In the Shadow of Akimbo Corporatism: Arched Athleticism and the Becoming-Human of 'a People'

Johnny Golding CFAR-Birmingham School of Art, BCU

Sudarshan Pattnaik, artist (4 September 2015). *Humanity Washed Ashore: Shame Shame Shame . . .* [1]

Abstract

The importance of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's development of 'encounter' is brought into sharp relief as key to the notion of 'athleticism'. Here, each is developed as indispensable to the other, forming an a-radical/ana-material groundless ground to power, politics, literary sensibility, indeed sense itself. This nuanced encounter produces an acephaletic knowledge, a body-knowledge, without the Ego-I. In an

Deleuze Studies 10.2 (2016): 261–277
DOI: 10.3366/dls.2016.0224

www.euppublishing.com/journal/dls

age of massifying systems, drone warfare and horrific migrations, where corporate tentacles bend the rules akimbo, one finds that this turn to a Deleuzian athleticism offers a different kind of political analysis, a radical difference, which, despite (or because of) the odds, enables a politics of hope and indeed, of a 'becoming-human'.

Keywords: becoming-human, encounter, a-radical, ana-materialism, groundless ground, leaders and led, hope

> We are in danger, we are not enemies of yours, and in rejecting us you will not only be failing to stop those who are your enemies and aggressors, but also acquiescing in their building up of power from your own empire. This is not right.
> (Thucydides [431–11 BC] 2009, Book One, §35, p. 19)

In the everyday politics of mass murder, mass repression, mass sexual assault and mass starvation, these violently dystopic hells unite in their mass cruelty to create one thing rather effectively: they produce a blanket nomadism, a de-territorialisation so profound as to force the nation-state, its armies, legislators and its people (that is to say, 'the people') into a wild, albeit ineffective, nonsense game of three halves. On the one hand: an Us vs Them clarion call; on the other hand: a 'not-in-my-backyard' ethnic cleanse; and on the third hand: a collective outpouring of despair, fear, exhaustion, anger, nausea – label it as one may – all in the name of this dying ember called 'humanity'. Dotted amongst the three halves exist the unnamed medics, journalists, artists, philosophers, scientists, technicians, economists, housewives, poets, punks, little girls, little boys, ballerinas, the diseased, the middle class, the poor, the once well-healed, the queer – all now walking, swimming, drowning, crying, reaching out, getting shot, moving on, being moved on. Handing out blankets. Not giving up. Throwing in the towel. Prostrated, dead on a beach.

Recorded warfare savagery and its consequences dating from at least the twelfth century BC onward suggests the age-old question: was it not ever thus? The short, easy, answer seems a resounding 'yes'. The longer, more accurate one, around which this essay cautiously unfolds, is 'no, not exactly'.

Three considerations will enter the fray. First, a remark on the most fundamental law of politics (that there are always leaders vs led), and more precisely, how Deleuze's and Deleuze and Guattari's approach to that fundamental division enables a concept of difference

that not only foregrounds sensuous, human agency but does so by radically raising the bar (/); indeed, by removing it altogether. Theirs is a rethinking of the encounter itself, not to mention this pock-marked conceptual entity called 'humanity', as something much closer to bodies without organs, planes of immanence, one might even say: quantum entanglements, intensities and nomadically coded transformations quite unlike the violent nomadism of a displaced and hunted people. Second consideration: a remark on political activism, and more precisely, activism in an age of akimbo corporatism, with its awkward and bendy proliferations, sideways promises and slyly sanctioned warfare strategies, including drone strikes, data mining, austerity and terror. In so remarking, Deleuze's concept of athleticism as a fluid, raw, embodied logic (or logics) of sense, a multiple singularity, will be drawn to the fore. As a living concept in the strongest, most corruptible and terminal meaning of the word 'body', this athleticism will open a tactical-strategic path that not only enables the becoming-human of a people not yet invented but, in so doing, offers a powerful antidote to the ever aggressive, homogenising triumphs of what can best be described as populist Will – be it corporate, military, religious or secular.

Against this behemoth of unrelenting massification with its seemingly paradoxical handmaiden, violent inequality, Deleuze proposes an athleticism nourished out of a certain kind of sensuous, sexual fabulation; a 'minor' kind of literary (read: political) creation, a kind of non-ego embodiment, one without completion or totalising mastery but nevertheless able to invent, in this case, 'a people'. It is an athleticism not too far removed from the very meaning of revolutionary activity itself, famously developed by a young Marx over 170 years ago in an attempt to redress the woeful inadequacies of the, at the time, quite fashionable turn to a neo-Hegelian contemplative speculative materialism, most evident in the philosophical works by Ludwig Feuerbach on religion and Christianity (Marx [1845/1888] 2010). As with so many before Feuerbach, and as with so many more thereafter, 'sensuousness' was to be linked to materiality via its interchangeable equivalence with the very meaning of 'humanity' itself. This was a deeply scrubbed, spiritually absolute, a conceptually 'pure' humanity, whose without-sin sensuality could only be re-cognised in contemplation. On the offensive, a rather droll Marx insists instead that this kind of neo-Hegelian materiality 'forgets the dirty-Jewish [*sic*]' practical activities of real, indeed, and more precisely, revolutionary change. Marx's use of sensuous in opposition to 'contemplative' is precisely the 'dirt', the 'grit'

and 'art' required for the overthrow of oppressive regimes, be they state, family, religious or a combination of all three:

> Thesis 1. In *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, [Feuerbach] therefore regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and defined only in its 'dirty-Jewish' form of appearance. Hence he does not grasp the significance of 'revolutionary' (that is) of 'practical-critical', activity. [...] Thesis 5. Feuerbach, not satisfied with *abstract thinking*, appeals to *sensuous contemplation*; but he does not conceive sensuousness as practical, as human-sensuous activity. [...] Thesis 9. The highest point of *contemplative* materialism, that is materialism, which does not contemplate sensuousness as practical activity (but instead) is the contemplation of single individuals in 'civil' society. (Marx [1845/1888] 2010: 7–8)

For Marx, this practical activity, this unquantifiable, non-metric, demystified activity, this ability 'not to forget' that circumstances are not made by luck, miracles or some omnipotent force, but emerge, are maintained, re-staged and possibly overthrown via embodied, 'down-to-earth' dreams, collective or otherwise, of what a people can become. One could say, it is a kind of raw poetics that enables an 'unsayable something' to enter into the picture, enables a people to invent anew, the 'whatever', including humanity itself; to add life into what this humanity may be or may become; to think outside the proverbial 'box' without lapsing into a pre-set agenda, zero-sum rationality or mystic reverie. In his 'Literature and Life', Deleuze simply puts it like this: '(It is) the task of the fabulating function – to invent a people.... a bastard people... always becoming, always incomplete' (Deleuze 1997: 228).

That task requires a certain kind of movement, a certain kind of fire, and a certain kind of courage, what Foucault names *parrhēsia* (truth telling) (Foucault [2008] 2011) – the activity of 'telling it like it is' in such a way as to include oneself in the process, the dissemination and the consequences of that exchange. For Deleuze, this activity, this movement, is his 'athleticism' though one that is 'embodied', perhaps not unsurprisingly, by the move away from any form of collective will or individual ego-I (Deleuze [1993] 2006: 123–4, 1997). It is, as Deleuze suggests, an athleticism that is at once both utterly alive and completely impersonal; one might say, along with Deleuze and Guattari, a minor form of, in this case, the political and the ethical, alongside a minor form of literature and art in the most engaging terms imaginable (Deleuze and Guattari [1975] 1986). It poses a family resemblance to the Leibnizian 'compossible' updated to become nothing less than

an essential requirement for the building of liberty and freedom of expression; indeed, an essential requirement to the very folds of life itself (Deleuze [1993] 2006: 97–138).[2] Political with a small 'p', this athleticism is, to misquote Clausewitz, 'a minor form of warfare by other means'.[3]

I. 1926 ⇌1515 ⇌1968 ⇌2004 ⇌1957 (Remark on the First Law of Politics)

Whilst imprisoned under Mussolini's fascist regime, Antonio Gramsci famously secreted to the outside world thousands of paper fragments upon which were written extensive analyses of the role played by culture, religion, theatre, political philosophy, the state and the economy, detailing the rise and rise of fascism within Europe (Gramsci [1937] 1975).[4] Drawing from Machiavelli's *The Prince*, a work dedicated to the Medici family who had recently come to power and as such were considered by Machiavelli not yet 'in the know', an incarcerated Gramsci addressed his remarks to the modern version of a prince, that is, to a disparate 'not in the know' rising group – those who included 'organic' intellectuals, a new political class of activists, curios, artists and odd-bods unfamiliar with the minutiae of power, strategy, tactics and transformation – but nevertheless were in a position to make an impact, effect massive change and indeed, and despite all odds, lead. And what was it that both newly emergent groups, four hundred years apart, needed to know? For Gramsci, as for Machiavelli, it was the first law of politics; that is, that there are always leaders and led, and, armed with that knowledge, one must learn to act accordingly. The key to this mantra lay in the multiple understandings of how the, seemingly eternal, binaric divide of leaders and led came to be considered always already so divided, and, given the 'always already' in that division, what was to be meant by the clause 'one must learn to act accordingly'.

In order to understand how Deleuze and, as a team, Deleuze and Guattari, answered those questions and, in so doing, tore up the rule book almost in its entirety, we must turn to a brief history of the deep cut in modern political philosophy. For despite the often radically distinct epistemological and practical assumptions emanating from political-philosophical debate of the nineteenth, twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, questions around the cohesion of the social whole (read: society, nation-state, class, community or some combination thereof) foregrounding the importance of human agency, did so whilst simultaneously relying on a system or method that required a 'deep cut';

that is, some kind of 'horizon' or 'limit', 'lack' or 'abyss' that could delineate an 'X' from its Other. Those deep cut divisions took on various forms, be it 'thesis vs anti-thesis', 'subject vs object', 'phallus vs lack' or 'logic vs sense' and so on, around which their synthetic unity suggested the totality of the field.[5]

One could say, without overstating the case too much, that the primary analytic tool, dialectics – whether speculative, transcendentalist, realist, materialist or negative (or that which has yet to be invented) – ruled supreme during this time. It ruled supreme in part because dialectical analysis did something that earlier transcendental metaphysics could not quite do: it enabled one to stake a universal truth-claim as both objectively the case, whilst simultaneously incorporating as its core ontological assumption, the ever important Enlightenment concept of change, movement – and in particular a change or a movement, spearheaded through human intelligence, reason and sensuous activity. In so doing, dialectics (especially the dialectics of historical materialism) offered up a way to 'ground' thought, without losing the practico-ethical agency of human intervention in all its collective and individual incarnations.[6]

The difficulty remained that this 'ground' could only be established logically via dialectically synthesised contradiction, one which required as given that all 'A' and its point-for-point flipside 'not-A' could not (logically) exceed the field of its generative ratio, could not, as it were, transform the everyday 'real' into something Other except through negation or by leaving a remainder or producing an excess (or lack) or maintaining some form of a frontier-horizon.[7] Amongst various interpretations, this meant that although it was important that change be incorporated within or as part of the logic and, in so doing, be grounded in the actuality of its movement, for Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, this was just old wine in new bottles. 'The binary logic of dichotomy', Deleuze and Guattari protest, 'has simply been replaced by biunivocal relationships between successive circles. Binary logic and biunivocal logic still dominate psychoanalysis [...], linguistics, structuralism and even information science' (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 2005: 5).

AQ1

At best this deep cut of dialectical contradiction presented a rather stunted, overthought picture of *realpolitik*, from the molecular to the molar, where difference was thought within the concept, but as yet, had not been able to conceptualise difference itself. At worst, it created a sanitised rationality, a flat-footed zero-sum decision-making pattern incapable of going beyond a 'propositional mode'. To put this slightly differently, the deep cut binarisms simply could not account

for the (uncommon) sensuous, the (impossible to define) strange, the becoming-x of those not in the know. 'These were not exactly new problems,' sighs Deleuze in the second edition of *Difference and Repetition*, 'since the history of philosophy, and especially contemporary philosophy, dealt with them constantly' (Deleuze [1968] 2001: xv). Continuing, he writes:

> But perhaps the majority of philosophers had subordinated difference to identity or to the Same, to the Similar to the Opposed or to the Analogous: they had introduced difference into the identity of the concept, they had put difference in the concept itself, thereby reaching a conceptual difference, but not a concept of difference. [...] This is the classic image of thought, and as long as the critique has not been carried to the heart of that image it is difficult to conceive of thought as encompassing those problems which point beyond the propositional mode. (Deleuze [1968] 2001: xv)

Dismissing this analytic re-cognitive frame as 'arboreal philosophy', whereby method requires a 'ground' in the same way as a tree requires earth to make its identity stand firm, Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari shift away from the ground itself, rethinking it via a non-arboreal multiplicity or, as they put it, a 'vegetal' logic of sense, a surface logic, a sporing 'rhizomatic' logic with no roots to plumb the ground (as such); indeed, no ground at all (Deleuze [1968] 2004: xv; Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 2005: 1–26).[8] Instead they posit a 'sporing' logic energised and made real not by an annihilating deep cut of dialectical contradiction, frontiersmanship horizons or a logos of the limit or lack, but by the much more attractive stickiness of an 'encounter', in the fullest and mutually lustful, carnal, smelly sense of the term.

II. Breaking Bad: Importance of Belonging, Longing to Be (Alone)

Quietly borrowing (or perhaps not so quietly borrowing) from Heidegger's development of ontological difference, Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's 'encounter' relies on the famous approach by Heidegger to rethink identity away from the Hegelian requirements of negation, unity and synthesis (Heidegger [1936–8] 2012, [1957] 1969).[9] In line with Parmenides' move to emphasise the logic of *τὸ αὐτό* (the same) as a *belonging* (where A = A translates to A *belongs* to A), this logic does more than simply denote what could appear as a meaningless tautology; it implies a vitalised assemblage, that is, an attraction/cohesion or

enabling of the 'that which must be thought together' (Heidegger [1957] 1969: 23–8).[10]

And what is it for Heidegger 'that must be thought together'? It is nothing less and nothing more than the very condition of humanity itself, now understood at its profoundly naked level as the 'belonging together of man [*sic*] and Being' (Heidegger [1957] 1969: 30–2). This 'belonging together' is not a coordination of two halves; neither is it a representational turn of events. It has nothing to do with unified wholes, limits or horizons. It is, instead and precisely, a response, a 'listening' response, which, at the moment of that attunement enables, as Heidegger argues, an event of appropriation to take place, to make a space take shape, to establish anew 'the framework' and, in a word, 'dwell'.[11] Worth quoting at length, Heidegger puts it like this:

> How would it be if, instead of tenaciously representing merely a coordination of the two in order to produce their unity, we were for once to note whether and how a belonging to one another first of all is at stake in this 'together'? [. . .]
>
> Man obviously is a being. [. . .] Man *is* essentially this relationship of responding to Being, and he is only this . . . A belonging to Being prevails within man, a belonging which listens to Being because it is appropriated to Being. And Being? Let us think of Being according to its original meaning, as presence. Being is present to man neither incidentally nor only on rare occasions . . . For it is man, open toward Being, who alone lets Being arrive as presence. [. . .]
>
> Man and Being are appropriated to each other. They belong to each other. [. . .] We stubbornly misunderstand this prevailing *belonging* together of man and Being as long as we represent everything only in categories and mediations, be it with or without dialectic. Then we always find only connections that are established either in terms of Being or in terms of man, and that present the belonging together of man and Being as intertwining.
>
> We do not as yet enter the domain of the *belonging* together. How can such an entry come about? By our moving away from the attitude of representational thinking. This move is a leap in the sense of a spring. The spring leaps away, away from the habitual idea of man as the rational animal who in modern times has become a subject for his objects. Simultaneously, the spring also leaps away from Being. (Heidegger [1957] 1969: 31–2)

Certainly if one is to stay the course using Heideggerian logic, one must eventually accept, as did Heidegger, an onto-theo-logical basis to the (groundless) ground of meaning, a conclusion that Deleuze is not willing to accept. So Deleuze takes his own conceptual leap, his own spring away from the Heideggerian 'rational man' $\rightleftharpoons$ 'Being' event of

appropriation, without, in so leaping, minimising the importance of 'the event' as reciprocal encounter that emphasises a belonging together which can never represent as fully formed either entities or Being; that is, as 'components' in and of themselves or, for that matter, made to be fully formed via a (false) sense of posing their identity (belonging together) as 'unity'. Resonating closer, it would seem, with Bataille's *acephale* anti-mastery of the real (Bataille 1997), Deleuze instead shifts the logic into its minor key; that is, into a logic of sense rather than an onto-theo-logic of 'rational man:Being' (Deleuze [1969] 1990: 148–53).

This logic of sense is, at a fundamental level not really a logic at all, if by logic one means a privileging of the analytic-rational, with or without its reciprocated belonging to Being. It is closer to an 'a-logic' as Deleuze calls it or 'ana-logic'; that is, a re-staging of an embodied notion of 'rationality as a thinking that dwells' to a notion of sense as a (not-quite-corporeal) raw sensibility that through encounter produces a thinking that moves, is alive, uncontained, nomadic. To put this slightly differently, it is a form of encounter activated precisely and only through patterns, repetitions, series and flights which, via those patterns, repetitions, series and flights, encounters the whatever, and, in so 'encountering' as Deleuze puts it, 'forces us to think' without recourse to the Concept (Deleuze [1968] 2004: 139–40). Representational unities, conceptual recognitions are flung from this enframing. 'It is difficult to respond to those who wish to be satisfied with words, things, ideas, images and ideas,' a weary Deleuze writes in his 'Third Series of the Propositions' (Deleuze [1969] 1990: 19), continuing by adding:

> For we may not even say that sense exists in either things or in the mind: it has neither physical nor mental existence. [...] This is why we said that *in fact* we can only infer it indirectly, on the basis of the circle where the ordinary dimensions of the proposition lead us. It is only by breaking open the circle, as in the case of the Möbius strip, by unfolding and twisting it that the dimension of sense appears for itself, in its irreducibility ... (Deleuze [1969] 1990: 20)

With the move to an emphasis on sense, Deleuze instead privileges – in an ana-logical rather than hierarchal move – the 'being of the sensible' (*aisthēteon*) as, in this instance, 'the given of the given' with any encounter that moves one to think (Deleuze [1968] 2004: 176). In this way, recognition (in the fullest sense of the term to re-cognise [invent anew] and recognise [find a rational familiarity]) is not counterpoised to sense, sensibility or sensuous being; nor is it considered dominant over, or subsumable to, a logic of sense (Deleuze [1988] 2006: 47–94, [1968]

2004: 194–208). In the most non-mastery terms available, it means instead that 'encounter' when it 'works' – when, that is to say, it makes one 'think', become 'in-formed', invent meanings that 'stick' – can only be grasped, imbibed, heard via the being (in/compossible singularities) of the sensible.[12] To try to grasp an encounter 'rationally', to try to 'recognise' this encounter 'as such' would only distort, sterilise or destroy the very moment of its reciprocality/event of appropriation (Golding 2000). It would invite, as Deleuze so carefully argues in *Difference and Repetition* and, later, with Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, too strong a 'bearing down' on the encounter; it would make it stale, make it into an object, territorialise its meaning (Deleuze [1968] 2004; Deleuze and Guattari [1972] 2000: 184–9). Over to Deleuze:

> Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can be sensed. In this sense it is opposed to recognition. In recognition, the sensible is not at all that which can only be sensed, but that which bears directly upon the senses in an object, which can be recalled, imagined or conceived … The object of encounter, on the other hand, really gives rise to the sensible with regard to a given sense. It is not an *aisthēton* [an external object of perception] but *aisthēteon* [being of the sensible] … It is not a sensible being but the being of the sensible. It is not the given but that by which the given is given. It is therefore in a certain sense the imperceptible [*insensible*]. It is imperceptible precisely from the point of view of recognition – in other words from the point of view of an empirical exercise of the sense in which sensibility grasps only that which also could be grasped by other faculties. Sensibility, in the presence of that which can only be sensed (and is at the same time imperceptible) finds itself before its own limit, the sign, and raises itself to the level of a transcendental exercise: to the 'nth' power. […]
>
> [T]hat which can only be sensed (the *sentiendum* or the being of the sensible) moves the soul, 'perplexes' it – in other words, forces it to pose a problem. (Deleuze [1968] 2004: 176; original emphasis)[13]

In shifting to 'the given of the given' as the being of the sensible, Deleuzian encounter replaces the Heideggerian call of Being (and 'man's' almost siren-like response to that call) with something more active, inventive, non-essentialist, down to earth, sweaty and raw. It is, in a word, athleticism: the animated sensual sense of a logic, both alive and impersonal, that makes an encounter 'work' (Deleuze and Guattari [1972] 2000: 140). One could say that this athleticism, as an active,

constituting of an ana-logic of sense, expresses (and is expressed by) an always-already historically contingent, multiple singularity; that is, an ever-present encountering 'is' (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 2005: 1–74). As such, it facilitates a radical *displacement* of ground (as instead, the profoundly superficial and immanently nomadic surface), whilst simultaneously enabling a radical *replacement* of ground, as the being-with of encounter (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 2005; Nancy 2008).[14] In this manner, too, one could also say that this athleticism foregrounds a kind of *habeas corpus* without organs and, as it so happens, without the baggage of two thousand years of Western metaphysics. One could also say that this move enables a re-think of the very condition(s) – the reciprocating condition(s) – that make a human and a humanity 'be' ⇌ 'belong' without re-instating an ontic in whatever form of heterotopic groundless ground or binaric horizon or split. This reciprocating oddly embodied, fractally sliced, impersonal minor move, this athleticism borne out of a logic of sense, is precisely a move that enables the conditions upon which 'a people' can become (and do become) human.

One might suggest without sounding overly optimistic or falling into the dreaded 'humanist' trap, that this ana-lytic, this minor logic of sense offers a small but undeniably upbeat (blood) poetic to this Being/being called human, warts and all. It is a focus that enables a profound rethinking of the first law of politics – the always-already leaders/led deep cut conundrum – without, in so doing, losing sight of what is at stake: curiosity, imagination, hunger, risk, hurt, friendship, wonderment, love; that is, the very 'being of the sensible' in all its differently embodied singularities and fractal entanglements, without organs and without the ego-I. A sticky radically and eternally present contingency this athleticism, which comes to the fore, erupts and, in that becoming-eruption, in that fabulation, takes flight.

III. Coding the Political: 2015

One could be forgiven for thinking that even after all the conceptual gymnastics thus far delineated, we still seem to find ourselves in an apparently endless return of leaders vs led, Us vs Them or some other deadly variety on the binary. With wounds so deep and brutal, it is but a wonder the world has not amputated itself into a hundred thousand different plateaus, each one a more puerile twist on the other, the ultimate stomach-wrenching depravity towards which this sorry state

of affairs seems hell-bent on racing to the bottom to win. The picture is not pretty and it does not inspire confidence.

So the question must be put: even if Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari are right; even if the age of which we are a part has so radically transformed as to make the logic of its presence no longer resembling (if ever it did) a closed field or even a quasi-transcendentalist one; even if it is better understood through a 'vegetal' philosophy; even after one catches a glimpse of the importance of oddly embodied sense as an athleticism to the essential condition of being human; even after all that and more, the toxic question must be asked again and again: how does a people, any people, survive (and do more than just simply survive) the ever proliferating holocausts, gangland skirmishes, global hedge fund mismanagements, the military–industrial nuclear destruction agendas, refugee camps, homophobia, racism, radical fundamentalist religious groups, ecological brutalities, honour killings, the National Rifle Association, war-rape, not to mention everyday sexism and the common or garden variety of hatreds and assaults that happen for no particular reason whatsoever?

One last piece to the puzzle must therefore be addressed. It concerns the vicissitudes of coding and its relation to 'athleticism'.

Turning to Deleuze and Guattari's 'Savages, Barbarians, Civilised Men', they set out the following claims. First, the contemporary world, they observe, is not, as is usually assumed, constituted by economies of value – at least not in the first instance (Deleuze and Guattari [1972] 2000: 139–44). Instead, they suggest that the socio-ethico-political present is constituted by codes, be they nomadic, algorithmic, drifting or set.[15] Second, these codes are not to be understood as 'secrets'; they are, rather, the raw sewage of political inscription and as such, they trump the modernist (and earlier) arguments around state, society and culture as being foremost an expression of circulation and exchange (140). Deleuze and Guattari put it thus:

> Flows of women and children, flows of herds and of seed, sperm flows, flows of shit, menstrual flows: nothing escapes coding. [. . .] We see no reason in fact for accepting the postulate that underlies exchangist [*sic*] notions of society; society is not first of all a milieu for exchange where the essential would be to circulate or to cause to circulate, but rather a socius of inscription where the essential thing is to mark and to be marked. There is circulation only if inscription requires or permits it. (Deleuze and Guattari [1972] 2000: 142)

To put this differently, by rethinking the present as an expression of coding, the emphasis moves away from an arithmetic zero-sum, either/or, totalising field, to an ana-logical approach around the 'how'

of *flow*, now re-constituted as mobile, nomadic (one could even add 'cloud' as well as 'locative media' to this list). It includes also the 'what' of *flow*: segmentarities, intensities, nodal points, planes of immanence, encounters, algorithmic zeroes and ones and so on. In so doing, an 'a-radical' rootless enframing of a people comes into play, a 'socius of inscription' as Deleuze and Guattari put it, the collective in-forming, the collective and creative ability to mark and be marked.

But in the twenty-first-century age of digital transformation and information technology, this 'coming into play' of a collective relationship to the 'that' of marking and especially, of the 'that' which makes a mark 'stick' (mutate, transform, dissolve, take up arms, take flight) within the flow and *as* flow, is itself manifested as a simultaneously discontinuous, wildly heterogenic ana-logic surface, paradoxically multidimensional, singular and fractured all in one go. One could say that this is a terribly flawed game of infinitely exponential and global proportions, as it can be (and is) played by anyone or any group or any thing: sperm, menstruation and shit as mentioned above, but also corporate expansion, drones, ISIS to give but a few headline examples. Nothing escapes the infinite proliferation of code. But if the game (within the game) is to mark and be marked then for some of the players this will literally mean the creating of divisions, divisions that of course include (indeed privilege) the leaders vs led binaric 'divide and conquer' law. On the other hand, as this is also a world where the playing field is itself intensely slippery, arched, multiple and corrupt in the fullest sense of those terms, this play can no longer be heralded as the first law of politics (or even the last). It is rather a mid-game posed as end-game. The more brutal it becomes, the more 'inevitable' seems its logic.

Which is not to say that nothing can be done; indeed, it is to say exactly the opposite: for movement and change is ingrained in the flow; it is not a decision, it is not an opinion; it is not even a fact. It is born from the realisation that the present is not only inhabitable, but able to become x. If there is to be a 'first law of politics' for a twenty-first century steeped in digital/information age coding, then let it be precisely the 'encounter' and the arched athleticism that invokes the being of the sensible to think.

Notes

1. Sudarshan Pattnaik (2015; image courtesy of the artist) *Humanity Washed Ashore: Shame Shame Shame . . .*', sand sculpture at Puri Beach, 65 km from Bhubaneswar, Turkey, 4 September 2015. Despite hundreds of thousands drowning off the shores of various European and Asian ports or suffocating in the back storage spaces of lorries or freezing to death whilst tucked away in

the landing gear of various airliners, the photograph of young child Aylan Kurdi washed ashore in his red and blue Western outfit managed to create an enormous global ground swell of horror and shame. Some governments threw out the term 'economic migrant' in favour of 'war refugee' and agreed to open their borders. Other governments went about erecting massive barbed wire borders with armed patrol guards and dogs. Still others wept with shame but offered only their tear-stained handkerchief of monetary aid – under the proviso, of course, that a refugee would come no closer to the West than just outside Syria itself.

2. Suffice to say at this juncture that the Deleuzian refit of Leibniz's concept of compossibility is one that enables Deleuze to develop a bold re-think of identity in a way that sidesteps the usual self-reflexive traps inherent with so-called identity thinking. Although this point will be developed further, see Leibniz [23 November 1697] 2006: 31–6.
3. In his famous treatise *On War*, Clausewitz writes, 'We see, therefore, that War is not merely an act of policy, but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means. What remains peculiar to war is simply the peculiar nature of its means. War in general, and the commander in any specific instance, is entitled to require that the trend and designs of policy shall not be inconsistent with the means. That, of course, is no small demand; but however much it may affect political aims in a given case, it will never do more than modify them. The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in insolation from their purpose' (Clausewitz [1832, 1918] 2010: 'War Is Merely the Continuance of Policy by other Means', Book 1, Chapter 1: 'What Is War?', §24, p. 99; see also Book 8, Chapter 6, B: 'War Is an Instrument of Policy', pp. 731ff.).
4. Arrested 8 November 1926, Gramsci was sentenced (from May 1928) to twenty years without parole for 'attempting to undermine the Italian state'. His twenty-six volumes of notes collected under the heading of *Quaderni del Carcere* [*The Prison Notebooks*] were secretly protected by various (unnamed) prison cellmates and removed by visitors including the Cambridge economist, Piero Sraffa, and Gramsci's sister-in-law, Tatiana Schultz. Only but a tiny portion of the notebooks have been translated into English.
5. Hence in some quarters, a continued love affair with the Hegelian dialectic and its variations on negation, negativity and difference – a love affair sometimes open, sometimes covert, but in any case one which continues unabated to this day – embraced by a multitude of otherwise seemingly radical thinkers from Žižek to the relatively newly emergent 'object oriented ontologies' and 'speculative realism' scholars. For some of the best philosophical blogs duelling it out with respect to this and other post-discursive relationships to Hegel and Lacan (including Deleuze's relationship to Lacan) see the irrepressible *larvalsubjects* at < http://www.larvalsubjects.wordpress > , especially 'Lacan and Deleuze: A Pet Peeve', 22 May 2006 at < https://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2006/05/22/lacan-and-deleuze-a-pet-peeve/#comments > (accessed 3 April 2015). See also the complex conceptual variations on 'limit', 'horizon' and 'difference' in the work of Butler, Laclau, Mouffe Critchley and Marchart (Critchley and Marchart: 2004).
6. To do otherwise, that is, to accept a profoundly discursive, immanent and/or genealogical 'groundless ground' approach, often brought with it the usual accusations of 'nihilism', 'mediocre', 'naïve', 'fascistic' or some combination thereof. See, for example, many of the earlier works of Christopher Norris (from 1993 onwards), though his most recent text (2013) seems to recant much of the hardline positions he along with many others so passionately upheld in the past.

7. This is not to ignore the praxilogical importance of hegemony, contingency, universality and equivalency so thoroughly debated from the mid-1980s onwards and importantly discussed in Verso's critical *Radical Thinkers* series. Rather, it is to remind those who need reminding that those argument(s), crucial though they may be for rethinking non-essentialism and political resistance, still can be reduced to the problem of (or need for) 'excess' 'horizon' or 'lack' as the fundamental principle for democratic (or indeed any kind of) struggle. Laclau puts it thus: 'There is no politics without the creation of political frontiers, but creating such frontiers is more difficult when one cannot cannot rely on stable entities (such as the "classes" of Marxist discourse) but has to construct through political action the very social entities which have to be emancipated. This, however, is the political challenge of our age' (Butler et al. 2000: 306).
8. '[Instead] we invoked a vegetal model of thought: the rhizome in opposition to the tree, a rhizome-thought instead of an arborescent thought' (Deleuze [1968] 2004: vi, xv). Cf. Deleuze [1968] 2004: 164–213 (ch. III, 'The Image of Thought'); Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 2005: 3–25 ('Introduction: Rhizome'), 208–31 (ch. 9, 'Micropolitics and Segmentarity').
9. There is not sufficient space to develop in detail the delectable range of Heideggerian collectibles that Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari (as well as so many other contemporary and continental philosophers) specifically rely upon to greater or lesser degrees. For the purposes of the argument being advanced here, see Heidegger [1936–8] 2012, especially 133–78 ('III. The Interplay'), 179–230 ('IV. The Leap'), 231–312 ('V. The Grounding'). See also Heidegger's Freiburg lectures given in the summer of 1951 and 1952 (Heidegger [1954] 1968) and perhaps most significantly, as mentioned above, Heidegger [1957] (1969).
10. 'The obvious thing to do,' writes Heidegger, 'would be to represent this belonging together in the sense of identity as it was thought and generally understood later on. What could prevent us? None other than the principle itself, which we read in Parmenides. For it says something else – it says that Being, together with thinking, belongs in the Same. [. . .] The Sameness of thinking and Being that speaks in Parmenides' fragment stems from further back than the kind of identity defined by metaphysics in terms of Being as a characteristic of Being' (Heidegger [1957] 1969: 28).
11. Heidegger will further complicate the notion of encounter/event of appropriation/dwelling/clearing to introduce the crucial concept of 'framework', a muscular, vital move that enables one to situate the epistemological (ontic) move, which we do not have scope in this essay to develop now. Cf. Heidegger [1957] 1969: 33–4 ('The Principle of Identity'), 40–74 ('The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics'). On the development of Deleuze and Guattari's use of attunement, see Golding 2010.
12. The importance of Deleuze's development of the Leibnizian notions of compossible and incompossible must be highlighted, but cannot be developed here given the limitations of space. Suffice just to note here Deleuze's use of the terms. In his 'Twenty-fourth Series of Communication', he writes: 'For what Leibniz called "compossible" and "incompossible" cannot be reduced to the identical and contradictory, which govern only the possible and impossible. [. . .] Compossibility must be defined at an original level in a pre-individual level, by the convergence of series which singularities of events form as they stretch themselves out over lines of ordinary points. Incompossibility must be defined by the divergence of such series' (Deleuze [1969] 1990: 171).
13. Bracketed translation: J. Golding. I have chosen to maintain the Greek translation of *aisthēteon* as meaning 'the being of the sensible' rather than use

the English translation in *Difference and Repetition* as 'sign' since the latter may give rise to a misuse of linguistic (semiotic) representational thinking. But see also Rancière's ([2000] 2011) use of *aisthēton* and its development of the aesthetic sensible.

14. Cf. Nancy 2008.
15. For an important political-aesthetic development of code as 'drift', see Kroker and Kroker 2010.

References

Bataille, George (1997) *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, trans. Iain White et al., London: Atlas Press.

Butler, Judith, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek (2000) *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, London: Verso.

Clausewitz, Carl von [1832, 1918] (2010) *On War*, unabridged edn, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, New York; London; Toronto: Everyman's Library/Alfred A. Knopf.

Critchley, Simon and Oliver Marchart (2004) *Laclau: A Critical Reader*, London; New York: Routledge.

Deleuze, Gilles [1969] (1990) *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale, London: Athlone Press.

Deleuze, Gilles (1997) 'Literature and Life', *Critical Inquiry*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco, 23:2 (Winter), pp. 225–30, available at < http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343982 > (accessed 3 February 2015).

Deleuze, Giles [1968] (2001) 'Preface to the English Edition', *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, London: Continuum.

Deleuze, Gilles [1968] (2004) *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, London; New York: Continuum.

Deleuze, Gilles [1993] (2006) *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Crowley, New York: Continuum.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari [1975] (1986) *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, *Theory and History of Literature*, vol. 30, Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari [1972] (2000) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari [1980] (2005) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Foucault, Michel [2008] (2011) *The Courage of Truth: The Government of Self and Others, II, Lectures at the Collège de France, 1983–1984*, ed. Frédéric Gros, trans. Graham Burchell, New York; London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Golding, Johnny (2010) 'Fractal Philosophy (And the Small Matter of Learning How to Listen): Attunement as the Task of Art', in Stephen Zepke and Simon O'Sullivan (eds), *Deleuze and Contemporary Art*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 133–54.

Golding, Sue (2000) 'The A-Radicality Lectures – Second Meditation on Identity, Ethics and Aesthetics [Or What Does It Mean to 'Inhabit' Technology?]', *Issues in Contemporary Culture and Aesthetics*, 10/11, pp. 286–92.

Gramsci, Antonio [1937] (1975) 'Note sul Machiavelli, sulla politica e sullo Stato modern', in *Quaderni del Carcere*, ed. Valentino Gerratana, Turin: Einaudi.

Heidegger, Martin [1954] (1968) *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. J. Glenn Gray, New York: Harper & Row.
Heidegger, Martin [1957] (1969) *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, New York: Harper & Row.
Heidegger, Martin [1936–8] (2012) *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
Kroker, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker (eds) (2010) *Code Drift: Essays in Critical Digital Studies*, Victoria, BC: New World Perspective.
Leibniz, Gottfried [23 November 1697] (2006) 'On the Ultimate Origination of Things: Ch. 1 Metaphysics', in *The Shorter Leibniz Texts: A Collection of New Translations*, ed. Lloyd Strickland, New York: Continuum.
Marx, Karl [1845/1888] (2010) 'Theses on Feuerbach', in *Marx & Engels Collected Works 1845–47*, vol. 5, ed. Frederick Engels, editorial commissions by Jack Cornforth, Maurice Dobb, E. J. Hobsbawn, James Klugman, Margaret Mynatt, London: Lawrence and Wishart.
Nancy, Jean-Luc (2000) *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Nancy, Jean-Luc (2008) 'The Being-With of Being-There', trans. Marie-Eve Morin, *Continental Philosophy Review*, 41:1, pp. 1–15.
Norris, Christopher (1993) *Truth about Postmodernism*, London: Blackwell Publishing.
Norris, Christopher (2013) *Philosophy Outside-In: A Critique of Academic Reason*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Rancière, Jacques [2000] (2011) *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, trans. with introduction by Gabriel Rockhill, London; New York: Continuum.
Thucydides [431–11 BC] (2009) *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Martin Hammond, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

AQ1: Amended to 2005 edition rather than 1987 because this was done for [1980] 1987 in note 8 and is the edn used elsewhere in the text: OK?
AQ2: Place of publication and publisher checked via Arthur Kroker's web page [he has `NWP New Media Books'] and WorldCat.
AQ3: Not cited in text (only 2008 ref. cited) Delete or include citation?