The Utopian Dimension of Thought in Deleuze & Guattari

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It is no small irony that two of the most Remarkable recent renewals of utopian thinking would find inspiration in a version of universal history – the one propounded by Deleuze & Guattari in their first collaboration, Anti-Oedipus – that explicitly eschews any utopian program of its own.¹ “Schizoanalysis as such,” Deleuze & Guattari insist, “has no political program to propose” (380). This is so because in their view, it is illegitimate to assign the deterritorializing movement of history any goal whatsoever: the principle of hope in history is “completing the process [of deterritorialization] and not arresting it, [neither by] making it turn about in the void, [nor by] assigning it a goal” (382). How could such an apparently anti-utopian perspective have inspired such differing utopian visions as those of Hardt & Negri in Empire and of Edouard Glissant in Traité du Tout-Monde? Perhaps the greater irony, however, is that the more familiar and developed of these two utopian visions – that of Hardt & Negri – is at odds with what Deleuze & Guattari do say about utopianism as a mode of thought in their last collaboration, What is Philosophy?. A comparison of Hardt & Negri with Deleuze & Guattari will reveal what is distinctive about the latter’s conception and practice of utopian thought, especially in contrast with the perspective of that other great utopian Marxist of the 20th century, Ernst Bloch. An important point of departure is the distinction between what can be called “utopianism as a process” and utopia as a fixed “product”: that is, the various utopianisms under consideration here all involve not the elaboration of an ideal blueprint for a perfect society (such as those of Thomas More, Charles Fourier, et al.), but rather the identification of real historical forces or trends that are judged likely to ameliorate
rather than aggravate the human condition. This important distinction finds strong confirmation and something in the way of a historical explanation in Deleuze & Guattari’s reflections on the relation between the utopian dimension of thought and what in Anti-Oedipus they call universal history.

Perhaps the first thing to be said about this version of universal history, which Deleuze & Guattari derive in part from Marx, is that it is quite unlike – perhaps even diametrically opposed to – the better-known Hegelian variety. Deleuze & Guattari in fact call it an “ironic” universal history, for three inter-related reasons: it is retrospective, singular, and critical. It is retrospective in that, just as the anatomy of the human offers the key to the anatomy of the ape, schizophrenia and the deterritorialized socius of capital arise only at the end of history. But this is important because of the singularity of capitalist society: it is not some hidden similarity between capitalism and previous social forms that make capitalism universal, but rather what Marx (in the Grundrisse) calls the “essential difference” between it and the others. Nor did market capitalism evolve from pre-capitalist markets out of historical necessity: Marx insists instead on the role of “chance” in the singular emergence of capitalism. Finally, capitalism offers the key to universal history because with capitalism society can become self-critical: labor as abstract subjective essence, as productive activity in general, becomes a reality only under capitalism, and thus makes the critique of capitalist and all other forms of exploitation possible. In just the same way, Deleuze & Guattari argue, Freud’s discovery of the abstract subjective essence of desire makes the critique of Oedipus
and all other forms of repression possible. It would be possible to take this argument one step further and suggest that the key to the universality of the capitalist market or to capitalist universal history is ultimately its promotion of difference: the universal is not some feature or principle shared with or common to all human societies, it is difference itself.

We have become familiar with one version of this argument from feminists such as Irigaray and Spivak: faced (particularly in reading Hegel or Lacan) with the asymmetry between man’s and woman’s participation in the universal, the solution is to proclaim sexual difference itself to be the true universal. What is truly human is not sharing a set of traits – a set that inevitably appears skewed or unfair as soon as the differences between men and women are taken into account – but rather the very necessity of choosing between being man and being woman. For Deleuze & Guattari, however, the universal is found not in difference as binary opposition – man/woman – but in difference itself: differences in the plural; multiple differences; or difference in multiplicity. If capitalism makes history universal, this is because it promotes multiple differences – or in other words, because the capitalist market operates as a difference-engine. For Marx, the key human universal was production: the species-being of humanity was defined in terms of its ever-growing ability to produce its own means of life rather than simply consume what nature offered. For Deleuze & Guattari, the key universal is not just production (not even in the very broad sense they grant that term in the Anti-Oedipus), but specifically the production of difference.

Capitalism is not the only difference-engine, however: evolution is another, and expression is yet another. In each case, there exists an interplay of differentiation and
In the case of life, random genetic mutation multiplies differences, from which natural selection then consolidates (or “contracts”) organs and species. In the case of expression, what Peirce calls “infinite semiosis” generates differential relations among signifiers and signifieds, which are then consolidated or captured in the sign-function by sedimented habit, codification, and representation. In the case of the market, the circulation of commodities generates a vast network of differential relations, from which private capital then captures surplus-value. Of course, the relations among these three difference-engines are complex, but they are all part of one universe; as Deleuze & Guattari put it in Anti-Oedipus, “nature=history=industry” (25).

One feature distinguishing these three difference-engines is their relative speed. Each one represents as it were a quantum leap in the speed of differentiation: evolution differentiates somewhat faster than geology; cultural evolution or history differentiates far faster than biological evolution; and industrial production or capitalist history accelerates differentiation faster yet. Against the backdrop provided by the first of these engines (biology), Deleuze & Guattari are most interested in the ongoing clash between the more recent two: semiosis and the market. The argument of the Anti-Oedipus is that under capitalism, the market prevails: deterritorialization and the decoding that accompanies it subordinate Meaning to the abstract calculus of market exchange. But even with the predominance of the market, capitalism for Deleuze & Guattari remains crucially ambivalent. On one hand, the market continually differentiates and diversifies – constantly revolutionizing the means of production and consumption, as Marx put it, and constantly extending the division of labor and the socialization of production; but on the other hand, capital also continually centralizes, consolidating surplus accumulation
in fewer and fewer private hands. Following the analyses of Fernand Braudel and presupposing (unlike Marx) the absolute predominance of finance capital over industrial capital, Deleuze & Guattari thus distinguish the immanent and synthetic dynamic of the market itself from the quasi-transcendent extractive operations of capital.¹³

The market fosters an increasingly differentiated network of social relations by expanding the socialization of production along with the division of labor, while capital extracts its surplus from the differential flows enabled by this network, by means of exploitation and the never-ending repayment of an infinite debt.¹⁴ In this light, the erstwhile subordination of civil society and the market to the transcendent State is no longer paramount: the immanent constitution of differentiated productive social relations and the quasi-transcendent command and expropriation of those relations both take place within the economic sphere; the State in other words has been subordinated to capital, and now functions merely to manage or regulate the network of flows in the service of private accumulation (hence its “quasi-transcendent” rather than simply transcendent status). So even though the difference-engine of capital fails to fully realize universal history, it nonetheless makes universality possible, puts it on the historical agenda. The market inaugurates the utopian process of multiplying related difference and subverting all representation of the Same – even while capital and its tool, the State, operate to re-capture difference in order to extract and accumulate surplus, consolidate power, and enforce repayment of that infinite debt.

This preference for the utopian potential of the market vis-à-vis that of the state finds clear expression in the work of Edouard Glissant, whose affinity for Deleuze & Guattari
(and in particular their concept of the rhizome) is well known. One of the most striking features of his sketch of a utopian vision for the Caribbean island of Martinique is just how unconcerned – perhaps even somewhat disdainful – Glissant is about the juridical and constitutional matters associated with State politics, and particularly about the nature of the political ties between Caribbean islands and the French state. In line with Deleuze & Guattari, his hopes clearly lie in the prospects for more equitable and mutually beneficial forms of market exchange. Unlike Deleuze & Guattari, however, Glissant projects a strong sense of writing from and about a particular place in the world, rather than about the world as a whole. For he speaks and thinks both from and of an archipelago: a region with no single standard or measure of identity, but plural sources, influences, relations; a region without a single People or State, but with multiple ties, parallel histories, shared interests; a region where subterranean or rather sub-oceanic linkages count for more than politically enclosed territorial boundaries, where the sea serves as much to link as to separate the land, if not more. This is, in effect, his plea for a specifically Caribbean utopia:

*Forget about all the political bullshit (“Oublions les tracas politiciens” [226]); forget about founding the “Federated States of the Caribbean” [231]; forget about working out our statutory relations with France [227]: if we speak to France at all from Martinique, it won’t be to fight her, much less to be her servants or employees, but simply to tell her we’re going to do something else – “nous allons entreprendre autre chose” [228]. And just what are we going to do? Let’s seek out markets around the world for goods that we agree to make here, that we design and put into production*
ourselves, instead of following orders from foreign politicians and world bankers only to end up making commodities that don’t sell. Sure, we’ll have to face plant reconversions, reorganize work, redistribute resources, invent new products... Sure, the going will be tough – but is our current situation all that good? It really isn’t even livable! So if we don’t devote ourselves to this utopia, then we’ll have to imagine some other one...19

If Glissant eventually comes to consider the non-identity of archipelagic being and thinking ("cette belle démesure"[226]) as a model for postmodern or postcolonial globalization, this no doubt stems in part from his appreciation of the remarkable history, geography, and demography of the Caribbean itself, and the ways it seems to incarnate rhizomatic relations, or what has here been called “related difference.” But he also clearly implies in this brief sketch that some of the best prospects for utopia reside in the eclipse of the nation-state and the development of the global market as an engine for the simultaneous multiplication and inter-relation of difference.

II

This view of the relative importance of the market and the state underlies Hardt & Negri’s recent book on Empire, and no doubt contributes significantly, in a period of capital’s rapid globalization and subordination of the state, to its epic sweep and heroic sense of grandeur – not to mention its astonishing success.20 Yet the shape and tenor of the story they tell is quite unlike the ironic history of Deleuze & Guattari. Hardt & Negri instead present a stirring narrative about the ineluctable historical passage from imperialism to Empire and the hope for counter-Empire – something like a “grand
narrative” of History of the kind Lyotard had said was no longer feasible, or likely to inspire confidence. What matters for present purposes are the subjectivism and teleologism of this view of history, whose sources can be located in a Marx corrected, as it were, by Nietzsche and Spinoza.

The intersection with Nietzsche centers on the issue of negativity, of activity and reactivity. Nietzsche had castigated dialectical thinking, with its emphasis on negativity, as a version of slave morality. Hegelian Marxism, meanwhile, has often associated the proletariat with negativity (the negation of the negation), consigning it to a reactive role in history. In opposition to this view, Hardt & Negri argue that proletarian rather than capitalist initiatives are in fact the motor of history. Indeed, they insist that “History has a logic only when subjectivity rules it, only when (as Nietzsche says) the emergence of subjectivity reconfigures efficient causes and final causes in the development of history. The power of the proletariat consists precisely in this” (235). Historical crises – crises of overproduction, for example, and the Great Depression in particular – which have often been understood as effects of the objective laws of capitalist economics, result instead in this view from proletarian organization and demands. As Hardt & Negri insist in Empire, The power of the proletariat imposes limits on capital and not only determines the crisis but also dictates the terms and nature of the transformation. The proletariat actually invents the social and productive forms that capital will be forced to adopt in the future. (268, original emphasis)
In a dramatic reversal of perspective, “the history of capitalist forms” themselves is now considered to be “always necessarily a reactive history” (268, original emphasis).24

The influence of Spinoza is most clearly evident in Hardt & Negri’s choice of “the multitude” as the new hero of their grand narrative, in place of the old proletariat. They take pains to clearly distinguish what they call the “new proletariat” (402, original emphasis) from the industrial working class, and in fact define this new postmodern proletariat as “the entire cooperating multitude” (402). They will then retain this latter term so as to underscore the importance of the transformed composition of labor, and the importance of cooperation (related difference) as a force of production – indeed as the principal force of production today. Under conditions of what Marx presciently called “real subsumption,” surplus value is now extracted everywhere throughout society, and not just in factories or the workplace. So for Hardt & Negri, cooperation takes place not just on the shop floor, but throughout a society knit by linguistic and affective as much as commercial ties – albeit still under the control of capitalist command backed by state regulation and/or domination. Indeed, the agon at the core of their grand narrative pits the multitude against capitalist command and state regulation; the narrative unfolding of this conflict appears as the passage from modernity to postmodernity, from an imperialism on the wane to an Empire “called into being,” as they insist, by the desires of the multitude (43 and passim).

Hardt and Negri’s focus on subjectivity has prompted criticism from those who believe that intra-capitalist competition (if not ‘objective laws of the economy’) contributes as
much or more to crises of overproduction and the “terms and nature of [historical] transformation” as/than action by the proletarian multitude does. But there can be no question that subjectivity lies at the core of their vision of history and of Empire. The subjectivity of the multitude, moreover, is understood by definition to entail “at the most basic and elemental level… the will to be against” (210, original emphasis). It is practically inevitable, then, that conflict between aspects of subjectivity constituted politically and those constituted economically will resolve in favor of the latter, since political relations will automatically be resisted:

> each subjectivity must become a subject that is ruled in the general networks of control (in the early modern sense of the one who is subject [subdictus] to a sovereign power), and at the same time each must also be an independent agent of production and consumption within networks…. Is it possible for the system to sustain simultaneously political subjection and the subjectivity of the producer/consumer? It does not really seem so…. The new mixed constitution leads to… a new social dynamic that liberates the producing and consuming subject from (or at least makes ambiguous its position within) the mechanisms of political subjection. (320-21, emphasis added)

Thus, when they declare late in the book that their “ultimate objective” is to be able “to recognize the terrain on which contestation and alternatives [to Empire] might emerge (319), that terrain turns out to be principally that of subjectivity: “the primary site of struggle seems to emerge… on the terrain of the production and regulation of subjectivity” (321):
On the terrain of the production and regulation of subjectivity, and in the disjunction between the political subject and the economic subject, it seems we can identify a real field of struggle in which all the gambits of the constitution and the equilibria of forces can be reopened – a true and proper situation of crisis and maybe eventually of revolution. (321)

We see here, once again, the preference for economics over politics, presented now in terms of conflicting subjectivities, but we also get a sense of the inevitability of crisis and of what they call throughout the book the historical “passage” from imperialism to Empire. Even while recognizing the objection that a subjectivity defined as a “will to be against” might not provide adequate grounds for revolutionary organization and mobilization, they insist that “this objection does not present an insuperable obstacle because the revolutionary past and the contemporary cooperative productive capacities …of the multitude… cannot help revealing a telos, a material affirmation of liberation” (395, emphasis added).

With its emphasis on subjective agency combined with historical inevitability, Hardt & Negri’s perspective resembles in important respects the utopian Marxism of Ernst Bloch. For despite their extensive and distinctive borrowings from Deleuze & Guattari, Nietzsche and Spinoza, Empire’s grand narrative remains an essentially dialectical one in which subject and object tend toward mutual correlation in an auspicious future. The inherent inclinations of the multitude providentially correspond to and realize the objective tendencies of the historical “passage” from imperialism to Empire. Similarly, in what Bloch calls “militant optimism,… the revolutionary decision of the proletariat…
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commits itself to the final struggle of liberation, a decision of the subjective factor in alliance with the objective factors of economic-material tendency."²⁷ Empire’s self-proclaimed goal, ultimately, is “to construct an apparatus for bringing together the subject (the multitude) and the object (cosmopolitical liberation)” (64). This willingness to or insistence on ascribing substantive directionality to history through narrative and on ascribing congruency with that directionality to revolutionary agency sets this kind of utopianism as a historical subject-object dialectic apart from Deleuze & Guattari’s understanding of utopia as a dimension of thought.²⁸

III

“Subject and object give a poor approximation of thought,” Deleuze & Guattari proclaim in their final collaboration, What is Philosophy?.²⁹ Instead, thought is something that happens to thinkers, something that befalls them: philosophers are subject to thought rather than subjects of thought; the provocation of thought then leads to the creation of concepts, but these concepts, in turn, create (rather than reflect) their objects, and so these objects are objects of thought (virtual objects), not objects one would find in the real world. Once we understand what Deleuze & Guattari mean by defining philosophy as the creation of concepts, we can examine what they consider to be the utopian dimension of philosophical thought.

Philosophical thought, for one thing, is in an important sense a-subjective.³⁰ This is not to deny the importance of great philosophers, but the names Spinoza, Nietzsche, et al. come to designate in philosophy distinctive bodies of concepts rather than flesh-and-
blood historical personnages. As philosopher, Deleuze insists, “I am no longer myself but thought’s aptitude for finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places” (64). Yet if philosophical thought is not subjective, not the accomplishment of philosopher-subjects but something that happens to them, neither is it objective or historical. Philosophers are not spokespersons or ventriloquists for their age: the creation of concepts takes place outside of or rather orthogonal to historical time, by resisting the present: “to create is to resist” (110). In explicit contrast with historicists like Hegel and Heidegger “inasmuch as they posit history as a form of interiority in which the concept necessarily develops or unveils its destiny” (95), Deleuze & Guattari propose a “geophilosophy” (following Braudel’s notion of geohistory): philosophical thought may have historical preconditions, but thought becomes philosophical by extracting itself from history, and by extracting philosophical concepts from historical states of affairs (96).

In the most general terms, the circumstance that provokes thought is chaos, the infinity of determinations that comprise the complexity of the cosmos. In order to get a handle on chaos, thought invents what Deleuze & Guattari call a “plane of immanence”: this plane “sections” chaos (much as a plane sections a cone) and thereby reduces its complexity by considering it from a certain angle (or perspective, as Nietzsche might put it); it is on this plane that concepts will be created (42). Chaos harbors many potential planes of immanence – infinitely many, in fact; all great philosophers have invented one (or more), but that still leaves infinitely many more to be invented. The plane of immanence combines powers of being and powers of thinking (following Spinoza’s
extension and thought; 48), and it is their coexistence that enables thought to get a grasp of being (38). But each plane of immanence is itself infinitely complex (comprising an infinity of determinations) – even though it is only one section of chaos – and hence its powers of thought move at infinite speed. Indeed, thought must move at infinite speed in order to prevent the emergence of transcendence (47), since stopping the infinite play of determinations (principle of the plane’s very immanence) at any one point of the plane would establish that point as its center.31

Another key feature of the plane of immanence is that, as a particular section of chaos, it inevitably has a specific orientation, some “principle” of selectivity by which it reduces the infinity of chaos to something concepts can grasp, even if that principle becomes visible as such only after the concepts have been created. Deleuze & Guattari call such an orientation the “image of thought” implicated in a plane of immanence, the sense of what thinking is for to begin with (recollecting Truth for Plato, correcting sense-evidence for Descartes, exercising will-to-power for Nietzsche, and so on), even before concepts are created. Finally, Deleuze & Guattari maintain that concepts are created on the plane of immanence by means of what they call “conceptual personae.” In line with their de-subjectivation of philosophy, Deleuze & Guattari suggest that it is these conceptual personae that actually do the thinking for the philosopher:

The conceptual personae is not the philosopher’s representative but rather, the reverse: the philosopher is only the envelope of his principal conceptual persona and of all the other personae who are the intercessors, the real subjects of his philosophy. Conceptual personae are
the philosopher’s “heteronyms,” and the philosopher’s name is the simple pseudonym of his personae. (64)

In some cases, a philosopher’s conceptual personae are obvious: Socrates and the Philosopher-King for Plato; Dionysus – but also the Priest, and others – for Nietzsche; sometimes they are not. But all philosophy thinks through conceptual personae who are distinct from their authors (just as narrators are distinct from their literary authors). For Deleuze himself, for example (and particularly in Anti-Oedipus), the schizophrenic becomes “a conceptual persona who lives intensely within the thinker and forces him to think” (What is Philosophy?, 70).

What is it that befalls or happens to a philosopher that forces him to think? What specific circumstances, aside from mere chaos, provoke the creation of concepts by conceptual personae on a plane of immanence? In the course of his career, Deleuze has given three kinds of answer to this question. In his early works, it is paradox that provokes thought: “Philosophy is revealed not by good sense but by paradox,” says Deleuze in Difference and Repetition; “Paradox is the pathos or passion of philosophy” (227). The Logic of Sense, in turn, is comprised in its entirety of “a series of paradoxes which form the theory of sense” (xiii). Here, the provocation to thought is as it were internal to thought itself: logical paradoxes provide the irritants that shake the brain out of its habitual slumber and force it to think. In the later collaborations with Guattari (and perhaps because of that collaboration), the locus of the stimulus to thought shifts steadily outside of thought, and eventually even outside of philosophy. The second kind of provocation consists of topics or problems within philosophy (no
longer limited to logical contradictions or paradoxes) that, in the estimation of a creative philosopher, have been poorly conceived and hence demand to be re-conceived: “…in philosophy, concepts are only created as a function of problems which are thought to be badly understood or badly posed” (16).

The third kind of provocation, which most interests us here, arises from the connection between philosophy and its socio-historical context; here the problems are not strictly speaking or originally philosophical, but they nonetheless provoke philosophical thought to furnish solutions to, or at least new and improved articulations of, those problems – solutions or articulations that are indeed philosophical. In this connection, it is possible to argue that there is no “history of philosophy” per se, that philosophy has no history internal to itself, but that its evolution depends on and derives from the transformation of the problems to which it responds. As Deleuze & Guattari put it, “human history and the history of philosophy do not have the same rhythm” (103). How is it possible to be a Platonist or a Kantian today? Why didn’t Stoic philosophy die with the Stoics themselves, or with the passing of their epoch? Is it because we face some of the same problems they did? Or is it because we can reshape their concepts to respond to new problems of our own?

If one can still be a Platonist, Cartesian, or Kantian today, it is because one is justified in thinking that their concepts can be reactivated in our problems and inspire those concepts that need to be created. What is the best way to follow the great philosophers? Is it to repeat what they said or
to do what they did, that is, create concepts for problems that necessarily change? (28, original emphasis)

Here, philosophy does not respond to problems of “its own,” but to problems presented to it or forced upon it by its real-world milieu. And it is this kind of connection, between philosophy and socio-historical context, that Deleuze & Guattari will call utopia: “utopia is what links philosophy with its own epoch” (99, original emphasis).

In theory, philosophy has an unlimited number of problems to confront, and there would thus be no reason to suppose that the history of philosophy would have any “rhythm” to it at all. But Deleuze & Guattari suggest that philosophy has truly flourished in two specific historical epochs, that it emerged and re-emerged in connection with two distinctive social milieus: the Greek city-state, and the world market (99 and passim).35

In both cases, what is especially propitious for philosophical thought is “the connection of an absolute plane of immanence with a relative social milieu that also functions through immanence” (98, original emphasis). The philosophical plane is characterized by absolute immanence as long as thought proceeds at infinite speed and thereby prevents transcendence. The social milieu of the Greek city-state is characterized by relative immanence inasmuch as the agora brings together citizens as friends and rivals, among whom there is (in principle) no pre-established social hierarchy and hence no transcendent authority-figure; authority is to arise immanently from discussion itself. Here, we could say, immanence is constructed politically. The social milieu of world capitalism is characterized, as we have seen, partly by deterritorialization and the decoding that accompanies it, which subordinate Meaning to the abstract calculus of
market exchange and hence dissolve or subvert any and all social authority. Here, we would then say, immanence is constructed *economically*. It is true that world capitalism is also characterized by reterritorialization, particularly in the operations of the quasi-transcendent nation-state; hence Deleuze & Guattari’s struggle to keep philosophical (or “nomadic”) thought free from capture by State-supported and State-supportive thought in its many forms (including Platonism, Hegelianism, et al.); hence also, however, the need to complement the concept of schizophrenia with the concept of paranoia in *Anti-Oedipus*, as we shall see. For now what matters is the kind of connection between thought and context that Deleuze & Guattari are proposing. High-speed philosophy as absolute immanence finds fertile ground in milieus that themselves have strong (though always relative) tendencies toward immanent self-organization, whether based politically on the *agora* or economically on the market. The question then becomes what kind of relation obtains between the absolute plane of immanence of philosophical thought and the relative social milieus of the city-state and the world market, and how does the economic immanence of the latter produces the preconditions for utopianism in connection with universal history?

But before addressing these questions, it is worth noting the relation between these two historical moments and modes of utopian immanence – the agora and the market – and the two modes of utopian thinking alluded to at the outset – utopia as blue-print or fixed product and utopianism as process. For it would be possible to show that blue-print utopianism corresponds *as a mode of thought* to the politically-constructed immanence of the agora, where the thrust of utopian thought is to arrive at collective agreement
about “the Good” or “Justice,” “the ideal society,” etc., and that process-utopianism corresponds to the deterritorialization and decoding characteristic of the world market, where agreeing on content is less important than identifying multiple forces of production of the new that are active in a given socio-historical milieu. The former is a matter of ideal representation, while the latter is diagnostic rather than representative.

In line with this difference, Deleuze & Guattari are generally concerned to distinguish a properly philosophical relation between concept and context from the better-known scientific relation. Already in *A Thousand Plateaus*, they are categorical about the distinction: “Nowhere do we claim for our concepts the title of science” (p.22; see also p.11: “the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world”). And they also devote a good part of *What is Philosophy?* to rigorously distinguishing philosophical concepts from scientific ones. Unlike both the human and the natural sciences, which are representative, philosophy is creative, serving as a kind of relay between one practical orientation to the world and another, new (and hopefully improved) one. Philosophy, as we have said, responds to problems that arise when a given mode of existence or practical orientation no longer suffices. Such problems are real enough, but they are not reducible to reality. The purpose of philosophy is not to represent the world, but to create concepts, and these concepts serve not to accurately replicate in discourse specific segments of the world as it really is (as science does), but to propose articulations of and/or solutions to problems, to offer new and different perspectives on or orientations toward the world. Take for example the problem facing Greek society, as Plato construes it: emergent democracy fosters free speech
and through its exercise, sophists threaten to undermine hierarchical social order; his solution: the conceptual persona called “Socrates,” who will invent a practice of the dialectic to engage with and “correct” immanent public opinion in the interests of a transcendent Truth, becoming thereby a cornerstone of State philosophy (and hence a constant target of Deleuze & Guattari’s nomad thought). We have, on one hand, a prodigious creation of concepts (the Socratic dialectic, the Ideal Forms, etc.) and of conceptual personae (not just the figure of Socrates, but also the philosopher-king, the guardians, and others). We have, on the other hand, numerous rhizomatic points of contact with the real: nascent democracy, the agora, the sophists, Socrates himself, and so on. The conceptual persona “Socrates” is derived from Socrates the person and his particular social milieu; it does not represent him or that milieu. Even if there are features of the historical milieu that resemble concept-formations in philosophy (features such as the real-life sophists and Socrates) the “corresponding” conceptual persona or philosophical concept (Socrates or the dialectic, for example) does not represent those psychosocial types: “conceptual personae are irreducible to psychosocial types. (…) Nietzsche’s Dionysus is no more the mythical Dionysus than Plato’s Socrates is the historical Socrates” (66,65; original emphasis). In the same vein, Deleuze & Guattari insist in Anti-Oedipus that “they have never seen a schizophrenic” (380) – despite the fact that the schizophrenic as conceptual persona is in a sense the very hero of the book (though not its only conceptual persona). The point is that the conceptual persona of the schizophrenic is a completely different kind of entity from the flesh-and-blood schizophrenic: “in one case the schizophrenic is a conceptual persona who lives intensely within the thinker and forces him to think, whereas in the other the
schizophrenic is a psychosocial type who represses the living being and robs him of his thought" (What is Philosophy?, 70).

So the connection between philosophy and its socio-historical milieu is essentially diagnostic rather than representative-scientific: “All concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood [as problems] as their solution emerges” (16; see also 79). Sciences aim to grasp states of affairs as they are; the point is to get reality right, to settle on a correct understanding of the world. Philosophy aims never to settle but on the contrary always to unsettle and to transform our understanding of certain problems, because they are thought to have been badly posed, or not posed at all, by previous thinkers, and/or because the problems are historically new or have changed so radically over time as to render previous responses inadequate. Hence Deleuze & Guattari insist that philosophy for them “does not consist in knowing and is not inspired by truth. Rather it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine [its] success or failure” (82). In the same vein, they distinguish at the beginning of A Thousand Plateaus between scientific tracing and philosophical mapping: a tracing (or a photograph) simply captures or reproduces reality as it is; mapping selects and extracts certain features because it entails a certain orientation toward (or perspective on) reality. A map showing the location of freeway entrances but not school buildings is no more or less accurate than one showing the location of schools but not freeways, and neither one of them is completely accurate: neither one includes all the facts. Their special value as maps depends on the problem at hand – whether getting on a freeway
or finding a school – and then, of course, but only then, does it depend on whether they get those locations right. The creation of concepts is thus crucially selective as well as (or as part of being) diagnostic; thought selects out from states of affairs “what belongs to philosophy by right” (52). And in extracting a philosophical concept from a historical state of affairs, thought chooses certain determinations as “Interesting, Remarkable or Important,” and “relegates other determinations to the status of mere facts, characteristics of states of affairs, or lived contents” (52). The concept of schizophrenia, for instance, gets created through the extraction of selected features from a historical state of affairs characterized by the spread of the market, the subversion of Meaning by calculation, and the resulting prospects for a radically free “infinite semiosis” at play throughout society.

Finally, while both philosophy and science wrest order from chaos, they do so through two procedures in which the relation between the virtual and the actual differs significantly. Whatever is and whatever happens come into being, according to Deleuze & Guattari, by passing from the state of virtuality to actuality. At the limit, virtuality is characterized by an infinity of determinations (chaos); philosophy and science have distinctive means of grasping and managing the relations between virtuality and actuality for their respective purposes. Where philosophy sections chaos, as we have seen, using a plane of immanence and concepts, science sections chaos using a plane of reference and functives. Science employs functives and the plane of reference to limit chaos, to reduce and slow down the infinity of determinations constituting virtual chaos, so as ultimately to produce a freeze-frame in which the
actualization of virtual determinations in a specific state of affairs can be seized, understood, and predicted (118). The passage from chaotic virtuality to actuality is traced by science through the ascription of limits and coordinates on the plane of reference, and by what Deleuze & Guattari call the “de-potentiation” of the infinity of chaos (122). The chaotic virtual gets progressively deprived of determinations until the point at which actual behavior appears to ‘obey’ natural laws (through what Deleuze calls bare repetition of the same 42). Science turns its back on chaos, as it were, and thins virtuality out to the point that there appears to be nothing between the absolute chaos it leaves behind and the absolute natural law which is its end and goal.

Philosophy, by contrast, turns away from actuality in order to give consistency to virtuality by extracting from actual states of affairs the selected determinations constitutive of and mapped by its concepts. Philosophical concepts do not refer to the actual states of affairs from which they are extracted, but rather give consistency to the virtuality from which those states of affairs arose or were actualized. Philosophy thus counter-actualizes actuality and re-potentiates virtuality, restoring the latter’s motility and, perhaps most importantly, its potential to be actualized differently (through what Deleuze calls “clothed,” i.e. differential or creative repetition 43). Where science captures or traces reality itself (or segments of actuality on various planes of reference), philosophy maps the virtual, or rather maps diverse sections of virtuality on its various planes of immanence.

Schizophrenia and paranoia are among the many properly philosophical concepts that Deleuze & Guattari create in Anti-Oedipus in order to map the virtual of our present
milieu. Despite having been drawn from psychoanalysis, they do not represent psychological or even psycho-social types; hence the authors will insist not only that they have never seen a schizophrenic (380), but more precisely that “the schizo is not the revolutionary, but the schizophrenic process…is the potential for revolution” (341, emphasis added). The radically free-form semiosis of schizophrenia unleashed by capitalist deterritorialization and decoding is the potential for revolution, even while it is severely counteracted at the same time – and perhaps even overpowered most of the time – by capitalist reterritorialization and paranoia. Crucially, the philosophical concept of schizophrenia does not designate a historical trend – the way the concepts of “the multitude” and “passage” do for Hardt & Negri; rather, the concept of schizophrenia is extracted from the state of affairs of our milieu to identify a real virtual potential, whether that potential ever gets actualized or not: ironic universal history is a history of contingency, not a teleology.44 It must be said, however, that the irony of Deleuze & Guattari’s conception of universal history was apparently lost on most readers, for linear history gets thoroughly ironized by the time they write A Thousand Plateaus, with its apparently random and decidedly non-linear dating of the plateaus. Perhaps “universal history” had already accomplished its work; in any case, the problems have now changed, and are henceforth to be conceived of as “geographical” rather than historical: “globalization” and lateral differences are what matter, rather than linear “progress” versus “underdevelopment”. – It is not that underdevelopment has been “solved” on the ground by any stretch of the imagination, but it is now conceptualized in a different way, as actively produced contemporaneously by advanced capitalism, rather than as a temporal “holdover from the past”. In brief, for the geophilosophy of the later
collaborations (*A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy*?), utopia is as radically disconnected from linear history as from subject-object dialectics.

Even though schizophrenia does not designate a historical trend, it nonetheless entertains important relations with the historical milieu: its function is to “give consistency” to the virtual as it exists in given circumstances. For the virtual potential of a given milieu is never infinite, and the purpose of utopian concept creation is precisely to disclose real potential, to re-potentiate the virtual with the hope of actualizing it differently (through creative rather than mechanical repetition). If “utopia is what links philosophy with its own epoch,” this is because “with utopia…philosophy becomes political and takes the criticism of its own time to the highest level” (99; original emphasis). Thus the utopian dimension of thought “stands for absolute deterritorialization but always at the critical point at which it is connected with the present relative milieu, and especially with the forces [of relative deterritorialization] stifled by this milieu” (100). And as we have seen, in our present milieu, the forces of relative deterritorialization giving rise to schizophrenia are produced by the market, its deterritorialization of political power, and its decoding of representation.

Granted that *Anti-Oedipus* created the philosophical concepts of schizophrenia and paranoia in relation to the relative deterritorialization and reterritorialization of capitalism respectively, in response to what problem(s) were they created? Of what problem(s) do they provide a better articulation than previous perspectives? One such problem is very clear, and had already been articulated (though differently) by Baruch Spinoza, Herbert
Marcuse, and Wilhelm Reich (among others) : “why do [people] fight for their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their own salvation?” (A-O, 29). How does capitalism manage to “manufacture consent” or engineer desire in people so as to produce not merely consent, but enthusiastic devotion to the cause of their own oppression? The other central problem (perhaps less clear, inasmuch as psychoanalysis provides the main target, the title, and the dominant idiom of the book) is how to reconceive of the positive potential of capitalism in such a way as to avoid vulgar productivism (as diagnosed by Marcuse and Jean Baudrillard, among others). In the context of massive over-production and under a regime of positive or productive power (as diagnosed by Foucault), the hope for capitalism surely cannot lie in overcoming scarcity or even in the redistribution of goods. As Foucault has argued most insistently, productivism itself (in the form of what he calls biopower) is in fact the current mode of domination, vehiculated by a pervasive regime of paranoia – or what he calls in his preface to the English translation of Anti-Oedipus “the fascism in all of us, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us” (xiii). The genius of Anti-Oedipus was to have revealed that these two problems are actually one and the same: relative deterritorialization based on the market frees both labor power and libidinal desire (the active utopian forces operating in the present milieu), even though both get stifled through reterritorializing privatization (via capital and the nuclear family, respectively): “the identity of desire and labor is not a myth, it is rather the active utopia par excellence that designates the capitalist limit to be overcome by desiring-production” (Anti-Oedipus, 302). The problem posed by Anti-Oedipus thus becomes how to free the
deterritorializing forces of the market (schizophrenia) from re-capture by the regime of power (paranoia) imposed on it by capital and promulgated by the nuclear family (along with a host of other oedipalizing institutions, up to and including the state).

In light of this articulation of the problem, the utopian dimension of the concept of schizophrenia designates the potential inherent in market deterritorialization for emancipating labor power and libidinal desire from their capture by capital accumulation, state-sponsored discipline, and the asceticism of the nuclear family.47

But this is only a potential, for Deleuze & Guattari’s ironic universal history, once again, is not a teleology, and schizophrenia is not to be understood as some kind of historical trend: the philosophical concept is never a “utopian prefiguration of a future that is still part of our history” (112).48 This is because while schizophrenia as utopian concept maps a revolutionary potential that is indeed really inherent in the virtuality of our present milieu, virtuality itself exists outside of historical time. It is in turning away from history that the utopian dimension of thought re-potentiates virtuality and restores to it the chance of becoming other than what it was: “History…designates only the set of conditions…from which one turns away in order to become, that is to say, in order to create something new” (96).49 Hence philosophy as problem-posing and as thought-experiment: “History is not experimentation, is it only the set of almost negative conditions that make possible the experimentation of something that escapes history” (111). This “turning away” from history – visible in the shift of emphasis noted above between volumes one and two of Capitalism and Schizophrenia – may indeed be what is most “post-modern” about the later collaborations between Deleuze and Guattari.50 If
we agree that modernity assigned a central place to univocal, linear historicity, and that this form of historicity is in turn a function of capital, it is clear why Deleuze & Guattari would divorce revolutionary becomings from such capitalist historicity. As they insist in *What is Philosophy?*, “the market is the only thing that is universal in capitalism” (106): the market as difference-engine produces differences; capitalist expansion, appropriation, and centralization strive to capture those differences and yoke them to the master-narrative of history. The aim of philosophy generally is to extract concepts from the historical milieu precisely in order to promote escape from it, and the thrust of these particular concepts is to free the difference-engine of the market from its capture by the power of capital.

Deleuze & Guattari ultimately connect Foucault’s renewal of Kant’s reflections on revolutionary enthusiasm with Nietzsche’s conception of the philosopher as “physician of civilization” and “inventor of new modes of existence” whose task is “the diagnosis of becomings in every passing present” (113, original emphasis). Already for Kant, as Deleuze & Guattari put it, “the concept of revolution exists not in the way the revolution is undertaken in a necessarily relative social field but 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” (100). Connecting Kant with Nietzsche in this way adds a distinctly utopian dimension to philosophy’s vocation of creating concepts, whereby “the object of philosophy is not to contemplate the eternal [Plato] or to reflect history [Hegel] but to diagnose our [potential] becomings” (112). And so it is that in its utopian connection with the forces of relative deterritorialization fostered by the market, and in resistance to
the paranoia fostered by capital accumulation and oedipal asceticism, philosophical thought creates new concepts to diagnose Important becomings in our present milieu, and that becoming-schizophrenic becomes a mode of becoming-revolutionary.

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NOTES

This essay is dedicated to Fredric Jameson.


2 See Anti-Oedipus: “If we must still speak of utopia... it is most assuredly not as an ideal model, but as revolutionary action and passion” (63). For a similar distinction between “the utopianism of social process” and “utopias as spatial form,” see David Harvey, Spaces of Hope (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), esp. pp. 164-81.

3 See Anti-Oedipus, esp. p.140.

4 See Karl Marx, The Grundrisse (New York, Random House, 1973): “Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape.... The bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to the ancient....” (105-106).

5 Ibid., p. 106: “The bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to the ancient.... Although it is true therefore that the categories of bourgeois economics possess a truth for all other forms of society, this is to be taken only with a grain of salt. They can contain them in a developed, or stunted, or caricatured form etc., but always with an essential difference.”


8 Of course, a forced choice between ‘man’ and ‘woman’ has problems of its own, as Deleuze and Guattari and much of queer theory take pains to point out.


10 On how the concept of production in Deleuze & Guattari includes both desiring-production and social-production, see my Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus, pp.1,4,18-24, and passim.

11 Deleuze’s aversion to Hegelian dialectics is well known; I use the term interplay here and ambivalence in what follows to characterize his assessment of capitalism.

12 One way of characterizing the semiotics of schizophrenia, according to Deleuze & Guattari, is in terms of a radically free-form (if not infinite) semiosis operating against the grain of sedimented habit and codification by representation; see my Deleuze & Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus.

13 See Fernand Braudel, Capitalism and Material Life: 1400-1800 (New York: Harper and Row, 1973). On the predominance of finance over industrial capital within industrial capitalism itself (the only truly capitalist form), see Anti-Oedipus, esp. pp.226-39. Braudel proposes a fundamental distinction between markets and anti-markets: anti-markets are characterized by the exercise of monopoly or near-monopoly power over market transactions; in his terms, then, capitalist “markets” are in fact anti-markets, and nowhere is this truer than of the labor market, where what Marx called “primitive accumulation” gives capital an unassailable power advantage over labor. His and Deleuze & Guattari’s positive assessment of the utopian potential of markets depends on eliminating anti-market forces from them.

14 On the infinite debt under capitalism, see my Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus, esp. pp.78-96.

15 See in particular Edouard Glissant, Poetics of Relation, (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1997).


17 Of course any appeal to the idea of a post-State, post-capitalist global world must reckon with obstacles to achieving it: how to eliminate the State, if not by forms of economic organization that will effectively dissolve it; how to eliminate the infinite debt, short of simply canceling it; how to eliminate wage-labor, if not by instituting employee ownership and cooperative production (along the lines of Mandragon in Spain). David Schweickart provides what may be the most recent elaboration and justification of this last idea; see his After Capitalism (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002). See also note 13 above, on the utopian elimination of anti-markets from markets.
This perspectivism is evident in his evocation of *la belle démesure de la pensée archipélique*: « Nous sommes accoutumés de penser en termes archipéliques, mettons nos actes en accord avec cette belle démesure, qui n’est ni désordre ni affolement, » in Glissant, *Traité du tout-monde*, p.226.


See for example Callinicos, op.cit.; Hardt & Negri say this: “In order to understand the passage from imperialism to Empire, in addition to looking at the development of capitalism itself, we must also understand the genealogy from the perspective of class struggle. This point of view is in fact probably more central to the real historical movements. Theories of the passages to and beyond imperialism that privilege the pure critique of the dynamics of capital risk undervaluing the power of the real efficient motor that drives capitalist development from its deepest core: the movements and struggles of the proletariat” (234, emphasis added).

Resistance in the subjectivity of the multitude is naturalized by Hardt & Negri in these terms: “In general, the will to be against does not seem to require much explanation. Disobedience to authority is one of the most natural and healthy acts. To us it seems completely obvious that those who are exploited will resist” (210) – and this despite invoking the crucial question posed by Deleuze & Guattari (following Spinoza and Wilhelm Reich): why do men fight for their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?” (quoted 210, original emphasis).

Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, Vol. 1, Plaice, Plaice, and Knight, trans. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995): 199. Further on, Bloch stresses that “The subjective factor is the unenclosed potency to turn things here, the objective factor is the unenclosed potentiality of turnability…. Both factors are always interwoven with one another in dialectical interaction…. Subjective potency coincides not only with what is turning, but also with what is realizing in history, and it coincides with it all the more, the more men become conscious producers of their history. Objective potentiality coincides not only with what is changeable, but with what is realizable in history, and it coincides with this all the more, the more the external world independent of man is also one which is increasingly mediated with him” (247-48).

By “substantive directionality” I mean simply a course of development susceptible to narrativization with relatively clear-cut before- and after- states of being, such as Hardt & Negri proffer in their account of the passage from imperialism to Empire.


Thought is by no means limited to philosophy; in fact, Deleuze & Guattari discuss the relations of philosophical thought to thinking through science and the arts at length in *What is Philosophy?* (see p.8 and passim): I limit myself mostly to philosophical thought here for reasons of expediency and clarity of exposition.

Deleuze & Guattari’s plane of immanence bears comparison with Derrida’s *différance* (free play in a structure of differences without a transcendent center) and with Foucault’s concept of episteme. Althusser’s wrestling with “the lonely instance of the economy” (which, if it ever arrived, would stop thought at a final determination) is another contemporary illustration, and it is not clear whether having the economic determine what instance is dominant rather than being itself the dominant instance rescues his structural causality model from transcendence; see *Difference and Repetition* where Deleuze suggests
that “the economic [instance]’ is never given properly speaking, but rather designates a differential
tegrity to be interpreted, always covered over by its forms of actualization” (186).


34 As Deleuze & Guattari say in What is Philosophy?, “The philosopher must become nonphilosopher so that nonphilosophy becomes the earth and people of philosophy” (109).

35 Geophilosophy: “From the point of view of philosophy’s development, there is no necessary continuity passing from Greece to Europe through the intermediary of Christianity; there is the contingent recommencement of a same contingent process, in different conditions” (98). “The birth of philosophy required the conjunction of two very different movements of deterritorialization, the relative and the absolute, the first already at work in immanence. Absolute deterritorialization of the plane of thought had to be aligned or directly connected with the relative deterritorialization of Greek society” (92).

36 This is not an historicist argument: blue-print utopias continue to be written well after the market emerges as a basic social institution in the west, but they appear increasingly antiquated compared to process-utopian modes of thought.

37 See A Thousand Plateaus (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). See also What is Philosophy?, especially p.22: “The [philosophical] concept is defined by its consistency... but it has no reference: it is self-referential” (original emphasis) and p.79: “Since [philosophical] concepts are not propositional, they cannot refer to problems concerning the extensional conditions of propositions assimilable to those of science”; see also p.82.

38 See especially What is Philosophy?, Chapter 5: “Concepts and Functives,” pp.117-33; but see also pp.23-24, 33, 42, 79-80, and passim. Deleuze and Guattari draw a similar distinction in the opening pages of A Thousand Plateaus between (scientific) tracing and (philosophical) mapping: “What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it [the map] is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (13).


40 “[P]hilosophy invents modes of existence or possibilities of life” (What is Philosophy?, p.72); such invention is clearly not representational. See Paul Patton’s excellent account of Deleuze & Guattari’s philosophical endeavors in Deleuze and the Political (London: Routledge, 2000), in which he observes, regarding the issue of nomadism, that Deleuze & Guattari “are engaged in the invention of a concept rather than empirical social science” (117).

41 See Difference and Repetition: “The virtual possesses the reality of a task to be performed or a problem to be solved: it is the problem which orientates, conditions and engenders [actual] solutions...” (212).

42 See Difference and Repetition, xx, 287, and passim. In the Preface, Deleuze explains that one of the two lines of research underlying the book is “a concept of repetition in which physical, mechanical or bare repetitions (repetition of the Same) would find their raison d’être in the more profound structures of a hidden repetition in which a ‘differential’ is disguised and displaced” (xx).

43 On “clothed” or “covered” or “disguised” repetition, see Difference and Repetition, pp.18, 24, 84, 287, 302, and passim.

44 Deleuze & Guattari insist that the virtual is “real without being actual” (156 and passim); for example, the language-system as a whole (langue) is real, even though it never gets actualized as a whole, but only in partial speech acts (parole). See also Difference and Repetition: “The reality of the virtual is structure” (209). In Deleuze et la question de la démocratie (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2003), Philippe Mengue attributes a ‘positive’ (p.34) rather than ironic sense of universal history to Deleuze & Guattari in Anti-Oedipus, and thereby constructs a false opposition between their earliest and later collaborations; he also fails to recognize the difference between radical and representative democracy, thereby mistaking Deleuze’s mistrust of the latter for a rejection in principle of the former.

On how the philosophical concepts of desiring-machine and social production in Anti-Oedipus provoke this rearticulation, see my Deleuze and Guattari’s Anti-Oedipus, pp. 23-24 and passim. In What is Philosophy?, Deleuze & Guattari return to insist on the revolutionary thrust of utopian thought in its connection to real virtuality: “to say that revolution is itself utopia of immanence is not to say that is is a dream…. On the contrary, it is to posit revolution as plane of immanence, as infinite movement and absolute survey, but to the extent that these features connect up with what is real here and how in the struggle against capitalism, relaunching new struggles whenever the earlier one is betrayed” (100). The historical betrayal of an earlier solution (such as Leninism or aristocratic trade-unionism) is thus as much of a provocation for the creation of new utopian concepts as logical paradox or “historical change” are for the creation of new philosophical concepts in general.

The intersection of Deleuze, Guattari, Althusser, and Foucault provides fertile ground for reflecting on the extent to which or proportions in which modern discipline is state-sponsored, capital-imposed, and family-generated.

For a critique of Empire for confusing philosophical concepts with historical analysis, see my “Optimism of the Intellect…”.

If space permitted, it would be worth relating this radical distinction between history and the crucially Important concept of becoming to Deleuze’s theories of time and causality as developed in Difference and Repetition.

See for instance P. Mengue, Deleuze et la question…, esp. pp. 31-36.