

*The Worldly and the Otherworldly*  
On the 'Utopianism' of Deleuze's Thought

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The work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari has been heralded as a radical new way of thinking through the political problems of capitalism. Incorporated within their 'schizoanalysis' is a re-conceptualisation of traditional notions of desire, social production and subjectivity. Likewise, they propose 'geophilosophy' as a method for investigating the territories and deterritorialisations of philosophical thought<sup>1</sup> – one that, for the authors, provides a welcome alternative to philosophies of history. As these two approaches indicate, the thought of Deleuze and Guattari characteristically adopts a 'revolutionary' stance in the face of the (social and political) status quo. In light of recent criticisms of Deleuze's work, I will explore the question of whether this revolutionary character of thinking in Deleuze (and Guattari) could be considered 'utopian' – and if so, in what sense this utopianism should be understood.

While keeping in mind the problems and contradictions that often accompany any (mis)use of the word 'utopia' beyond the context of utopian studies,<sup>2</sup> the term will merely serve a heuristic function in the present paper, where I will employ the notion in relation to Deleuze's thought through a rather rudimentary definition: 'utopianism' conceived as a mode of philosophical transcendence. Considering Deleuze's own uncompromising aversion to all transcendent modes of thought, and given some of the recent critiques of Deleuze that characterise his philosophy through this kind of pejoratively understood sense of the term, the question of 'utopia' – here defined as philosophical transcendence – appears to take on a special significance in the contemporary interpretation of Deleuze's work.

This paper will critically explore the problem of utopia in Deleuze's philosophy by considering arguments both for and against Deleuze. While some critics of Deleuze ascribe to his thought a utopian dimension of transcendence – one that supposedly serves as the ultimate foundation for his philosophical position – Deleuze's use of the *transcendental* could be interpreted more sympathetically as an attempt to reconfigure the possibilities of our world. In his formulation of the transcendental, Deleuze rejects what he considers a 'juridical' model of thinking in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, as he raises the application of the transcendental to a 'superior empiricism.'

According to Deleuze, Kant's conception of the transcendental places the subject at its centre whereby, through a harmonious accord between the faculties, the thing in question becomes an object of recognition. For Deleuze, this limit-governed organization of the faculties in the exercise of 'common sense' merely traces the transcendental from the empirical in a passive description of conventionally accepted experiences. In order to overturn this kind of conservative operation of the transcendental, Deleuze retains the Kantian language of the faculties but promotes the extension of each faculty to the extreme point of its dissolution, where in the object of an encounter it explores that which, within its own unique domain, remains ungraspable from the point of view of any empirical exercise. Here, Deleuze attempts to frame the conditions of 'real' experience (what 'unique passion' forces the exercise of each faculty), and not merely the conditions of possible experience informed by established values and the already-known.<sup>3</sup>

In his reconfiguration of the transcendental, Deleuze not only advocates the discovery of new faculties and the possibility for thinking differently, he also complicates any over-simplified philosophical division of transcendence and immanence, or the otherworldly and the actual world – a division that is nevertheless often employed in critical commentaries against the 'utopianism' of his thought. Throughout this paper, I will invoke the role

of the transcendental in Deleuze as it is described above in order to re-evaluate and re-frame the problems at stake in interpreting the possible utopian dimension of his work. More specifically, I will question whether the revolutionary character of Deleuze's thought is directed towards the transcendental discovery of new conditions for 'our world,' or if this revolutionary appeal merely outlines a transcendent or utopian plane of thinking, one that would ultimately constitute a philosophical 'otherworld' as such.

This distinction will be brought to bear upon three of Deleuze's most significant works; *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), and together with Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *What is Philosophy?* (1991).<sup>4</sup> The first of these three texts proposes a radical reading of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy, where Deleuze retains the concept of the *Übermensch* (overman) and re-defines it against his understanding of the Hegelian conception of history. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze's adaptation of the *Übermensch* returns in the guise of schizophrenic desire, which the authors contrast to all transcendent uses of desire within the context of capitalism in general and psychoanalysis in particular. It is only in the much later collaboration, *What is Philosophy?*, that Deleuze and Guattari attempt a definition of 'utopia' in relation to their own thought. For the authors, the term utopia designates the point at which a-historical, absolute deterritorialisation is linked with the present, relative milieu in such a way as to offer both criticism towards, and the prospect of a revolutionary transformation within, the prevailing political conditions of our time.

However, there are a number of potential problems with this formulation of the term 'utopia,' especially regarding what would appear to constitute an essential incompatibility between the a-historical and the present, and the impossibility of the former providing any resources for a political orientation towards the conditions obtaining in the latter. As such, this definition of utopia can serve to crystallise the issues at play within the

revolutionary positions adopted by Deleuze from *Nietzsche and Philosophy* through to *Anti-Oedipus* and *What is Philosophy?* Correlating to these three works, the modalities of revolution espoused by Deleuze appear through the concepts of active force, schizophrenic desire and philosophical creation. These concepts – privileged in the vocabulary and framework of Deleuze's thought – assume the critical role of the transcendental and provide the impetus and justification for his philosophical position in each case. However, the question of the 'utopian' status of these revolutionary processes remains problematic and a potential point of criticism in the interpretation of his work.

In exploring the question of utopia in relation to Deleuze's thought, I briefly introduce the Nietzschean theme of the *Übermensch*, together with the distinction between the 'worldly' habitat of the human and the 'otherworldly' ideal. In the following section of the paper, I examine Deleuze's early study of Nietzsche's thought, focusing in particular upon the differentiation between immanence and transcendence. Subsequently, while keeping this study of Nietzsche as a frame of reference, I discuss the inherent difficulties in establishing a 'political' position through Deleuze and Guattari's method of schizoanalysis. In the next section of the paper, I comment upon the authors' own description of the term 'utopia' in the context of their definition of philosophical thought in *What is Philosophy?* As a critical engagement with this explicitly avowed utopian position, I then refer to Peter Hallward's recent critique of Deleuze, which is developed against a call for political commitment through the material conditions of the actual world. Following from this, and as a challenge to Hallward's approach, I bring into question the very status of an 'actual world' and the possibilities of 'political' action within it. In concluding, I compare Deleuze and Nietzsche on the question of transcendence and immanence, while suggesting a re-evaluation of the transcendental would be required to

contest the criticisms facing Deleuze's utopianism and its supposed political indifference.

### **Nietzsche: The *Worldly* and the *Otherworldly***

The philosophy of Nietzsche is represented as a radical model of thinking within Deleuze's work. To a large extent, through the influence of this model Deleuze develops the revolutionary dimension of his own thought. When viewed in a favourable light, this revolutionary dimension could be considered in connection with the transcendental and its capacity to frame new possibilities for our world. By delineating the condition of the transcendental, Deleuze outlines one of the fundamental tasks facing his philosophy of difference: distinguishing between the principles of immanence and transcendence. Within the framework of Nietzsche's own philosophy, this critical task of differentiation is implicated in one of the major preoccupations of his work – the thematic treatment of truth and lie.

While Nietzsche employs the truth/lie thematic across a number of divergent theoretical domains, it culminates in the question of the 'otherworldly.' In this context, one key passage from *The Gay Science* – "How we, too, are still pious" – is particularly striking. Here, Nietzsche proposes that what science and religion share – faith in a transcendent dimension of truth opposed to our world of appearance and error – may be nothing more than humanity's most enduring form of the lie.<sup>5</sup> *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* also provides many important formulations on this concern with the 'worldly' and the 'otherworldly,' and it is through the mouth of Zarathustra that Nietzsche pronounces one of his most famous dictums on the topic: "*remain true to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of superterrestrial hopes!*"<sup>6</sup>

Throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche develops his myth of the *Übermensch* as 'revolutionary' in the sense of representing a future, ideal type of humanity, but one that is explicitly against any otherworldly beliefs.

Rather, the *Übermensch* symbolises the promised end product of a process of overcoming all pre-established cultural values of transcendence, and, as such, is based upon a faith in materiality, the senses and the earth. Through the narrative of Zarathustra, Nietzsche contests all fallacious interpretations that deny the immanent conditions of life and adopt in their place dogmatic conviction in a transcendent plane of existence. For, according to Nietzsche, those moralists, philosophers and scientists who instil belief in the otherworldly (through, for example, the concepts of ‘heaven,’ ‘truth,’ or ‘objectivity’) always betray a certain ‘bad faith’ and weakened constitution in relation to the immanence of *this* world. In the words of Zarathustra:

It was suffering and impotence – that created all afterworlds ... It was the body that despaired of the body – that touched the ultimate walls with the fingers of its deluded spirit ... It was the body that despaired of the earth – that heard the belly of being speak to it. And then it wanted to get its head through the ultimate walls – and not its head only – over into the ‘other world.’ But that ‘other world,’ that inhuman, dehumanised world which is a heavenly Nothing, is well hidden from men; and the belly of being does not speak to man, except as man.<sup>7</sup>

In the revolutionary dimension of his thought, Nietzsche insists upon the human over the divine and the worldly over the ‘after’ or ‘other’ worldly in the path towards the *Übermensch*. However, the manner in which Nietzsche advocates a form of materialism that is implied by this movement – and which is encapsulated in the notion of ‘being true to the earth’ – is open to critical interpretation: Nietzsche’s thought leaves unresolved, or at best open-ended, the question of how one could justify this sense of ‘being true.’ The problem lies in how to conceive of a seat of judgement and a criterion of truth to differentiate between the immanent, material world and all transcendent otherworlds which would not itself fall back upon – or find its ultimate foundation in – a principle of transcendence.

### Deleuze's Nietzsche: Active and Reactive Force

Deleuze reframes this question of the worldly and the otherworldly in his 1962 study on Nietzsche. In this text, Deleuze synthesises Nietzsche's terminology into a dualistic conception of active and reactive forces, one that he aligns, respectively, with the affirmative and negative qualities of the will to power. Within this framework, the role of the transcendental is characterised by Deleuze in terms of active forces and the affirmative quality of the will to power, where active forces express an expansive, plastic or transformative capacity of life, while reactive forces merely function towards the conservation and utility of what already exists.

For Deleuze, active forces command and dominate over reactive forces in a quantitative sense, but one that also serves to define their essential qualitative difference from each other.<sup>8</sup> However, this approach appears to fall into contradiction over the question of 'fact' and 'right,' where Deleuze is compelled to justify why the hierarchical difference between active and reactive comes to be inverted within the nihilistic conditions of the human world.<sup>9</sup> For Deleuze, active forces cannot be 'known' by human consciousness, which he considers to be essentially reactive.<sup>10</sup> Thus, he claims the *historical* development of humanity causes a perversion of the original typological hierarchy between active and reactive force.

By adopting this position, it would appear that Deleuze, more defiantly than Nietzsche, places the *Übermensch* outside the limits of human consciousness and outside human history – in a post-human and post-historical world.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, Deleuze's argument unfolds as a kind of speculative history that remains irreducible to any simple opposition between an 'inside' of material history and a utopian 'outside' or otherworld. Deleuze's narrative complicates such a binary model by positing an 'active' self-destruction of the reactive type of man, who, by

bringing about his own decline, wills the decline of nihilism within human history itself.

Yet in this very process, the supposedly 'essential' qualitative opposition between active and reactive force – along with the distinction between the two qualities of the will to power, affirmation and negation – becomes increasingly convoluted, if not devoid of all foundation. Here, Deleuze's argument could be seen to culminate in the question of how to distinguish between 'genuine' Dionysian affirmation – together with its promise of the *Übermensch* – and the pseudo-affirmation of life performed by the nihilistic will of the human, all-too-human. This is the same problem thematised by Nietzsche in the 'ass' festival, where Zarathustra is initially deceived by the motley clan of the so-called 'higher men' who ultimately make a mockery of his teaching. There is a need in Deleuze's thought to isolate from reactive forces a purely affirmative will to power, one that would remain uncontaminated by the perversion of culture within human history.

But the dilemma here, as Robert Sinnerbrink explains, is that in his attempt to overcome the nihilism of human history, Deleuze cannot thereby position in its place a utopian transcendence of active, affirmative being. For to do so, as Sinnerbrink reminds us, would be "to lapse into the kind of Platonic and Christian metaphysics that both Nietzsche and Deleuze fundamentally reject as nihilism."<sup>12</sup> What is at stake in Deleuze's definition of active force is the distinction between transcendent and transcendental; whether the ultimate realisation of active forces – the *Übermensch* – should be considered a transcendent, utopian state of being, or rather, if the will to power – as the genetic and differential element of force<sup>13</sup> – can be conceived in terms of real conditions of experience that remain realisable within our world.

According to Sinnerbrink, through the course of his argument Deleuze divides the will to power in a dualistic fashion, distinguishing the mode in

which it can be known and experienced by the human (as reactive forces, nihilism) from the power we have to think of it essentially (as active forces, affirmative being).<sup>14</sup> Given this division of the will to power, Sinnerbrink concludes that the ultimate justification of Deleuze's conception of active force is founded upon a transcendent plane that remains above and beyond what we can know through the reactive state of the human in which we exist. Thus, according to Sinnerbrink, Deleuze's escape from history and the human takes the form of an uncritical metaphysics of affirmative being.

However, despite its complications, Deleuze's argument may not fit so easily into the somewhat static model invoked by Sinnerbrink – that of a transcendent dimension of affirmative being and an immanent nihilism of the human condition. It is possible that, within the framework of Deleuze's thought, nihilism is not the only force at work within the human habitat. Even in this early text, Deleuze's overall position is not 'utopian' in the pejorative sense of gesturing towards an outside and unattainable otherworld, but is rather preoccupied with exploring the 'active' and 'affirmative' conditions of life that could potentially revolutionise our world.

Here, rather than reconstituting a principle of transcendence, Deleuze can be seen to advance a form of the transcendental. Nevertheless, in developing the theme of the *Übermensch*, he does little to distinguish between transcendent and transcendental and thereby preclude the sort of criticisms that Sinnerbrink and others have brought against him. By failing to provide adequate self-reflection upon the status of this myth he adopts from Nietzsche's thought, Deleuze appears ill-equipped to defend himself against the claim that his affirmation of the *Übermensch*, together with its revolutionary appeal, ultimately betrays its own guiding principles as a kind of utopian gesture towards a transcendent realm of affirmative being.

### Deleuze and Guattari: Schizo-Desire and the New Earth

Deleuze reproduces his Nietzschean inspired mode of revolution throughout the transformations and permutations of his later thought. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Nietzsche's will to power is transmogrified into Deleuze and Guattari's positive and productive conception of desire.<sup>15</sup> By characterising the transcendental through the notion of schizophrenic desire, the authors attempt to undermine what they consider to be the transcendent uses of desire in psychoanalysis. For Deleuze and Guattari, Oedipal psychoanalysis institutes an alien transcendence into desire through the triangulated structure of the nuclear family; by imposing this frame of reference, psychoanalysis codes the immanent flows of desire onto a culturally enforced model that suffocates the desiring-productions of the 'orphan' unconscious.<sup>16</sup>

Denouncing the theory of the Oedipus complex as the metaphysical 'faith' of the psychoanalytic approach, the authors set out to describe schizoanalysis as a transcendental investigation into schizo-desire and its immanent conditions. Yet, as they declare the omnipresence of the transcendent coding of desire within capitalism, their conception of schizophrenia is grounded upon assumptions that apparently remain unverifiable within the prevailing socio-political conditions of our world. Through their method of schizoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari cannot effectively isolate schizo-desire from the reactive, paranoid-repressive desire fostered by the Oedipus complex. Thus, for Vincent Descombes, the practice of schizoanalysis "culminates in utter idealism," whereby, against the very intentions of "his *empiricist* project, Deleuze finds himself measuring *that which is* according to the standard of *that which is not*, but *which ought to be*." <sup>17</sup>

It would appear that this contradiction should extend to any possible 'political' use of Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis. Indeed, the authors unequivocally declare that they cannot advocate or advance any particular

goal in which to direct the errant, deterritorialised flows of schizo-desire: “schizoanalysis *as such* has strictly no political program to propose.”<sup>18</sup> Repeating the movement of Deleuze’s argument in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, schizoanalysis appears to rest upon a presupposed dimension of immanence that can only be negatively inferred in relation to our human world, where the process of schizophrenic desiring-production must be radically removed from all of the historical and cultural developments of humanity.

Not to be confused with any psychosocial or clinical condition of schizophrenia, schizophrenic desiring-production is presented by the authors as a kind of ideal which symbolises the absolute immanence of desire; a process distinct from the relative immanence of the capitalist market, with its deterritorialised flows that fall back upon – as they become reterritorialised by – the State and other prevailing imperial and despotic structures. As such, schizoanalysis does not entail any fixed model of an idealised society but rather describes the conditions of possibility – and the very process – of ‘revolution’ itself. For Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenic desiring-production holds out the promise of a new deterritorialised earth to overcome all of the reactive territories that serve as the habitat and milieu of humanity: “the new earth ... is not to be found in the neurotic or perverse reterritorialisations that arrest the process or assign it goals; it is no more behind than ahead, it coincides with the completion of the process of desiring-production, this process that is always and already complete as it proceeds, and as long as it proceeds.”<sup>19</sup>

The condition of the world as promised by the functioning and fulfilment of schizo-desire must necessarily be considered a ‘new’ earth because this process is forever restrained, curtailed and cut short by the state of affairs in which we live. As such, this ‘revolutionary’ movement towards an earth serving to figure as the very principle of immanence is problematic – while Deleuze and Guattari outline a radically deterritorialised earth as the only ‘true’ or desirable earth, there appear to be no means to justify such a

conviction from the perspective of our world. Without qualifying the ‘utopian’ status of their deterritorialised new earth, the authors open themselves up to the critical claim that schizoanalysis is less a transcendental method for exploring the immanent conditions of desire than a futile gesture towards a transcendent and unattainable otherworld.

### **The ‘Utopian’ Dimension of Philosophical Thought**

Despite, or perhaps because of, its utopian allure, Deleuze and Guattari continue their preoccupation with the topos of the earth in *What Is Philosophy?* where they explore the relationship between relative and absolute in terms of philosophical thought and the deterritorialised earth. Through this approach, which they term geophilosophy, the authors define the creative process of philosophy in its construction of the properly philosophical concept. For Deleuze and Guattari, the task of philosophy is to map out a plane of immanence that ‘sections’ the chaos and infinite speed of pre-philosophical thought. To describe how philosophical concepts are created out of this plane of immanence, the authors introduce the notion of the *conceptual persona* as a kind of creative voice utilised by philosophy.<sup>20</sup>

For Deleuze and Guattari, conceptual personae cannot be equated with psychosocial types because they resist the history and psychology of the ‘actual’ world which we inhabit. However, it is through this resistance that the authors declare the revolutionary potential of philosophy. Distinct from the state of affairs of this world, philosophical thought is in a process of “‘Becoming’ [that] does not belong to history. History today still designates only the set of conditions, however recent they may be, from which one turns away ... in order to create something new.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus, for Deleuze and Guattari, the transcendental capacity of philosophy must operate a-historically in order to remain a revolutionary force, and this is one of the rare occasions where the term ‘utopia’ is acknowledged by the authors in relation to their own work: the “word

utopia ... designates *that conjunction of philosophy, or of the concept, with the present milieu*"<sup>22</sup> – a conjunction they claim can only occur outside of any relationship with history.<sup>23</sup> For the authors, philosophy becomes a revolutionary process when thought deterritorialises the present and creates new possibilities to free up prevailing social and political determinations:

Philosophy takes the relative deterritorialisation of capital to the absolute; it makes it pass over the plane of immanence as movement of the infinite and ... *turns it back against itself so as to summon forth a new earth, a new people* ... Actually, *utopia is what links philosophy with its own epoch* ... In each case it is with utopia that philosophy becomes political and takes the criticism of its own time to its highest point. Utopia does not split off from infinite movement: etymologically it stands for absolute deterritorialisation but always at the critical point at which it is connected with the present relative milieu, and especially with the forces stifled by this milieu.<sup>24</sup>

However, despite these declarations of a political dimension to geophilosophy, the definition of utopia that is outlined here appears highly problematic. There is a seeming incommensurability in terms of the duality of absolute and relative deterritorialisation, one that threatens to undermine Deleuze and Guattari's own characterisation of utopia as a process of 'mediation' occurring between the two domains – a process that, moreover, is thought to furnish the potential for a revolutionary transformation of the world in which we live. If, in their own idiosyncratic use of the term, utopia occupies the "critical point" between the a-historical and the present, it remains to be seen how this process could be oriented towards any particular political direction, meaning or sense.<sup>25</sup>

Along this line of inquiry, a number of questions can be posed; how could the infinite indifference of a-historical thought serve as a foundation for criticising the specific forms of socio-political organisation obtaining within our world? How can the project of utopia, which occurs at the point of 'mediation' between a-historical, absolute deterritorialisation and present, relative deterritorialisation, ultimately be constituted as anything other than

a historical – or even dialectical – process? Has anything essentially changed in Deleuze and Guattari's thought from *Anti-Oedipus* – where they claim to have no ideal goal in which to direct the errant flows of desire, and thus no political program to propose – that would allow them to now declare a 'critical' and politically informed dimension to geophilosophy?

Granted that their version of utopia as process must be distinguished from all static models of an idealised society, the problem persists as to how to interpret Deleuze and Guattari's 'utopian' gesture towards a new people and new earth of deterritorialisation, and the question remains if this gesture can be conceived in any politically meaningful way. Even if this were possible, it appears difficult to imagine the dynamic relationship between the chaotic nature of pre-philosophical thought and the conditions predominating in the 'actual' world, especially given the lack of any historical frame of reference in Deleuze and Guattari's approach.

#### **Hallward: Deleuze's Direction 'Out of this World'**

According to Hallward, these difficulties are impossible to overcome, as he argues that Deleuze provides no satisfactory response to the demands for material and concrete political action. For Hallward, this is due to the fact that he only privileges forms of temporality opposed to the present, as well as concepts that are on the side of the virtual, the active and the a-subjective. Thus, as Hallward explains, the actual, present and material conditions of the human world are under-developed in Deleuze's approach: "there is no place in Deleuze's philosophy for any notion of change, time or history that is mediated by actuality ... Deleuze offers few resources for thinking the consequences of what happens within the actually existing world as such."<sup>26</sup>

Hallward's reading of Deleuze is informed by Alain Badiou's influential study <sup>27</sup> and thus borrows much from the latter's critical line of argumentation. Badiou interprets Deleuze's philosophy as a failed attempt to conceive of being in its multiplicity. Rather, for Badiou, as for Hallward,

Deleuze's thought manifests itself in conformity to a single, unifying ontological principle – a metaphysical One-All. Thus, in the introduction of his study, Hallward states that his reading of Deleuze is guided by one central presupposition: that for Deleuze being 'is' creativity.<sup>28</sup> According to Hallward, Deleuze draws his inspiration from a single creative force – equivalent to a supreme deity or God – which renders his thought spiritual, mystic and divine.<sup>29</sup> For Hallward, Deleuze uncritically invokes an absolute creative power in a revelatory or theophanic way where, through this invocation, he affirms what is the telos of his philosophy: "a perfectly sufficient or 'intuitive knowledge' of singular things."<sup>30</sup>

In Hallward's critique, this method of intuiting the divine creative force of being is one that seeks to escape the world, rather than to act within it<sup>31</sup> – the 'mysticism' of Deleuze's conception of philosophical thought becomes for Hallward a line of flight for the human 'out of this world.' In his characterisation of Deleuze's thought, Hallward invokes the dichotomies of inside and outside, matter and spirit – positioning a material 'inside' of our world against a spiritual escape 'outside' of the human habitat. However, in the process, Hallward risks simplifying the problems of Deleuze's philosophy, while overlooking the complications it can present to the very oppositional structure he employs in the recurring theme of his critique.

According to Hallward, Deleuze's thought fails to provide any foundation for a political approach towards the materially existing world in which we live: "the political aspect of Deleuze's philosophy amounts to little more than utopian distraction ... [The] truth is that Deleuze's work is essentially indifferent to the politics of this world."<sup>32</sup> Following Hallward, if one were to posit a 'revolutionary' dimension to Deleuze's philosophy, this could only be conceived as a mere escape from human materiality towards a realm of absolute, 'spiritual' immanence; whether the modality of revolution were to be framed as affirmative being, schizo-desire or the creation of philosophical concepts. Considered from the perspective of Hallward's

critique, Deleuze's thought manifests itself in contradiction to Nietzsche's demand to 'remain true to the earth' – Deleuze's deterritorialised new earth would here be deemed defiantly superterrestrial and 'out of this world.'

### **Critical Reflections Upon Hallward's Approach**

Despite the often convincing manner in which Hallward articulates a number of problems surrounding the interpretation of Deleuze's philosophy, his critique itself requires a critical commentary. While he accuses Deleuze of failing to provide any avenue for political action within the material world as such, the question remains as to how Hallward's line of criticism itself provides a more convincing philosophical position on contemporary political concerns. Beyond the mere mention of a need for political engagement, one could question whether Hallward's critique – compared with the resources of Deleuze's philosophy – provides a superior platform through which to actively think through and participate in the political problems of our time.

Several of the key terms guiding Hallward's critical reading of Deleuze could be brought under interrogation. His repeated insistence upon the need to conceive of time in terms of the 'present' – and politics in terms of the 'material' and 'actual' – could be deemed, from a philosophical point of view, a somewhat conservative gesture. The significance of this counter-argument can be appreciated when taking into account how this gesture serves as the major thrust of Hallward's accusations against Deleuze and the purported limitations of his philosophy. If one could fault the deterritorialised new earth as lacking in critical resources towards our world and ungrounded in any form of actuality, then Hallward's motion towards the materially existing 'actual world' could be considered an unsophisticated philosophical position.

Merely invoking 'materiality' and the 'actual world' as the sites of real political intervention – as something 'tangible' opposed to the supposed

mysticism of Deleuze's thought – neglects the philosophical complexity of the transcendental and the relationship between transcendence and immanence that is constantly at play within Deleuze's work.<sup>33</sup> Beyond the question of recuperating a Deleuzian 'politics,' it would appear that in his critique Hallward fails to advance a philosophical approach towards the political sphere through which he could convincingly articulate and justify his criticism of the inadequacies of Deleuze's thought.

If the philosophical vocabulary of Hallward's critique of Deleuze should be brought into question, then so should the differences between the two thinkers in terms of their conception of a politics of language. The manner in which Hallward's position rests upon a political terminology of the 'actual' or 'real' world is unlike Deleuze's radical understanding of language, where in texts such as *The Logic of Sense* (1969) – and with Guattari in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980)<sup>34</sup> – he argues for a 'literal' interpretation of words. For Deleuze, words have their own 'materiality' and capacity to produce 'reality.' Indeed, according to Deleuze, the literality of words can serve as a challenge to repressive orders of signification, together with the transcendent principles of language that conserve conventional structures of meaning and the political status quo.

This idiosyncratic understanding of language is part of Deleuze's overall project, in which he seeks to investigate the question of how situations are constituted as transcendental in order to express their potential for transformation. His approach (towards language as towards schizo-desire) rests upon philosophy's capacity to produce rhetorical constructions that are able to radically redefine the nature of things. However unlikely or implausible some of Deleuze's 'constructions' may sometimes appear, it remains a question of debate as to whether Hallward's gesture towards the 'actual world' provides a more constructive philosophical framework through which to formulate real conditions for political transformation and change.

## Conclusion

In returning to the original Nietzschean model of the *Übermensch* and the distinction between the worldly and the otherworldly, it would appear – following the argument of Hallward’s critique – that Deleuze betrays Zarathustra’s demand to ‘remain true to the earth,’ despite his best intentions. For Hallward, the revolutionary dimension of Deleuze’s thought represents a failed materialism that moves in the direction of an extra-worldly plane opposed to the political possibilities and responsibilities of the worldly habitat in which we exist.

However, in an effort to avoid such a precipitous repudiation of Deleuze, one could interpret his approach as a replication of the paradoxes that underlie Nietzsche’s own form of materialism – albeit in a manner that exaggerates and renders more discernible the contradictions of Nietzsche’s thought. Extending this interpretation, Deleuze would here be seen to repeat the Nietzschean dilemma of differentiating the ‘false’ affirmations of life from the ‘true.’ Given his apparent failure to address Nietzsche’s demand for a critical distinction between worldly immanence and otherworldly transcendence, Deleuze could even be identified as one of the so-called ‘higher men’ of Zarathustra’s cave. This argument would become especially convincing if one were to agree with Hallward’s claim that Deleuze, as his philosophy draws its inspiration from a supreme deity of creative being, effectively reconstitutes the former place of God – the one that Nietzsche, in his affirmation of the *Übermensch*, had attempted to overthrow.

However, such a characterisation of Deleuze tends to overlook the fundamental disposition of his thought, which outlines the potential for assembling ‘reality’ in various different ways. Considered in this fashion, the revolutionary turn of Deleuze’s thought does not constitute a flight ‘out of this world’ (as Hallward would have it) or, even more radically, an escape to an ‘other place’ or ‘otherworld.’ Rather, Deleuze’s revolutionary thought endeavours to redefine our worldly states of affairs as transcendental in

such a way that they can be conceived of *differently* and *otherwise*.<sup>35</sup> Reading Deleuze in this manner would draw his philosophical project closer to Nietzsche and his emphasis upon the task of creating new values.

Yet, more so than Nietzsche, Deleuze's approach ultimately relies upon an unlikely rhetorical reconstruction of our world. A major factor that renders Deleuze's thought unconvincing in relation to Nietzsche is its declared disengagement from human history. With their technique of schizoanalysis, unlike Nietzsche's historically informed genealogical method, Deleuze and Guattari essentially divorce the revolutionary process of schizo-desire from any historical horizon. If this position does change in the formulation of geophilosophy, it comes by way of their own conception of 'utopia,' which is defined as the critical point of conjunction between the a-historical and the present milieu. However, there are a number of problems surrounding their definition of the term, especially as to how the a-historical could supply the present with any particular political orientation.

If Deleuze's attempts to provide a political dimension to his philosophy have become subject to a critique of 'extra' or even 'other-worldliness,' his own position on immanent, 'worldly' materialism remains a decisive concern for the contemporary interpretation of his work. In this instance, the question of 'utopia' offers a useful frame of reference through which to approach this philosophical problem of immanence and transcendence. If the theme of utopia – beyond its heuristic employment in the present paper as transcendent ideal – could be positively re-defined in relation to Deleuze's thought, it would require a re-examination into the role of the transcendental and its immanent criteria. However, to pursue this task would also entail considerably more elaboration and justification of the concept of utopia and its status than Deleuze and Guattari provide within their own work.

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<sup>1</sup> The concepts of 'territory,' 'deterritorialisation' and 'reterritorialisation' are essential to the collaborative work of Deleuze and Guattari. To offer a brief definition of the terms, if a 'territory' represents an already-established place, social hierarchy, economic means of production or sense of subjectivity, then 'deterritorialisation' designates the process whereby order and organisation are taken away from the composition of the territory. As such, deterritorialisation frees up new ways for territories to be constituted, which occurs through the process of 'reterritorialisation.' For a more elaborate account of these terms, see Adrian Parr, "Deterritorialisation / Reterritorialisation," in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 66-9. See also Paul Patton, "Deterritorialisation + Politics," in *Deleuze Dictionary*, 70-1.

<sup>2</sup> In her article "Utopias: Scholarly," Michèle Le Dœuff reminds us that attention must be paid towards the field of application of 'utopia,' as well as to precisely who makes use of the term, and to what ends. See Michèle Le Dœuff, "Utopias: Scholarly," trans. Susan Rotenstreich, *Social Research* 49 (1982): 441-66.

<sup>3</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 129-67; Daniel Smith, "Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality," in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 29-56. Deleuze's conception of the transcendental, which is framed in the interests of discovering the conditions of 'real,' not possible, experience, could be compared with the overall project of phenomenology. For an account of the status of the transcendental within phenomenology, see Jean-François Lyotard, *Phenomenology*, trans. Brian Beakley (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 43-56.

<sup>4</sup> While I will concentrate upon these three works, two other texts of note regarding the 'utopian' question in Deleuze's thought are: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2003) and Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Continuum, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 282-3.

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1969), 42.

<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 59.

<sup>8</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Continuum, 2002), 39-44.

<sup>9</sup> See Robert Sinnerbrink, "Active Slaves and Reactive Masters? Deleuze's Anti-Dialectic Nietzsche," *Social Semiotics* 7 (1997), 151-2.

<sup>10</sup> See Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, 40-1, 64-5.

<sup>11</sup> See Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, 140.

<sup>12</sup> Sinnerbrink, 157.

<sup>13</sup> See Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, 49-52.

<sup>14</sup> See Sinnerbrink, 157-8.

<sup>15</sup> See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen Lane (London: Continuum, 2003), 4-5.

<sup>16</sup> See Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 50, 74-5, 92-3, 116.

<sup>17</sup> Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy*, trans. L. Scott-Fox and J. M. Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 178-80.

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<sup>18</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 380.

<sup>19</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 382.

<sup>20</sup> See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 61-83.

<sup>21</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 96.

<sup>22</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 100.

<sup>23</sup> See Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 110.

<sup>24</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 99-100. For a clear analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's conception of 'utopia' as the point of conjunction between philosophical thought and the socio-political milieu, see Eugene Holland, "The Utopian Dimension of Thought in Deleuze and Guattari," in *Imagining the Future: Utopia and Dystopia*, eds. Andrew Milner, Matthew Ryan and Robert Savage (Melbourne: Arena Publications Association, 2003), 228-42. Despite its detail, Holland's reading of the utopian dimension of Deleuze and Guattari's thought offers little critical insight into the problems surrounding their definition of utopia.

<sup>25</sup> In this manner of approaching the question of the 'political' dimension of Deleuze's thought, I have been influenced by Jacques Rancière's critical essay "Deleuze, Bartleby, and the Literary Formula." See Jacques Rancière, *The Flesh of Words: The Politics of Writing* trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 146-64.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Hallward, *Out of this World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (London: Verso, 2006), 162.

<sup>27</sup> See Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> See Hallward, 1.

<sup>29</sup> See Hallward, 21, 54.

<sup>30</sup> Hallward, 12.

<sup>31</sup> See Hallward, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Hallward, 162.

<sup>33</sup> While framing his argument through different conceptual terms, John Protevi makes a similar claim. In his critique of Hallward's book (published by *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*), Protevi suggests that Hallward simplifies Deleuze's thought by interpreting the virtual and the actual in a dualistic fashion that overlooks the independent ontological register of the 'intensive.' See John Protevi, review of "Out of this World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation" (Indiana, March 2007 [accessed 31 May 2007]). Available from <http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=10564>

<sup>34</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin Boundas, trans. Mark Lester (London: Continuum, 2004); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Deleuze and Guattari, "November 20, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics," in *A Thousand Plateaus*, 75-110.

<sup>35</sup> This is a claim reiterated by Ian Buchanan, who describes Deleuze and his philosophical project as 'utopian' in a favourable sense of the term. See Ian Buchanan, *Deleuzism: A Metacommentary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 117-74, 192-7. While he devotes two chapters of this book to the question of utopia in relation to Deleuze's thought, Buchanan does not engage with Deleuze and Guattari's own definition of the term in *What is Philosophy?* and the problems this definition can pose to the supposed 'political' dimension of their thought.