Applying Theory to Practice: Putting Deleuze to Work

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Abstract

The work of Deleuze and his associates has been widely discussed, and there is a burgeoning literature on the political implications for the education system specifically. Examples in Sweden, the UK and the USA are discussed. Deleuzian writing offers a powerful critique of educational bureaucracies, but the work also highlights problems in connecting work with a definite philosophical agenda to critical and political analyses of empirical processes and situations. Deleuze's philosophical agenda leads to radical but also to highly unconventional thinking and writing and this makes the argument notoriously inaccessible. Some general paradoxes in linking theory to practice emerge through Rancière's discussion of philosophical autonomy and heteronomy. The work of Bourdieu in particular can also help to explain the difficulties of Deleuzian writing in terms of possible residual effects of a particular social context – the elite French university system of the 1960s and 1970s which fostered a particularly allusive style.

Keywords: Bourdieu, Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari, educational politics, progressive pedagogy

R i S E
INTERNATIONAL
JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY
OF EDUCATION

Hipatia Press
www.hipatiapress.com

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Aplicando la Teoría a la Práctica: Poniendo a Deleuze a Trabajar

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Resumen

La obra de Deleuze y sus asociados ha sido ampliamente discutida, y ha surgido una literatura emergente sobre las implicaciones políticas de su obra en el sistema educativo específicamente. Aquí se analizaran ejemplos en Suecia, Reino Unido y Estados Unidos. Los escritos de Deleuze ofrecen una fuerte crítica sobre las burocracias docentes, pero la obra también destaca los problemas en las obras vinculadas con una firme pauta filosófica con respecto a los análisis críticos y políticos de procesos y situaciones empíricas. Las pautas filosóficas de Deleuze conducen a un pensamiento y escritura radicales y muy poco convencionales lo cual hace su razonamiento de notoria inaccesibilidad. Ciertas paradojas generales surgen al relacionar la teoría con la práctica usando la proposición de Rancière sobre la autonomía y heteronomía filosóficas. La obra de Bourdieu en particular también puede ayudar a explicar las dificultades en los escritos de Deleuze con relación a los posibles efectos residuales de un contexto social particular – el sistema elitista universitario francés de los sesenta y setenta, lo cual fomenta un estilo particularmente lleno de alusiones.

Palabras clave: Bourdieu, Deleuze, Deleuze y Guattari, política educacional, pedagogía progresiva.

Radical theorists lose credibility if they are seen to be concerned only with scholastic pursuits, Rancière (2002) tells us, hence the turn to radical politics. 'Politics' can refer not only to organized social movements but also to local struggles, including those over educational policy. Deleuzian theory offers a radical and general account of politics based on concepts such as deterritorialization, lines of flight and the war machine. The aim is to develop an organization which does not mirror state apparatuses, as organized parties do, but to build a suitably modern 'war machine' which will avoid turning into something closed and authoritarian again. Encouragingly, 'In a certain way it is very simple, this happens on its own and every day' (Deleuze & Parnet, 1995: 145).

Deleuze and Guattari have also both supported larger radical political movements, such as the grassroots Italian Autonomist Movement of the 1970s and 1980s, and Deleuzian concepts seem to have been particularly applicable, especially the 'body without organs'(see Lotringer & Marazzi, 1980). Guattari (Guattari & Rolnik, 2008) helped develop the anarchistic Free Radio Movement in France, and also embarked on an extensive tour of Brazil, talking with militants and activists organizing the Workers' Party in their struggle to come to power: the aim was to build a popular movement based on an alliance of various cultural, political and sexual minorities. Guattari and Rolnik specifically tried to help militants identify a singularization, a particular movement that would cause the political system to tip over into radical change. The term has its own context in political theory, but it could also be seen as a specification of the concept of a singularity in Deleuzian philosophy – a particular combination of the usually invisible forces in a multiplicity, which, when examined properly, leads to an understanding of the multiplicity.

Guattari and Rolnik also engaged in considerable debate with Brazilian psychotherapists about the repressive implications of particular kinds of Freudian theory, and Guattari discussed his own specific practice in the therapeutic community in which he worked in France (further described in Guattari, 1995). Here, it is possible to see the theoretical work with Deleuze (Deleuze & Guattari, 1984; 2004), being extended to modern conditions, for example in the notion of 'a-signifying semiotics... to relate to Significations and expressions that

[technological] machines have' (Guattari, 1995: 36 --37).

From the other direction, radical activists also turn to theory because they want to argue that their positions are firmly grounded in something real and of universal interest, not based just on idealism or self-interest. Feminist writers, principally in France and the USA have been especially interested in the work of Deleuze (and Deleuze & Guattari) in thinking out the most effective political stance for women and sexual minorities to overcome the oppression of phallogocentrism. Deleuze and Guattari (2004) had written on the need to embark on 'becoming-woman' as an essential stage for everyone, including heterosexual men, in liberating themselves from conventional thinking about sex and gender. They had also discussed 'becoming-minority', a process of escaping fully from repressive majoritarian conceptions and discourses. Together, these arguments seemed to promise an effective break at last with phallogocentrism in philosophy.

Goulimari (1999) summarized the political implications of these strategies – broadly, whether to insist on the positive identity of 'woman', even if still contaminated with phallogocentrism, as a basis for political mobilization, or to opt instead for an oppositional minority status (defined not numerically, but in terms of holding minority conceptions), with no compromises with official discourses, to establish a place outside of the dominant system. This in turn implied an open and non-hierarchical relationship of alliance with other minorities, including homosexuals and queers of both sexes.

Educational applications

Deleuze seems to offer immediate support for critics of current policies with comments that '[there is a] grotesque image of culture that we find in examinations and government referenda' (Deleuze, 2004: 197). In the famous essay on the society of control (Deleuze, 1995: 179) we read 'Even the state education system has been looking at the principle of "getting paid for results"... school is being replaced by continuing education and exams by continuous assessment. It's the surest way of turning education into a business'. The result is 'the widespread progressive introduction of a new system of domination' (1995: 182).

However, and as an indication of complexities to come, we also read some warnings against identifying too early with conventional progressive thinking: 'work by children' tends to be interesting but 'extraordinarily flaky, unable to preserve [itself]' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 165). It is also misleading to see such creativity in adult terms: 'it is hardly acceptable… to run together a child's nursery rhymes, poetic experimentations, and experiences of madness… [and] justify the grotesque trinity of child, poet, and madmen' (Deleuze, 1990: 82--83).

The studies summarized below indicate some possible ways to take this promising material further. The first two introduce Deleuzian thought, specify a number of concepts which might be particularly useful, and offer personal testimony about the liberating effects. The last two are longer and more extended discussions, and with those we begin to see some problems, turning on moments when Deleuzian work seems to offer implications which 'exceed' immediate educational practices. These problems will be developed in later sections too.

In the first example, those struggling against increasing bureaucracy have been especially encouraged by the Deleuzian argument that formal institutional territories in current educational organisations must also contain a potential for deterritorialization, a real basis for change. Teachers resisting educational organisations can become nomadic, since there are 'spaces that are always shifting between the smooth and the striated' (Gale, 2010: 304). Gale also lists other concepts that might be useful in informing the struggle, such as the fold, the rhizome, becoming, the assemblage and the event.

In the second study, concepts like the fold, the nomad and the rhizome were 'immediately useful and helped me try to think outside [both conventional ideas of practice and] ... the overcoded qualitative research process', argues St Pierre (2004: 288). She reports that her students also enjoyed taking up selected Deleuzian concepts, in this case 'multiplicity, bodies–without–organs, faciality and insomnia in response to their own problems' (2004: 284, original emphasis), and students produced 'simply thrilling lines of flight in response' (2004: 293).

In the third example, Semetsky (2006: 12) explores Deleuze's critique of the conventional subject and sees it as a liberating reading of the processes of subjectivation, escaping the ideological effects of the

conventional American notions of 'selfhood' and promising a liberating 'becoming-other'. It is less clear, however, whether she would accept the 'excessive' possibility here – becoming not just another human being but becoming-animal as well (discussed in Deleuze & Guattari, 2004). For Deleuze and Guattari (2004), 'becoming' clearly departs from the usual educational concerns for self-development, exploring the roles of other people, and suggests something more radical and less humanist: connections at a virtual level between humans and the natural world.

Semetsky thinks that people have to be motivated to accept learning if it is challenging, and she cites Deleuze and Guattari (1994) in arguing that it is not just concepts that are required in learning, but 'percepts' and 'affects' as well. She goes on to argue that Dewey would agree on the need to engage the arts and the emotions in generating these necessary components, part of her general argument that there are parallels between Deleuze and Dewey and Peirce, whose work is more familiar to educationalists. However, Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 164) themselves might diverge from Dewey and Peirce in saying that 'Sensations, percepts, and affects are beings whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any [human activity]... man, as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself [already] a compound of percepts and affects'. This would again imply something excessive from the point of view of educational practice, an external reality beyond human activity.

For the fourth example, Olsen (2009: 101) admires Deleuzian concepts like 'desire, micropolitics and the event'; the singularity as 'essentially preindividual, non personal and aconceptual' (2009: 115); assemblages of desire, desiring machines, collective assemblages of enunciation; 'a-lives, virtuality, crystal time and becoming' (2009: 189). She uses these to critique conventional notions of the preschool child, the current concern in policy with pre-established outcomes, and orthodox conceptions of creativity and learning. She also cites the material on de- and reterritorialization, lines of flight and rhizomes. Her discussion of Deleuze (1990) on the interweaving of (adult) nonsense with sense argues that we should see children's nonsense stories also as a general, often unrecognized, process of sense making.

Deleuzian thought offers direct support for the sorts of 'collective intense and unpredictable experimentation… in a relational field' (2009: 50) that Olsen finds in some Swedish preschools, with children developing as independent and creative learners as they encounter unlimited events that 'force them to think', to use a Deleuzian phrase. They also develop their own lines of flight that permit 'not only a creative approach to the material… But also to the existing social and gendered order' (2009: 47). She gives a number of examples, including one where 'a line of flight seems to have been created when projects focus on the construction of problems and when this process is considered to be more important than the outcome' (2009: 73).

Olsen does fully recognize that the extent of Deleuze's and Guattari's philosophical project exceeds immediate applications, but she claims that her primary interest is in pedagogy, and her primary political intent is to support those teachers engaging in experimental practice. This is a common, self-imposed restriction on philosophizing in the name of practical relevance, which is widespread in educational thinking according to Hodgson and Standish (2009), and which inevitably limits the radical potential of thinkers like Deleuze (and, in their example, Foucault). This is probably an inevitable feature in any discussion which needs to gain the consent of practising teachers, however, as Olsen recognizes.

Another effect of adopting too narrow a definition of relevance can be seen in the omission from all the work summarized above of Deleuze's substantial work on the cinema (Deleuze, 1989; Deleuze, 1992). Cinema is also powerfully educational (in a broader sense) for Deleuze. To pick up on Semetsky's interests, for example, Tomlinson and Galatea in their translators' introduction to Deleuze (1989: xiv) argue that 'cinema...[above all]... gives conceptual construction new dimensions, those of the percept and affect... This is... a kind of provoked becoming of thought'. For Deleuze cinema provides many examples of images that make us feel as well as see and hear, and 'produce [in visual forms] material from the outside which becomes unthinkable [in the usual ways]' (Deleuze, 1989: 178) and this forces us to think. Deleuze even revitalizes an early idea that cinema somehow communicates immediately to the audience, through their brains, 'communicating vibrations to the cortex, touching the nervous and cerebral system

directly' (Deleuze, 1989, 156).

Even early cinema offered problems for conventional subjective perceptions with the use of slow-motion, time lapse, and 'impossible' perspectives provided by strange camera positions. In modern cinema, film-makers deliberately break with the conventions of realism and can illustrate 'the simultaneity of incompossible presents, or the coexistence of not–necessarily true pasts' (Deleuze, 1989: 131), replacing the conventional notion of a single underlying truth, with 'an irreducible multiplicity' (1989: 133). Avant-garde cinema especially has a pedagogic function for Deleuze—it breaks with conventional representation and stimulates further critical and radical thought, making the audience ask questions like 'How do the sequences form part of an assemblage?', at least according to Bogue (2008).

Lines of Flight

It would be useful to examine some of those concepts seen as particularly relevant to education and to see how they are actually understood and applied. Some must be ruled out in a short article, however, on the grounds that they are discussed in particularly dense ways in Deleuzian work, preventing easy summary. The rhizome, for example, might make us think of familiar garden plants like the iris, but it is defined in Deleuze and Guattari (2004: 7) in technical ways, for example:

> The multiple must be made, not by always adding a higher dimension but ...with the number of dimensions one already has available -- always n-1 (the only way the one belongs to the multiple: always subtracted). Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constructed: write at n-1 dimensions...A system of this kind would be called a rhizome.

Equally difficult discussion surrounds many of the other concepts too. However, terms like deterritorialization or lines of flight seem to have applied by most commentators, and discussion is slightly more manageable. The terms can provide insight into some central problems in applying Deleuzian philosophy, and they also lie at the heart of a dispute between two major commentators on Deleuze and Guattari,

which is particularly relevant to the question of the analysis of concrete examples.

We might begin by reading that '... in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification... All of this… constitutes an assemblage… a multiplicity '(Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 4). Lines of flight are a necessary component of these multiplicities: 'The line of flight marks: the reality of the finite number of dimensions that the multiplicity effectively fills; the impossibility of a supplementary dimension, unless the multiplicity is transformed by the line of flight' (2004: 10).

It is 'absolute' lines of flight that transform multiplicities altogether, offering 'absolute deterritorialization... absolute drift... flows of absolute deterritorialization…' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 61-2). Any transformation is likely to be resisted, however. If it threatens 'an absolute deterritorialization; [a] regime has to block a line of this kind or define it in an entirely negative fashion precisely because it exceeds the degree of deterritorialization of the signifying sign… Anything that threatens to put the system to flight will be killed or put to flight itself' (2004: 128-9). Moreover, 'subjectification imposes on the line of flight a segmentarity that is forever repudiating that line, and upon absolute deterritorialization, a point of abolition that is forever blocking that deterritorialization or diverting it' (2004: 148). Nevertheless, in some circumstances, absolute lines of flight receive 'a positive sign… [if]... followed by a people who find in it their reason for being or destiny… [For example]… In the case of the Jewish people, a group of signs detaches itself from the Egyptian imperial network of which it as a part and sets off down a line of flight into the desert' (2004: 134-5).

Deleuze and Parnet (1987) also warn that lines of flight can lead us into 'black holes', turn into 'lines of abolition' or end in self-destruction (1987: 140). Such personal dangers are all too real, and many writers pursuing absolute lines of flight in their art have ended with suicide or in madness. There is always some unpredictability: 'we can't assume that lines of flight are necessarily creative, that smooth spaces are always better than segmented or striated ones' (Deleuze, 1995: 33). We should proceed with caution: 'Is it not necessary to retain a minimum of strata, a minimum of forms and functions, a minimal subject from which

to extract materials, affects, and assemblages?' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 298).

Reterritorialization can follow deterritorialization as a deliberate return to the first assemblage and the safety it offers: 'a line of flight must be preserved to enable an animal [in this case] to regain its associated milieu when danger appears' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004: 61). However, change may be irreversible producing another kind of line of flight 'when the associated milieu is rocked by blows from the exterior, forcing the animal to abandon it and strike up an association with new portions of exteriority, this time leaning on its interior milieus like fragile crutches' (2004: 61). Additional complexities include: 'reterritorialization as an original operation does not express a return to the territory but rather these differential relations internal to D[eterritorialization] itself, this multiplicity internal to the line of flight' (2004: 560 – 61).

Lines of flight as a philosophical concept

These remarks and definitions might look confusing, but they can also be seen as perfectly consistent with Deleuze's and Guattari's notion of a specifically philosophical concept. For them, concepts are 'fuzzy sets... aggregates of perceptions and affections… Qualitative or intensive multiplicities… where we cannot decide whether certain elements do or do not belong to the set' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 141). This undecidability arises from concepts referring not just to empirical states of affairs but to virtual processes. Philosophical concepts are 'vagabond, and nondiscursive, moving about on a plane of immanence' (1994: 143). They have no tight reference to the lived or the actual, but only to 'a consistency defined by its internal components… The event as pure sense' (1994: 144). Only by forming such concepts we can grasp adequately the complex nature of states of affairs emerging from multiplicities as actualities.

Concepts are not simply discursive or propositional either. Indeed, philosophical concepts often appear as 'the proposition deprived of sense' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 22). This means philosophy is 'in a perpetual state of digression or digressiveness' (1994: 23). Developing such concepts, as pure knowledge, not tied to actual states of affairs, is

the proper task of philosophy: 'always to extract an event from things and beings, to set up the new events from things and beings, always to give them a new event: space, time, matter, thought, the possible as events' (1994: 33). By contrast, science does not create philosophical concepts as its main task. Science always refers to existing states of affairs and their conditions, while philosophy should grasp the whole of the lived: 'philosophy… does not need to invoke a [specific] lived that would give only a ghostly and extrinsic life to secondary, bloodless concepts' (1994: 33). When philosophy is forced to conform to requirements of logical consistency or limit its inquiry only to lived experience, it can only offer 'more or less plausible opinions without scientific value' (1994: 79).

Philosophy requires a non-standard image of thought and this can lead to social isolation: 'Becoming stranger to one's self, to one's language and nation, is not this the peculiarity of the philosopher and philosophy, or their "style" or what is called a philosophical gobbledygook?' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 110). There are other personal implications : 'In this sense, it is indeed true that the thinker is necessarily solitary and solipsistic' (Deleuze, 2004: 352). Asceticism and an aristocratic aloofness must ensue, according to Badiou (2000). If one way of putting Deleuze to work, suggested in Deleuze and Guattari (1994), means encouraging thinkers to develop a Deleuzian philosophy of their own, this would seem to require a similar level of engagement and stern commitment.

Philosophy struggles with chaos as an 'undifferentiated abyss or ocean of dissemblance' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 207), but it also has to struggle to distinguish itself from normal opinion. Repressive opinions are also rejected, of course: philosophy must oppose capitalism, and go beyond ideology into a consideration of the infinite, 'turn it back against itself so as to summon forth a new earth, a new people' (1994: 99). Because it is insufficiently separated from conventional opinion, even earlier philosophical thought 'conforms to the goals of the real State, to the dominant meanings and to the requirements of the established order' (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987: 13)

This ontology has undoubtedly helped Deleuze address and resolve a number of problems in the history of philosophy—to critique and move beyond Plato, and then Kant and Hegel, to reinstate recently neglected

philosophers such as Bergson, to rescue Nietzsche from unfortunate associations with Nazism, and to replace one of the main tenets of 'social constructivism' with an account of the dynamism of reality itself (Delanda, 1999). Foucault (1970) in a well-known quotation says: 'perhaps one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian... new thought is possible; thought is again possible'.

Lines of flight as an empirical concept

Using the terms to undertake empirical analysis can bring frustration, however. At the end of his own discussion about deterriorialized spaces in shopping malls, Buchanan (2006: 147) concludes 'We are still a long way from being able to say what a Deleuzian analysis...of space might, much less should look like' . And 'not one of [the dozens of books on Deleuze and Guattari] can tell you how to read a text in a manner that is recognisably Deleuzian' (2006: 148). Deleuze himself said that we must return to actual problems, 'to create a practical, useful form of philosophy' (2006: 148), but without precision, Buchanan says, Deleuze's conceptual toolbox is useless.

   Lines of flight certainly could be better specified to pursue empirical research. Gale (2010) or St Pierre (2004) could have fleshed out their personal testimonies and told us whether they felt or observed relative or absolute lines of flight, for example, whether the whole educational assemblage was threatened or whether relocation within it was being described, from bureaucratic to more professionally autonomous strata.

   Considering the effects of relative lines of flight could probably be extended with more empirical social science research. Movements from rigid bureaucratic roles to more flexible and autonomous ones in universities could simply be described as the effects of the necessarily 'loose coupling' of university organization (Weick, 1988), for example. Here, bureaucratic and more autonomous activities have to be combined, but they can never be fully integrated, and actors can take advantage of this structural looseness to manage their own activity to a considerable extent. Areas of teaching in preschools and personal research at postgraduate level also feature degrees of licensed autonomy, as a part of their necessary operations, where the educational system expects people to be creative. We might even suggest, with

Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), that such autonomy and creativity are crucial areas in maintaining the claim that universities are independent of capitalist social formations, and thus able to deliver with particular authority an important social reproductive role for them.

Olsen does distinguish absolute lines of flight from earlier segmentary lines describing forms of pupil-centred creative activity, and she has offered an empirical basis for this distinction which might clarify matters. Absolute lines of flight never arise from rational planning, but are instead 'magic moments where something entirely new and different seems to be coming about. This is recognized only by the tremendous intensity, and, very often, the physical expression of goose bumps that take possession of participants' (Olsen, 2007: 63). An additional dimension might be whether the preschool lines of flight led to reterritorialization at later stages, and, if so, what form this took. All the authors might have also explored whether they could detect an emerging attempt at political reaction. Detecting signs of subsequent personal stress, social isolation, or even tendencies towards self-destruction might also be a major priority.

Of course, empirical specification like this would mean a departure from strictly Deleuzian concepts, for the reasons discussed above. Demands for relevant critical applications might pull in a different direction to demands for philosophical and explanatory power. Ideally, to reconnect with Deleuze, any extended empirical findings of this kind would need to be shown as actualizations, derived only from the processes of explication and individuation at work in the virtual, 'isomorphic with real intensive individuation processes', in the terms of DeLanda (2002: 171), and not driven by separate and external forces.

Deleuze's reductionism?

This leads to an important debate between Badiou and others about the emphases in Deleuzian work. Briefly, Badiou argues that the books Deleuze wrote before meeting Guattari and becoming politicized clearly express his major interest in an ontology concerned only with the relations between the virtual and the actual in general. Since any kind of concrete institution and process, even fascist ones, can be seen equally as actualized, this ontology is indifferent to politics. Even the interest in

a wide series of applications to empirical cases is only apparent. Deleuze aimed all along at describing a single reality which can account for all actual differences, a single voice, '"a single clamor of Being for all beings"' (Badiou, 2000: 11, quoting Deleuze's Difference and Repetition). Despite the apparent variety of objects of analysis in Deleuzian work, these appear only as particular cases of the concept. It is necessary to start with the cases, to suggest 'you are compelled and constrained by [cases]' (2000:14), to avoid elevating the idea or concept into a privileged starting point, but the cases themselves are means to a philosophical end, to reveal philosophy and its power. This gives Deleuze's work a reductive and 'monotonous' character, with an 'almost infinite repetition of a limited repertoire of concepts, as well as a virtuosic variation of names, under which what is thought remains essentially identical' (2000: 15).

   This argument has been extended subsequently in several areas concerning the arts. To take just one example, Badiou says that the huge work on the cinema shows clearly that the concepts announced at the beginning (such as Bergson's notions of movement and duration) persist throughout all the massively detailed discussion, and triumphantly emerge unaltered at the end, while 'the specifics of the cinema gradually become neutralized and forgotten' (2000, 15). However Zourabichvili (2000, 142) says Deleuze 'considered that he could not have written [the books] except through contact with cinema' in the first place.

   Alliez (2006) insists that Deleuzian work on lines of flight specifically marks a break with the notion of Being as a single voice. The possible distinctions between relative and absolute lines of flight discussed above might give a hint of the different options. It might be suggested that Deleuze's and Guattari's own discussion of lines of flight might indeed refer to empirical cases only to reveal the power of thought. The issue is whether anyone else might be able to reverse the emphasis. Here, some account of what someone like Gale, St Pierre or Olsen actually did might be important: did they grasp the philosophical concepts, operationalize them in some way and then set out to test them against their observations, or just to affirm or recognize them immediately?

   Badiou says Deleuze refused to debate this issue with him: 'in conformity with his aristocratic and systematic leanings, Deleuze felt

only contempt for debates' (Badiou 2000: 17). Deleuze is indeed unwilling to test his views in an open debate with other philosophers and says 'Philosophers have very little time for discussion' (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 28). No-one ever talks about the same thing, and 'when it comes to creating, conversation is always superfluous' (1994: 28). He has sometimes engaged with other philosophers through correspondence, but he can be seen as dismissive and patronising in his reply to a 'harsh critic' (Deleuze, 1995: 8):

> There are, you see, two ways of reading a book: you either see it as a box with something inside and start looking for what it signifies, and then if you're even more perverse or depraved you set off after signifiers... And you annotate and interpret and question and write a book about the book [the critic seems to have done just this]... Or there's another way: you see the book as a little non signifying machine, and the only question is "Does it work, and how does it work?" How does it work for you? If it doesn't work, if nothing comes through, you try another book'

Rather than waste time debating, 'it is better to get on with something else, to work with people going in the same direction. As for being responsible or irresponsible, we don't recognise these notions, they are for policemen and courtroom psychiatrists' (Deleuze, 1995: 24).

Deleuze opts for particular concepts as a matter of 'philosophical taste': 'it is certainly not for "rational or reasonable" reasons that a particular concept is created' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 78). This 'faculty of taste… is ... instinctive' (1994: 79). Rather than developing knowledge or truth, 'it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine success or failure... Only [mere] teachers can write "false" in the margins, perhaps' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 82, original capitalization)

Badiou and Alliez also debated the collaboration between Deleuze and Guattari. This is relevant if we accept the common view (explained in detail in Massumi, 1992) that Guattari added more specific and political concepts to Deleuzian philosophical ones. Perhaps if they explained how they managed this connection to their own satisfaction, it might guide subsequent efforts to bridge the two domains. However, the details of what they actually did are absent. They worked 'according to

becomings which were unattributable to individuals, since they could not be immersed in it without changing qualitatively… We became less sure of what came from one, what came from the other, or even from someone else... We wanted a rhizome rather than a tree with binary logic' (Deleuze, 1995: x).   Deleuze says that rather than discussing common ground with Guattari, he 'merged' with him so they became 'a non personal individuality' (1995: 141).

The social context of philosophy

Such apparent disdain for the specifics of scholarly labour, together with the belief that some unspoken agreement might be involved, is probably socially rooted. According to Bourdieu, work in elite French universities, where Deleuze was located in the 1960s and 1970s, was dominated by collective and unconscious understandings of what counted as proper knowledge and as effective teaching and writing. These made up an academic habitus defined (in Bourdieu, 2000: 145) as:

> the site of durable solidarities, and loyalties … an immediate agreement in ways of judging and acting which does not presuppose either the communication of consciousness, still less a contractual decision… [and]… is the basis of the practical mutual understanding, the paradigm of which might be the one established between members of the same team, or, despite the antagonism, all the players engaged in a game.

Even critical philosophers adhered to the rules of the game: they still 'have a life-or-death interest... in the existence of [a] repository of consecrated texts, a mastery of which constitutes the core of their specific capital' (Bourdieu, 1986: 496). Even the 'philosophical "deconstruction" of philosophy' is really a continuation of it. Objectifying the tradition one belongs to in order to launch some critical commentary draws attention to philosophy and places 'the person of the [radical] philosopher at the centre of the philosophical stage' (Bourdieu, 1986: 497).

Although appearing as a purely technical matter of transferring concepts and debating them, French academic education was actually based on an 'arbitrary' selection of available knowledge informed by

cultural preferences (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). Having observed a number of lectures at several elite French universities, Bourdieu and his associates were able to identify a number of common features, even where professors saw themselves as developing their own personal styles. For Bourdieu and Passeron (1979: 42), academic work was characterised by 'professorial charisma… The display of virtuosity, the play of laudatory allusions or depreciatory silences'. Students seem to be expected to possess a 'whole treasury of first degree experiences', such as extensive knowledge of literature and the arts, and to be accustomed to 'allusive conversations' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979: 22). The effect, which might have been quite unintended, was to deny access to those without sufficient cultural capital and to reproduce privilege.

It is very easy to see most of these features reproduced in Deleuzian work, alongside the radical intentions. There are many allusions to the works of writers, poets, dramatists and filmmakers, quite often barely referenced on the assumption that readers will just know them. Even the more technical sections are discussed in an allusive style. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) make much of famous case-studies in Freud, like that of President Schreber, but only experienced academics could spot a possible 'depreciatory silence' about Lacan's rather different discussion of the same case. Earlier work is also frequently used in the later material—the 'body without organs' which became a famous concept in Deleuze and Guattari (1987; 2004) – was first discussed in Deleuze (1990), although there is no reference to guide those who were not aware of this.

No doubt some elite French students of the 1960s could grasp what was being argued, but even some of those had problems: Bourdieu and his associates tested elite French students in their understanding of the words used frequently in the lectures they observed and found substantial misunderstandings: for example one philosophy student defined 'epistemology' as 'the study of memoirs, journals and correspondence' (Sociology Research Group in Cultural and Education Studies, 1980: 82).

Bourdieu tells us that some students in that setting did seem to enjoy professorial displays in lectures, as might some current readers of Deleuze, as a pleasurable 'initiation into the mysteries and an infusion

of grace' (Bourdieu et al.,1994: 107). However, Bourdieu also noted that students avoided being forced to think and displayed '[cultural] dualization or... resigned submission to exclusion' (Sociology Research Group in Cultural and Education Studies, 1980: 47). Others coped in uncomfortable ways—with a 'rhetoric of despair', 'an illusion of understanding' (Bourdieu et al., 1994: 15), emulating professorial discourse, producing work that offered 'manipulation of the finite bunch of semantic atoms, chains of mechanically linked words' (1994: 14). Some learned to defend themselves by playing academic games, deploying 'professorial rhetoric… false generalities… echolalia' to cover misunderstanding (Sociology Research Group in Cultural and Education Studies, 1980: 55 - 56).

Nevertheless, students and staff worked to maintain the illusions necessary to academic work. These suggest that academic language is 'natural', that lectures are aimed at inspiration, and that any unpleasantly discordant or sceptical dialogue is to be avoided. Any directly instructional content is likely to be seen as vulgar and 'schoolmasterly'. This permits professors and students to address each other as 'fictive subjects' (Sociology Research Group in Cultural and Education Studies, 1980: 63) apparently sharing universal interests and aptitudes. Both groups denied the importance of hard scholarly work, and saw success arising from 'gifts' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979: 65).

Bourdieu (1986) might also be useful in further clarifying notions of philosophical or written tastes, since it is clear that taste is not just a matter to guide philosophers but was associated with definite social strata and used in class closure, especially in excluding unwelcome members. Even avant-garde taste, which is displayed prominently in the rhizomatic writing of Deleuze and Guattari (2004):

> defined itself in a quasi-negative way, as the sum of the refusals of
> all socially recognised tastes, refusal of the middle of the road
> taste… and especially… [that of] the petty bourgeoisie, [and] the
> teachers' 'pedantic taste'

Popular reactions to avant-garde cultural politics included 'confusion, sometimes almost a sort of panic mingled with revolt… [since elite works generally are] seen as a sort of aggression, an affront to common sense and sensible people.' (Bourdieu, 1986: 33), and this is a way of

rejecting encounters with thought. Deleuze and Parnet can see a political danger: 'it is a disaster when [spokespersons] slip into a black hole from which they no longer utter anything but the micro–fascist speech of their dependency and their giddiness: "We are the avant-garde", "We are the marginals"' (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987: 139).

Radical theory, practice and pedagogy

Deleuzian work could be made more accessible, especially to non-elite readers, including those who might be asked to join in a general political struggle against bureaucracy. We might consider developing radical philosophy in pedagogic stages, instead of presenting an immediate combination of Deleuzian concepts and practical experiences, which is what most of the educational applications offer. Rejecting elitism would involve designing pedagogically-informed settings, not necessarily based in a university: theory and practice would be mediated by a third term—open and rational pedagogy, based on adding stages to the model suggested by Spinoza, and working through them. It would have been useful here for Gale, St Pierre and Semetsky to tell us about their pedagogy, especially how they negotiated the requirement for any formal assessment.

   We could begin by considering what Deleuze himself suggests as a route towards developing philosophical understanding. Deleuze admires Spinoza's notion of a 'spiritual automaton' (Deleuze, 1988) as a learning process. This is not learning that implies a knowledgeable subject in the usual sense, of course. In the right conditions, the automaton works on its own, as a 'higher control which brings together critical and conscious thoughts and the unconscious thoughts' (Deleuze 1989, 165). We would need to modify the processes involved to develop an active pedagogy, since the automaton also seems to produce an elite, as we shall see.

   At the first stage, people decide what are good and useful encounters only through their feelings – intense excitement, goose bumps, elation or personal thrills might indicate we are on the right track, and induce us to proceed to the next stage. This involves developing what Spinoza calls 'common notions', links in thought between the experiences and understandings of others and our own. Spinoza saw that his first two

stages were accessible to most people and were provided by normal experiences, including encounters with other people, and this is where Semetsky saw parallels with Dewey. However, Deleuze and Spinoza suggest the final stage is fully philosophical thought, aimed at clarifying 'the spiritual' – the nature of substance or reality in modern terms, where we work with purified philosophical concepts, revealing their value in relation to other concepts, aiming at clarifying the interrelations of the virtual and the actual. Deleuze agreed with Spinoza that 'individuals are not equally capable of [developing to this stage]' (Badiou, 200: 13), perhaps thinking in terms of the scarcity of intellectual 'gifts'.

We could introduce an intermediary pedagogical stage between stages two and three, to consider how philosophical thought might be further encouraged, not forced or left to an automatic and selective process. Neither Spinoza nor Deleuze discuss ways in which these common opinions might be made more systematic or critical before encountering philosophy, but social science applications seem particularly appropriate as an intermediary step. Conventional educational research can clearly play a role here, for example by producing empirical findings about lines of flight, connected to other work, as suggested above. There might be still further stages, involving work with critical social sciences based on marxist or feminist thought which begin to dereify existing reality.

One more intermediary stage, briefly-discussed in Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), might involve reconstructing elite philosophy, to break with assumptions of universal interests or common cultural capital. The problem would be to retain the complexity and openness of academic work and not reduce it to the banalities of, say, behavioural objectives, study skill routines, or teaching to the test. It is not just a matter of simplifying and popularising: Bourdieu (1993: 21) argues that 'In order to break with the social philosophy that runs through everyday words and also in order to express things that ordinary language cannot express…the [theorist]... has to resort to invented words which are thereby protected…from the naïve projection of common sense'.

DeLanda's commentary comes closest to this rational approach in the case of Deleuzian work, it could be argued. His (2002) work is

addressed specifically to scientists and mathematicians, while DeLanda (1991) addresses military historians and DeLanda (2006) sociologists. However, non-specialist readers are still not entirely excluded, and there is an accessible series of European Graduate School lectures on video (DeLanda 2007). DeLanda (2002) attempts a 'reconstruction of [Deleuze's] philosophy, using entirely different theoretical resources and lines of argument' (DeLanda, 2002: 4). Inevitably, 'There is a certain violence which Deleuze's texts must endure in order to be reconstructed for an audience they were not intended for' (2002: 8), but there is no alternative, since Deleuze himself often offers only a 'compressed' account of these issues, one which 'assumes so much on the part of the reader, that it is bound to be misinterpreted' (2002: 5). DeLanda also omits, or places in footnotes, almost all of the elite cultural allusions in the originals. Before accessing the original texts, DeLanda's work would offer a much more accessible route into Deleuzian philosophy.

We can think, therefore, about expanding the three-stage model to a six stage chain linking experience with philosophy in the form of more manageable steps. Deleuzians might even be able to see this scheme as model displaying a chain of explication or individuation. In present circumstances, the scheme can only be seen as utopian, however.

Autonomy and heteronomy

Rancière (2002) points out that the relation between radical theory and radical practice must be paradoxical. Radical theory must break with conventional thinking and aim at autonomy if it is to avoid being domesticated and managed. Even Deleuzian thought runs this risk, suggests Žižek (2000: 185): the global flows of capital from one tax haven to another could be seen as rhizomatic; the Web could become the virtual; Capital is already the 'concrete universal'; the nomadic subjectivity that once seemed so important could be seen as materialised in the form of portfolio careers and serial lifestyles. In those circumstances, Deleuze could become, ironically, the 'ideologist of digital capitalism' (Žižek, 2000: 184). To avoid this sort of domestication, radical thinking has to be couched in such unusual language that it looks like something completely other than normal

discourse, 'heteronomous' in Rancière's terms, initially inaccessible to anyone who is not a scholastic philosopher.

Rancière (2002: 150) argues that this paradox can never be fully resolved, and no thinking and practice, however radical, can avoid exhaustion. Radical theory and practice can only be linked by constantly 'playing a heteronomy against an autonomy [and vice versa]… Playing one linkage between... [theory] and...[practice] against another such linkage'. All concerned must be able to discuss this constant tension openly, making explicit the role of judgments and taste (philosophical and aesthetic, especially cinematic), and discussing the metapolitics of putting radical theory to work.

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