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Abstract

In their final book Deleuze and Guattari state that the practice of philosophy 'calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist'. This call is deeply problematic: aside from its aristocratic overtones, it is difficult to ascertain what it might sound like, how to give it voice, and what might come of it. But it is also problematic in *form*. In this paper I will explain how. After investigating its genesis in Deleuze's engagements with Nietzsche and Bergson, I will outline the geography of the call as it appears in the mature work of Deleuze and Guattari. Aided by this analysis the paper will conclude by making some tentative remarks on what is to be done with the call for a new earth and people – or more accurately, what might be done with it, for the benefit of what is to come.

Keywords

Bergson, Deleuze, Guattari, Nietzsche, Problems, Untimely

Introduction

What are the major problems of today, the ones that demand our immediate and collective attention? We each have our own lists, but I would hazard to say that many of us would nominate one or both of the following: (1) the destruction of the natural environment; and (2) the polarisation of politics. Regarding the first problem, responses have commonly revolved around efforts to 'save the earth', to 'slow down' the rate of change and 'conserve' what currently exists (or bring back what recently used to). By the same token, however, some scholars, for instance those working within the rubrics of environmental philosophy and anthropocene studies, have argued that if the earth is to be 'saved' then it might require that we think of it anew (McWhorter and Stenstad, 2009; Parr, 2017; Saldanha and Stark, 2016). In this respect, the successful conservation of the earth might be dependent upon the creation of a *new earth*, a new way of conceiving and approaching the wholistic entity that we call 'earth'. As for the second problem on my list, the predominance of governments espousing views that were once viewed as 'extreme' continues to accelerate across the globe. To give the latest example, at the time of writing Brazil has recently elected a far-right president, Jair Bolsonaro, who speaks of the military dictatorship that ruled the country from 1964-85 in glowing terms. Developments such as these have been accompanied by a return of discourse that invokes 'the people'. Whilst politicians have always attempted to claim the support of 'the people' in their public addresses, recent incantations by elected officials in a wide variety of locations have been disturbingly reminiscent of fascist language from the period Hobsbawm called the 'age of extremes'. Such appeals to 'the people' often involve a heavy dose of romanticised nostalgia, illustrated perhaps most obviously by the British 'Brexiteers' that hark back to the former glories of the Empire. But just as relevant are those instances where 'the people' refers to a populous that is in the process of awakening or taking shape, a *new people* whose day is now dawning.

These two problems, one concerning 'the earth' and the other 'the people', are most certainly distinct, but they are also related. Their connection is most evident, I would suggest, when considered in their futural and aspirational registers: a new earth, for instance, would seem to call for a new people that populates it; and in the other direction, one might surmise that it is only a new people that can bring forth a new earth. But *what is* the new earth and new people in these contexts, ontologically speaking, and what could they be? Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari can be of assistance in our consideration of these questions. Throughout their joint writings they repeatedly refer to the endeavour of engendering a new earth and a new people. What they mean by this, however, is not immediately clear. It is also varied, veering between the fields of political activism and psychoanalysis to the fine arts and the definition of philosophy. In this paper I will attempt to provide an overview of Deleuze and Guattari's periodic discussions of a new earth and a new people. As those familiar with Deleuze and Guattari studies (and its influence) will confirm, passing references by commentators to this call for a new earth and a new

people are not uncommon; there have also been some important pieces of scholarship that examine the nature of the call in a particular context, such as political philosophy and the creative arts (which I will go on to explore). But given that each of these invocations by Deleuze and Guattari are rather oblique and brief, a schematic explication and overview of the relevant passages can complement the existing scholarship and improve the wider appreciation of their call, including what it means, or could, for our contemporary situation.

Also of use towards this end would be a greater awareness of the genesis of Deleuze and Guattari's call for a new earth and new people, as it appears in Deleuze's earlier work. Such will comprise the second ambition of this paper: to trace the genealogy of the call back through Deleuze's engagements with Nietzsche and Bergson. If this task is necessary, it is for establishing two key aspects of the call. Firstly, the new earth/people does not exist, and to a certain extent *never will* – it/they must exist as imperceptible, as a 'minoritarian becoming' in the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari. And secondly, great problems, such as the two on my list above, cannot be solved – they must instead be *dissolved*, which is to say *constructed* and *fabulated*. By intersecting these two threads from Nietzsche and Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari's call for a new earth and a new people could be described as an *untimely problem*. In the next section of the paper I will explain in more detail what I mean by this. Subsequently, we will be better placed to map out in the following section the eclectic geography of Deleuze and Guattari's call for a new earth and a new people. Finally, I will then broach the burning question ignited by the genealogy and analytical overview of the call: how might we use this thinking to not simply address the great problems of our day, but problematise today for tomorrow?

The Call as an Untimely Problem

In his Foreword to the essay 'On the Utility and Liability of History for Life', Nietzsche (1995: 86-87) closes by saying: 'I have no idea what the significance of classical philology would be in our age, if not to have an unfashionable effect – that is, to work against the time and thereby have an effect upon it, hopefully for the benefit of a future time'. In what follows Nietzsche explains how history has come to exert a restrictive role in society. Over the course of the 19th century, the discipline of history in Germany underwent a process of scientification, whereby the past came to be viewed as objective data that could be 'discovered' by historians who implemented an adequately 'rigorous' scientific method. Nietzsche (1995: 116 and 138) mocks such technicians, accusing them of 'congenital greyness' and 'weakened personality'. He refers to them as '"servants of truth" who possess neither the will nor the strength to judge, and who set themselves the task of pursuing "pure, ineffective" knowledge' (1995: 123). It may be

that what they discover is factually true, but for Nietzsche it is 'a truth that amounts to nothing' (1995: 123).

At play here is the distinction between knowledge and life. According to Nietzsche, the historians of his day are slaves to knowledge. If asked they would no doubt say that the knowledge they produce is, for the most part, useful to life. But such an outcome is a secondary consideration; of primary concern is knowledge for knowledge's sake. If the true knowledge they produce happens to harm life then this is not really their concern or responsibility. How might one act differently, though, if life was placed above knowledge? And what if history was put in the service of life, rather than knowledge? To facilitate this it is necessary to break the shackles of history, to get out from under its enormous weight. Nietzsche offers two complementary antidotes: on the one hand we need to learn how to forget, like a goldfish, and be *without* history – to be *ahistorical* (1995: 87, 163); and on the other hand we need to be above or beyond history, *suprahistorical*, we need to show some confidence in ourselves and act as legislators, creators of rules, beings who can forcibly bend the world to their will, or better yet, will a new world (1995: 92). Those inspired by Nietzsche's unfashionable views often group these two forces together within the word 'untimely' – that which is not of the current time, but instead gestures to a 'time to come', a time that will indeed be engendered by select instances of untimeliness. It is also common to consider how this notion of the untimely is a forerunner for some of Nietzsche's most significant motifs in his later work, such as the eternal return, the will to power, and the figure of the Overhuman.[1] Deleuze is one such commentator.

In his 1962 *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze takes up Nietzsche's contrast between the truth-seekers, 'those who say: I'm looking for the truth', and those beings that are of another type – 'the inhuman and the superhuman', which express 'a type of forces unknown to man' (Deleuze, 1983: 78-79). Of these two options, it is only the latter that are capable of affirming life. What's more, in the act of affirming life the Overhuman provides meaning for the earth: 'Affirmation is the highest power of the will. But what is affirmed? The earth, life…' (Deleuze, 2005: 83). When this affirmation occurs the Overhuman is said to be 'transhistoric' (Deleuze, 1983: xiii) and 'untimely' (Deleuze, 2004: 126). Deleuze is here drawing on Nietzsche's Zarathustra, where he exclaims: 'The Overhuman is the sense of the earth. May your will say: *Let* the Overhuman be the sense of the earth!' (Nietzsche, 2005: 12). And putting the same point differently: 'Whoever one day teaches humans to fly will have shifted all boundary-stones; all boundary-stones will themselves fly into the air before him, and the earth he will baptize anew – as "the Light One"' (Nietzsche, 2005: 167).

It is telling that Deleuze's first engagement with the call for a new earth occurs within the context of a discussion on method. Under the subheading 'The Form of the Question in Nietzsche', Deleuze brings

attention to Nietzsche's anti-Platonism. Instead of the classical question 'what is…?', commonly posed by Plato/Socrates, Nietzsche asks 'which one…?' – a question which means: 'what are the forces which take hold of a given thing, what is the will that possesses it?' (Deleuze, 1983: 77). This alternative question, one should note, is not opposed to the inquiry into essence. On the contrary, it leads us to essence, by bringing to light its *plurality* and *becoming*. Essence, in other words, is not One, but multiple; it has an inherent *perspectivity*: 'Essence, being, is a perspectival reality and presupposes a plurality. Fundamentally it is always the question: 'What is it *for me*' (Deleuze, 1983: 77). The question of 'which one' is therefore superior to and metaphysically encompasses the question of 'what is', for it acknowledges the operation of force and will within the determination of essence: 'Essence is always sense and value. And so the question "which one?" reverberates in and for all things: which forces, which will?' (Deleuze, 1983: 77)

As with essence, truth is not One but multiple. This does not necessarily mean that there are many truths, since it could rather be that there many perspectives on it. These different perspectives, however, are not all equivalent: there is a hierarchy of values, of higher and lower order – the Overhuman at the top, for instance, with the historians of 'weakened personality' lower down. Truth thus always has a relation to forces outside of itself, the forces that give it sense:

> We always have the truths we deserve as a function of the sense of what we conceive, of the value of what we believe. Any thinkable or thought sense is only brought into effect insofar as the forces that correspond to it in thought also take hold of something, appropriate something, outside thought. Clearly thought cannot think by itself, any more than it can find truth by itself. The truth of a thought must be interpreted and evaluated according to the forces or power that determine it to think and to think this rather than that. (Deleuze, 1983: 104)

As we can now see, the truth of the world and the meaning of the earth, as with life, is dependent on those who will it into being. Encapsulated into a figure, it is the Overhuman that affirms the earth and life; but what they more specifically affirm is its plurality and multiplicity, its becoming, in contrast to the nihilist who 'considers becoming as something that *must* atone and must be reabsorbed into Being, and the multiple as something unjust that must be judged and reabsorbed into the One (Deleuze, 2005: 84).[2]

Deleuze is here echoing an argument that he first makes in his study of Henri Bergson.[3] As with Nietzsche, Bergson is highly critical of metaphysical frameworks that seek to ascertain the essence of things *in general*. According to the classical method inaugurated by Plato, the real is reconstructed through the use of general ideas. This 'dialectical' method, as Bergson calls it, begins by establishing certain facts as 'general principles', which it then attempts to apply to things and situations outside of those facts. To be more precise, a general concept, such as Being, is posited and then played off of its opposite, non-

Being. This process of going from one opposite to another, however, is a 'false movement' that 'tells us nothing' (Deleuze, 1991: 44-45). If a concept is too broad or too general to tell us anything specific about reality, then playing it off its opposite hardly improves the situation. As Deleuze summarises: 'The concrete will never be attained by combining the inadequacy of one concept with the inadequacy of its opposite' (Deleuze, 1991: 44).

For example, consider the dichotomy of the One and the Many. Unlike those metaphysicians who attempt to articulate these two concepts at their maximal abstraction or generality, Bergson refuses to accept the legitimacy of the dualism from the outset, for there can be more than one *kind* of unity and more than one *kind* of multiple. The self, for instance, may be both one and multiple at the same time, but this does not mean that it is multiple in the same way as all other cases where that concept is used, nor can the self be adequately reduced to a primal form: 'there is in it [our self] a multiplicity which, it must be recognized, has nothing in common with any other' (Bergson, 2007: 148). From this Bergson concludes that 'What really matters to philosophy is to know *what* unity, *what* multiplicity, *what* reality superior to the abstract one and the abstract multiple is the multiple unity of the person' (Bergson, 2007: 148). Thus we again have the question, 'which one'. Or phrased another way: 'why this rather than something else?' (Deleuze, 2004: 24; see also 36).

Bergson follows Nietzsche's methodological lead in other ways. When faced with the question of 'which one', it is not simply a matter of choosing between pre-existent options. Indeed, part of the problem with most metaphysicians, in the view of Bergson, is that they are all too ready to work with the 'ready-made'. But the sense or value of something does not come from nowhere. Like the times that we live in it must be created, an emergent construct from the 'misty region of the ahistorical' (Nietzsche, 1995: 91). Our task is therefore not one of mere selection amongst options already laid out for us: life, when well-lived, is not a case of 'pick and mix'. Rather, its flavour must be generated, in the same way that discrete colours are carved out from a spectrum of plenitude.

To explain this, Bergson uses the language of problems and solutions. Part of our problem, he suggests, is that the problems we obsess over are not of our own making, we have inherited them. What Bergson has in mind here has to do with the way in which problems are understood and framed: the component parts, relations between them, etc. In short, the *sense* or *value* of a problem. The sense or value of a problem cannot be ascertained 'once and for all'. Aside from there being a plurality of senses/values, problems change over time, even if only because they have been around longer than before. For similar reasons, each one is singular, inasmuch as it cannot be fully subsumed within or reduced to a general Idea or category. As such, Bergson (2007: 23; see also 36-37) implores us to focus our energies not on the finding of a solution to inherited problems, but rather on articulating the precise sense of a problem.

When this happens, 'the problems we considered insoluble will resolve themselves, or rather, be dissolved, either to disappear definitively, or to present themselves in some other way'. In shifting the emphasis from solutions to problems, it must be stressed that this does not mean Bergson is uninterested in solutions or considers them to be unimportant. Rather, as Deleuze (1991: 16) makes clear, 'it is the solution that counts, but the problem always has the solution it deserves, in terms of the way in which it is stated (i.e., the conditions under which it is determined as problem), and of the means and terms at our disposal for stating it'.

As the language of this quotation makes evident, the Bergsonian method of problematisation shares a close affinity with Nietzsche's genealogical method of critique (Deleuze, 1983: 1-2).[4] For Deleuze, Bergson and Nietzsche, it is this 'differential element' that drives their thinking. It is also what determines the meaning and direction of reality – of life and the earth, as conceived by those who create it. Bergson will call this element the *élan vital*, and Nietzsche the will to power. Deleuze has other names that extend the call for a new earth and people.

Mapping the Geography of the Call

There are three interrelated registers, roughly speaking, in which Deleuze and Guattari cash out this call for a new earth, a new people: (1) the socio-political; (2) the arts; and (3) philosophical thought. Common to all instances is an overriding concern for the *geography of creation*.

The earth is spoken about repeatedly in Deleuze and Guattari's first book *Anti-Oedipus*. This is because it is the counterpart to their concept of 'territory' – a notion that, along with affiliated terms such as deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, dominates their work. A territory is a socially structured space that is overlaid upon the earth, the latter of which has no intrinsic subdivisions. Territories are constructed in various ways and also undergo processes of transformation; elements perennially flee a territory, escaping on a line of flight that can bring about the deterritorialisation of a territory and a simultaneous reterritorialisation onto something else. That 'something else' could be another territory, in which case the deterritorialisation experienced is said to be 'relative', since it is relative to the earth. But a line of flight could also reterritorialise on deterritorialisation itself, in which case the deterritorialisation experienced is said to be 'absolute'. In such instances it is the earth itself that is made relative to the absolute movement, producing as a result *a new earth*, and with it a people appropriate to that earth, *a new people*.

If the Overhuman is the figure for Nietzsche that distils the call for a new earth and people, Deleuze and Guattari's first substitute figure is that of the schizo. The ground for this figure is prepared by their discussion of three 'great social machines' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 141). The first social machine outlined is what they call the primitive territorial machine. This machine creates meaning by coding the earth and marking bodies (1984: 142). Upon this form a second is founded, which instead of coding the earth operates by *overcoding* existing codes. Through this process of reinscription, all codes are diverted to a single despot, whose sign then becomes the source and meaning for all codes. Unlike the primitive territorial machine, which was based on 'the immanent unity of the earth as the immobile motor', the despotic machine provides 'a transcendent unity of an altogether different nature – the unity of the State […] which now takes charge of the fertility of the soil as well as the rain from the sky and the general appropriation of the productive forces' (1984: 146).

Whereas the primitive territorial machine operates by coding the earth and the imperial despotic machine overcodes all codes, a third great social machine – the civilised capitalist machine – functions by *decoding* all codings and overcodings it comes across. The capitalist machine has no real interest in *what* a coding or overcoding happens to be – the intrinsic essence of a coding/overcoding is irrelevant. For this reason the ideology of capitalism is said to be 'a motley painting of everything that has ever been believed' (1984: 34, 267). What matters, within the capitalist machine, is the *differential value between codings/overcodings*, for the greater this difference then the greater the profit. Such processes of capitalisation can only be conducted if all codings/overcodings are rendered onto the same unitary market. Hence why capitalism is defined (in part) by its activity of decoding and promotion of a global market for the exchange of all codings/overcodings.

In one sense, the capitalist machine unifies the earth by exerting a massive force of deterritorialisation whilst inaugurating a market that encompasses the entire globe. Deleuze and Guattari (1989: 454) are careful to stress, however, that this does not mean a new earth is created by capitalism: 'its power of deterritorialisation consists in taking as its object, not the earth, but "materialised labour", the commodity'. Capitalism may universalise the earth and its history, converting all things and meanings into commodities, but this is no act of escape; on the contrary, nothing is allowed to escape its powers of decoding and reappropriation (more specifically, 'axiomatisation'). Nothing is allowed to die, as capital is capable of animating and reanimating everything, since anything can be exchanged on the global market – all existing societies are brought within its fold, as are all previous societies: 'capitalism has haunted all forms of society, but it haunts them as their terrifying nightmare' (1984: 140). As such, capitalism consumes the earth and serves as the limit of all societies, but it is more precisely their *relative* limit (1984: 245-246). By inserting itself into all of the earth's relations, and continually pushing the limits of the earth

itself, capitalism takes over the world, but it does not create one. For that more revolutionary act of creation, schizophrenia is required.

While capitalism is the relative limit of all societies, schizophrenia is 'the *absolute* limit that causes the flows to travel in a free state on a desocialized body without organs' (1984: 246). The attraction of schizophrenia for Deleuze and Guattari is quite straightforward: the schizo has an outstanding ability to change who they are. Put differently, 'The schizo knows how to leave: he has made departure into something as simple as being born or dying' (1984: 131). While seductive to some readers, it should be noted that the term is also the source for a great deal of criticism levelled at them, given that schizophrenia is a medical condition seen by many to be far from attractive. In their defence, Deleuze and Guattari clarify that the term is used in an exceptional and conceptual sense. Deleuze will also elaborate in a later interview that the sole purpose of *Anti-Oedipus* was to *prevent* people from being reduced to a pulp and developing the early stages of schizophrenia as a medical condition – an outcome that leads to their hospitalisation (Deleuze and Parnet, 2007: 'D for Desire'). Their work must therefore not be taken too literally. It must also be taken in a measured and balanced way, in which one harnesses the destructive and productive powers of schizophrenia but with 'extreme prudence' (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 138), as well as 'great patience, great care' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 318).[5] Schizophrenia, as Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 318) see it, destroys the 'representative territorialities and reterritorializations through which a subject passes'. There are of course attempts to interrupt such destruction, but when uninhibited, the schizophrenic process of deterritorialisation leads to the creation of a new earth. In this respect, schizos 'are like Zarathustra' (1983: 131).

The liberatory sentiment that Deleuze and Guattari invest in the schizo is fairly obvious. We should be mindful, though, of the particular context in which such statements are advanced. That context is the critique of psychoanalytic theories and practices that were dominant in the period *Anti-Oedipus* was written. Deleuze and Guattari's choice of the schizo as a Zarathustra-like figure can only be comprehended when one notes what it is up against and contrasted to: the conditions of paranoia, neurosis, and psychosis. It is in aid of escaping these ends that Deleuze and Guattari champion the schizo and their ability to create a new land, a new earth. The psychoanalytic context is not exactly necessary, however, for making the point, and there are other figures that do the same job, such as the nomad: she who constructs a war-machine directed against the State and other apparatuses of capture. As with the schizo, the nomad is 'the Deterritorialised par excellence' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1989: 381), because their traveling is not for the sake of relocating from one territory to another (as is the case with migrants). Rather, their movement is itself a way of life, which is to say that with the nomad 'it is deterritorialization that constitutes the relation to the earth, to such a degree that the nomad reterritorializes on

deterritorialization itself. It is the earth that deterritorializes itself' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1989: 381; Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 134).

Although the psychoanalytic context loses much of its importance after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, the call for a new earth and people remains pivotal. It is more frequently explored, however, in a different register: artistic creation. In between the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze published a book with Claire Parnet which previewed many of the developments that were to come. In a chapter on literature Deleuze and Parnet provocatively suggest that Anglo-American literature is superior to that of the French. As they put it:

> Thomas Hardy, Melville, Stevenson, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Wolfe, Lawrence, Fitzgerald, Miller, Kerouac. In them everything is departure, becoming, passage, leap, daemon, relationship with the outside. They create a new Earth: but perhaps the movement of the earth is deterritorialization itself. American literature operates according to geographical lines: the flight towards the West, the discovery that the true East is in the West, the sense of the frontiers as something to cross, to push back, to go beyond. The becoming is geographical. There is no equivalent in France. The French are too human, too historical, too concerned with the future and the past. They spend their time in in-depth analysis. They do not know how to become […]. (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 37)

He may not be mentioned, but the connection from this passage back to Nietzsche is not hard to spot. As with the historians weighed down by their tomes of knowledge, unable to breath clean air due to the haze of history that surrounds them, French literature, Deleuze and Parnet suggest, is burdened by the past and the demands of analysis. The Anglo-American tradition, by contrast, is of another nature: it is geographical instead of historical, preoccupied with becoming instead of Being, ahistorical and suprahistorical – which is to say untimely – insofar as it is against the status quo and for the creation of a new dimension: 'The author creates a world, but there is no world which awaits us to be created' (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 52).

While such generalisations of literary traditions can be somewhat jarring and perhaps unnecessary, the point they are making about creative forms of writing is a worthy one. It is a point that can also be extended to fine art more broadly. Indeed, it is especially through the visual arts that, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari extend their call for a new earth and people. As with their description of the three great social machines in *Anti-Oedipus*, this discussion moves from 'the forces of the earth' and its territorialisation towards lines of deterritorialisation that leave the earth – the *cosmic breakaway* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1989: 337). There is no need to rehearse the three stages in detail, for it is the direction of travel that we are more concerned with, along with the concluding stage reached.[6] The forces of chaos

and the forces of the earth may be immense, but what Deleuze and Guattari wish to articulate are those instances in which such forces are overcome to create a new plane of existence. This is done by harnessing forces of an *unworldly* nature: 'The forces to be captured are no longer those of the earth, which still constitute a great expressive Form, but the forces of an immaterial, nonformal, and energetic Cosmos' (1989: 342-343). The word 'immaterial' must be read here with caution, for what Deleuze and Guattari are getting at is also characterised in the same paragraph as 'a molecularized matter', in contrast to matter that is 'molar'. The word 'nonvisible' is also employed: the forces of the cosmos are nonvisible, in their molecular state, and the task of those who attempt to harness them is to *render visible* such forces into states of consistency.

Deleuze and Guattari stress that such rendering of cosmic forces is not an act of reproduction; it is not a matter of representation, but *presentation* – a making present of the cosmic forces that *insist* in things. Cézanne is offered as an example in the visual arts, and Debussy in music, but their central example is provided by Paul Klee (Deleuze and Guattari, 1989: 343). As Klee explains in *On Modern Art*, his work is concerned with locating a point of consistency, a 'gray point', from within the forces of chaos. This point then 'jumps over itself' and 'tries convulsively to fly from the earth […] powered by centrifugal forces that triumph over gravity' (Klee, 1966: 43).[7] The allusions here to Nietzsche are again especially strong. Aside from the reference to gravity (the Overhuman as 'the Light One' or 'weightless'), it could be noted that the eternal return is also described as a centrifugal force that expels lesser values so that only the highest 'return' (see Deleuze, 1994: 55, 90 and 297). Moreover, the eternal return, for Deleuze (1994: 90), *is a problem that must be posed.*

And so we return to the 'problematic' nature of the call. As it happens, the notion of the problem features in Deleuze and Guattari's final text, *What Is Philosophy?* (1994). Commentators have frequently remarked that Deleuze and Guattari define philosophy as the creation of concepts, but while this short definition is correct, it is only *partially* correct. While philosophy does indeed involve the creation of concepts for Deleuze and Guattari, it also involves (amongst other things) the *construction of problems that determine the sense of concepts and their relations within a horizon*: 'All concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as their solution emerges' (1994: 16). This is not to say that concepts are straightforwardly reducible to a problematic context, for concepts can zigzag between problems, connect different problems together and assign conditions to a problem (1994: 18, 21). We are unable to elaborate on the intricacies of their relations at present (see Lundy 2012: 146-162), but it will suffice to say that the relation of concept and problem draws much from the Bergsonian problematology already outlined above:

A solution has no meaning independently of a problem to be determined in its conditions and unknowns; but these conditions and unknowns have no meaning independently of solutions determinable as concepts. Each of the three instances is found in the others, but they are not of the same kind, and they coexist and subsist without one disappearing into the other. Bergson, who contributed so much to the comprehension of the nature of philosophical problems, said that a well-posed problem was a problem solved. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 81; see also 27)

Thinking, though, is not purely incorporeal. It always occurs somewhere, at a particular time and place; it has a 'milieu', a relationship with the earth (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 69). Or rather, 'thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and earth' (1994: 85).[8] As with the socio-political and artistic contexts canvassed above, there are instances where thought is rendered *relative* to the existing forces of the earth and 'the territories that take shape and pass away on it', but when pushed to its limits, or rather beyond them, thinking constructs a new plane for thought that *adsorbs* the earth. In other words, the earth is itself made relative to an absolute thought, a 'Being-thought' or 'Nature-thought', that leads to 'the creation of a future new earth' (1994: 88).

Problems, therefore, are what situate thought; and problems are themselves situated by the time and place in which they occur. But problems are not eternal, and they must themselves be constructed. When they are fully 'worked out' they dissolve, bringing about a new state of affairs with new problematic constellations. This point is perhaps best put by the Bergsonian disciple Charles Péguy, who says the following when describing the experience of problematic transformation:

Suddenly, we felt that we were no longer the same convicts. Nothing had happened. Yet a problem in which a whole world collided, a problem without issue, in which no end could be seen, suddenly ceased to exist and we asked ourselves what we had been talking about. Instead of an ordinary solution, a found solution, this problem, this difficulty, this impossibility had just passed what seemed like a physical point of resolution. A crisis point. At the same time, the whole world had passed what seemed like a physical crisis point. There are critical points of the event just as there are critical points of temperature: points of fusion, freezing and boiling points; points of coagulation and crystallization. There are even in the case of events states of superfusion which are precipitated, crystallized or determined only by the introduction of a fragment of some future event. […] [N]othing happened, and we are in a new people, in a new world, in a new humanity. (Péguy, 1931: 269)[9]

In this passage we have it all: the distillation of a world in a problem; the dissolution (rather than solution) of both; a fragment of the future, or untimely thought, that serves as a spur to bring forth a new world

and people. The task of great thinkers, as with artists, is to take us farther in the construction and dissolution of problems, to find ways of grasping or rendering forces beyond this world and humanity to precipitate a new world and people. But how, one might rightly ask, is this to actually occur?

Sounding the Call

Before turning to this question, let's take a closer look at the character traits of *who* it is that does the calling and *who* it is that is called. Starting with the latter, the first thing we can say about the people being called is that they are *missing*, they *do not exist* – or at least *not yet*, they are a people *to come*, they are what we lack and what we seek. In light of this, giving a precise description of their *actual* features in advance is impossible, and rightly so: 'The people are missing means that the fundamental affinity between a work of art and *a* people that does not yet exist is not, will never be clear' (Deleuze, 2006: 324). In saying they are 'still-missing', however, we must avoid at all costs the impression that the people already exist in ideality; there is no pre-existing or eternal Idea or ideal of a particular possible people that one then attempts to realise.

Rather than a possible people, we should say with Deleuze that those who are 'still missing' are *virtual*. While the possible is the opposite of the real and thus has no reality, the virtual is opposed to the actual and both are real, though in different ways. The possible/real relation is subject to the principles of resemblance and limitation: the possible and the real *resemble* one another, in the same way that the shape of the cookie cutter resembles that of the cookie; and the selection process involves a *limiting* in which one option amongst many is chosen whilst the others are *eliminated*. By contrast, actualisation is a process of *differentiation*, in which a virtual totality diverges along various emerging lines. As such, the movement from the virtual to the actual adheres to a principle of difference, as opposed to the resemblance of identities. Furthermore, it is in the act of differentiation that actualities are first created. This means that the second principle of this alternative formulation is *creation* as opposed to elimination: 'the characteristic of virtuality is to exist in such a way that it is actualized by being differentiated and is forced to differentiate itself, to create its lines of differentiation in order to be actualized' (Deleuze, 1991: 97).

In other words, the people who are missing, who are yet to come, are not and cannot be known in advance, even by those who bring them forth, for they are not a possible people. Rather, and most importantly, *they must be created*. In the context of art, *where* does an original piece of work reside before it is created? Nowhere. It is created in the act of creation – line by line, paint stroke by paint stroke; and in most cases the created can only be retrospectively identified as such, including the possibility that such a thing could be created. When an artist creates an earth-shattering work, they often do not even 'know'

what it is they are doing (or how), let alone know in advance the precise features of the work as a 'possibility'. To borrow another example from Bergson, where did *Hamlet* reside before Shakespeare wrote it (Bergson, 2007: 83)? The suggestion that *Hamlet* existed in the ether as a fully-formed possibility before it was created is absurd. So too with the people to come.

Which is why, pace contemporary populists, creating a people has nothing to do with fostering or reinstituting a mythical *Volk*. Nietzsche's sister unfortunately misunderstood this, contributing to the Nazi appropriation of his work. But so too did Heidegger. Touching on his fascists predilections, Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 108-109) say that Heidegger 'wanted to rejoin the Greeks through the Germans, at the worst moment in their history: is there anything worse, said Nietzsche, than to find oneself facing a German when one was expecting a Greek'? Heidegger, they continue, 'got the wrong people, earth, and blood. For the race summoned forth by art or philosophy is not the one that claims to be pure but rather an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic, and irremediably minor race – the very ones that Kant excluded from the paths of the new Critique' (1994: 109).[10] So we can now say that the people to come, whoever they are, are *minoritarian*. Which is not to say that they are *a minority*. It is not an issue of identity politics, but the processes of becoming-minor that cross-cut all of us. Similarly, it is not a problem of or for the *demos*, but quite the opposite – it is in the *nomos*, beyond the city walls, that the people we are missing, the imperceptible people, reside. The people to come cannot be found in our democracies for the simple reason that 'Democracies are majorities, but a becoming is by its nature that which always eludes the majority' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 108). And it is in this sense that those who succeed in making the call are *aristocratic*. Not because they are aristocrats in the majoritarian or identitarian sense of this word, but because unlike populist thinkers and artists they are not of this time – their work can never be described on the dust jacket as a 'timely contribution' to some pre-existing movement or problematic. *Resistance to the present* is therefore the leading trait of those who call for a people to come, but this present includes the utopian visions of a possible future that circumscribe the present. Those who sound the call for a future people and earth, in short, are those who are able to grasp hold of a minoritarian or nomadic tendency and give it voice – an act that shatters an existing façade by providing a glimpse of an Other world and way of being that is entirely unrecognisable and out of kilter with the present.

The importance of this minoritarian element cannot be under-emphasised. In their book on Franz Kafka, Deleuze and Guattarti set out the characteristics of what they refer to as 'minor literature'. The first is that 'language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialisation' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986: 17). In Kafka's case the coordinates of deterritorialisation have to do with the strangeness of writing in German as a Prague Jew, but a more contemporary example would be the unravellings and perversions of the English language that occur as it is 'bastardised' by minoritarian communities. As this suggests, minor literature is inherently political (its second characteristic), but it also takes on a collective value (its

third characteristic). Insofar as it offers a glimpse of the faceless, minor literature 'finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation' (1986: 17). Thus when Kafka says that literature is a concern of the people (Kafka, 1948: 193), the people he has in mind are a '*virtual* community' expressed by a minor writer who aims 'to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1986: 17, 84, emphasis added).

In Deleuze's (1989: 215-216) second book on cinema he nominates several auteurs who also show us glimpses of this kind – 'modern' film-makers, such as Resnais and the Straubs, who 'know how to show how the people are what is missing, are not there'. In contrast to classical cinema, which views the medium of cinema as 'art of the masses' and hence 'democratic art' (1989: 216), modern cinema proceeds according to a different politics – a micropolitics of the molecular and minor. Much credit is also given to 'third world film-makers' for 'contributing to the invention of a people', to the extent that they shine a light on who is absent from the majoritarian schema (1989: 217). Such directors produce utterances from the outside, speech-acts that give voice to a collective Other, 'which are like the seeds of a people to come, and whose political impact is immediate and inescapable' (Deleuze, 1989: 221). When this happens, cinema becomes what Jean Rouch calls *cinema-vérité*, truth-cinema (Deleuze, 1989: 151). The point here is not to 'show the truth', as if it had been out there all-the-while, obscured by majoritarian forces before being revealed. Rather, there is a truth to this kind of cinema because it *makes the true*. In doing so it follows Nietzsche by destroying the model of the true worshipped by those 'servants of truth' with 'weakened personality'; or if one prefers, it is Bergsonian insofar as it shuns pre-fabricated truths that are 'ready-made'. At its best, *cinema-vérité* boils down to story-telling or myth-making, *fabulation*, and in several directions at once: the characters who become other and merge with the missing people, the people coming about; the film-maker who 'takes real characters as intercessors and replaces his fictions by their own story-telling' (Deleuze, 1989: 152).[11] We could say, in the spirit of Nietzsche, that these double becomings take us 'Beyond the true and the false' to 'becoming as power of the false' (Deleuze, 1989: 275). But alternatively, following Bergson, we could insist that the determination of true/false be conducted at the level of problems – the truth and falsity of a problematic construction, instead of true or false solutions to an inherited problem. When the tune is played in this key, 'True freedom lies in a power to decide, to constitute problems themselves. And this "semi-divine" power entails the disappearance of false problems as much as the creative upsurge of true ones' (Deleuze, 1991: 15).

How, then, does one sound the call? By now it should be clear that there is no easy answer to this question. If the call came with an assembly guide then it wouldn't even work the one time, let alone repeatedly. There are, however, some things that we can say on this topic. Firstly, don't criticise: 'those who criticize without creating, those who are content to defend the vanished concept without being able to give it the forces it needs to return to life, are the plague of philosophy' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 28). Secondly,

to modify a common saying, 'do as I do, but in a different way that bears no resemblance'. If the past provides us with inspiration, it is insofar as we use it to create something new, to 'do as they did' by bringing forth a *new* people and earth, not the same one that was previously conjured.[12] Thirdly, do not seek the truth, if by that you imagine that the truth is 'out there' waiting to be discovered; instead, seek that which is interesting, remarkable or important, since these categories – which 'cannot be known before being constructed' – are what 'determine success or failure' (1994: 82). As Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 27-28) say of concepts, if one attempt to bring forth a new earth and people is better than another, 'it is because it makes us aware of new variations and unknown resonances, it carries out unforeseen cuttings-out, it brings forth an Event that surveys us'. Fourthly, don't go crazy, or try to pretend as if you are; deterritorialisation is a difficult thing to fake. If one wishes to mess with the status quo, to efface it, then a haphazard scrambling of lines will not suffice. A young child's messy scribbling, or that of an elephant, is not really art. In the same vein, jazz improvisation, when done well in a way that opens up new worlds, is extremely difficult, for it is not merely a matter of mashing random notes together. To open onto the cosmic and render a portion of it visible, 'a certain simplicity' is required, 'a maximum of calculated sobriety' – 'the sobriety of a becoming-child', which is not the same as 'the becoming *of* the child' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1989: 344).

For those seeking more specific instructions on what to do, or even just a concrete articulation of Deleuze and Guattari's 'position', this list will no doubt seem inadequate if not laughable. Much turns, however, on the extent to which one detects (or wishes to extract) a 'normative' agenda in their work.[13] It also depends on the agendas that one brings to Deleuze and Guattari's work in the first place. Jeremy Gilbert puts this point well when he says: 'the analytical resources offered by Deleuze's work […] might be deployed from a range of political perspectives not necessarily limited to those which would seem to receive some explicit endorsement within it' (Gilbert, 2009: 11). Gilbert is here reflecting on two influential critics of Deleuze, Phillipe Mengue and Peter Hallward, who were both disappointed in their own ways with 'Deleuze's politics' – in the case of Mengue its 'anti-democratic' tenor, and in the case of Hallward its general withdrawal from the socio-political arena.[14] But as Gilbert's survey essay goes on to show, Deleuze has been attacked and defended from all manner of political perspectives.[15] One could even say that this is one of its distinctive features, for better or worse; something Deleuze indeed shares with Bergson, who was pilloried 'not only [by] his natural enemies, but the enemies of his enemies' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 133). Does this feature itself indicate a particular political persuasion? Maybe. But in any case, it is important to remember that the socio-political is only one of three registers of the call for a new earth and new people, and it is not at all clear that it should be given precedence. And this is perhaps the value in engaging with the call *across* multiple registers, *as an untimely problem*, rather than approaching it from within the confines of a particular discipline and/or established set of debates – for

if the call is continually comprehended and positioned with respect to the ready-made landscape, we should not be surprised when it comes to look like the earth and the people that we already have.

For the last word on this matter it is perhaps most appropriate to go back to Deleuze and Guattari's engagement with Klee, as it includes the closest thing to a 'how-to' manual that we are likely to get. '[T]he artist begins by looking around him- or herself, into all the milieus, but does so in order to grasp the trace of creation in the created, of naturing nature in natured nature' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1989: 337). Before us sits something created, being, but there was a time when it was in the process of becoming. Our first task is to detect the trace of that dynamic element, amongst what presently exists, if only to use it as a reminder that creation is achievable, it can be done. Associated with this is a second reminder: things were not always this way, and they could have been different. They still could be. Inspired by these reminders, the artist or thinker for the future must then turn 'his or her attention to the microscopic, to crystals, molecules, atoms, and particles, not for scientific conformity, but for movement, for nothing but immanent movement' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1989: 337). The suggestion here is not to become obsessed with minutia and lose sight of the 'bigger picture' – after all, these particles are nothing if not cosmic. It is at the molecular level that temporary territories (this patch of land, that body) reincorporate into an immanent universe – as poetic cosmologists like to say, we are all made of stardust. Once open to this Cosmos, and its unfolding lines of differentiation, the last task is 'to harness forces in a "work"' (1989: 337) – to latch on to a passing comet, like the cat on the back of the witch's broom, and make something worthy of it.[16] Where it takes us and what comes of it we naturally can't say in advance, but one can do as best one can to *problematise reality* and act 'counter to the past, and therefore on the present, for the benefit, let us hope, of a future' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 112).

Endnotes

[1] For more on this see Lundy, 2009: 197-198.

[2] For more on Deleuze's call for a people to come in relation to Nietzsche see Mengue, 2008: 221-222. Somewhat curiously, Mengue does not mention the untimely, nor does he discuss truth, sense and value.

[3] Although Deleuze's book on Bergson is published four years after his book on Nietzsche, it should be noted that his engagement with Bergson happened first. For more on this see Lundy, 2018: 9.

[4] In addition to the Bergson-Nietzsche nexus, it could be noted that Deleuze also draws on Marx for this point. See Deleuze, 1991: 16, and Deleuze, 1994: 186.

[5] For more on this see Lundy 2013.

[6] For those interested in the detail of the three 'ages' see Deleuze and Guattari, 1989: 338-347.

[7] For further discussion of the artistic register of the call for a new earth and people see: Grosz 2008, Brito 2009, and O'Sullivan 2006 and 2016.

[8] See also Deleuze, 2006: 383. For a more detailed examination of the 'where' of philosophical thought see Lundy 2011.

[9] For more on Deleuze's engagement with Péguy see Lundy 2019.

[10] For an extensive examination of the relation between Deleuze and Heidegger on the 'invention of a people' see Sholtz 2015.

[11] Deleuze adopts this notion of 'fabulation' from Bergson (Deleuze, 1995: 125-126). For more on this issue in relation to the people to come see Bogue 2006, and more expansively, Bogue 2010.

[12] Nietzsche, it could be noted, pairs Zarathustra with a buffoon as a double – someone who will ape him, and in so doing be nothing like him (Nietzsche, 2005: 152-154). See also the chapter on 'The Convalescent' (Nietzsche, 2005: 188-193).

[13] For an interesting discussion of the 'normativity of Deleuze and Guattari's work see Alliez et al, 2009: 147-169.

[14] The best response to Mengue's 'anti-democratic' accusation (a criticism also voiced by Rancière, 2010: 169-183) is given by Paul Patton (2010: 137-210). As for Hallward's interpretation of Deleuze, dissenters amongst the Deleuze community are numerous. For my own remarks on it see Lundy, 2012: 188.

[15] In the decade since Gilbert's article this has only further proliferated, illustrated by publications such as *Deleuze and Anarchism* (Gray van Heerden and Eloff, 2019) and Nicholas Tampio's *Deleuze's Political Vision* (2015), which positions Deleuze as a liberal in the vein of John Stuart Mill. See also Lundy 2013 and 2017.

[16] For more on 'the witch's broom' (also referred to as the 'witch's line') see: Deleuze, 1998: 3-5 and 109; Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 15 and 76; Deleuze and Guattari, 1989: 248; Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 41 and 185; Deleuze, 1995: 104.

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