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Political postmodernity

Defining postmodernity

One of my foremost goals has been to show that anarchism, both historically and theoretically, has constituted a movement beyond political modernity. At the highest level of generality, I have defined political modernity in terms of representation—representation of the subject, of society, of the world, of the relationships among them. To the extent that anarchism has distinguished itself chiefly as a critique of, and alternative to, representation, to the extent that it has moved beyond the discourse of political modernity, it is fair to say that I have achieved this goal. But I want to go a step further and reiterate a claim I made earlier—namely, that anarchism is rightly termed the first “postmodern” political philosophy. Rudolf Pannwitz, who was the first to use “postmodern” as a sociological *term de l’art* in 1917, defined postmodernity as “nihilism and the collapse of values in contemporary European culture.”¹ If we generalize (and soften) Pannwitz’s definition a bit—such that “postmodern” refers only to what is generally opposed to, or stands outside, or moves beyond modernity—there is nothing anachronistic about calling the anarchists “postmodern,” especially in juxtaposition to what I identified as characteristically “modern” in previous chapters. I will say more about this below.

For the time being, let us be clear that 150 years of anarchist thought and action, despite being radically “postmodern” in form and content, has failed to bring about any substantial historical changes. In my view, therefore, it is not just mistaken but ridiculous to claim that the world has entered a new and distinctive “postmodern” epoch or that we have otherwise transitioned into something called “the postmodern condition.” This is scarcely to deny the very real cultural, technological, psychological, economical (et cetera) changes enumerated and discussed by the likes of Bell, Bauman, Jameson, Lyotard, and other theorists.² The point is merely that none of these changes, considered individually or *in toto*, constitute a fundamental break from the dominant social, political, and economic institutions of modernity. The

greatest changes, in my view, have been quantitative rather than qualitative—modernity has grown, expanded, “globalized,” but it has not transformed into something altogether new and different. As I said earlier, we have never been postmodern.³

We have, however, provided glimpses of what political postmodernity is or, better, what it could be. I have argued that the anarchists were among the first to provide such glimpses—indeed, to articulate the first identifiably “postmodernist” philosophy—but for most scholars political and philosophical “postmodernism” is something that developed much later. As Lawrence Cahoon notes, “postmodernism” has become a catch-all term associated especially with “the new French philosophers of the 1960s—the most influential of whom were Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Jean-François Lyotard.”⁴ He continues:

[These philosophers] had been schooled by another theoretical movement, structuralism, developed earlier by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and championed after the war by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Structuralism rejected the focus on the self and its historical development that had characterized Marxism, existentialism, phenomenology, and psychoanalysis. The social or human sciences . . . needed to focus instead on super-individual structures of language, ritual, and kinship which make the individual what he or she is. Simply put, it is not the self that creates culture, but culture that creates the self. The study of abstract relations or “codes” of cultural signs . . . is the key to understanding human existence. Structuralism seemed to offer the student of humanity a way of avoiding the reduction to the natural sciences, while yet retaining objective, scientific methods . . .⁵

The so-called postmodernists shared the structuralists’ rejection of a presocial, prelinguistic self but “saw deep self-reflexive philosophical problems in the attempt by human beings to be ‘objective about themselves.’”⁶ Generally speaking, the resultant “poststructuralist” critique argues that thought itself, as manifested in various modes of “rational” inquiry, is by turns groundless, contingent, indeterminate, ambiguous, and illusory. Understood as a generic philosophical trend, “poststructuralism” variously criticizes presence (versus construction), essence (versus appearance or phenomena), unity (versus plurality), heterogeneity (versus difference), identity (versus alterity), and transcendence (versus immanence).⁷ In short, it attempts to undermine the very foundations of “modernity” or “Enlightenment.”

The philosophers named above have tended to reject the “postmodernist” or “poststructuralist” label, and rightfully so. It is simply a mistake to suggest that Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard are members of a distinct philosophical “school” defined by a set of doctrines that all of them would unequivocally endorse. It would be equally mistaken, however, to

suggest that these thinkers have nothing in common, or that they are not similar enough to each other that we can reasonably and accurately speak of shared orientations, or common commitments and concerns. Lewis Call has helpfully suggested that “postmodernism” is better understood as a “matrix” that is “profoundly pluralistic and nonhierarchical: it has neither a single concrete origin nor a definite teleology, and none of its strands or nodes may be said to rule over the others.”⁸ For our purposes, it is enough to briefly describe two of the central elements of “poststructuralist” critique—namely, deconstructive analysis and genealogical analysis. The first, which we shall discuss by way of Derrida, is concerned crucially with the indeterminacy of language. The second, which we shall discuss by way of Foucault, is concerned with the historical production of knowledge (discursive practices), institutions (nondiscursive practices) and subjectivity (processes of subjectivation) vis-à-vis the operation of power.

Deconstructive analysis

The most expedient way to introduce Derrida’s deconstructive analysis is by focusing on certain ideas and concepts which, when taken together, form its theoretical core. Although the “meanings” of these ideas and concepts remain more or less consistent throughout Derrida’s writings, he nonetheless adopts a variety of different terms to describe them. (For example, the “foundational” Derridean concept of the transcendental signified is variously described as “logocentrism,” “phallogocentrism,” and “the metaphysics of presence.” The same is true of other concepts such as trace, metaphoricity, the supplement, and so on.) As an exhaustive discussion of all such terms would take us well beyond the scope of this section, I will instead focus my attention on the basic concepts underlying them—concepts that are crucial to understanding Derrida’s project in general.

One such concept is undecidability—that is, the impossibility, within language, of achieving any sort of fixed, static, or transcendent meaning. Derrida articulates this concept in part through a critique of Saussurian linguistics. Broadly construed, Saussure’s theory involves the differentiation of words (phonetic sounds which signify concepts), concepts (ideas which are signified by words), and referents (objects in the “real world” which are signified by both ideas and words).⁹ Saussure is frequently regarded as the first thinker to affirm the arbitrary relationship between words and the concepts they represent,¹⁰ but his true accomplishment is the discovery that words actually derive their meaning from their differential relationships to other words, rather than correspondence to arbitrary concepts.¹¹ Derrida goes a step further by arguing that there are no concepts behind the signifiers—in other words, that the notion of a “transcendent signifier” existing outside the play of linguistic differences is illusory.

Midway through his essay *Différance*, Derrida uses Saussure to develop a distinction between the absent and the present: "We ordinarily say that a sign is put in place of the thing itself, the present thing—'thing' holding here for the sense as well as the referent. Signs represent the present in its absence; they take the place of the present."¹² Thus the sign is a kind of intermediary between the sensible and the intelligible; we think we are aware of presence even though it is absent to perception vis-à-vis the sign. The problem, Derrida says, is that "the sign is conceivable only on the basis of the presence that it defers and in view of the deferred presence one intends to reappropriate."¹³ Because we cannot perceive presence except through the mediation of signs, presence can no longer be regarded as "the absolutely matricial form of being"; rather, it becomes merely an effect of language.¹⁴

A word, therefore, never corresponds to a presence and so is always "playing" off other words.¹⁵ And because all words are necessarily trapped within this state of play (which Derrida terms "*différance*"), language as a whole cannot have a fixed, static, determinate—in a word, *transcendent* meaning; rather, *différance* "extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely."¹⁶ Furthermore, if it is impossible for presence to have meaning apart from language, and if (linguistic) meaning is always in a state of play, it follows that presence itself will be indeterminate—which is, of course, precisely what it *cannot* be.¹⁷ Without an "absolute matricial form of being," meaning becomes dislodged, fragmented, groundless, and elusive. One immediate consequence of this critique is a disruption of the binary logic upon which much of Western thought is based. There are many reasons for this, but one is that binary logic derives difference from absolute metaphysical identity (read: presence) and not the other way around. (i.e., the law of identity: $A = A$, not just $A = \sim B, \sim C, \sim D \dots$, and the law of noncontradiction: A cannot be $\sim A$ at the same time and in the same respect). As we have just seen, however, nothing is what it is independently of the play of differences; there is nothing signified that transcends its relationship to the "differential network" of signifiers.

Derrida articulates and expands upon this general criticism of the "metaphysics of presence" in various texts and applies it to a wide range of binary concepts. In *Of Grammatology*, for example, he attacks the idea that writing is a "supplement" to speech in the sense that the former (which is marked by absence) "stands in" for the latter (which is marked by presence).¹⁸ Elsewhere he discusses truth and falsity,¹⁹ logic and illogic,²⁰ and so forth. All such discussions attempt to unearth *aporias* (i.e., impassable logical contradictions) within binary structures with a mind to undermining the logicometaphysical groundwork upon which they are founded. In the place of this groundwork Derrida offers a different model that he calls the "logic of supplementarity." This "other" logic has been repressed and excluded by the history of philosophy. Whereas binary logic operates within the limits of an exclusive disjunction ("either . . . or . . ."), Derrida's undecidable logic of

supplementarity is a logic of “both . . . and . . .” that resists and disorganizes classical binary thinking. While binary logic is constructed on fundamental axioms such as the law of identity ($A = A$) and the law of noncontradiction ($\sim[A \cdot \sim A]$), “undecidable” logic is derived from the conjunction both A and not- A . Derrida provides many examples of this logic, most notably the *pharmakon*—a substance which is both a poison and a remedy (hence something that is both A and $\sim A$ simultaneously).²¹ Because the *pharmakon* is both A and $\sim A$, he says, it does not have any *absolute* identity or *essential* meaning; therefore, binary logic does not apply to it.²²

In his early essay “Structure, Sign and Play,” Derrida spurns all longing for presence and urges the deconstructive radical to “play the game without security” and to affirm “a world of signs” that “determines the noncenter otherwise than as the loss of center.”²³ As he argues in *Différance*, moreover, “In the delineation of deconstruction everything is strategic and adventurous. Strategic because no transcendent truth present outside the field of writing can govern theologically the totality of the field. Adventurous because this strategy is not a simple strategy in the sense that strategy orients tactics according to a final goal, a *telos* or theme of domination, a mastery and ultimate reappropriation of the field.”²⁴ The “adversary” of deconstruction, against which it wages its strategic and adventurous battle, is not a unitary presence but rather the multiplicity of totalized binary oppositions that are constantly and variously manifesting themselves within multiple sites.²⁵ It does so, moreover, by “overturning,” “displacing,” “resisting,” “disorganizing,” and “transgressing” these oppositions wherever they arise.²⁶

Along with Foucault and Deleuze, Derrida insists that the principal vehicles through which binary opposition is manifested in multiple sites are representation and the suppression of difference. The two are related, as we have seen, because any act of representation is by definition an attempt to fix the identity of the other, to relegate it to the same. For Derrida, however, representation specifically involves the imposition of structures upon the play of differences—structures that involve both naming and logical deductions founded upon naming. This process inevitably involves privileging certain referents (“names”) as originary, as the very sources or foundations of thought, identifying them as the “absolutely central form[s] of Being” and presuming them to be transparently “present” to and constitutive of language.²⁷ What deconstruction demonstrates is that the act of representation is always and already generated through a prior (and ultimately foundationless) process of textualization which is a “determination and . . . an effect.”²⁸

Genealogical analysis

Tidy generalizations about Foucault are neither easy nor particularly worthwhile to make. We might say, however, that Foucault is interested in

exploring the historical production of particular forms and processes of representation. Whereas Derrida's aim is to show *that* all such representations fail to correspond to an underlying "presence," Foucault's aim is to show *how* and *why* particular forms of representation emerge historically. If there is a single pithy aphorism that captures the spirit of this project, moreover, it is Bacon's *Ipsa scientia potestas est* ("knowledge itself is power"). Foucault's perspective is of course very different from—indeed, in radical opposition to—the proto-Enlightenment scientism of Bacon, for whom knowledge is always *power to do*. As we shall see, knowledge for Foucault is rather *power to say*, on the one hand, and *power to be said*, on the other. This distinction underlies the metaphilosophical character of his analysis. Like Derrida, Foucault rejects the notion of transcendent "Knowledge" and instead focuses on the complex power relations that make possible, give rise to, and shape various conceptions of knowledge.

Foucault understands knowledge in a way that diverges sharply from traditional epistemology. In his early works (*Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, *The Order of Things*, and *The Archeology of Knowledge*), the principal object of his analysis is what he calls *statements*. Broadly speaking, a statement is any combination of signs that appears within a particular context and "enunciative field." Context, in turn, refers to the primitive "backbone" of structures within which statements are situated (e.g., phonetics, grammar, etc.), whereas "enunciative field" refers to those structures themselves (e.g., particular languages). Statements are to be distinguished from propositions, which appear in the purely logical field, and sentences, which appear in the purely grammatical field.

For Foucault, all statements belong to a particular *discourse*, which is the set of all possible statements that can be articulated about a particular topic within a particular historical period. Discourse defines the boundaries surrounding what can and cannot be *said*, and to this extent shapes or constructs what can be *known*, that is, the object of knowledge itself. Foucault's early works are principally concerned with the conditions of possibility ("historical *a priori*s") that must be in place in order for certain statements (again, that which can be said) to actually emerge within a given discourse.²⁹ They are also concerned with demarcating and analyzing *discursive formations*—the historical ruptures and discontinuities whereby new forms of discourse appear and supplant older forms of discourse. Foucault refers to this mode of analysis as "archeology." The point of the archeological method is "to grasp the statement in the narrowness and singularity of its event; to determine the conditions of existence, to fix its limits as accurately as possible, to establish its correlations with other statements with which it may be linked, and to show what other forms of articulation it excludes."³⁰ For Foucault, knowledge is not a *thing* (e.g., a particular mental state) but rather a *relation* between statements within a particular discourse—specifically, the relation of what can be spoken or

thought to that which cannot. This method yields a radically nonteleological view of intellectual history. For thinkers of the Enlightenment (or “classical age” in Foucauldian terms), Truth is the absolute, a-historical, a-temporal, and universal *telos* of Reason, and Reason approaches Truth in a strictly linear progression over time. For Foucault, there is no linearity to the production and acquisition of knowledge—just a jagged, disjointed series of historical disruptions. There can be no absolute *telos* because the conditions for assigning truth to particular statements keep changing as discursive formations arise and are replaced.

Foucault’s three major works in the early period involve the application of the archeological method to a particular discourse. In *Madness and Civilization*, for example, he analyzes the discourse of madness vis-à-vis various historical institutions: the workhouse, the hospital, the asylum, etc. The appearance of a new discursive formation (e.g., the discourse of madness or insanity) gives rise to a new institutional form (e.g., the asylum), a new knowledge form (e.g., psychiatry) and a new object of knowledge (e.g., the insane). By reflecting on the conditions of possibility that were necessary in order for particular institutional forms to emerge, Foucault uncovers a new form of discursive knowledge that has been constructed in history. Another example: *The Order of Things* examines the conditions of possibility necessary for the emergence of scientific discourse during the “classical age” (what we commonly refer to as “the Enlightenment”), the salient feature of which was the representation of the (physical) world. In the nineteenth century, a new discursive formation came into being in which Man, rather than the world, became the object of scientific inquiry vis-à-vis three aspects of human existence: language, life, and labor. Each of these aspects in turn, now considered as particular objects of knowledge, gave rise to new forms of science—namely, philology, biology, and economics, respectively.

The early works seek to describe particular discursive formations (through “archeology”) but not to *explain* how and why they came about. Beginning with *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault turns his attention to analyses of how power relations produce knowledge within particular discursive formations (a method that he calls *genealogy*). To this end, he moves beyond discursive formations to a consideration of other forms of knowledge that are formed and constituted by power—namely, nondiscursive formations and the formation of subjects. Nondiscursive formations are practices through which power is manifested in particular forms (e.g., the prison, the asylum, the hospital, etc.). Subjects (e.g., prisoners, madmen, patients, etc.) in turn, are created through the process of being acted upon by nondiscursive practices. Classical political philosophers and jurists (e.g., Hobbes, Locke, Machiavelli, etc.) understood power in a purely juridical sense—that is, as a function of law and the coercive authority of the sovereign/state. Juridical or sovereign power is force exerted upon bodies (e.g., in torture or punishment). It is

repressive in nature; it prevents rather than allows, disables rather than enables, limits rather than expands, constrains rather than mobilizes, closes possibilities rather than opens them. For Foucault, power is not and cannot be centralized in the body of the sovereign or any form of coercive state apparatus. It exists not only at the macrolevel of society (e.g., in ideologies and coercive state apparatuses) but also at the microlevel of subjects (as in disciplinary power). The invisible surveillance of the Panopticon reveals a form of power that is dynamic, ubiquitous, and diffuse. It operates only in the relations of those to whom it applies. It can be exerted on individual bodies (anatomopower) or entire populations (biopower). It is not an absolute force but rather a relationship that exists *between* forces—a set of actions or forces exerted upon other actions or forces, or upon subjects.³¹ It is the capacity to act upon *and* to be acted upon, thus is not only repressive but productive as well.

When Foucault says that power “opens possibilities,” he is referring specifically to the capacity of power to bring about new discursive and nondiscursive formations and hence to produce new forms of knowledge. Because power is a mode of reciprocal affectivity, however, it not only produces knowledge but is *produced* by knowledge in turn. The range of possible statements circumscribed by a particular discursive formation is shaped by power relations, but the visible manifestation of power relations (for example, at the level of practices and the forms these practices take in institutions) is in turn shaped by what can be said. How does this reciprocal shaping take place? In the first instance, we recall that power makes actions possible and is made possible by them in turn. This is because all actions, once actualized by power, are related to other actions (hence other possible modalities of power). But to say, speak, utter, write, or communicate in any way is to perform a certain kind of action—namely, the action of producing statements within a particular discourse. Knowledge, then, is essentially the *power* to produce statements that are in turn capable of being related to other statements within a particular discourse. Truth for Foucault is simply the mechanism whereby this power is exercised:

“Truth” is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements . . . Each society has its regime of truth, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and authorities that enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.³²

With this basic outline in place, let us turn to a specific example of how power has produced knowledge in history.

In *Discipline and Punish*, as in the earlier archeological works, Foucault analyzes discursive formations surrounding the institutions of discipline and punishment. The change comes in his extending this analysis to nondiscursive formations (practices) and, most importantly, to the power relations that give rise to both discursive and nondiscursive formations. Thus, for example, Foucault discusses the nondiscursive formation of punishment actualized in the institution of the prison. Initially the prison was merely an extension of the juridical-sovereign power of the state, responsible solely for the administration of prison sentences (i.e., the actual confinement of a prisoner's body for a specific period of time as determined by the courts). At a certain point the power to punish shifted from the juridical-sovereign apparatus to the prison itself; the prison system thereby became a "corrections system," responsible for, among other things, the rehabilitation of criminals.³³

The aforesaid shift in power brought about a new nondiscursive formation ("correction" or "rehabilitation") that was actualized in a new institution ("the penitentiary"). This new formation, in turn, replaced a previous formation ("punishment") that had its own form ("the prison"). More important, however, the formation of the penitentiary model also produced new forms of knowledge (*discursive formations*) including criminal justice, criminology, criminal psychology, prison science, forensics, and so forth. This is because, whereas juridical punishment took as its object the illicit act, penitentiary discipline focused on the perpetrator—that is, the criminal himself.³⁴ In order to effectively exert disciplinary power on the bodies of prisoners, the penitentiary system came to regard the criminal as a type ("the delinquent")—a form of subjectivity which exists before and is predisposed to the commission of punishable offenses. This subjectivity, in turn, constitutes the object of a whole new class of knowledge forms.

Power relations, then, produce nondiscursive formations at the level of practice (e.g., discipline), which are in turn made visible in institutions (e.g., the penitentiary). Moreover, these practices produce new forms of knowledge (e.g., criminology) that in turn produce new objects of knowledge at the level of the subject (e.g., the criminal type). This reveals another of Foucault's essential insights: that subjects are produced and shaped by power relations vis-à-vis becoming objects of discourse (e.g., study, inquiry, analysis, classification, etc.) and practices (e.g., work, education, discipline, consumption, etc.). To paraphrase Quine (and turn him on his head), to be is to be the object of a praxis and the subject of a theory. My subjectivity is exhausted by the power exerted on me by others and the world and the power that I exert in turn.

A radical consequence of this view is that subjects, strictly speaking, are not ontologically basic in the way they are for, say, Sartre. This does not mean that individual subjectivities do not exist for Foucault—they do. His point is that there is no preexistent human nature or essence that provides the ontological foundation of subjectivity. The body alone is basic; and bodies

are constantly being created and recreated as subjects both by affecting other bodies and by being so affected. Disciplinary power, for example, is manifested in practice at the level of institutions (e.g., penitentiaries) and exerted upon bodies. This relation between the body and power gives rise to particular forms of subjectivity—namely, that of the criminal (whose body is affected by power) and, for example, the warden (whose body affects the bodies of others through power). Interestingly, this same power dynamic also gives rise to a third kind of subjectivity—that of the “expert”—whose role is not to exert power upon the body of the criminal but rather to constitute the criminal as an object of knowledge (e.g., by studying the effects of disciplinary power upon the criminal subject).

We can distinguish, in sum, at least three ways in which power produces knowledge-as-subjectivity. First, there is what we might call “disciplinary subjectivity,” which is produced when a body exerts power on other bodies in a particular nondiscursive practice at the level of institutions (e.g., police officers, generals, prison guards, bosses, teachers, etc.). Second, there is “disciplined subjectivity,” which is produced when a body is acted upon by a disciplinary subjectivity (e.g., criminals, soldiers, workers, patients, students, etc.). And third, there is “observer subjectivity,” which constitutes other subjects as objects of knowledge (e.g., medical doctors, psychiatrists, anthropologists, sociologists, etc.).

Poststructuralist anarchism?

As we have seen, the concept of representation figures heavily in Derrida’s and Foucault’s critique. For both, representation is arguably the principal vehicle by which relational concepts are subordinated to totalizing concepts: difference to identity, play to presence, multiplicity to singularity, immanence to transcendence, discourse to knowledge, power to sovereignty, subjectivation to subjectivity, and so on. We have already seen that representation plays a similar role in anarchist critique. This is one reason that Lewis Call counts “classical anarchism” among the historical precursors of poststructuralism, all of which, in turn, belong to the postmodern matrix. Call was not, however, the first scholar to associate postmodern philosophy with anarchism. Twenty-four years earlier Gayatri Spivak and Michael Ryan published a fairly groundbreaking analysis of the connections between poststructuralist philosophy (including that of Derrida, Deleuze, and Guattari) and the *nouvel anarchisme* of 1968.³⁵ This was followed fourteen years later by Todd May’s seminal work *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, which presented the first book-length argument that the political philosophy of Deleuze, Foucault, and Lyotard represents a new kind of anarchism.³⁶ May was followed by Saul Newman (who refers to “postanarchism”³⁷) as well as Lewis Call (who refers

to “postmodern anarchism”³⁸). The common theme of these and related works is that poststructuralist political philosophy is an anarchism, one that unconsciously borrows several key ideas from “classical anarchism” and proceeds to reaffirm, elaborate, and ultimately “improve” these ideas.

My own argument is that (a) the so-called classical anarchists had already discovered several of the insights attributed to postmodernists more than a century before these thinkers appeared on the scene; (b) that anarchism, consequently, is a postmodern political philosophy and not (or not *just*) the other way around; (c) that poststructuralist political philosophy, particularly as developed by Deleuze and Foucault, indeed elaborates, expands, and even, to a certain extent, “improves” upon “classical” anarchist ideas, but not in the way, or for the reasons, that May et al. suggest; and (d) that rather than regard poststructuralist political philosophy as a totally “new” and “ready-made” form of anarchism, it is better to view poststructuralist ideas as potential ingredients for the development of new anarchist recipes. As I have already offered support for (a) and (b), subsequent sections will mostly focus on defending the other claims. In order to do so, however, we ought briefly to consider the political context within which poststructuralism emerged and, by extension, the role and status of anarchism within that context.

From Proudhon to the Paris commune, anarchist movements occupied an important place in the history of French radical politics until the end of the Second World War, when they were driven to near extinction by the triumph of the Soviet-backed French Communist Party (PCF).³⁹ This situation had begun to change dramatically by the early 1960s, however, owing to the increasing influence of so-called New Left theory, the rise of the youth movement, and growing antagonism on the left toward Soviet-sponsored terrorism. For the first time in a long time, leftist intellectuals were no longer content to make apologies for Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy and were instead seeking viable alternatives to it. The visible culmination of this process was, of course, the uprisings of May 1968 in France, which marked the first significant revolutionary event in the twentieth century that was not only carried out independently of the Communist Party, but in flagrant opposition to it as well. Unlike the fundamentally vanguardist revolutions of Russia, China, Vietnam, and Cuba, the Paris Spring was fomented in mostly spontaneous fashion by a decentralized and nonhierarchical confederation of students and workers who harbored a common skepticism toward grand political narratives. At the forefront of this confederation were the Enragés, a group of revolutionaries who sought to reinvent leftist theory and practice.⁴⁰

Unlike the FAI/CNT during the Spanish Civil War, the Enragés were not so much an organized faction as a loose collection of individuals representing a variety of political persuasions. They were not anarchists in the narrow ideological sense of belonging to a particular anarchist movement or

endorsing a particular theory of anarchism (e.g., anarchosyndicalism).⁴¹ On the contrary, the Enragés had little to do with the French Anarchist Federation,⁴² nor with any other residua of the pre-1945 European anarchist movement.⁴³ While some, like Daniel Cohn-Bendit, were indeed associated with organizations more closely related to traditional anarchism, several belonged to Marxist-oriented groups such as the Situationist International, Socialisme ou Barbarie, and Informations Correspondance Ouvrières.⁴⁴ As Cohn-Bendit stated of his comrades, "Some read Marx, of course, perhaps Bakunin, and of the moderns, Althusser, Mao, Guevara, Lefebvre. Nearly all the militants of the movement have read Sartre."⁴⁵ Other influences included: "Trotskyist criticism of Soviet society . . . Mao Tse-tung on the question of the revolutionary alliance with the peasant masses, and Marcuse when it comes to demonstrating the repressive nature of modern society or when the latter proclaims that everything must be destroyed in order that everything could be rebuilt."⁴⁶ Classical anarchist theories and movements, as such, were only one source of inspiration among many, and as with all such sources, the Enragés did not regard them as infallible.⁴⁷

The Enragés were "anarchistic" (if not altogether "anarchists") in the more important and fundamental sense of advocating certain principles, such as opposition to centralization, hierarchy, and repressive power, that are common to all forms of anarchism.⁴⁸ It is precisely the realization of such principles in practice, however, that made May 1968 such a decisive turning point in the history of radical politics.⁴⁹ For example, despite the enormous influence they enjoyed throughout the uprisings, the Enragés refused to betray their antiauthoritarian beliefs by taking on leadership roles of any sort.⁵⁰ Moreover, they repeatedly thwarted attempts by others to consolidate the leadership of the movement, thereby preventing its appropriation by outside political parties.⁵¹ Ultimately, centralized leadership was replaced with democratic, self-managing councils such as the Sorbonne Student Soviet and the Commune of Nantes.⁵² As a result, the anarchist-controlled universities "became cities unto themselves, with virtually everything necessary for normal life."⁵³

Although such successes were short-lived, the uprisings having been quelled after only six weeks, the events of May 1968 had far-reaching and lasting effects. Among other things, they marked the end of the Stalinist PCF's longstanding dominance over the French Left,⁵⁴ laid the foundation for the German and Italian Autonomia movements of the 1970s and 1980s, and would eventually exert a profound influence on various antiglobalization movements of the 1990s. They also radicalized a whole new generation of intellectuals including Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. Unlike his longtime friend and collaborator Felix Guattari, who had been involved in radical activism since the early 1960s, Deleuze did not become politically active until after 1968.⁵⁵ "From this period onward," writes Paul Patton, "he became involved with a variety of groups and causes, including the Groupe

d'Information sur les Prisons (GIP) begun by Foucault and others in 1972.”⁵⁶ More importantly, Deleuze's prior commitment to speculative metaphysics gave way to a deep interest in political philosophy as he attempted to make sense of the political practices he encountered in 1968. Four years later, in 1972, Deleuze and Guattari published *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the first of a two-volume work on political philosophy.⁵⁷ The second volume, entitled *A Thousand Plateaus*, followed eight years later.⁵⁸

As we have already mentioned, Todd May has argued at great length that the political theories of Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard (whom I shall not discuss here) were deeply influenced by the Paris Spring and the anarchists and antiauthoritarians who helped foment it. May thinks this explains, at least in part, why the political philosophy of poststructuralism developed into a kind of anarchism. At the same time, he acknowledges that Foucault and Deleuze were in all likelihood completely unfamiliar with the so-called classical anarchists, which suggests that anarchism came to them secondhand, by way of the Enragés and the Situationists. This strikes me as plausible enough, but it is not the only possible explanation. We noted earlier that certain of Nietzsche's ideas are remarkably similar to those of Proudhon, Bakunin, and other anarchists even though it is certain that Nietzsche was unfamiliar with their writings (and vice versa, at least until after Nietzsche's death). Given the enormous influence of Nietzsche upon both Foucault and Deleuze, it is also possible that they inherited a portion of Nietzsche's unconscious anarchism (or the anarchists' unconscious Nietzscheanism, depending upon how one looks at it).

Schizoanalysis

Having already discussed Foucault at some length, let us turn our attention to Deleuze. The primary focus of Deleuze's early works is metaphysics and the history of philosophy. Though they can hardly be called “apolitical,” the political dimension of books such as *Difference and Repetition* (1968) tends to be so vague and understated as to require extraction by skilled exegetes. This is not true of the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the political emphasis of which is made quite explicit at the outset. (Like all of Deleuze's works, however, *C & S* is so formidably dense and complicated that we cannot begin to do it justice in an essay of this size. Instead we will limit ourselves to a brief “thematic overview” of those ideas and concepts which illustrate the *anarchistic* dimension of Deleuze's political thought according to May.) The first is Deleuze's critique of the subject. As we noted earlier, liberal political philosophy—not to speak of modern philosophy more generally—begins with the concept of the individual, self-identical subject (as opposed to nonsubjective concepts such as essences, substances, or, in the political realm, sovereigns). Within this framework, the subject is

not only conceptually distinct from the world but *substantially* distinct; it is, in a word, *beyond* or *transcendent* of it. This is because the subject (which is immaterial and active) *constitutes* the world (which is physical and passive). To this extent, moreover, the subject is superior to the world because it gives form and content to an otherwise empty and inert “prime matter.”

Deleuze denies this dualistic picture of reality. Following Spinoza, he instead claims that there is only one Being or substance that *expresses* itself differentially through an infinite number of attributes (chief among them thought and extension), which are in turn expressed through an infinite number of modes. Because Being is univocal, the world and everything it contains—from physical objects to mental constructions—cannot be articulated in terms of relations of self-contained identity.⁵⁹ It does not follow from anything, it is not subordinated to anything, and it does not resemble anything; it expresses and is expressed in turn:

Expression is on the one hand an explication, an unfolding of what expresses itself, the One manifesting itself in the Many . . . Its multiple expression, on the other hand, involves Unity. The One remains involved in whatever expresses it, imprinted in what unfolds it, immanent in whatever manifests it.⁶⁰

Like the anarchists, Deleuze holds that all being is immanent; there is no transcendence, thus there are no self-contained identities outside the world (gods, values, subjectivities, etc.) that determine or constitute it.⁶¹ Furthermore, substance is at root a *difference* that exists virtually in the past and is actualized in various modes in the present.⁶² These modes are not stable identities but multiplicities, “swarms of difference,” complicated intersections of forces.⁶³ “There is no universal or transcendental subject, which could function as the bearer of universal human rights, but only variable and historically diverse ‘processes of subjectivation.’”⁶⁴ The Cartesio-Kantian subject that underlies modern politicophilosophical thought is therefore a fiction. It neither transcends the world nor is transcended by anything else in turn.

Another key concept that underlies much modern thought—the concept of rationality—involves an alleged direction of fit between our thoughts and the world (theoretical rationality) or between our desires/moral beliefs and our actions (practical rationality). Both conceptions involve the idea of *representation*—our thoughts are rational to the extent that they accurately represent the world (i.e., are *true*); our actions, in turn, are rational to the extent that they accurately represent our desires/moral beliefs.⁶⁵ Deleuze regards this concept of rationality, no less than the concept of the subject, as a fiction: “Representation fails to capture the affirmed world of difference. Representation has only a single center, a unique and receding perspective, and in consequence a false depth. It mediates everything, but mobilizes and

moves nothing.”⁶⁶ The problem with this “dogmatic image of thought” is that it relies on representation, and difference (read: substance) cannot be represented through linguistic categories. This is because linguistic categorization assumes that the things it aims to represent are fixed, stable, and self-identical, which, as we noted above, they are not. The difference at the heart of being is fluid, constantly overflowing the boundaries of representation.⁶⁷ In the place of representational language, Deleuze offers what he calls “logic of sense” (which, for the sake of brevity, we shall not explore here.)⁶⁸

Deleuze’s political philosophy as outlined in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* may be seen as an extension of his earlier ontology. As we noted earlier, liberal political theory begins with “already constituted individuals, each with his or her interests,” just as the dogmatic image of thought begins with “already constituted identities, each with its qualities.”⁶⁹ The foundational question of liberalism posed earlier—namely, “why and under what conditions should these individuals come together and allow themselves to be governed”—is a question concerning the relation between individuals and governments. Like the relation between mind and world in the dogmatic image of thought, the relation between individuals and governments in liberal theory is one of *representation*. As Todd May notes, “If a government is to be a legitimate one, the interests of each individual must be represented in the public realm occupied by government . . . [Thus] liberal theory is a form of the dogmatic image of thought.”⁷⁰

Just as Deleuze replaces the foundational modern concept of identity with the concept of difference, so does he replace the concept of the individual subject with other concepts such as the *machine*. In Deleuze’s political ontology, individuals, communities, states, and the various relations that obtain among them are all understood as machines or machinic processes. Unlike an organism, which is “a bounded whole with an identity and an end,” and unlike a mechanism, which is “a closed machine with a specific function,” a machine is “nothing more than its connections; it is not made by anything, and has no closed identity.”⁷¹ Whereas liberalism regards the relation between individuals and society mechanistically (i.e., as a “specific set of connections”) or organically (i.e., “as a self-organizing whole”), Deleuze regards this relation *machinically* (i.e., “as only one level of connections that can be discussed”).⁷²

Unlike the static, self-contained, and transcendental subject of liberal theory, machines are fluid, mobile, and dynamic; they are capable of changing, of connecting and reconnecting with other machines, they are immanent to the connections they make, and vice versa. In creating these connections, moreover, machines produce and are produced by desires (hence “desiring-machines”).⁷³ The liberal subject consents to be governed because it lacks the ability to realize its own interests independently of the state. Machines, in contrast, “do not operate out of lack. They do not seek to

fulfill needs. Instead they produce connections. Moreover, the connections they produce are not pre-given . . . Machines are productive in unpredictable and often novel ways.”⁷⁴ There are different types of machines which can be distinguished according to how they operate. In all cases, machines are driven by power or force or desire.

Anarchism, as we have seen, places an enormous emphasis on what we referred to as “closed” and “coercive” power. The same is true of Foucault. As for Deleuze, he, too, discusses power—especially in his book on Foucault.⁷⁵ However, he is generally more inclined to speak in terms of *forces*—that is, active versus reactive forces in his book on Nietzsche,⁷⁶ forces of desire versus social forces in *Anti-Oedipus*, and so forth. For purposes of this section, we will follow May in regarding “force” as more or less synonymous with “power,” at least in the Foucauldian sense.⁷⁷ Our initial question concerns what force is and how it operates according to Deleuze. It should be noted, first of all, that Deleuze’s conception of force, as opposed to Foucault’s conception of power, is unambiguously ontological. Fundamental to Deleuze’s ontology is the idea that reality is constituted by the material actualization of forces, which are themselves virtual capacities to affect and be affected by other forces.⁷⁸ Forces enter into relations with other forces by chance, but the nature or character of such relations once expressed is determined by an internal and immanent principle, variously described as “desire” (in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*), “will to power” (in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*), and so forth. Desire itself is a virtual force that exists immanently in all particular relations and expressions of force; all particular relations and expressions of force exist in a reciprocally constitutive relationship with desire.⁷⁹

In one famously aphoristic passage, Deleuze claims there are only forces of desire and social forces.⁸⁰ Although Deleuze tends to describe desire as a creative force (in the sense that it produces rather than represses its object) and the social as a force that “dams up, channels, and regulates” flows of desire,⁸¹ he does not mean to suggest that there are two distinct *kinds* of forces that differentially affect objects exterior to themselves. On the contrary, “the social field is immediately invested by desire . . . the historically determined product of desire.”⁸² Desire is a single, virtual force that is immanent to all relations and expressions of forces manifested concretely in particular “assemblages” (complex processes by which desire is organized, as well as the network of circuits through which these processes operate).⁸³

As Ronald Bogue notes, both Foucauldian power and Deleuzian desire/force “permeate all social relations, penetrates the body at a subindividual level, and implements an immediately political investment of the body within larger circuits of actions and production.”⁸⁴ Existing things are constituted (“assembled”) by forces that are immanent to them; “concrete social fields” are therefore affects of complex movements and connections of forces that vary in intensity over time.⁸⁵ For Deleuze, force/desire is as such does not

have any “natural” mode of affecting or being affected. The character of forces is determined by their qualities and affects as express in their actual relations with other forces. There are reactive forces, which are defined by their resistance to change (activity), which are conditioned in various ways by superior forces, and which act by “separat[ing] active force from it can do [and by taking] away a part or almost all of its power.”⁸⁶ So, too, there are active forces, which are defined by their capacity to transform themselves, which condition inferior forces in various ways, which express themselves creatively to the fullest extent of their ability and “go to the limit of what [they] can do.”⁸⁷

Deleuze further argues that “in order to be the source of the qualities of force . . . the will to power [or desire as such] must itself have qualities, particularly fluent ones, even more subtle than those of force . . . the immediate qualities of becoming itself.”⁸⁸ These qualities of desire, which are also described as qualities of power or life,⁸⁹ are affirmation and negation or denial. They are immanent to every force, every expression of or relation among forces; actual force is not only determined by its own quality (its sense) but by the quality of the virtual desire or will to power immanent to it (its value). As Patton notes, “there is an affinity or complicity between affirmation and active force, and between negation and reactive force, but never a confusion of these two levels.”⁹⁰ Thus active force can deny life, or, what comes to the same, nihilistic forces can become active. Likewise, reactive force can affirm life, or, what comes to the same, vital forces can become reactive.⁹¹ The same is true of various types of assemblages: as complex networks of force and desire they contain within themselves both the capacity for creativity and life as well as “bureaucratic or fascist” capacities which seek to stifle creativity or annihilate life.⁹² Again, force does not act or works upon preexistent objects; rather, everything that exists is created or transformed or destroyed in a reciprocal relation to the particular assemblage to which it belongs.

As May notes by way of summary, “power does not suppress desire; rather it is implicated in every assemblage of desire.”⁹³ Given the ubiquitous and ontologically constitutive nature of force, it goes without saying that force *simpliciter* cannot be “abolished” or even “resisted.” As we shall see, this does not mean that repressive social forces cannot be opposed. It does imply, however, that for Deleuze (as for Spinoza) the crucial question is not whether and how resistance is possible, but rather how and why desire comes to repress and ultimately destroy itself in the first place.⁹⁴ Answering this question requires, among other things, theoretical analyses of the various assemblages that come into being over time (vis-à-vis their affects, their lines of flight, etc.) as well as experimentation at the level of praxis. We will say more about this below, but for the time being it is enough to note that Deleuze and Foucault, like the anarchists before them, reject the repressive thesis—that is, they reject the idea that power is “repressive” by nature. All are agreed that power can be active or reactive, creative or destructive,

repressive or liberatory. More importantly, they are agreed that power is to some extent ontologically constitutive (i.e., that it produces reality) and that it is immanent to individuals and society as opposed to an external or transcendent entity.

Foucault and Deleuze also reject the concentration thesis—that is, the idea that repressive forces emanate from a unitary source rather than multiple sites. In Deleuze's philosophy, the interplay of multiple forces within and among multiple nodes, which are themselves interconnected via complex networks, is precisely what gives rise to the social world (this is what he means when he suggests that power is "rhizomatic" as opposed to "arboreal"). This is not to say that power does not become concentrated within certain sites; indeed, much of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is given over to an analysis of how such concentrations express themselves in particular political and economic forms, how these forms operate, and so forth. These analyses are similar to Foucault's genealogies insofar as they seek to unearth how power (or force or desire), as manifested in concrete assemblages *works*. For Foucault, a genealogy of actuality is simultaneously a cartography of possibility: forms of power always produce forms of resistance, thus in analyzing how power operates one also analyzes how power is or can be resisted. Similarly, for Deleuze, "to analyze a social formation is to unravel the variable lines and singular *processes* that constitute it as a multiplicity: their connections and disjunctions, their circuits and short-circuits and, above all, their possible transformations."⁹⁵ A social formation is not just defined by its actual operation, but also by its "lines of flight," the internal conditions of possibility for movement, transformation, "deterritorialization."⁹⁶ Although the rejection of the concentration thesis entails a greater number of *explananda*, which in turn requires a greater number of *explanantia*, we have already seen, in the case of the anarchists, that different and multiple forms of domination ensure that different and multiple forms of resistance are possible.

Even a cursory summary of the complicated political ontology outlined in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* would well exceed the scope of this work. Fortunately, however, such a summary is unnecessary. For our purposes, it is enough to note that Deleuze's robust ontologization of politics is what distinguishes him most vividly from the so-called classical anarchists. Like them, he denies the existence of Kantian pure reason or any other model of universal, transcendent rationality.⁹⁷ So, too, he denies the existence of a universal, transcendent subject.⁹⁸ As Daniel Smith writes, "What one finds in any given socio-political assemblage is not a universal 'Reason,' but variable processes of rationalization; not universalizable 'subjects,' but variable processes of subjectivation; not the 'whole,' the 'one,' or 'objects,' but rather knots of totalization, focuses of unification, and processes of objectification."⁹⁹ Generally speaking, Deleuze, like Proudhon, takes the idea of social physics in a radically literal direction by shifting political analysis to the level of presocial, presubjective processes, operations, and

relations of force. This shift requires, among other things, the invention of new concepts as well as the redefinition of extant concepts using complex, technical, and highly idiosyncratic terminology. (The same is not true, or *as true*, of Foucault, who does not appear to ontologize power and power relations to such an extreme degree, if he does so at all.)

We need not go into exhaustive detail about “machines,” “becomings,” “molar lines,” and the like to note that (a) Deleuze shares the anarchists’ disdain for “abstractions,” which he typically regards as “anti-life”¹⁰⁰; (b) that the most objectionable form of abstraction for Deleuze, as for the anarchists, is representation;¹⁰¹ and (c) that Deleuze believes that representation at the macropolitical level arises from representation at the micropolitical level.¹⁰² As Todd May notes regarding (b):

The power to represent people to themselves is oppressive in itself: practices of telling people who they are and what they want erect a barrier between them and who (or what) they can create themselves to be. *Anti-Oedipus* can be read in this light as a work whose project is to demolish current representational barriers between people and who they can become, and in that sense Foucault states its point exactly when he calls it a “book of ethics.”¹⁰³

As for (c), Deleuze locates the origin of representational practices in micropolitical orders, identities, and regulatory practices (what he calls “molar lines”) and in the “overcoding” of these “molar lines” by more complicated power mechanisms (what he calls “abstract machines”). A particular society may represent individuals in terms of a variety of constructed identities—for example, familial identities (son), educational identities (school child), occupational identities (professional), racial identities (Caucasian) and so on. That same society may also represent individuals via a system of normalized ordering—for example, from son to school child to professional, and so forth.

Alongside systems of ordering and identifying, there may be other distinct regulatory practices such as “the minute observation and intervention into the behavior of bodies, a distinction between the abnormal and the normal in regard to human desire and behavior, and a constant surveillance of individuals.”¹⁰⁴ For Foucault, as we have seen, discipline is nothing more than the collocation of these practices, the concrete manifestation of which is the prison.¹⁰⁵ Discipline itself “does not exist as a concrete reality one could point to or isolate from the various forms it takes.”¹⁰⁶ Instead, Deleuze describes discipline as an “abstract machine” that collocates diverse representational practices (i.e., “overcodes molar lines”) into a single regime of power.

For Deleuze, the state does not create representations of its own. Rather, “it makes points *resonate* together, points that are not necessarily already

town-poles but very diverse points of order, geographic, ethnic, linguistic, moral, economic, technological particularities.”¹⁰⁷ More specifically, the state helps to actualize a variety of abstract machines (e.g., discipline), to bring them into a relationship of interdependence with itself and with each other, to expand and maintain them.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, the state “territorializes”—that is, it marshals these machines against the various micropolitical forces, identities, multiplicities, relations, and so forth that threaten or oppose it (“molecular lines” or “lines of flight,” as well as the various abstract machines which could bring these lines together—e.g., radical political movements). Capitalism, on the other hand, is an axiomatic “defined not solely by decoded flows, but by the generalized decoding of flows, the new massive deterritorialization, the conjunction of deterritorialized flows.”¹⁰⁹

A given social formation is a dynamic system comprised of various “flows”—of matter, people, commodities, money, labor, and so on. Whereas the medieval state, for example, “overcoded” flows of people, land, labor, and so forth, by subordinating them to the abstract machine of serfdom, capitalism liberated (“decoded”) these flows by wresting control of labor and property from the state (“deterritorialization”). The decoded flows initially escape along a line of flight: workers are free to sell their labor, inventors can create and sell products, entrepreneurs can buy patent rights to these products and invest in their manufacture, and so on. Capitalism does not establish codes—that is, rules that govern relationships among specific people or between specific people and things—but by establishing a generic (“axiomatic”) framework for governing relationships among diverse people and things. It accomplishes the latter by reterritorializing the lines of flight it frees from codes, subordinating decoded flows to exchange value, and bounding the circulation of flows within the orbit of the capitalist axiomatic. This is what the anarchists referred to as “appropriation”—the seemingly magic ability of capitalism to transform the fruits of freedom and creativity (“decoded flows”) into commodities to be bought and sold. (Early capitalism transformed labor into a commodity; late capitalism does the same thing with lifestyles, modes of subjectivity, and even “radical” ideologies.)

The latter point underscores an important feature of social formations more generally, one that was recognized as well by the anarchists. Social existence writ large, no less than the macropolitical institutions or micropolitical practices that comprise it, is a battlefield of forces, none of which have an “intrinsic” or “essential” nature. As Bakunin and Deleuze both release, one and the same force can be at odds with itself—for example, within a single human being, or a group, or a federation of groups. The tension produced by a force simultaneously seeking to escape and reconquer itself is precisely what allows ostensibly “revolutionary” or “liberatory” movements (e.g., Bolshevism) to occasionally metamorphose into totalitarian regimes (e.g., Stalinist Russia). For the anarchists, the prefigurative ethic is intended in

part to maintain, as much as possible, a balance or equilibrium among forces or within a single force.

A critique of May's poststructuralist anarchism

Such are the various parallels and points of intersection that have led Todd May and others to conclude that there is a strong affinity between "classical" anarchism and the poststructuralist philosophies of Foucault and Deleuze. As I noted early, however, much of *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* is devoted to showing that there are irreconcilable differences between the two. For example, May repeatedly alleges that "classical" anarchism depends upon an essentialistic conception of human nature,¹¹⁰ that the "classical" anarchists endorse the repressive thesis,¹¹¹ and so forth. Although I and others¹¹² have already refuted these charges, I mention them again because they constitute a major weakness of *Poststructuralism Anarchism* and related books. The works of several self-identified "postanarchists" have been characterized by remarkably limited engagement with actual anarchist texts coupled with problematic exegesis of the sort just cited. In fact, the very idea of "classical anarchism" is, as I noted at the outset, a straw man.

There can be no doubt that poststructuralist political philosophy elaborates, expands, and even improves upon "classical" anarchist ideas. Deleuze and Foucault cut a much wider and more incisive swathe, and this makes sense given the mid-twentieth-century context in which they thought and wrote. Nor could anyone reasonably deny that their political critique is much more sophisticated than that of Proudhon or Kropotkin, even if it is not quite as novel as some have claimed. Indeed, it is simply wrong to claim that poststructuralist political philosophy represents a totally "new" form of anarchism that was "discovered," complete and intact, by the likes of Todd May and Saul Newman. This has not only to do with the foregoing evidence, nor with the postanarchists' occasional tendency to misinterpret or altogether ignore that evidence, but also with their habit of misconstruing important aspects of poststructuralist philosophy, chief among them the status of normativity.

In the final chapter of *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, for example, May rehearses the oft-repeated accusation that poststructuralism engenders a kind of moral nihilism.¹¹³ Such an accusation is a product, he thinks, of the poststructuralists' general unwillingness to "refer existence to transcendent values," which is surely the dominant strategy of much traditional moral philosophy in the West.¹¹⁴ Strangely, May goes to great lengths to explain why Deleuze rejects classical "ethics," only

to argue that certain of Deleuze's other commitments implicitly contradict this rejection. As he notes:

[Deleuze] praises Spinoza's *Ethics*, for instance, because it "replaces Morality . . ." For Deleuze, as for Nietzsche, the project of measuring life against external standards constitutes a betrayal rather than an affirmation of life. Alternatively, an ethics of the kind Spinoza has offered . . . seeks out the possibilities life offers rather than denigrating life by appeal to "transcendent values." Casting the matter in more purely Nietzschean terms, the project of evaluating a life by reference to external standards is one of allowing reactive forces to dominate active ones, where reactive forces are those which "separate active force from what it can do."¹¹⁵

In the same breath, however, May argues that Deleuze provides no explicit means by which to distinguish active forces from reactive ones beyond a vague appeal to "experimentation."¹¹⁶ Such a means, he thinks, can only be discovered by extracting "several intertwined and not very controversial ethical principles" from the hidden nooks of the Deleuzian corpus.

The first such principle, which May terms the "antirepresentationalist principle," holds that "practices of representing others to themselves—either in who they are or in what they want—ought, as much as possible to be avoided."¹¹⁷ The second, which he calls the "principle of difference," holds that "alternative practices, all things being equal, ought to be allowed to flourish and even to be promoted."¹¹⁸ In both cases, May provides ample textual evidence to demonstrate that Deleuze (*inter alia*) is implicitly committed to the values underlying these principles. This claim, which we ourselves have already made, is surely correct. It is very clear from the foregoing that "Gilles Deleuze's commitment to promoting different ways of thinking and acting is a central aspect of his thought."¹¹⁹ What I take issue with is the idea that the avowal of such values, implicit or otherwise, is *a fortiori* an avowal of *specific normative principles*.

As May himself notes, the defining characteristics of traditional normativity are precisely abstraction, universality, and exteriority to life, all of which, as we have seen, Deleuze rejects. Incredibly, May goes on to argue that Deleuze's unwillingness to prescribe universalizable norms is itself motivated by a commitment to the aforesaid principles. Such an argument, however, amounts to claiming that Deleuze is self-referentially inconsistent; it does not lead, as May thinks, to a general acquittal on the charge of moral nihilism. If it is true that Deleuze scorns representation and affirms difference—and we have shown that it is—then surely the operative values cannot be articulated and justified by means of representation or the suppression of difference except on pain of dire contradiction. Of course this is precisely the opposite of what May wishes to argue.

The normative principles that May attributes to Deleuze are problematic not because they are categorical but because they are transcendent—they stand outside any and all particular assemblages and so cannot be self-reflexive. It is easy to see how such principles, however radical they may seem on the surface, can become totalitarian. To take a somewhat far-fetched but relevant example, the principle of antirepresentationalism would effectively outlaw *any* processes of majoritarian representation, even in banal contexts such as homecoming competitions or bowling leagues. Likewise, the principle of difference would permit, or at least does not obviously prohibit, morally suspect “alternative practices” such as thrill-killing or rape. A year after the publication of *Poststructuralist Anarchism*, May later amended his views somewhat, expanding them into a comprehensive moral theory.¹²⁰ The foundation of this theory is a revised version of the antirepresentationalist principle, according to which “people ought not, other things being equal, to engage in practices whose effect, among others, is the representation of certain intentional lives as either intrinsically superior or intrinsically inferior to others.”¹²¹ The principle of difference drops out of the picture altogether.

May buttresses the revised antirepresentationalist principle with what he calls a “multi-value consequentialism.”¹²² After suggesting that “moral values” are “goods to which people ought to have access,”¹²³ he proceeds to argue that the “values” entailed by the antirepresentationalist principle include “rights, just distributions, and other goods.”¹²⁴ May’s theory judges actions as “right” to the extent that (a) they do not violate the antirepresentationalist principle nor (b) result in denying people goods to which they ought to have access. Whatever substantive objections one might raise against this theory would be quite beside the point. The problem, as we have already noted, is that the very idea of a “moral theory of poststructuralism” based on universalizable normative principles is oxymoronic. What distinguishes normativity from conventional modes of practical reasoning is the universalizable or categorical nature of the rational reason in question—that is, the fact that in all relevantly similar circumstances it applies equally to all moral agents at all times. Typically this rational reason has taken the form of a universal moral principle, and to this extent, May’s “principle of antirepresentationalism” is no different from Kant’s categorical imperative or Bentham’s principle of utility. It is precisely this universal and abstract character that makes normativity “transcendent” in the sense outlined earlier, and poststructuralism is nothing if not a systematic repudiation of transcendence.

Some would suggest that normativity is attractive precisely because it provides us with a means by which to guide our actions. It is not at all clear, however, that this requires transcendent *moral* principles, especially if ordinary practical reasoning will suffice. The prefigurative principle, which demands that the means employed be consistent with the desired ends, is a practical principle or hypothetical imperative of the form “if you want

X you ought to do Y." Anarchists have long argued that incongruity between the means and the end is not pragmatically conducive to the achievement of the end. As such, it is not the case that one ought to do Y because it is the "morally right" thing to do, but because it is the most sensible course of action given one's desire to achieve X. A principle of this sort can be regarded as categorical or even universalizable, but it is scarcely "transcendent." Its justification is immanent to its purpose, just as the means are immanent to the desired end. It provides us with a viable categorical norm without any concept of transcendence.

It may be possible to preserve some semblance of normativity in Deleuze. Paul Patton has suggested that the "the overriding norm [for Deleuze] is that of deterritorialization."¹²⁵ In shifting the focus of political philosophy from static, transcendent concepts like "the subject" and "rationality" to dynamic, immanent concepts such as "machinic processes," "processes of subjectivation," and so forth, Deleuze also shifts the focus of normativity from extensive to intensive criteria of normative judgment. As Patton notes, "What a given assemblage is capable of doing or becoming is determined by the lines of flight or deterritorialization it can sustain."¹²⁶ Thus normative criteria will not only demarcate the application of power by a given assemblage but "will also find the means for the critique and modification of those norms."¹²⁷ Put another way, political normativity must be capable not only of judging the activity of assemblages, but also of judging the norms to which said assemblages gives rise. Such normativity is precisely what prevents the latent "microfascism of the avant garde" from blossoming into full-blown totalitarianism.

Transcendent normativity generates norms that do not and cannot take account of their own deterritorialization or lines of flight. Because the norms follow from, and so are justified by, the transcendent ground, they cannot provide self-reflexive criteria by which to question themselves, critique themselves, or otherwise act upon themselves. The concept of normativity as deterritorialization, on the contrary, does not generate norms. Rather, it stipulates that "what 'must' always remain normative is the ability to critique and transform existing norms, that is to create something new . . . [o]ne cannot have preexisting norms or criteria for the new; otherwise it would not be new, but already foreseen."¹²⁸ Absolute deterritorialization is therefore categorical, insofar as it applies to every possible norm as such, but it is not transcendent; rather, it is immanent to whatever norms (and, by extension, assemblages) constitute it. (There can be no deterritorialization without a specific assemblage; thus normativity of deterritorialization both constitutes and is constituted by the particular norms/assemblages to which it applies.)

Considered as such, normativity as deterritorialization is ultimately a kind of "pragmatic" normativity. It determines what norms ought or ought not be adopted in concrete social formations according to a pragmatic

consideration—namely, whether the norm adopted is capable of being critiqued and transformed. This further entails that a norm cannot be adopted if it prevents other norms from being critiqued and transformed. We might say, then, that a norm must (a) be self-reflexive and (b) its adoption must not inhibit the self-reflexivity of norms. Because normativity is a process that constitutes and is constituted by other processes, it is dynamic, and to this extent we should occasionally expect norms to become perverted or otherwise outlive their usefulness. Pragmatic normativity provides a metanorm that is produced by the adoption of contingent norms but stands above them as a kind of sentinel; to this extent it is categorical without being transcendent.

Such a view of normativity, while interesting and promising, is not without its problems. Among other things, it does not specify when it is advisable or acceptable to critique or transform particular norms; rather, it only stipulates that any norm must in principle be open to critique and transformation. For example, suppose I belong to a society that adopts vegetarianism as a norm. The adoption of this norm obviously precludes other norms, such as carnivorousness. Is this a reason to reject it? Not necessarily. As long as we remain open to other possibilities, the norm is at least *prima facie* justified. But this by itself does not explain (a) what reasons we may have to adopt a vegetarian rather than a carnivorous norm in the first place, and (b) what reasons we may have to ultimately reject a vegetarian norm in favor of some other norm. Such an explanation would require a theory of value—that is, an axiological criterion that determines what things are worth promoting/discouraging vis-à-vis the adoption of normative principles.

Whether or not we ought to have done with normativity, we cannot simply ignore the charge of moral nihilism. The problem with May is that he cannot see a way around this charge without normativity or morality—that is, without some reference to laws, norms, imperatives, duties, obligations, permissions, and principles that determine how human beings ought and ought not to act;¹²⁹ that do not just describe the way the world is but rather prescribe the way it ought to be.¹³⁰ As we have already had occasion to mention, however, ethics is not concerned merely with expressing what is *right* (i.e., what ought to be done); it is also concerned with determining what is *good* (i.e., what is worth being valued, promoted, protected, pursued, etc.). The latter is the purview of *axiology*, the study of what is good or valuable for human beings and, by extension, what constitutes a good life.¹³¹

The *ethical* question of “how one should live” (i.e., what constitutes a good life) was of primary importance “involves a particular way of approaching life . . . [i]t views life as having a shape: a life—a human life—is a whole that might be approached by way of asking how it should unfold.”¹³² For the ancients, a life is judged vis-à-vis its relationship to the cosmological order—the “great chain of being”—in which it is situated. At the summit of this order is the Form of the Good (for Plato) or the specifically human *telos* known as

eudaimonia (for Aristotle) “which ought to be mirrored or conformed to by the lives of human beings.”¹³³ The good or the valuable is “above” the realm of human experience because it is, in some sense, *more real*. Consequently, the things of this world not only strive to become *better* but to *be*—that is, to exist in the fullest and most real sense.¹³⁴ In the case of human beings, success in this striving is manifested in *arête*—that is, excellence or virtue. The question how should one live? was gradually replaced by another one—namely, how should one act?¹³⁵ Enlightenment philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and Jeremy Bentham were no longer concerned with what constitutes a good life (the ethical question) but with how one ought or ought not to act (the normative or moral question). In rejecting the idea of a “great chain of being”—that is, a qualitative ontological hierarchy with God (or the Forms) at the top and brute matter at the bottom¹³⁶—modern moral philosophy shifted the focus of moral judgment to individual subjects, as opposed to the relation of human life in general to a larger cosmological whole. Consequently, morality is no longer concerned with the shape lives take; rather, it establishes the moral boundaries or limits of human action. As long as one acts within said boundaries, the direction one’s life as a whole takes is entirely up to him or her; it is, in a word, a “private concern.”¹³⁷

Morality, as opposed to ethics, is not “integrated into our lives”; rather, “it exists out there, apart from the rest of our existence.”¹³⁸ Whether the ultimate foundation of said morality is the divine commandment of God or the dictates of an abstract moral law (e.g., Kant’s categorical imperative or Bentham’s principle of utility), it is no longer situated in our world or woven into the fabric of our experiences. It is exterior, transcendent, *other*. All of this changes in the nineteenth century with Nietzsche whose most radical moves are without question his announcement of the death of God¹³⁹ and his systematic critique of traditional morality.¹⁴⁰ In one fell swoop, Nietzsche not only destroys the idea of “theological existence” but with it “the transcendence in which our morality is grounded.”¹⁴¹ This gives rise to a new question: not how should one live? or how should one act? but rather how might one live? In lieu of any transcendent “outside” to constrain our actions or establish what sorts of lives are worthwhile for us to pursue, we are free to pursue new ambitions and projects, to explore new ways of being—in short, to discover with Spinoza “what a body is capable of.”¹⁴²

As with Nietzsche, the question of how one might live is the cornerstone of both “classical” anarchism and poststructuralist anarchism.¹⁴³ Rather than attempt to refine either so as to make them conform to the commonplaces of post-Kantian moral philosophy, critics should instead recognize and celebrate the radical alternative that they propose. That alternative is precisely a turn to *ethics* of the sort Deleuze associates with Nietzsche and Spinoza. It is the ethical, after all, which underlies the anarchist concept of self-creation, the Deleuzean concept of experimentation, and Foucault’s “care of the self.” The question, of course, is what such an ethics would entail.

Ever since Kant, moral philosophers have tended to regard rationality as the foundation of normativity. As Christine Korsgaard puts it, "Strictly speaking, we do not disapprove the action because it is vicious; instead, it is vicious because we disapprove it. Since morality is grounded in human sentiments, the normative question cannot be whether its dictates are true. Instead, it is whether we have reason to be glad that we have such sentiments, and to allow ourselves to be governed by them."¹⁴⁴ The point here is that an immoral action—one which we *ought not* to perform—is one which we have a *rational reason* not to perform. We already know that ethics is to be distinguished from morality on the basis of its concreteness, particularity, and interiority to life itself. Rather than posing universal codes of conduct grounded in abstract concepts like "rationality," ethics is instead concerned with the myriad ways in which lives can be led. To this extent, the traditional notion that ethics is concerned with *values* rather than *norms* is not entirely unfitting. Clearly values can be and often are universalized and rendered transcendent, as in the case of natural law theory. Even the Greeks, for whom value was a function of particular standards of excellence proper to particular things, believed that such standards were uniform for all human beings.

For the anarchists, however, every human being is the product of a unique and complicated multiplicity of forces, including the inward-directed forces of self-creation. Thus their highest value, as we have seen, is life—the capacity of the social individual (and the society of freely associated individuals) to be *different*, to change, move, transform, and create. To value something, to treat it as good, is to treat it as something "we ought to welcome, [to] rejoice in if it exists, [to] seek to produce if does not exist . . . to approve its attainment, count its loss a deprivation, hope for and not dread its coming if this is likely, [and] avoid what hinders its production."¹⁴⁵ There is no doubt that the anarchists value life in this way. On the other hand, I am not sure whether they would regard it as "intrinsically valuable," if by this is meant that the value of life obtains independently of its relations to other things, or that life is somehow worthy of being valued on its own account. For the anarchists, it makes no sense to speak of life in this way, since by its very nature life is relational and dynamic. There is no doubt, however, that anarchists believe that life *worthy* of being protected, pursued, and promoted. As for the question of *why* this is so, Bakunin's response is that "only an academician would be so dull as to ask it."¹⁴⁶ At the risk of being dull, and in the interest of being brief, I shall leave it to one side for now.

Conclusion

Near the end of his life, Foucault sought to address the following problem: given that power is pervasive, and given that power shapes, molds, and

constitutes both knowledge and subjects, how is it possible to resist power? More importantly, when and why is it appropriate to resist power?¹⁴⁷ Though recast in Foucauldian parlance, this is the traditional problematic of classical anarchism and, indeed, of all radical philosophy. (That Foucault raises this question, that he calls it an *ethical* question, is perhaps evidence enough that he was neither a nihilist nor a quietist, but rather a new and very different sort of radical.) For Foucault, as we have seen, power is pervasive; it is neither concentrated in a single juridical entity (such as the state) nor exerted upon subjects from somewhere outside themselves:

If it is true that the juridical system was useful for representing, albeit in a nonexhaustive way, a power that was centered primarily around deduction and death, it is utterly incongruous with the new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed at all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus.¹⁴⁸

Thus resistance necessarily emerges *within* power relations and is primary to them. To resist power as though it were somehow *elsewhere* or *outside* is merely to react against power. And as radicals of all stripes have witnessed time and again, such reactive resistance is either quickly defeated by extant power structures or else ends up replicating these power structures at the micropolitical level. In the place of reactive resistance, Foucault recommends an active form of resistance in which power is directed against itself rather than against another form of power (such as the state). To actively resist is to enter into a relation with oneself, to reconstitute oneself, to create oneself anew. Through this process, extant power relations are challenged and new forms of knowledge emerge. Bakunin and Kropotkin could not possibly have put the point better.

For Foucault, the relation of the self to itself forms the basis of ethics or “modes of subjectivation.” In “Technologies of the Self,”¹⁴⁹ he formulates a history of the various ways that human beings “develop knowledge about themselves” vis-à-vis a host of “specific techniques.” These techniques, which Foucault calls *technologies of the self*, “. . . permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.”¹⁵⁰ Technologies of the self are to be distinguished as such from three other types of technology (or “matri[ces] of practical reason”): (1) technologies of production (labor power), by which we “produce, transform, or manipulate” objects in the world; (2) technologies of signs systems, which includes human languages specifically as well as the use of “signs, meanings, symbols, or signification” more generally; and

(3) technologies of power, by which human behavior is directed, coordinated, compelled, engineered, and so forth, in “an objectivizing of the subject.”¹⁵¹

In Greco-Roman civilization, Foucault claims, there were initially two major ethical principles—“know yourself” (the Delphic or Socratic principle) and “take care of yourself.” To illustrate the idea of care for the self, Foucault examines the “first” Platonic dialogue, *Alcibiades I*, and extracts from it four conflicts, namely, (1) between political activity and self-care, (2) between pedagogy and self-care, (3) between self-knowledge and self-care, and (4) between philosophical love and self-care. The principle of self-knowledge/examination emerges as victor in the third conflict and gives way both to the Stoicism of the Hellenistic/imperial periods as well as Christian penitential practices in the early Middle Ages. For the Stoics, the importance of self-knowledge is manifested in the practices of quotidian examinations of conscience; the writing of epistles, treatises, and journals; meditations on the future; and the interpretation of dreams. Foucault summarizes:

In the philosophical tradition dominated by Stoicism, *askesis* means not renunciation but the progressive consideration of self, or mastery over oneself, obtained not through the renunciation of reality but through the acquisition and assimilation of truth. It has as its final aim not preparation for another reality but access to the reality of this world. The Greek word for this is *paraskeuazō* (to get prepared). It is a set of practices by which one can acquire, assimilate, and transform truth into a permanent principle of action. *Alethia* becomes *ethos*. It is a process of becoming more subjective.¹⁵²

For the early Christians, in contrast, self-examination involves not self-mastery but rather self-denial: the repudiation of the flesh, the renunciation of mundum, the purification of the soul as a way of preparing for death. This emphasis on self-denial, in turn, gives rise to the absolute obedience of monasticism as well as the entire *dispositif* of the confessional (both in early, public forms [*exomologesis*] and later, private forms [*exagouresis*]). Whereas the Stoic seeks to know himself in order to become a vehicle for the “acquisition and assimilation [read: mastery] of truth,” the Christian seeks to know himself in order to become a vehicle for transcendence. Self-knowledge and disclosure involve a renunciation of the body—the locus of sin and fallen-ness—and a purification of the soul.

In the modern era, the principal technology of self is *self-expression*—that is, the process of expressing those thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and desires that are constitutive of one’s “true self.” On my reading, the “true self” here is neither an immortal soul nor a transcendental subject but rather that aspect of one’s subjectivity which one has affected oneself. Modern consciousness takes for granted that there is an inner life that we are constantly forced to suppress in our myriad roles within the capitalist machine. Underneath one’s

roles as student, son, tax-paying American, and so forth,—all of which are constructed from without by power relations—there is a self that one does not discover but rather *fashions*. The potential for such self-construction is not necessarily radical in and of itself, since self-construction can and often does merely replicate extant power relations that lie “outside” or “on top of” the self. But it is precisely through self-construction that radical political resistance becomes possible.

It is clear that for Foucault, as for the anarchists, power is or ought to be directed toward the creation of *possibilities*—the possibility of new forms of knowledge, new ways of experiencing the world, new ways for individuals to relate to themselves and others—whereas under our present circumstances power is directed toward crystallizing and maintaining institutions of repression, circumscribing knowledge, severely delimiting modes of subjectivity, and representing individuals to themselves through various mechanisms of totalization (e.g., religion, patriotism, psychology, etc.). I do not think it is outlandish to claim that the later Foucault, the *ethical* Foucault, cherished life in the same way the anarchists did. Life, after all, is not only a condition of possibility for the “care of the self” but also is the “care of the self.”

Much of what we have said here about Foucault applies to Deleuze, whose valorization of “difference” and scorn of “representation” surely hint at, if they do not reveal, a similarly vitalistic theory of value. Time and again Deleuze, like Nietzsche, like the anarchists, emphasizes the importance of *Lebensliebe*—the love and affirmation of life. Likewise it is clear that *Lebensliebe* is both a condition and a consequence of creativity, experimentation, the pursuit of the new and the different. To the extent that representation and its social incarnations are opposed to life, they are condemnable, marked by “indignity.” This strongly suggests that for Deleuze, life is loveable, valuable, and good; that it is worthy of being protected and promoted; that whatever is contrary to it is worthy of disapprobation and opposition. At the same time, however, we must recall that the life of which the anarchists speak is something virtual, and there is no guarantee that its actualizations will be affirmative and active. Of course, this is simply one more reason why Deleuze, like Foucault, like the anarchists, emphasizes experimentation, on the one hand, and eternal vigilance, on the other. “We do not know of what a body is capable.” Our experiments may lead to positive transformations, they may lead to madness, they may lead to death. What starts out as a reckless and beautiful affirmation of life can become a death camp. It is not enough, therefore, to experiment and create; one must be mindful of, and responsible for, one’s creations. The process requires an eternal revolution against domination wherever and however it arises—eternal because *atelos*, and *atelos* because domination cannot be killed. It can only be contained or, better, outrun. Whatever goodness is created along the way will always be provisional, tentative, and contingent, but this is

hardly a reason not to create it. Anarchism is nothing if not the demand that we keep living.

Political postmodernity, then, is coextensive with anarchy, an eternal revolution against representation which itself an eternal process of creation and transformation, an eternal practice of freedom. Anarchy is both the goal of political postmodernity as well as the infinite network of possibilities we travel in its pursuit. In other words, political postmodernity just is the blurring or overlapping or interstiction of means and ends, the multiple sites at which our desires become immanent to their concrete actualization, the multiple spaces within which the concrete realizations of our desire become immanent to those desires. Such sites and spaces are constantly shifting into and out of focus, moving into and out of existence like rooms in a funhouse. In producing them we occupy them; in occupying them we produce them. The freedom we seek as an end is created by our seeking. It is a process of eternal movement, change, becoming, possibility, and novelty which simultaneously demands eternal vigilance, eternal endurance, an eternal commitment to keep going whatever the dangers or costs. To stop, even for a moment, is to court domination and representation—in short, death. The forces of death, no less than the forces of life, of *revolution*, are always and already with us awaiting actualization. There is neither certainty nor respite at any point. There are no stable identities, no transcendent truths, no representations or images. There are only the variable and reciprocal and immanent processes of creation and possibility themselves.

Like Bakunin, all anarchists are “true seekers.” They seek nothing in particular save greater and more expansive frontiers to explore. Such frontiers, moreover, promise nothing save the possibility of further exploration. Freedom is the practice of opening up new spaces for the practice of freedom: *Leben Möglichkeiten*—“life-possibilities.” We might say, then, that political postmodernity, that *anarchy*, is nothing more than a *Leben-Schaffung-Möglichkeit*—a “life-creation process.” However, if all life is an indeterminate flow, we can never know in advance what forms lives can or will take. “There is a bit of death in everything,” wrote Rilke. Thus to be revolutionary is to be on guard against death, to prepare oneself not to flee death, nor even to fight it, but simply to change the subject, to do and think otherwise, to seek what is new and vital—all in the hope that some life can and will come from that death, that there is a “bit of life” in everything, too.

There is a book—as yet unwritten, perhaps as sequel to the present work—that will demonstrate that all of this is already happening, that it has been happening for a long time, that it will continue to happen. Forty years ago, when France erupted in revolution, a small window of anarchy, of postmodernity, opened up and quickly closed. Within the space of that window, paradoxical slogans such as “soyez réalistes, demandez l'impossible!” (“be realistic, demand the impossible!”) became logical and

real. For what were the Enragés doing if not making possible what was represented to them as impossible? Nearly ten years ago, when Seattle was shrouded in tear gas and tens of thousands of laborers, students, environmentalists, peace activists, and anarchists successfully shut down the World Trade Organization ministerial, I watched another window open up. Just as before, it was quickly closed. Still, there was a space within that brief aperture within which the cry of the Zapatistas—“otro mundo es posible!” (“another world is possible!”)—took on the appearance of an axiom, of a self-evident and unquestionable truth. For what were we doing in Seattle if not showing an alternative to a world that has been represented to us as lacking alternatives? There are many other examples, but each would belie a common theme: that the unjust, inequitable, and violent limitations that are placed upon the many for the benefit of the few—the forces that separate us from our active power, from what we can do—are not unshakeable, immutable realities but representations. When people begin to think and act otherwise, these representations begin to crack and splinter; when and if people ever grow tired of death, when and if they refuse death and come together as a massive tidal wave of *life*, these representations will be obliterated. Everything we have been told is real and unchangeable will be revealed as lies, and in refusing them we will make them change. Into what? No one knows, but that is not important. What is important is the change itself.

In this work I have attempted to show that politics is about power and that political philosophy is a negotiation between power and images of power, between actual power relations and their capacity to become otherwise. So, too, I have attempted to demonstrate that political modernity, in both its liberal and socialist forms, is predicated precisely on the theoretical denial and practical suppression of possibilities. What it offers instead is a series of representations—of who we are as individuals and groups, of what we should and should not want, of what we can and cannot do or think or become. Lastly, I have attempted to argue that the anarchists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the first to launch a systematic attack on political modernity—not only by challenging its system of representational thoughts, practices, and institutions, but by offering alternative ways of thinking and acting. In this they were followed by Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, and countless others, all of whom, in his or her own way, have contributed to an ongoing struggle to move beyond modernity into postmodernity and anarchy, into processes of thinking, acting, and being otherwise. Much, much more needs to be said and written and *done* on this subject, but for the time being, I hope I have given us some sense of where we have been, where we are now, and where—with sufficient resolve and creativity and above all, *Lebensliebe*—we might go.