anyone else. Habermas is not the only one who would like to index philosophy on communication. A kind of ethics of communication?'

⁵⁶¹ On the difference between the original position and the state of nature, see John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 278–280.

social position, skills, preferences, and the like.⁵⁶² Devoid of the constants that would otherwise ground their rational pursuit of interest, Rawls argues that subjects would necessarily prefer a society based on ‘conditions which we are ready, upon due reflection, to recognize as reasonable in our conduct towards one another’, utilising a ‘common human reason’ or sense of just treatment he believe to be shared by all.⁵⁶³

Rawls uses this sense of the reasonable to ground the legitimacy of sovereignty:

our exercise of political power is fully proper only when it is exercised in accordance with a constitution the essentials of which all citizens as free and equal may reasonably be expected to endorse in the light of principles and ideals acceptable to their common human reason. This is the liberal principle of legitimacy.⁵⁶⁴

On his own account, Rawls argues that these conditions are best fulfilled by his two principles of justice, these being an equal claim to basic individual liberties on the part of every person, to the extent this is compatible with the liberties of all, and a limitation of social inequalities to those which could provably benefit the most disadvantaged.⁵⁶⁵ Concretising these principles within a constitution would ensure that society would provide the maximum possible individual freedom, with all political decisions established under conditions which would be minimally acceptable for all: to the extent that individuals are ‘reasonable’ and accept the primacy of these principles and their associated rights over their particular values and interests. The abstraction from actual experience provided by the original position thus introduces a universal conception of justice that has less to do with the qualities of individuals than it does the conditions of social coexistence, implying that interests which forsake the necessity of compromise with other ‘reasonable’ positions within a general consensus ‘have no value’ and must be discarded.⁵⁶⁶

As with Kant, the population thus becomes free by subjecting themselves to constants supposedly drawn from their own nature, such that even while voting they ought to vote only for that which can be justified to their fellow citizens within an established, ‘reasonable’ framework rather than simply according to their actual beliefs.⁵⁶⁷ But as Rawls clarifies in *Political Liberalism*, though it is universally shared, our sense of ‘reasonability’ is not a suprasensible capacity, as in Kant, but an implicit set of values underlying the

⁵⁶² John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 17-22.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 587.

⁵⁶⁴ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 137.

⁵⁶⁵ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 302.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁶⁷ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 219. See also Jonathan Woolf, “John Rawls,” in *Liberal Democracy and its Critics* edited by April Carter and Geoffrey Stokes. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

institutions of a given society.⁵⁶⁸ A principle of ‘reflective equilibrium’ states that a legitimate political solution is one which accords with the ‘implicitly recognised’ ideas and principles which make up this common sense, with the centrality of values such as freedom and equality to democratic culture making their systematisation the perfect basis for the establishment of consensus within Western democratic states.⁵⁶⁹ As he puts it:

The most reasonable political conception for us is the one that best fits all our considered convictions on reflection and organises them into a coherent view. At any given time we cannot do better than that.⁵⁷⁰

Reasonability implies accepting that the individual application of reason is not enough in itself to solve political issues. This does not mean that one abandon one’s own ‘comprehensive’ accounts of truth or the good life, but rather that one accepts that the ‘burden of judgement’ faced by such positions is too demanding to be overcome by reason alone, such that further ‘reasonable’ alternatives are equally rational. Rawls argues that the necessity of compromise with the ‘considered convictions’ underlying Western democratic society leads necessarily to a variant of political Liberalism, though it need not extend to Rawls’ own principles of justice.

As with other Liberal political philosophies, Rawls takes the central political problem to be that of establishing the conditions of legitimacy for sovereign *pouvoir*: conditions he finds in our most firmly-held democratic convictions, which provide a means of differentiating ‘reasonable’ positions from those which threaten justice. This makes politics a continuous process which transforms alongside the individuals and communities involved, as specific practices and policies are compared with the values embedded within their society and corrected wherever they introduce a contradiction. Unlike the war machine, however, which turns upon the singular, I would argue that this reflective ‘equilibrium’ reduces social actors to formally homogeneous variations of a general political subject, presenting them as mere vessels for the contingent opinions, beliefs, values and interests they possess: a relative deterritorialization which ultimately limits their capacity to realise lasting change. This is because the ‘most firmly-held’ beliefs of any society remain beyond the influence of democratic decision-making, as Rawls makes explicit by bracketing them to an original position reached only by reflection. When already subject to the constants of reasonability, a *mythos* which establishes cooperation with the existing state and a compromise with others as the very

⁵⁶⁸ John Rawls, “Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical,” in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 14, (1985): 223-251.

⁵⁶⁹ Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, 8.

⁵⁷⁰ John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: a Restatement*, ed. Erin Kelly (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 31.

condition of legitimacy, any political activity is necessarily established within an overall compromise of forces, with problematisation subject to a *logos* which restricts it to a particular set of institutional constants.

This is not to argue that successful political action is necessarily unreasonable or refuses all compromise, but rather to suggest that the category of 'reasonable' behaviour is always established with reference to a dominant symbolic order, and so tied to institutions which possess a set of connections and signs of legitimacy. Where reasonability implies that political positions must treat other opinions, beliefs, and values as worthy of equivalent recognition, for example, participation within the existing concrete democratic institutions becomes a necessary sign of reasonable political action. Within existing representative democracies, this would mean subsumption within political parties, each of which can find success only by serving as the vehicle for a number of interest-groups, the views of which they consolidate into actionable policies that can be promoted to the electorate. This process of translation is established not only through a process of compromise amongst the positions subsumed within the party, but actively adapted by the officials of the party itself with reference to their intuitions regarding the interests of the aggregates they recognise within the population, and thus the prospects of electoral success; something which shifts in relation to the actions of opposing parties.

Considered as actual institutions rather than formal entities, political parties can be seen to impose their own limits on the interests they synthesise, acting as localised conjunctions incorporating their own forms of normalisation not examined at the molar level of theory. To the extent individuals and collectives remain 'reasonable', all desire is thus translated into biunivocal and molar co-ordinates which subject desire to concrete forms of authority. As Guattari puts it, the norms within which democratic debate takes place are not merely formal or structural devices to better facilitate consensus, but an effective tool which invests desire into particular forms of individual and collective forms of recognition and sensible differentiation, establishing a restrictive force which precedes and determines any discussion that may occur:

It's the same thing in traditional political structures. One finds the old trick being played everywhere again and again: a big ideological debate in the general assembly and questions of organization reserved for special commissions. These questions appear secondary, determined by political options. While on the contrary, the real divisions emerge in organization: a particular way of treating desire and power, investments, group-Oedipuses, group-super-egos, phenomena of perversion... Only then are the political oppositions built up: an individual chooses one position

over another, because in the scheme of the organization of power, he has already chosen and hates his opponent.⁵⁷¹

It is essential, therefore, to ensure any analysis remains pragmatic, tied to the way concepts such as ‘reason’ or ‘reasonability’ function within actual states.

Seen in this light, ‘reasonable’ behaviour becomes a *logos* or reterritorialization internal to the system, in the sense that it differentiates individuals into formal political positions which are already signifying and recognised in relation to the ‘major’ constants of an existing consensus.

A determination different from that of the constant will therefore be considered minoritarian, by nature and regardless of number, in other words, a subsystem or an outsystem. This is evident in all the operations, electoral or otherwise, where you are given a choice, but on the condition that your choice conform to the limits of the constant (‘you mustn’t choose to change society...’).⁵⁷²

To adopt the term from *Difference and Repetition*, a democratic system tied to notions of reasonability can be described as ‘thermodynamic’ in that it reduces the singularity of political actors to discontinuous variations measured in advance by constants which include the unity of the state-form and the legitimacy of its centres of power. To the extent they maintain themselves within this system, political collectives are subject to the ‘good sense’ of Rawls and other political Liberals, who, lacking ‘political positions’ themselves, are capable of occupying the unbiased ‘milieu’ established by the original position and other variants of the ‘generally accepted norms’ of society. Occupying this milieu allows them to ‘correct’ positions that deviate from the required norms, forever legitimised by a *mythos* of justice, and so maintain the system itself in perpetuity.

For Deleuze and Guattari, focused as they are on the minor and problematisation, such an equilibrium requires a counterattack or change of speed, resurrecting a war machine which ignores the striations of existing organisation and opinion. As I argued in the last chapter, this does not mean that Deleuze and Guattari’s revolutionary pragmatism is incompatible with macropolitical action, or even democratic participation: not only are such struggles essential to any politics of the left, it is important to note that established political parties contain their own fringes, elements which might, given particular connections with other revolutionary elements of the social field, tip their assemblage towards the plane of consistency.

⁵⁷¹ Deleuze and Guattari, “On Capitalism and Desire,” 265.

⁵⁷² *ATP*, 105. Though the term ‘minoritarian’ is adopted here, as they clarify on the same page, ‘subsystems’ are proper to recognised, molar minorities, rather than minoritarian groups, rather than the minoritarian ‘as a potential, creative and created, becoming’ (Ibid., 105-106).

It is however to argue that these struggles must remain the ‘index’ of the real struggle for justice, which always occurs at the molecular level of individuals, communities, and their particular potentials, and which will ‘mimic’ these constants only to the extent they prove conducive to further experimentation.

II.ii. Habermas: Deliberative Equilibrium

Deleuze and Guattari are certainly not the only theorists to note the potential for entrenched systems of power to undermine the principles which supposedly underpin modern democracies. An alternative diagnosis and proposal for treatment has been given by Jürgen Habermas, who has argued that we must revive the Enlightenment tradition by instantiating a ‘deliberative’ democracy in which dialogue spreads throughout society.⁵⁷³ Deliberation, for Habermas, is constitutive of reason, which he presents not as an individual capacity, but rather as a process which unfolds as individuals argue for and test the claims to validity implicit within their statements.⁵⁷⁴ Such ‘communicative action’, that is, the act of reflecting upon, articulating, and defending different positions, orients us towards ‘achieving, sustaining, and renewing consensus’, something which can be established within a pluralistic modernity only by turning to the ‘practice of argumentation as a shared court of appeal’.⁵⁷⁵ Specifically, such argumentation entails ‘thematising’ claims to truth, truthfulness, and normative rightness, ‘universal’ grounds on the basis of which positions can be criticised, defended, and improved.⁵⁷⁶ Like Rawls, Habermas thus avoids grounding consensus on any particular vision of the good, instead establishing a dialogic *logos* in the *mythos* of communicative universals and the necessity of consensus. Though he is liable to be reticent to accept the label unconditionally, Habermas can therefore be seen as a natural continuation of the Liberal tradition I have begun to chart, establishing ‘intersubjective’ universals which establish a general conception of the subject as communicator rather than turning to the singularity of given subjects, and establishing a theorematic method on this basis, one which he takes to guarantee freedom in perpetuity.

⁵⁷³ Habermas opposes Foucault’s genealogy of governmentality, which he argues to be a selective reading of the change in government practices which occurred during the Enlightenment, specifically ignoring the benefits of the ‘revolutionary establishment of a constitutionalised state power’ and the movement towards popular sovereignty produced by the Kantian and utilitarian systems of morality. See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: 12 Lectures* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Polity Press: Oxford, 1998), 289. This opposition would also extend to Deleuze and Guattari, who, as I have argued, would likewise consider the shift in sovereignty from ‘prince’ to ‘people’ in similarly ambiguous terms.

⁵⁷⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 8-10.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

The institutionalisation of communicative action ensures the freedom of subjects in general because it solves the problem posed by 'strategic' forms of action which treat others as means, rather than as interlocutors in the dialogic process.⁵⁷⁷ This failure of recognition is most prominently the result of established economic and political systems, which use the 'steering media' of money and power to institutionalise strategic action by replacing dialogue with a competition between interests and the 'symbolic generalisation of rewards and punishments'.⁵⁷⁸ As political parties, trade unions and other organised bodies are presently incapable of instituting real dialogue because of their own role within this competitive system, Habermas at first suggests that the problem of politics is the protection of whatever spaces for reciprocal recognition can be found in the informal 'counterinstitutions' of civil society, aiming to

dedifferentiate some parts of the formally organised domains of action, remove them from the clutches of the steering media, and return these 'liberated areas' to the action co-ordinating medium of reaching understanding.⁵⁷⁹

Such an aim might be considered to parallel Deleuze and Guattari's own desire to open institutions to the plane of consistency, though with the caveat that any such problematisation must be restricted to the progression of rational dialogue.

In his later work *Between Facts and Norms*, this conception is expanded into a radical rethinking of the relation of democracy to law. Habermas formulates the problem of legitimacy in terms of a 'discourse principle', arguing in Kantian terms that laws are legitimate only if they can be 'impartially justified', with 'equal consideration... given to the interests of all those who are possibly involved', such that 'all possibly affected persons could agree as participants in rational discourses'.⁵⁸⁰ Where Kant held the state to be justified by its guaranteeing of laws to which one could rationally accede, Habermas justifies it as the guarantor of the communicative process by which laws are actually acceded to, producing and maintaining the conditions for public reason.⁵⁸¹ To truly count as legitimate, Habermas believes that the deliberative

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., xxix.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston, MA.: Beacon Press, 1987), 396.

⁵⁸⁰ Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: Polity, 1996), 100 and 107.

⁵⁸¹ Note that while Habermas believes the foundation of a system of rights to be co-extensive with the formation of a popular sovereignty, the basic set of rights remain local concretisations of the universality of communication: 'we can understand the catalogs of human civil rights found in our historic constitutions as context-dependent readings of the same system of rights' (Ibid., 128).

process must actually be taking place, realised through a ‘democratic process of will formation’ which unifies the state as a political community comprised of all those both subject to and authors of the law.

From the standpoint of *legal theory*, the modern legal order can draw its legitimacy only from the idea of self-determination: citizens should always be able to understand themselves also as authors of the law to which they are subject as addressees.⁵⁸²

This turn to the law represents a shift to a more directly theorematic approach to the political, in which freedom is guaranteed through law and a generalisation of dialogue throughout all institutions, rather than the protection of specific institutional spaces. As part of this shift, Habermas also introduces systems of human rights as the guarantee of such dialogue, ensuring that all have an equal capacity to contribute to those laws which directly affect them. For Habermas,

The substance of human rights... resides in the formal conditions for the legal institutionalization of those discursive processes of opinion and will formation in which the sovereignty of the people assumes a binding character.⁵⁸³

Rights are necessary to produce the dialogic conditions within which norms can be impartially justified and determined by those subject to them.⁵⁸⁴ In contrast to Rawls’ placement of democracy as a tool for concretising a synthesis of opinions that already fall within the bounds of reasonability, Habermas proposes that deliberation permeate society, allowing reason to extend ‘like a spider’s web’ by tying laws to the communication, conflict, and improvement of opinions.⁵⁸⁵ The problem of legitimacy is thereby solved by tying sovereignty to dialogic spaces in which a truly vertical process of discourse can take place, with all participants provided with equal rights to join the dialogic process. Where individuals are ‘forced’ through the ‘direct democratic’ or ‘legitimation’ filters of these communicative spaces, they produce a reason which exceeds their individual capacities, constituting a ‘higher-level subjectivity’.⁵⁸⁶ Being vertical, such filters can be used to ensure that the political system remains sensitive to issues arising from the ‘periphery’ of the public sphere, as their incorporation within the workplace can incorporate all workers within decisions that affect them and so protecting against the potential injustice of management.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸² Ibid., 449.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 108.

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., 122.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., 437.

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., 299.

⁵⁸⁷ Ibid., 354-356.

Like Deleuze and Guattari, Habermas recognises the weaknesses of ‘arborescent’ institutions tied to established forms of power, and in particular their tendency to exclude or marginalise. However, I would argue that, where the ‘peripheries’ or fringes to which Deleuze and Guattari turn their analysis are minor, incorporating a potential to transform the molar aggregations which underpin the system itself, Habermas’ aim is to expand the scope of recognition to incorporate interests within an overall synthesis, whilst maintaining the formal continuity of the counterinstitutions and democratic filters which achieve this. This formal continuity is grounded on the *mythos* of the communicative process, which is taken to produce a just result regardless of the interests so incorporated due to the natural capacity of human beings to produce reason through discourse. From Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, however, such a ‘cogito of communication’ is ‘even more dubious than that of reflection’.⁵⁸⁸ We would be unwise to place our faith in theorematized political structures grounded in the capacity to communicate, not just because such communication relies upon general conceptions and significations already informed by existing structures of power, but also because such communication has always been and continues to be part of our political life, without thereby providing a true barrier to entrenched systems of power. What we lack, they argue, is not communication, but ‘*resistance to the present*’ and to a ‘meanness and vulgarity of existence that haunts democracies’, expressed in the ‘values, ideals and opinions of our time’.⁵⁸⁹ I believe this ‘vulgarity’ can be understood as the ‘equilibrium’ which acts as a reterritorializing force which reduces any expressed opinion or interest to a minority position relative to established norms, something which would continue at the ‘molecular’ level of individual engagement within dialogue, informing the supposedly ‘higher’ or more rational subjectivity constituted by these spaces.

I would therefore argue that, to the extent that Habermas’ proposed dialogic spaces would remain tied to the same symbolic order and institutions from which such norms derive, and would seek to introduce a consensus against which subjects would remain relative, any position they produced would remain relative to these existing opinions, values, and interests, recognised through its deviance from them and translated into a form compatible with existing structures of power. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, the ‘Western Democratic ideal’ of a conversation amongst formal equals ‘has never produced a single concept’.⁵⁹⁰ Where one denies the transcendence of communicative universals and the naturally productive nature of dialogue, dialogic spaces provide no more than a homogeneous form into which desire can be translated, bringing individual problems under the unity of universal principles of reason and the actually existing spaces which

⁵⁸⁸ *WIP*, 108.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 107-108.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

concretise them. In this sense, though Habermas would expand democracy into civil society, he would do nothing to ameliorate the effects of the *pouvoir* which precedes discourse, such that each deliberative space could serve as a local conjugation, a communicative smooth space within the greater, rational striation: dissolving and cancelling the difference of the singular, rather than facilitating its expression.

As Deleuze argued in *Difference and Repetition*, and as he and Guattari argue more stringently in *What is Philosophy?*, opinion, even when developed through reflection, is the enemy of thought, which is always creative and rooted in the singular. A war machine, in contrast to a synthesis of interests, ‘analyses’ desire in pursuit of minor divergences which remain strictly unrecognisable for remaining open to further connections, realising the artistic or political sorcery necessary to induce ‘an earth and a people that are lacking’: something which, Deleuze and Guattari insist, ‘will not be found in our democracies’ simply because democracies ‘are majorities, but a becoming is by its nature that which always eludes the majority’.⁵⁹¹ Where philosophy fails to account for the singular and instead attempts to provide principles for a general consensus amongst formally homogeneous subjects, it becomes appropriated, forsaking its creative purpose:

In every conversation the fate of philosophy is always at stake, and many philosophical discussions do not as such go beyond discussions of cheese, including the insults and the confrontation of worldviews. The philosophy of communication is exhausted in the search for a universal liberal opinion as consensus, in which we find again the cynical perceptions and affections of the capitalist.⁵⁹²

I turn in the next section to this appropriation, and to the capitalist class it ultimately supports.

III. Against the Rechtsstaat

The Deleuze-Guattarian critique of communication is closely connected to a further critique, developed in *A Thousand Plateaus*, *What is Philosophy?* and Deleuze’s later interviews, of human rights and the role their guarantee plays in the self-justification of modern states. Deleuze and Guattari are dismissive of those who would reduce philosophy to the identification and reinforcement of human rights because such theoretical constants obscure the ‘molecular’ individuals, affects, and encounters through which politics actually proceeds. As they argue, ‘Good or bad, politics and its judgments are always molar, but it is the molecular and its assessment that makes it or breaks it’, and rights, while they may well have positive effects within

⁵⁹¹ Ibid., 108.

⁵⁹² Ibid., 146.

particular concrete cases, can also be subverted or ignored following a particular investment of desire and a given set of circumstances.⁵⁹³ As always, analysis must be pragmatic, looking beyond such molar constants to the actual conditions within which they are applied and the function they hold within a particular system: and in this case, the function they have adopted under capitalism. In this section, I argue that Deleuze and Guattari's critique of rights is grounded in their conception of the capitalist 'axiomatic', which suggests that the rights possessed by specific individuals in a given situation can only ever be the immanent products of a compromise between specific national and international forces, their concretisation altered according to shifts in this dynamic. I then argue against Paul Patton's suggestion that Deleuze-Guattarian political theory ought to be supplemented with a normative 'utopianism' that would better engage with the values which underpin the modern Liberal state, instead reaffirming their notion of 'justice' as essentially tied to minor problematisation.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that capitalism has effected a second transformation in the nature of the law, one which fundamentally alters its relation to the state. They argue that the law can no longer be considered purely 'topical' and tied to the operation of arborescent institutions, but has rather become an 'axiomatic', a collation of immanent principles continually re-established through the interaction and competition of state and non-state forces. I examine this 'axiomatic' in more detail in the next chapter, but for now can argue that the law, from Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, derives not from a dialogue concerning the theorematized political structure the state ought to adopt, but from the needs of international capital, which permeates the institutions of states and subverts their functioning by controlling the conditions within which they exercise their authority. This further development of the law correlates to the general conception of what Foucault named the 'subject of rights': the subject or citizen as understood formally through their possession of a given set of rights guaranteed by the state, this being the practical corollary to the deterritorialization of the rational cogito discussed in the second chapter. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, such conceptions of the subject in general present the object of politics as a pre-existing 'society of brothers' or of formal equals, this being a model from which the modern state draws its legitimacy.⁵⁹⁴

From Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, this relative deterritorialized or general subject is no longer specified purely by the subjectification imparted by institutions, but instead by their relation to private property, or in other words, capital:

⁵⁹³ *ATP*, 222.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 452.

Private property no longer expresses the bond of personal dependence but the independence of a Subject that now constitutes the sole bond. This makes for an important difference in the evolution of private property: private property in itself relates to rights, instead of the law relating it to the land, things, or people... *A new threshold of deterritorialization*. And when capital becomes an active right in this way, the entire historical figure of the law changes... it increasingly assumes the direct form and immediate characteristics of an axiomatic, as evidenced in our civil “code.”⁵⁹⁵

Though localised ‘conjunctions’ continue to organise flows, the fact that capital is now international and free of the constraints imparted by institutions within particular territories enables it to alter the laws imparted by these institutions. This means that, despite any claims to be derived from ‘universal’ grounds such as reason or the ‘reasonable’ behaviour needed for a stable and secure society, even human rights are not unshakeable principles with universally consistent application, but rather ‘axioms’, immanent principles grounded in a particular compromise of forces, with the rights one possesses ultimately specified by one’s relationship with capital, an ‘active right’ which underlies all others. As they then argue in *What is Philosophy?*:

Human rights are axioms. They can coexist on the market with many other axioms, notably those concerning the security of property, which are unaware of or suspend them even more than they contradict them: “the impure mixture or the impure side by side,” said Nietzsche. Who but the police and armed forces that coexist with democracies can control and manage poverty and the deterritorialization-reterritorialization of shanty towns? What social democracy has not given the order to fire when the poor come out of their territory or ghetto? Rights save neither men nor a philosophy that is reterritorialized on the democratic State. Human rights will not make us bless capitalism. A great deal of innocence or cunning is needed by a philosophy of communication that claims to restore the society of friends, or even of wise men, by forming a universal opinion as “consensus” able to moralize nations, States, and the market. Human rights say nothing about the immanent modes of existence of people provided with rights.⁵⁹⁶

Deleuze later argues that the reduction of philosophy’s purpose to the identification of the rights or principles which underlie a society is intellectual discourse ‘for odious intellectuals... who have no ideas’; indeed, such is its vacuity that it tempts one to say ‘odious’ things in turn, as if arguing against the positive contents of given rights, adopting the affectations of the reactionary ‘opponent’ such theorists might

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 454.

⁵⁹⁶ *WIP*, 107.

conjure.⁵⁹⁷ But Deleuze's argument, and that of Deleuze and Guattari, is not against the content of rights, but rather their formal abstraction: unless they are provided specificity, tied to 'immanent modes of existence', rights are liable to be discarded wherever a situation is judged 'exceptional' enough to warrant it.⁵⁹⁸ To the extent the state-form is taken to be a necessary prerequisite for any system of human rights, the latter must necessarily make way whenever the former is threatened, as where capital flight or a lack of available resources might undermine an economy: the movements of capital and the needs of the market thus determine when and where such rights are to be applied, and where they must be curtailed. The centrality of human rights to the *mythos* of contemporary democracies therefore does nothing to ensure these states actually implement them, but rather makes each a 'humanitarian Tartuffe', hypocritically professing piety to equality and freedom whilst participating in a global market that leads them to engage in horrifying forms of exploitation.⁵⁹⁹

By presenting human rights as axioms existing alongside and equal to others, Deleuze and Guattari can be placed within the 'most virulent' strain of their Marxist critics, professing what human rights discourse attempts to obscure: its own use as a tool of power, subject to a commodity production which finds it profitable rather than intellects that find it true.⁶⁰⁰ Where Rawls or Habermas might attempt to establish the system of rights necessary to produce consensus within a state despite modernity's inherent pluralism, Deleuze and Guattari argue that this naïve or disingenuous position ignores the differentiations of power which precede any such discourse, most notably the capacity of capital to undermine even the most 'rational' and open forum. Though they might claim to restore a fundamental equality amongst citizens possessed of a shared *logos*, or even to take on the authoritative role of the 'friends of wisdom' once adopted by Greek philosophy, they do nothing to oppose the power of state and capital, but instead reinforce the democratic *mythos* through which these states justify both themselves and the 'occasional' breach of human rights which occurs upon their watch. To the extent their systems of rights presuppose sovereignty as the only means of guaranteeing such rights, they excuse all contingent failures as steps towards the ultimate correction of the state, redirecting those subjects that might otherwise be horrified into action by the realities of the international market back into the 'reasonable' discourses through which these states justify

⁵⁹⁷ Deleuze and Parnet, "G".

⁵⁹⁸ In this vein, Deleuze discusses the example of the Armenian genocide: 'Human rights... you invoke human rights... what does that mean? It means: Ah, the Turks have no right to massacre Armenians. Ok. The Turks don't have the right to massacre Armenians, then what?' Ibid.

⁵⁹⁹ *WIP*, 106.

⁶⁰⁰ Justine Lacroix and Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Critiques of Human Rights in Contemporary Thought," in *Human Rights on Trial: a genealogy of the critique of human rights* trans. Gabrielle Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 56-57.

themselves. I would therefore argue that theorematic presentations of universal human rights, far from a barrier to the entrenched powers that might subvert democracy, in fact serve to reinforce them.

It could however also be argued that Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy offers a means of establishing an immanent process of correction which could use such horror as a means of adapting states to the changing needs of a given population, this being the position I attribute to Patton. In *Deleuze and the Political*, Patton deploys a criticism of Rawls' notion of reflective equilibrium similar to the one presented above, arguing that, to the extent it 'implies a form of recognition of the fundamental values presupposed at the outset', it 'remains bound to the dogmatic image of thought'.⁶⁰¹ However, he also later argues that, if suitably adapted, reflective equilibrium could form the basis of an 'immanent utopianism' extending Deleuze-Guattarian political philosophy in a normative direction. Patton justifies this extension as fulfilling an instruction, given in *What is Philosophy?*, for philosophy to 'become-democratic', a concept he takes to establish 'vectors' for correcting what he perceives to be Deleuze and Guattari's failure to 'address the normative principles that inform their critical perspective on the present'.⁶⁰² Patton takes this failure to imply 'a need for further engagement with the kind of normative political theory undertaken by Rawls and other egalitarian liberals' specifically because he believes these principles to be those that 'inform the basic institutions of modern liberal democracies', including 'the equal moral worth of individuals, freedom of conscience, the rule of law, [and] fairness in the distribution of material goods produced by social cooperation'.⁶⁰³

Deploying such principles as a critique of the states which concretise them so imperfectly, Patton argues, is the true meaning of 'utopia', a term Deleuze and Guattari describe as the point philosophy becomes explicitly political by taking 'the criticism of its own time to its highest point', something it achieves 'immanently' and in connection to 'the forces stifled by this milieu'.⁶⁰⁴ On Patton's account, this connection necessarily relates philosophy to the concrete 'ideals and opinions' which motivate these forces:

To the extent that these processes or 'lines of flight' encompass resistant political forces and the ideals or opinions which motivate them, it follows that this immanent utopianism will draw upon elements of present political normativity to suggest ways in which the injustice or intolerability of existing institutional forms of social life might be removed.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰¹ Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, 22.

⁶⁰² Patton, *Deleuzian Concepts*, 151.

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*, 198 and 151.

⁶⁰⁴ *WIP*, 99-100.

⁶⁰⁵ Patton, *Deleuzian Concepts*, 191.

In other words, philosophy becomes ‘utopic’ and brings the struggles of resistant groups to ‘the limits of what is possible under present conditions’ by ‘criticising the workings of actually existing democracies in the name of the egalitarian principles that are supposed to inform their institutions and political practices’.⁶⁰⁶ For example, he argues that Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of the axiomatic concerns the material inequality it fosters, and so ‘implicitly raises’ the normative question of the principle that ought to govern distribution:⁶⁰⁷ by elucidating this principle, philosophy can unite those disparate minorities which find themselves at an impasse rooted in this inequality into a single revolutionary flow.

This makes the purpose of philosophy that of distinguishing between the everyday opinions of the population and the ‘considered opinions of a given people on fundamental principles of right’, these being ‘philosophical opinions’ in relation to which these resistant groups can be conjugated.⁶⁰⁸ Where Rawls takes such principles to be largely fixed, however, being subject only to the most gradual forms of historical change, Patton believes Deleuze-Guattarian political philosophy to introduce the potential for their transformation in relation to present forms of injustice and the resistant groups that coalesce within it. Reflective equilibrium would thus entail not only the correction of empirical opinions in light of philosophical opinions, but also the development of the latter with ‘the aim of extending and developing equality of condition within contemporary societies’.⁶⁰⁹

I agree both with Patton’s stipulation that Deleuze-Guattarian philosophy must connect with the ‘relatively deterritorialized’ yet resistant forces oppressed by existing concrete states, and that a distinction can be made between the everyday empirical opinions, or what one might call ‘objective presuppositions’, of populations, and the ‘philosophical opinions’ which underpin the nation states of which they are part. However, I believe that Deleuze and Guattari’s political philosophy, concerned as it is with the minor and the problematising, has nothing to do with the opinions or values of ‘resistant groups’, and certainly does not aim to correct them with reference to normative principles, something which would subject them to the ‘authority’ of the philosopher qualified to produce such principles or discern them within institutional or collective social practice. Further, sorcery cannot draw upon these ‘philosophical opinions’ in its conjugation of decoded flows, as these values are inextricably tied to the state-form, presupposing it as the only means by which they might be realised. Patton’s suggestion, in contrast with the spirit of Deleuze-Guattarian political philosophy, is theorematic, presenting the philosopher as a means of identifying the

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid., 156.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 193.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., 196.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., 197.

values concrete states fail to realise, leading those who suffer from this failure towards the utopian vision of a new, more 'judicial' concretisation of sovereignty.

In contrast to their Rawlsian presentation of 'philosophical' opinions as a seemingly natural product of a people's collective social life as it develops over time, Deleuze and Guattari specifically argue that they are the result of the reterritorialization, one might say the 'appropriation', of philosophy by European nation-states, who, from the seventeenth through to the nineteenth century, tied it to 'revolution, the democratic State, and human rights', using it to particularise principles of theocratic governance, democratic theory, and law, to the history and habits of their particular populations:

Can we say that philosophy is reterritorialized on the modern democratic State and human rights? But because there is no universal democratic State this movement implies the particularity of a State, of a right, or of the spirit of a people capable of expressing human rights in "its" State and of outlining the modern society of brothers. In fact, it is not only the philosopher, as man, who has a nation; it is philosophy that is reterritorialized on the national State and the spirit of the people.⁶¹⁰

Each country thus developed its own 'nationalitarian' response which adapted these concepts and the formally equivalent collective to which they are connected to local particularities. Thus German philosophy reterritorialized on institutional practice, French philosophy on constitutionalism, and British philosophy on convention:⁶¹¹ in each case establishing a philosophical 'opinion' which relativised the particular opinions and values of European citizens.

Patton argues that Deleuze and Guattari stipulate that becoming-democratic is 'not to be confused with present constitutional states'.⁶¹² However, his modified translation on this point loses the essence of their claim, which is that philosophy must engage in a becoming-democratic which is 'not the same as what States

⁶¹⁰ *WIP*, 102.

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, 103-106. These 'nationalitarian' territorializations of philosophy are rooted in the history of Liberal revolutions, and particularly in reactions to the French Revolution: something that further supports my argument that modern Liberalism emerged as a means of reordering the decoded flows it released. See *Ibid.*, 103-104: 'French philosophy already speaks in the name of a republic of minds and of a capacity to think as something that is "the most widely shared," and that will end up being expressed in a revolutionary cogito. England will constantly reflect on its revolutionary experience and will be the first to ask why revolutions turn out so badly in reality when in spirit they promise so much. England, America, and France exist as the three lands of human rights. As for Germany, it will continue to reflect on the French revolution from its side, as that which it cannot do... But what it cannot do, it undertakes to think'.

⁶¹² Patton first presents this translation in Paul Patton, "Utopian Political Philosophy: Deleuze and Rawls," *Deleuze Studies* 1, no. 1 (2007): pp. 41-59, <https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2007.1.1.41>, 44. It is reprinted twice in Patton, *Deleuzian Concepts*, 154 and 162. The original reads: 'Un devenir-démocratique qui ne se confond pas avec ce que sont les Etats de droit'. Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie?* (Les Éditions de Minuit: Paris, 1991), 108.

of law are' [*les Etats de droit*].⁶¹³ 'States of law' might be better translated as states of right: that is, as the *rechtsstaat*, as introduced in the German constitutionalism that followed Kant, but in a sense extended to include the contractual or conventional models of French and British jurisprudence. Deleuze and Guattari's point is therefore not restricted to existing constitutional states, implying a superior constitutionalism that might be established by adapting their incorporated normative principles to a given situation, but to the modern state itself as defined by the normative constants of a system of right. Where the state, as a form of political organisation, is presupposed as the rational solution to problems of injustice, philosophy can do no more than serve a subject, functional role, establishing within each state both a general conception of the subject underpinning sovereignty and the particularisations which establish the rationale behind the law.

This means that, if philosophy is to become 'utopic', establishing a critical connection to its present historical milieu and the forces within it, it cannot do so via general normative principles already embedded within the institutions and semiotic regimes dominant within this milieu, even if it ultimately aims to transform them. Deleuze and Guattari argue that, wherever the term has been 'distorted by public opinion', utopia is not the best word for their critique.⁶¹⁴ This is because 'even when opposed to History it is still subject to it and lodged within it as an ideal or motivation'.⁶¹⁵ In other words, the 'utopia' which marks the point at which philosophy becomes truly political must be distinguished from the theorematized presentation of a blueprint to which society must be adapted, because such a blueprint can only come from existing forms of opinion and the semiotic regimes which funnel them into recognisable positions to which the state's institutions can adapt. Any such utopia would remain subject to the problems which maintain the existing historical order, presupposing the aggregations and representations by which subjects differentiate both the present and any prospective future. Rather, philosophy can be said to reach its 'highest point' only through absolute deterritorialization, producing a utopia which escapes 'history' as a particular construction established on the basis of these problems.⁶¹⁶ As Deleuze argues in "Control and Becoming", it might be better to replace the term 'utopia' entirely, instead adopting 'fabulation', as presented by Bergson, but vested with a 'political meaning'.⁶¹⁷ Political philosophy reaches its highest point not with the critique of the particular failings of present states, but by overturning the *mythos* which establishes them, inducing a collective subjectification that heterogeneous dimensions of the multitude can take up in their own terms:

⁶¹³ *WIP*, 113.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁶¹⁷ Deleuze, "Control and Becoming," 174.

something that precludes their adopting a common normative principle determined in advance by the philosopher.

Alongside the demand to 'become-democratic', Deleuze and Guattari thus continue to insist that philosophy 'become-revolutionary', a concept which is 'not the same thing as the past, present, or future of revolutions' as empirical events leading to renewed states, but rather concerns philosophy's adoption of the problematisation and creation of new potentials for living, thinking, and being which, as discussed in the last chapter, constitute the true spirit of revolution.⁶¹⁸ As Deleuze argues in *L'Abécédaire*:

To act for freedom, becoming revolutionary, is to operate in jurisprudence when one turns to the justice system. Justice doesn't exist, "rights of man" do not exist, it concerns jurisprudence... That's what the invention of law is.⁶¹⁹

Rather than the 'rights of man', Deleuze argues for the promotion of the 'rights of life': rights which, like life itself, unfold 'case by case' as part of a singular creative process.⁶²⁰ In the same way, a philosophical 'becoming-democratic' worthy of the prefix could not be a 'correction' of minor movements on the basis of a superior, even 'philosophical', normativity. Philosophy connects to democracy in the same way it does revolution, that is, it finds within it a particular potential for problematisation that might be used to realise justice, as the invention of ways of life and of law in response to singular situations. I would therefore connect becoming-democratic to Deleuze's later argument that laws are not to be produced by 'well-qualified wise men', that is, those who might claim a certain authority from their knowledge of a superior form of normativity, but by 'user groups', that is, those who are most effected by a given law or social practice.⁶²¹ This clearly refers to a certain macropolitical practice engaging with existing institutions, and might at first appear to parallel Habermas' desire for legitimation filters, incorporating peripheries into the production of law: but 'user groups', in this case, should not refer us to a regionalism or local determination tied to a particular institution, that is, to a recognisable or molar minority, but instead to a group immanently determined in relation to an event, who find the means to 'get involved in producing the program' rather than simply entering a pre-established space of interlocution alongside other, supposedly equivalent interests.⁶²² To be 'just', laws must be burned and re-established by those they most concern: but for Deleuze, this establishment of rights and precedents must be continuous and tied to a people aggregated

⁶¹⁸ *WIP*, 112. See also Deleuze and Guattari, "We invented the Ritornello," 379.

⁶¹⁹ Deleuze and Parnet, "G".

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶²¹ Deleuze, "Control and Becoming," 169-170.

⁶²² Deleuze, "On Philosophy," 153.

only by a shared problematic endeavour, that is, to the minor.⁶²³ Such an effort could never mark an exhaustive solution to a particular problem, but it could certainly provide a means of ameliorating its worst effects and of providing a concrete collective with the means to free themselves from existing limitations and pursue their potential for action.

While Deleuze and Guattari may well support the establishment of new institutions better able to cater for a form of subjective potential that had already begun to emerge, this would only ever be as mimicry, and the index of a struggle which precedes and exceeds the formal democratic or dialogic spaces imposed upon it. From their perspective, there is no final method that could, in itself, prevent institutions from being subverted to oppressive ends; no formal condition that could cement the openness of even the most radical forum. Politics demands caution, not hesitation, and an ongoing analysis seeking ways to realise concrete connections between divergent elements of society and conjugate in relation to rights and norms which emerge immanently from these interactions, rather than from normative principles divined by the philosopher. Politics always turns upon molecular analysis and the singular potentials for liberation or constriction present within the current investment of desire, with the only ‘justice’ that which a people create themselves.

IV. The Dangers of Desire

To the extent that minor movements deviate from the constants on which the modern state relies, Liberalism presents them as inherently unreasonable, a pursuit of individual interests which, if left unchecked, might recreate the arbitrariness its judicial structures supposedly replace. The natural response to Deleuze and Guattari’s politics is therefore an accusation of relativism or ambivalence: if war machines do not aim to identify the legitimate structures proper to human dignity or best able to implement justice, and adopt these only as a form of ‘mimicry’ which furthers their own goals, how is their promotion distinct from strategic action, from notions of ‘might makes right’, and how do Deleuze and Guattari propose to prevent politics from descending into a battle in which particular visions of the good are dogmatically imposed?

I believe that Deleuze and Guattari would respond by arguing that, as with Kafka’s K, it is essential to recognise that ‘justice’ can be achieved only through the refusal of any representation, democratic or

⁶²³ Though it falls beyond the scope of the present discussion, Alexandre Lefebvre has argued that a possible response from Habermas lies in the concept of adjudication, derived from the work of his close ally Klaus Günther and introduced in *Between Facts and Norms*. See Alexandre Lefebvre, “Habermas and Deleuze on Law and Adjudication,” *Law and Critique* 17, no. 3 (2006): pp. 389-414, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10978-006-9003-1>, 399-414.

otherwise, which mediates desire through supposed constants and the limited problems to which these are tied. This is because even the most ‘reasonable’ constant or political principle must be concretised by actual individuals, communities, and institutions, and so remains as open to subversion as their desire is to a particular investment.

Desire is never an undifferentiated instinctual energy, but itself results from a highly developed, engineered setup rich in interactions: a whole supple segmentarity that processes molecular energies and potentially gives desire a fascist determination. Leftist organizations will not be the last to secrete microfascisms. It’s too easy to be antifascist on the molar level, and not even see the fascist inside you, the fascist you yourself sustain and nourish and cherish with molecules both personal and collective.⁶²⁴

Desire is invested connection by connection, proceeding through individual affects and perceptions which often escape the limits imposed by the molar aggregations and rigid segments on which the state and its institutions rely. From Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, institutionalised procedure could therefore not provide an unbiased mediation between competing positions, because how such procedures are understood depends on the individuals charged with maintaining them, and the way in which they differentiate their experience. Far from an unbiased judgement grounded in an unchanging axiom of reason or reasonability, the exclusion of the unreasonable or irrational presupposed by representative democratic systems can easily become no more than the means by which ‘lines of flight’ are prevented from realising change within the system, with demands that might otherwise be deemed reasonable recognised as an existential threat to the order on which the state is founded and subject to a ‘microfascistic’ affectual response by party officials; likewise, there is no end to the evils that might be deemed ‘reasonable’ given a collective investment in a particular set of social problems, such that no attempt to legislate against the unreasonable or to institutionalise dialogue could provide a permanent ward against totalitarianism or fascism.

To ensure a social assemblage remains ‘vital’ and open to the redetermination of problems by those most affected requires more than a theorematic politics focused on the molar recognition and synthesis of reasonable interest-groups or political positions: it requires an active micropolitics, guided by a careful pragmatic analysis which replaces the judgement of positions as correspondent to constants of reasonability and rationality with more subtle questions of singularity, direction, and potential. Does a political movement represent a continuation of an existing ‘thermodynamic’ system which restricts variation to pre-given forms, or does it contain a relation to exteriority, a potential for divergence? Further, can such

⁶²⁴ Ibid., 215.

divergence be repurposed by minor groups as part of their own experimentation, or does it break these connections, imposing a formal consistency of its own? If given free rein of the social field, overcoming the limits set by existing mechanisms, would it then open the assemblage to the immanent and vital determination made possible by universal minority, would it subject them to an authority drawn from the minor movement in which it is presently embedded, or worse, would it repurpose them towards ultimately destructive ends? Most importantly of all, how can existing flows be connected and conjugated in ways which enable experimentation to continue, without establishing a restrictive, exclusive disjunction that limits the thought and action of others?

Whilst the terminology used to identify and isolate such problems is rather abstract, something I believe to result from the necessity of avoiding specifications drawn from established presuppositions regarding the nature of politics, the problems themselves are, I would argue, far more representative of the concrete practical approach to the political adopted by actual groups and individuals. While political theory proceeds through the identification of constants such as the nature of the subject or the particular aggregations which define a given historical milieu, political practice often relies on calculated intuition and an ‘approximation’ of the nature of groups and institutions, something that can reveal far more of their true character and potential than the formal constants and explicit propositions to which they are tied. Deleuze and Guattari present four dangers which animate such questions: ‘fear’, ‘clarity’, ‘*pouvoir*’ and, worst of all, a nihilistic and cancerous ‘disgust’ for life. In this final section, I turn to each of these dangers in turn, emphasising the ways in which they might inform micropolitical action and the threat they pose to a theorematic politics focused only on the molar.

A minimal form of constancy is, as I argued in the last chapter, an absolute necessity: one must always possess a ‘plot of land’ from which to experiment, and Deleuze and Guattari argue that the security provided by molar conceptions of identity and established notions of value are often a necessary ward against the chaos that underlies desiring-investment.⁶²⁵ However, as Spinoza once argued, fear can lead to superstition, which ultimately serves to keep a populace in thrall to the existing order; or, in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, it can lead to the fetishization of molar constants and the false problems to which they are tied. Where desire becomes ‘fearful’, individuals and communities are led to subject their encounters to the mould provided by the dominant forms of representation, with any nuance that might disrupt these

⁶²⁵ *WIP*, 201.

constants or open new avenues for variation appearing as an existential threat: a limitation that can extend to ‘modes of perception, kinds of actions, ways of moving, life-styles, [and] semiotic regimes’.⁶²⁶

One problem such ‘fear’ might pose to Liberalism relates to localised conjugations defined by particularly rigid molar aggregations. In their reflection on May ’68, for example, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the most prominent alternative subjectifications to those imparted by contemporary capitalism are religious territorializations such as fundamentalist Islam and European ‘neo-papism’, both of which represent ‘a new orthodoxy’ and desire to impose a rigid distribution of molar identities rather than a means of reaching a more vital engagement with the social field.⁶²⁷ Despite their pretensions towards secularity, a number of Liberal states incorporate such restrictive molar aggregates or ‘fearful conjugations’ into the functioning of arborescent institutions, as for example in the case of close links between religious communities and political parties, who provide each other a vehicle by which to alter legislation and a reliable source of votes respectively. Such conjugations represent a compromise which serves as one dimension of the ‘spirit’ of a particular nation, informing the national *mythos* which precedes and informs any rational debate, potentially concretising laws which subvert the supposed universality of the rights on which the state is grounded.

A further problem concerns a more general fear of the new, and particularly of minor identities whose desires remain unrecognisable under existing semiotic regimes. As Deleuze wrote in 1980, for example, the ‘reaction against ’68... demonstrated all too clearly just how intact the Oedipus family remains, to this day imposing its snivelling regime on psychoanalysis, literature and thought’, with fearful, even neurotic desires leading the population to reterritorialize on the molar identities they associated with the family and workplace.⁶²⁸ Rather than engaging with the singular potentials uncovered by those ‘minor’ movements which used the event as an opportunity to forge new connections which deviated from the norms associated with existing molar aggregates, they recognised in this spontaneous re-establishment of social order both a threat and a contingent exception to the rule, the cause of which could be attributed to ‘deviant’ molar categories such as ‘the youth’, whose capacity to engage in reasonable debate had been corrupted by external influences. This ultimately resulted in a recognition of the ‘children of ’68’, the new generation who exemplified these subjective potentials, as a problem to be legislated against rather than an opportunity to

⁶²⁶ ATP, 227.

⁶²⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, “May ’68 did not take place,” 236.

⁶²⁸ Gilles Deleuze. “Preface to the Italian Edition of *A Thousand Plateaus*,” in *Two Regimes of Madness*, 308.

produce new ways of thinking and living that ought to be fostered through subjective redeployment.⁶²⁹ I would argue that this use of legislation can be considered the result of a ‘fear’ proper to Liberalism itself, a reterritorialization on restricted notions of ‘rationality’ or ‘reasonability’ that recognises any group whose identity deviates from established norms and whose activity proceeds through connections which fall largely outside representation by the dominant parties as enemies to be excluded rather than voices to be incorporated within a general consensus. The majoritarian tendency of Liberalism can thus lead it to reject demands for change, legislating against the expression of seemingly ‘divergent’ communities and social practices even where the demands might be framed in terms of the universal rights on which the state itself is justified.

A ‘minoritarian’ approach to politics, by contrast, would remain sensitive to this potential distortion of desire: free of the necessity of interpreting new collectives with reference to a pre-determined form, an immanent diagnosis of new social movements could be made with reference to the disjunctions by which their potential for connection might be realised, and of existing institutions with reference to the interests they incorporate or otherwise exclude. For example, a Liberalism focused purely on the theorematic constants of democracy might present participation in an existing democratic system as the only legitimate means of voicing the concerns of a concrete group, with any concrete failings within it a problem to be resolved only through further participation in the political parties which constitute it. A pragmatic analysis, by contrast, would focus on concrete individuals, collectives, and the potential connections with existing institutions or associations might possess either to further problematisation or to limit it to the interests of an existing aggregation. It would therefore examine the particular democratic system in place, and in particular on the hidden exclusions that might permeate it: as where the excessive influence of a religious collective within the state established a ‘fearful’ restriction which ensured that prominent figures within government, alongside much of the electorate, could understand the world only via a limited conception of possible identities and social roles. In such circumstances, those who deviate from the molar constants of identity reinforced by such religious communities could realise their true potential only by establishing spaces independent of the governing apparatus, establishing new connections in a ‘clandestine’ fashion which evaded the restrictive influence of the population’s fear rather than attempting to influence the

⁶²⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, “May ’68 did not take place,” 235: “The children of May ’68, you can run into them all over the place, even if they are not aware who they are, and each county produces them in its own way. Their situation is not great. These are not young executives. They are strangely indifferent, and for that very reason they are in the right frame of mind. They have stopped being demanding or narcissistic, but they know perfectly well that there is nothing today that corresponds to their subjectivity, to their potential of energy. They even know that all current reforms are rather directed against them’.

electorate directly. Likewise, a protest group oriented towards pressuring governments to limit the worst effects of climate change might make theoretical demands which could only be perceived as positive: but might also be organised by members who retained a 'fearful' refusal to understand political practice in ways which deviated from established norms, such that any potential they might have would be squandered through a reinforcement of an existing institutional structure that remained subject to the whims of capital. In this case, the analysis undertaken by individuals and collectives might lead them to establish a new group in their own terms, rather than simply contributing their efforts to opening the established organisation onto the transformative 'plane of consistency'.

Becoming pragmatic and escaping the 'fear' which leads to the reinforcement of existing molar distinctions exposes one to a further danger, one Deleuze and Guattari name clarity: a tendency for individuals or communities to recognise themselves as possessed of a singular purpose or role which legitimises them to impart an oppressive force on others:

Instead of the great paranoid fear, we are trapped in a thousand little monomanias, self-evident truths, and clarities that gush from every black hole and no longer form a system, but are only rumble and buzz, blinding lights giving any and everybody the mission of self-appointed judge, dispenser of justice, policeman, neighborhood SS man.⁶³⁰

Such clarity could be considered pragmatic, in Deleuze and Guattari's sense, in that a particular subjectification allows an individual or group to dispense with established molar forms and instead analyse their encounters 'case by case'. However, any problematisation here results only in localised reterritorializations, either because the subjectification through which these individuals recognise themselves still harbours the prejudices of the molar segmentarity from which they have supposedly departed, or, worse still, because they are driven by a 'microfascist' desire to master whatever they encounter, believing utility to be best served by the subjection of other groups and institutions to their particularly clear vision of what needs to be done.⁶³¹

Though Liberal democracies are defined by the theorematic establishment of procedures and institutions derived from molar aggregates, seemingly in opposition to all such 'arbitrariness', I would argue that the officials and bureaucrats which populate its institutions remain as vulnerable to such 'clarity' as any commissar within the Soviet bureaucracy. Where such officials are considered only in terms of their segmented position within an institution, and their correspondence to the recognised tropes of reasonability

⁶³⁰ *ATP*, 228.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

or rationality, their actual approach to the concrete capacities enabled by their authoritative position within an arborescent institution is effaced. Such officials, for example, may follow the letter of the law, but take it upon themselves to go against its 'spirit' wherever they believe this to serve the wider aims of their party or the population as whole, the furtherance of which they take to be their unique prerogative. Likewise, where a political movement is run by a leadership with a particular conception of the changes that a society requires in order to ameliorate existing social problems, they would be liable to sacrifice the interests of those who did not complement this vision when the situation appeared to demand it: something as ascribable to contemporary politicians implementing austerity policies as it might be to Lenin and the 'Stalinist' semiotic regime already implicit within his Bolshevism. In this case, the exact demands of the group would obscure the true potential they possess for oppression or destruction, and in particular the force they would use to prevent others from engaging in their own problematisation, should this not accord with their objectives.

A process of analysis, by contrast, can diagnose the actual tendencies of given officials or leaders within extant hierarchies, questioning whether they might use the formal *pouvoir* with which they have been vested to prevent further problematisation. Rather than determining whether the demands of a group are 'reasonable', analysis turns to the whether they perceive themselves as possessed of a privileged position or authority, or whether they would otherwise enable others to re-establish problems in their own terms. For example, a political party that both participated within and claimed to respect the principles of democracy might also harbour a bureaucracy of career politicians with a very particular conception of what is necessary to win over the electorate, such that they would use the formal *pouvoir* they had acquired to prevent others from shifting it in another direction, even to the extent of preventing popular intervention into party functioning. In such a case, a decision would need to be made, on the basis of analysis, regarding whether a continuing alliance with this party might result in the replacement of these officials through a more immanent relationship between members and the party machinery, or whether the party is best avoided altogether.

The above distortions combine within the third danger, a desire to gain or maintain formal or institutional *pouvoir*. This operates on both the molecular level of individual and collective encounters and the molar level of institutional and legal practice, with the illusions of 'fear' and 'clarity' leading subjects to believe not only that they ought to possess institutionalised authority, but also that such authority must be absolute and unrelenting. This leads to the desire for 'autarky', that is, a state without exteriority or external influence, with the potential for variation excluded from both formal institutions and the molar representations on which they rely. However, it is important to note that, despite any such desire, no state is

truly ‘deterritorialized in the void’ and will always be subject to decoded flows of one kind or another, establishing certain problems governments are ‘impotent’ to alter without recourse to new connections with the exterior.⁶³² At the limit, excluding further variation thus entails a particular collective adopting and enforcing these external problems as their own, coupling the ‘resonance’ of state unity with a ‘forced movement’ which subjects everything within it to their preferred solution. In this case, their clarity of purpose and of their own technical capacity makes them ‘totalitarian’:

a State becomes totalitarian when, instead of effectuating, within its own limits, the worldwide overcoding machine, it identifies with it, creating the conditions for “autarky,” producing a reterritorialization by “closed vessel,” in the artifice of the void.⁶³³

Today, such problems derive exclusively from the continuous extraction of the ‘worldwide overcoding machine’ that is global capital, something which, as I explore in the next chapter, results in ‘totalitarian’ attempts to limit states to the ‘axioms’ or guiding principles necessary for an efficient domestic market.⁶³⁴

Though Deleuze and Guattari do distinguish between ‘democratic, totalitarian, liberal, and tyrannical States’, as Deleuze previously distinguished between states with more laws and those with more institutions in “Instincts and Institutions”, they argue that these differences are not ideological but rather the result of ‘concrete variables’ determined axiomatically at a global level.⁶³⁵ The institutions which diffuse power within Liberal capitalist states are enabled by the relatively strong position of their domestic economies within a global market, and often presuppose more ‘totalitarian’ approaches at another point in the supply chain; but beyond even this, the subjection of these states to problems determined by international capital ensures that a ‘totalitarian’ or technocratic desire to limit axioms to those needed for economic growth and market competitiveness is, less a danger, and more a defining constant of modern Liberal democracies, one which can easily take hold within the institutional structures of even the most nominally democratic system.

Deleuze and Guattari’s listing of the desire for *pouvoir* as a danger to be avoided introduces a host of problems regarding institutions and consistent political associations, which in each case would need to maintain a problematic founded on *puissance* and the creative potential of a community to respond to the singularity of a given event. To desire power for its own sake, even where one is supposedly justified by some ‘truth’ derived from the nature of subjectivity or citizenship, is therefore alien to the aims Deleuze and Guattari wish to privilege; likewise, it is essential to ensure that any political association is not guided by

⁶³² Ibid., 225.

⁶³³ Ibid., 223.

⁶³⁴ Ibid., 224.

⁶³⁵ Ibid., 455.

problems derived from the global market. For example, a political party that associated the welfare of workers with controls on immigration, recognising the relation as effectively zero-sum, could be accused of falling for this exact trap, adopting the problems created by the global market as essential and so desiring a power to oppress others in pursuit of the supposedly optimal solution. I turn to these problems of the market and the question of totalitarianism in the next chapter.

Fear, clarity, and the love of *pouvoir* are each potent dangers that can, separately or in combination, end the creative 'vitality' of any political association. By far the greatest danger, however, relates to a destructive desire Deleuze and Guattari associate with the state's appropriation of war machines. As I explored above, appropriation makes war machines ultimately uncreative, with their capacity to free elements from their existing relations and repurpose them becoming subverted by a state which deploys them as a means of maintaining an existing order. In particular, they can be used to fight the state's 'wars', either against internal forms of deviance or against external threats, this including other states. Where the law remained purely topical, these 'wars' were limited to defined objectives: as a counterintelligence body is driven to destroy enemies of the state, or a military to force another state to accept beneficial terms. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the industrialisation and capacity for mobilization and militarization that resulted from the development of global capitalism led wars to become increasingly 'total', realising the '*maximal conditions* of the appropriation of the war machine by the State apparatus', by permeating militarism throughout society and repurposing institutions, individuals, and collectives towards the destructive ends of appropriated institutions.⁶³⁶ Rather than remaining within the formal limits ascribed to it by the state's objectives, this produced a vector or 'line of abolition' which, like a line of flight, became 'continuous' and 'absolute' by co-opting both individual affective responses and the operation of formal institutions, selectively establishing those 'investments' (such as particular distributions of significations or processes of subjectification, and including the population's fear, self-conception, and desire for power) which contributed to an overall deterritorialization.⁶³⁷ Unlike the positive and creative 'line of flight', however, Deleuze and Guattari follow Virilio by describing this vector as a 'suicidal' desire for 'one's own annihilation, or... the power to annihilate', in that this continuous process operates through the constitution of problems which entail the death of those who adopt them.⁶³⁸

Deleuze and Guattari present the 'molar' Fascism of the 20th Century as the first concrete appearance of this vector. Like couchgrass, a weed that rapidly spreads in every direction according to available nutrients,

⁶³⁶ Ibid., 421.

⁶³⁷ Ibid., 230.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., 165.

fascism is 'rhizomatic', in the sense that it involves a non-totalising association of elements connected according to the pragmatic aims of realising new potentials: but unlike the vital problematisation that enables the associated individuals and collectives to realise such potentials in their own terms and according to their singular situation, the realised potentials concern only destruction.⁶³⁹ Though it ultimately fashioned for itself a 'totalitarian' state to enhance its internal reach, Nazism was 'a cancerous body rather than a totalitarian organism', with its real power deriving not from the *pouvoir* of the party as a transcendent power, but a form of *puissance* drawn from molecular connections which arose amongst fringe elements in political institutions, voluntary associations, and families, installing a war machine into 'each hole, in every niche'.⁶⁴⁰

Cancerous tissue: each instant, each second, a cell becomes cancerous, mad, proliferates and loses its configuration, takes over everything; the organism must resubmit it to its rule or restratify it, not only for its own survival, but also to make possible an escape from the organism, the fabrication of the "other" BwO on the plane of consistency.⁶⁴¹

Such cancer marks the 'despotism' proper to the rhizome, as mentioned in the last chapter: a false double of vitality or the plane of consistency, which conjugates decoded flows into an absolute deterritorialization which proceeds through and exceeds particular stratifications, submitting to and 'mimicking' their constants where expedient, and cultivating an ongoing resistance to state determination. Rather than the vitality that derives from enabling its concrete parts to realise themselves anew in relation to the event, however, it leads these elements to overcome their existing limits without reterritorializing on new constants which enhance their capacity to think and act, instead exhausting them in the service of destruction.

A theorematized politics which maintained the cohesiveness of a democratic system with reference to the rationality or reasonability of the positions it enabled would not provide an effective barrier to fascism, which proceeds as much through individual encounters and affects as it does molar political organisations seeking centralised control over the state. Where significant public adoption of the sensible and semiotic regimes which underpinned Fascism had taken hold, no attempt to designate the party which concretised it as 'unreasonable' and no process of inclusive dialogue could have prevented its insertion, and ultimate subjection of, the democratic order of the state. Further, and as I examine in the next chapter, capitalism represents a contemporary continuation of this nihilistic 'vector', continually re-establishing problems which orient our behaviour to the destruction of the planet which sustains us. These problems have not

⁶³⁹ Ibid., 9.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., 214-215.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., 163.

only been promoted by liberal democracies, but have entirely appropriated them, orienting their institutions towards producing the sensible differentiations and processes of subjectification needed to facilitate the extraction of surplus by international capital.

Diagnosing such a destructive desire is perhaps more complex than in the previous cases. Both fascism and capitalism can deploy our joy and desire for community alongside our fears of desire for power, aping associations of *puissance* that are experienced in the moment as a creative means of realising our lives and experience in ways more attuned to our singular condition, and as producing an enhanced capacity to act. This means that, though the drive towards annihilation proceeds via war machines, while totalitarianism is a problem of the state, I would argue that it is important not to reduce the complexity of their relation to that between two poles of social organisation, such that an excess of either leads to disaster: a position that would imply the necessity of a ‘reasonable’ ideal state founded somewhere *a milieu*, with war machines serving as a civil society useful to prevent the state from becoming stagnant, but ultimately contributing to its unity.⁶⁴² Though *A Thousand Plateaus* introduces a note of caution originally lacking in *Anti-Oedipus*, I do not believe it negates its suggestion that ‘one can never go far enough in the direction of deterritorialization’:⁶⁴³ rather, it supplements this principle with the addendum that absolute deterritorialization must continue only through carefully selected forms of reterritorialization, these being the ‘new plots of land’ which provide the consistency necessary to allow experimentation to continue without sedimenting into a stratified equilibrium which prevents such experimentation being taken up anew. The desire for annihilation represents a threat which can only be countered through problematisation and the universal minority it enables, and thus by a war machine that resists the state and any constants it might impose.

Analysis must therefore problematise the vectors which might determine the direction adopted by a given society, and question whether specific associations and institutions have not been co-opted by a development which would ultimately lead only to destruction. For example, a political party or leader might marshal support by identifying and heightening fears already found within the population. In such a case, the actual political positions professed would be mere expediences, adopted only as a means of fostering conflict between groups and profiting from the heightened tensions. This may appear a kind of ‘creativity’, a mimicry of existing strata: but rather than the creation of new means of problematising experience, all that results is a continuous identification of further ‘enemies’. As the force itself relies upon conflict, it will continue to corrupt until such time as it produces a desire for annihilation that turns upon its creators, and

⁶⁴² See Emma Ingala, “On the Refrain (The Ritornello),” in *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*, 203 for such a presentation.

⁶⁴³ *AO*, 321.

ultimately results in nothing but destruction. This suggests the necessity not only of identifying the threat and refusing to establish productive connections with it, but also of actively finding the means of countering it, this being a necessary prerequisite for the successful experimentation of the war machine. A similar diagnosis might be considered to apply to the ‘innovation’ of global capitalism I examine in the next chapter, which fosters a ‘creativity’ in both individuals and corporations which enables them to reshape their world and the problems by which they orient themselves in pursuit of further surplus: a process that could only end with the destruction of the Earth and of every capitalist upon it. As I explore in the next chapter, this makes the problem facing any ‘minor’ association not only that of realising their potential, but also of actively ‘overturning capitalism’.

The dangers of fear, clarity, *pouvoir*, and fascism reinforce the necessity of caution to micropolitical experimentation, as the ‘strange bands’ and fringe collective bodies to which sorcery might connect are ‘just as capable of nourishing a modern fascism as of freeing a revolutionary charge’.⁶⁴⁴ Remaining ‘stratified—organised, signified, subjected’ is therefore ‘not the worst that can happen’, with too rapid a destratification risking our being ‘killed, plunged into a black hole, or even dragged toward catastrophe’.⁶⁴⁵ This does not mean, however, that out of fear we reinforce the constants of ‘reasonability’ that maintain a particular democratic system, refusing to engage with any political process not ultimately subject to electoral aims. Such constants can exclude potentially destructive opinions from joining within the discourses from which consensus is derived, but can do little to stop these potentials taking hold within people’s hearts and minds, as de Tocqueville might put it. Instead, an active micropolitics is necessary to ensure that decoded forces are conjugated in ways that maintain the vitality of a social assemblage, such that collective associations remain able to independently realise new connections without contributing to a wider impulse towards stasis or destruction:

the material problem confronting schizoanalysis is knowing whether we have it within our means to make the selection, to distinguish the BwO from its doubles: empty vitreous bodies, cancerous bodies, totalitarian and fascist. The test of desire: not denouncing false desires, but distinguishing within desire between that which pertains to stratic proliferation, or else too-violent destratification, and that which pertains to the construction of the plane of consistency.⁶⁴⁶

Macropolitics, of various strands, is inescapable and necessary, but must remain the index of the molecular, the only plane on which we can successfully identify the changeable dangers of desire. Without an active

⁶⁴⁴ *AO*, 258.

⁶⁴⁵ *ATP*, 161.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 165.

and pragmatic micropolitics redirecting existing forms of resistance towards the vital problematisation potential within the concrete circumstances of the present, cancer will inevitably take hold of any constants asserted by the theorematic approach to politics.

All we are saying is that the identity of effects, the continuity of genera, the totality of all BwO's, can be obtained on the plane of consistency only by means of an abstract machine capable of covering and even creating it, by assemblages capable of plugging into desire, of effectively taking charge of desires, of assuring their continuous connections and transversal tie-ins. Otherwise, the BwO's of the plane will remain separated by genus, marginalized, reduced to means of bordering, while on the "other plane" the emptied or cancerous doubles will triumph.⁶⁴⁷

Where the war machine fails to continue its experimentation and its guerrilla 'nonbattle' with the constants of the state, the different lines of production will remain subject to strict limits, confined to a subsystem or outsystem of its overall unity; simultaneously, the state will be permeated by molecular flows which drive it inexorably towards a nihilistic destruction. Constant analysis and sorcery must therefore be directed towards avoiding these dangers, aiming to reterritorialize in ways which allow nomadism to continue, for as long as possible, always living on the edge of a deterritorializing flow.⁶⁴⁸ The close connection between nomadic flows and their appropriated and cancerous doubles ensures that diagnosis and experimentation is never easy: conjunctions which once liberated us from the dominance molar identities might yet become traps, harbouring their own nascent totalitarian or fascist impulses that become apparent only in the macropolitical changes they produce or the decoded elements that emerge in their wake. In each case, it remains for individuals and communities to take up new weapons, finding new forms of flight and the conjugations necessary to push society towards the justice they will only find in problematisation.

As this chapter has demonstrated, the problem of law or justice is for Deleuze and Guattari a matter of minor groups realising new potentials to counter the destructive impulses of the state, its appropriated bodies, and the fearful and fascistic desires that might be concretised by new connections. The dangers of desire cannot be countered through the elucidation of a particular set of rights or a fixed institutional procedure, be these grounded in reason or particular norms shared by a given historical community, as their application necessarily proceeds at a molecular level obscured by such molar aggregations, but instead demand an active micropolitics which concretises new potentials for experimentation rather than elucidating fixed principles. In the next chapter, I turn to capitalism and expand upon the 'axiomatic' by

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., 166.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., 417.

which it has subjected both states and the systems of right which define them, realising a nihilistic line of commodity production and expropriation more dangerous than even the Fascism which preceded it.

Chapter 5 | Capitalism, Control, and the Problem of Security

The price being paid for ‘universal security’ is much too high: and the maddest thing is that what is being effected is the very opposite of universal security... To make society safe against thieves and fireproof and endlessly amenable to every kind of trade and traffic, and to transform the state into a kind of providence in both the good and the bad sense – these are lower, mediocre and in no way indispensable goals which ought not to be pursued by means of the highest instruments which in any way exist – instruments which ought to be saved up for the highest and rarest objectives! Our age may talk about economy but it is in fact a squanderer: it squanders the most precious thing there is, the spirit.

— Friedrich Nietzsche⁶⁴⁹

As I explored in the last chapter, states redeploy the ‘nomadic’ forces of the war machine in order to compensate for or destroy elements they are unable to incorporate, leading them down a destructive path in which they repurpose their institutions and population as materiel for increasingly total forms of warfare, until they themselves become subject to a vector of annihilation beyond their control. The first concretisation of this vector was Fascism: but the fascists were only ‘child precursors’, Deleuze and Guattari argue, to the capitalists who emerged during the post-war reconstruction. On their account, the attempts by states to harness the decoded flows of capital and labour ‘reconstituted a war machine of which they themselves were only the parts’, with financial, commercial, and productive circuits conjoining into the ‘continuum’ of a world economy which subjected their institutions and populations to the ‘*unlimited material process*’ of commodity production.⁶⁵⁰ Capitalism establishes a vector of absolute deterritorialization which maintains its consistency through intermittent, pragmatic reterritorialization, using states and their semiotic regimes to delimit ‘plots of land’ from which to begin extraction anew. Unlike the ‘vital’ absolute deterritorialization constituted by problematisation and minority, however, capitalism desires only surplus, an aim no less nihilistic than the militarism which preceded it.

The ‘appropriation’ of the state by capital means that Liberalism also maintains a role in production, one which undermines its claims to ground politics in fixed constants of the individual or their potential for reasonable behaviour and discourse. In this final chapter, I argue that Liberal states are ultimately subject to the ‘axiomatic’, a continually shifting fabric of conflict between national and international forces, the compromises amongst which provide immanent principles which establish the conditions within which any laws are concretised. This subjection, to the extent it modifies the supposedly ‘universal’ principles that form the Liberal *mythos*, is formulated as a problem of security, as to ignore or challenge the demands of the

⁶⁴⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 180.

⁶⁵⁰ *ATP*, 467.

market on the basis of principle would be to invite the ruin of war, terrorism, capital flight, lost exports, sanctions, or even foreign intervention, undermining the state which continues to mark their only potential concretisation. Submission to problems determined internationally thus becomes a matter of practical necessity, always beyond the influence of democratic and even technocratic action.

But as Nietzsche wrote, the price we pay for modern 'security' is far too high: enabling the rational providence (or, to adopt the terms of the first chapter, 'prescience') of our existing political systems, that is, their right to trace the semiotic and institutional coordinates by which social phenomena are measured and associated, comes at the cost of our 'spirit', our *puissance* or capacity to orient ourselves according to the demands of the present; but this sacrifice does nothing to counter exploitation, which often operates imperceptibly on the periphery and through the 'exception' of a crisis. Deleuze and Guattari therefore argue that, rather than a 'macropolitical' struggle aiming to temper the worst excesses of the market through the democratic capture of states, the reform of their institutions, and the facilitation of their international cooperation, real security can be achieved only through a new and specifically minor socialism: one which transversally unites local struggles within the figure of the 'proletariat', an international, revolutionary mass open to singular redetermination.

In this chapter, I begin by examining Deleuze and Guattari's presentation of the global capitalist 'axiomatic' and the problems it imposes onto democratic states, the potential solutions to which are limited to the 'poles' of social democracy and totalitarianism. I then elaborate on the inequality they take to be fundamental to capitalism, undermining the possibility that a better model of the constitutional state might counteract the economic and political insecurity it produces or resolve the crises it engenders. In the third section, I expand upon the different systems through which nation states maintain the dominance of the axiomatic, limiting particularity to pre-established coordinates which increasingly lend themselves to systems of 'control'. In the final section, I associate Deleuze and Guattari's politics with the internationalism of a global proletariat, a universal minority capable of building solidarity across peripheral spaces by making the problem of insecurity collective. Minor groups, to the extent they maintain a 'problematizing' approach to actual conditions, are the only bodies capable of realising change within an axiomatic system, whilst the theorematized models of Liberalism do little more than facilitate its adaptation. I conclude by introducing the Paris commune as a 'symbol' of the transformations in the problematic necessitated by the various forms of insecurity which result from global capital, listing examples of individual, collective, and international actions that might open localised struggles onto a truly universal minority.

I. The Global Capitalist Axiomatic

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari describe capital as the body-without-organs of the capitalist: something which never appears in itself, but rather consolidates the forces concretised by investments, wages, and commodities, instituting the quantifiable criteria of profit and exchange-value as a 'recording surface' for the measurement and association of social phenomena.⁶⁵¹ 'Capital' in its pure state exceeds these forms, incorporating both the productive connections that constitute them and the 'antiproduction' of their dissolution, whilst simultaneously appearing as the unconditioned explanans for all social activity. Whilst capitalist democracies might present themselves as essentially aligned with freedom, maintaining a permanent system of rights through which the population are able to realise their interests however they see fit, in practice these interests are recognised only to the extent they contribute to connections measurable according to these fixed coordinates, making capital an irrevocably 'empty' body-without-organs defined by a supplementary and imposed invariance.

This picture is complicated in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where Deleuze and Guattari define capitalism as a system in which an international body of capital exists in direct relation to a global flow of labour, the two 'conjugating' into a single flow of commodity production which exceeds and determines the concrete forms of investment and employment through which it proceeds. They argue that this flow did not fully materialise before its appearance in Europe during the Middle ages because the 'topical' conjugations of states, that is, the segmentation imposed by their institutional 'centres' of power, prevented this development by ensuring that any circulating wealth necessarily moved between the fixed 'territories' of land ownership and the exchange networks established between particular urban centres, and that any flows of labour were segmented by fixed class or caste structures, with production tied to the division of the population according to traditional forms of artisanry.⁶⁵² These ties were increasingly broken by the circuits of international trade, which 'intensified' the relative movements between the constants of existing states (their production facilities, borders, and so on), establishing a 'new nomadism' and 'smooth space' by which collective bodies and institutions could connect to others through circuits independent of any centralised control.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵¹ *AO*, 10.

⁶⁵² See *WIP*, 97, where Deleuze and Guattari follow Fernand Braudel in the association of capitalism with the Middle Ages, and *ATP*, 452-453 for the discussion of its association with the dissolution of slavery and serfdom on the one hand, and mercantile and landed wealth on the other.

⁶⁵³ *ATP*, 387.

For example, as I described in chapter three, the bourgeoisie of the French Revolution were a ‘cutting edge’ of deterritorialization, using their connection to decoded commercial circuits to dissolve the Feudal class structure and church and noble ties to land, only to recapture the flows thus released through the subjectification of the citizen and the open market respectively. This development established a general flow of urban labour which was far more ‘deterritorialized’ in the sense it could be particularised according to the changeable needs of the emerging factories, and increased the amount of ‘deterritorialized’ capital which, unhindered by ties to particular institutions and lineages, could circulate internationally without restriction.

Wherever it took hold, the ‘new nomadism’ of capital aligned whatever participated in these connections to the needs of commodity production, an indirect subjection affecting not only the collective bodies of commercial and civil society, but also those institutions most central to organised state power. A military, for example, requires resources and weapons domestic economies are not necessarily equipped to produce, leading them to form connections to international arms companies which, in turn, rely upon resource extraction occurring further down the supply chain, institutions of scientific and industrial research, production facilities, and lobbying groups which seek better contracts from government departments. Each of these bodies will maintain particular interests, notably that of minimising costs, and will thereby be incentivised both to adapt in ways which make the supply chain more productive and to encourage such adaptation in others. Such an international union of private and public interests in consistent yet adaptable relations might properly be called a ‘military-industrial complex’, incorporating a diverse range of social formations in the combination most conducive to the manufacture and sale of arms.⁶⁵⁴ While each part of the chain will exist within the boundaries of a particular state, with each incorporated segment adapting to local laws or, potentially, to their weak enforcement, the chain itself necessarily exceeds them, making the flow of capital ‘an enormous, so-called stateless, monetary mass that circulates through foreign exchange and across borders, eluding control by the states... [and] constituting a de facto supranational power untouched by governmental decisions’.⁶⁵⁵ By aligning the interests of individual actors within these complexes with the needs of commodity production, capitalism encourages the continuous adaptation of the production process at every level, with the individual pursuit of self-interest resulting in a systemic tendency to increase the amount of surplus value expropriated by international flows.

It is in this sense that Deleuze and Guattari describe capitalism as a ‘war machine’, a transversal alliance of elements which proceeds by establishing these elements in new connections and ‘cutting’ into the established constants by which states restrict them to particular forms, and thus through its own

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., 435.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid., 453.

transformation. It might therefore be considered at least a parallel to the minor problematisation that characterises Deleuze-Guattarian political sorcery: lending credence to criticisms which have focused on the seeming affinity between their affirmation of rhizomaticity and the ‘innovation’ characteristic of ‘digital’ capitalism.⁶⁵⁶ However, and as I argue in this section, Deleuze and Guattari take capitalism to be no less opposed to the liberation of desire than the theorematic conception of politics they associate with the state. Though the ‘axioms’ by which the international system regulates flows are immanently determined by the actions and interactions of a number of actors and institutions, this flexibility in fact actively prevents the determination of problems by the minor individuals and groups established by event in a far more effective fashion than state appropriation alone. Beyond this, capitalism could be said to appropriate the theorematic politics I associate with Liberalism, with the constants which define the particular conceptions of freedom and obligation variants of Liberalism specify finding their own role within production. To the extent that interests within democratic states are constituted according to economic problems which align with the needs of an international system which accounts for a desire to extract surplus on the part of innumerable individuals and collectives, any system of rights or obligations will be particularised in ways which ultimately further global production, a need taking precedence over any supposed universals of subjectivity or intersubjective communication.

Though it redirects forces towards the ‘creation’ of commodities and industries, the vector of absolute deterritorialization established by commodity production must be considered nihilistic because the forms through which it proceeds are selected not according to the problematisation of specific concrete groups, but by the demands of profit, which ultimately demands the dissolution and exhaustion of any form so adopted. This continual destruction is unavoidable, Deleuze and Guattari argue, due to what Marx called the ‘tendency of the rate of profit to fall’.⁶⁵⁷ In Marx’s terminology, investments in the machinery and resources necessary for production are ‘constant’ forms of capital, their cost set at the point of purchase, whilst the fluctuating value of labour makes any investment in wages ‘variable’, and so the source of any surplus. The relationship between the proportional investment in these two forms of capital and the actual ratio between the means of production and labour is then described as capital’s ‘organic composition’.⁶⁵⁸ Marx argues that this organic composition tends to increase as competition incentivises improvements in

⁶⁵⁶ See for example Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies*, 161ff. or Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiappelo, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (Verso: London, 2017).

⁶⁵⁷ *ATP*, 463. Marx describes this as ‘the most important law of political economy’. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), 748.

⁶⁵⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx and Engels Collected Works Vol. 35: Karl Marx: Capital, vol. 1* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), 607-608.

labour productivity, notably through the incorporation of new technology into the production process, thus decreasing the labour necessary to produce each unit. This simultaneously increases the proportional investment in constant capital needed in order to produce the same surplus, decreasing profits over time.⁶⁵⁹

These diminishing returns mean that international capital is unable to circulate in the same way for an extended period:

the growing importance of constant capital... means that the depreciation of existing capital and the formation of new capital assume a rhythm and scale that necessarily take the route of a war machine now incarnated in the complexes: the complexes actively contribute to the redistributions of the world necessary for the exploitation of maritime and planetary resources.⁶⁶⁰

The tendency of the rate of profit to fall establishes an immanent internal limit to the production process which must constantly be confronted or displaced through the renewed exploitation of the world's resources, leading both states and corporations to participate in the development of new industries and commodities.

This 'superior' deterritorialization often leads capitalism to raise 'war cries' against states, incentivising their deterritorialization by corporations and institutions which stand to profit from the relaxing of given laws.⁶⁶¹ As Deleuze puts it elsewhere, this dynamic lends capitalism a 'purely illusory appearance of liberalism', with capital appearing as a vehicle by which individuals and collective bodies can establish connections previously precluded by the fixed constants of the state.⁶⁶² Though the numerous ways one can interact with capital might be said to contribute to the realisation of individual and collective interest in a way independent of centralised state control, such 'freedom' must be considered illusory on Deleuze and Guattari's conception because it never introduces the capacity for minor individuals and collectives to constitute problems themselves. As where the capital flows charted by the bourgeoisie helped liberate the *sans-culottes* only to once again subject them, the supposed 'liberation' or 'nomadism' brought about from a connection to capital flows is always coupled with new conjunctions and the continuation of formal *pouvoir*, such that capitalism 'has always been state capitalism', necessarily coupled with, and in large part concretised by, the sovereignty it sometimes appears to oppose.⁶⁶³

⁶⁵⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx and Engels Collected Works Vol. 37. Karl Marx: Capital, vol. 3* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), 209-229.

⁶⁶⁰ *ATP*, 466.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 454.

⁶⁶² Gilles Deleuze, "Anti-Oedipus I, Lecture 02, 14 December 1971," trans. Karen Isabel Ocaña (The Deleuze Seminars), accessed November 11, 2020, <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/anti-oedipus-i/lecture-02>.

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

Rather than presenting markets as an internal limit of states, as Foucault does, Deleuze and Guattari present modern states as themselves part of a single global market, one which gives them the ‘materialist’ determination of ‘a group of producers in which labor and capital circulate freely... in principle without external obstacles’, their institutions and laws now an oblique means by which ‘the homogeneity and competition of capital is effectuated’.⁶⁶⁴ Though this may intuitively seem to refer to states influenced by classical Liberal or ‘neoliberal’ political theory, that is, by the positions that the state ought to be restricted to the minimal aim of guaranteeing the individual freedoms or free market conditions necessary to facilitate economic prosperity, it is important to note that Deleuze and Guattari are here referring to states in general.⁶⁶⁵ Beyond pushes towards austerity and deregulation, they argue that even laws which appear to inhibit the unrestricted flow of capital play an essential calibrating role necessary for sustained accumulation. Capitalism needs the state, they argue, because each deterritorialization effected in pursuit of surplus risks releasing flows that might endanger production: examples including communities displaced, environmental damage, and new technologies with unintended effects. State reterritorialization ‘compensates’ for such flows, preventing them from ‘escaping in all directions’, whilst simultaneously assisting with the redistributions necessary to counteract the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.⁶⁶⁶ An example Deleuze and Guattari give is that of space exploration during the Cold War:

NASA appeared ready to mobilize considerable capital for interplanetary exploration, as though capitalism were riding a vector taking it to the moon; but following the USSR, which conceived of extraterrestrial space as a belt that should circle the earth taken as the “object,” the American government cut off funds for exploration and returned capital in this case to a more centered model.⁶⁶⁷

Space exploration is more a vector than a single, achievable goal, demanding limitless capital whilst guaranteeing no returns: the US thus served both to produce NASA, following the Sputnik crisis and fears

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid., 454-455.

⁶⁶⁵ Even the most vociferous Liberal defenders of economic freedoms against the encroachment of the state maintain the minimal conception of law necessary to sustain them. See for example Ludwig Von Mises, *Liberalism: the Classical Tradition*, ed. Bettina Bien Greaves, trans. Ralph Raico (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), 18: ‘It is only thus that one can understand how it was possible for people to go so far as to reproach liberalism for its “hostility,” or enmity towards the state. If I am of the opinion that it is inexpedient to assign to the government the task of operating railroads, hotels, or mines, I am not an “enemy of the state,” any more than I can be called an enemy of sulfuric acid because I am of the opinion that, useful though it may be for many purposes, it is not suitable either for drinking, or for washing one’s hands’.

⁶⁶⁶ *ATP*, 461.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., 455.

regarding USSR technological superiority, and to ensure that, following the correction of this perceived imbalance, its problematic approach was tempered and restricted to more mundane and profitable goals.⁶⁶⁸

This dynamic relation of state and capital produces the reflexive international system Deleuze and Guattari name the 'axiomatic'. As I introduced in the last chapter, the axiomatic is so called because flows are regulated not by the theorematism imposition of codes, but rather by 'axioms', temporary, contingent, and immanent ordering principles produced as localised compromises between the deterritorializing forces of capital and state reterritorialization. Each axiom is independent of the others and differentiates an existing flow, establishing a regulative principle grounded in the actual engagement of particular elements. In this sense the axiomatic features its own 'experimentation', with new axioms being 'added' or 'subtracted' on the basis of an objective situation: as an additional 'axiom', that space exploration was worthy of a certain amount of funding, was produced and revoked as a compromise between NASA, the US government, domestic corporations, and the international market, according to the actual interaction of these specific bodies rather than the application of a pre-determined principle.⁶⁶⁹ Despite this continual openness to redetermination however, axiomatics is not 'problematizing'. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, 'far from drawing creative lines of flight and conjugating traits of positive deterritorialization, axiomatics blocks all lines' and 'subordinates them to a punctual system':⁶⁷⁰ that is to say, it translates the products of events into immanent yet generally applied principles, which collectively form a totality or overall 'conjunction' to which individuals and communities remain subject, rather than allowing particular bodies to produce their own orientations. This makes the axiomatics, which has become definitive of both 'capitalism and present day politics', the 'heir' to the theorematism approach to politics, and all the more restrictive for its ability to adapt to the shifting dynamics of power.⁶⁷¹ Whilst models of communication, democracy, and human rights may be predominant amongst modern nation states with a capitalist mode of production, the circumstances to which these political institutions react are determined axiomatically according to the constant interaction of social forces, rather than with reference to subjective or intersubjective constants,

⁶⁶⁸ This situation has changed in the years since the publication of *A Thousand Plateaus*, with private companies now integral to the development of technology directed towards the establishment of new markets such as commercial space flight and asteroid mining. This movement of research from public to private capital perfectly characterises the 'experimental' nature of the corporate war machines, and arguably constitutes a greater threshold of technological deterritorialization than would have been possible under a more Fordist model.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 454.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 461. For a discussion of the mathematical sources of these two potential approaches to multiplicity and event, see Daniel W. Smith, "Mathematics and the Theory of Multiplicities: Deleuze and Badiou revisited," in *Essays on Deleuze*, 287ff.

such that ‘the question is not that of freedom and constraint, nor of centralism and decentralization, but of the manner in which one masters the flows’ to which the concrete state is presently subject.⁶⁷²

The necessity of mastering flows restricts democratic capitalist states to two ‘poles’, each of which play a role within production. The first is that of ‘social democracy’, which concerns the ‘addition’ of new axioms to differentiate flows: as where a new axiom was created to differentiate a proportion of tax revenue towards NASA’s research, or where a welfare program might differentiate a particular section of the population from the mass. While the production of new axioms may coincide with a rational or ethical principle, Deleuze and Guattari argue that both differentiation and justification should be seen in the pragmatic terms of a reorganisation of the domestic market, ultimately serving to ‘displace’ capitalism’s internal limit by improving the productivity of existing labour or incorporating new workers or resources into the production process.

There is a multiplication of axioms most notably when an integrated domestic market is being organized to meet the requirements of the foreign market. Axioms for the young, for the old, for women, etc.⁶⁷³

Though states will often introduce such differentiations under pressure from demands for recognition on the part of particular interest groups, Deleuze and Guattari argue that it is likely to predominate not where institutions are most open to the communication of such demands, but where existing industries have reached the limits of their current profitability. In such circumstances, international capital finds greater potential returns on investment in new industries, and governments greater benefits in expanding the labour force and improving infrastructure to facilitate this expansion, than either would gain from the suppression of wages or demands for welfare. It is for this reason that the last great ‘laboratories’ of axiom production followed the two World Wars, firstly through the New Deal and Keynesian economics, and secondly in the form of the Marshall Plan, in both cases serving to recover lost industrial capacity.⁶⁷⁴

This second pole is that of ‘totalitarianism’, which concerns the ‘subtraction’ of axioms, or more accurately, the production of more exclusive axioms which differentiate flows to a lesser degree. As I explored in the last chapter, totalitarianism involves particular bodies within the state using its sovereign *pouvoir* to transform it into a ‘closed vessel’, adopting as their own the problems produced by decoded flows in relation to which the state remains impotent and applying their solutions through a ‘forced movement’ which excludes all

⁶⁷² ATP, 462.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

variation. Under capitalism, this means the international market, such that the ‘totalitarian’ impulse corresponds to a restriction of axioms to the minimum necessary to allow for the direct expropriation of surplus by international capital. Thus, there remain totalitarian states with a distinctly ‘Liberal’ economy, while the most characteristic example is not the Stalinist regime, but rather the ‘anarcho-capitalist’ and ‘minimal’ state established in Chile under Pinochet, which subjected the population to economic problems derived from the universities of the democratic United States and the needs of international capital.⁶⁷⁵

The Marshall Plan and Pinochet regime are of course extreme examples, and for the most part both poles are effectuated within the same states, either simultaneously or in successive but closely linked moments.⁶⁷⁶ I would argue that the biunivocal distributions which often characterise representative politics, for example, broadly map onto these two poles: thus in the UK, the neoliberal reforms of Margaret Thatcher and more recent drives towards austerity can be considered examples of the totalitarian subtraction of axioms, seeking to extract greater profits from existing workforces and industries, whilst those of Tony Blair were defined by the simultaneous implementation of the two poles, for example by increasing funding for education whilst simultaneously subjecting it to the exclusive directive axiom that its purpose was economic.

Rather than a suspicious hermeneutic finding the invisible hand of capital behind political decisions that appear *prima facie* to have received a democratic mandate, it is essential to note that the axiomatic is not a fixed economy of forces directing events, but rather ‘a kind of accounting’ in which the actual encounter of collective associations, institutions, international bodies, and individuals continually reproduces the immanent conjunctions into which their produced effects are translated, ‘ligaturing’ flows and restricting them to particular limits.⁶⁷⁷ This accounting is far from exact, however, and despite capital’s pervasiveness it would be ‘absurd to think that the insertion of popular movements is condemned in advance throughout this field of immanence’.⁶⁷⁸ A push for new axioms can win out even where international conditions are not ideal, should enough pressure be exerted: indeed, even where such conditions are in place, such exertion

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 223 ft. 24, and 462. Deleuze and Guattari describe this as part of the ‘isomorphism’ and relation of dependency that existed between the economic ‘centre’ established by the United States and the South American ‘periphery’ it partially organised according to the needs of its domestic market: a distinction I examine in the next section. For a study of the economic reforms put in place under the influence of the ‘Chicago school’, see Juan Gabriel Valdés, *Pinochet’s Economists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁶⁷⁶ ATP, 463. The example Deleuze and Guattari give here is that of the ‘ambiguous alternative “totalitarianism-social democracy”’ identifiable during the Presidency of João Figueiredo in Brazil (Ibid.). At the time of *A Thousand Plateaus*’ publication, Figueiredo’s dictatorship was in the process of implementing a number of reforms designed to lessen the influence of international corporations such as IBM on the domestic market by producing corporations of their own. For a recent study, see Jeff Seward, *The Politics of Capitalist Transformation: Brazilian informatics policy, regime change, and state autonomy*. (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁶⁷⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, “On Capitalism and Desire”, 270.

⁶⁷⁸ ATP, 466.

remains a prerequisite for change. Both examples of subjective redeployment I discussed in chapter three, that is, the 'New Deal' and Japanese post-war miracle, can be considered 'axiom laboratories', their openness to new differentiations enabling experimentation to continue where it would otherwise have been unable to realise lasting effects, and Deleuze and Guattari argue that social democratic struggles targeted at 'national and international axioms' are the only means by which we might ward off 'the danger of a worldwide labor bureaucracy or technocracy' taking hold.⁶⁷⁹

Despite their continuing necessity, however, Deleuze and Guattari remain insistent on the limits of macropolitical struggle, arguing that it can contribute to the complication of conflicting forces involved in the production of particular axioms but never overturn axiomatics itself. This is firstly due to the susceptibility of formal political institutions to the demands of international capital: as I examined in the last chapter, democratic institutions translate emergent desires into terms compatible with problems accepted as valid by party and electorate, and to the extent that these problems are themselves tied to educational and media institutions which form part of international complexes, and to a government incentivised to develop the domestic economy in the way they consider most profitable, even the most radical demands for change will thus be tempered by dominant systems of power. While it could be argued that establishing an appropriate set of rights and vertical forms of communication could guarantee that axioms necessary for welfare might be preserved despite any shift in international conditions, as I also explored in the last chapter, Deleuze and Guattari take even the most 'universal' human rights and open spaces of dialogue to be subject to more mundane grounds than reason. It is therefore also absurd to posit a division between "good" States that are democratic, social democratic or at the other extreme socialist' or otherwise 'tyrannical'.⁶⁸⁰ Some states are more open to democratic intervention and the 'communication' of opinion than others, and this intervention can at times be determining, but the interests and self-perceptions of the population in aggregate are part of an investment which can be redirected by both public and private interests. While actual individuals may well escape these general aggregations, a fearful desire can always prevail, particularly where, as I explore in the next section, the population is subject to constant insecurity. In practice, all axioms, including human rights, can be revoked given the right conditions.

Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, Deleuze and Guattari argue that macropolitical pressure can never overcome axiomatics because axioms always remain specific to a particular domestic market, such that

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid., 464.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid., 466.

they can easily be compensated for by international supply chains realising exploitation elsewhere. As Deleuze puts it in “Control and Becoming”:

In capitalism only one thing is universal, the market. There’s no universal state, precisely because there’s a universal market of which states are the centers, the trading floors. But the market’s not universalizing, homogenizing, it’s an extraordinary generator of both wealth and misery. A concern for human rights shouldn’t lead us to extol the ‘joys’ of the liberal capitalism of which they’re an integral part. There’s no democratic state that’s not compromised to the very core by its part in generating human misery.⁶⁸¹

States are always limited by the global ‘continuum’ of flows to which they can only react, explaining ‘how the oppressed can take an active role in oppression’, and in particular how ‘the workers of the rich nations actively participate in the exploitation of the Third World, the arming of dictatorships, and the pollution of the atmosphere’:⁶⁸² in each case they remain subject to the local conditions of a state, their desire invested in compensation for flows which pre-exist any decision on their part, making an internationalist outlook difficult, if not impossible, to sustain. The battle for new axioms in one location can thus weaken the fight further down the supply chain; it can strengthen the desire to protect the domestic market through subsidies or trade barriers. Intervention within the axiomatic is unable to realise a truly international shift, with any exerted pressure remaining both localised to the economy in which it takes place and susceptible to change alongside the conditions to which it is subject.

II. Unequal Exchange and Molecular Insecurity

Despite the inability of localised macropolitical action to overcome the pressures of axiomatics, it might still be argued that the constitutionalism and free trade policies developed by Liberal philosophy and political economy have been of huge benefit to the world, establishing the conditions for relative peace amongst democracies and for lifting previously ‘undeveloped’ areas out of poverty. Any hope of resolving the remaining international crises of world hunger, climate change, and international conflict, on this account, would therefore lie in a better practical application of these essentially good principles. As I argue in this section however, Deleuze and Guattari argue not just for the failure of present Liberal states and international agreements to resolve these crises, a position which would leave open the utopian possibility that they might be adapted in ways which made capitalism ethical, but for the inability of any state to resolve a form of inequality which is fundamental to axiomatics, or to alleviate the insecurity that marks its

⁶⁸¹ Deleuze, “Control and Becoming,” 172-173.

⁶⁸² *ATP*, 225.

necessary consequence. While a form of ‘security’ can be said to emerged at the ‘molar’ level of states and international agreement, this remains subject to a market which produces constant crises both nationally and internationally, albeit often in ways obscured by dominant forms of recognition.

When considered in the light of the present, Deleuze and Guattari’s account of international politics might be considered lacking in a number of respects, notably in its excessive focus on the economic centre established by the democratic capitalist states of the West. Whilst accepting that the international distribution of economic centres and their peripheries has significantly altered since and will continue to do so in future, my aim in this section is to maintain focus on the relation between these broadly ‘Liberal’ states and the world market, arguing that they are unable to resolve the inequality that is fundamental to the axiomatic in which they operate, and hence to ‘progress’ towards an ultimate solution to the global crises of capitalism, even if the principles by which they operate were to alter.

Though all states are ‘effectuations’ of the axiomatic, Deleuze and Guattari argue that they are particularised according to the relative power of their domestic market to resist the more immediate demands of international war machines, the most notable of which are those conglomerates and companies which extend across the borders of states. This leads them to adopt the distinction, formulated in world-systems theory, between an economic ‘centre’ of wealthier states and a ‘periphery’ from which they extract value. The states of the latter, broadly mapping onto what has been called the ‘global south’, have typically possessed a much greater variety of government forms than the states of the centre, which have, at least in the West, exclusively taken the form of democratic capitalist states operating according to broadly Liberal principles: a heterogeneity Deleuze and Guattari present as a direct consequence of their varied positions within global supply chains.

[The axiomatic] tolerates, in fact it requires, a certain peripheral polymorphy, to the extent that it is not saturated, to the extent that it actively repels its own limits; this explains the existence, at the periphery, of heteromorphic social formations, which certainly do not constitute vestiges or transitional forms since they realize an ultramodern capitalist production (oil, mines, plantations, industrial equipment, steel, chemistry), but which are nonetheless precapitalist, or extracapitalist, owing to other aspects of their production and to the forced inadequacy of their domestic market in relation to the world market... it gives rise to and organizes its “Third World.”⁶⁸³

⁶⁸³ Ibid., 436-437.

As Deleuze and Guattari argue, perhaps the greatest hypocrisy of modern Liberal states is the fact that they not only participate in a global market responsible for any number of crimes against the universal rights by which they define themselves, but that they establish ‘strict complementarities’ with ‘colonial or neocolonial tyrannies that they install or support in other regions’, these including the ‘isomorphy between the United States and the bloodiest of the South American tyrannies’ as well as the relations of dependency ‘between France, England, and West Germany and certain African States’.⁶⁸⁴ Beyond simply failing to uphold rights beyond their borders, Liberal states are only maintained as such because of their position in the market, which dominates weaker economies and forces their adaptation in ways most conducive to the global supply chain. While many states in the global south have democratised and achieved greater economic independence following the decolonial movements of the Cold War and after, the argument here is less about the direct political influence exerted by central states onto their peripheries as the necessarily uneven influence of international capital over domestic markets, an axiom which serves as a modern ‘substitute’ for colonisation.⁶⁸⁵

In this they closely follow the work of Samir Amin, arguing that the peripheral states are not to be considered ‘undeveloped’, a position that would relegate them to an earlier stage within a pre-determined teleology, but rather actively ‘underdeveloped’, that is, maintained in a state of forced inadequacy: not through war (at least, not primarily) but through international trade.⁶⁸⁶ In opposition to the principle of comparative advantage associated with the political economy of David Ricardo and others, Amin argues that trade between economies follows a principle of ‘unequal exchange’ which follows from the fact that the world market establishes a single price for goods despite the supply chains which produce them incorporating both central and peripheral states. To the extent that the peripheral states maintain a lower organic composition of capital, the ‘ultramodern’ production facilities they incorporate being owned by foreign corporations, the value of each hour of labour in their economies is able to acquire less of the goods produced by the chain as a whole, with their reliance on imports constituting a ‘hidden transfer’ of wealth.⁶⁸⁷ Their specialism in production does not therefore result in their receiving greater surplus, but

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid., 456 and 465.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁶ See Samir Amin, *Unequal Development: An essay on the social formation of peripheral capitalism* trans. Brian Pearce (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1976), 143: ‘Out of an overall total of exports from the underdeveloped countries of the order of \$35 billion (in 1966), the ultra-modern capitalist sector (oil, mining, and primary processing of minerals, modern plantations - like those of United Fruit in Central America, or of Unilever in Africa and Malaya) provides at least three-quarters, or \$26 billion’.

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., 144: ‘The hidden transfers of value from the periphery to the center, due to the mechanism of unequal exchange, are of the order of \$22 billion, that is to say, twice the amount of the “aid,” and the private capital that the periphery receives. One is certainly justified in talking of the plundering of the Third World’.

rather ‘blocks’ their growth, preventing their accumulation of the capital necessary to enter the more profitable industries. As the only way to successfully interrogate this ‘main problem of our day’ Amin therefore instructs us to analyse not only the relations between classes, but also those which join ‘bourgeois’ and ‘proletarian’ nations.⁶⁸⁸

Deleuze and Guattari follow Amin closely on this point, presenting unequal exchange as an ‘indispensable’ axiom of capitalism.⁶⁸⁹ But they also ‘strengthen and relativize’ his theses, arguing that the movement of ‘high industry and highly industrialized agriculture’ to the global periphery, alongside the correspondent focus on ‘postindustrial’ activities in the centre (notably ‘automation, electronics, information technologies, the conquest of space, overarmament, etc.’) has resulted in the emergence of new peripheries internal to the latter:

It could even be said in certain respects that the periphery and the center exchange determinations: a deterritorialization of the center, a decoding of the center in relation to national and territorial aggregates, cause the peripheral formations to become true centers of investment, while the central formations peripheralize.⁶⁹⁰

Deleuze and Guattari credit Negri and others for identifying these ‘internal margins’ within the economic core, joining students with the *emarginati*, a ‘mass’ or multitude which, as Nicholas Thoburn summarises, transversally unifies ‘proletarian youth, cultural workers, off-the-books and precarious workers, students, sexual minorities, temporary workers, houseworkers, feminists, the unemployed, service workers, and young workers of the small factories’ according to their mutual deviation from the constants of Fordist production.⁶⁹¹ groups one might directly connect to the ‘children of ’68’ Deleuze and Guattari take to constitute the suppressed potentials of the post-war era. As I explore in the final section, these peripheries establish decoded connections which ‘work [states] from the inside’, harbouring a revolutionary potential; but their subjection to ‘subcontracting, temporary work, or work in the underground economy’, and the fact their ‘official subsistence is assured only by State allocations and wages subject to interruption’ also constitutes a hidden violence which exploits their deviation from the norms of traditional employment.⁶⁹²

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid., 359.

⁶⁸⁹ *ATP*, 468. For a further study of the relation between Deleuze and Guattari and the ‘dependency theorists’, including their explicit references to Amin, see Samuel Weeks, “A Politics of Peripheries: Deleuze and Guattari as Dependency Theorists,” *Deleuze and Guattari Studies* 13, no. 1 (2019): pp. 79-103, <https://doi.org/10.3366/dlgs.2019.0342>.

⁶⁹⁰ *ATP*, 468-469.

⁶⁹¹ Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx, and Politics*, 125ff.

⁶⁹² *ATP*, 469.

Such hidden expropriation continues despite the promulgation of human rights and democracy within the states of the centre, which may devote some efforts towards its identification and amelioration (as with the production of new labour regulations or enhanced foreign aid) but continue to extract more than they provide. Even where a real desire to end exploitation exists, however, and though its distribution changes, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the inequality between centres and peripheries is fundamental to axiomatics itself. This is because attempts to resolve such inequalities themselves proceed via the production of 'axioms', serving to differentiate particular flows and select particular elements for incorporation into the production process, and so remain in this sense limited in their application. In other words, unlike the defined exclusions which unify the 'striated' interiors of the strata, an axiomatic does not exclude so much as it simply fails to integrate everything. To give an example, an axiom which treats unemployment will differentiate the unemployed from the mass of the potential workforce, redirecting a flow of capital towards them as a means of easing political pressure or reincorporating their labour; but it will simultaneously exclude a number of marginal exceptions not counted within official records of unemployment: as, until recently, those with serious disabilities were often excluded from the category of potential workers, precluding in advance the problem of how this inclusion might be facilitated.⁶⁹³ Though further axioms can be produced which incorporate these peripheries, as labour regulations in Western countries now often centre this problem, further, unrecognised margins remain, extending to all it is presently considered 'unfeasible' to include within the workforce.

Such divisions are not quantitative, and the actual numbers distributed between these sets is not the point in question. Deleuze and Guattari's point here is not that material conditions cannot be improved, or the worst excesses of poverty or social exclusion corrected: it is instead that, to the extent this occurs within a global system of capital flows continually incentivised to extract surplus, any attempt to do so would serve a purpose in production restricted in the extent of its operation, and hence liable to be compensated for by enhanced exploitation on the new periphery, or the production of further peripheries elsewhere:

Even a social democracy adapted to the Third World surely does not undertake to integrate the whole poverty-stricken population into the domestic market; what it does, rather, is to effect the class rupture that will select the integratable elements.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹³ See Deleuze and Guattari, "May '68 did not take place," 235: 'What we institutionalize in unemployment, in retirement, or in school, are controlled "situations of abandonment," for which the handicapped are the model.'

⁶⁹⁴ *ATP*, 468.

In this, they oppose suggestions that global trade and international investment have a necessary relation to the alleviation of poverty, as proposed by the World Bank and many others.⁶⁹⁵ While the increasing expansion of local economic centres and investment in the ‘developing’ world may have decreased poverty in absolute terms, in each case these new inclusions were matched by the production of further peripheries and forms of exclusion both within these nations and the global centre.

It might be objected in Rawlsian terms that such inequality is, in itself, not a great evil, and at the least far less significant than any decrease in poverty in absolute terms. Beyond simply being a source of inequality however, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the irremediable division of core and periphery leads to problems of distribution or circulation which neither states nor the market can solve, the most important of which concern ‘the flow of matter-energy, the flow of population, the flow of food, and the urban flow’.⁶⁹⁶ Global hunger, for example, remains a problem despite every advance in agricultural technology and efforts towards international aid, with each axiom produced to divert food remaining tied to particular forms of recognition which leave spaces of starvation on the peripheries, notably in warzones and economically ‘deprived’ areas within states deemed wealthy enough to handle the problem themselves.⁶⁹⁷ In the same way, each distribution of shelter or resources produced to resolve the humanitarian crisis of migration, and even simply of homelessness within wealthy nations, have thus far failed due to the necessity of compromise with nationalist or financial interests; the attempts to establish international agreements capable of limiting carbon production have likewise remained halting and subject to significant reversal despite climate change threatening the very habitation of the Earth. Though such crises alter over time both nationally and internationally (as the global rate of starvation has tended to fall over recent decades, whilst the worst effects of climate change have yet to be fully realised), and while the axiomatic marshals the productive capacity of the entire planet in a mobilisation completely unfeasible in any previous economic system, in each case they appear irresolvable.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that this is not to be attributed to some essentially flawed dimension of human nature, nor to a contingent failure of political will, but rather to the translation of any such will into

⁶⁹⁵ See for example World Bank Group and World Trade Organization, *The Role of Trade in Ending Poverty*. (Geneva: World Trade Organization, 2015).

⁶⁹⁶ *ATP*, 468.

⁶⁹⁷ On the question of global hunger, see von Grebmer, K., J. Bernstein, R. Alders, O. Dar, R. Kock, F. Rampa, M. Wiemers, K. Acheampong, A. Hanano, B. Higgins, R. Ní Chéilleachair, C. Foley, S. Gitter, K. Ekstrom, and H. Fritschel. *2020 Global Hunger Index: One Decade to Zero Hunger: Linking Health and Sustainable Food Systems*. (Bonn: Welthungerhilfe; and Dublin: Concern Worldwide, 2020). As the report argues, despite significant progress in countering global hunger levels, ‘Progress Is Too Slow, or Even Being Reversed, in Many Countries’, whilst ‘Even in some countries without hunger crises at the national level, marginalized groups and selected regions face tragically high levels of hunger and undernutrition’, with the anticipated ‘zero hunger’ remaining unattainable this decade (Ibid., 5).

localised axioms subject to compromises amongst a number of national and international forces, each of which is driven by problems of 'security' which make such compromises appear a matter of political or economic necessity. As has been widely noted by proponents of Liberal nationalism, the world order that emerged from the post-war reconstructions has reterritorialized the drive towards total war within a more peaceful network of productive, financial, and commercial networks, matched by supranational organisations such as the League of Nations, U.N., and World Bank.⁶⁹⁸ Deleuze and Guattari argue that, despite the limited the number of open wars between the more developed economies it has produced, the absolute peace is nonetheless 'still more terrifying than fascist death' because it produces a constant insecurity or violence at the molecular level of specific nations, communities and individuals, one which remains obscured by the dominant molar conceptions of international politics, which focus on such problems as the 'rights' of sovereign powers to act within their borders and on the world stage and the international accords necessary to prevent open conflict.⁶⁹⁹ To the extent that peripheries can appear anywhere, depending on the needs of production, the 'molar' security of the world economy can be guaranteed only alongside an 'organized insecurity or molecularized, distributed, programmed catastrophe':⁷⁰⁰

The administration of a great organized molar security has as its correlate a whole micro-management of petty fears, a permanent molecular insecurity, to the point that the motto of domestic policymakers might be: a macropolitics of society by and for a micropolitics of insecurity.⁷⁰¹

The 'macropolitics' of state sovereignty and supranational agreement that defines post-war international relations obscures a world in which every individual, corporation, and state is forced to continually adapt in order to maintain their relation to capital. At the state level, the threats of capital flight, currency fluctuation, and economic sanctions are often enough to ensure that domestic policies of the wealthier nations rarely diverge from those which assist the movement of international capital, while the peripheral states are maintained by economic necessity to the specialisation in production that maintains their peripheral status; at the political level, policymakers remain tied to the necessity of aligning with the interests which keep them in power, and thus to the needs of their domestic economies; individuals are subject to problems of economic necessity which force them to adopt the norms required by the market.

⁶⁹⁸ *ATP*, 422. The development of sovereignty proposed by Hardt and Negri in *Empire* can be considered an elaboration on the Deleuze-Guattarian position outline here. See Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 31-41.

⁶⁹⁹ *ATP*, 422.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 467.

⁷⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 215.

The 'absolute' peace is therefore maintained by problems of 'survival', 'security', or 'deterrence', a reterritorializing 'terror' produced by the global economy 'as a function of the real, very special kind of peace it promotes and has already installed'.⁷⁰²

Deleuze and Guattari can therefore be taken to oppose the longstanding association of democracy to global peace, where this is presented as the result of the rationality inherent in democracy or the interconnectedness of interests produced by international trade: rather, they believe the lack of direct military engagement between mature democracies to have resulted from the needs of the global production process in which they are embedded. The peace (or rather, lack of overt war) which now defines relations within the economic centre is not a triumph for Liberal constitutionalism or cosmopolitanism, but a necessary dimension of a process which has exchanged the direct conflict of states for the more subtle forms of violence realised by proxy wars, military 'interventions', the continual expropriation of the world's resources, and the constant exploitation of peripheries: a 'Third World War', waged against potential sources of profit, which continues to this day.⁷⁰³

This Third World War has no set justification, but rather conjures the image of what Virilio called the 'unspecified enemy', an 'individual, group, class, people, event, [or] world', recognised as a contingent negative influence or potential disastrous outcome, which presents each crisis as the result of external factors marring the otherwise rational operation of the world economy, each an 'exception' demanding the temporary disabling of the rights which ground Liberal states.⁷⁰⁴ What one might call false crises, enemies, and problems, such as the war on terrorism, the war on drugs, the necessity of constant growth, and so on, constantly emerge to explain the continued existence of the worst excesses of capitalism, while the real problems remain unsolved: not because of a failure of political will, but because they are the axiomatic consequence of the unequal distribution upon which capitalism rests. For this reason, as Deleuze argues later, we must not 'confuse the quest for freedom with the embrace of capitalism':

It seems doubtful that the joys of capitalism are enough to liberate a people. The bloody failure of socialism is on everybody's lips, but no one sees capitalist globalization as a failure, in spite of the bloody inequalities that condition the market, and the populations who are excluded from it. The American Revolution failed long before the Soviet Revolution.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰² Ibid., 467.

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁵ Deleuze, "We invented the Ritornello," 379.

If we are to end the Third World War, Deleuze and Guattari would argue that we cannot look to the continued reform of capitalism or the supranational organisation that sustain it. Instead, we must find the means to liberate ourselves by regaining the capacity to constitute problems. As I explore in the next section, this is a task that necessarily opposes minor movements to existing nation states.

III. Nationalism, Subjection, Enslavement, and Control

As the last section argued, Deleuze and Guattari believe that the material crises which plague capitalism cannot be solved through the production of new axioms, which might benefit a particular community or ameliorate the worst effects of a crisis, but will always leave a peripheral excess to which exploitation is diverted. Corollary to this ineffectiveness, however, they argue that the axiomatic actively prevents the emergence of any direct and problematising approach to resolving these crises or ending this exploitation. Subject to the problems of security associated with global production, intervention within general axioms via the legitimate institutions appears the only means of realising change, however limited: anything else invites destruction.

However modest the demand, it always constitutes a point that the axiomatic cannot tolerate: when people demand to formulate their problems themselves, and to determine at least the particular conditions under which they can receive a more general solution.⁷⁰⁶

Problematisation's 'scrambling' of social codes is an existential threat to the axiomatic no less than to the state, as an 'indeterminate' body establishing its connections in response to the potentials of a concrete situation, rather than a formal method, cannot be subject to the compromises which maintain the security of production. Deleuze and Guattari argue that the tendency of states to convert such problematisation into regularity now serves the axiomatic, their semiotic regimes providing the 'quantitative and qualitative processes, miniaturizations, and adaptations that enable it to graduate its attacks or counterattacks, each time as a function of the nature of the "unspecified enemy"' which supposedly threatens international security at that moment.⁷⁰⁷

Deleuze and Guattari associate this development with the rise of 'nations', which they describe as 'precisely the State as a model of realization' for the axiomatic.⁷⁰⁸ Nationalism has historically maintained an ambiguous relation to international security because of its connection to mass mobilisation, realised firstly

⁷⁰⁶ *ATP*, 471.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 456.

through revolution, and then as total war.⁷⁰⁹ The national fervour unleashed by the French revolution and its ‘patriotic’ subjectification, for example, culminated in the *levée en masse*, an apparatus of mass conscription which, once appropriated by Napoleon, began an arms race in Europe that dramatically increased the size of standing armies.⁷¹⁰ Since its appropriation by states, nationalism has acted as a reterritorializing force which enables the continual reinvestment of the population’s desire, and so a continuous or absolute deterritorialization: as it provided the Fascist drive towards militarised annihilation with the means of marshalling populations towards destructive ends, and as it now represents an essential means of maintaining the security of global production, allowing for the reterritorialization of individuals and communities whose collective associations are otherwise undermined by capitalism.

The nation... is inseparable from the modern state that gives consistency to the corresponding land and people. It is the flow of naked labor that makes the people, just as it is the flow of Capital that makes the land and its industrial base. In short, the nation is the very operation of a collective subjectification, to which the modern state corresponds as a process of subjection.⁷¹¹

Where traditional conceptions of nationalism take it to concern a ‘native’ and ‘pregiven’ population with a shared history, ethnic identity, or culture, Deleuze and Guattari see these bonds as a contingent selection, employed by the state as part of a ‘collective subjectification’ which reterritorializes the flows which were

⁷⁰⁹ As Theda Skocpol notes, ‘New state organizations—armies, administrations, committees of surveillance, and so forth’ established during periods of revolutionary upheaval ‘are at once authoritarian and unprecedentedly mass-mobilizing’, as competition amongst elites for authority over the population leads them to mobilise the politically disenfranchised, motivating a ‘democratisation’ which is neither ‘an extension of political liberalism or the realization of democratic socialism, but... an enhancement of popular involvement in national political life’. Theda Skocpol, “Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization,” *World Politics* 40, no. 2 (1988): pp. 147-168, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010360>, 148-149. This correlates exactly with the ‘conjugation’ of decoded flows Deleuze and Guattari associate with new centres of power, which establish assemblages of enunciation through which peripheral figures might gain new potentials, but which also provide the conditions for their ultimate subjection. Where Skocpol associates such bodies with ‘illiberal’ revolutions (including, she argues, the ‘Terror’ which followed the French Revolution and the theocratic regime that followed the Iranian Revolution) Deleuze and Guattari would argue that ‘authoritarian’ institutions remain a central dimension of modern Liberal democracies, one which makes them no less mass mobilising, though towards the ends of production rather than war.

⁷¹⁰ The drive towards nationalism might be described as having been relativised by the Vienna system which, more than simply a balance of power, can be described as a ‘security culture’ imposing a particular set of problems onto states, obliging them to quash internal demands for Liberal constitutional reform and Nationalist demands for self-determination. See Beatrice de Graaf, Ido de Haan, and Brian Vick, “Vienna 1815: Introducing a European Security Culture,” in *Securing Europe after Napoleon: 1815 and the New European Security Culture*, ed. Beatrice de Graaf, Ido de Haan, and Brian Vick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). Nationalism continued to be a deterritorializing factor disrupting the old empires, re-emerging with the revolutions of 1848, and ending only where national identity became an integral correlate to state power.

⁷¹¹ *ATP*, 468.

released from their Feudal ties by industrialization, particularising the universal subjectification of the rational or rights-bearing subject in ways conducive to production.

In this, their view closely resembles that of sociologist Ernest Gellner, who proposes that the desire for concurrence between a political and national unit could only have emerged with modernity and the need for a general labour force that could be specialised to fit the demands of a rapidly evolving production process.⁷¹² Against the standard nationalist contention that ‘peoples’ are originary, Gellner argues that the sheer number of cultures and languages which make no attempt to manifest themselves as political units demonstrates that the desire for dominance is specific to those cultures which are taken up by a state already in place, which promotes it in order to ensure a certain homogeneity amongst its working population. It is therefore somewhat arbitrary which ‘nationality’ will be privileged by the industrial state, out of the multiplicity of cultures they are liable to contain; but, once tied to the educational institutions necessary to continually reproduce a ‘high’ (one might say, major) culture, it will assert itself on others and become the unique means by which individuals can interact smoothly with an industrialised economy which increasingly demands their adaptability.⁷¹³

In parallel terms, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the birth of nations involved opposition not only to the existing territorializations of Feudal class identities, but also to local reterritorializations that might have made collectives incompatible with the ‘general’ flow of labour, including the highly skilled artisanal occupations and collective identities not assimilated into the ‘high’ culture:

the birth of nations implies many artifices: Not only are they constituted in an active struggle against the imperial or evolved systems, the feudal systems, and the autonomous cities, but they crush their own “minorities,” in other words, minoritarian phenomena that could be termed “nationalitarian,” which work from within and if need be turn to the old codes to find a greater degree of freedom.⁷¹⁴

Deleuze and Guattari deploy the term ‘nationalitarian’ to refer to a reterritorialization on the molar identities and particularities of the nation, as with the reterritorialization of philosophy discussed in the last chapter. Here their use of the term is closer to the original use given to it by Anouar Abdel-Malek, who uses it to refer to anti-imperialist movements seeking liberation from a foreign or colonial power, and who in

⁷¹² See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 24-38. Though *Nations and Nationalism* was released three years after *A Thousand Plateaus*, it expands upon a chapter from his 1964 text *Thought and Change*.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷¹⁴ *ATP*, 456.

Deleuze and Guattari's terms use cultural reterritorializations as the basis for resistance to the molar impositions of the state.⁷¹⁵ Crushing these particularities is a necessary prerequisite for the imposition of a general conception of the subject which could then be particularised by schools and other arborescent institutions according to the needs of the labour force.⁷¹⁶ The success of this project is demonstrated by the fact that 'the only remaining element of work left under world capitalism is the molecular, or molecularized, individual, in other words, the "mass" individual', one who gains particularity only from the predetermined activities into which they are led by the institutions legitimised to do so.⁷¹⁷

Nationalism is therefore fundamentally a form of faciality, establishing the 'major' norms of identity against which all minority is relativised and made compatible with the needs of the market. The nation state thus establishes capital as not only the single active right, but also 'a single unqualified and global Subjectivity, which capitalizes all of the processes of subjectification', with the authority imposed by arborescent institutions such as education now serving to subvert the general conception of the subject, and the necessity of subjection to the state that forms its inexorable consequence, to strictly economic ends.⁷¹⁸

In effect, capital acts as the point of subjectification that constitutes all human beings as subjects; but some, the "capitalists," are subjects of enunciation that form the private subjectivity of capital, while the others, the "proletarians," are subjects of the statement, subjected to the technical machines in which constant capital is effectuated.⁷¹⁹

The proletariat is here defined not as a class with specific interests, but as a 'mass' moulded by and to the means of production, the problems which orient their lives determined axiomatically in ways which align with the market. In this sense, a capitalist mass of investors, managers, and entrepreneurs, alongside, I would

⁷¹⁵ See Anouar Abdel-Malek, *Social Dialectics: Nation and Revolution*, trans. Mike Gonzalez, vol. 2 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 13: '[The] nationalitarian phenomenon... has as its object, beyond the clearing of the national territory, the independence and sovereignty of the national state, uprooting in depth the positions of the ex-colonial power – the reconquest of the power of decision in all domains of national life... Historically, fundamentally, the struggle is for national liberation, the instrument of that reconquest of identity which... lies at the heart of everything'.

⁷¹⁶ This correlates in particular with earlier presentations of Nationalism which provided an essential particular differentiation which supplemented any claim to 'universality' on the part of Liberal governments. Mill, for example, described such 'minor' nations as the Bretons, Basque, Welsh and Scottish nations as 'inferior and more backward', and therefore as ultimately benefiting from their assimilation into the wider community of 'highly civilised and cultured people'. John Stuart Mill, "Considerations on Representative Government," in *On Liberty, Utilitarianism and Other Essays*, 375. Contemporary visions tend to be more communitarian, aiming to preserve specific cultures and even allowing them degrees of autonomy: but only insofar as they form a recognised variant of the unitary field of the Nation, ensuring that they never enter a process of becoming that might further disrupt the social field.

⁷¹⁷ *ATP*, 215.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 452.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 457.

argue, the politicians who enable them, form a private common sense which establishes the problems to which all others are subject, this being the ‘capture’ specific to modern nation states.⁷²⁰

From a standpoint within the capitalist mode of production, it is very difficult to say who is the thief and who the victim, or even where the violence resides. That is because the worker is born entirely naked and the capitalist objectively “clothed,” an independent owner. That which gave the worker and the capitalist this form eludes us because it operated in other modes of production.⁷²¹

This authoritative relation serves to obscure the despotism of the present world-system, which subverts the pre-established capture of states and redirects their cruelty towards the ends of capital.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that this capture continues to mutate alongside the means of production.

Where previously it was characterised by the social subjection which divided bourgeoisie and proletariat, the ‘postindustrial’ activity of the centre increasingly incorporates not only the marginalised ‘extensive labor that has become erratic and floating’, but also an ‘intensive surplus labor that no longer even takes the route of labor’, introducing indirect processes which manipulate subjects in ways which improve their contribution to the production process.⁷²² The most notable example of this concerns the ‘internal communication’ enabled by digital technologies: while we remain socially ‘subjected’ to phones and computers, these being machines with which we willingly interact as part of education, labour, and leisure, this subjection also enables ‘processes of normalization, modulation, modeling, and information that bear on language, perception, desire, movement, etc.’ to aggregate, analyse, and control our activity.⁷²³ This brings subjection ‘to its most radical expression’ and so reinstates ‘the purest of knots’, that is, the ‘machinic enslavement’ or direct imposition of social role which characterised pre-modern states.⁷²⁴ Individuals are as much shaped by the needs of production as they are subjected to it, allowed a degree of choice in terms of the machines to which they will be subject, but nonetheless treated like parts at the statistical level, controlled by all manner of nudges of which they remain unaware by both government and corporations.⁷²⁵

⁷²⁰ Along similar lines, Deleuze and Guattari associate the two regimes of faciality with the psychiatric diagnosis common to different economic classes, with the bourgeoisie associated with the paranoia of signifying interpretation, constantly attempting to establish rules or principles for the association for phenomena, and the proletariat with ‘passional’ monomanias, reflecting their association of their desire with linear proceedings imposed from without (*ATP*, 121).

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, 447.

⁷²² *Ibid.*, 469.

⁷²³ *Ibid.*, 459.

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*, 457.

⁷²⁵ As Deleuze and Guattari argue, though enslavement is largely an operation of the market and subjection the operation of states, this distribution is in practice more nuanced, with states adopting their own statistical analysis and

I would argue that these ‘modulating’ technologies establish the human being itself as a form of constant capital, an investment obscured by the supposed voluntarism of social subjection and the veneer of Liberalism it enables. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, the wage regime is thus able to

take the subjection of human beings to an unprecedented point, and exhibit a singular cruelty, yet still be justified in its humanist cry: No, human beings are not machines, we don’t treat them like machines, we certainly don’t confuse variable capital and constant capital...⁷²⁶

Not only can the activity of the proletariat be directed and appropriated for profit, but they themselves are now as much materiel in the capitalist war against the falling rate of profit as they are users subjected to its machines.

As Deleuze expands in later interviews and essays, this marks a further shift in social organisation beyond the ‘disciplinary’ societies described by Foucault. Within the emerging ‘societies of control’, the population are manipulated not as individuals subjectified by the segmentary spaces of education, industry, and the penal system, but rather as statistical aggregates of ‘dividuals’, such that it is nearly impossible to identify a direct relation between power and the subjects on whom it is effected.⁷²⁷ The segments which organise and differentiate them are no longer separate and rigid, but simultaneous and ongoing, incorporating terrifying doubles of Deleuze-Guattarian problematisation: as corporations increasingly adopt malleable, even non-hierarchical structures, allowing for greater adaptation and encouraging active problematisation from their workforce; schools become supplemented by a continual process of digital education which no longer simply disciplines, but adapts to the user’s behaviour; and the clinic is replaced by an ever more amorphous tracking of emotional wellbeing.

Family, school, army, and factory are no longer so many analogous but different sites converging in an owner, whether the state or some private power, but transmutable or transformable coded configurations of a single business where the only people left are administrators.⁷²⁸

The ‘mass’ associations and centres of authority that previously ordered the social field have gradually lost their power, replaced with a moulding of subjectivity that reacts to the needs of capital.

manipulation. Government policies inspired by ‘nudge theory’ would fall within this category. See Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness* (London: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁷²⁶ *ATP*, 457.

⁷²⁷ Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies,” in *Negotiations*, 179.

⁷²⁸ *Ibid.*, 181.

It is almost impossible to formulate this capture as a problem within democratic institutions, as its ‘molecular’ effects do not seem to contradict the ‘molar’ conception of freedom as the ability for individuals to make decisions and participate within particular institutions. Democracies, as I explored in the last chapter, formulate problems according to a synthesis of recognisable interests, one which maintains its own reterritorializing function. To the extent Liberalism presents such bodies as the only legitimate means of political participation, therefore, it serves to funnel all desire into its effectuation of axioms, whilst obscuring the violence wrought on both individuals and collectives by the nation states and corporations, who take from them their capacity to formulate problems.

It may seem from this that Deleuze and Guattari attribute the capitalists and politicians who administer these processes with a creative power, one that might be subverted towards more positive ends; this would, however, be to confuse the position they are attributed within the axiomatic. On the one hand, the politicians of nation states are, as argued above, as subject to the problems of security as any individual, remaining thereby ‘impotent’ in the face of decoded flows and, in Deleuze and Guattari’s presentation, too ‘mediocre’ to chart those that might realise new forms of expression.⁷²⁹ On the other, capitalists fare no better: though they ‘may be the masters of surplus value and its distribution... they do not dominate the flows from which surplus value derives’, being no less subject to the insecurity of the axiomatic and limited in the problems they can pose.⁷³⁰ As Guattari writes elsewhere, these disjunctions force the capitalist to subject themselves to the machines they continually effectuate, and from which they draw their power:

The body without organs of capital is the ideal to master the decoded flows: it is always lagging behind machinery and innovation... capitalists are there to prevent capital from spreading, but they cannot. The capitalist expropriates himself in the very movement of capital.⁷³¹

The quantifiable relations of surplus and profit ensure the ‘problems’ posed by capitalists are limited in advance, driving them to concretise decoded flows into profitable investments and enterprises: a quixotic task leading them to constantly adapt to circumstances in relation to which they too remain impotent, and which ultimately exhausts them in turn. As Deleuze and Guattari write in *Anti-Oedipus*:

The bourgeois sets the example, he absorbs surplus value for ends that, taken as a whole, have nothing to do with his own enjoyment: more utterly enslaved than the lowest of slaves, he is the

⁷²⁹ ATP, 225.

⁷³⁰ Ibid., 226.

⁷³¹ Félix Guattari, *Généalogie du capital 1: Les équipements du pouvoir* (Paris: Centre d’Etudes, de Recherches et de Formation Institutionnelles, 1973), 29. Translation mine.

first servant of the ravenous machine, the beast of the reproduction of capital, internalization of the infinite debt. “I too am a slave”—these are the new words spoken by the master... that which in the miser is a mere idiosyncrasy, is, in the capitalist, the effect of the social mechanism, of which he is but one of the wheels.⁷³²

It was the bourgeoisie who first established the Liberal state, recapturing the capital and labour which escaped their Feudal bonds within the market: but as with all reterritorializing forces, they thus became the first servants of a new system, one which incorporates Liberal political philosophy, the rights it established, and the mechanisms of democracy as functional parts within an ultimately destructive pursuit of surplus. As capitalist, the bourgeois remains expropriated by capital, forced to do everything necessary to displace or confront its immanent limit; and as politician, they are forced to adopt an ultimately fruitless theorematic approach, aiming to enforce rights and principles within a democratic machine constantly undermined by the manufactured necessities which sustain the security of the world market. No one has control of the machine, least of all the capitalists and politicians who effectuate it: if we are to find the means to disrupt this process and resist the capture realised by both state and capital, Deleuze and Guattari insist we look elsewhere.

IV. The Age of Minorities and the New Proletariat

As Deleuze writes in the *Postscript*, though the axiomatic appears to be evolving into an increasingly encompassing form of control, there is no need to fear or hope, only to look for new weapons.⁷³³ Though it continually adapts to and ligatures decoded flows, it is also, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, ‘leaking’:⁷³⁴ the greater its dominance, the more it must alter and particularise its axioms, each of which inadvertently produces the conditions for “‘fuzzy,’ nondenumerable, nonaxiomizable sets’ upon the peripheries they fail to incorporate, a line of flight which leads them to define our age as that of ‘minorities’.⁷³⁵ Just as every differentiating axiom always leaves an excluded margin, so too do attempts by the state to crush minority and maintain molar security fail to do so exhaustively, such that ‘the capitalist axiomatic continually produces and reproduces what [its] war machine tries to exterminate’, resulting in a vector leading inexorably towards ‘the absolute war it is supposed to ward off’.⁷³⁶ Problems are ‘ballistic’ weapons that can be turned against axiomatics itself, rather than simply against particular forces within it, and there are always

⁷³² *AO*, 254.

⁷³³ Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies,” 178.

⁷³⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, “On Capitalism and Desire,” 270.

⁷³⁵ *ATP*, 469-470.

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*, 470-471.

problems to be found on the periphery: but as every revolutionary reclamation of problems will be swiftly met by a new appropriation, revolutionary politics must likewise adapt and change according to the flows in place, demanding a process of experimentation and sorcery extending beyond any one issue or movement.

Here I agree partially with the position of William Connolly, who has argued that while ‘state and interstate actions’ such as the exertion of ‘pressure to regulate derivative markets, to roll back Israeli settlements, [and] to promote a new state of Palestine... would help immeasurably’ to resolve some of the worst effects of the axiomatic, or what he calls the ‘global resonance machine’, these are in themselves insufficient, requiring ‘significant constituency changes on the ground to make them feasible’.⁷³⁷ Connolly argues that effective political action concerns experimentation with the various ‘roles’ we are ascribed within the axiomatic, and thus the assemblages of which we are part, uncovering those which, in Deleuze-Guattarian terms, could be pushed towards the plane of consistency: all the while working on ‘mood, belief, desire, and action’ to ensure this experimentation does not slide towards authoritarianism. This is entirely in keeping with my arguments presented in previous chapters: where we disagree, however, is on Connolly’s insistence that this experimentation ought to be restricted to ‘taking cumulative actions to move’ the axiomatic rather than to directly ‘expose and resist’ it.⁷³⁸ While Connolly’s chosen examples, this including the alteration of consumer spending habits, the public repudiation of extremism by religious figures, and the development of renewable forms of energy, would certainly assist in laying the ground for macropolitical action, to restrict micropolitics to such gradualist actions then ‘expressed’ through macropolitical change would, on my account, limit experimentation to the production of axioms then compensated for elsewhere, and so speaks to a hesitation I believe Deleuze and Guattari would not accept.⁷³⁹ As I argued in the third chapter, redeterminations of molar aggregates are essential to allowing experimentation to continue, but do not constitute its aims, and must be complemented by both concrete forms of resistance and a ‘transversal’ contribution to the problems of others.

As Deleuze puts it in discussion with Foucault, the axiomatic ‘cannot tolerate anything, whence you see its radical fragility at every point, and at the same time its global repression’.⁷⁴⁰ From a Deleuze-Guattarian perspective, this fragility does not concern the struggles for recognition characteristic of macropolitics: as I explored in the first section, the malleability of the axiomatic to such demands is rather its greatest strength,

⁷³⁷ William Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 2011), 143.

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*, 144-145.

⁷⁴⁰ Deleuze and Foucault, “Intellectuals and Power,” 208.

allowing it to compensate for points of political pressure with axioms which limit flows to a particular domain.

The response of the States, or of the axiomatic, may obviously be to accord the minorities regional or federal or statutory autonomy, in short, to add axioms. But this is not the problem: this operation consists only in translating the minorities into denumerable sets or subsets, which would enter as elements into the majority, which could be counted among the majority. The same applies for a status accorded to women, young people, erratic workers, etc.⁷⁴¹

Continuing previous arguments regarding the importance of macropolitical endeavours, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the ‘tactics’ of minorities necessarily leads them to frame their struggle in terms of recognition, intervening within existing political systems in pursuit of the ‘axioms, statutes, autonomies, [and] independences’ that would ameliorate immediate forms of exploitation.⁷⁴² But though such change can be ‘determining’, it is not a threat to axiomatics itself, the fragility of which lies rather in its inability to manage the indeterminate and their capacity to forge connections which undermine its compromises, and hence threaten production:

the struggle around axioms is most important when it manifests, itself opens, the gap between two types of propositions, propositions of flow and propositions of axioms... The issue is not at all anarchy versus organization, nor even centralism versus decentralization, but a calculus or conception of the problems of nondenumerable sets, against the axiomatic of denumerable sets.⁷⁴³

As I explored in the third chapter, while minor movements conjugate with and ‘submit’ to established constants where this is pragmatic, they are defined by their refusal to do the same at the level of problems. This allows them to cut through the political and economic ‘necessities’ the axiomatic imposes and instead establish a ‘calculus of problems’ to which they each contribute. ‘Such a calculus may have its own compositions, organizations, even centralizations; nevertheless, it proceeds not via the states or the axiomatic process but via a pure becoming of minorities’:⁷⁴⁴ that is, while it will involve localised conjugation with the state and macropolitical intervention within the axiomatic, it will itself be neither theorematic nor axiomatic, but problematising, adopting constants only to the extent these allow experimentation to continue.

⁷⁴¹ *ATP*, 470.

⁷⁴² *Ibid.*, 472.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, 471.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

I would therefore argue that, while Deleuze and Guattari consider macropolitics necessary, something which, in the Western democratic context, implies ongoing participation in representative democracies and experimentation with the molar aggregates presently recognised within them, any ‘tactical’ battles in this regard must be complemented by, and ultimately subject to, a micropolitical struggle which necessarily exceeds and will often oppose the institutions and molar social roles already present in the state. A minor community will never be more than a recognised variant of variable capital as long as it defines itself by ‘an acquired status, or... by a theoretically conquered state’, as it is only by reclaiming the capacity to repose problems in relation to their singular condition, and thus ‘leaving the plan(e) of capital, and never ceasing to leave it, that a mass becomes increasingly revolutionary and destroys the dominant equilibrium of the denumerable sets’, inducing a collective departure which disrupts the stasis of the present.⁷⁴⁵

The strictly ‘nondenumerable’, indeterminate, and unrecognisable mass movements which could produce such a ‘counterattack’ appear in two interconnected forms: firstly, through ‘clandestine’ minor movements, whose experimentation ‘works’ states from within, and secondly as collective realisations of new potentials for thinking, living, and associating. The former are ‘restricted’ sets, minor movements who repose the problem of their singular identity by charting and repurposing ‘decoded’ elements: as with Kafka and the Jews of Prague. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, there will always be those who escape via alternative subjectifications which disrupt the axiomatic’s present distribution: ‘a Palestinian or Basque or Corsican to bring about a “regional destabilization of security.”’⁷⁴⁶ These ‘strange bands’ in each case refer to the *puissance* of a multitude established on the fringes of molar collectives and institutions, including everything from ‘domino players to home brewers via the Veterans of Foreign Wars’.⁷⁴⁷ Deleuze and Guattari associate the independence of these multitudes with the resistance I discussed in the third chapter, such that they form ‘focal points of resistance and contagion’ with ‘their own towns, their own internationalism, etc.’, with which other movements can connect as a means of pursuing their own independence from the dominant norms of the state.⁷⁴⁸ Remaining local and ‘limited’ is in this sense is therefore not a disadvantage, and does not prevent ‘transversal’ unification with others: as I argued in the previous chapter, the ‘exteriority’ of the war machine is inclusive of all that is minor and autonomous, incorporating elements to the extent they realise their own difference, and so makes no demands that a body remain open to all

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid., 472.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid., 216.

⁷⁴⁷ *AO*, 257.

⁷⁴⁸ *ATP*, 437.

potential connections.⁷⁴⁹ These clandestine associations are, I would argue, in excess of the gradualist and cumulative experimentation with social roles Connolly proposes, simply because they adopt such roles only as ‘mimicry’, using them as part of a problematising endeavour which adopts or loses connections on the basis of the difference they induce. Experimentation in this sense pays as little regard for the ‘gradual’ as it does to existing conceptions of ‘reasonability’, with any compromise adopted as a means of allowing experimentation to continue rather than out of a principled avoidance of direct conflict with state and capital. The need for caution, in this case, may well lead them to temporary reterritorialization, but must ultimately lead to flight, and to a problematising association which overturns the molar categories which ground the state and establishes the conditions for universal minority in their place. It cannot remain satisfied purely with a redistribution of molar aggregations or with a new reterritorialization, however beneficial this may be in the moment.

The collective realisation of new potentials proceeds through ‘infinite’ sets constituted by departures from the restricted forms of expression imparted by Faciality, which, as I argued in chapter two, is in modern Western states defined by the majoritarian constants of the ‘White Man’. This leads Deleuze and Guattari to argue that all becoming within these states must in some way connect to the collective identities of ‘woman’ and ‘non-white’: ‘Woman: we all have to become that, whether we are male or female. Non-white: we all have to become that, whether we are white, yellow, or black’.⁷⁵⁰ The ‘clandestine’ bodies, whilst remaining singular and irreducible, will, through their positive formation of connections, constitute solutions to the problem of what it means to be other than the molar identities demarcated by major norms and the ‘minorities’ recognised through their deviance. The singular, concrete forms of solidarity and resistance through which they continue thus also connect to an ‘infinite’ and ‘fuzzy’ set of all that refuse the established molar categories. From Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective, what it means to be feminine (or perhaps better, non-male, where male is considered in the restrictive, molar sense found within present Faciality) and what it means to be ‘non-white’ are problems continually reopened by the experimentation of these concrete groups, something which can then inform the macropolitical struggles for recognition on the part of the associated molar aggregate: as the various ‘waves’ of feminism have consistently problematised the molar qualities associated with femininity, firstly in opposition to the manufactured image of

⁷⁴⁹ Andrew Culp has emphasised the ‘clandestine’, even ‘conspiratorial’ nature of the war machine, promoting this as an alternative to the immanent democratic politics characteristic of Spinozist-inspired readings such as that of Hardt and Negri (Culp, *Dark Deleuze*, 41-43). Though he does not elaborate further, it can be surmised that he is here referring to the importance of these delimited bands as an essential complement to the universal minority of the revolutionary proceeding as a whole.

⁷⁵⁰ *ATP*, 470.

subservience, and then against the restriction of feminist analysis to the interests of white middle class women. But while these macropolitical struggles are determining, they ought not be taken to exhaust the efforts of clandestine bodies: any concrete experimentation, to the extent that the individuals incorporated within it will necessarily engage with the majoritarian constants of masculinity, whiteness, and the 'deviances' they circumscribe, will reopen these problems once again.

These two types of minoritarianism are thus continuous dimensions of the one revolutionary process, with finite sets being singular particularisations that constitute the infinite sets. In each case, minority engenders further potentials for minority, such that the efforts of concrete groups might contribute to a 'worldwide movement' even where they seem most localised:

Whether it be the infinite set of the nonwhites of the periphery, or the restricted set of the Basques, Corsicans, etc., everywhere we look we see the conditions for a worldwide movement: the minorities recreate "nationalitarian" phenomena that the nation-states had been charged with controlling and quashing.⁷⁵¹

As I argued in the last chapter, these minor movements are not without their dangers, and constant analysis remains necessary to discover those capable of realising a productive set of connections which enable those who take up this collective identity to do so in ways which allow experimentation to continue, without fearfully imposing norms derived from other molar reterritorializations, descending into microfascism, becoming embroiled in the struggle for *pouvoir*, or becoming purely reactive and destructive. Where they successfully maintain their resistance to the dominant norms of signification and subjectification, however, without thereby realising a further form of oppression, they can be said to contribute to a strictly international war machine, one comprised of all those who refuse to allow the problems which orient their lives to be directed by state and capital.

I would argue that adopting this politics of the minor entails orienting our behaviour in two ways, the tension between which can go some way towards explaining the difficulty interpreters have faced in understanding their overall direction of their 'war machine'. The first such orientation is an experiential pragmatism which encourages specific concrete groups and individuals to adopt the 'sobriety' which discards false problems and engages with the social field, and their position within it, in the way which best lends itself to a continuous experimentation. This can be clarified further with reference to another infinite set that has shifted since *A Thousand Plateaus*' publication. To becoming-woman and non-white might be

⁷⁵¹ Ibid.

added a becoming-precarious which reflects a departure from the dominant norms of labour. As a mass which ‘unites’ the various peripheries not incorporated within established axioms of fixed employment or unemployment, what it means to be such an *emarginati* remains an open question, a line of flight that might be followed in any number of directions by particular ‘strange bands’: each of which will be finite, but mutually contribute to a redetermination of what it means to be something other than ‘full-time employed’. As Stephen Shukaitis has argued, academic inquiry into such ‘precarity’ can be divided into two moments.⁷⁵² The first, as epitomised by Negri and others, focused on the resistance to Fordist production such precarity enabled, with different groups of precarious workers establishing the forms of mutual aid needed to allow the youth, women, ethnic minorities, and counter-cultural elements to better solve the specific problems forced upon them by the regularity of the Fordist production line: in particular, through the formation of communal spaces with the material support necessary to allow workers to drop out of production as necessary. Without this openness to redetermination on the part of each of these groups, this might have realised a repressive desire, tied to the molar conception of what constitutes a ‘real’ worker: as it was, it enabled experimentation and facilitated the continual ‘contagion’ of these divergent groups, who found in one another a means by which their own experimentation could continue.

More contemporary accounts of precarity, however, follow its recuperation by post-Fordist models of employment, with the state having dismantled the welfare programs, labour regulations, and communities which made such spaces revolutionary. Rather than a form of liberation, flexible and contingent working conditions have now become primarily a means by which employers avoid the obligations stipulated by axioms of labour regulation and prevent their unionising.⁷⁵³ The periphery is produced by official records of employment, which tend to obscure contingent labour practices, leaving workers vulnerable to exploitation; a flight to the periphery, under such conditions, could achieve little more than the minor improvements to labour efficiency required to ‘confront’ capitalism’s present internal limit, increasing the volume of surplus available for extraction without additional investment. To revive the revolutionary potential of this periphery would therefore demand a ‘change in speed’ and new forms of resistance to emerge, as might be achieved through unionisation or the reintroduction of practices of mutual aid, to give two obvious examples. Simultaneously, Deleuze and Guattari would argue that this collective practice must be prevented from becoming subverted by fear, clarity, the desire for *pouvoir* or the desire for annihilation, such that it

⁷⁵² Stephen Shukaitis, “Precarious Politics and Recomposing the Radical Imagination,” in *Mappe della precarietà: Vol. II - Knowledge workers, creatività, saperi e dispositivi di soggettivazione*, ed. Emiliana Armano and Annalisa Murgia (Bologna: I libri di Emil, 2012), 232ff.

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.*, 232-234.

could be taken up by any number of individuals or collectives faced with its impasses. This does not preclude all centralisation, as a union might maintain the particular structure required to engage with existing labour regulations: rather, it insists that it remain ‘vital’, providing the means by which specific concrete groups might engage with the social field in a new way without imposing particular forms of activity upon them, as where a union might use the authority provided by its ‘right’ to represent contingent workers in general and negotiate the new norms to which they will be subject to break a strike. To the extent they maintain this ‘vital’ openness to contagion on the part of individuals and collectives who might rework such problems in their own terms, each line of becoming presents an opportunity for others to escape the limits imposed by the existing strata, without finding themselves constrained within a larval state apparatus: or in other words, it unites them within a revolutionary war machine, through which they regain their capacity to constitute problems and to which they contribute new potentials for connection. Other groups aside from precarious workers might thus find in their concrete mechanisms of resistance a means by which to escape the determination of the axiomatic that constricts them, allowing revolution to continue and disrupting the norms required for ongoing extraction. While exploitation may move to other peripheries, in this case, further opportunities would also be realised.

As I argued in the third chapter, establishing concrete forms of resistance and minor problematisation is one dimension of Deleuze-Guattarian politics; another is political sorcery, which extracts from such potentials the signs needed to concretise a people ‘yet to come’ implicit within the capacity for thought, action, and association adopted by these minor movements. As Deleuze and Guattari continue this thread in *What is Philosophy?*, ‘the race summoned forth by art or philosophy is not the one that claims to be pure but rather an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor race’:⁷⁵⁴ that is, a nondenumerable set, the territory of which remains in the process of being drawn by problematisation. I would argue that they can therefore be considered to engage in their own sorcery where they propose that the ‘power of minority, of particularity, finds its figure or its universal consciousness in the proletariat’:⁷⁵⁵

one cannot make the slightest demand whatsoever on any point of application without being confronted by the diffuse whole, such that as soon as you do, you are necessarily led to a desire to explode it. Every partial revolutionary attack or defence in this way connects up with the struggle of the working class.⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵⁴ *WIP*, 109.

⁷⁵⁵ *ATP*, 472.

⁷⁵⁶ Deleuze and Foucault, “Intellectuals and Power,” 213.

This might be considered the second orientation found in Deleuze and Guattari's politics. The 'proletariat' to be summoned forth is not a class, defined by the molar coordinates which derive from a particular relation to the means of production, but as a mass or infinite set constituted by all those who have had their capacity to constitute the problems which they orient their lives taken from them by the capitalists and politicians which ligature flows in the ways most amenable to capital. Today's 'revolutionary movement' therefore has 'multiple focal points', each a line of problematisation to which others might connect, but this isn't a deficiency, as 'totalization belongs rather to power and its reaction'.⁷⁵⁷ To adopt Deleuze and Guattari's politics in its fullest sense is therefore not just to adopt a pragmatic approach to one's particular social field, but to do so in such a way in engenders a 'worldwide movement', and a universal minority others might adopt in turn.

This emphasis is further supported by Deleuze and Guattari's recommendations regarding the 'subjective redeployments' possible in the modern world, which they suggest must be devoted to the unification of revolutionary struggles 'in a new internationalism that no longer relies solely on an alliance with the Third world, but on the phenomenon of third-worldification in the rich countries themselves'.⁷⁵⁸

Peripheralization and its associated insecurity is common both to a global periphery and the internal margins of the economic core, demanding a solidarity capable of encompassing both. Rather than the synthesis of the divergent interests of these peripheries by an organisation capable of overcoding them, something which would inevitably realise new hierarchies and inequalities, the struggle of the working class remains minor and transversal, encouraging concrete forms of problematisation that might provide a vehicle by which other individuals and collective associations can begin to take charge of their own desire.⁷⁵⁹

Whatever the periphery, I would argue, the vital problem will be that of survival or security: but unlike the 'survival' that comes from submission to problems set by the axiomatic, the survival of minor movements extends to their ability to remain indeterminate, and to reformulate the problems of life, thought, and

⁷⁵⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, "On Capitalism and Desire," 270.

⁷⁵⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, "May '68 did not take place," 236.

⁷⁵⁹ Though a detailed discussion would confuse the issue at hand, I would therefore argue against Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's suggestion in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" that it is Deleuze and Guattari's blindness to the way they themselves are shaped by ideology leads them to refuse the 'counterhegemonic' discourse necessary for 'dealing with global capitalism', instead producing the image of an autonomous proletariat which reintroduces the sovereign or 'legal subject of socialised capital... with supposedly unquestioned access to due process' (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 250-252). I would instead argue that Deleuze and Guattari's refusal to impose such a discourse is exactly what makes their conception of the proletariat revolutionary: as an ethics or politics of experimentation, it does not presuppose the capacity for all to experiment equally and in the same way, nor produce any image of such a revolutionary subject, but rather encourages the constitution of problems which can be reworked by others.

association in the terms which best allow them to interact with the world, whilst allowing others to do the same. The identity of proletariat must therefore be reopened by every attempt to escape axiomatic determination, and therefore according to the concrete forms of insecurity imposed. As this entails resistance to the capitalist mass which would otherwise formulate the problems to which they were subject, the problem of realising their security, survival, or continuity in connection with others is also that of smashing (rather than reforming) capitalism, via a socialism which, as with their destinies, they define themselves.

If minorities do not constitute viable states culturally, politically, economically, it is because the state-form is not appropriate to them, nor the axiomatic of capital, nor the corresponding culture. We have often seen capitalism maintain and organize inviable states, according to its needs, and for the precise purpose of crushing minorities. The minorities issue is instead that of smashing capitalism, of redefining socialism, of constituting a war machine capable of countering the world war machine by other means.⁷⁶⁰

This means that any collective movement must avoid establishing its problems in the theorematic terms of a new Liberalism, one which identified some common or universal dimension of the subject or intersubjectivity which could be used to legitimise a state or supranational alliance of states. To the extent that problems are established on these supposedly 'universal' bases, I believe Deleuze and Guattari would argue, they are necessarily divorced from the singular approach to conditions characteristic of the minor and the problematising, remaining thereby vulnerable to the continually shifting conditions of the axiomatic. If we are to find inspiration for our internationalism, it must not be found in something ahistorical we have yet to concretise politically, but instead within our own potential for creation.

I believe that Deleuze was therefore correct to suggest that he and Guattari remained Marxists, in their respective ways: not only because their analysis centres upon capitalism and its contingent history, but also because their solution is that of minor internationalism rather than cosmopolitan proceduralism, encouraging a constant experimentation and sorcery devoted to overcoming the alienation by which the axiomatic separates us from our capacity to constitute the problems which orient our lives, whilst providing a means by which others might do the same. On my reading, this makes their political philosophy an immanent, continuous, pragmatic, and experimental socialism, a politics 'of the left' always counter to the state and capital even where it remains more subtle than becoming-revolutionary. By privileging the singular and the indeterminate, which always exceed the formal conceptions of subjectivity or intersubjectivity on

⁷⁶⁰ *ATP*, 472.

which particular institutions rely, Deleuze and Guattari remain directly opposed to Liberalism, which always seeks to pin down needs and interests, establishing the legitimate institutions through which they might be synthesised in perpetuity. As Deleuze and Guattari would argue, it is not through institutional intervention into the axiomatic or adaptations to our constitutions that individuals and communities will find freedom and security, but in the transversal association of peripheral spaces, each of which was empowered to constitute what socialism demands within their particular context. As Deleuze argues in “Control and Becoming”, the present development towards systems of control may well provide the weapons needed to establish a ‘utopian’ communism, understood as the ‘transversal organization of free individuals’: but in any case, it would be nothing ‘without minorities speaking out’.⁷⁶¹

A further problem arises, however, when drawing out this minor proletarianism in more concrete terms.⁷⁶² Unlike the ‘sorcery’ of Lenin or other past revolutionaries, Deleuze and Guattari explicitly avoid providing a content to the subjective form they summon, instead insisting upon an active process of problematisation on the part of singular groups in relation to their conditions under capitalism. Taking charge of our own desire and escaping the direction of the axiomatic, and thus finding our own way of being proletarian, remains always a task we must take up ourselves, and in our specific terms. The resources of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* can, however, certainly help sketch its requirements, and so provide a starting point from which we might begin the difficult process of orienting ourselves, believing once more in the world and our potential within it.

On the one hand, the new internationalism must remain universally minor, meaning that no one group or individual can serve as a ‘vanguard’ or establish the theoretical principles to which the ‘proletariat’ as a whole would then conform: instead, it must remain open to the redetermination of those who adopt it, and who use their connection to other minor groups as a means of taking charge of their own desire through the constitution of problems. This means that each strange band must engage in its own process of analysis, identifying the dangers inherent in both new connections and their own behaviours: avoiding, for example, any global movement that reinforced a particularly restrictive molar aggregate that devalued the experience of a concrete community, but also ensuring that they themselves do not take their analysis to provide their actions with an essential or formal ‘authority’. This means our political philosophy must focus on associations and alliances which operate transversally, without presupposing in advance an unequal distribution of power.

⁷⁶¹ Deleuze and Guattari, “Control and Becoming,” 175.

⁷⁶² I would like to thank Thomas Nail for suggesting this essential inclusion.

On the other, though it may take place (and, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, likely must take place) in connection to subjective redeployments which facilitate this collective solidarity at the macropolitical level, it must remain resolutely free of the fixed hierarchisation characteristic of the state-form, a form of political organisation that demands the precedence of molar aggregation over minor experimentation. Instead, all fixity must remain ‘mimicry’, a contingent selection enabling some greater experimentation to continue despite the stratified nature of the nation-states in which it must necessarily begin. Rather than a new or renewed state, the operation of the strange bands and minor movements upon which political philosophy must now turn must be oriented towards establishing conditions of universal minority, ‘accelerating’ other minor groups in their divergence by providing them the concrete means of engaging in problematisation themselves. This means both that particular care must be taken to avoid the desire for formal *pouvoir* and that any problematisation cannot itself presuppose the transcendence instituted by state capture. This means that the operation of ‘non-governmental organisations’, corporations, and other non-state entities which presuppose the inequality of power inherent within axiomatics, something which, as I explored in this chapter, itself presupposes the stratified unity of states, can never provide us with a formal solution to our problems. Instead, we must turn to the minor.

Drawing once again on the concept of *Difference and Repetition*, I would suggest that our approach to the problem of overturning capitalism must begin with our adoption of ‘symbols’ capable of standing in for the revolutionary shifts needed by those who find in the capitalist axiomatic an impasse which prevents them realising their singular potential. With this in mind, I would begin by adding to the list of French revolutions discussed in the third chapter an event passed over by Deleuze and Guattari with surprising silence: that of the Paris Commune of 1871, a revolutionary attempt at self-governance identified by Marx and Engels as the ‘vague aspiration after a Republic that was not only to supersede the monarchical form of class-rule, but class-rule itself’ and the first major example of the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁷⁶³ In the place of the formal *pouvoir* of the Third Republic, the Commune instituted a remarkable example of direct democracy, tied to a council which distributed power through a series of commissions. Rather than finding its legitimacy in such general or theorematic notions as the supposed necessity of governance or the defence of the ‘rights of man’, the Commune was established in response to a specific problem affecting every occupant of Paris: that of organising themselves and their city in such a way that they survived the Prussian

⁷⁶³ See Karl Marx, “The Civil War in France: address of the general council of the international working-men’s association,” in *Marx and Engels Collected Works Vol. 22: Marx and Engels 1870-1871* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1986), 331 and Friedrich Engels, “Introduction to Karl Marx’s *The Civil War in France*,” in *Marx and Engels Collected Works Vol. 27: February 1890-April 1895* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 191.

siege. This relation to the problem or ‘event’ of the singular present enabled them to reject the supposed authority of the state and local government which had failed them so badly; further, it led them to discard the molar aggregations which underpinned the outdated, conservative policies which continued in the rest of France. This dual rejection enabled them to attune themselves to their true potential to think and to act through such radical reforms as the abolition of the death penalty, the separation of church and state, and the cancellation of interest on debts, ‘cutting’ the bonds which had previously prevented them from taking charge of their desire and constituting problems in relation to their singular conditions. Once the siege ended, the problem shifted from their literal survival in the face of Prussian bombardment to that of preserving their autonomy and the continuity of their capacity to experiment independent of the state and the bourgeois class lent authority by the norms inscribed in its ‘Faciality’.

In the place of the theorematic legitimacy proper to the established institutions, the Commune thus instantiated problematisation and their collective *puissance* as the driving force behind their laws and institutions, making it a vital space within which minor groups could experiment with their singular potential. In particular, it is noteworthy that the insurrection could be said to have truly begun with the intervention of Parisian women, and to have fostered ‘a ripe environment for the emergence and elaboration of multiple feminist socialisms’, as communardes ‘entered the fight to challenge and change the institutions and power relations which oppressed them’.⁷⁶⁴ A notable example of such feminist intervention was the *Union des femmes pour la défense de Paris et les soins aux blessés*, which linked gender inequality to the workers struggle and enabled women to adopt an active political role that would otherwise have been denied to them;⁷⁶⁵ another was the actions of André Léo, who used the revolutionary conditions established by the Commune as an opportunity to theorise and defend new social roles of women, to challenge conventional notions of gender, and to establish radical institutions for the education of girls.⁷⁶⁶ Though the limitations of the molar aggregations of gender certainly remained at the beginning of the Commune, notably in the inability of women to vote for its representatives, such self-organised institutions made clear progress in shifting the influence these limited conceptions held, realising previously obscured potentials for women to think and act. The immediate relation between the people and the principles promulgated by the Commune, and the openness to self-organisation enabled by the political conditions in Paris at the time, enabled concrete groups not only to become-minor and re-establish their potential for thought and action,

⁷⁶⁴ Carolyn J. Eichner, *Surmounting the Barricades: Women in the Paris Commune* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 1.

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 69ff.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 97ff.

but also to re-establish the problematic conditions to which the population collectively responded. The figure of the *communard* can in this sense be seen as universally minor, representing a vital potential distinct from the theorematic notion of the citizen.

Of course, as with all ‘actual’ revolutions, the Commune ultimately resulted in failure, in this case by failing to properly defend itself from the reactionary forces of the state, which reinstated the limited molar aggregations on which the *pouvoir* of its institutions relied. Where the Commune failed to organise its own defence, firstly from a Proudhonian belief that the state would respect its autonomy, and later from a sheer incapacity to determine the conditions for new and ‘immanent’ forms of authority to emerge, it thus established the conditions for its own destruction. If we are to maintain the symbol of this virtual ‘event’ as a means of orienting thought and action today, we must also draw an essential lesson from this actual failure: the institutions and practices which concretise the war machine, to the extent they are to enable experimentation to continue, cannot hesitate and restrict themselves to establishing the conditions for minor problematisation, but must also sustain a collective resistance to the state and its efforts to crush minority.

The insecurity inherent within the capitalist axiomatic is far more varied than that which faced the people of Paris in 1840. A truly universal figure of the proletariat, one which exceeded particular positions within the world economy, must begin by establishing ‘immanent’ or minor institutions designed to establish the means by which the specific vulnerabilities to which individuals, communities, and nations are subject might be countered, before establishing avenues by which others might experiment in turn, as well as the collective forms of resistance that might sustain this ‘universal minority’ despite the inevitable efforts of states to crush it. In this way, we might reproduce the spirit of the Commune, establishing forms of association oriented by mutual defence against insecurity and the singular prospects for productive, non-hierarchical community rather than by supposed constants of human nature or behaviour. To conclude this chapter, I will introduce concrete examples of such institutions and the ways in which they might open onto a universal conception of minority that could be sustained in the face of state reaction. In each case, my intention is not to argue in favour of a particular position (such arguments being entirely absent from Deleuze and Guattari’s explicit statements) but instead to show how the concepts of vitality and minority might be used to establish an immanent analysis or ‘diagnosis’ of the potentials concrete forms of political action might entail.

As discussed above, the insecurity to which individuals are subject concerns their individual income, and thus the necessity of adapting oneself to the demands of a malleable labour market or of maintaining one’s

capital in the face of inflationary pressures or government intervention. One concrete example of institutional practice that might provide the conditions for resistant minority in the face of this insecurity are the rejuvenated forms of mutual aid and unionisation discussed above: institutions which, as I argued in that section, must be maintained in their 'vitality' by ensuring they do not become embroiled with a fearful conception of desire which limited the ways in which one can participate in these institutions or the hierarchical divisions characteristic of *pouvoir*. In this way, they can be developed into a form of universal minority, providing the means by which any precarious individual might find the means of living otherwise and so realising their potential without reproducing the authoritative relation between subjects of the statement and of enunciation in the form of a managerial body which limited how such supportive relations are to develop. To be effective, these institutions would need to remain independent of the determination of the state by refusing any problems tied to dominant conceptions of the aggregates through which individuals and collectives 'ought' to be understood, and to develop some means of maintaining this independence in the face of attempted appropriation: by, for example, insisting upon a self-sustaining structure that prevented the 'encastment' that might result from state funding, the acceptance of which would reduce the institution to a replacement to existing welfare programs which enabled further capital to be extracted from the existing production process.

A further example of an institution that might enable further defence against individualised insecurity comes in the form of the 'subjective redeployment' of Universal Basic Income, which may presuppose the transcendence inherent in existing states, but would also provide a set of axioms which provided a vehicle by which individuals might escape the insecurity restricting their potential. Analysing or diagnosing this redeployment would entail examining the conditions tied to this income, and whether they implied limited molar conceptions of how the money was to be used, or to whom it would be provided, which would leave a further peripheral space then available for exploitation. Supporting such a policy at the state level would thus turn on whether it remained open to the experimentation of all citizens, who would necessarily need a form of direct power which prevented a particular institution or managerial class from limiting how funds were distributed. Without this, there would be no means of subverting these stratified, arborescent institutions into a form of 'mimicry' which enabled individuals a new means of realising themselves and their potentials.

At the communal level, the insecurity to which 'strange bands' are subject is tied in each case to the limited forms of recognition enabled by the Faciality of the state in which they are subsumed. As discussed in chapter three, communities 'recognised' according to the molar aggregates of race, gender, sexuality, or some other affiliation may be subject to forms of hidden or structural violence resulting from the

dominance of particular ‘major’ norms. In this case, a form of resistance will need to be adopted to enable the community to escape the ‘impasse’ imposed by dominant norms and institutions: as with the literature of the Jews of Prague. For a more contemporary example, one might look to the development of clandestine queer communities as a defence against persecution, and to queer activist groups such as ACT UP, whose leaderless structure and creative use of non-violent resistance, guerrilla theatre, and innovative media work in the face of the AIDS crisis transformed the nature of protest.⁷⁶⁷ The new means of protest and resistance they developed were soon adopted by other protest groups campaigning against globalisation, a ‘contamination’ which represents one means by which a form of universal minority might be fostered.

As discussed above, a further form of collective minority results from the subjection of given nations to the authoritarianism effected by the international market. Communities have thus found freedom organising along ‘nationalitarian’ lines, using their collective subjectification and the institutions associated with it as sites of resistance against international corporations which parallels former struggles against colonial and imperial violence. As Nail has demonstrated, the Zapatistas of Chiapas established a revolutionary politics which insists upon a multi-dimensional and intersectional political struggle and the necessity of continually diagnosing the singular forms of suffering demanding amelioration, using a combination of military self-defence and community outreach as a means of resisting neoliberal organisation in the same fashion as they once did the authoritarian regime of Porfirio Díaz.⁷⁶⁸ This ‘diagnostic of suffering’ critically interrogates the practices of the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (EZLN) and challenges them where they fall short of its revolutionary principles: by, for example, establishing a ‘Women’s Revolutionary Law’ promoted by autonomous collectives in local townships, which challenged the historically dominant patriarchal model of much of Mexican society by allowing women access to training and leadership positions.⁷⁶⁹ Further, they have prevented their consolidation into an authoritative ‘vanguard’ by ensuring the autonomy of a number of municipalities, such that decisions can proceed through the production of actual consensus and a series of *Juntas* with rotational leadership structures, as well as by instituting forms of collective ownership, worker control, and self-management.⁷⁷⁰ Aside from preventing the development of internal hierarchies, the EZLN also actively attempts to foster an immanent connection between their localised problems and global issues, establishing ‘transversal’ alliances with minor groups throughout the world, establishing networks of

⁷⁶⁷ See the collected essays of Ronald Hayduk and Benjamin Shepard, eds., *From Act up to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization* (London: Verso, 2002) on this relation between ACT UP and the ‘new activism’.

⁷⁶⁸ See Nail, *Returning to Revolution*, 66ff.

⁷⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁷⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

global solidarity through a number of international *Encuentros* congresses and acts of material solidarity with non-Zapatista movements around the world.⁷⁷¹ By adopting such a concrete diagnostic and active construction of international alliances, ‘nationalitarian’ associations within states can overcome the attachment to molar aggregations and problems that might otherwise establish them as states in waiting, and instead contribute to the ‘vitality’ of an international war machine capable of ‘overturning capitalism’.

Finally, this introduces the most difficult set of problems, those which face humanity as a whole (understood, of course, only in the ‘transversal’ sense of a fragmented, contingent unity). The problems of climate change, resource depletion, and the starvation and suffering produced in the wake of the global market have, as I argued above, proved entirely resistant to the actions of states and non-governmental or supranational organisations, being an axiomatic consequence of capitalism and the global subjection of states to international capital. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, these problems can be resolved only where ‘minorities’ are capable of speaking out. On the one hand, this implies the transversal interaction of heterogeneous, minor groups and individuals discussed in the previous section, that is, those whose particular form of resistance to state determination also provides a vehicle for others to do the same, without new forms of authority being imposed in turn. This could, for example, involve activist groups providing greater support to communities at the forefront of the battle to defend particular ecosystems, such as those living in and around the rainforest in Brazil presently engaged in resistance to the illegal mining and deforestation carried out by international corporations and the Bolsonarian government which tacitly supports this destruction. Such is the importance of these ecosystems that the local and minor struggle has immediate global importance, presenting us with problems that cannot be solved by other states or the international community, the continued legitimacy of which relies upon respecting the sovereignty of governing bodies to maintain law within its territory even where this undermines not only human rights, but potentially even human survival.

On the other, however, solving these international problems also requires the subversion of existing international institutions according to the needs of the minor: that is, providing ‘user groups’ with some means of ‘get involved with the program’. As I discussed in chapter four, this implies forms of subjective redeployment which enable experimentation to continue by tying existing *pouvoir* to the needs of those minor groups which are most effected by the negative consequences of axiomatics. As the recent failure of the COP26 conference has demonstrated, solving the problem of carbon emissions and fossil fuel reliance will not be solved by states locked in a global war for geopolitical dominance: but enabling those most

⁷⁷¹ Ibid., 143.

effected by the immediate effects of climate change a greater seat at the table of international politics would represent a macropolitical alteration which, though not in itself a solution to the problem, would better facilitate the micropolitical and direct action necessary to curb our existing reliance on exploitation and extraction. Its effectiveness would however presuppose a series of victories which could only be considered in micropolitical terms, this including the pressure within specific institutions in particular states which could ensure any enacted measures were applied to at least some extent, rather than reversed in response to some new 'crisis' or exception.

None of these orientations or problems are absolutely good in themselves, and they do not form the content of a program presented as such by Deleuze and Guattari. Rather, they are examples and suggestions, potential inclusions within a contemporary revolutionary lineage in relation to which we might frame our own thought and actions, critically diagnosing the potential for a fearful, totalitarian, or purely destructive desire to take hold at every juncture. As alternatives to the theorematic approach of Liberalism and the general constants it finds in reason or citizenry, each presents a means of turning one's most immediate problems into something global: the struggle of the workers, that is, the collective resistance of all those subject to state and capital. Ultimately, however, freedom implies not only a critique of one's singular condition, but also a construction, a realisation of potential that can be taken up only on an experiential and immediate basis through the constitution of problems themselves.

Conclusion | Freedom and a Task of Freedom: Towards a Deleuze-Guattarian Political Analysis

Thought is an invisible and almost imperceptible power that scoffs at all tyrannies.

—Alexis de Tocqueville⁷⁷²

I. Summary

In the introduction, I stated my intention to develop a conception of Liberalism as a foil to Deleuze and Guattari's political philosophy. I argued that Liberalism can be understood as a historical development with both a theoretical and practical dimension, the former comprised of philosophical positions defined by the interconnection of the concepts of subject, freedom, and subjection, the latter by the simultaneity of a formal sovereignty justified by a conception of subjectivity in general and an array of institutions whose power derives from particular aggregations of subjects. I argued that its attempt to ground sovereignty in supposed constants of subjectivity or intersubjective association makes Liberalism an essentially 'theorematic' politics, whilst Deleuze and Guattari's 'problematization' promotes a continuous experimentation with the singular.

In the first chapter, I introduced the concepts of multiplicities and intensity, using transcendental empiricism and its relation to problems to explore Deleuze's focus on the becoming which dissolves fixed conceptions of identity and makes each encounter a singular 'event'. I argued that, as the 'sense' we derive from our encounters alters according to the connections we involuntarily draw between experiences, Deleuze turns critique from appearances to the problems through which we associate them, transforming both ethics and politics into a matter of experimentation and the cultivation of problems better aligned with our capacity to act. Finally, I opposed this ethics to a dogmatic 'Image' of thought which presents it as equivalent amongst subjects and subject to general principles, and to 'thermodynamic' conceptions of politics which homogenise emergent differences within a formal system they are unable to alter.

In the second chapter, I examined the political philosophy of Locke, Kant, and Hegel, associating the 'sad' Image of thought Deleuze and Guattari believe to produce conceptions of the subject in general with the early development of Liberalism. I introduced the concepts of 'desire', and 'assemblage' as a means of exploring Deleuze and Guattari's 'analysis' of subjects and societies in the singular terms of the multiplicity

⁷⁷² Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America: Historical-Critical Edition of De la démocratie en Amérique*, ed. Eduardo Nolla, trans. James T. Schleifer (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010), 96.

of connections they maintain, using this to explore the despotic and judicial ‘poles’ of sovereignty. I argued that the formal conception of the subject introduced by Liberalism establishes an ‘absolute’ consensus for sovereignty by presenting it as the only rational means by which truth, justice, or right might be concretised, and serves as the basis for an internalised conception of subjectivity in general which prepares subjects to accept their particularisation by institutions to the needs of an economic and political structure. I then used this conclusion to differentiate Deleuze and Guattari’s position from any theorematic politics which relies upon a ‘civil society’ supposedly independent of the state, instead arguing that the political philosophy of Judith Shklar, Richard Rorty, and Richard Flathman utilise a restricted form of problematisation ultimately subject to institutional practices grounded on dominant norms and forms of representation.

In the third chapter, I presented Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘micropolitics’ and its ‘minoritarian’ concern with the potentials embedded within the actual encounters, affects, and perceptions which define a social field, rather than with the interests or rights of subjects in general. Beginning with the example of Kafka, I argued that micropolitics involves both a cultivation of ‘decoded’ and variable connections, and a form of ‘sorcery’ which analyses the social field to uncover and concretise the potentials these connections constitute, contrasting this with the majoritarian and state-centred politics of Liberalism. I argued that it aims to be both ‘vital’ and ‘rhizomatic’, oriented by the construction of immanent associations open to further determination. Finally, I turned to the French Revolution and May ’68, arguing that revolution demands both a collective subjectification defined by ‘universal minority’, and the formation of a ‘war machine’, an association of problematising forces which reinforce one another in their problematisation. I also expanded on some similarities between Deleuze and Guattari’s position and that of Hannah Arendt, arguing that Arendt represents a limit point of Liberalism, a point that its institutionalism might have opened onto a problematisation which subjected all constancy. I argued further that it can involve ‘subjective redeployments’ which use the state as a means of facilitating further experimentation, but that this does not constitute the end of their politics.

In the fourth chapter, I examined the ‘judicial’ pole of sovereignty in more detail, arguing that it relates to the state’s ‘appropriation’ of previous iterations of the war machine, which it then redeploys as a means of maintaining its unity. I argued that Liberalism establishes ‘smooth spaces’ of seemingly ‘immanent’ associations which restrict elements to a pre-defined equilibrium, using the political philosophy of Rawls and Habermas to associate this with modern democracies. I then explored Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of human rights, and argued against Patton’s suggestion that their politics ought to be expanded in a ‘normative’ direction. Finally, I defended Deleuze and Guattari from potential charges of arbitrariness by

arguing that a continuous and immanent micropolitics is the only means by which a social assemblage can remain 'vital' in the face of potential distortions of desire.

In the fifth chapter, I turned to the global capitalist axiomatic, a conjunction of undifferentiated labour and capital which now subjects states and their populations to the needs of commodity production. I argued that the 'totalitarian' and 'social democratic' tendencies of modern democracies are 'compensatory reterritorializations' mediating flows in the way most conducive to the accumulation of global capital. I argued that an inequality between 'centres' and 'peripheries' is inherent to the axiomatic, with every diversion of people or resources leaving an excess vulnerable to exploitation, and that this results in crises of distribution that the axiomatic is unable to solve. I argued that modern nation states serve to particularise populations to the needs of the labour market, preventing them from establishing alternative forms of identity and realising a modern 'enslavement' in which governments and corporations mould the population as statistical aggregates. I then explores the minor internationalism Deleuze and Guattari present as the solution to these problems as a reclamation of the capacity to constitute problems on the part of concrete individuals and groups provides a means by which others might do the same, establishing the 'transversal' and 'minor' universality of a global proletariat. Finally, I provided some concrete examples of 'immanent' institutions and subjective redeployments which might open individuals, communities, and the great 'mass' of global peoples onto a more vital, communal approach to the insecurity imposed on them by capitalism.

I turn now to some final remarks on how philosophy can contribute to this return to minority, and why this contribution ought not to be formulated through the problems of a new Liberalism.

II. Concluding Remarks

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari argue that the history of philosophy turns on two moments of 'relative' deterritorialization, each of which established subjectivity 'as concrete universality or as universal individuality'.⁷⁷³ The first was the Greek *agon*, which, as mentioned in the introduction, was born from the 'free men' of city states and the 'society of friends' they established, which equalised subjects to the extent that they could each lay claim to authority in a given domain to life.⁷⁷⁴ Platonism emerged in this milieu as a means to select between such rival claims, its own authority grounded in the philosopher's 'eidetic' contemplation of the Forms.⁷⁷⁵ The second, far more extended, was capitalism, which from the Middle

⁷⁷³ *WIP*, 94.

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

Ages induced ‘a fantastic relative deterritorialization... due first of all to city-towns *and that itself takes place through immanence*’, and which, as explored in the final chapter, is constituted by the deterritorialized flows of “‘wealth in general,” “labor tout court,” and their coming together as commodity’.⁷⁷⁶ Like the ‘free’ men of Greece, the capitalist subject is able to consider themselves not as ‘one psychosocial type amongst others’, but as ‘Man par excellence’, that is, as universal subjective form.⁷⁷⁷

I would argue that the development of Liberal political philosophy is inextricably tied to that of capitalism, establishing the *mythos* of ‘the modern national State, which finds an outcome in democracy, the new society of “brothers,” the capitalist version of the society of friends’.⁷⁷⁸ As I explored in chapters one and two, the *cogito* introduced by modern philosophy establishes the authority of the philosopher as the arbiter of the ‘good sense’ all subjects are taken to possess, a position they acquire through a method of reflection which uncovers beneath objective presuppositions the universal form of the subject. This universal of reflection relativises immanence by associating all possible experience with the transcendence of a unified subject, one already subject to a differentiation of legitimate and illegitimate thought.⁷⁷⁹ Early Liberal philosophy drew from this general conception of the subject an absolute justification for the state, formulating it in terms of a reason which overrides all particularity and presents submission to existing laws and institutions as equivalent to freedom. As I then explored in chapters three and four, the decoded flows of people, ideas, and capital released by the era of revolution were recaptured by more ‘judicial’ institutions and constitutions which connected the free thought and activity of the population to sovereignty, a process to which modern Liberalism contributed ‘intersubjective’ universals of ‘communication’ drawn from the “‘objective’ transcendence of an ideal world populated by cultural formations and the human community’.⁷⁸⁰ These universals of intersubjective dialogue and association relativise and homogenise opinions, interests, and values within systems of right which associate market, democratic, and dialogic processes with a true expression of freedom.⁷⁸¹

Through these two moments, Liberalism can be described as having induced the ‘democratic imperialism’ or ‘Europeanization’ by which capitalism relativised the particular identities of the human communities which occupied the states ensnared within its global net, this being an incorporeal transformation or relative deterritorialization which was ‘not a becoming but merely the history of capitalism, which prevents the

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., 97.

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., 98.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., 46.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid., 97.

becoming of subjected peoples'.⁷⁸² The universal subjectification of the democratic subject, particularised by the particular coordinates of a nation, ties all identity to the continual development of the labour market and prevents individuals and communities from taking charge of their own desire. The elucidation of such an Image of thought can thus be described as an appropriation of philosophy, one which restricts the political thinker to the authoritative role of 'philosophy professor', an administrator essential to the functioning of law.⁷⁸³ Though Liberal political philosophy is not the only discourse to have held such a role within the axiomatic, and though today its direct influence in this regard might be considered minimal, it has proved essential in establishing the fundamental coherence the modern nation state requires to undermine alternative forms of social and political identity.

This does not mean that philosophy is to be considered inherently corrupt. What 'saves' it from its distorted, appropriated, judicial function is the fact that it is 'no more the friend of capitalism than ancient philosophy was the friend of the city', capable of turning the relative deterritorialization it induces towards an 'absolute' deterritorialization passing between singular states of a social assemblage.⁷⁸⁴ As I explored in the third chapter, this implies the continuous transformation of all established identity, value, interest, and opinion rather than the general representations of a given state, meaning that such a philosophy is always oriented towards a 'people yet to come' implicit within presently obscured 'vectors' of desire rather than the interests of recognisable molar aggregates.

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.*⁷⁸⁵

The question remains however whether this new earth might not be established by a renewed Liberalism, one which maintains its characteristic problems but opens them to the redetermination of singular events. Such is the project of Nicholas Tampio, who interprets Deleuze-Guattarian politics (which he names specifically Deleuzian) as a form of left pluralism in which the political sphere takes the form of a 'garden' in which a variety of political positions or interest groups can productively co-exist.

Specifically, Tampio reads Deleuze's philosophy as a contribution to social contract theory, one which asks, after the manner of Rawls, 'What kind of rules would you want to apply to the garden if you did not know

⁷⁸² Ibid., 97 and 108.

⁷⁸³ Ibid., 106.

⁷⁸⁴ Ibid., 99.

⁷⁸⁵ Ibid.

where you were placed in it after you determined the rules?’⁷⁸⁶ On Tampio’s reading, Deleuze’s answer to this question takes the form of ‘a political order where individuals, and individuals assembled into groups, have the right to experiment in peace, on the condition that they do not harm others’.⁷⁸⁷ Rather than establishing its principles in advance in terms of its recognition of the molar aggregations of ‘subjects’ or ‘citizens’, a Deleuzian social contract would enable singular groups to experiment without presupposing their supposed needs or interests. It is in this sense that Tampio presents Deleuze as the ‘cutting-edge’ of Liberalism, understood as a tradition which ‘recurrently expands the range of constituencies deliberating about the principles of a just society’.⁷⁸⁸ Deleuze’s great contribution to Liberal theory would thus be a turn towards the singular and specific, with his minor politics providing the means to ‘perceive a wider spectrum of elements in the garden and take responsibility for their care’.⁷⁸⁹

The only requirement imparted by the ‘rules’ derived from this ‘immanent’ social contract is that individual flowers or political positions ‘exercise a certain modesty’ and respect for the autonomy of others, whilst endeavouring to ‘marshal forces’ to oppose other ‘flowers’ which become arborescent or cancerous, as in the case of terrorist groups.⁷⁹⁰ Such modesty, Tampio argues, is particularly important to apply to those who prejudice might lead us, incorrectly, to perceive as harmful: a specifically Deleuzian ‘flower’ would thus aim to encourage victimised groups to ‘relax anger over historic and present-day injustices enough to make possible coalitions for common concerns’, these alliances including everyone from ‘environmentalists and industrialists, theists and atheists, traditional-value workers and liberal capitalists’.⁷⁹¹ A political ‘regime’ organised by this contract would be ‘an island of stability—a plane of consistency—in an entropic universe’, a consistent arrangement of interest groups, beliefs and opinions between which individuals could freely move and with which they could experiment, the ultimate aim being to make capitalism more hospitable to a creative experimentation on the part of ‘those who wish to take that risk’.⁷⁹²

Some dimensions of this reading align with my own position: notably, that it remains essential to avoid developing an authoritarian or microfascistic desire for *pouvoir* or the capacity to oppress, subjecting problematisation to the ends of abolition rather than creation, and to avoid empowering forces that implicate the same. There are also some obvious contradictions. Notably, Tampio’s account of the

⁷⁸⁶ Tampio, *Deleuze’s Political Vision*, 85.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁷⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17 and 39.

⁷⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 88

⁷⁹² *Ibid.*, 85.

‘Deleuzian flower’ implies a commitment to ‘individual rights (liberalism), majority rule (democracy)’ and a ‘socialism’ which has been made compatible with capitalism, suitably ‘redefined’ as an agent of social virtue after the manner of Mill.⁷⁹³ Against this, I would point to Deleuze and Guattari’s concrete opposition to the reterritorialization of philosophy on ‘states of law’ and human rights grounded on a notion of the individual, as discussed primarily in chapter four, their rejection of ‘majoritarianism’ and insistence on the singular, as discussed in chapter three, and their explicit statements regarding the necessity not only to redefine socialism, but to ‘overturn capitalism’ and axiomatic politics itself, as discussed in chapter five.

However, a more subtle and perhaps more interesting opposition arises regarding the ultimate aims of Deleuze-Guattarian political philosophy. The aim of Tampio’s pluralistic conception could be described as establishing the ‘garden’ as a space of judgement, within which analysis serves to differentiate which flowers might be permitted to flourish and those which must be crushed, with the ‘rules’ of the garden (established through theoretical abstraction) determining in advance legitimate and illegitimate forms of experimentation. Though this adapted harm principle might appear to guarantee a smooth space in which different groups might experiment with the porous boundaries of their own identities, I believe such a position remains essentially theorematized and so subject to the striated for its abstraction from the lived, political reality that underlies such experimentation. Deleuze-Guattarian schizo-analysis is not itself a ‘flower’ equivalent to others within a homogenous field of opinions, and to vest it with the authority to distinguish reasonable and unreasonable from a supposedly original position would be to appropriate it as a tool in the hands of the law, one which, as Tampio argues, could then be used to facilitate a compromise between minor movements and the capitalists who subject them to constant insecurity. As I argued in chapter three, the role of the political sorcerer is not to act as judge of existing social practices and collectives according to a pre-determined set of values, nor does it seek to ‘summon’ a people tied in advance to a state based on judicial principle. Rather, the political sorcerer is an immanent role established in relation to the singular, tied to an experimental analysis of actual social movements and aiming to induce the continuous variation of the rhizome: an aim which fundamentally contradicts Tampio’s suggestion that the role of the philosopher is to provide a framework within which legitimate grievances can be corrected, and those ‘weeds’ which fail to form a productive alliance with capitalists and industrialists rooted out.

As I introduced in chapter four, Deleuze and Guattari believe philosophy to become both ‘utopic’ and political where it takes the criticism of its own time to its highest point: a criticism not carried out on the basis of normative principles, but rather through its ‘conjunction’ with the historical and social milieu in

⁷⁹³ Ibid., 51 and 116.

which it is embedded, with both thus opening onto a ‘plane of immanence, infinite movement, and absolute survey’ in which the past and present consist in their singular potential to alter the future, and chronological time is replaced by the immediate connection of singular events.⁷⁹⁴ The ‘new earth’ Deleuze and Guattari seek is not a striated political space within which different positions are made formally homogeneous entities with a shared interest in being left free to experiment, but the continuous variation produced by a multitude of ‘immanent, revolutionary, libertarian utopias’, distinguished from theorematized alternatives which attempt to find some constant of human nature or intersubjective behaviour by their turn to singular potentials embedded in concrete social assemblages.⁷⁹⁵ As I explored in chapter three, the aim of Deleuze-Guattarian political sorcery is that of opening a given assemblage to the ‘vital’ lines of individual problematisation embedded within it without reterritorializing on the overall conjunction of a state, even where this promises a more ‘judicial’ diffusion of power. This makes utopia a problem not of judgement, tied to norms established in advance according to one’s preconception of subjects and their interests, but of diagnosis.

The *diagnosis* of becomings in every passing present is what Nietzsche assigned to the philosopher as physician, “physician of civilization,” or inventor of new immanent modes of existence. Eternal philosophy, but also the history of philosophy, gives way to a becoming-philosophical.⁷⁹⁶

All connection to becoming on the part of philosophy, whether it be democratic, revolutionary, or otherwise, necessitates an immanent analysis forgoing the historical progression established by a particular set of relative deterritorializations and molar constants in favour of the becoming made possible through a continuous relation to the decoded and exterior. The philosopher thereby ceases to be a judicial authority inscribing a system of rights to moralise a social assemblage, or a ‘gardener’ seeking to expunge its weeds, but instead a physician and sorcerer who discovers ‘the arrow and discus of a new world’ otherwise obscured by present opinions and values.⁷⁹⁷ Such a thought, as de Tocqueville puts it, scoffs at all tyrannies: not because it holds a natural alignment with truth, when oriented by a good method, but because it maintains a necessary connection to the present and the becoming which imbues it with potential, mutating alongside the flows it charts and so escaping the impositions of any given Image.

⁷⁹⁴ *WIP*, 100.

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

The presentation of philosophy as an immanent and critical diagnosis can be identified in Deleuze's work as early as *Nietzsche in Philosophy*, in which he argues that its proper function is to 'sadden', even to 'shame':

Philosophy does not serve the State or the Church, who have other concerns. It serves no established power. The use of philosophy is to sadden. A philosophy that saddens no one, that annoys no one, is not a philosophy. It is useful for harming stupidity, for turning stupidity into something shameful. Its only use is the exposure of all forms of baseness of thought... Philosophy is at its most positive as a critique, as an enterprise of demystification.⁷⁹⁸

As I argued in the first chapter, Deleuze sees such stupidity as a confusion of the singular and the 'ordinary' entities which conform to our existing sensible and conceptual differentiations, representing a failure to institute a means of selection appropriate to a given situation. The destruction of such stupidity can only come at the point critique becomes positive and creative, clearing the ground of both objective and subjective presuppositions and so freeing subjects to return to problematisation. Continuing this thread, in *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that shame is necessary to open thought onto immanence: a shame in being a man, as Primo Levi once put it, and which they read as the shame in sharing in the supposedly 'universal' subjectivity which legitimises states and the exploitation in which they are engaged.⁷⁹⁹ As Deleuze also puts it in "Control and Becoming", this extends to any number of further stupidities, each a consequence of the stratification of thought to supposedly pre-given problems:

There's the shame of there being men who became Nazis; the shame of being unable, not seeing how, to stop it; the shame of having compromised with it; there's the whole of what Primo Levi calls this "gray area." And we can feel shame at being human in utterly trivial situations, too: in the face of too great a vulgarization of thinking, in the face of TV entertainment, of a ministerial speech, of 'jolly people' gossiping. This is one of the most powerful incentives toward philosophy, and it's what makes all philosophy political... What's so shameful is that we've no sure way of maintaining becomings, or still more of arousing them, even within ourselves. How any group will turn out, how it will fall back into history, presents a constant "concern." There's no longer any image of proletarians around of which it's just a matter of becoming conscious.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (Columbia University Press: New York, 2006), 106.

⁷⁹⁹ *WIP*, 107.

⁸⁰⁰ Deleuze, "Control and Becoming," 173.

The problem of shame is not that of replacing the particular culpability of those who actively commit atrocities with a collective guilt proper to humanity in general, but rather to find within the present the impetus to engage in an experiment that might draw us beyond such general conceptions: to move from man par excellence to a particularity grounded in experience, following a potential for becoming otherwise obscured by dominant molar segments and semiotic coordinates. As I explored in chapter five, such experimentation joins each plight with that of others subjected to the axiomatic and the generalities on which it relies, uniting the minor within a global proletariat reconstituted by problematisation rather than simply discovered.

This creative pursuit involves a necessary inequality which opposes the formal equivalence on which Liberalism relies. Far from an 'elitism' however, a politics reserved for a privileged group of intellectuals or revolutionary vanguard, this inequality is that of the minor and the singularity characteristic of everything that concerns itself with intensity and difference, including art, nationalitarian movements, and a political philosophy which seeks weapons in our present malaise. Each of these revolutionary experimentations, to the extent they connect to decoded flows, cultivates a collective resistance 'to death, to servitude, to the intolerable, to shame, and to the present'.⁸⁰¹ Our immediate responsibility, in the face of the present and the intolerable suffering that marks its axiomatic consequence, is to adopt these movements as a means of escape, unearthing the lines by which social assemblages can be opened to an immanent redetermination on the part of those who presently face an impasse. In short, it is to uncover new ways of living, thinking, and associating, which, clandestine and imperceptible, escape the society of 'brothers' that promotes the communication of opinion, responsible before the 'animal' and the victims whose 'contamination' opens thought onto potentials the existing aggregations obscure:

We are not responsible for the victims but responsible before them. And there is no way to escape the ignoble but to play the part of the animal (to growl, burrow, snigger, distort ourselves): thought itself is sometimes closer to an animal that dies than to a living, even democratic, human being.⁸⁰²

As Deleuze puts it later, 'Men's only hope lies in a revolutionary becoming: the only way of casting off their shame or responding to what is intolerable'.⁸⁰³ Philosophy and the world must engage in a mutual, 'double'

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., 110.

⁸⁰² *WIP*, 108.

⁸⁰³ Ibid., 171. In very similar terms, Deleuze argues in "On Capitalism and Desire" that 'If the left were "reasonable," it would be satisfied with vulgarizing economic and financial mechanisms. There's no need to make the private public, just admit what is already public'. Deleuze and Guattari, "On Capitalism and Desire," 263. Capitalism constitutes 'a very special delirium' immune to the judicial attacks of a theorematized system, with no evidence 'admissible' against it.

becoming, Deleuze and Guattari argue, one which matches the former with the ‘unimaginable sufferings that forewarn of the advent of a people’ contained by the latter.⁸⁰⁴ They connect to the other’s suffering, not ‘out of pity’, or driven by normativity, but rather as a mutual becoming through which philosophy incorporates the nonphilosophical and the nonphilosophical becomes a plane of philosophy. This is what it means to write for the animal or the oppressed, allowing the minor people whose potential remains obscured to confront their suffering and wrest themselves free, birthing a new people and a new world.

At a certain moment in *Kafka*, enthused with their first identification of writing and the ‘minor’, Deleuze and Guattari ask: ‘Is there hope for philosophy, which for so long has been an official, referential genre?’ Their reply is striking: ‘Let us profit from this moment in which antiphilosophy is trying to be a language of power’.⁸⁰⁵ As they argue in *What is Philosophy?*, states increasingly have little need for philosophy, finding in information technology, sociology, and marketing more efficient tools by which communication and the universal subjectification of capital might be facilitated, keeping philosophical considerations of the subject and intersubjective communication largely in reserve.⁸⁰⁶ Where the state has lost its interest in philosophy, that first ground on which subjection rests, a unique opportunity has appeared to transform it into a minor genre suitable for problematising purposes at odds with the formal stability on which the axiomatic relies.

The State does not give power [*pouvoir*] to the intellectuals or conceptual innovators; on the contrary, it makes them a strictly dependent organ with an autonomy that is only imagined yet is sufficient to divest those whose job it becomes simply to reproduce or implement of all of their power [*puissance*]. This does not shield the State from more trouble, this time with the body of intellectuals it itself engendered, but which asserts new nomadic and political claims.⁸⁰⁷

Despite all reterritorialization, philosophy always retains a trace of problematisation, a necessarily creative dimension obscured by the legal purposes to which it is diverted by the state. Where Liberalism reduces the philosopher to the ‘public professor or state functionary’, a war machine resurges wherever the sad Image of thought is overcome by a ‘private thinker’ or creative ‘thinker-comet’ who turns to sorcery and so connects their thought to this continually changing exterior, something that not only releases thought from the constants which appropriate it, but allows it to accelerate other forms of minority in turn.⁸⁰⁸ Rather than an

Evoking a failing on the part of democracies could do no more than induce a ‘scandal’ quickly lost in the shifting relations which constitute desire under capitalism, which would invest any indignation in non-revolutionary ends.

⁸⁰⁴ *WIP*, 108.

⁸⁰⁵ *K*, 27.

⁸⁰⁶ *WIP*, 12.

⁸⁰⁷ *ATP*, 368.

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 276-377.

agent of normativity, 'immanent' or otherwise, Deleuze and Guattari thus demand that philosophers become revolutionary, incorporating an analysis that examines and melds with flows of becoming. As Nail argues:

contemporary political philosophy interested in understanding the current conjuncture should offer us more than the mere conceptual conclusion that another politics is possible. Additionally, it should offer us a philosophical interrogation of actually existing strategies: what dangers they face, what kinds of changes they have made, what kinds of alternatives they propose and what the larger connections they have created are.⁸⁰⁹

Such interrogation is not a passive examination of populations as variants of general identities or moments within a pre-determined historical progression, nor even a limited 'critique' which establishes the limits of existing molar forms, but what one might call an 'active dismantling' which intervenes within the concrete social assemblages of which they are part through the creation of concepts. As Deleuze argues in "Intellectuals and Power", the role of the intellectual is that of providing a 'toolbox' of such concepts, derived from singular situations and concrete cases, to minor movements who can adopt and transform them as part of their own problematisation.⁸¹⁰ This is the intellectual not as a 'state philosopher' whose authority allows them to transcend and organise a non-philosophical mass, correcting their empirical opinions and grievances, but a political sorcerer who produces new forms of expression through which they can differentiate their experience and better attune themselves to their potentials. This does not pre-empt how these groups should realise their desire, as by extracting a normative principle from their action which would then be reimposed upon them, but rather extracts from their engagement with the world a multiplicity they can take up and experiment with in turn.

This means that philosophers must intervene within the world, chart its flows and be transformed by them, realising a simultaneous analysis of and experimentation with the reality of 'what is actually going on in a factory, a school, a barracks, a prison, a police station' rather than restricting themselves to abstract theorising about the subject, communication, or even creation, where this is understood only as a general capacity.⁸¹¹ As Deleuze puts it in *Difference and Repetition*, 'It is rather a matter of acting, of making repetition as such a novelty; that is, a freedom and a task of freedom'.⁸¹² Only in this way can philosophy be made 'adequate to what is happening around us', adopting as its own 'revolutions going on elsewhere, in

⁸⁰⁹ Nail, *Returning to Revolution*, 184.

⁸¹⁰ Deleuze and Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power", 208.

⁸¹¹ *Ibid.*, 210-211.

⁸¹² *DR*, 6.

other domains, or those that are being prepared' within a critique not of false applications of thought, but of the 'true morality, true faith, and ideal knowledge' its appropriated form reimparts.⁸¹³ Rather than an abstract political theory assisting with the population's management, Deleuze-Guattarian political philosophy sketches out the means by which philosophy can help revolutionaries, artists, mystics or whichever concrete group currently faces an impasse to chart their map and allow others to chart it in turn.

I would therefore argue, contra Patton, that the Deleuze-Guattarian conception of becoming-democratic introduced in *What is Philosophy?*, entails a becoming specific to the relatively deterritorialized identity of the democratic subject or citizen, a return to singularity achievable only because of the original 'Europeanization' which dissolved the territorializations and 'topical' conjunctions which previously defined the law, but which has nothing to do with concrete democratic systems or the particular array of relative deterritorialisations which define them. Where this formal identity is devoid of content beyond that necessitated by the axiomatic, philosophy is able to turn it to the absolute by reintroducing the potential for the minor reclamation of problems, making subjective or collective identity indeterminate by connecting it to the continual flow of being rather than the abstract form of right. If Deleuze and Guattari are to have anything to do with democracy, it is with the radical heterogeneity which it enables, that is, the 'mass' identity it imposes and which can be turned towards the minor and proletarian: a revolutionary path which, while it may involve conjugation with the constants of existing democracies and a concrete struggle over the rights which define them, necessarily continues through molecular connections and actual events which ensure it exceeds any concretised democracy or set of institutions. In each case, it is not by reterritorializing on the subjectifications of such democracies, or on the rational or reasonable subject, that we redeem ourselves, but through critique and construction, the active dissolution of the stupidities proper to 'people in general' and an active experimentation drawing on forms of life that cannot presently be articulated.

The ends of a Deleuze-Guattarian political analysis therefore diverge from Liberalism, to the extent the tradition is understood as grounded in general or formal conceptions of the subject and the forms of individual freedom and subjection which mark its necessary complement. As I have argued, the problems of Liberalism concern the maximisation of freedom through the critique of 'unreasonable' forms of action and the construction of thermodynamic systems to be maintained in perpetuity; the establishment of a legitimate sovereignty operating according to principles of truth, justice, and right; the popular reforms necessary to diffuse power and prevent its turn to tyranny; the popular determination of law and the establishment of the rights necessary to facilitate consensus; and the maximum security possible under

⁸¹³ Gilles Deleuze, "On Nietzsche and the Image of Thought," in *Desert Islands*, 138.

capitalism. Those of Deleuze and Guattari, by contrast, concern the cultivation of singular and minor potentials, inspired by the 'suffering' and 'shame' of present impasses and the molar conceptions of identity imposed by dominant institutions; a universal minority that transversally connects these concrete groups in ways which facilitate their further problematisation; and the formation of a liberatory war machine which overturns the alliance of state and capital that constitutes the axiomatic. Such a problematic politics is inherently opposed to the formal reduction of difference entailed by the theorematic, which has become no more than the impotence underlying our present paralysis, limiting the extent of legitimate political activity to dominant institutions and the theoretical consideration of those rights and privileges assumed to already underly the modern state. Any 'new Liberalism' that might emerge, to the extent it concerned these rights and principles, would thus remain a part of the history of capitalism, unable to foster the problematisation, and thus the becoming, necessary to escape the shameful present.

Bibliography

- Abdel-Malek, Anouar. *Social Dialectics: Nation and Revolution*. Translated by Mike Gonzalez. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981.
- Acton, John Emerich Edward Dalberg. *Essays in Religion, Politics, and Morality*. Edited by J. Rufus Fears. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988.
- Alliez Éric, and M. Lazzarato. *Wars and Capital*. Translated by Ames Hodges. South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2018.
- Althusser, Louis. *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. Translated by G. M. Goshgarian. London: Verso, 2014.
- Amin, Samir. *Unequal Development: An Essay on the Social Formation of Peripheral Capitalism*. Translated by Brian Pearce. Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1976.
- Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *Germinal Life: the Difference and Repetition of Deleuze*. London: Routledge, 1999.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. London: University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- . *On Revolution*. London: Penguin, 1990.
- . *Crises of the Republic*. London: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1972.
- Armano, Emiliana, and Annalisa Murgia, eds. *Mappe Della precarietà: Knowledge Workers, Creatività, Saperi e Dispositivi Di Soggettivazione*. Vol. 2. Bologna: Emil di Odoia, 2012.
- Assis, Paulo de. *Logic of Experimentation*. Leuven University Press, 2018.
- Baugh, Bruce. “The Open Society and the Democracy to Come: Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari.” *Deleuze Studies* 10, no. 3 (2016): 352–66. <https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2016.0231>.
- Beistegui, Miguel de. *Truth and Genesis: Philosophy as Differential Ontology*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- . *Immanence: Deleuze and Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
- . *The Government of Desire: a Genealogy of the Liberal Subject*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- Bell, Jeffrey. *Deleuze's Hume: Philosophy, Culture and the Scottish Enlightenment*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.

- Berankova, Jana Ndiya, Michael Hauser, and Nick Nesbitt, eds. *Revolutions for the Future: May '68 and the Prague Spring*. Lyon: Suture Press, 2020.
- Bergson, Henri. *The Creative Mind: an Introduction to Metaphysics*. Translated by Mabelle L. Andison. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2007.
- Boltanski, Luc, and Eve Chiapello. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Gregory Elliott. London: Verso, 2017.
- Boundas, Constantin V. *Deleuze and Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
- Braidotti, Rosi, and Patricia Pisters, eds. *Revisiting Normativity with Deleuze*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012.
- Bryant, Levi R. *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008.
- Buchanan, Ian. "Assemblage Theory and Its Discontents." *Deleuze Studies* 9, no. 3 (2015): 382–92. <https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2015.0193>.
- Buchanan, Ian, and Nicholas Thoburn, eds. *Deleuze and Politics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008.
- Burke, Edmund. *Substance of the Speech of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, in Thr [Sic] Debate on the Army Estimates, in the House of Commons, on Tuesday the 9th Day of February, 1790: Comprehending a Discussion of the Present Situation of Affairs in France*. Oxford Text Archive. Accessed 12 August 2019. Found online at <https://ota.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/repository/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.12024/K045342.000/K045342.000.html?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>.
- Bykova, Marina F, ed. *Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit: a Critical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Carter, April, and Geoffrey Stokes, eds. *Liberal Democracy and Its Critics: Perspectives in Contemporary Political Thought*. Cambridge: Polity, 1998.
- Colson, Daniel. *A Little Philosophical Lexicon of Anarchism from Proudhon to Deleuze*. Translated by Jesse Cohn. Colchester: Minor Compositions, 2019.
- Connolly, William E. *A World of Becoming*. Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Culp, Andrew. *Dark Deleuze*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Claire Parnet. *Dialogues II*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2006.

- . “The ABC Primer, Lecture Recording 2 – G to M, 4 February 1989”. Translated by Charles J. Stivale. The Deleuze Seminars. Accessed May 18, 2021.
<https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/gilles-deleuze-abc-primer/lecture-recording-2-g-m>.
- . “The ABC Primer, Lecture Recording 3 – N to Z, 3 June 1989”. The Deleuze Seminars. Translated by Charles J. Stivale. Accessed May 18, 2021.
<https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/gilles-deleuze-abc-primer/lecture-recording-3-n-z>.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- . *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. Translated by Dana Polan. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- . *A Thousand Plateaus*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- . *What Is Philosophy?* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell. Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- . *Qu'est-Ce Que La Philosophie?* Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1991.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton. London: The Athlone Press, 2001.
- . *Bergsonism*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Zone Books, 1991.
- . *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Translated by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- . *Empiricism and Subjectivity: an Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*. Translated by Constantin V. Boundas. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- . *Kant's Critical Philosophy: the Doctrine of the Faculties*. Translated by Barbara Habberjam and Hugh Tomlinson. London: Continuum, 2008.
- . *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974*. Edited by David Lapoujade. Translated by Michael Taormina. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2004.
- . *Negotiations, 1972-90*. Translated by Martin Joughin. Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- . *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*. Edited by David Lapoujade. Translated by Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina. New York: Semiotext(e), 2006.

- . *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- . *Proust And Signs: The Complete Text*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Continuum, 2008.
- . “A Thousand Plateaus III: Continuous Variation. 12 January 24, 1978.” Translated by Timothy S Murphy and Charles Stivale. The Deleuze Seminars. Accessed July 25, 2020. <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/thousand-plateaus-iii-continuous-variation/lecture-12>.
- . “Anti-Oedipus and other Reflections, Lecture 1, 27 May 1980.” Translated by Charles J. Stivale. The Deleuze Seminars. Accessed July 25, 2020. <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/anti-oedipus-and-other-reflections/lecture-1>.
- . “A Thousand Plateaus V: The State Apparatus and War-Machines II, Lecture 01, 6 November 1979.” Translated by Christian Kerslake and Charles J. Stivale. The Deleuze Seminars. Accessed March 28, 2020. <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/thousand-plateaus-v-state-apparatus-and-war-machines-ii/lecture-01>.
- . “Anti-Oedipus I, Lecture 02, 14 December 1971.” Translated by Karen Isabel Ocaña. The Deleuze Seminars. Accessed November 11, 2020. <https://deleuze.cla.purdue.edu/seminars/anti-oedipus-i/lecture-02>.
- Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*. Translated by R. E. Sutcliffe. St. Ives: Penguin, 1998.
- . *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. Translated by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Dosse, Francois. *Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari - Intersecting Lives*. Translated by Deborah Glassman. Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Eichner, Carolyn J. *Surmounting the Barricades: Women in the Paris Commune*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Flathman, Richard E. *Reflections of a Would-Be Anarchist: Ideals and Institutions of Liberalism*. Minneapolis, ME: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1978-79*. Edited by Michel Senellart. Translated by Graham Burchell. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- . *The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983.

- Genosko, Gary, ed. *Deleuze and Guattari: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*. Vol. 3. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Gilbert, Jeremy. "Deleuzian Politics? A Survey and Some Suggestions." *New Formations* 68, no. 68 (2010): 10–33. <https://doi.org/10.3898/newf.68.01.2009>.
- Goldman, Avery, Tatiana Patrone, and Paul Formosa, eds. *Politics and Teleology in Kant*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014.
- Goldstone, Jack A. "Theories of Revolution: The Third Generation." *World Politics* 32, no. 3 (1980): 425–53. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010111>.
- Goodchild, Philip. *Deleuze and Guattari: an Introduction to the Politics of Desire*. London: Sage Publications, 1997.
- Graaf, Beatrice de, Ido de Haan, and Brian E. Vick, eds. *Securing Europe after Napoleon 1815 and the New European Security Culture*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Grebmer, K., J. Bernstein, R. Alders, O. Dar, R. Kock, F. Rampa, M. Wiemers, K. Acheampong, A. Hanano, B. Higgins, R. Ní Chéilleachair, C. Foley, S. Gitter, K. Ekstrom, and H. Fritschel. *2020 Global Hunger Index: One Decade to Zero Hunger: Linking Health and Sustainable Food Systems*. Bonn: Welthungerhilfe; and Dublin: Concern Worldwide, 2020.
- Guattari, Félix. *Chaosophy*. Edited by Lotringer Sylvère. Translated by David L Sweet, Jarred Becker, and Taylor Adkins. New York: Semiotext(e), 2007.
- . *Généalogie Du Capital. Les équipements Du Pouvoir: Villes Territoires Et équipements Collectifs*. Paris: Centre d'Etudes, de Recherches et de Formation Institutionnelles, 1973.
- Guattari, Félix, and Antonio Negri. *Communists like Us: New Spaces of Liberty, New Lines of Alliance*. Translated by Michael Ryan. New York: Semiotext(e), 1990.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Translated by William Rehg. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.
- . *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: 12 Lectures*. Translated by Frederick Lawrence. Oxford: Polity Press, 1998.
- . *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Vol. 1. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1984.
- . *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1984.

- . *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2: Lifeworld and System: a Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Boston, MA.: Beacon Press, 1987.
- Hayduk, Ronald, and Benjamin Shepard, eds. *From Act up to the WTO: Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization*. London: Verso, 2002.
- Hallward, Peter. *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*. London: Verso, 2006.
- Hardt, Michael. *Gilles Deleuze: an Apprenticeship in Philosophy*. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011.
- . *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: The Penguin Press, 2009.
- . *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Hayek, Friedrich von. *Studies on the Abuse and Decline of Reason: Text and Documents*. Edited by Bruce Caldwell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- . *Hayek on Hayek*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Heerden, Chantelle Gray van, and Aragorn Eloff, eds. *Deleuze and Anarchism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Edited by Allen W. Wood. Translated by H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- . *The Philosophy of History*. Translated by John Sibree. New York: Dover Publications, 1956.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Minneapolis: Lerner Publishing Group, 2018.
- Holland, Eugene W. *Nomad Citizenship: Free-Market Communism and the Slow-Motion General Strike*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
- Houlgate, Stephen. *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.
- Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Edited by David Fate Norton and Mary J Norton. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007.
- Kafka, Franz. *The Complete Stories*. Edited by Nahum Norbert Glatzer. New York, NY: Schocken, 2011.

- . *The Trial*. Translated by Mike Mitchell. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- . *The Castle*. Translated by J. A. Underwood. London: Penguin Classics, 2019.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Practical Philosophy*. Edited and translated by Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . *Religion and Rational Theology*. Edited and translated by Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- . *Critique of Pure Reason*. Edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Kleinherenbrink, Arjen. *Against Continuity: Gilles Deleuze's Speculative Realism*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019.
- Lacroix, Justine, and Pranchère Jean-Yves. *Human Rights on Trial: a Genealogy of the Critique of Human Rights*. Translated by Gabrielle Maas. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Larkin, Philip. *Philip Larkin: Collected Poems*. Edited by Anthony Thwaite. London: Faber and Faber, 1988.
- Lazzarato, Maurizio. *Governing by Debt*. Translated by Joshua David Jordan. South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2015.
- Lefebvre, Alexandre. "Habermas and Deleuze on Law and Adjudication." *Law and Critique* 17, no. 3 (2006): 389–414. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10978-006-9003-1>.
- . *The Image of Law: Deleuze, Bergson, Spinoza*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009.
- Locke, John. *Locke: Political Essays*. Edited by Mark Goldie. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- . *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited by Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- . *Locke's Conduct of the Understanding*. Edited by Thomas Fowler. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901.
- . *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Edited by John W Yolton and Jean S Yolton. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- . *Two Treatises on Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*. Edited by Ian Shapiro. London: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Losurdo, Domenico. *Liberalism: a Counter-History*. Translated by Gregory Elliott. London: Verso, 2011.

- Mackay, Robin, and Armen Avanesian, eds. *Accelerate: the Accelerationist Reader*. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014.
- Manent, Pierre. *An Intellectual History of Liberalism*. Translated by Rebecca Balinski. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Marchais, Georges. “De Faux Révolutionnaires à Démasquer.” *L’Humanité*. May 3, 1968.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. *Vol. 11, General Works 1844-1895*. The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2001.
- . *Vol. 22: Marx and Engels 1870-1871*. The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986.
- . *Vol. 27, February 1890-April 1895*. The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990.
- . *Vol. 37, Karl Marx: Capital, Vol. 1*. The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998.
- . *Vol. 39, Karl Marx: Capital, Vol. 3*. The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998.
- Marx, Karl. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. Translated by Martin Nicholas. London: Penguin, 1993.
- May, Todd. *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.
- McDougall, Taijia. “Left Out: Notes on Absence, Nothingness and the Black Prisoner Theorist.” *Anthurium A Caribbean Studies Journal* 15, no. 2 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.33596/anth.391>.
- Mackenzie, Iain, and Robert Porter. *Dramatizing the Political: Deleuze and Guattari*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Mengue, Philippe. *Deleuze et la Question de la Démocratie*. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006.
- Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays*. Edited by Mark Philp and Frederick Rosen. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Nail, Thomas. “What Is an Assemblage?” *SubStance* 46, no. 1 (2017): 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.3368/ss.46.1.21>.

- . *Returning to Revolution: Deleuze, Guattari and Zapatismo*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
- Negri, Antonio. *The Savage Anomaly: the Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics*. Translated by Michael Hardt. Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Edited by Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman. Translated by Judith Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- . *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Edited by Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- . *'On the Genealogy of Morality' and Other Writings*. Edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson. Translated by Carol Diethe. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- . *The Gay Science*. Edited by Bernard Williams. Translated by Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian del Caro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. *Sex and Social Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Patton, Paul. "Utopian Political Philosophy: Deleuze and Rawls." *Deleuze Studies* 1, no. 1 (2007): 41–59. <https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2007.1.1.41>.
- Patton, Paul. *Deleuze and the Political*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Plato. *Complete Works*. Edited by John M Cooper and D S Hutchinson. Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.
- Polanyi, Karl. *The Great Transformation: the Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 2001.
- Popper, Karl R. *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Protevi, John. *Political Physics: Deleuze, Derrida, and the Body Politic*. London: Athlone Press, 2001.
- Ramey, Joshua. *The Hermetic Deleuze: Philosophy and Spiritual Ordeal*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.
- Rawls, John. "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (1985): 223-51.
- . *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

- . *Justice as Fairness: a Restatement*. Edited by Erin Kelly. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.
- . *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Reiss, H. S. "Kant and the Right of Rebellion." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 17, no. 2 (1956): 179–92. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2707741>.
- Ricœur, Paul. *Freud and Philosophy: an Essay on Interpretation*. Translated by Denis Savage. London: Yale University Press, 1977.
- . *Oneself as Another*. Translated by Kathleen Blamey. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Rosenblatt, Helena. *The Lost History of Liberalism: from Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.
- Rosenblum, Nancy L., ed. *Liberalism and the Moral Life*. London: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Emile*. Translated by Barbara Foxley. New York: Barnes & Noble, 2005.
- . *On the Social Contract*. Translated by Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2019.
- Ryan, Alan. *The Making of Modern Liberalism*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Schmitt, Carl. *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*. Edited and translated by G. L. Ulmen. New York: Telos, 2006.
- Schouls, Peter A. *Reasoned Freedom: John Locke and Enlightenment*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018.
- Seward, Jeff. *The Politics of Capitalist Transformation: Brazilian Informatics Policy, Regime Change, and State ... Autonomy*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Sholtz, Janae. *The Invention of a People: Heidegger and Deleuze on Art and the Political*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.
- Sibertin-Blanc, Guillaume. *State and Politics: Deleuze and Guattari on Marx*. Translated by Ames Hodges. South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2016.
- Skinner, Quentin. *Liberty before Liberalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

- Skocpol, Theda. "Social Revolutions and Mass Military Mobilization." *World Politics* 40, no. 2 (1988): 147–68. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010360>.
- Smith, Daniel W. *Essays on Deleuze*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
- Smith, Daniel W., and Henry Somers-Hall, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Somers-Hall, Henry, Jeffrey A. Bell, and James Williams, eds. *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018.
- Spinoza, Benedictus de. *Spinoza: the Letters*. Translated by Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1995.
- . *Complete Works*. Edited by Michael L. Morgan. Translated by Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. London: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Strauss, Leo. *Liberalism Ancient and Modern*. London: Basic Books, 1968.
- Sunstein, Cass R., and Richard H. Thaler. *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth and Happiness*. London: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Tampio, Nicholas. *Deleuze's Political Vision*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.
- Thoburn, Nicholas. *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Tilly, Charles. *European Revolutions: 1492-1992*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993.
- Tocqueville, Alexis de. *The Ancien Régime and the French Revolution*. Edited by Jon Elster. Translated by Arthur Goldhammer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- . *Democracy in America: Historical-Critical Edition of De La démocratie En Amérique*. Edited by Eduardo Nolla. Translated by James T. Schleifer. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010.
- . *The Recollections of Alexis De Tocqueville*. Edited by J P Mayer. Translated by Alexander Teixeira de Maltos. London: The Harvill Press, 1949.
- Toews, David. "The New Tarde." *Theory, Culture & Society* 20, no. 5 (2003): 81–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764030205004>.
- Toscano, Alberto. "Everybody Thinks: Deleuze, Descartes and Rationalism." *Radical Philosophy* 162 (2010): 8–17. <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/everybody-thinks>.

- Valdés, Juan Gabriel. *Pinochet's Economists: the Chicago School in Chile*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Voltaire. *Political Writings Voltaire*. Edited and translated by David Williams. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Voss, Daniela. *Conditions of Thought: Deleuze and Transcendental Ideas*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.
- Mises, Ludwig Von. *Liberalism: the Classical Tradition*. Edited by Bettina Bien Greaves. Translated by Ralph Raico. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005.
- Walzer, Michael, ed. *Regicide and Revolution Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI*. Translated by Marian Rothstein. Oxford: Columbia University Press, 1992.
- Wasser, Audrey. "How Do We Recognise Problems?" *Deleuze Studies* 11, no. 1 (2017): 48–67. <https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2017.0251>.
- Weber, Max. *Weber: Political Writings*. Edited by Peter Lassman. Translated by Ronald Speirs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Weeks, Samuel. "A Politics of Peripheries: Deleuze and Guattari as Dependency Theorists." *Deleuze and Guattari Studies* 13, no. 1 (2019): 79–103. <https://doi.org/10.3366/dlgs.2019.0342>.
- Widder, Nathan. "Deleuze and Guattari's 'War Machine' as a Critique of Hegel's Political Philosophy." *Hegel Bulletin* 39, no. 2 (2018): 304–25. <https://doi.org/10.1017/hgl.2018.13>.
- Widder, Nathan. *Political Theory after Deleuze*. London: Continuum, 2012.
- World Bank Group and World Trade Organization. *The Role of Trade in Ending Poverty*. Geneva: World Trade Organization, 2015.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *Organs Without Bodies*. London: Routledge, 2004.