

Immanence and anarchist ethics

by

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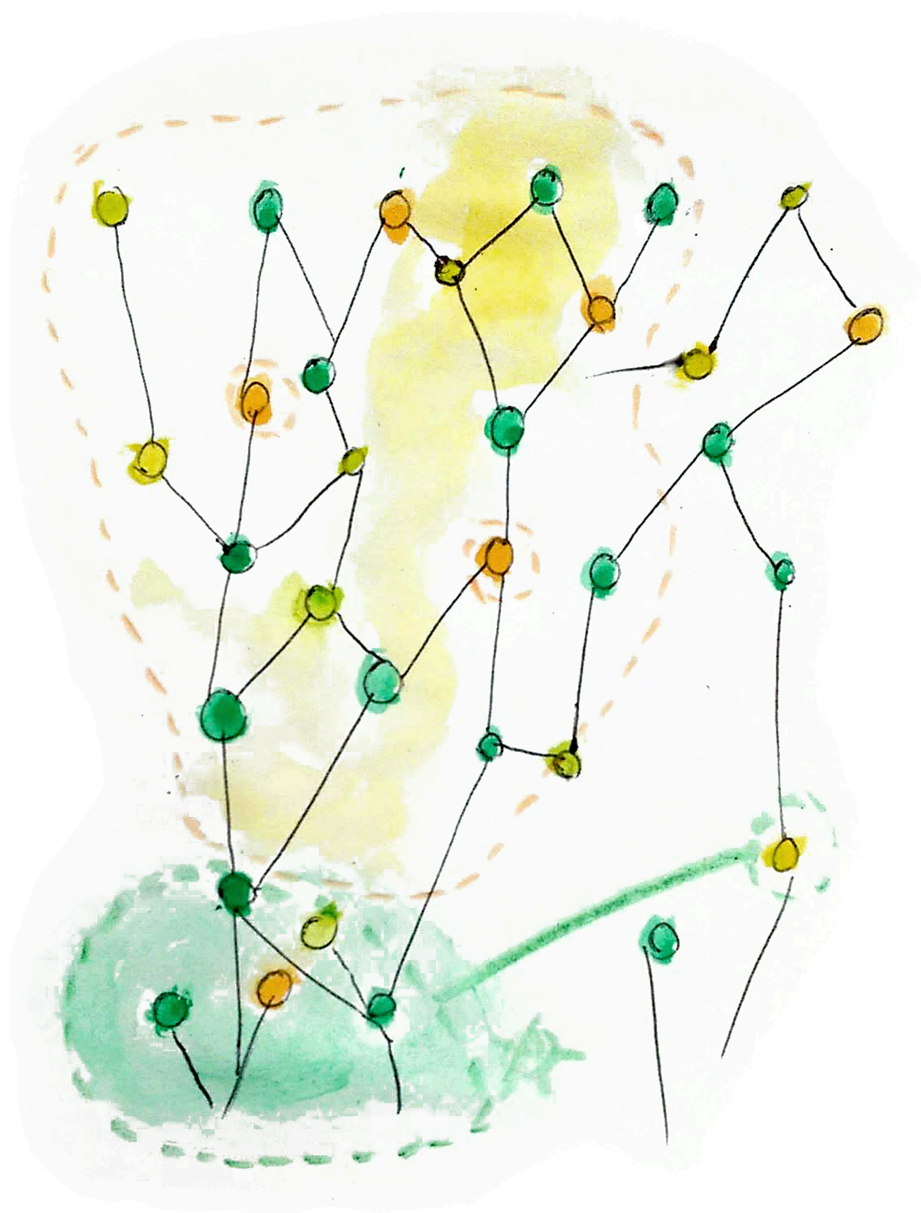
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Abstract

This thesis engages with the problem of meta-ethics in postanarchist theory. In their rejection of 'classical' anarchism, various postanarchist thinkers adopt a position of epistemological critique and reduce their metaphysics to a minimal conception of the self and broad, common knowledge statements about politics. Morality in the form of coercive rules or obedience to norms is rejected, whilst ethics in the form of guidelines or suggestions is taken to be desirable, and even necessary, for anarchist politics. The main argument of the thesis takes up the postanarchist critique of morality, taking seriously the concerns that essentialism, universals and representation are contestable and open to fallibility, and suggests that a further contradiction exists between anarchist principles and transcendent ethical systems. As long as postanarchist metaphysics appeal to transcendence, there is a possibility for anarchist ethics to become coercive.

This work's original contribution to knowledge is the introduction of immanent metaphysics as a foundation for anarchist ethics. This is done primarily through the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and his critique of transcendence. The argument begins by outlining Deleuze's metaphysics of difference which are to underpin the rest of the discussion on anarchist ethics. Following this, the thesis draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari and others to explore the 'political' and active aspects of immanent ethics. The final part sketches anarchist ethics in immanent modes of existence.



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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

In the beginning there was a wall.¹

Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall.²

This dissertation is a story, and the question of how a story is to be told is of utmost importance. The purpose of this introduction is, therefore, to explain the choices I have made about how to tell this story, to introduce the main characters and the setting, as well as the main ideas in each chapter. As Deleuze suggests, “[p]hilosophy is like a novel: you have to ask ‘What’s going to happen?’ ‘What’s happened?’ Except the characters are concepts, and the settings, the scenes, are spacetimes.”³

1.1.1 Setting and characters

Gone are the times when ‘other worlds, other values’⁴ seemed possible. The Battle of Seattle is a distant memory of the anarchist collective imagination.

¹ U. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*, 2nd edn., Golancz, Great Britain, 2002, p. 5.

² M. Foucault and G. Deleuze, ‘Intellectuals and Power’, in D. F. Bouchard (ed.), *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1980, p. 206.

³ G. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 2nd edn., Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, p. 140.

⁴ T. Muller, ‘Other Worlds, Other Values’, PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 1998.

We are not winning. There is no 'we'.⁵ At least in Europe, the activist/anarchist/radical social movement(s) seem stuck with the same arguments, same battles, and no substantial 'victories' have been achieved without conceding even more substantial sacrifices.⁶ The economic crisis of 2008 left a generation of young people facing unemployment, soaring inequality and a politics of austerity aimed at destroying all hope.⁷ In the UK and elsewhere the seeds for this were already planted by the 1970s and 1980s with the dispossession of industrial workers and the shift to more diffuse systems of governance. While in the 2000s it was possible to argue that "the past ten years have seen the full-blown revival of anarchism, as a global social movement and coherent set of political discourses, on a scale and to levels of unity and diversity unseen since the 1930s,"⁸ by the late 2010s activists struggle to find secure housing, jobs or means to support themselves, having less and less energy to dedicate to organising or fighting back. The reign of neoliberalism is so well established that it feels like it has been here forever.⁹ Governments, along with the likes of Facebook and Google, are capable of identifying individuals (subversive or not) through algorithms and trait analysis;¹⁰ a black mask no longer anonymises or protects. However, the anarchist revival at the turn of the century hadn't only happened on the

⁵ Here I am referring to the famous Seattle slogan, 'We are winning', but also to the growing feeling that there is no 'we' in the fragmented British left. The collapse of the image of a revolutionary identity is exemplified by feminist and postcolonial analyses, a good example of which is A. Emejulu, 'Diversity is Liberalspeak: Why We Must Build a Decolonised Left', *Strike!*, March 2016.

⁶ For an excellent study of the politics of austerity and activism, see E. Craddock, 'Emotion and gender in local anti-austerity activist cultures', PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2017.

⁷ For (bleak) accounts of the effects of austerity on the British left see Phil, '20 June: The Beginning of What?', [web blog], 15 June 2015, <<https://libcom.org/blog/20-june-beginning-what-22062015>>, accessed 14 December 2017; A. Ishkanian and I. Ali, 'From Consensus to Dissensus: The Politics of Anti-Austerity Activism in London and Its Relationship to Voluntary Organizations', *Journal of Civil Society*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2017.

⁸ U. Gordon, 'Anarchism Reloaded', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2007, p. 29.

⁹ M. Fisher, 'Capitalist Realism: Is There Still No Alternative?', *Strike!*, November 2012, <<https://strikemag.org/capitalist-realism-is-there-still-no-alternative>>, accessed 14 December 2017.

¹⁰ For a comprehensive guide on how it's done, see B. Schneier, *Data and Goliath. The Hidden Battles to Collect Your Data and Control Your World*, W.W. Norton and Company, London, 2016. For a critical, anarchist approach to surveillance, The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, Semiotext(e), South Pasadena, 2015 and Institute For The Study of Insurgent Warfare, *Panopticons Then and Now*, [zine], 2014, <<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/institute-for-the-study-of-insurgent-warfare-panopticons-then-and-now>>, accessed 10 September 2017.

streets with the rise of the anti-globalisation movement.¹¹ Anarchist academic work also proliferated in that decade, with postanarchism appearing as the frontrunner with its claims to freshen up 'old' anarchism. Even though the activists on the streets incorporated elements of a traditional anarchist ethos,¹² many academics claimed that there were undeniable differences between the ideas of 'classical' anarchism and the new anarchists.¹³ As Uri Gordon writes:

[T]he sources of anarchism in its contemporary idiom are largely discontinuous with the traditional thread of anarchist movement and theory, as it developed in the context of workers' and peasants' movements in Europe and the Americas during the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries . . . Instead, the mainspring of today's anarchism can be found at the *intersection* of several trends of social criticism and struggle whose beginnings were never consciously 'anarchist'.¹⁴

These intersections came in the form of alliances between "radical ecology, feminism, black and indigenous liberation, anti-nuclear movements,"¹⁵ producing a network of heterogeneous, anti-hierarchical, but connected groups.¹⁶

The need to reflect and analyse these intersections was also taken up by postanarchism, the prefix post- denoting both its debt to poststructuralism and its move beyond traditional anarchist theory.¹⁷ Süreyya Evren remarks that "interest in postanarchism was directly linked to the enthusiasm created

¹¹ R. Kinna, 'Fields of Vision: Kropotkin and Revolutionary Change', *SubStance*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2007, p. 67.

¹² U. Gordon, 'Anarchism and Political Theory: Contemporary Problems', PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2005, p. 80.

¹³ D. Graeber, 'The New Anarchists', *The New Left Review*, vol. 13, 2002.

¹⁴ U. Gordon, loc. cit.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ See G. Chesters and I. Welsh, *Complexity, Multitudes and Movements: Acting on the Edge of Chaos*, Routledge, London, 2005; M. Sheller, 'From Social Networks to Social Flows: Re-thinking the Movement in Social Movements', *Department of Sociology*, Lancaster University, 2000.

¹⁷ L. Call, 'Post-anarchism Today', *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2010.

in post-Seattle anti-globalization movements,"¹⁸ a sentiment confirmed by its most prominent authors in the English-speaking world Simon Critchley, Todd May and Saul Newman.¹⁹ When this thesis was being researched, postanarchism was already an established field, though it had become somewhat controversial and many of its more prominent figures were distancing themselves from the label.

In the context of the struggles of the economic crisis and austerity politics, British activism appeared to have lost much of its momentum by the mid-2010s. In 2016, Some London Foxes proclaimed, "In talking about resistance and rebellion in London, we may as well start with the obvious point: there isn't much."²⁰ Coinciding with this shift, there has been a noticeable drop-off in the production of postanarchist texts, though that is not to say their insights have not been incorporated in other works. Both Todd May and Simon Critchley have been engaged with other avenues of radical politics, leaving Saul Newman as the principal writer keeping the field active. Most others who had previously been interested have also moved onto other, presumably more productive battlegrounds.

Given this, it might seem strange that this work is situated in the field of postanarchism. The reason behind this choice is less to do with any particular affinity to postanarchist politics or academic theory, and more for the pragmatic reason that it is the postanarchists who first 'married' poststructuralism and anarchism. In this sense, postanarchism is used primarily as a springboard to talk about issues of theory and praxis and this work is perhaps closer to philosophy (especially in the sense in which

¹⁸ S. Evren, 'What is Anarchism? A reflection on the canon and the constructive potential of its destruction', PhD Thesis, Loughborough University, 2012, p. 22.

¹⁹ S. Critchley interviewed in S. James, *Perspectives: International Postgraduate Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2009; T. May interviewed in S. Evren and T. May, 'An Interview with Todd May', *Varlik*, no. 9, 2006, <<https://www.eurozine.com/an-interview-with-todd-may/>>, accessed 28 May 2015; S. Newman, interviewed in S. Evren, K. Kiziltug and E. Kosova, 'Interview with Saul Newman', *Siyahi Interlocal Journal of Postanarchist Theory, Culture and Politics*, April 2005, <<http://community.livejournal.com/siyahi>>, accessed 25 May 2015.

²⁰ Some London Foxes, *London 2016: The Terrain of Struggle in Our City*, [zine], 31 Dec 2015, <<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/some-london-foxes-london-2016-the-terrain-of-struggle-in-our-city>>, accessed 11 June 2016, para. 56.

Deleuze and Guattari talk about philosophy) than it is to politics in the academic sense.

To take up our *dramatis personae*, the characters which populate this story include: anarchism, the theoretical and practical field of contemporary European/UK activism, the writings of Gilles Deleuze (including his collaborations with Guattari), and ethics, the branch of philosophy concerned with what we should do. This intersection makes it difficult to situate the work in a particular tradition. It could be read simultaneously as a critique of anarchism, of philosophers and of academics. It is an attempt at writing differently – by virtue of the theory and methodology it utilises, it inevitably needs to break with the academic framework it would normally be part of.

In terms of content, our aim is to understand what ethics might look like in anarchist political practice if conceptualised through an immanent metaphysical schema. However, by trying to incorporate a radically different approach to theory and practice, an auxiliary aim of this thesis is to critique and interfere with the normative practices that have come to define, categorise and affirm certain types of writing as academic and therefore ‘examinable’. Deleuze comments:

What now seems problematic is the situation in which young philosophers, but also all young writers who’re involved in creating something, find themselves. They face the threat of being stifled from the outset. It’s become very difficult to do any work, because a whole system of “acculturation” and anticreativity specific to the developed nations is taking shape. It’s far worse than censorship.²¹

The situation which Deleuze refers to here is the French academy in the generation after his own, where, he felt, philosophy and academia were blocked by a reactionary economic and political space and where more and more rules were being put in place to encourage philosophers and theorists to

²¹ Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 2nd edn, Columbia University Press, New York, 1995, p. 27.

conform. Looking at Britain in 2018, the situation does not seem so very different. The turn towards the commodification of knowledge and privatisation of universities is well on its way, with humanities and arts degrees a primary target through their failure to easily produce quantifiable results. The current expectations around producing knowledge in the form of articles, books, conference presentations etc. and disseminating that knowledge to students are subordinated more and more to this market logic. As one might expect, the 'knowledge' that is produced is also closely monitored and curated, most often by other academics through a system of peer-reviewed journals resulting in "an orthodoxy of research that is so disciplined, so normalized, so centered . . . that it has become conventional, reductionist, hegemonic, and sometimes oppressive and has lost its radical possibilities."²² It is not surprising then that the proliferation of written information in the form of textbooks, articles, chapters, blogs, etc. heaps up so quickly that new students are often left discouraged and frustrated in their attempts to navigate the field. At the same time, we rarely see a break from the established knowledge and methodologies of academic writing and attempts to question this framework are 'stifled', as Deleuze puts it.

Initially, this thesis was not conceived of as such a break, and indeed it may seem somewhat arrogant for a novice academic to attempt a radical departure from the norm. However, in the process of writing, it became apparent to me that I would have to do a bit more than just write about Deleuze's metaphysics - I would have to (attempt to) embody this approach if I wanted to do it justice. As Deleuze and Guattari observe, "There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made."²³ Following Braidotti, I refuse to embrace the 'image of thought' which constitutes the role of the academic as a judge or moral arbiter and prefer instead to produce a new set

²² E. A. St. Pierre, 'Post qualitative research: The critique and the coming after', in N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln eds, *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 4th edn, Sage, Thousand Oaks CA, 2011, cited in D. Bright and E. Honan, 'Writing a Thesis Differently', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 29, no. 5, 2016, p. 732.

²³ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Bloomsbury, London, 2013, p. 2.

of connections with the tools Deleuze and others have offered.²⁴ While this is inspired by Deleuze's critique of philosophy, I am also driven by the anarchist exhortation to question authority and dogmatism. Thus, this dissertation is different in a few ways that I now attempt to reflect upon.

1.1.2. My aim and content

This thesis attempts to construct a new form of anarchist ethics employing the 'ultimate philosopher of immanence', Gilles Deleuze. One aim of this work is to foster a conversation which redefines the rules of the game in a way that creates space for new, complex solutions to emerge.²⁵ I hope to disturb stagnated debates and open up some blockages. Ultimately, the aim is to discern ways of creating new assemblages and analyse the conditions for them to emerge. I enter the debate through the postanarchist argument that Enlightenment-inspired approaches to ethics on which much classical anarchist theory is founded are destabilised by poststructuralism. While in postanarchism, and in political theory in general, this move is often taken to mark the end of metaphysics, I argue that there is nevertheless necessarily a metaphysical foundation to anarchism. Indeed, Deleuze himself argues that there is no such thing as 'overcoming metaphysics' in philosophy, only a turn towards the recognition that all metaphysics is immanent.²⁶ Following this approach I establish an immanent foundation for anarchist ethics.

It is worth also briefly mentioning what the purpose of this dissertation is not. I do not aim to reach a truth or solve a problem or produce some form of quantifiable result. Even though this is a work of ethics, I also do not aim to offer rules, speculations, blueprints or to discern a core set of values. This

²⁴ R. Braidotti, *Metamorphoses. Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 9.

²⁵ R. Braidotti, 'The Subject in Feminism', *Hypatia*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1991, p. 164.

²⁶ A. Villani, 'The Problem of an Immanent Metaphysics', in A. Beaulieu, E. Kazarian and J. Sushytska eds, *Gilles Deleuze and Metaphysics*, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2014, p. vii.

thesis is also not 'making the case for anarchism' to non-anarchists.²⁷ Furthermore, I have no intention of entering the debate around whether Deleuze is an anarchist, or anarchists Deleuzian. I do not intend to be 'representative' of the politics on the streets (as postanarchism has sometimes been understood to be), or use theory to understand social movements, or be a 'gift'²⁸ back to the community as others have. All of these approaches frame the relationship between activists and academics as two separate spheres which are limited in the ways they co-exist and relate to each other. The problems with such an approach and the question of theory/practice will be addressed more in chapter three.

In terms of content, this work inserts itself into the debate around how we might conceptualise (post)anarchist ethics, and more specifically, what they look like in theory/practice. My central contention is that in order to complete the postanarchist project (that is, if we agree that we need a non-universalist, non-essentialist and non-representative anarchist politics) we need to ground it in an immanent metaphysics; this can free us from the bind of transcendent ethical frameworks, a move I argue is necessary. To this end, the whole thesis can be understood as charting a path through three primary ethical questions:

How should we act?

The first question is the quintessential traditional moral question. It is also the question postanarchists saw as incompatible with the new forms of poststructuralist anarchism since it appeals to human essence and representation to posit a foundation on which a set of duties, rules or values that guide our actions are established. When this question is addressed in later sections I propose the theoretical division between ethics and morality in anarchism, postanarchism and Deleuze's philosophy, further problematising

²⁷ See, for example, L. S. Brown, *The Politics of Individualism. Liberalism, Liberal Feminism and Anarchism*, Black Rose, Montreal, 1993; A. Carter, 'Analytical Anarchism: Some Conceptual Foundations', *Political Theory*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2000, pp. 230-253; A. Ritter, *Anarchism: A theoretical analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980; M. Taylor, *Anarchy and Cooperation*, Wiley, London, 1976; R. P. Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism*, Harper and Row, New York, 1971.

²⁸ D. Graeber, *Fragments of Anarchist Anthropology*, Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago, 2004, p. 12.

the concept. The bulk of the answer to this question comes through an analysis of the possible foundations of ethics. First, I present the postanarchist critique of universals and essentialism and, second, move towards a Deleuzian critique of transcendence.

How do we act?

The second question has become necessary for our construction of an alternative postanarchist ethical schema. The starting position of Deleuzian metaphysics – beginning from ‘what is given’ – allows us to take immanence as the foundation of ethics, thus is materialist and affirmative in the sense of not denying or condemning what we do on the basis of moral categories. This is the way we avoid the ‘mental gymnastics’ of ‘deeming what we will to be good’ – Spinoza’s critique regarding the contingency of moral values.²⁹ ‘How do we act?’ is a question that, by virtue of starting from the given, allows us to also reject the primacy of representation through the recognition and acknowledgement of one’s actions, without judgment or comparison to a higher arbiter such as moral duty. Thus, I present a descriptive account of Deleuze’s metaphysics of immanence.

How can we act?

The third question highlights the possibility of change and self-determination. It is also a return to normativity, albeit a re-worked, Deleuzian version of it. Here it becomes possible to emphasise the complexity of social and ethical problems and the possibilities for their resolution. It is also a discussion of how we can push the limits of our bodies, of our environment and of the realm of ethics. Finally, this question is an attempt to address anarchist ethical problems – in a sense, to move the thesis towards applied ethics, and re-think them in new and different ways.

These questions correspond roughly to the three chapters of the thesis. The

²⁹ B. Spinoza, *Ethics*, III, P9.

first chapter concerns postanarchism, where I begin by problematising the definition of 'anarchism' and offer a working concept that is built upon throughout the whole dissertation. The chapter then moves onto the first stage of the argument, namely that postanarchist theory has provided an invaluable epistemological critique of anarchism but has failed at establishing an ontology which enables that critique to move further and become productive. This claim is supported through an analysis of the two main moral frameworks adopted by 'classical' anarchists and their epistemological foundations. This sets the ground for outlining the postanarchist critique of classical anarchism. The postanarchists identify four main points of tension in anarchist ethics – essentialism, ethical subjectivity, universalism and representation – which I examine in detail. The chapter then presents the second claim of my argument, which is that anarchism needs a strong metaphysical foundation (and, in particular, an immanent one). A number of anarchist thinkers with strong ontologies adapted their ethical frameworks in response to the postanarchist critique and I examine the success of these endeavours here. Through this analysis I excavate the problem of transcendence, and the issues it poses for anarchism as a set of philosophical principles. Having established that anarchist ethics need metaphysics and should be resistant to transcendent frameworks, I argue the case for using Deleuze, one of the few poststructuralist philosophers to have a direct and sustained engagement with the question of metaphysics. This becomes the foundation for the claim that anarchist ethics needs immanent metaphysics and will therefore engage with the problematic outlined by Deleuze.

The second chapter deals primarily with the philosophy of Deleuze (and Guattari) and can be understood in a sense as a 'methodology' chapter. I have found 'Deleuzian ethics' to be a contradictory field. Even though the issue of ethics and normativity is present throughout his entire opus, the conceptual break he proposes distances him from debates in moral philosophy, and to an extent also the terms of reference for traditional 'ethics'. This often leads commentators to talk about Deleuze's analysis of Spinoza or Nietzsche as if it

were his own ethical position.³⁰ Without diminishing the importance of Spinoza and Nietzsche for Deleuzian ethics, the purpose of this chapter is to understand, and outline, the metaphysical foundation of immanence which serves as the basis for a new normativity to emerge. Thus, it starts by discerning the problems of the philosophical 'image of thought', followed by the ontology of difference Deleuze builds in *Difference and Repetition*, moving on to the productive statements that Deleuze offers on the question of ethics in relation to the Event. Towards the end of the chapter, the question of Deleuzian-Guattarian subjectivity is explored further in relation to desire and production. These sections serve to construct the problems which our formulation of immanence must respond to and provide a guide (albeit perhaps one of many possible) to resolving them.

The final chapter incorporates the metaphysics of immanence with practical anarchist ethical questions. It identifies and examines the dogmatic image of thought in anarchist ethics using the tools provided by Deleuze. I provide examples of contemporary debates and the philosophical presuppositions that prevent them from moving forward. The main issues we are concerned with here are: dislodging ethics from the domain of the 'rational', reformulating ethical subjectivity, and establishing the conditions for change in the ethical event.

1.1.3 Notes on methodology

Deleuze's own methodology is very particular to the problems he formulates and addresses. As such, it is only partially possible (and desirable) to replicate it for our project. The ways in which this happens will become apparent as we move through. I try to avoid binarized argument forms, in which a position is critiqued, synthesised into a new object of critique and taken up in a linear manner. Rather, I attempt a more 'rhizomatic' approach where the

³⁰ L. Bryant, 'Difference and Givenness: Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence', PhD thesis, USA, Northwest University Press, 2008, p. xi.

connections are numerous and lead in multiple directions at once. As a result, you are unlikely to find neat conclusions or clear answers.

Secondly, I want to avoid always presenting (my own) thinking and writing as clear, logical and rational from the onset. The way this work is presented is going to evoke a response in the reader, and my intention is, partly, to provoke new assemblages through this affect. As Karen Houle observes, thinking is messy and unclear, and there is a certain merit in recognising and accepting it as such. She discerns that such an approach allows us to foster new creative engagements, helps discover new blockages or points of stagnation, and that, by recognising the contingency and uncertainty of the domain, we might be able to put judgment aside and discuss the problem with different eyes.³¹

Last but not least, our approach,

gives us a way to envision the role of the self – whether as the story teller or the reader or the philosopher theorizing the issue – in the production of the domain and the power of its values; and conversely, to see the role of the domain in the production of the self and the self’s values, or sense of worth and meaning.³²

I do not mean to imply that this work has not been edited or thought through, but that allowing the possibility for thinking to be other than clear and rational is important – for new solutions to emerge, new ways of thinking and writing need to be present. As Deleuze says, “to think is to create – there is no other creation – but to create is first of all to engender ‘thinking’ in thought.”³³ His collaborations with Guattari experiment with the rejection of structured and clear language, opting instead for novelty and fragmentation which disrupts whilst connecting and re-connecting. In the first plateau of *A*

³¹ K. Houle, *Responsibility, Complexity, Abortion: Towards a New Image of Ethical Thought*, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2014, p. 11.

³² *ibid.*

³³ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Continuum, London, 2012, p. 147.

Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari identify two types of thought. The tree-form, or arborescent structure, is based on 'striated' metaphysics – it incorporates binarizing logic, stable entities, and allows us to understand static relationships. The rhizome, on the other hand, is a more fluid structure. It is horizontal, whereby parts of the system can join or disappear without harming the structure as a whole. Both of these should be taken as descriptive, rather than prescriptive terms. Rhizomatic thinking, is a method that emphasises connections and meeting points, the various ways in which we enter and exit 'assemblages'. In this sense, rhizomes are conglomerations of various interconnected organic and non-organic elements, making rhizomatic thinking more suitable for understanding change.³⁴ There are, then, well-justified reasons for attempting a less formal academic format, given my objectives.

That said, the style of the thesis is intended to be accessible. The problems I am trying to deal with are complex and sometimes they call for specialised terminology, but I have tried to not over-complicate this by using unnecessary jargon. Moreover, I am going to be using a mix of academic and activist literature. Of course, there is a huge overlap between the two, and sometimes similar ideas have different names in the respective fields. The choice of terminology I have used depends largely on the context of the discussion.

In addition, despite the general recommendation to avoid using personal pronouns in academic texts, I have chosen to recognise my position as an author of this text and therefore refer to myself. The reason behind that choice is my rejection of the notion of 'objectivity', or unbiased writing, which is the aim of such language, and the false feeling of distance that is created when the author is not present. This work does not begin with the unquestionable assumption that there is a Truth which is objective, achievable and the object of knowledge. Instead, it takes truths as many, as heterogeneous and

³⁴ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 10.

sometimes opposing, and, by adopting a radically subjective language, recognises the accountability of the author for which truths are presented.

In this sense, this work will be part of a conversation we are going to have together. 'I' will appear often in this conversation – I have kept my own name not because it is important, but because I am as much a product of my habits as anybody else.³⁵ Echoing Rosi Braidotti's politics of location – "a collectively shared and constructed, jointly occupied spatio-temporal territory"³⁶ – I would like to acknowledge that the position I am occupying in relation to this conversation is European, geographically in Britain, and this sets certain limitations on this work (and perhaps open connections unfamiliar to some readers). In the same breath, I would like to specify my use of the academic 'we'. Rather than an undefined, broad category of shared commonality between humans, my use of 'we' refers to *me and you*, the author and the reader. Moreover, I have used 'they' as a neutral singular pronoun throughout when referring to undetermined individuals; for example: "An activist throws a brick through a wall. They are dressed in black." 'They' in this usage substitutes the male universal. I have also used 'they' to refer to the authors of various works when their gender is unknown. The reason is twofold – first of all, to dispense with the use of the masculine pronoun as the neutral, universal subject, and second, in the case of real people, to acknowledge that the subject might not identify with the gender I have perceived them to be.

Finally, in this section I would like to reflect briefly on a few methodological premises. Anarchists, it is sometimes argued, can have a prickly relationship with 'intellectuals' because of their tendency to impose 'theory' (perhaps often seen as irrelevant).³⁷ In response, Gordon, for example, argues for a 'participatory strategy' of theorising, where the researcher is 'embedded' in

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 1.

³⁶ R. Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, p. 12.

³⁷ D. Graeber, *The New Anarchists*, p. 1.

the practices they seek to explore.³⁸ Similarly, Sandra Jeppesen talks about the trilogy of 'do-make-think' as the three focal points of anarchism.³⁹ Rather than adopting one, or a combination, of these methods, I shall follow Elizabeth Grosz in her more Deleuzian understanding of theory as "labor, production, building, or making, in the same ways as other practices . . . are forms of labor and production."⁴⁰ I hope this will resonate with the anarchist sceptics and allow us to bridge some of these divides. Echoing the Invisible Committee's recent call, I submit this work to the on-going conversation about a very real problem that we share as friends.⁴¹

Theory and practice are often thought to form two sides of a coin – the former relates to abstract meaning and expression, the latter relating to the material world, to actual people and actions. Theory is 'applied' in practice. The rejection of this strict division between theory and practice is often taken to be foundational for new materialist philosophy. New materialism is a term used by a range of Deleuze-influenced scholars such as Rosi Braidotti, Manuel DeLanda and Quentin Meillassoux to refer, broadly, to a methodology/metaphysics which does not privilege the side of 'culture' in the nature-culture divide:

The term proposes a cultural theory that radically rethinks the dualisms so central to our (post-)modern thinking and always starts its analysis from how these oppositions (between nature and culture, matter and mind, the human and the inhuman) are produced in action itself.⁴²

This should point to the ways in which this 'new' materialism differs from 'old' or dialectical materialism, but also to the ways in which it is similar. It takes as its point of departure the existence of a material world and accepts

³⁸ U. Gordon, 'Anarchism and Political Theory: Contemporary Problems', p. 20.

³⁹ S. Jeppesen, 'Do Make Think: Anarchy and Culture', in G. Zezulka-Mailloux and J. Gifford eds, *Culture+The State: Alternative Interventions*, Humanities Studio, Edmonton, 2003, p. 64.

⁴⁰ E. Grosz, 'Deleuze, Theory and Space', *Log*, no. 1, 2003, p. 77.

⁴¹ The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*.

⁴² R. Dolphijn and I. Van der Tuin, *New materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*, Open Humanities Press, Michigan, 2012, p. 93.

that identity is a product of processes rather than essence. The main difference, however, is that this process doesn't follow a dialectical model. For DeLanda it is the process of double articulation while for Braidotti it is monism with difference as the primary ontological category.

New materialists do not take theory and practice as ontologically separate and claim that to prioritise the discursive is to deny that the two sides inevitably mix and that elements of them are combined or separated again. To highlight an example, for somebody who is actively involved in activism and at the same time produces knowledge about it, it is rarely if at all clear how much theory informs their practice and vice versa. Theory is itself a practice, not a pre-existent field of knowledge intellectuals draw from.⁴³ As Deleuze put it, "A theory is exactly like a box of tools. It has nothing to do with the signifier. It must be useful. It must function. And not just for itself."⁴⁴ Moreover, in terms of anarchism, theory/practice come together not only historically – the canonised writings we have today and the actualisation of the movement in 19th century clearly fed off one another – but also continued to operate in a very specific relationship which can be called 'thinking and acting', in which neither is clearly defined or necessarily a representation of the other.

Reading Deleuze

There are a few methodological difficulties stemming from the choice to engage with the philosophy of Deleuze. Notoriously difficult to read, his works are often taken to be 'symbolic' or impressionist and labelled elitist or exclusive. In an attempt to avoid that problem, I follow Paul Patton in his rejection of readings of Deleuze (and Guattari's) terminology as metaphorical and/or poetic and attempt to read them through the unfolding of problems

⁴³ T. May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, Pennsylvania State University Press, USA, 1994, p. 64.

⁴⁴ M. Foucault and G. Deleuze, 'Intellectuals and Power', p. 208.

we encounter⁴⁵ – as Levi Bryant phrases it, to read “Deleuze as he himself read other thinkers,” considering “what problems informed Deleuze’s thought and [seeking] to determine how these problems necessitated the construction of particular concepts.”⁴⁶ This is the same approach I attempt to apply to my analysis of anarchist ethics as well. This necessitates the use of Deleuzian (and Deleuze-Guattarian) neologisms and language at times, despite all of their conflicting and overlapping deployments. Rather than give a (lengthy) presentation of the entirety of Deleuze’s canon and terminology at the beginning I will deploy concepts as I go, hopefully resulting in a finely tuned set of tools specific to our needs.

It is also worth reiterating that my reading of, and engagement with, Deleuze is concerned with an application of his metaphysics rather than his statements about ethics. However, it is worth briefly addressing charges of implicit normativity or an unaccounted for ethical position that have been brought against poststructuralism in general and Deleuze in particular.⁴⁷ Although Deleuze and Guattari arguably did little to explicitly outline their ethical positions, they never claimed to have none. In accordance with their philosophy, it would be fair to assume that their silence on the matter indicates a desire to avoid a position of objective, universal ethical subjectivity. In their writings, they do assume an ethical position, even if one of the ways it is expressed is in the fact that they have chosen to engage with particular concepts in a particular way. This choice has significance for the type of ethical position they embody. Therefore, I claim there are clear grounds for utilising their philosophy for ethics work. As we will discuss later, there are no ‘pure beginnings’ in philosophy.

The choice of the term ‘metaphysics’ in this thesis is deliberate. Deleuze

⁴⁵ P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, Routledge, London, 2000, p. 1.

⁴⁶ L. Bryant, ‘Difference and Givenness’, p. xi

⁴⁷ This issue will be taken up again in section 1.3.1. For a more detailed account than that given here, see R. Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 13-30.

characterises himself as a “pure metaphysician.”⁴⁸ This metaphysics is perhaps best understood as a mix of both ontology and epistemology – “a thought that aspires to give a complete description of the wholeness of what exists”⁴⁹ – rather than the more traditional interpretation as the study of transcendence. Indeed, Deleuze sees the ‘overcoming of metaphysics’ (in a Heideggerian sense, for example) as only applicable to metaphysics of transcendence. As such, the construction of *immanent* metaphysics, therefore, is the main task of this thesis. His particular favouring of ‘metaphysics’ over ‘ontology’ is a sign, according to Villani, that he feels himself belonging to an alternative tradition that has, “with Nietzsche and Whitehead, its great texts and titles.”⁵⁰ Keeping that in mind, it is also worth noting that Deleuze’s choice of terminology does not correspond with the contemporary division of ontology and epistemology and therefore the terms ontology and metaphysics should not be confused. Given this, I use ontology to refer to contemporary understandings of the study of being, and metaphysics to designate a Deleuzian understanding.

Finally, this thesis moves between Deleuze’s writings and Deleuze and Guattari’s collaborative works without overly problematising the difference between the two corpora. This might be considered a problem due to □i□ek⁵¹ and Badiou’s⁵² claims that Deleuze’s ontology shifts notably between his early and later work. To begin with, Deleuze posits subjectivity as preceding and conditioning experience, driven by “the transcendental and critical thought that the real processes of production of empirical objects cannot themselves be objects.”⁵³ In *Difference and Repetition*, temporality is subjectively constituted through ‘larval subjects’, still rooted in contemplation, but by *Anti-Oedipus* the transcendental becomes a material process in ‘desiring-production’ with the

⁴⁸ G. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p. 88-89.

⁴⁹ A. Anelli, ‘Leaving Metaphysics? Deleuze on the Event’, in A. Beaulieu, E. Kazarian and J. Susthytska eds, *Gilles Deleuze and Metaphysics*, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2014, p. 36.

⁵⁰ A. Villani, ‘Foreword’ A. Beaulieu, E. Kazarian and J. Susthytska eds, *Gilles Deleuze and Metaphysics*, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2014, p. vii.

⁵¹ S. Žižek, *Organs without bodies: On Deleuze and consequences*, Routledge, London, 2012, p. 19.

⁵² A. Badiou, *Deleuze: Clamor of Being*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2000, p. 69.

⁵³ A. Welchman, ‘Deleuze’s post-critical metaphysics’, *Symposium*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2009, p. 32.

syntheses becoming properly immanent. At this point contemplation is no longer necessary, as desire and the assemblage reconfigure the notion of the subject altogether. The accusation amounts to something like an early 'idealist' Deleuze and a 'materialist' later one. The validity of this division is contended by Manuel DeLanda, who claims that the two paradigms "retain enough overlaps that they can be meshed together as a heterogenous assemblage."⁵⁴ Rather than attempting to keep Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari separate, I have chosen to freely employ concepts from the two, driven by the impetus to create the joyous hybrid connections Rosi Braidotti calls for.⁵⁵ Despite the differences in the early and later projects, I have opted to engage with the elements of the two that I have deemed most applicable for anarchist ethics. This approach becomes clearer through my translation of Deleuze's conception of subjectivity in sections 2.4 and 3.3.

Terminology

A note on instances where I appear to have reduced complex, multiple entities to simple terms (such as the use of the broad term 'anarchist'): this is not an attempt to impose an identity where there isn't one, but an attempt to keep the language as comprehensible as possible. For example, I tend to use activist/anarchist/radical as somewhat interchangeable. I take a similar approach to the term 'activist' as Andrew X in his zine *Give Up Activism* in which he criticises the production of the category 'activist' as self-proclaimed experts in social change, reserved only for particular people.⁵⁶ However, this is a commonly used word and I have decided to stick with it for purposes of clarity. Similarly, I take contemporary social movements/radical social movements/activism to mean broadly the same thing (I am aware that there are, for example, right-wing social movements, however, they are not present in this work). As may become obvious, the commitments of this thesis would

⁵⁴ M. DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, Continuum, London, 2002, p. 202.

⁵⁵ R. Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*, 2010.

⁵⁶ Andrew X, *Give Up Activism*, [zine], 2005, <<https://libcom.org/library/giveupactivism>>, accessed 17 Oct 2017.

require many more words than available to give each of these delineations a proper treatment.

Similarly, when I refer to ‘anarchism’ I generally include both post- and ‘classical’ anarchist theory, as well as the range of political practices and histories which commonly come under the rubric. As Uri Gordon observes, “any account of anarchism that remains sensitive to its evolving character” needs to involve a “constant re-definition of anarchism itself.”⁵⁷ In that spirit, I will be redefining anarchism as we go through this thesis, winding up with a working definition quite distinct from most used today.

Finally, ethics and morality are two characters which surface in many ways throughout this work. Ethics, also called moral philosophy, comprises three main areas: meta-ethics, normative ethics and applied ethics. The field of meta-ethics is usually concerned with the origin of ethical principles or values and their meaning, the *theoretical* side of the field; normative ethics is more *practical*, defining the moral limits of right and wrong actions; and applied ethics is when a specific controversial issue is being examined.⁵⁸ Thus, in the traditional sense, ethics and morality are usually taken to mean the same thing. However, anarchists have long argued against normative morality, especially as deployed by the Church and state as a tool of control. Moreover, since this ‘classical’ anarchist critique, most anarchist authors have preferred to use the term ‘ethics’ to describe anarchist *oughts* and *ought-nots*. The difference between the two is often perceived in terms of power. Morality is coercive, comes from institutionalised religion or imposed social norms, while ethics is a blueprint or guidance for how to lead a good life (and one that corresponds to anarchist values). For most of the postanarchists, the meaning of ethics and morality is reconfigured to signify that morality is a set of rules of conduct that stipulate what is good and evil, while ethics is the study of why certain things are good and others evil. This use will be preserved in our

⁵⁷ U. Gordon, ‘Anarchism and Political Theory: Contemporary Problems’, p. 81.

⁵⁸ R. Solomon, *Morality and The Good Life. An Introduction to Ethics Through Classical Sources*, 5th edn, McGraw-Hill, New York, 2009, p. 2.

discussion of the works of postanarchist authors, even though it is not one that I wholly subscribe to. The third and final layer of the distinction, through which I understand my own project, comes from Deleuze's study of Spinoza. Deleuze also conceives of ethics and morality as distinct, but now in terms of immanence and transcendence. The redefinition of these two terms becomes clearer as the thesis progresses.

1.2 Defining anarchism

1.2.1 An anarchist canon?

Having established our engagement with the theory/practice debate and situated ourselves in the field of postanarchism (understood broadly as the intersection between poststructuralism and core anarchist principles), it is still unclear what our working definition of anarchism might be. Our options might include taking anarchists as united under the umbrella of 'contemporary radical activism',⁵⁹ as social movements against neoliberal hegemony,⁶⁰ as political ideology⁶¹ or "decentralised networks of communication, coordination and mutual support among autonomous nodes of social struggle"⁶² to name a few prominent approaches. However, whatever the merits of these approaches, we encounter an awkward problem when delineating what anarchist *ethics* might be. Whilst it is undeniable that anarchism is comprised of 'activists' and can be described as a 'movement', a coherent study of ethics in use would require an ethnographic engagement

⁵⁹ R. Day, *Gramsci is Dead, Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*, Pluto Press, London, 2005, p. 4.

⁶⁰ See A. Grubacic and D. Graeber, 'Anarchism, Or The Revolutionary Movement Of the Twenty-First Century', *The Anarchist Library*, 2004, <<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/andrej-grubacic-david-graeber-anarchism-or-the-revolutionary-movement-of-the-twenty-first-centu.pdf>>, accessed 9 April 2015.

⁶¹ See D. Neal, 'Anarchism: Ideology or Methodology?', *The Anarchist Library*, 1997, <<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/dave-neal-anarchism-ideology-or-methodology>>, accessed 9 April 2015.

⁶² U. Gordon, 'Anarchism and Political Theory', p. 9.

with countless individuals.⁶³ Moreover, such a method might reveal people's personal or collective decision-making processes but would not necessarily expose the meta-ethical dimensions of anarchist thought.

Another approach might be to take a sample of anarchist writings/theories and use them as representative of movement practices. The first problem with this approach comes from the difficulty of defining an anarchist 'canon'. As with many other institutionalised fields, only a certain number of people 'make it' into the textbooks. One could argue that it is not possible to include and study every person who has ever written on the subject, but the question of who selects the texts that are 'important' (and how) nevertheless remains a problem. Moreover, this is particularly problematic for a movement like anarchism that might appear to be opposed to hierarchies between knowledge legitimised by authority and other forms of thinking – the anarchist movement itself is strongly dependant on 'propaganda', zines, collective discussions and other forms of knowledge that are difficult to acknowledge as part of a formal canon. Since anarchism has relied so much on collective practice for its development, any attempts to talk about 'canon' are highly likely to be exclusionary and ultimately misguided.

As Kinna and Evren point out in their introduction to 'Blasting the Canon',⁶⁴ the idea of a core set of anarchist texts came to prominence in the 1960s with Paul Eltzbacher's *Anarchism: Seven Exponents of the Anarchist Philosophy*. Similar efforts were later made by George Woodcock and other anarchist historians. Before exploring ways to move beyond the canon it will be pertinent to briefly examine the ideas and figures associated with it. Broadly speaking, anarchism as a political theory has been conceptualised as politics directed against the state, capitalism, organised religion, coercive power, domination, and exploitation, among others. Anarchists, the story goes, strive

⁶³ That is not to say that such studies are not being attempted. See for example Anarchy Rules!, 'Anarchist Constitution', [Anarchy Rules], 2016, accessed 15 March 2018.

⁶⁴ R. Kinna and S. Evren eds, 'Blasting the Canon', *Anarchist Development in Cultural Studies*, Punctum Books, New York, 2013, pp. 1-6.

to achieve a world where individuals have freedom of self-determination and equality through the use of direct action and grassroots organising.

Historically, what might be called anarchist-oriented sentiments can be found throughout human history,⁶⁵ but as a self-aware or self-identifying movement its origin is linked primarily to working class organisation in nineteenth century Europe alongside Marxism and other forms of communism. The first explicitly anarchist writings, as far as Eltzbacher's canon is concerned, are those of William Godwin, particularly his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). The *Enquiry* outlined a division between human society and the state, arguing for the abolishment of the latter. However, Godwin decidedly did not support the idea of a revolutionary vanguard, as:

Either the people are unenlightened and unprepared for the state of freedom and then the struggle and the consequence of the struggle will be truly perilous; or the progress of political knowledge among them is decisive, and then everyone will see how futile and short lived will be the attempt to hold them in subjugation.⁶⁶

Anarchism did not gain popularity until another theorist took up a central role in working class organising – the ‘father of anarchism’, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Proudhon, heavily involved in the worker's movements of the 19th century and the French Revolution, expanded on anarchist philosophy, coining still popular slogans such as ‘Property is Theft’ and ‘Anarchy is Order’. The list continues with Proudhon's contemporary Mikhail Bakunin and later Peter Kropotkin, whose contributions developed anarchism as a rational political theory reliant on mutual cooperation and voluntary social structures. It is worth also mentioning a few of the countless women who were involved in producing anarchist theory. Emma Goldman was one of the first to incorporate gender into anarchist politics and contributed to militant

⁶⁵ For example, Taoist critique of rulers has often been linked to anarchism, as well as the ideas of the Cynics in Ancient Greece. Some Christian anarchists even consider Jesus to be an anarchist. For more, see A. Christoyannopolous, *Christian Anarchism: A Political Commentary on the Gospel*, Imprint Academic, Exeter, 2010.

⁶⁶ W. Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness*, The University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1946, p. 252.

action and anti-prison theory. Her colleague Voltairine de Cleyre advocated for unity among anarchists in the form of ‘anarchism without adjectives’.

By tracing the story of the anarchist canon, Kinna and Evren argue that the tradition of anarchism derived from these movements and texts still resonates, and more, has never been divorced from anarchist practices, propaganda or informal writings. Evren elaborates further in his doctoral dissertation: by asking ‘how to tell the story of the anarchist past’ he aims to show the problems in the currently dominant historicisation of anarchism. He shows that it is not enough to merely expand the canon to include theorists who have not been included previously.⁶⁷ We might need to take a lesson from Foucault and consider whether the process of canonisation might in itself have oppressive or detrimental effects on the anarchist movement.

The postanarchist thinkers have a complex relationship to this notion of canon. Saul Newman portrays postanarchism as moving beyond ‘classical’ anarchism, which he holds to correspond more or less to the canonised version of anarchism critiqued by Kinna and Evren. The composition of postanarchism as a field itself, however, remains unclear. The history of the label ‘postanarchist’ is divorced from many other attempts to combine poststructuralist insights with anarchism, most of which we might consider part of the same broad project. Rather than attempt our own canonisation of poststructuralist anarchist ideas, I have chosen to engage primarily with those authors who are explicitly engaged with the philosophical questions this dissertation is interested in.⁶⁸ The definition of anarchism we will start with, then, is one that is simultaneously broad and specific – anarchism as specific practices and ways of relating that are historically contingent and yet their genealogy is traceable. However, as we build on our understanding of anarchism, this definition will come back under scrutiny and be reformulated.

⁶⁷ See S. Evren, ‘What Anarchism? A Reflection on the Canon and the Constructive Potential of its Destruction’.

⁶⁸ These thinkers are also, for the most part, considered to be prominent postanarchists in the secondary literature.

1.3 (Post)anarchist ethics

The argument contained in the rest of the chapter proceeds through three stages. First, I explore the postanarchist rejection of 'classical' anarchist metaphysics. This rejection is largely based on the poststructuralist critique of essentialism, universal morality and representation. Even though their reading of 'classical' anarchism is somewhat reductive, I argue that their critique is still valid. Poststructuralists have managed to sufficiently problematise essentialism and universalist postulates, which therefore stipulates conditions that need to be met by any future anarchist ethical theories.

Secondly, I contend that this rejection has had the effect of (or has been part of a move to) shift away from metaphysics into epistemology. By rejecting the ontologies of 'classical' anarchism, postanarchist authors have become reluctant to explore their own metaphysical assumptions. This is part of a larger trend in political theory towards 'weak' ontologies. However, rather than solving the problems posed by essentialism and universals, this trend results in a lack of explicit engagement with metaphysics. Subsequently, I argue that this lack of engagement is detrimental for politics and ethics because without metaphysics we cannot make a critical analysis of the conditions by which we can understand our present situation.

Finally, I defend the claim that the epistemological problems of essentialism, representation and universal postulates emerge as a result of transcendent metaphysics. Moreover, I propose that the solution of these problems is not a critique of their symptoms but the formulation of a metaphysics of immanence. The original contribution to knowledge of this thesis is, therefore, to provide and defend such metaphysics utilising the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and his collaborative works with Guattari and thus to suggest a specifically anarchist form of immanent ethics.

1.3.1 Stage 1: Postanarchist epistemology

This section outlines the main features of postanarchism. It starts by setting it in the historical context of the movement, as well as outlining the theory it responds to. I then draw out the postanarchist critique of ‘classical’ anarchism, the rejection of ontological foundations such as essentialism, universal ethics or representation. Finally, I present the first major part of the thesis’ argument by claiming that postanarchism has not sufficiently established an ontological grounding that satisfies the conditions for non-essentialist, non-universal and non-representative politics/ethics. This is part of a general trend in political philosophy, often exemplified by the division between ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ ontologies. Weak ontologies, such as postanarchism, tend to provide an epistemological critique without engaging with ontological questions. Frequently, this is in an attempt to reject ‘strong’ ontological foundations of universalism or essentialism. I argue that even though the postanarchist critique of ‘classical’ anarchism is valid, without an explicit engagement with ontology anarchist ethics lack a normative ground on which to reject a politics of ‘anything goes’. Furthermore, I argue that the implicit ontological claims found in postanarchist texts are problematic because they do not necessarily contribute to the type of politics postanarchists have argued for.

The context of postanarchism

Even though some postanarchists claim a direct connection with the activist practices of the 1990s and 2000s, especially around Seattle, it is difficult to pinpoint the precise impetus behind the development of postanarchist theory. Most of its main proponents saw it as responding to the need to update ‘classical’ anarchist theory, a feeling that was growing even before the new alliances of Seattle had taken to the streets. Hakim Bey’s highly controversial

1987 essay 'Post-Anarchism Anarchy'⁶⁹ paved the way with claims about the "staleness" of the anarchist movement, its inability to relate to other anti-authoritarian struggles and its reliance on stiff and rigid doctrines that didn't correspond to then-contemporary practices:

Like Sinbad & the Horrible Old Man, anarchism staggers around with the corpse of a Martyr magically stuck to its shoulders . . . Between tragic Past & impossible Future, anarchism seems to lack a Present.⁷⁰

This critique of old methods was developed by Bey into a new type of activism, a variety of personal revolts, under the names of 'ontological anarchism', chaos, postanarchism among others. The style of the essay is polemical, but also highly artistic, adopting poetic language, a sort of embodied creative political statement.

This need to move beyond the stale debates that dominated anarchism and the critique of 'classical' anarchism was subsequently taken up by other postanarchists. Most notably in the Anglo-American context were Todd May, Simon Critchley and Saul Newman, who attempted to develop its foundations as well as offer a new direction for anarchist organising. Though their aims differed in many ways, in effect they were grouped together under the mantle 'postanarchism' because of their proximity to radical politics, but also their attempts to rework the foundations of such forms of resistance. Eventually, they also became a target of the same critique. The works of these three authors in particular have been widely contested due to a perceived misrepresentation and/or lack of acknowledgment of the 'classical' anarchist tradition. Here I am referring to the number of anarchist theorists who have convincingly argued that these postanarchists tend to reduce the anarchist

⁶⁹ H. Bey, 'Post-Anarchism Anarchy', in D. Rousselle and S. Evren eds, *Post-Anarchism. A Reader*, Pluto Press, New York, 2001, pp. 69-72.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 69.

tradition to their preferred straw-man.⁷¹ Simon Critchley, for example, seems to largely ignore a good deal of the philosophical and practical tradition of anarchism when he uses the term. *Infinitely Demanding* met with criticism that, although it is possible to reach anti-authoritarian egalitarian conclusions through many different lines of thought, as Critchley does with Levinas and Badiou, to then label them 'anarchic' without further reflection on that tradition is to reinforce the philosophical ignorance towards anarchism as a specific political tradition.⁷²

Similarly, the main criticism Newman faced for *From Bakunin to Lacan*, which he tried to address in his later book *Politics of Postanarchism*, centred on his reading of 'classical' anarchism. Newman's presentation of classical anarchism based on a benevolent view of human nature has been forcefully disputed by a number of theorists claiming that, on the contrary, some 'classical' anarchist theorists in fact adopt a (limited) social constructivist view by perceiving different ways humans relate to the world and seeing subjectivity as a blank canvas upon which society draws.⁷³ Indeed, by introducing this context, critics of Newman claim that Kropotkin's view of subjectivity opens up the possibilities of ethical self-determination rather than limiting them, since his view was a rejection of the essentialist Darwinist position that competition and survival should be the driving forces organising society. This view of the anarchist project construes cooperation and competition as two tendencies among many on which to build human

⁷¹ Notable criticisms can be found in A. Antliff, 'Anarchy, Power and Poststructuralism', *SubStance*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2007, p. 56-66; Cohn, J. & Wilbur, S., 'What's Wrong with Postanarchism?', *The Anarchist Library* [blog post], <<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/jesse-cohn-and-shawn-wilbur-what-s-wrong-with-postanarchism>>, accessed 20 Jun 2015; B. Franks, 'Postanarchism: A Critical Assessment', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2007, pp. 127-145; S. Jeppesen, 'Seeing Past the Outpost of Post-Anarchism', *Institute of Anarchist Studies*, 2004, pp. 1938-1948; R. Kinna, 'Fields of Vision: Kropotkin and Revolutionary Change'.

⁷² A. Robinson, 'Review of *Infinitely Demanding*', *Contemporary Political Theory*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 451-456.

⁷³ See, for example, P. Kropotkin, 'A Platformist Response to "Post-Anarchism"', [zine], 2003 <<https://zabalaza.net/2003/10/03/sucking-the-golden-egg-a-reply-to-newman/>>, accessed 4 May 2016; also J. Cohn, *Anarchism and the Crisis of Representation: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics, Politics*, Susquehanna University Press, Selinsgrove, 2006, p. 58 and R. Kinna, 'Fields of Vision: Kropotkin and Revolutionary Change'.

relations and societies.⁷⁴ As Newman's reading fails to acknowledge this and stands accused of contrasting postanarchism with a falsely essentialised classical anarchism, it seems to some critics that the whole of Newman's project is rendered redundant.⁷⁵

Even though I agree with Newman's critics that many of the works of 'classical' anarchism do not necessarily succumb to Newman's identification of essentialism (for example, the work of Kropotkin or Goldman), this discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis. For our purposes it will suffice to acknowledge the debate but not follow Cohn, Wilbur and others in dismissing postanarchism. For me, what is significant about the postanarchist project is that it introduces a poststructuralist framework and critique that anarchists cannot ignore if they are to continue being actors in the struggle against oppression. In this context, whether Newman has accurately depicted the form of anarchism he is departing from is neither here nor there and, as we see in 1.3.3, the critique of transcendence further reinforces these arguments.

Historically, postanarchist writings in the USA interrupted an anarchist-activist milieu dominated by a disagreement between Zerzan and Bookchin on the future of anarchism. Zerzan, who advocated for primitivist anarchism through the abolishment of technology and human society as we know it,⁷⁶ and Bookchin, known for his social anarchism based on Kropotkin, are two authors with prominent places in contemporary anarchist theory. Despite their differences, however, both have expressed strong feelings towards poststructuralist (or postmodern) versions of anarchist politics, dismissing them as shaky foundations on which to build a new society. Bookchin, for example, famously condemned 'lifestyle anarchism' that only feigns political

⁷⁴ R. Kinna, 'Fields of Vision: Kropotkin and Revolutionary Change', p. 76.

⁷⁵ See, for example, J. Cohn and S. Wilbur, 'What is Wrong with Postanarchism', 2011; and S. Villon, 'Post-Anarchism or Simply Post-Revolution', *The Anarchist Library*, [blog post], 2003, <<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/sasha-k-post-anarchism-or-simply-post-revolution>>, accessed 20 May 2016.

⁷⁶ J. Zerzan, *Future Primitive and Other Essays*, Semiotext(e), New York, 1996.

action, a philosophy that he argues produces nihilism and hopelessness. His main fear is that these individualistic tendencies are “antithetical to the development of serious organizations, a radical politics, a committed social movement, theoretical coherence and programmatic relevance.”⁷⁷

Arriving in this Anglo-American context, Newman’s *From Bakunin to Lacan* attempted to give fresh blood to anarchism studies by reflecting on the new type of political action that activists were doing on the streets. Primitivism and social anarchism, important strands as they are, do not take as central a place in this contemporary radical practice as intersectional, more inclusive and fragmented affinity structures have – ones which don’t necessarily identify with Marxism or anarchism as theoretical positions (probably partly because of their rigidity and inability to keep up with praxis). Newman’s work is an attempt to bridge the gap between these contemporary radical movements that seem to incorporate poststructuralist theory with anarchist theory through a variety of practices. Regardless of whether or not *From Bakunin to Lacan* offers a comprehensive view of classical anarchism, it successfully manages to show that an essentialised view of human nature is destructive for anarchism and a more poststructuralist approach could benefit anarchists. Perhaps, then, it becomes unnecessary to label ‘classic’ and ‘post-’ anarchism as two completely separate theories, a question Newman seems to be more aware of in *Politics of Postanarchism*, where he actively tries to trace the continuity between Bakunin, Kropotkin, Godwin and his own theoretical works.

Thus, regardless of whether ‘classical’ anarchism was entirely guilty of the charges presented by postanarchists, the epistemological concerns they raised were both timely and valid. If, in ‘classical’ anarchism, ethics needed to respond to the challenge of social Darwinist competition and a reconciliation

⁷⁷ M. Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*, AK Press, London, 1995, p. 19.

of means and ends,⁷⁸ contemporary anarchist ethics have identified a new set of challenges. Problematising the ontological foundations of deontology, consequentialism and 'classical' anarchist ethical positions, Newman, Critchley, May, Call and Koch, among others, have tried to show that ethics based on a universal telos or universal authority can result in oppression and inequality. This critique of universalism is now an unavoidable question when considering anarchist ethics as we will address later. Even critics of postanarchism such as Benjamin Franks are mostly united in their agreement that deontology and consequentialism do not fit with anarchist values.

Around the same time as Todd May was writing the seminal *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* in 1994, Andrew Koch wrote 'Poststructuralism and the Epistemological Basis of Anarchism,'⁷⁹ in which he argued that "a new theory of anarchism cannot be based on the ontological assumptions contained within the classical anarchist literature."⁸⁰ Koch's argument rests on three critiques: a critique of representation, of human nature and of universal truths, all of which he extends to ontology itself: "Post-structuralism challenges the idea that it is possible to create a stable ontological foundation for the creation of universal statements about human nature."⁸¹

Koch explores the 'classical' anarchist metaphysical foundations of Godwin, Kropotkin and Proudhon, finding common threads in the way they have constructed the philosophical grounds of anarchism. The ontological claims rejected by Koch, and later other postanarchists, revolve around the validity of representation and the status of universal 'truths', thereby also rejecting the legitimacy of representative democracy or state power and exposing their contingency. This provides the grounds for a critique of the state rather than

⁷⁸ See R. Kinna, 'Fields of Vision: Kropotkin and Revolutionary Change'; P. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, PM Press, Oakland, 2002, pp. 234-361.

⁷⁹ A. M. Koch, 'Poststructuralism and Epistemological Basis of Anarchism', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1993.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 24.

an ontological understanding of human beings as benign and cooperative – what Koch calls an epistemological defence of anarchism, one that “questions the processes out of which a ‘characterization’ of the individual occurs.”⁸² Thus, Koch’s fundamental move is to reject ontologies that rely on the *a priori* of epistemological perspectives. In other words, any given ontological position is always already based on a particular epistemological orientation, implying that there is no starting premise which is not representative of one’s own subjective understanding of the world.

To draw out the similarities among the postanarchists further, this reluctance towards ontological questions is traceable in Lewis Call’s works, as well as Richard Day’s and Todd May’s. Both Koch and Call reject classical anarchist ontology on the basis of it being always representative, as does May also through his critique of traditional Marxism. May introduces a division between tactical and strategic political philosophy. Marxism, an example of the ‘strategic’ mode of thinking, carries a view of distribution of power that relies on representative ontology.⁸³ This epistemological position is juxtaposed with ‘tactical’ political philosophy (including that of the poststructuralists), which instead carries a view of “power as decentralised, the sites of oppression as numerous and intersecting,”⁸⁴ and is best exemplified in the works of Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard. Anarchism, May continues, sits ambivalently between the two because it has a more decentralised view of power but at the same time relies on an essentialist understanding of human nature.⁸⁵

This leads May to emphatically reject “the type of philosophical and political perspective”⁸⁶ out of which strategic philosophies emerge and embrace tactical political theory in a form of politics that is not grounded on all-encompassing stable metaphysics. This could be seen as the root of May’s

⁸² *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁸³ T. May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, p. 7.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 14.

problem in the final chapter where he struggles to find the foundation of ethical action, asking the question “can [poststructuralist discourse] be ethically grounded?”⁸⁷ May does not seem to be able to sufficiently answer that question and ends up suggesting a form of rational-universalist ethics completely at odds with his own analysis and his affinity with poststructuralism. We shall look into his critique in more detail later.

In a similar vein, Saul Newman rejects ontologies based on

human essence, a certain view of historical development (whether dialectical, materialist or evolutionary) and a rationalist vision of social relations – which were seen to be part of a natural order outside the world of power.⁸⁸

‘Classical’ anarchists, he claims, are guilty of these and he instead opts to start his analysis from a position of anarchy, rather than end with it.⁸⁹ He follows Todd May’s account to the point of recognising the importance of difference for poststructuralists and claims that postanarchist ethics need to be based not on a spurious notion of human essence or rationality, but on constant questioning, a “refusal to accept anything on its own terms.”⁹⁰ Rather than a morally-authentic self – a notion of the self dialectically subordinated to universal moral and rational laws – he posits the idea of the self being ethically authentic, precisely through the questioning of this very idea of authenticity. This latter interpretation implies an identity that is “structurally open, contingent, and morally-autonomous,”⁹¹ and instead of grounding itself in essential human identities it is based on an empty signifier that is open to a multitude of struggles.⁹² We shall return to Saul Newman’s ontological foundations later, along with Simon Critchley’s, but for now it is enough to

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸⁸ S. Newman, *Politics of Postanarchism*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2010, p. 51.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹⁰ S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2001, p. 173.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 173.

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 164.

acknowledge that the imperative to reject universalism and essential identity categories is also a central premise of his work.

Given these points, it is evident that by rejecting the metaphysical foundations of 'classical' anarchism, postanarchism attempts to constitute a radical break with other anarchist conceptualisations of ethics. Whilst their use of poststructuralism has led them to question universal statements about human nature, this is the point at which I side with Duane Rouselle to claim that "post-anarchism is the realization of traditional anarchist meta-ethics . . . but it is an incomplete project insofar as it has focused only on the epistemological dimension of meta-ethics."⁹³ Indeed, Rouselle takes Koch's argument to show that postanarchists have been unable to conceive of the possibility of an ontology that is neither representative nor essentialist, thus never explicitly engaging with ontological questions of their own.⁹⁴

This problem is indicative of a larger trend in political studies which is not only applicable to postanarchist theory. As Nathan Widder remarks, political theory of the '60s and '70s sought to avoid ontological discussions about the nature of human beings, politics and society and instead used two main strategies to minimise reliance on metaphysics: a minimalist conception of the self and the use of generally accepted 'common knowledge' statements as a starting point.⁹⁵ The ontological turn in political theory in the 1980s rejected this dominant normative bias and turned towards Nietzsche-inspired theorists for alternative metaphysics, resulting in a split of 'weak' versus 'strong' ontologies by the 1990s. Motivated by the "dissatisfaction with both mainstream theory's 'disengaged subject' (the subject of Rawl's original position) and the relativism that seems to follow from this subject's deconstruction,"⁹⁶ weak ontologies were designed to both affirm ethico-political positions and avoid recourse to universal metaphysical statements

⁹³ D. Rouselle, *After Post-Anarchism*, Repartee, Berkeley, 2012, p. 32.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁵ N. Widder, *Political Theory After Deleuze*, Continuum, London, 2012, p. 6.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

about the world. They acknowledge that an ontological foundation is needed, but at the same time make explicit the contestability of their own ontological assumptions through practices of self-reflexivity and disclaimers about the normativity of their suggestions. Strong ontologies, on the other hand, rely on metaphysics grounded on an external principle and produce a strong ethical commitment to a normative set of ideals.

At the core of this division between weak and strong ontology is a deeper philosophical disagreement, which Levi Bryant calls 'the problem of hegemony of epistemology'. The crux of his argument is that there are two opposing poles in philosophy, based upon different starting presuppositions around the division between nature and culture, which also correspond to subject/object. Epistemological realists are concerned with producing knowledge that represents the world as accurately as possible – the most accurate mirror of reality. This was, in a way, the goal of the Enlightenment project – discovering the true nature of a world which is objective and not biased by cultures, societies, religion, etc. The anti-realists, on the other hand, would argue that representation falls entirely within the domain of the subject and there are no criteria by which we can determine if representation is accurate or merely a product of our imagination. This constructivist position also leads to an understanding of truth as residing in the shared representation itself rather than a direct correspondence between representation and reality.⁹⁷ The result of these two approaches, Bryant argues, is that the question of the nature of objects, of *what* they are (ontology), becomes a question of *how* we know objects (epistemology).⁹⁸ Moreover, the question of how we know things, he claims, has long been dominated by representation as the primary relationship between the mind and what is outside of it.⁹⁹ Thus, the division between the two different types of political theory becomes a division on the nature of truth, and more

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 14-16.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 16.

⁹⁹ L. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects*, Open Humanities Press, London, 2011, pp. 13-14.

specifically, whether it is possible to ever reach a shared, universal truth.

That this disagreement about universal shared reality becomes a problem for ethics is famously exemplified by the debate between Michael Foucault and Jurgen Habermas.¹⁰⁰ Foucault, along with other poststructuralists, was subjected to criticism from several critical theorists, most notably Habermas and Fraser, for never explicitly articulating his ethical position, thereby creating the impression that he did not consider it to be present in his work. Subsequently, this lack of an ethical position or commitment to a specific type of ethics was branded a 'crypto-normative' ethical position in itself. As Habermas points out, in order to make evaluative judgments about social conditions and act on these analyses we must seek a recourse to a stronger normative theory which lays out clear goals against which our practice can be evaluated.¹⁰¹ Foucault's genealogical method, he tells us, is guilty of rejecting the possibility for such a space where politics is grounded, thus creating a performative contradiction:

Genealogical historiography emerges from its cocoon as precisely the presentistic, relativistic, cryptonormative illusory science that it does not want to be... it follows the movement of a radically historicist extinction of the subject and ends up in an unholy subjectivism.¹⁰²

The Habermasian critique, in this sense, takes the side of 'strong' ontologies by discerning that Foucault in particular – and poststructuralism in general – provides an epistemological critique based on (dangerously) 'relativist' ethics since they reject any possibility for 'objective' truth. For Habermas, and later

¹⁰⁰ Interestingly, a similar debate went on between Judith Butler, a broadly Foucauldian poststructuralist, and Seyla Benhabib, a critical theorist, with regards to feminist theory and the death of the subject. Butler is arguably more convincing than May in expressing the problems with critical theory's universalist and normative approaches and in articulating the ethics of Foucault. For example, Butler clearly refutes the notion that poststructuralism cannot lend itself to an elaboration of social critique. Although she does to an extent agree with her critics in saying that poststructuralism has no political implications in and of itself, she considers it to have "a possible political deployment". See F. Webster, 'The Politics of Sex and Gender: Benhabib and Butler Debate Subjectivity', *Hypatia*, vol. 15, no. 1, Winter 2000, pp. 1-22.

¹⁰¹ J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1987, p. 275.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 276.

May, this rejection precludes the possibility of any coherently grounded collective action.

The crucial aspect of this critique for the argument proposed here is Habermas' assumption that politics, and political action, can only be based on a unified, rational, modern subject, and that, therefore, subjectivism would be detrimental. Unfortunately, this is the assumption that also underpins Todd May's *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*. On one hand, together with other poststructuralists, he embraces a critique of Modernity and its transcendent metaphysics, and on the other, he seems to hold objectivity and universal values to be necessary components of collective action. I argue that Habermas is right to claim that there is an implicit ethical position in poststructuralism¹⁰³ and that this should not be taken lightly or sidestepped. However, I disagree with him about where this leads. As Braidotti puts it, "[t]he response to this challenge is neither the exaltation of neo-universalism, nor the retreat into relativism, but a neo-materialist discursive ethics based on non-unitary subjectivity. Poststructuralist philosophers provide such a response."¹⁰⁴ In other words, the initial formulations of postanarchist ethics and their rejection of Enlightenment-based approaches fall prey to the general critiques directed towards poststructuralism. Rather than embracing and constructing new forms of metaphysics which are compatible with the postanarchist project, Koch and May opt to minimise any engagement with questions of ontology.

While Widder is critical of the binary categorisation into weak and strong ontologies, calling it 'forced' and reductive,¹⁰⁵ he is right to identify that certain strands of political theory have sought to redefine their foundations in such a way that they avoid dogmatism, grand narratives and are open to fallibility. This redefinition is correctly taken to be an anti-metaphysical

¹⁰³ Indeed, poststructuralists would likely argue that there are implicit ethical positions in every theory.

¹⁰⁴ R. Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁵ N. Widder, *Political Theory After Deleuze*, p. 9.

one.¹⁰⁶ In this example, Habermas' position rests on a firm metaphysical foundation, while postanarchism could be seen as one of the 'weak' ontologies, occupying a middle ground between stable universalism and poststructuralism. By refusing to draw a direct connection between its ontological claims and the moral/political principles that could be derived from them, postanarchist theory rejects metaphysics (in the traditional sense) which is seen to lead inevitably to dogmatism.

The position of this thesis is that, on the contrary, metaphysics is a crucial aspect of anarchist politics. More specifically, I claim that it is possible to have our (metaphysical) cake and eat it. I argue that all political positions imply a certain view about the nature of reality – the belief that issues such as equality, freedom or solidarity 'matter' contains an ontological claim, rather than a 'purely' ethical one. It is the subject's position in relation to everything else that produces these beliefs. The question of what we take to be real and important becomes a significant political question. Thus, ethics and metaphysics are not two separate lines of inquiry, applicable to two discernible spheres of human life, but part of a continuum. Anarchism, as the multi-layered struggle we defined, brings with it a particular type (or types) of understanding of the world, effectively resulting in the selection of particular (political) issues and problems we deem important. The main difficulty stemming from the anarchist need for metaphysics draws on two main postulates, which are explored in the rest of the chapter. On one hand, by taking seriously the critique of essentialism, representation and universalism presented by postanarchists, it becomes impossible to ground political action in human nature or representative democracy. On the other hand, without problematisation of its own metaphysical assumptions, postanarchist theory cannot make a critical analysis of the conditions by which we can understand our present situation, or the conditions for change. Thus, crucially, what is needed is a particular type of metaphysics which does

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

not lead to dogmatism and is able to constantly problematise its own limits by producing an ethical practice without creating an 'anything goes' situation. In other words, a metaphysics that is simultaneously 'strong', but also responds to the challenges raised by the 'weak' ontologies.

Before moving on to expand these points, let us briefly recapitulate. I started this argument with the claim that postanarchism rejects classical anarchist ontology based on a poststructuralist critique of human nature and the universal rational subject. Despite their (mis)representation of anarchist theory, this remains a valid position, which we need to take seriously in future radical politics. Moreover, we built on this statement with the argument that postanarchists have largely focused on epistemological problems due to their inability to conceive of non-representational, non-essentialist metaphysics. This was situated in the larger contexts of political theory and philosophy and exemplified in relation to ethics with the Foucault-Habermas debate. Finally, I put forward the claim that this question of metaphysics needs to be addressed if we are to understand the possibility for ethical action that is neither dogmatic, nor relativist. Not engaging with the foundations of postanarchist theory does not simply result in a lack of metaphysics, but in a lack of their problematisation.

The postanarchist meta-ethical critique

In this rest of this section we will explore the three main authors of postanarchism in more detail. The aim is twofold. First, I present the postanarchist critique of 'classical' anarchist ethics in more detail, more specifically their critique of meta-ethical foundations. I argue that the problems of essentialism, universal ethical claims and representation do indeed need to be taken into consideration in radical anarchist politics. Thus, I aim to analyse in depth the problems postanarchist literature sets out to solve in relation to ethics. Secondly, I present the implicit metaphysical assumptions underlying the type of politics postanarchists argue for. I am looking at the main ontological conditions that post-anarchists rely on for

their new understanding of ethics – ethics that are non-essentialist, non-universalist and anti-representational. I draw out some similarities and differences between their theories and briefly outline some postanarchist conceptualisations of ethical subjectivity.

In doing this, we address the two main statements of the argument above, namely the validity of the postanarchist critique of ‘classical’ anarchism, and the claim that metaphysical assumptions underpin the postanarchist political project. This section utilises narratives that have emerged from postanarchist writings in the last twenty years. For this reason, the chapter focuses on three postanarchist writers in depth but also considers various others. Todd May, Saul Newman and Simon Critchley are the three figures most strongly associated with the theory of postanarchism, though people such as Hakim Bey, Süreyya Evren, Lewis Call, Bob Black, Jamie Heckert and Duane Rouselle have also had a finger in the postanarchist potluck. My interest in the first three is their engagement with ethics, specifically the problems they identify with ‘classical’ anarchist ethics and the solutions they propose. The meta-narrative that these men have created about anarchist ethics will serve as a starting point for the second part of my argument, leading us to identify transcendent metaphysics as the root of the problems posed by postanarchists. Methodologically, this first section will attempt to flesh out the problems postanarchists identify with ‘classical’ anarchism, and the set of premises postanarchist ethics need to fulfil in order to avoid these problems.

Non-essentialist ethical subjectivity

Hakim Bey’s demand to ‘update’ anarchism and bring it closer to the streets was one of the earliest battle cries of the new turn in anarchism, but Todd May was the first one to properly take up the task of theorising the connections between anarchism and poststructuralism. *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* is written from a poststructuralist perspective and is explicitly concerned with postanarchist ethics. Laying a path that other postanarchist theorists would later follow, May leads with an analysis of

Marxism and its decline following the failure of national communist experiments in the twentieth century. In light of the end of the Soviet Union this was, of course, a heated subject and as much as anarchists could wag their finger and shout “I told you so,” it was a dark time for the whole left spectrum. However, May’s aim with this opening discussion is not to rub salt into the wound, but to distinguish Marxism as a ‘strategic’ political philosophy, which sees power centralised in the state and capitalism, and eventually the proletariat, while conceptualising anarchism as a ‘tactical’ philosophy that identifies various loci of power in society.¹⁰⁷

On this basis, the book draws a parallel between several ethical principals in poststructuralism and notes their similarities with anarchist thought.¹⁰⁸ May begins by identifying several problems with classical anarchism, making a point that most postanarchists will repeat later: many anarchist theorists assume the existence of an innately good human nature that will support a society of mutual aid and cooperation if humans can be liberated from oppressive structures of power. This view is mostly based on the works of Kropotkin and Bakunin and is taken to provide an ethical basis for the anarchist project, liberating a repressed human essence.¹⁰⁹

However, as May is concerned to show, in the light of the poststructuralist critique of human nature, it seems that anarchists cannot rely on essence to provide the foundation for ethics any more. Colin Ward, for example, is one of the anarchists who recognised this problem by calling for fragmented, decentralised networks as a mode of organising society, together with Emma Goldman who followed Nietzsche in calling for a re-valuation of values.¹¹⁰ May terms the issue of human nature and the assumption that power is suppressive the ‘*a priori*’ of anarchist thought, a problem that haunts it but is not derived from an analysis of political situations. Instead, May sees the pair

¹⁰⁷ T. May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, p. 36.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 34.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 35.

of assumptions as hampering anarchism by imposing themselves from the outside, rather than being needed or derived from within.¹¹¹

About ten years later a similar thought informed Saul Newman's initial writings on postanarchism. Anarchist theory, he claims, relies on a set of philosophical premises that have been undermined by poststructuralism. Newman's *From Bakunin to Lacan* presents the narrative of a 'classical' anarchism which does not fit with contemporary activist practices, thereby setting the task of reinventing anarchism through the insights of poststructuralism. Newman's argument, mostly articulated in the second chapter of the book, is that 'classical' anarchism offers an essentialised, authoritative foundation that does not appeal to contemporary radical movements. This morality, he claims, "has its basis in human nature, not in any external source."¹¹²

Based on a reading of Kropotkin and Bakunin, Newman claims that 'classical' anarchists saw the individual as a pure being that has been contaminated by power. The purpose of the anarchist political agenda was therefore to resist that power from a position outside of it and restore the oppressed human subjectivity to its rightful state.¹¹³ However, Newman alerts us that there is a trap contained in this position, namely that essentialist notions of human nature could be the basis of reproducing domination, as seems to be the case with Marxism.¹¹⁴

One major difference between Marxism and anarchism, he claims, is that in anarchism both the means and the ends need to be libertarian, leading to a specific type of prefigurative politics.¹¹⁵ This need arises from the tension of using authoritarian means to achieve revolutionary goals, which would carry an untenably high risk of leading to an authoritarian, hierarchical structure in

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, p. 38.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p. 51.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 47.

¹¹⁵ S. Newman, *Postanarchism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2016, p. 118

any future society. Newman advocates for an anarchism which is aware of this trap and rejects essentialism in favour of a Foucauldian conception of power and post-colonial and feminist discourses on human subjectivity. It is important for him that this should not lead to nihilism and an inability to structure resistance, but instead to the formulation of a new place 'outside of power' which allows for a non-essentialist notion of the outside.¹¹⁶

The argument that 'classical' anarchist thought relies on an essential, benign human nature has, as mentioned previously, been criticised and rejected. Regardless of whether Kropotkin and Bakunin's view of subjectivity was indeed irrevocably essentialist (exploring this is beyond the scope of this thesis), exposing human nature as a set of contingent, socially constructed practices is at the heart of the poststructuralist project. Both Foucault's explorations of power and Deleuze's concept of individuation problematise the idea that there even is such an entity we could recognise as 'self'. Furthermore, feminist and intersectional approaches compel us to acknowledge the ways gender, race and class cannot be separated from the production of social bodies as always already gendered, racialised and class-bound, scrutinising the attribution of essentialist characteristics to these bodies. In this sense, postanarchists are in good company with their critique of essentialism. However, if benign human nature is no longer to be a stable foundation for anarchist ethics, what kind of conceptualisation of human subjectivity is required for radical (anarchist) action?

Constructing an ethical subjectivity that does not rely on an essentialist understanding of human nature and simultaneously serves as the basis for political action has been the main task of Simon's Critchley postanarchist project. *Infinitely Demanding* is primarily focused on exploring possibilities for both universally applicable and contextually particular ethics. The book focuses on the problem of ethics as a political concept, divided into two aspects: meta-ethics, or the theory surrounding ethics, and normative ethics,

¹¹⁶ S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, p. 6.

which refers to the application of ethical rules. The central question of his book concerns the impetus to act politically, the motivation behind ethical subjectivity. Critchley opens his argument by presenting the ‘problem of disappointment’ and the active and passive nihilisms it produces. Passive nihilism, stemming from disappointment in modernist humanism, is the belief that no one can change anything and is translated into practices for “discovering the inner child, manipulating pyramids, writing pessimistic-sounding literary essays, taking up yoga, bird-watching or botany.”¹¹⁷ The active nihilist, on the other hand, departs from the same moment of disappointment, but instead focuses on destroying the world and creating a new one, believing that the fault is with current political institutions, rather than the political order itself. It emerges in the agendas of various political and terrorist groups, with al-Qaeda as its zenith. *Infinitely Demanding* tries to conceptualise an ethical experience that avoids these two extremes through a framework of ethical subjectivity based on infinite demands.

Critchley makes three concepts central in his quest: Badiou’s fidelity to the event, which Critchley links to the concept of commitment, Logstrup’s formulation of the ethical demand as unfulfillable, radical and one-sided, and Levinas’s idea that “the unfulfillability of the ethical demand is internal to subjectivity,”¹¹⁸ defining ethical subjectivity through a constant demand that cannot be met. To spice things up, Critchley also adds a bit of Lacan with his notion of trauma and claims that the ethical subject is always divided between itself and an infinite demand that it cannot meet, simultaneously producing the subject as it is and dividing it. Critchley’s formulation begins with a meta-ethical discussion of the process through which the subject commits itself to a specific framework of good and bad based on its approval or rejection of a demand – what Critchley calls ‘ethical experience’. He makes an interesting point here, differentiating between ethical and factual statements. An ethical statement always calls for approval, while a factual one

¹¹⁷ S. Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*, Verso, London, 2014, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 10.

supposedly presents only empirical information. He describes how a fact can also contain an implicit ethical demand, for example in the statement “The bomb is going to explode.” However, he doesn’t elaborate on this claim. His focus remains the way ethical experience structures subjectivity in a constant process of demand and approval. Critchley sees this as a circular pattern where both the demand and the creation of the subject are internal, and the demand requires an action from the subject which is constituted through the act of granting approval. The first chapter ends with a discussion on Kantian ethics and their hegemony in the study of ethics when it comes to the impetus for political actions. This hegemony can be traced through Kant to Fichte, Marx and Heidegger in the form of what Critchley calls ‘autonomy orthodoxy’. Here, the experience of an ethical demand is always divided into internal and external, with priority given to the internal as the individual appropriates an external demand. This results in experiencing moral claims ‘as externally compulsory, but not internally compelling’.¹¹⁹

The main problem with Kantian ethics, Critchley claims, is that they are supposedly universal but need to be equally relevant for particular situations. Therefore, the ethical demand seems to arrive externally as a fact placed upon an already-constituted subject. In an attempt to resolve this without falling into relativism, Critchley introduces an aspect of the ethical demand called ‘situated universality’.¹²⁰ The ethical demand, following Badiou’s reading of Levinas, is both contextual (or singular) and universal, being a direct response to a specific context with claims to be applicable universally. In practice, this is exemplified by an individual reacting to an event, let’s say a murder. The ethical demand for action is not reducible to only one individual, only one murder or only a specific place. The demand is thus, in principle, universal. Critchley goes on to introduce more of Badiou’s philosophy to conceptualise his idea of ethical subjectivity and the way it is constituted. Similarly to Nietzsche, Badiou sees ethics as active and not reactive – the commitment to

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 39.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 42.

ethics already exists when the demand is issued. However, that does not imply that ethics are general; on the contrary, they are only ethics of processes. Thus, the concept of commitment, or truths, becomes vital. Truths in Badiou's terms are 'durable non-relativistic maxims' that are not scientific statements that can be tested, but rather refer to being true *to* something. In a confusing spiral of demand-subject-demand, the subject commits itself to an ethical framework which in fact cannot be based on a pre-given subject since the subject is always becoming and being called into existence by an event which takes the form of an ethical demand. Tracing this ethical subjectivity through a reading of Levinas and Badiou's theories, Critchley introduces Logstrup's ethical theology through the concept of 'infiniteness'. An ethical demand, he claims, is infinite – it can never be fulfilled. It is the demand Jesus issued when he said "Love thy neighbour as thyself", entrusting people with a radical demand that they could not possibly fulfil unless they happen to be a deity themselves. Regardless of where the demand comes from (a divine or non-divine source), Critchley chooses to focus on the fact that this demand is unfulfillable to anyone who is not God and therefore serves as a permanent drive to become more god-like, thus shaping our subjectivity. In addition, the unfulfillability of the demand produces a certain psychological trauma, as Critchley tries to show using Lacan.

Critchley's model of ethical subjectivity so far only sets the foundations of his argument without explaining how the divided, traumatised subject is actually motivated to commit to political actions. In chapter three, he introduces sublimation via humour as a means for moving away from the autonomy orthodoxy, where a heroic-tragic line of thought was dominant. Humour, in the form of self-irony, allows the super-ego to laugh at the subject and thereby take the unfulfillability of the demand not as a punishment, but as a self-reflective learning experience. In the last chapter, Critchley wraps up his argument by translating his ethical and meta-ethical theory into political practice. One of the most interesting points he makes is that not only is the revolutionary vanguard not the proletariat, but neither is it simply going to

appear 'naturally' as Marx might have thought, and can instead only be self-consciously constructed as such.¹²¹ Taking an anti-statist political stance, Critchley advocates for a position that is distanced from the state, creating spaces that will allow for the construction of that political subject. With the infinitely demanding ethics he presents providing the motivation for political action, humour is seen as the anarchist model of resistance, with examples such as the WOMBLES and protesters in Seattle who use street theatre and performance to disrupt police oppression. Critchley ends on a positive note, with hopeful excitement about carnivalesque resistance practices.¹²²

The publication of *Infinitely Demanding* marked a shift in the thinking of a number of radical political theorists. Somewhat revising his views on essentialism ten years later in *The Politics of Postanarchism*, Newman addresses some of the criticisms of his first book with a more in-depth reading of classic anarchism and once again makes the argument for the relevance of postanarchism today and its differences with classic anarchism (including its contemporary advocates Zerzan and Bookchin). The primary task of this book is to theorise (anarchist) radical politics outside the state, or rather, beyond the state, and explore their place in the political world. The next section will briefly outline the changes in Newman's views on ethical subjectivity and discuss it together with Simon Critchley's as they both focus on the infinite demand of ethical subjectivity.

In his usual polemical style, Newman strides forth with the claim that contemporary activism seems reluctant to commit itself to theories of classic anarchism, but at the same time adopts a kind of politics that resembles anarchist principles, at least from out of the corner of the eye. It rejects power and authority and challenges political and social institutions such as the state, patriarchy, etc. At the same time, it adopts various forms of action such as unionism, direct democracy and horizontal organising, practices ranging

¹²¹ *ibid.* p. 102.

¹²² *ibid.*, pp. 123-128.

across the whole left spectrum, as well as incorporating queer theory, post-colonial theory and poststructuralist insights. For Newman these are some of the many reasons to call contemporary activist practice postanarchist.

Newman's book is entirely oriented towards providing a framework for understanding postanarchism and its practices, using authors such as Deleuze and Guattari, Hardt and Negri, Laclau and Mouffe, as well as anarchists like Zerzan and Bookchin. Similarly to Critchley, Newman tries to find the motivation behind political actions, focusing on the way the subject can overcome power and act in exteriority to it so as not to replicate its structures.¹²³ For both of them, the problem of ethics seems to be the point of departure, and even though Newman is not committed to Levinas, he also conceives of postanarchist ethics based on an infinite demand to the other. However, in *Politics of Postanarchism* this demand is towards the state, not the individual, advocating for more and more changes in government policies so as to implicitly call into question its sovereignty. This position echoes Žižek's critique of Critchley,¹²⁴ emphasising the significance of the distance between the two postanarchists on this issue.¹²⁵

Moreover, Newman's use of Levinas seems not to cohere with one of the main tenets of classic anarchism he wants to preserve, namely that of equal-liberty, or Bakunin's "I am free only when all human beings surrounding me . . . are equally free."¹²⁶ The Levinasian subject is not necessarily free or equal with the others, but could assume a martyr-like position towards authority and therefore negate some anarchist practices. The Levinasian ethical subject appears frequently in the ontologies of radical politics today, and we shall address them and my critique of them later on in the chapter.

¹²³ S. Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, p. 7.

¹²⁴ Slavoj Žižek famously criticised Simon Critchley's *Infinitely Demanding* in the London Review of Books' 'Resistance is Surrender'. Academics T.J. Clark and David Graeber responded, which compelled Žižek to elaborate further in chapter 7 of *In Defense of Lost Causes*. The exchange concluded with Critchley's piece for the Naked Punch: 'Violent Thoughts about Slavoj Žižek'. The crux of Žižek's critique is that the politics Critchley advocates for are futile in practice and radical left politics should instead be focusing on demanding the impossible from the state.

¹²⁵ S. Newman, op. cit., p. 114.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 20.

Rejecting universalism

The problem of essentialism that postanarchists have identified is, in some writings more explicit than others, inevitably bound up with the problems of moral universalism and moral relativism. We have seen how taking up the notion of essential human nature and making it a universal basis of ethics has been problematised, but this section will try to situate this problem in a broader framework.

For much of what comes under 'classical' anarchism for Newman and the other postanarchists, an appeal to universal rules in ethics comes either in the form of deontological or consequentialist ethical frameworks.¹²⁷ Both of these approaches have been problematised by other anarchists on the basis of either amoralism (in the form of acknowledging moral law exists but rejecting its binding power), or subjectivism, which is the line taken up by Newman. As Benjamin Franks has observed, the postanarchists identify and critique three forms of universalism as it appears within meta-ethics.¹²⁸ These forms are: naturalism, a belief in objective standards fixed by nature; rationalism, the notion that universal rules can be identified with reason, as is the case with Kantian rationalism; and intuitionism, which is the conviction that universal moral rules are derived from a special sense or intuition. Dedicating a whole book to the topic, Newman is our first choice to exemplify the postanarchist critique. I quote at length:

Universal political positions and strategies are seen as inherently authoritarian because they not only fail to confront more diffuse, hidden forms of domination – at the level of discourses, social practices and institutions – but also because they are based on essentialist conceptions of subjectivity and rationality, and they therefore deny perspectives and forms of subjectivity that do not fit into this paradigm.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ B. Franks, 'Anarchism and Meta-Ethics', *Anarchist Studies*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2008, p. 138.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 138.

¹²⁹ S. Newman, *Unstable Universalities*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2007, p. 4

What Newman seems to be putting forward here is the idea that universal rules promote hierarchies of power and that, concomitantly, there is no epistemological basis on which these rules can be founded. Let us examine these two aspects in more detail.

The fact that universalist forms of morality lead to hidden forms of power and are coercive has been recognised as a problem by anarchists as far back as the early rejections of religious (church) morality as oppressive. As Franks has observed, most anarchist arguments against morality boil down to two main objections. Firstly, some anarchists adopt an economic or social deterministic position, thus rejecting moral behaviour as means for achieving social change. Secondly, ethics/morality is often conceptualised as a tool of the upper classes to silence political resistance, exemplified by the phrase attributed to Brecht: "Bread first, then ethics."¹³⁰ The latter position is closely bound to the notion of universal ethics as hierarchical, while the former is arguably a complete rejection of morality.

Secondly, there is a meta-ethical rejection of the foundation of universal ethics. Stemming from the critique of essentialism presented earlier, Newman draws on Foucault, Deleuze and Derrida to reject universal norms as "grounded in a particular epistemological and cultural paradigm."¹³¹ He argues that, on one hand, the poststructuralist critique of human nature reveals the role of discourse as constitutive of the subject and therefore contingent, thus questioning the foundations of universalism. A similar critique is applied to reason or moral intuition as the universal grounding of ethics. As Newman argues, with Foucault, different social practices have their own discourses which are normalised to appear universal. Neither reason nor intuition are essential attributes of humans. On the other hand, he claims, "life in post-industrial societies is too complex, diverse and heterogenous to be explained within the rational and moral categories of the Enlightenment

¹³⁰ B. Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The Means and Ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms*, AK Press, Edinburgh, 2006, pp. 93-95.

¹³¹ S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, p. 150.

paradigm, and that therefore these categories can no longer serve as the foundation for social and political consensus.”¹³² Thus, universal ethical frameworks are rejected on the basis of the lack of a legitimate foundation for their universality and because they fail to describe the complexity of contemporary life.

This rejection of coercive universal morality is solved by Newman through establishing a distinction between ethics and morality. Morality is taken to refer to a strict normative code which is applied (universally) without question and therefore has the greater potential to be oppressive, while ethics refers to recommendations or blueprints for praxis along certain lines or principles. The postanarchist contribution, then, is to return ethics, instead of morality, to the forefront of political thought. These emerge in Newman’s claims that anarchism is first and foremost an ethical position and Critchley’s paraphrasing of Kant that “ethics without politics is blind.”¹³³

To exemplify this point, Saul Newman’s position is a good starting place. He claims that there are ethical limits to what we can and should do regarding oppressive behaviours. Ethics is supposed to provide a method for discerning which political actions are justifiable.¹³⁴ However, he is against an ethical limit “imposed from a metaphysical place that transcends discourse”¹³⁵ and instead calls for embracing uncertainty and instability. Morality, conversely, forces the individual to conform to a particular identity, thus eliminating any trace of difference and otherness. The motivation behind this differentiation is to construct ethics that are not coercive, but instead serve as a blueprint for action. Newman contends that such ethics still need a foundation of rationality but proposes instead applying Laclau’s logic of the ‘empty signifier’, where rationality and morality are empty signifiers not based on ideas of essence or humanism, but remain open to an endless series of

¹³² S. Newman, *Unstable Universalities*, p. 2.

¹³³ S. Critchley, *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas and Contemporary French Thought*, Verso, London, 1999, p. 283.

¹³⁴ S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, p. 160.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 161.

signifieds:

...anarchist morality and rationality no longer have to remain tied to a certain conception of humanity or nature. They can be freed from such essentialist grounds and become free-floating signifiers, structurally open to a multitude of different struggles.¹³⁶

In this way, Newman can simultaneously criticise universal ethical rules from an anarchist viewpoint of them being coercive whilst at the same time offering ethical principles that avoid this problem.

The division between morality and ethics is not employed in the same manner by Todd May, arguably because he does not conceptualise universalism as strictly problematic the same way Newman does. May recognises the fact that Deleuze, Foucault and other neo-Nietzscheans make a distinction between ethics and morality, but doesn't align himself with this position, preferring the more traditional use of the terms as interchangeable¹³⁷ (he does not provide reasons for this choice). May also recognises Foucault's rejection of morality, Lyotard's suspicion of it and Deleuze's reformulation, but nevertheless, for him, the distinction between the two is only superficial as, he contends, the poststructuralist stance against morality is itself an ethical position: "What I would like to argue here is that despite themselves, Deleuze, Foucault, and Lyotard predicate much of their political work on several intertwined and not very controversial ethical principles."¹³⁸ These are the principle of anti-representationalism and a commitment to difference that we will examine later. An anarchism which is to be poststructuralist therefore needs to acknowledge these ethical principles and critically evaluate their ability to provide us with guidelines for political action.

It could be argued that what is missing in May's work is a suitable critique of universalism, something others had found in the move to distinguish ethics

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 164.

¹³⁷ T. May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, p. 70.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 72.

from morality which he rejects. Although May presents poststructuralist critiques of essentialism and representation, by not subscribing to a corresponding critique of universalism he ends up with postanarchist ethics that are still somehow universal in scope, and subsequently not quite convincing. As a result, he is left in the same quandary as Critchley, who we shall return to next. Downplaying the importance of the poststructuralist break with traditional ethics leads May towards the assumptions of critical theory, to the extent that he assumes a universal subject position as a starting point for his ethics. The reformulation of ethics suggested by Foucault and Deleuze is vital for the rejection of such an ethical subject, as well as for a poststructuralist anarchist project as Newman argues. May is left seeking a more traditional form of morality that gives the 'possibility of ethical judgement,'¹³⁹ concluding in a form of multi-value consequentialism that will be addressed later.¹⁴⁰

Critchley's first book on ethics, *Ethics of Deconstruction: Levinas and Derrida*, was one of the first works of poststructuralist ethics which was explicitly not relativist. Critchley outlines the Levinasian difference between ethics and morality, conceptualising ethics as a "non-totalizable relationship with the Other."¹⁴¹ Levinas' theory serves this purpose well as it is not really concerned with questions of right and wrong, but questions of meta-ethical importance, such as the moment of the emergence of ethics and political subjectivity. This moment, he claims, is always already there in the form of responsibility to the other (person). Even before making any conscious ethical commitment the individual is obligated to their neighbour. Thus, the moment of the emergence of ethics is the moment this demand to be responsible is placed on the subject, a demand that is always present and can never be fulfilled. The parallel that these Levinasian ethics have with Derrida's

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁴⁰ May developed his more robust analysis of the poststructuralist ethical position in his books on Foucault, Deleuze and Rancière: T. May, *Philosophy of Foucault*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2006; T. May, *Gilles Deleuze*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005; T. May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière: Creating Equality*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2008.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 255.

poststructuralism is precisely that deconstruction starts with the same demand, almost creating a sense that poststructuralism produces ethics *a priori*. Critchley elaborates on the problem of ethics more in his later books, and in *Infinitely Demanding* he does not shy away from universality.

Rejecting Kantian approaches based on universal reason, Critchley nevertheless posits the infinite demand itself as a universal.¹⁴² Moreover, he contends that it is the task of politics to unite together different forms of resistance in shared political subjectivity:

What is going to allow for the formation of such a political subjectivity – the hegemonic glue, if you will – is an appeal to universality, whether the demand for political representation, equality of treatment or whatever.¹⁴³

In summary, the legitimacy of universal ethics seems to be quite contentious for postanarchists. Newman and Critchley both reject Kantian rationality as universal, while Todd May seems to still hold onto some of its utility. Despite their differences, postanarchists seem to be united in their suspicion of meta-narratives and the epistemological foundation of universal ethics. Newman attempts to move beyond the relativist/universalist framework and Critchley explores a Levinasian way of constructing ethics that are simultaneously universally applicable but not founded on essentialist notions of ethical subjectivity. My own contribution also attempts to escape this dichotomy. Insofar as universal ethics are based on the notion of human essence and rational subjectivity, I agree with Newman that these are epistemologically questionable bases on which to claim universality. However, I believe that the key to navigating this problem lies in the nature of the distinction between ethics and morality proposed by some poststructuralist authors, and more specifically, the reformulation by Deleuze. The important distinction to be made in this sense is not between morality as coercive, and ethics as a blueprint or as radical subjectivism, but of morality as *transcendent* and ethics

¹⁴² S. Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*, p. 31.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 114.

as *immanent* responses. We shall return to this division later in the chapter on Deleuze as we unpick how fundamental this shift should be for anarchism.

The anti-representation principle

Closely bound to questions of essentialism and universal morality is the last central tenet of the postanarchist critique of 'classical' anarchism: the anti-representation principle. Starting with the famous split between Marx and Bakunin, the key to understanding anarchism, Todd May argues, is acknowledging as its central theme the rejection of representation.¹⁴⁴ Following a discussion of Foucault's ethics, May identifies two main ethical principles of postanarchist ethics, the first of which is anti-representation. This is framed as: "people ought not to engage in practices of representing others to themselves, as much as possible."¹⁴⁵ Representation, he claims, is problematic on both an epistemic and political level.¹⁴⁶ First, it is epistemologically unfounded because of the poststructuralist critique of human essence. Through the rejection of human nature, representation is also eschewed as a 'false' way of understanding humanity - representing people to themselves is equated with "telling them who they are." However, if there is no human essence that limits what people can be, representation becomes oppressive in itself because it falsely restricts the possibilities of what or who people can become. Here May seems to be implicitly referring to Platonic Forms, which serve as a paradigm for what individuals are, thus taking each person to be a 'representation' of such an ideal form. This, however, has not been made clear in May's discussion. Politically, this form of epistemic representation is taken to be oppressive.

Second, anti-representation coincides with the "indignity of speaking for others"¹⁴⁷ drawn from the works of Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard.

¹⁴⁴ T. May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, p. 29.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 54.

¹⁴⁷ M. Foucault & G. Deleuze, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* ed. D. Bouchard, trans. D. Bouchard and S. Simon, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1977, p. 209.

'Representing others to themselves' reinforces oppressive social relations by upholding the social structures of inequality, such as economic exploitation.¹⁴⁸ Again, May is not very clear on how such relationships operate, but hints towards something like Foucault's practices of normalisation:

[A] practice of defining what is normal in a group and attempting to hold people to that norm . . . [The power of the sovereign] is a representation designed to discourage deviance and to ensure obedience; and it is presented by Foucault with no more sympathy than modern practices of normalisation.¹⁴⁹

Similarly, May cites Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* as a project to "demolish current representational barriers between people and who they can become."¹⁵⁰ Anti-representation, in that sense, seems to be both a micro and macro level critique of political structures which, for May, translates into the ethical maxim that representing others, regardless of how accurate that representation is, ought to be avoided. However, even though May calls one of them epistemic and the other political, both of these types of representation seem best understood as political rather than through a linguistic or philosophical notion of representation.

Interestingly, though, this is the principle May blames for the poststructuralist failure to escape the Habermasian performative contradiction:

It is precisely the commitment to this principle [of anti-representation] that is at play in the reticence the poststructuralists have shown toward promoting general ethical principles.¹⁵¹

This is a particularly relevant point, as positing anti-representation as an ethical principle is at the core of the problem May will run into later.

¹⁴⁸ T. May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, p. 72.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 73

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

Anti-representation is thus seen as a principle which underpins poststructuralism and, for May, is derived directly from a second ethical principle, the commitment to difference. The principle of actively promoting difference and diversity, May argues, can be seen in Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?* and Foucault's later writings on alternative practices of being.¹⁵² May characterises it thus: "alternative practices, all things being equal, ought to be allowed to flourish and even be promoted."¹⁵³ This is presumably referring to alternative practices to the ones that are 'normalised' via representation, and therefore oppressed. Crucially, for May, this principle does not provide a value-system for poststructuralists (and by extension postanarchists) that ensures the promotion of non-oppressive practices. For instance, through the promotion of difference, we might fall into the trap of promoting fascism, which will then result in oppression (we expect). Thus, it is clear that only *some* different practices need to be encouraged, which May extrapolates into his version of consequentialism. Since that approach moves more or less outside the territory of poststructuralism, we shall explore it further in the next section. For now it will suffice to say that May fills this gap with the broadly anti-capitalist values held by the poststructuralists, claiming that capitalist (and, for Lyotard, fascist) tendencies towards unification and universalisation contradict the first two principles, so practices that favour anti-capitalist organisation are preferable within a poststructuralist framework.

In a similar vein, Newman draws a critique of representation from his reading of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* and the work of Foucault. Recognising their differences in terms of how they conceptualise desire,¹⁵⁴ Newman nevertheless finds a uniting thread: "[Deleuze and Guattari's] critique of representation in psychoanalysis is similar to Foucault's attack on various discourses – political, medical, psychiatric, etc. – which attempt to speak for

¹⁵² *ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁵⁴ See S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, pp. 101-102.

the individual.”¹⁵⁵ Indeed, Newman acknowledges his indebtedness to May by referring to anarchism as a critique of political representation – which is always “a relationship of domination.”¹⁵⁶ Following from this, anarchism should never accept vanguardism of the party or proletariat, leading to inevitable conflict with certain strands of Marxism. Later in his argument, Newman goes as far as to claim that “representative thinking is a domination of thought, in the same way that the anarchists argued that representative politics was a domination of the individual.”¹⁵⁷ Moreover, he claims, the poststructuralist attack on certain norms of truth and rationality is what enables postanarchism to expose ‘classical’ anarchism’s reliance on representational forms of thought such as essentialism or a commitment to universals. In fact, all representation, Newman continues, is based on essentialist thinking – the notion there is an authentic object that thinking refers to, or a truth, or place, constructed dialectically through binaries.¹⁵⁸

Relying heavily on Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, Newman extends the anarchist critique of vanguardism as a form of oppressive representation into a broader, ontological idea of representation. Representational thinking, he claims, is dependent on essential truth or place – thinking is supposed to ‘reflect’ or ‘represent’ truth that we find in nature. Instead, we can liberate thinking through a rhizomatic model that “eschews essences, unities and binary logic.”¹⁵⁹ Similarly, linguistic representation is also rejected in the form of pragmatic utterances that “only have meaning in the context of power relations,”¹⁶⁰ although Newman does not make it clear what form of linguistic representation he is referring to. He does not return to this problematisation of representation in his proposals for postanarchist ethics or suggest what it might imply in practice beyond expressing a dissatisfaction with oppressed groups’ demands for ‘political

¹⁵⁵ S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, p. 101.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 107.

representation'.¹⁶¹

It would seem that for May, political representation is categorically unacceptable in anarchist politics as it is both oppressive and reinforces the status-quo. For Newman, on the other hand, this critique extends to all types of ontological representation, including representational thinking in the form of Hegelian (or other) dialectics. Both of them seem to tie up the question of representation with the poststructuralist critique of essentialism, thus implying a position against Platonic idealism. Other postanarchists like Lewis Call, for example, take the failure of political representation to be foundational for postanarchist politics. Political representation in the form of elected governments or a Leninist vanguard, he claims, is challenged through Baudrillard's critique of the real.¹⁶² It has failed because it can no longer represent the masses. They are a black hole sitting outside the order of representation; they are too diverse, too incoherent, and this is precisely what gives them their revolutionary force.

Conclusion

To conclude this section and recapitulate, the main threads we have identified in postanarchism in the reconstruction above are: a commitment to non-essentialism, a rejection of universals and critique of representation in various forms. Even though we haven't specifically discussed them, it is worth noting that postanarchists also critique the 'classical' anarchist view of power as centred upon the State, as well as conceptualisations of an uncontaminated place 'outside' capitalism where the revolution would begin.

In Saul Newman's work, the trigger event for postanarchist ethics is the poststructuralist rejection of essential human nature. For him, both the critique of universals and representation stem from this shaken foundation of essentialism. For Todd May, on the other hand, poststructuralism implicitly

¹⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 172.

¹⁶² L. Call, *Postmodern Anarchism*, Oxford, Lexington Books, 2002, p. 109.

promotes two main ethical principles – not representing others and promoting difference. Representing others to themselves is a practice of oppression, of creating a limit to what they can be. It creates practices of normalisation and ignores particularities. Thus, the second ethical principle of poststructuralism, namely the emphasis on difference that May identifies in Lyotard, Deleuze and Foucault.¹⁶³ This takes the form of recognising particularities among individuals and groups and not generalising them into categories of representation. Following a similar line, Newman posits the linked rejection of political representation and representation of thought as one of the main tenets of postanarchism. His quest to defeat essentialism also brings him to recognise the poststructuralist principles of plurality and difference and translate them into a postanarchist ethical framework. Finally, the question of ethical motivation and subjectivity appears both in Newman and Critchley in the form of an infinite demand, closely bound to anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist sentiments, forming an implicit ethical scheme taken up by postanarchism.

Even though we haven't engaged with them in detail, a similar epistemological critique can be traced in the works of Lewis Call, Richard Day and Jesse Cohn, among others. For instance, Cohn starts with the premise that anarchism rejects representative democracy, moving towards an analysis of representationalism and anti-representationalism in philosophy, art and politics.¹⁶⁴ Call, on the other hand, in his cyberpunk *Postmodern Anarchism*, uses Foucault, Baudrillard and Haraway to offer a set of connections for radical politics through a 'postmodern matrix'. Finally, Day approaches 'contemporary radical movements' through a much broader framework of anarchist, Marxist and poststructuralist intersections.¹⁶⁵ Less engaged with the meta-dimensions of postanarchist ethics, he nevertheless articulates themes and solutions that are applicable to defining and advancing activism.

¹⁶³ T. May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, p. 131.

¹⁶⁴ J. Cohn, *Anarchism and the Crisis of Representation: Hermeneutics, Aesthetics, Politics*.

¹⁶⁵ R. Day, *Gramsci is Dead, Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*.

1.3.2 Stage 2: Strong ontologies

If we are committed to going beyond epistemology, it is worth now looking at the impact the postanarchist critique of ethics based on universal truth and human nature has had on anarchist proponents of ‘strong’ ontologies. The critique, in targeting the metaphysical foundations of ‘classical’ anarchism, posed a particular problem for other contemporary theories of anarchism which subscribe to the need for normative anarchist ethics using more traditional approaches. In particular, we will address consequentialist and virtue ethics, both of which offer strong normative accounts usually associated with the Enlightenment paradigm the postanarchists rejected.

To foreground this exchange, we begin by exploring a critique targeting the lack of normative grounds in postanarchism. The arguments put forward by the postanarchists have inspired attempts to formulate anarchist ethics which do not rely on essentialist views of human nature, or forms of political representation, but at the same time allow for the possibility of collective action. The aim of this section is to explore the possibilities for ethical normativity based on ‘modern anarchist’¹⁶⁶ reformulations of classical ethical approaches. In other words, before we arrive at Deleuze we should see if there are any already-existing anarchist frameworks which would suit our purpose.

In *What’s Wrong with Postanarchism*, Cohn and Wilbur point to a major deficiency in postanarchist ethics,¹⁶⁷ namely that their reliance on poststructuralism brings with it a strong tendency towards relativism.¹⁶⁸ The lack of a universal foundation for ethics, they argue, results in a lack of normative grounds for establishing any collective action. For example, Andrew Koch admits that “the relativity of both ontology and epistemology,

¹⁶⁶ Here I am drawing a term from Peter Marshall’s *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* to make a distinction between the postanarchists and contemporary currents of thought that are not explicitly aligned with the ideas of poststructuralism in the way the postanarchists are.

¹⁶⁷ Although they say ‘postanarchist’, Saul Newman is the only author explicitly mentioned.

¹⁶⁸ J. Cohn & S. Wilbur, ‘What’s Wrong with Postanarchism?’, p. 9.

the plurality of language systems, and the impossibility of communicating intended meaning” results in the impossibility of reaching agreement without deception or coercion.¹⁶⁹ Since postanarchism is unable to distinguish between “free agreements and instrumentalist manipulation,”¹⁷⁰ it inevitably results in the subjective politics of ‘anything goes’. Interestingly, another critic of the type of ethics proposed by Newman is Todd May, who, in a review of *From Bakunin to Lacan*, confides that he has moved away from Derrida and Lacan precisely because such an approach leaves “no room for the kind of collective action that seems necessary for political success.”¹⁷¹ Indeed, May is a proponent of exactly the type of Enlightenment-based ethical paradigm Newman rejected, as we shall see later.

Nevertheless, this potential descent into relativism has not diminished the importance of the critique of essentialism and universal truth proposed by postanarchists. In an attempt to respond to both challenges, Todd May proposes a form of multi-value consequentialism, while Benjamin Franks offers a reworking of McIntyre’s virtue ethics as prefigurative politics. Such responses seek a foundation for ethical normativity which simultaneously grounds collective action and avoids the ‘coercive trap’ that morality is susceptible to. This section will explore these two ethical theories in more detail and argue that attempts to solve the problem laid out by postanarchists through a recourse to ‘strong’ ontology have been largely unsuccessful. Both of the proposals considered remain internally inconsistent without an appeal to an external telos, which, I argue, is incompatible with the demands established by the postanarchist epistemological critique.

Prefiguration

First, we turn to the works of Benjamin Franks. One of the most prominent critics of postanarchism, he nevertheless aims to answer the challenges posed

¹⁶⁹ A. M. Koch, ‘Poststructuralism and Epistemological Basis of Anarchism’, p. 343.

¹⁷⁰ J. Cohn & S. Wilbur, loc. cit.

¹⁷¹ T. May, ‘Lacanian Anarchism and the Left’, *Theory & Event*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2002, para. 11.

by it, grounding his ethics in a particularly anarchist ontology. Alasdair MacIntyre's early works provide Franks with a basis on which actions can be judged, but one which is not morally universalising and therefore not coercive. Since Franks' approach differs slightly from MacIntyre's, I shall focus mainly on Franks' treatment as it is more relevant for our purposes.

Franks shares the common anarchist worry that any ethical framework that proposes universal rules or guidelines has the potential to be oppressive. He defines prefigurative virtue ethics as those that "[identify] goods as being inherent to social practices, which have their own rules, which are negotiable and alter over time. [They stress] the immanent values of particular practices rather than the externally decided (consequentialist) values that will accrue."¹⁷² Franks acknowledges Newman's argument against universalism, starting with the premise that a universal morality would limit agency, a type of coercion that anarchists fight against. Following Bakunin and CrimethInc., among others, he builds a case against using any externally derived rules or morality. Moreover, he holds that applying the same universal rules to everyone and ignoring the context could result in more profound social hierarchy, rather than reducing it.¹⁷³ Finally, he examines Newman's critique of the epistemological foundations of universal ethics and, even though he seems to be in general agreement with these, he nevertheless disagrees with the proposed solution of utilising Stirner's ego to replace essentialist ontology. He argues, with Karl Marx, against Stirner, claiming that the radical subjectivism of Stirner is internally inconsistent.¹⁷⁴ In abstracting the ego from social order, Stirner does not acknowledge that the individual needs material resources to be 'free', while being placed back in the material and social world immediately compromises that freedom. This creates an irreconcilable contradiction for anarchist practice.

The alternative proposed by Franks takes the form of prefigurative virtue

¹⁷² B. Franks, 'Postanarchism and Meta-ethics', p. 137.

¹⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 147.

ethics. Prefigurative virtue ethics, he claims, avoids the trap of universalism by simultaneously serving as a blueprint for action but not claiming authority on the basis of a greater telos.¹⁷⁵ This is possible through multiple immanent telē, evaluating every practice on its own terms. Franks argues that this reconciles the anarchist value of personal autonomy with an ethical framework that still provides a normative foundation in the form of evaluating actions. Moreover, he suggests that these ethics collapse the distinction between means and ends – they require people who can fight to end their own oppression in pragmatic, localised ways, without claiming to represent others or other struggles. “Anarchist methods,” he writes, “are associated with seeking immediate results. Anarchist actions are aimed at achieving useful results.”¹⁷⁶ In contrast to instrumentalist strategies oriented towards achieving an ultimate goal, the contemporary anarchist ideal is for “tactics to embody the forms of social relations that the actors wish to see develop”¹⁷⁷ in a contextual way. For him, this ultimately eradicates the distinction between ends and means.

One possible critique of this approach is offered by Thomas Swann’s analysis of the ontological foundations of virtue ethics.¹⁷⁸ First of all, he observes, the suggestion that anarchist practices are evaluated as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ only within the context of that practice necessitates the rejection of a single unified (objective) telos that actions may be judged against. Swann argues that if the evaluation is performed on the basis of different telē specific for each practice, the inevitable consequence will be moral relativism.¹⁷⁹ Unlike MacIntyre, who introduces a form of universal telos to support virtue ethics, Franks argues that context-specific telē are enough to provide moral guidance. In such a situation, Swann suggests, there is no way to avoid moral relativism, whereby “statements about what is right and wrong have as much claim to objective

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 147.

¹⁷⁶ B. Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The Means and Ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms*, p. 114.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ Here I follow Swann’s analysis in ‘Can Franks Practical Anarchism Avoid Moral Relativism’, *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 199-215.

¹⁷⁹ T. Swann, ‘Can Franks Practical Anarchism Avoid Moral Relativism’, p. 205.

truth as statements about what is fashionable in clothing.”¹⁸⁰ Even though the example Swann suggests is perhaps not the most illuminating, he is right in identifying that prefigurative virtue ethics attempts to sit in a middle point between moral relativism and moral universalism, and so their validity relies on a successful defence of this possibility. Indeed, the problem is not only how to prefigure one’s actions so that they fit within an anarchist value-system, but also how to select which practices one should engage in. If all practices are judged on the basis of their immanent normativity and the distinction between means and ends is unnecessary, then, as Swann suggests, “how do we identify them and, further to this, use the term anarchism at all?”¹⁸¹

Thus, there seem to be two options. If prefigurative virtue ethics operate immanently in the form of each individual/collective generating its own specific ‘self-rewarding’ practices, then their normativity would have to come from a broader framework of anarchist values in the form of telos. If we reject the telos, then these values have to turn either towards relativism, or be somehow universalised to remain normative. Franks seems to have opted for the first one, which I will address again in the final argument of this chapter. Finally, I would add that Franks posits the creation of ethical standards and norms as almost naively “open to those entering these practices; they are open to critical dialogue and can alter over time.”¹⁸² Even though this seems to be crucial for his argument that prefigurative virtue ethics are not coercive or universal, he does not provide an account of the mechanism by which this might happen.

It remains, then, to engage with Franks’ definition of virtues and the possibility for anarchists to foster them. In ‘Virtues of Non-Domination’, he claims that it is not possible to create an exhaustive list of all virtues – and that it would be undesirable anyway because it increases the danger of

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 207.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 209.

¹⁸² B. Franks, ‘Postanarchism and Meta-ethics’, p. 147.

creating a dogmatic ethical framework, whilst virtue theory should promote one's own thinking and identification of new virtues.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, Franks uses three of Aristotle's virtues as an example of how virtues can be adapted to be compatible with anarchist principles.

Firstly, he focuses on bravery, the golden middle between the vices of rashness and cowardice. Bravery, he argues, is the virtue of confronting legitimate fears, which for anarchists transforms into something that undermines structures of domination, rather than reinforcing them. Fascists who beat up foreigners, for example, or soldiers sent by a world power to kill civilians, do not show bravery in terms of the modified Aristotelian virtue. Anti-fascists, on the other hand, are brave when they face up to racial bullying or help migrant organising. Justice and its related concept of fairness is the second virtue that Franks identifies.¹⁸⁴ Being just or fair, for Aristotle, was closely linked with distribution of resources, while a contemporary anarchist understanding would be related to the notion of rights. Finally, Aristotle's virtue of wisdom is translated into anarchist practices of education. Wisdom is building knowledge and expertise, which are then dispersed and used to bring down hierarchies between student and master.¹⁸⁵ However, Franks makes clear, these three virtues, and others, should not be examined in isolation from one another. They constantly inform and support one another – for example, it is important whilst conducting *brave* scientific experiments, pursuing knowledge and *wisdom*, to consider being *just* and *fair* to the objects being studied. By doing this one can avoid or solve moral dilemmas such as whether testing on animals is acceptable or not.

This short account of the virtues demands a few important clarifications. To begin with, neither McIntyre nor Franks have provided a reason as to why one should strive to lead a virtuous life. Even though providing an account of

¹⁸³ B. Franks, 'Virtues of Non-Domination', paper presented to Anarchist Studies Network conference, Loughborough, September 2012, [unpublished], p. 12.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 18.

ethical motivation is not necessarily part of an ethical framework, in the anarchist virtue ethics Franks has constructed there is an implicit assumption that one is already striving for equality and the diminishing of oppression. For example, if one is not already in opposition to wars where hundreds of civilians die in the interest of nation-states and corporate bodies, it might be hard to swallow the claim that soldiers do not show bravery. To construct the virtue of bravery as such, only insofar as it is positioned against oppression, appears to require another implicit ethical framework against which these virtues are measured. Regardless, the question remains: what are the criteria for deciding these anarchist virtues and thus delineating and categorising which actions will foster them? Relating back to Swann's criticism, prefiguration does not provide us with a way of identifying which virtues arise from each situation so that we are capable of fostering them, or how these virtues might be decided – collectively, individually or by a higher authority. Without this mechanism it is hard to see how this system is able to manage consensus between differing individuals, which seems to be a condition for prefigurative virtue ethics.

To conclude, Swann argued that Franks' conceptualisation of virtue ethics does not sufficiently balance relativist and universalist ethical demands. Moreover, even though prefigurative virtue ethics do not rely on notions of human nature as benign or universalist coercive moral rules, it nevertheless sees individuals as rational, unified subjects capable of self-determination. It is the universality of this view of subjectivity that prevents Franks' virtue ethics from fully responding to the conditions set out by postanarchism.

Multi-value consequentialism

Another approach that aims to offer an anarchist normativity is consequentialism, in particular the version Todd May has put forward as the implicit moral theory of the poststructuralists. Consequentialism is a teleological ethical position – it holds that the result/consequence of an action determines whether it was a morally right or wrong action. Descended from

classical utilitarianism (a form of *hedonistic act consequentialism*), this broad field of moral philosophy takes as its primary assumption the maxim that moral rightness derives primarily from consequences and not necessarily from anything intrinsic to actions themselves. Moreover, it is reliant on an evaluative practice that is quantitative and usually also qualitative, requiring the relative weighting of moral concerns. In the Anglo-American tradition the focus for consequentialist practice is usually constrained to the evaluation of individual (though not necessarily isolated) acts or decisions without appeal to a broader or more distant telos.¹⁸⁶ As a result, one of the appeals of consequentialism is that, given an agreed value framework, it facilitates rational debate and offers the possibility of consensus on complex moral questions. Since consequentialism is oriented towards consequences there tends to be a strong prioritisation of ends over means. Usually the only restriction on means is that their consequences do not override the net 'good' of the given enterprise. Different forms of consequentialism have different ways of expressing this, for example *rule consequentialism* which considers actions right only where they do not violate the general needs of a community or *equal consideration consequentialism* where all affected persons are treated as of equal importance.¹⁸⁷ This illustrates another tendency, which is to evaluate the success of a particular version of consequentialism by how well it aligns with 'our' moral intuition, a kind of validity test which works backwards from the logical consequences of the theory to see if the foundations are constructed correctly. In anarchism this form of means-ends relationship is often expressed in the insurrectionist tradition and to an extent the work of Godwin.¹⁸⁸

Preserving the principle of anti-representation we discussed earlier, Todd May proposes a form of *multi-value consequentialism*,¹⁸⁹ which ameliorates some of these concerns by providing multiple means for evaluating the

¹⁸⁶ J. Driver, *Consequentialism*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2011, pp. 5-7.

¹⁸⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 86-93.

¹⁸⁸ W. Godwin, *The Anarchist Writings of William Godwin*, Freedom, London, 1986, pp. 64-65.

¹⁸⁹ T. May, *The Moral Theory of Poststructuralism*, Penn State Press, Pennsylvania, 2010.

desirability of a given set of consequences. The different weightings each of these values is given allows for a more nuanced evaluation of a situation and is necessary to avoid contradictions between different values. The seeds for this approach are found in Moore's *ideal consequentialism* and it is typically the form that human rights-based ethics takes today, promoting rights, distributive justice and other goods in a hierarchy of priority. This form of consequentialism is more compatible with a deontological approach, insofar as it can take the values underlying duties or obligations and recast them as rights.

May's argument is that the problems of consequentialist ethics are usually derived from the identification of a single value as their universal principle.¹⁹⁰ Single-value consequentialism usually takes something akin to happiness, which can be measured across the whole field of human actions in order to evaluate the moral rightness of any given conduct. This principle is usually made to incorporate its negative – pleasure *and* pain for example. Most single-value consequentialisms struggle with the problem of how to identify a criterion which allows for interpersonal comparisons in such situations. G. E. Moore is credited with raising this point – moral goodness cannot be identified with 'natural' mental phenomena such as happiness without problematising the formal method of quantifying and qualifying the production of the primary value. Classic utilitarianism has thus had to formulate more complex modes of analysis, developing a tendency to introduce thresholds, for example, a certain magnitude of pain rendering an action wrong regardless of the level of happiness achieved. Since such forms of consequentialism are subject to the postanarchist critique of universalism as oppressive, they do not fit the requirements we have established.

However, May's multi-value consequentialism is able to avoid these criticisms by proposing a reformulation of values from "goods that somehow constitute a good or even satisfying life", to "goods to which people ought to

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 4.

have access”¹⁹¹ in the form of a right to physical safety, a fair distribution of social advantages, etc. He prefers consequentialism to virtue theories or deontological ones because those risk positing certain lives or people as intrinsically better, thus breaching the anti-representational principle, while consequentialism focuses on the action and the consequence, which anybody can, in theory, achieve. Moreover, the new conceptualisation of value allows for universal applicability of this morality without it becoming coercive, thus avoiding the conundrum of relativism. Multi-value consequentialism is likely to promote and embrace a multiplicity of values, which would result in a diversity of lifestyles as well. Thus, he claims, such an ethical framework is best suited for those wanting to align themselves with the ethical commitments of the poststructuralist project.

However, it seems that May’s presentation of multi-value consequentialism rests on some shaky premises regarding its fidelity to poststructuralism. First, May tends to construe ‘poststructuralism’ as a unified body of theory, failing to adequately acknowledge the disparate and historicised nature of its various contributors and concepts. Taken, then, in a homogenised state, an implicit moral theory is attached to poststructuralism, ignoring the important differences between the main authors he refers to (Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard). By taking this as a starting position, he disregards the potential of a radical break with the tradition of morality, remaining focused on their epistemological concerns with universal rules.

Finally, a common criticism of consequentialism from anarchist proponents of the prefigurative approach is that, in consequentialism, even oppressive means could be justifiable if they lead to ‘an anarchist society’.¹⁹² Indeed, this is a more general criticism levelled at consequentialism as well – that ‘bad’ actions can produce ‘good’ consequences.¹⁹³ Vice versa, some actions are in a sense ‘right’ even if they do not produce the desired consequences. This

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁹² See, B. Franks, *Rebel Alliances*, pp. 105-106.

¹⁹³ J. Driver, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

appears to be in conflict with the assumption at the heart of consequentialism that virtues do not reside in the person performing an action but in the action itself. In anarchism, consequentialist approaches are exemplified by Sergei Nechaev's justification for the murder of Ivanov, as well as his general attitude towards achieving the revolution through any means necessary, a sentiment expressed in Malatesta's "The end justifies the means."¹⁹⁴

As a moral theory responding to the type of ethical criteria postanarchists proposed, multi-value consequentialism must be rejected on two main grounds. Firstly, it does not necessarily respond to critics of coercive morality. The anti-representational principle is posited as an absolute rule, thus having the *potential* to result in oppression. Even though May argues that this is not a fault with the principle itself, but with the role of moral theory,¹⁹⁵ in practice it functions as a categorical imperative, thus precluding the possibility for individual decision-making processes. Secondly, Benjamin Franks' critique of ends-based approaches is also applicable here, namely that consequentialism relies on a form of moral intuition, or perhaps moral knowledge, which makes it possible to discern which actions are likely to lead to which consequences.¹⁹⁶ This is also applicable to multi-value consequentialism, which has rationality and a unified human subjectivity at its heart. As Todd May himself argued of Foucault, there are no epistemological foundations for establishing universal ethical principles, at least not ones based on universal reason.¹⁹⁷

Difference as lack

At the beginning of this chapter I argued that all political positions carry specific metaphysical presuppositions. Regardless of whether these are made explicit, the metaphysics of, for example, postanarchism might include an understanding of power operating in a more or less Foucauldian way, the

¹⁹⁴ E. Malatesta, *A Little Theory*, <<https://archive.org/details/ALittleTheory>>, accessed 24 Jun 2015.

¹⁹⁵ T. May, *Moral Theory of Poststructuralism*, p. 61.

¹⁹⁶ B. Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The Means and Ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms*, p. 104.

¹⁹⁷ T. May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, p. 94.

importance of an ethical subject for postanarchist politics, and the formulation of the infinite demand in Critchley, among others. I also argued that by not sufficiently problematising these metaphysical presuppositions, the conditions for non-essentialist, non-universal and non-representative ethics have not been adequately outlined by postanarchists. As we have established, the postanarchist rejection of 'strong' ontology is part of a larger trend in philosophy. The main divide seems to be between those, like Foucault, who refuse to accept the universality of reason, human nature and political structures, and those who, like Habermas, believe that such a refusal implies a situation of political chaos, where no normative rules or ethics can be established. In anarchist studies, on the other hand, this is exemplified by Newman, Call and Critchley on one side, and modern reformulations of other ethical theories such as those by Franks and May on the other.

Having introduced the main ethical challenges posed by postanarchism and the responses of other modern anarchists, in the final two sections of this chapter I will focus in more detail on the ontological foundation of the postanarchist ethical approaches of Saul Newman and Simon Critchley. Both of them rely on Levinas and Lacan, an approach taken by other radical political theorists as well.¹⁹⁸ True to their rejection of Enlightenment metaphysics, they have embraced an ontology that understands difference as being never truly captured by identity. Tønder and Thomassen frame this context in relation to the Marxist legacy:

Theorists of radical democracy object to three things in particular. First, they criticise Marxism for its economic determinism, which not only forecloses human agency, but also eliminates the autonomy of political organization . . . Secondly, they criticise Marxism for its essentialism . . . finally, they criticise Marxism for eradicating historical and philosophical heterogeneity, claiming that this risks aligning Marxism with the

¹⁹⁸ For example, Žižek, Butler, Laclau, Mouffe, Stavrakakis and Day. See A. Robinson, 'The Political Theory of Constitutive Lack: A Critique', *Theory & Event*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2005, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/v008/8.1robinson.html>, accessed 20 July 2015.

paradigms of thought it sought to overcome.¹⁹⁹

They argue that at the heart of these objections is a rejection of dialectical modes of production of difference, such as the binary of identity/difference, and their replacement with the notion of radical difference, one which “constitutes the difference between the two identities.”²⁰⁰ This makes difference firstly a primary ontological category and, secondly, constitutive of identity. Among theorists that subscribe to that position, however, there is a fundamental split. On one hand, there are those whose basic ontological assumptions are based around lack (the Lacanian/Levinas approach), such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and on the other hand are those whose ontology follows the path of ‘abundance’, such as Deleuze-inspired theorists like Paul Patton, Rosi Braidotti and Nathan Widder. Critchley and Newman’s reliance on Levinas and Lacan places them on the side of radical politics reliant on an ontology of lack at the heart of difference. In what follows, I will examine these two in more detail.

Firstly, the conceptualisation of subjectivity found in much of Western philosophy and theorised by Freud and, later, Lacan understands the subject as constituted through lack – we desire what we do not have. The repression of these desires, it is supposed, causes the subject to split between itself and the symbolic order, and it is at this point that representation fails: “there is a lack or gap between the subject and its representation.”²⁰¹ For Lacan, this lack is non-symbolisable, as language fails to provide a signifier to express the particularities of the subject fully. Thus, the subject develops through an infinite process of attempting to fill this lack. In radical political theory, the taking up of lack results in the critique of politics based on essentialised identities, but also the drive to destabilise structures by revealing the inherent lack at their core. Most often, such theories conceptualise a form of Otherness

¹⁹⁹ L. Thomassen and L. Tønder, *Radical Democracy. Politics between abundance and lack*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2005, p. 3.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.*

²⁰¹ S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, p. 138.

that is impossible to represent, positing lack as ontological.²⁰²

To begin with, Newman's own solution to the problem of an anarchist ontology utilises a combination of Lacan's psychoanalysis and Max Stirner's egoistic anarchism. This allows him to avoid essentialism, as the subject in Stirner is set up to not have a fixed identity or essence but provides the space for creating its own subjectivity.²⁰³ Using Stirner's anti-humanism, Newman conceptualises a non-essentialist notion of the self as 'becoming', as producing power by being bound to social norms and destroying this power with self-reflexivity:

The self, or the ego, is not an essence, a defined set of characteristics, but rather an emptiness, a "creative nothing", and it is up to the individual to create something out of this and not be limited by essences.²⁰⁴

Newman's argument then leads him to Lacan, where he discovers what he had been looking for all along, namely that (non)place outside of power where resistance is possible. This non-place is produced by power itself, by the inevitable transgression of coercive practices.²⁰⁵ Newman's ontology relies on Lacanian lack to avoid representation – "[t]here is always something in language that cannot be signified, a gap or blockage of some sort . . . The lack, then, is always part of the process of signification."²⁰⁶ The subject is split by its inability to achieve its desires, which Newman sees as the core of the subject – but rather than an essentialist core, it is one of non-signifiable lack. This results in a paradoxical place outside of power where resistance can take hold.

Secondly, in the other theoretical camp, both Critchley and Newman draw on Levinas for the concept of the infinite demand. As an ethical theorist, Levinas

²⁰² Nathan Widder argues that Lacan doesn't see lack as ontological in N. Widder, *Political Theory After Deleuze*, p. 13.

²⁰³ S. Newman, op. cit., p. 137.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 66.

²⁰⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 139-140.

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 139.

is quite unusual, as he does not offer particular rules or methods for deciding what an ethical act is but posits responsibility to the Other at the heart of the ethical encounter. This encounter happens through the recognition of the Other's face. For him, the face is infinite transcendence, something that cannot be captured by reason or representative thought or language. Everybody experiences the call of the face and we are all equal before it. In Levinas, ethics is prior to ontology. That is, the infinite demand appears with the appearance of the face of the other and with it our desire to be with others. This also renders the infinite unknowable, irreducible to any sort of moral knowledge and cognition – the only faculty that is engaged in the conception of ethics is thus the faculty of recognition of the face. The face, Levinas claims, is pre-discursive and universal. His conception of the ethical is, thus, not an applied or normative account, but one that explores the transcendental conditions of ethics.

The main political paradox resulting from ontologies of lack is the constant re-negotiation between the object of desire (the Other) and the identity of the subject. As Toril Moi aptly demonstrates in her critique of Lacanian subjectivity, this understanding of lack is inherently based on binary oppositions, of femininity as defined in relation to the phallus (or more specifically, its lack).²⁰⁷ The Other is always negating identity by exposing its incompleteness but, at the same time, the existence of identity is taken to be necessary for the possibilities for collective action. The paradox, thus, is the constant attempt to conceptualise “temporary collective unities established through friend/enemy antagonisms.”²⁰⁸ Following Laclau, Newman argues “any attempt to fill the social lack is ultimately doomed to failure because this lack cannot be overcome, and is constitutive of society itself.”²⁰⁹ He proposes ethics ‘without ground’, the ethics supposedly responding to the paradox by being “free-floating signifiers, structurally open to a multitude of different

²⁰⁷ T. Moi, ‘From Femininity to Finitude: Freud, Lacan, and Feminism, Again’, *Signs*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2004, pp. 841-878.

²⁰⁸ N. Widder, *Political Theory After Deleuze*, p. 15.

²⁰⁹ S. Newman, op. cit., p. 163.

struggles.”²¹⁰

It is beyond the scope of this work to address the breadth of the lack/abundance debate and its ongoing developments, but I argue that neither Newman nor Critchley have offered convincing examples of an ontology of lack. To begin with, Newman’s only articulation of the application of such ethics of uncertainty is based on a constant concern “to know why one should accept a particular moral condition,” and a “refusal to accept anything on its own terms.”²¹¹ The application of this seems to be somewhat narrow, as the examples Newman provides involve questioning the necessity of women-only spaces, feminism or other “definitely boring” identity politics.²¹² The lack of criteria on the basis of which this constant questioning happens suggests the relativist position of ‘anything goes’. The role of the conflicted subject, structured by its lack, is not visible in Newman’s postanarchist ethical framework, though it played a central role in his critique of anarchism. Moreover, the Lacanian subjectivity he previously advocated for is inconsistent with his later claims that anarchism should move beyond ‘unimaginative’ binary identities. This is a criticism that Simon Critchley escapes to an extent since he has not problematised binary thinking or essentialism. Nevertheless, the matrix of subjectivity that Critchley does adopt fails to make clear the basis for the universality of the infinite demand of the Other, the traumatised subject or sublimation. In other words, he lacks a convincing methodology for justifying that the experience of ethical responsibility does indeed take such a form across times, cultures and places. To assume that all ethical activity always necessarily operates in this manner is to pre-emptively exclude a range of activities that might also be considered ‘ethical’.

Finally, it is worth briefly mentioning the criticism of Lacanian subjectivity from the perspective of the ontologies of abundance. Most relevant for us will

²¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 164.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 171.

be the critique of Lacanian lack contained in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*. It will be briefly expounded here and developed later (in chapter 2) in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of desire. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari provide an analysis of contemporary society (and capitalism), uniting Marx, Nietzsche, Freud and Lacan, among others, and producing a method (or part of a method) for understanding reality and what constitutes it. According to them this method, schizoanalysis, is a "materialist psychiatry" – an unconventional 'liberation' of Marxist labour theory and the Freudian concept of libido from "determinate systems of representation."²¹³ Desire as lack, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is based on a form of representation that distorts desire – by questioning what our desires 'mean' we use representation to explain the unconscious.²¹⁴ Drawing on Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari claim that desire is in fact productive – it does not deal in imaginary objects which we lack, but 'it' produces the real world. Desire becomes repressive only (and necessarily) when it is placed in social configurations. Daniel W. Smith provides a good example:

Someone may have an interest, say, in becoming an academic, so he or she applies to the university, takes courses, writes a thesis, attends conferences, goes on the job market in hopes of securing a job, finding an academic position. You may indeed have an interest in all that, which you can pursue in a highly rational manner. But that interest exists as a possibility only within the context of a particular social formation, our capitalist formation. If you are capable of pursuing that interest in a concerted and rational manner, it is first of all because your desire – your drives and impulses – are themselves invested in the social formation that makes that interest possible. Your drives have been constructed, assembled, and arranged in such a manner that your desire is positively

²¹³ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, Bloomsbury, London, 2013, p. 34.

²¹⁴ E. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis*, London, Routledge, 1999, p. 22.

invested in the system that allows you to have this particular interest.²¹⁵

The political implications of this conceptualisation of desire will be explored later in this thesis. Nevertheless, as we mentioned earlier in our presentation of new materialist philosophies, the Lacanian approach suggests privileging the symbolic at the expense of the material. The primacy put on the symbolic order is a significant element of many feminist theories, queer theory and newer Marxisms. Thus, this is a debate which we will be returning to in the rest of the thesis. I have here assumed a position that this form of desire as lack becomes wholly problematic when placed in the heart of anarchist radical politics. Furthermore, Rosi Braidotti charges the Lacanian notion of lack with a hidden essentialism which, if granted, would compound its incompatibility with postanarchist politics:

[t]he concept of memory that Lacan renders through his vision of the unconscious is that of an essential black box that allegedly records the central data of psychic life. That is a very one dimensional and rather despotic notion of how memories work, which testifies to Lacan's psychic essentialism and to a static vision of psychic life.²¹⁶

Moreover, she claims, an ethical subjectivity based on a split subject leads to melancholia and negativity and is incapable of creating the conditions for the new to emerge.²¹⁷ In summary, a central argument of this thesis will be that the conceptualisation of desire as lack used by both Newman and Critchley is inherently representative and essentialist, subsequently requiring precisely the type of ontology postanarchists rejected and precisely the problems they wish to avoid.

²¹⁵ D. W. Smith, 'Deleuze and the Question of Desire: Towards an Immanent Theory of Ethics', in N. Jun and D. W. Smith eds, *Deleuze and Ethics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2011, p. 135.

²¹⁶ R. Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*, p. 86.

²¹⁷ R. Braidotti, *Metamorphoses. Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, p. 56.

1.3.3 Stage 3: Transcendence

So far with the postanarchists we have established a need for ethics that are non-essentialist, non-representative and not coercive (even if universal). The subsequent challenge, as presented by modern anarchists, is that anarchist ethics also need to be normative to allow for collective action. I have argued that the ontologies presented by modern anarchists to fulfil that task are either inconsistent or insufficient for satisfying the conditions we have posited. Finally, I have argued that postanarchist ontological presuppositions based on Lacan and Levinas are contestable from a Deleuzian perspective and ineffective in practice. However, this has not been sufficiently described or linked to our alternative – ontologies of abundance. This will be the purpose of the current section. In what follows I outline the form of traditional metaphysics based on transcendence and argue, with Deleuze, that productive metaphysics can exist without this grounding on external elements (a claim that defies orthodox notions of metaphysics). Moreover, I assert that in order to support the non-representative, non-essentialist ethical claims of postanarchism and avoid a descent into relativism, what is needed is a metaphysics of immanence. Justification for using a particularly Deleuzian version of this metaphysics follows in Chapter 2.

Transcendent ethical frameworks operate on the premise that there is something that transcends human existence – a set of values or ideals or duties that are independent of humans. These can be universalised, as is the case with deontological or utilitarian ethics, or, if we were to accept prefigurative virtue ethics, of which Benjamin Franks is a proponent, we can utilise practice-specific *telē* where only the values are transcendent. In all of these approaches, a person's actions (and the results) are always scrutinised in relation to whether they fit a transcendent standard. It could be said that it is almost irrelevant what these ideals or values are – what is important is that operating in this transcendent framework requires us to see means and ends as separate and subjugate one or the other to a transcendent ideal. It is this

that I argue is at the root of the normative tension found in postanarchist ethics.

Both in 'classical' and 'post' anarchist debates there appears a struggle to reconcile means and ends, to overcome the separation and hierarchy between the two. If seen as a political ideology with demands for internal consistency and a need to reconcile its values with its methods, anarchism inevitably creates tension over which practices are closer to this anarchist ideal and which are not (leading either to moral universalism, which postanarchists claim is the case for classical anarchism, or moral relativism, which Newman exemplifies with Stirner). Attempts to create anarchist ethics that avoid swinging between the two (or dispense with the question entirely) must start by questioning the need for a standard – the ideal serving as the standard, and reality as 'lower', that which needs to be elevated to meet the standard. An example here would be the much-discussed pacifism versus 'radicalism' debate, which The Invisible Committee highlight in *To Our Friends*.²¹⁸ Both pacifists and radicals, they claim, strive for purity (either of violent action, or of non-violent action), even reaching the point of handing each other over to their common enemy, the police. They write:

Since the catastrophic defeat of the 1970s, the *moral* question of radicality has gradually replaced the *strategic* question of revolution. That is, revolution has suffered the same fate as everything else in those decades: it has been privatised. It has become an opportunity for personal validation, with radicality as the standard of evaluation . . . What happens instead is that a *form* is extracted from each [revolutionary act].²¹⁹

Thus, a transcendent measure by which revolutionary acts are rated as 'radical' emerges and people come to aspire to a level of radicality rather than to real world change. There seems to be a similar intrusion of transcendent

²¹⁸ The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, Semiotext(e), 2015, p. 135.

²¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 142.

standards in queer and intersectional organising, particularly in recent debates around ‘oppression olympics’. Abbie Volcano exemplifies this with a sketch that many activists might find familiar:

“As a working class person, I have to say...” (a few nods of agreement)

“As a poor woman, it seems to me...” (even more nods)

“As a poor lesbian of color, I think...” (even more furious nodding, making sure everyone registers each other’s frenetic agreement).²²⁰

In the same way that there is a quest here for the most ‘authentic’ voice or the most oppressed person, the quest for radicality can become yet another search for the ‘ideal’ anarchist, who has the moral high ground and whose opinion therefore matters most (indicating a certain distribution of power). Volcano continues: “[o]ften this tactic of agreeing with ‘the most marginalised in the room’ will be used as a substitute for developing critical analyses around race, gender, sexuality, etc.”²²¹ Without wishing to take up a position on these particular debates at present, it seems to me that there are many more examples we could suggest with a similar structural framework.

Essential to this transcendent framework is a particular type of epistemology that prioritises those fixed and stable identities which are representations of a universal standard. In the example above, this is reflected in the construction of ‘queer’ as an identity with its own implications and limitations. To be *perceived* as the bearer of a queer identity, one needs to act in certain ways. These could include going to queer events, engaging in non-heteronormative sexual practices, dressing in certain ways, and so on. Moreover, what follows from this mode of thinking is that the rest of the world is also composed of stable and fixed identities – humans, nature, animals and cultures are all seen as clearly defined and separable from each other, relating only through the

²²⁰ A. Volcano, ‘Police at the Borders’, in *Queering Anarchism*, C.B. Daring et al. eds, AK Press, Edinburgh, 2012, p. 34.

²²¹ *ibid.*

medium of a standard ideal. Finally, this ideal needs to be more or less permanent (or at least presented as such), universally accepted and unchanging so that other people can aspire to achieve it. The difficulty of such transcendent frameworks is not necessarily that they result in an essentialist understanding of identities, but that they result in new types of norms where the existence of these assumptions and limitations cannot be easily challenged.

I would argue that this presents a twofold problem for anarchist ethics. On one hand, it is possible to claim that having an ontological hierarchy between means and ends and subjugating our reality to a higher standard is in opposition to the value of non-hierarchy, as is the case with certain types of ontological anarchism which Saul Newman discusses.²²² However, this claim is already an ethical stance that presupposes an (anarchist) position against hierarchy on all levels, including the ontological, a move we wish to avoid. On the other hand, we could say that measuring life against a transcendent ideal requires us to evaluate our embodied knowledge of the world according to an imposed standard (even if it is one created by ourselves; even if it's an anarchist one). For example, we know that not all women are gentle, meek, helpful and so on, but we may nevertheless expect (or demand through our actions) women to behave according to this ideal. This refers particularly to situations where various socially accepted practices are presented as historically unchangeable and universal, a problem which Foucault exposes in his critique of the treatment of sexual practices. If we were to accept that most (or even some) practices, structures and identities are socially constructed, then construing our actions as grounded in ahistorical truths or an ideal model is simply errant. Without repeating Foucault's entire argument, it is possible to draw on his conclusion that most human societies revolve around such historically contingent 'truths' that have nevertheless

²²² S. Newman, *Politics of Postanarchism*, p. 53.

been presented as universal and normalised.²²³ If – and here we might refer to Benjamin Franks’ idea of prefigurative ethics based on various *telē* – we are aware of these ‘truths’ and accept them as valid only in our own immanent reality, as Swann suggests, then the possibility of even having a *telos* to compare them to is exposed as another contingent concept that cannot be evaluated as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ without appealing to a transcendent framework.²²⁴

This will lead us to reject the ethical framework we reconstructed earlier from Simon Critchley’s *Infinitely Demanding* on the grounds of its appeal to transcendence. Critchley outlines a split, traumatised ethical agent constantly swinging between the desire to fulfil their ethical role and the unfulfillability of the ethical demand. His use of Levinas, ‘the prince of transcendence’, posits an ethical subjectivity where the subject comes into existence through the ethical demand – it is simultaneously produced by it and divided by it. The ethical demand is both universal and particular, but most significantly, it is transcendent. In an attempt to escape deontological and utilitarian ethical frameworks, Levinas wants to ground ethics in experiences, but without the disavowal of transcendent principles by which it is possible to evaluate action. This is motivated by a desire to find a ‘pure beginning’ where the constructive and normative aspects of one’s ontology are neither supported nor suppressed by ethics, the place ‘outside’ being that “which precedes essence.”²²⁵ Thus, he grounds his ethics on responsibility. Levinasian responsibility is transcendent, infinite, but also fluid to the extent that its content changes in response to the uniqueness of the Other.

This question leads us to our final critique of deontological, teleological, or even postanarchist ethical frameworks. Here I am referring to the so-called poverty or weakness of applied ethics that most ethics teachers will

²²³ For a summary of this argument see M. Foucault, ‘The political function of the intellectual’, *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1976, pp. 12-14.

²²⁴ See T. Swann, ‘Can Franks Practical Anarchism Avoid Moral Relativism?’

²²⁵ S. Critchley, *The Problem with Levinas*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 71.

immediately recognise. Sitting in a classroom and applying a set rules to a given problem, abortion for example, is a common methodology in these classes. Similarly, in anarchist meetings or discussions it is not uncommon to find 'anarchist' rules, expectations or limits established and people defending positions with reference to them. However, the problem often arises that one can defend virtually any position with ethical rules, within certain contextual boundaries. For instance, on the topic of abortion, we might apply Kantian deontology but find ourselves able to express opposing views equally well. In one instance we would check if the action is universalisable. If we encounter no contradictions and the action is still possible, then it is an ethical action, and this holds for both sides of the common debate. We are required to look at the action as detached from its context and probable outcome purely in relation to its universalisability. For Kant, a prime example is whether or not we should tell the truth. To decide, Kant suggests we check if it is possible for that action to be applied to everybody all the time. In a situation when lying becomes the universal rule, it becomes impossible to lie – the conditions which make telling a lie possible are gone (the conditions being that people ought to tell the truth).²²⁶ The paradox for an issue like abortion is that we could reach either moral conclusion through reason – contra Kant, reason is not sufficient to guide our ethical decision making. Similarly, we could use utilitarian ethics to weight the right to abortion and arrive at completely different conclusions. But none of these frameworks contains an imperative to perform the moral action unless we already subscribe to this particular framework. Franks attempts to fill this space through a prior commitment to anarchist values with contextual rules stemming from them,²²⁷ but, unfortunately, it is still possible to continue with the mental gymnastics within a value-based prefigurative framework. Of course, this critique was already suggested by Spinoza: “we do not endeavour, will, seek after or desire because we judge a thing to be good. On the contrary, we judge a thing

²²⁶ I. Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. M. Gregors, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 1959 [1785], p. 40.

²²⁷ B. Franks, 'Postanarchism and Meta-ethics', p. 148.

to be good because we endeavour, will, seek after and desire it.”²²⁸ The saving grace of this exercise is to stipulate a transcendent ideal or duty which never changes. This epistemology of transcendence relies on sameness as its fundamental ontological category and difference as its derivative. To match people to a standard or fit them into categories implies that they are in some way comparable to each other, that they are similar on some level. This error resides in the conceptualisation of difference, as Deleuze would argue. Difference constructed as the negation of the same, and thus as inferior to it, automatically creates the categories of the ‘one’ and the ‘other’.

The alternative approach to metaphysics established in what follows prioritises difference and constructs ethics of immanence. Exposing the transcendent as just another contingent practice problematises any ethical framework that relies on an ideal standard. The immanent mode of thinking I propose is inherently materialist – it focuses on what is produced, where, when, how, but also it understands the world as processual. Instead of moving from one fixed stable identity to another, identity is in flux/it is constantly becoming. There is no division between appearance and reality (appearance *is* reality); there is no opposition between One and Other, everything contained in one Being; nothing is outside, in a position of ‘higher’ existence. However, this does not imply a straightforwardly relativist position. Instead of ethics of ‘anything goes’, anarchism needs ethics that are able to conceptualise the conditions for change, a similar demand to that made by Braidotti in *Nomadic Ethics*.²²⁹ What will be constructed in the following pages does not necessarily reject essentialism and normative universals, and especially not from an ethical position. Instead, following Deleuze, I take an approach that starts with immanence and thus is able to critique and explain these concepts, perhaps seeing them differently and having a different approach to putting them to work.

²²⁸ B. Spinoza, *Ethics*, III, P9 Schol.

²²⁹ R. Braidotti, ‘Nomadic ethics’ in D. Smith, & H. Somers-Hall eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, pp. 170-197.

Before beginning, the choice of Deleuze should be explained since he is not traditionally seen as either a moral or anarchist philosopher. Deleuze's overriding concern with metaphysics singles him out from other poststructuralists who also develop a critique of representation, universals and human essence. Siding with Levi Bryant, I believe that the rejection of representation, essentialism and transcendence is not a primary concern for Deleuze's ontology but a *consequence* of it.²³⁰ This is a very important distinction insofar as it allows us to critique these elements and understand their genesis in a way that would allow for new configurations to emerge, rather than starting from an ethical position already committed to their opposition. Deleuze's philosophy responds to the question of what happens when representation and identity are taken as the basic premises upon which philosophy is constructed – the results, for example, include thinking in terms of binary oppositions such as particular and universal, being and thinking (of which theory and practice is a derivative) etc.

To break away from this mode of thinking, which Deleuze calls the dogmatic image of thought, Deleuze challenges Kantian transcendental idealism by reconfiguring it. Instead of trying to find the limits of possible knowledge, he wishes to identify the limits of real experience. This specific methodology (transcendental empiricism) contests the image of thought as representational, as what 'everyone thinks', linking the concepts 'common sense' and 'good sense'. Thought, as Deleuze shows, is more often based on common assumptions than an affinity to 'truth' – a statement which is paramount for the construction of pragmatic ethics. Consequentialism, for example, is an ethical position that attempts to bridge the gap between common sense and morality, providing a basis for ethical action that corresponds to people's moral intuitions. Moreover, ethical positions that assume we can decide on the basis of an ethical blueprint or code first and foremost assume that we are capable of rationally making this decision – in a

²³⁰ L. Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, p. 4.

sense, that we have the capacity to self-determine. Without denying this capacity, Deleuze shows that desire and notions of 'common sense' are much more influential in our decision-making processes than we might have previously acknowledged. To be able to exercise any self-determination,²³¹ we need to understand our desires and the influence society (among other structures) has over them; we need to know how our selves are constructed to be able to enlarge our power (to 'open up the virtual'). Moreover, to acknowledge the influence of desire, habits and common sense in relation to ethics does not imply rejecting ethics as a basic structure of political action – it implies we need ethics that are pragmatic and take into account the limitations of human subjectivity and knowledge. Of course, elements of this trajectory run through postanarchist thought, but, as I have argued, they all hesitate at the moment of adopting a full ontology of immanence. What follows is an attempt to perform this task.

²³¹ The concept of self-determination is one which we will revisit and readdress later on since Deleuze's philosophy radically reconfigures it.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Introduction to immanent metaphysics

2.1.1 Reading Deleuze (and Guattari)

In the introduction to the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*,²³² Deleuze and Guattari advise approaching the book as if you are listening to a music album – listen to your favourite songs first, skip the ones you don't like, listen from the beginning to the end or listen to only a couple of songs from the whole album until you get sick of them. The idea here is that there is no clear or easy way of approaching their work so that it follows naturally from one chapter to the next and there are different paths for finding a meaningful or useful way to read the book.²³³

However, this approach generates a dilemma when writing using Deleuze and Guattari's ideas. The concepts they create are so intertwined with each other that any given passage is unlikely to be fully understood without reference to various different sources from all over Deleuze's and Guattari's oeuvre. Their collaborative works relate to each other rhizomatically, with concepts setting the ground for others that appear much later on. Together they present a 'plane of immanence'. The approach I have utilised here aims to be consistent with Deleuze and Guattari's assertion that all concepts are

²³² It is probably worth briefly mentioning the use of mental health terms such as 'schizophrenia', which have arguably travelled a long way in their deployment since *Anti-Oedipus*. In *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis*, Holland makes it clear that "schizophrenia is not the disease or mental disturbance characterizing or defining schizophrenics" (p. 2), instead signalling a kind of "unlimited semiosis" which emerges as an objective tendency of the capitalist mode of society. Deleuze and Guattari defend this distinction in 'On Anti-Oedipus', *Negotiations*, pp. 23-24. Since I feel it likely to generate consternation in the contemporary anarchist milieu, and since this particular concept does not feature significantly in this thesis, I have generally steered clear of this terminology and leave it to the reader to decide whether it might still be considered an appropriate analytic term. Recent treatments can be found in H. A. Skott-Myhre and C. Taylor 'Autism: Schizo of Postmodern Capital', *Deleuze Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2011, pp. 35-48 and K. Kokubun, 'How to read Deleuze – neurosis, schizophrenia and autism', paper presented to Deleuze Workshop in Seoul, Seoul National University, 23 Jan 2018.

²³³ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 21-43.

responses to problems and thus cannot be properly understood outside of the conditions for their creation.

In the opening of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explain what they mean by rhizomatic thought. A rhizome is a horizontal network of seemingly unrelated and disparate objects – it creates offshoots of itself to produce new plants, with no clear centre or meaningfully ‘original’ plant; this mode of connection cannot be fixed or fully mapped out. Rhizomatic thought is opposed to what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘arborescent thought’, a Karl von Linneus-type of classificatory tree-like structure. They argue that the rhizome should not be thought of as a metaphor, but rather as a way of seeing all entities in the world as related and constructed by one another. In that sense, rhizomatic thought allows us to see ‘regimes of signs’, rather than relying on signification. This includes organic and non-organic beings: their routes of relations cannot be determined or predicted.²³⁴ At the other pole, the arborescent scheme, on the other hand, is a hierarchical structure with a (usually) transcendent concept at the top such as the Platonic forms or (for Kant and Descartes) the subject, with all other concepts deriving from it in a tree-like fashion. It is thus a closed system where concepts are not free to interact, a system that supports fixity and aims to preserve the arrangements of the dogmatic Image of Thought. The relationality of the rhizomatic network, on the other hand, has no single origin, and as such rejects binary oppositions such as those found in the Cartesian body/mind duality and Platonic transcendence. The result of this rhizomatic way of thinking where relationality and processes are recognised marks a break with the symbolic order (and thus representation).

The focus of the first major section (2.2) is to outline the features of the metaphysics of difference in Deleuze’s work, as well as elements arising from that foundation which are relevant for anarchist ethics. It begins with Deleuze’s diagnosis of Western philosophy as plagued with transcendence

²³⁴ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 10.

and moves into a rejection of Platonism, essences and subjectivity in the form of a purely immanent conception of difference and repetition as primary ontological categories. In 2.3, I analyse the role of the Event for immanent ethics, as well as related concepts such as 'series' and 'sense'. The final section, 2.4, discusses two strands of thought in Deleuze's collaborative works with Guattari which prove important for the construction of immanent ethics – a critique of representation in linguistics, and desire as a substitute for ethical intentionality. These also introduce the concept of production and productivity as vital for our project.

In doing this, the chapter at hand will at times present and engage with Deleuze's and Deleuze and Guattari's thought descriptively. I am by no means exempt from "the natural tendency . . . to preference or isolate particular aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's work in order to defend existing political affiliations,"²³⁵ but I have attempted to remain true to problems his philosophy responds to. In this sense, I think it is difficult to completely separate 'is' from 'ought' in the way Ian Buchanan seems to think possible.²³⁶ Nevertheless, I attempt to present the significant elements of Deleuze's metaphysics as clearly as possible before I move towards my own 'strong misreadings'²³⁷ in the next chapter. For this reason, the secondary literature on Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari used in this chapter is (mostly) confined to commentaries of their work, rather than philosophical trends inspired by them.²³⁸ Where I have used any 'Deleuze 2.0'²³⁹ commentators in this chapter, it is in service of exemplifying or elucidating Deleuze's and

²³⁵ Eloff, A., 'Children of the new Earth – Deleuze, Guattari and anarchism', paper presented to Deleuze and Guattari and Africa conference, 2015, <<http://meme.co.za/?p=152>>, accessed 12 May 2017, para. 20.

²³⁶ I. Buchanan, 'Desire and Ethics', p. 8.

²³⁷ J. Bell, 'Whistle While You Work: Deleuze and the Spirit of Capitalism', in N. Jun and D. Smith eds, *Deleuze and Ethics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2011, p. 13.

²³⁸ When referring to commentators of their works, I have tried to stick to generally well-received interpretations, such as those by James Williams, Daniel W. Smith, Ian Buchanan and Eugene Holland, though I concede the problem here of playing into what could be considered a 'Deleuzian canon'. The Deleuze-inspired theories I mention include assemblage theory, object-oriented ontology, and actor-network theory.

²³⁹ I. Buchanan, 'Assemblage Theory and Its Discontent', in *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2015, p. 387. pp. 382–392.

Deleuze and Guattari's concepts.

Though Deleuze is not often seen as an ethical theorist, he appears to have been interested in ethics from the beginning of his writing career – he read Nietzsche and Kant extensively, as well as the works of Spinoza, to whom he dedicated two books. Moreover, his collaboration with Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* produced what Foucault described as “the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time.”²⁴⁰ Despite all of this, Deleuzian ethics seem to have remained a relatively minor field. Deleuze's commentaries on earlier philosophers are frequently (and often uncritically) taken to represent his own philosophical position, and the difficulty of engaging with his ethical philosophy is exacerbated both by his style of writing and the absolute uniqueness of what he offers in ethical discussions. Moreover, as with most poststructuralists, accusations of nihilism or moral relativism have been hard to shake off. Therefore, it would seem appropriate to justify this work's engagement with what might be termed 'Deleuzian' ethics. There are a few trodden paths that can be taken in this respect – I could echo Nathan Jun's claim that “everyone from Žižek to Badiou is fond of saying that the conceptual and methodological tools with which we make sense of this age are Deleuzian tools.”²⁴¹ Alternatively, I could make claims for the political and ethical relevance of Deleuze's thought for activism and social movements, which, though valuable, are most likely claims that could be made for any prominent theorist.²⁴² But the main reason I pursue Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy in this thesis is in order to present a metaphysical foundation that is able to support the type of ethics that I argue anarchism needs, that is, immanent, non-representational and non-essentialist ethics on the basis of which we can reconceptualise bodies, processes and actions. This choice echoes what Braidotti calls “a materialist approach to affectivity and a

²⁴⁰ M. Foucault, 'Preface', in G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. xii.

²⁴¹ N. Jun, 'Introduction', in N. Jun and D. Smith eds, *Deleuze and Ethics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2011, p. 1.

²⁴² A prominent example is M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, USA, 2000.

non-essentialist brand of vitalism.”²⁴³

2.1.2 Ethics versus morality

First though, we need to re-examine the analytic distinction between the terms ‘ethics’ and ‘morality’ which was first presented in the previous chapter. Morality and its historical genealogies are closely aligned to religion, and to the judgment of God in particular (at least in the Western conception under discussion here). A huge number of Christian authors were involved in developing the concepts of guilt, responsibility, praise and duty, to name just a few of the more relevant principles.²⁴⁴ The roots of this mode of thinking can be seen in pre-Christian models of human subjectivity. Plato’s chariot allegory, for example, describes the human soul as tripartite.²⁴⁵ First, a black horse represents negative emotions, desires and instincts, pulling ‘downwards’. Second, a white horse represents positive feelings and noble passions which pulls upwards. These two horses are tethered together in a chariot that represents the soul, and they are in constant conflict, each of them favouring a different direction. It is the job of the third component, the charioteer, to moderate and overcome them. The charioteer, in this case, represents reason and intelligence, which are needed to guide human passions.

In Christian theology the division shifts – the black horse becomes the body, the urges of the body, the pull of the material world, and anything that has to do with bodily pleasures or satisfaction. Moreover, one now has a soul which is in need of saving. The soul is capable of reason and should guide/control the body. Finally, one has a spirit, which is God’s spirit within us, the spark of life which strives to return to the divine. Clearly, the Christian model implies stronger determinism and less choice, but it also changes the focus to the

²⁴³ R. Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*, p. 4.

²⁴⁴ See, for example, U. Leinsle, *Introduction to Scholastic Theology*, tr. M. Miller, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, [1995] 2010.

²⁴⁵ Plato, *Phaedrus*, Penguin, London, 2005, 246a–254e.

conflict between the body and the soul (pleasures and reason) rather than positive and negative impulses. Christian morality comes directly from God rather than through reason – there is no need to rationally justify good and evil, as believers are literally told which actions belong to God and which ones to sin.

This crude sketch provides us with a jumping off point to theorise the differentiation of ethics from morality. Rather than using the terms as synonymous or conceptualising the difference between the two on a scale of how coercive they are, in the history of philosophy morality relies on two main conditions – a division between mind and body, and external grounding. Deleuze (especially later in his work with Guattari) envisions a break with both of these elements of traditional morality. In his works on Spinoza, he offers a new differentiation between the two terms:

Ethics, which is to say, a typology of immanent modes of existence, replaces Morality, which always refers existence to transcendent values. Morality is the judgment of God, the system of Judgment. But Ethics overthrows the system of judgment. The opposition of values (Good–Evil) is supplanted by the qualitative difference of modes of existence (good–bad).²⁴⁶

Following Spinoza, Deleuze reformulates ‘ethics’ as a rejection of mind/body dualism and starts instead with a commitment to avoid judgment based on transcendent values. This entails an ontological position based on immanent and materialist understandings of the world completely different from (and opposed to) deontology, teleology or utilitarianism. Second, replacing the notions of identity and essentialism with difference and repetition as the foundations of metaphysics leads Deleuze to go beyond binary oppositions and dialectical synthesis as a way of understanding the world. My argument is that this points in the direction of a non-essentialist productive ethics, a position which allows for the amalgamation of theory and practice or, rather,

²⁴⁶ G. Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, tr. R. Hurley, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1988, p. 23.

collapsing the distance between them. Moreover, the importance of process-oriented ontology is complemented with the notion of ethics as 'problematic' and of philosophy as methodology.

Such ethics rely on the possibility of defining and applying the notion of immanence. Even though Deleuze and Guattari suggest that all philosophy is related to the 'plane of immanence',²⁴⁷ and all transcendent concepts can be read as bound to an underlying notion of immanence,²⁴⁸ describing an immanence-in-itself is nevertheless a complex task. Christian Kerslake gives a formal definition of immanence as a system which does not appeal to anything 'outside', where all the elements and relations are internal to the metaphysical system they are part of.²⁴⁹ Transcendence, on the other hand, privileges something outside. Ontologically, Kerslake continues, immanence "promises that *thought* is capable of being fully expressive of *beings*; there is no 'transcendence' of being to thought."²⁵⁰ Both of these formulations of immanence are fundamental elements of Deleuze's project. As Deleuze comments, as soon as we posit a relation as a relation 'to' something, we are in transcendent philosophy.²⁵¹ In an immanent philosophy, all relations are thought of as 'in' something. In ethics, transcendence manifests itself as an external body or force that serves as an arbiter for truth.

For Deleuze, the distinction between immanence and transcendence is all-encompassing. Transcendent metaphysics rely on fixed identity categories in dialectical opposition, such as mind/body, nature/society, passion/reason. These pairs are also always hierarchical negations, where one is evaluated in terms of the other, and always in relation to an 'outside'. Further, within a transcendent system, philosophers tend to focus on the 'interior' of these entities, in the form of human nature, or essence, or identity, rather than the

²⁴⁷ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, Verso, London, 1994, p. 14.

²⁴⁸ G. Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, MIT Press, London, 1990, p. 322.

²⁴⁹ C. Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2009, p. 2.

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*

²⁵¹ G. Deleuze, 'Immanence: A Life...', in J. Rajchman ed., *Pure Immanence*, Zone Books, New York, 2001, p. 26.

relations entities enter into with each other. In other words, transcendent metaphysics prioritises a fixed and stable interiority within the system, which is then put in a relation *to* a transcendent entity. Conversely, Deleuze is interested in the exteriority of these entities and their relations and posits that there is no 'natural' interiority to beings, such as essence or subjectivity. For example, the subject is formed from pre-subjective parts that stay together through a network of relations that they are constantly part of. The interior, thus, becomes a product of the exterior. In an interview with Claire Parnet, Deleuze comments:

'Peter is smaller than Paul', 'The glass is on the table': relation is neither internal to one of the terms which would consequently be subject, nor to two together. Moreover, a relation may change without the terms changing ... Relations are in the middle, and exist as such. This exteriority of relations is not a principle, it is a vital protest against principles . . . If one takes this exteriority of relations as a conducting wire or as a line, one sees a very strange world unfold, fragment by fragment: a Harlequin's jacket or patchwork, made up of solid parts and voids, blocs and ruptures, attractions and divisions, nuances and bluntnesses, conjunctions and separations, alternations and interweavings, additions which never reach a total and subtractions whose remainder is never fixed.²⁵²

That is to say, for Deleuze immanence is directly linked to his philosophy being 'relational' and materialist. On one hand, the relations between terms become the object of study, while on the other, they are considered to be as real as physical entities (hence materialist). Subsequently, this is also part of the reason he is so interested in processes.

When it comes to Deleuze's thought on immanent ethics, the central ethical question attributed to his philosophy is derived from his works on Spinoza and framed by the dictum 'we do not know what a body can do.' Spinoza's

²⁵² G. Deleuze and C. Parnet, *Dialogues II*, Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 55.

goal is to problematise the way we speak about mind, consciousness and soul as having power over the body, whilst at the same time not knowing what a body is capable of. Therefore, the goal of morality to control the body (via its physical urges) seems not only unnecessarily limiting but also naïve – how could we truly exercise power over it in this manner? Deleuze himself elaborates that the assumption that the soul/mind can control the body already puts it in a position of eminence over the body – “it has higher duties.”²⁵³ The body, on the other hand, has the power to execute the actions proscribed by the mind/soul, or to lead it astray. Thus, the purpose of morality is to provide the soul/mind with the rules to control the body, situating them in constant opposition to one another – “when one of these acts, the other suffers.”²⁵⁴ The novel alternative provided by Spinoza was parallelism – the notion that “a passion in the mind is *also* a passion in the body . . . an action in the mind is *also* an action in the body.”²⁵⁵ Moreover, Spinoza’s concept of *conatus* (translated variously as ‘striving’ or ‘endeavour’) contributes to Deleuze’s own definition of life and immanence.²⁵⁶ The body’s striving for joy, Spinoza claims, leads to happiness, thereby increasing our power, which in turn increases our knowledge of the world.

Indeed, from this perspective, we can perhaps glimpse some of the motivation behind Deleuze’s rejection of a transcendent ‘outside’.

Transcendence takes the form of ultimate impotence – especially in the works of philosophers like Levinas and Derrida where one can never satisfy the call for justice or infinite responsibility.²⁵⁷ Transcendence separates us from our capacity to act and represents negative, life-diminishing forces. Yet it is posited both as the ultimate basis of ethics and the foundation of politics. For Deleuze and Guattari, such ethics or politics ultimately hinder action. Deleuze’s own path towards immanence begins in earnest with his doctoral

²⁵³ G. Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, p. 255.

²⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 255.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 256.

²⁵⁶ G. Deleuze, ‘Immanence: A Life...’, pp. 25-26.

²⁵⁷ D. Smith, ‘Deleuze and the Question of Desire’, p. 125.

thesis, *Difference and Repetition* (1968), and *Logic of Sense* (1969) which both address the problem of identity (and essence) and its dominant position in Western philosophy. *Difference and Repetition*, in particular, is both a diagnosis of blockages and problems stemming from the search for transcendent grounding in philosophy, and a methodology which can resolve them.

This first section, then, aims to open our engagement with Deleuze by establishing his critique of Western philosophy. In discussing the 'dogmatic image of thought', we follow his analysis of the problem of transcendence in the search for pure philosophical presuppositions. This section will take a similar route to our discussion of postanarchism – rather than working with Deleuze chronologically, we will start by outlining the problem that *Difference and Repetition* is a response to and then continue on to Deleuze's methodology, which will allow us to understand his approach to immanence. In a later collaborative work with Guattari, they identify four main errors of transcendence: "(1) the illusion of transcendence (a making immanence immanent 'to' something or discovering a transcendence within immanence itself); (2) the illusion of universals (when concepts are confused with the plane itself); (3) the illusion of the eternal (when it is forgotten that concepts must be created); and, (4) the illusion of discursiveness,"²⁵⁸ which we will trace through his *oeuvre*. Subsequently, we will outline his metaphysics on the basis of difference-in-itself as a primary ontological category. Through this process I introduce other concepts as they become necessary, outlining repetition, individuation, and Deleuze's understanding of time and space. At the end of 2.4.2, we address his explicit remarks about ethics in relation to the Event and conditions for change. In the final section, I introduce two more elements which are less commonly associated with ethics, namely, the concepts of 'production' and 'desire', taken from Deleuze's collaborative work with Guattari. These two, I argue, provide the necessary steps for a complete anarchist conceptualisation of immanent ethics.

²⁵⁸ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 49.

2.2 Constructing immanence

2.2.1 The dogmatic image of thought

Difference and Repetition is the first book Deleuze published explicitly expounding his own philosophy, following a series of commentaries of other philosophers. It remains his most traditionally 'philosophical' text. James Williams, for example, claims that *Difference and Repetition* is central to Deleuze's philosophical project because it puts in motion a ground-breaking type of methodology – transcendental empiricism – which defines the form and content of the rest of his philosophy.²⁵⁹ As such, it is be a central touchstone for this thesis as well.

In the course of this section, I argue that morality is grounded upon the dogmatic image of thought, and that the first step in conceptualising a new form of ethics is critique, breaking with this inveigling presupposition. Therefore, we start with the eponymic chapter that outlines Deleuze's rejection of transcendent metaphysics and lies at the core of his argument against representationalism.²⁶⁰ In an interview in 1988 Deleuze said that the Image of Thought chapter was the turning point of the book, his "prolegomena to philosophy."²⁶¹ It is possible, then, to understand the preceding two chapters as Deleuze's demonstration that he can do 'philosophy' the way philosophy is traditionally done, "doing history of philosophy, or transplanting bits of Plato on problems that are no longer Platonic ones."²⁶² In the latter part of the book following the Image of Thought chapter, he starts doing philosophy in his own voice, the way he thinks philosophy should be done.²⁶³ This gives the book a pleasing,

²⁵⁹ J. Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2003, p. 33.

²⁶⁰ J. Mullarkey, 'Deleuze and materialism', in I. Buchanan ed., *A Deleuzian Century*, Duke 1999, p. 79.

²⁶¹ G. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p. 149.

²⁶² *ibid.*

²⁶³ See T. Murphy, 'The Philosophy (of the Theatre) of Cruelty', *Deleuze and The Transcendental Unconscious – Pli (Warwick Journal of Philosophy)*, vol. 4, 1992, pp. 105-135.

symmetrical structure through its differences and repetitions. For this reason, we will start with the Image of Thought and, through it, Deleuze's critique of Western philosophy, which is ultimately the justification for his engagement with difference as an ontological category.

From birth, Deleuze claims, we enter into a restrictive and conformist mode of thinking, one which relies on implicit presuppositions. Here subject and object are pre-established, and so thinking happens by a process of recognition and representation. The search for the 'purest' place to begin has (mis)guided many philosophers and led to a grounding in which it is assumed that the subject as thinker is a universal given.²⁶⁴ An image of thought, then, refers to the presuppositions of philosophy, defined as the form thinking assumes. According to Deleuze, philosophy can either start from objective or subjective presuppositions. Objective presuppositions could be defined as those which explicitly need another concept to be supported: for example, by saying 'anarchists are violent', we presuppose two external objects: both 'anarchist' and 'violence'. Subjective presuppositions, on the other hand, are more implicit, such as the Cartesian 'I think therefore I am', where the 'I' takes the form of a given. Here, it is expected that everyone knows, independently of definitions, what it is to think and to be. In philosophy, this is taken to be one of the purest possible beginnings as it refers all presuppositions back to the empirical self.²⁶⁵ Other examples include Hegel's pure being or Heidegger's pre-ontological Being. The image of thought in Western philosophy, argues Deleuze, is always repeating itself - it tries to identify something which does not rely on other concepts for its existence. This image of thought then becomes a dogmatic and circular method of doing philosophy. The subjective presuppositions, he claims, take the form of common sense that "everybody knows...", that which no one can reasonably argue against.²⁶⁶ Common sense has an explicit affinity with

²⁶⁴ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 164.

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 165.

universal, objective truth through its empirical claims of general knowledge, and it is always based on this particular kind of methodology or way of thinking, what Deleuze calls 'good sense' – the form of proper engagement of the faculties. On one hand, common sense ensures conformity with everyone else, and on the other, good sense preserves the established boundaries of thinking. Thus, the combination of the two (doxa) maintains the status-quo, and the resilience of a particular dogmatic form of thinking. It is this formal schema which most Western philosophy is based on, in its varieties of 'rationalist' or 'empiricist'.²⁶⁷ Finally, by taking common sense as its starting position, this image of thought inherently utilises a form of representation.²⁶⁸ Common sense is supposed to 'represent' truthfully that which is universally known and acknowledged. Deleuze's own project is to find a philosophical beginning that is without any kind of presuppositions. Genuine thought, he argues, is something we engage in rarely, emerging where thought encounters its own impossibility.

Therefore, it seems that to be able to understand his metaphysics of difference, the key is to start with Deleuze's rigorous critique of the Image of Thought. He identifies eight postulates as the errors or implicit presuppositions:²⁶⁹

1. *Cogitatio natura universalis*, the postulate of the good will of the philosopher and the good nature of thought.
2. The Ideal/common sense.
3. The problem of recognition as the primary faculty which leads all the other faculties.
4. The postulate of representation, difference being subsumed under the Same, Similar, Analogous or Opposed.
5. The one of the negative/error.
6. The problem of logical function/proposition.

²⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 167.

²⁶⁸ *ibid.*

²⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 207.

7. The postulate of solutions.
8. The postulate of knowledge.

It will be instructive to follow Deleuze's argument through the example of Descartes' *cogito*. The first postulate, of good will, is already expressed in 'I think, therefore I am'. Starting with a process (thinking), Descartes assumes that there is an 'I', a coherent self doing the thinking. The process is supposed to be universal and relies on what 'everybody knows' – it is common knowledge that everybody thinks (or at least has the capacity to think).²⁷⁰ This capacity to think is taken to be both universal and natural – Descartes assumes that everybody is naturally inclined to thought and this inclination results in rational thinking which then grounds philosophy. This is the first postulate, or implicit presupposition – the capacity to think (good will). The second postulate is tightly bound to the first one. Once we have established every I's capacity to think, the role of the philosopher becomes that of grounding common sense with empirical facts, which is especially dangerous in relation to politics or society. This ideal(ised) common sense presupposes a certain distribution of transcendental and empirical knowledge, which then results in an image of thought that relies on empty forms (Platonic forms).²⁷¹

The third postulate is based on knowledge seen as a product of the faculties of the mind – we obtain knowledge through perception, memory, understanding, sensations, etc.²⁷² The primary faculty, or the one that the others depend upon, is the faculty of recognition, which allows for the rest of the faculties to be engaged.²⁷³ To give an example, when we encounter something, we need to first recognise what it is (a blue dress) before any of the rest of our faculties are involved, such as remembering we saw James wearing the same blue dress last week. For Descartes, errors in thinking occur either in recognition (we are incapable of identifying what something is) or in

²⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 168.

²⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 170.

²⁷² *ibid.*, p. 171.

²⁷³ *ibid.*

the faculties (we are incapable of remembering or ordering our knowledge around it). Kant, on the other hand, is interested in discovering what the limits of the faculties are – what the limits of our *possible knowledge* are (transcendental idealism). Beyond these limits everything is error/illusion. Deleuze is suspicious of the primacy of recognition as the overarching faculty that enables the engagement of all the rest of the faculties. The problem with recognition, he claims, is that it relies on representation, which is where the fourth postulate appears.²⁷⁴ In order to recognise something as an object of the (other) faculties, we must rely on one of the four forms of representation: identity, analogy, opposition or similarity. James Williams elaborates:

Each of these aspects corresponds to an application of representation to different faculties. In terms of the understanding, it depends on the identity of the concept (*What are its correct predicates?*). For judgement, it depends on analogy (*Is the structure the same here and here?*). In terms of the imagination, it depends on oppositions (*What if this is negated or removed?*). Whereas, for perception, it depends on similarities (*Are these the same to you?*)²⁷⁵

The most basic form of representation is implied in the sentiment ‘everybody knows’. Thus, Deleuze’s primary objection to recognition is that it claims to be the condition for engaging other faculties because everything has to be recognised first, but actually it relies on that which is already known, recognising new things only on the basis of its previous knowledge. This means that rather than constituting a pure beginning the Cartesian *cogito* serves to justify ‘common sense’ and philosophers depending on it such as Kant and Hegel become inherently dogmatic as they cannot account for the new. Against this is positioned Deleuze’s own philosophical project of critique and immanence, imagining “[s]omeone who neither allows himself to be represented nor wishes to represent anything.”²⁷⁶ This form of doxa, or

²⁷⁴ *ibid.*, p. 182.

²⁷⁵ J. Williams, *Gilles Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide*, p. 128.

²⁷⁶ G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

common sense, is often opposed to knowledge, or good sense (*Eudoxus* and *Epistemon*), but both are equally dangerous – it is difficult not to discard one dogmatic image of thought for a new, equally dogmatic one. Philosophy needs to break with orthodoxy in its general form of rationalised common sense, rather than break with particular orthodoxies and replace them with other ones.

The fifth postulate, of error, refers to the general tendency (also exhibited in philosophy) to perceive thought as negative – as a method which always aims at correcting errors.²⁷⁷ Error, when located in the faculties as with Descartes and Kant, leaves the rational orthodoxy of the image of thought intact – if only we were thinking rationally we would reach the right conclusion.²⁷⁸ However, Deleuze points out that such an understanding of error ignores other aspects of falsehood, such as nonsensical sentences and incoherent or uninteresting remarks, among others. This leads him to question the connection between sense and falsity – anticipating *Logic of Sense* – by arguing that false propositions are not necessarily nonsensical. Drawing on mathematics and formal logic, Deleuze claims that “[s]ense is defined as the condition of the true, but since it is supposed that the condition must retain an extension larger than that which is conditioned, sense does not ground truth without also allowing the possibility of error.”²⁷⁹ Thus, sense cannot be subsumed under the categories of true and false, as it is the productive field out of which these categories emerge. Moreover, true and false are seen as attributes of problems.²⁸⁰ In this case, sense is ignored in favour of thinking oriented towards solving problems. Concomitantly, problems disappear once we find a solution for them. Contrary to this, Deleuze argues that it is an error to think of problems as negative and that they can be solved (or resolved).²⁸¹ This leads us into the seventh postulate: the simple activity of a teacher

²⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 185.

²⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 191.

²⁷⁹ *ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 196.

²⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 197.

setting a problem for the students to solve, “and the result is accredited true or false by a powerful authority.”²⁸² Later on, Deleuze and Guattari will expand this particular critique by arguing that most scientific and some philosophical endeavour is oriented towards the orthodox production of knowledge by constantly measuring, conducting experiments, or clarifying concepts and problems set by ‘masters’, always focused on solving problems and finding solutions.

Finally, continuing the critique of teaching, the eighth postulate deals with knowledge. Here, knowledge and learning are separated. Deleuze distinguishes between learning with the purpose of acquiring knowledge and learning as ‘apprenticeship’. The first type is bound to the orthodoxy of knowledge, as part of the dogmatic image. Knowledge is the passive possession of solutions, a kind of generality of concepts, while learning as an active process is when one confronts a problem and must find a response.²⁸³ An interesting example of learning in this sense is when one starts to swim. One has to “conjugate the distinctive points of our bodies with the singular points of the objective Idea in order to form a problematic field.”²⁸⁴ Learning is finding (and pushing) the limits of knowledge.²⁸⁵ For Deleuze, the problem stems from defining knowledge as the end goal of learning. If we take seriously the critique of the previous postulates, that problems are not soluble and errors of knowledge are not factual, then learning cannot be the practice of acquiring knowledge and ready-made solutions. Instead, Deleuze advocates for learning as an open-ended critical activity of responding to problems; This might be contrasted with the picture of someone learning to swim whilst on shore, going through the movements without being actually presented with the problematic field of the sea.

²⁸² *ibid.*

²⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 204.

²⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 205.

²⁸⁵ It is a ‘transcendental’ activity in a Deleuzian sense, which we will examine in the next section.

2.2.2 Transcendental empiricism

Having identified these postulates of Western philosophy, Deleuze's challenge is to construct a philosophy which does not rely on subjective presuppositions, or indeed, on any presuppositions at all, as Toscano argues.²⁸⁶ Pre-empting the later development of his philosophy, this initial project of finding a 'pure beginning' can be seen as the seeds for immanent metaphysics. Deleuze remarks that a critique of transcendence was the main concern of Kant's works.²⁸⁷ Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* aims at discerning reason by outlining the limitations of transcendent metaphysics. A major influence on Deleuze, Kant is the epitome of "a thinker who proposed an all-encompassing critique but who in the end settled for compromise",²⁸⁸ creating a philosophy which has the capacity to critique but remaining complicit with established values. To identify presuppositions which do not fall prey to the image of thought, Deleuze 'bastardises' Kantian transcendental idealism into a new method, 'transcendental empiricism'. In the following section, I outline this foundation for immanent thinking.

As Williams observes, Deleuze's critique and the postulates that emerge from it "could not come from radical empiricism, given the categorical assertion pertaining to a matter of fact. It is a transcendental claim about necessary conditions."²⁸⁹ The fact that the transcendental is the object of enquiry in Deleuze provides the direct connection with Kantian philosophy. Indeed, this connection has been extensively explored, not least due to Deleuze's own book on Kant.²⁹⁰ Kant coined the term transcendental to refer both to a methodological approach of searching for conditions of possibility and a metaphysics that explores the conditions themselves. Kant's main claim in

²⁸⁶ A. Toscano, 'Everybody Thinks: Deleuze, Descartes and Rationalism', *Radical Philosophy*, no. 162, 2010, p. 8.

²⁸⁷ G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Continuum, London, 2001, pp. 51-52.

²⁸⁸ P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, 2000, p. 22.

²⁸⁹ J. Williams, 'Difference and Repetition' in D. Smith and H. Somers-Hall eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Deleuze*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012, p. 39.

²⁹⁰ See D. W. Smith, 'Deleuze, Kant, and the Theory of Immanent Ideas', *Deleuze and Philosophy*, 2006, pp. 43-61.

relation to knowledge is that the mind contributes to our understanding of objects and experiences through certain ideal and universal structures, and his project was therefore to identify the limits of possible knowledge. In doing so he discerns four types of knowledge across four axes:

	Analytic	Synthetic
<i>A priori</i>	Logical	Transcendental
<i>A posteriori</i>	Hypothetical	Empirical

The categories of analytic and synthetic refer to a statement's relationship to truth, and more specifically whether its constitutive elements produce a truthful statement. *A priori* and *a posteriori* are the categories relating to experience, that is, knowledge acquired prior to or through experience. For example, an analytic *a priori* statement would be 'all Labradors are dogs', because being a dog is contained in the definition of labrador as a breed. There is no need for the person who makes the statement to have met Labradors to confirm its (logical) truth. *A priori* knowledge, for Kant, is based on reason. Of much more interest is the synthetic *a priori*, concerning transcendental knowledge. An example of such a statement would be 'Labradors like food', which is a fact about the world that needs to be verified externally, i.e. its constitutive elements do not necessarily represent truth. Epistemologically, the difference between analytic and synthetic resides in whether the truth of the statement could *only* be known from the constitutive elements of the statement or if it requires knowledge about the world. What is important to emphasize in this discussion is that for Kant the transcendental is opposed to the transcendent. He rejects transcendent metaphysics as being beyond human knowledge and instead attempts to investigate the *limits* of possible human knowledge (transcendental knowledge).

Deleuze, on the other hand, uses transcendental to refer to conditions that are immanent to being, building a transcendental ontology of the virtual by

rejecting 'the possible' in favour of real experience. In Deleuze, all conditions are specific to the situation they arise in. Whilst for Kant the transcendental are conditions which structure experience *a priori*, for Deleuze the transcendental conditions are those of genesis. Therefore, a Kantian transcendental methodology cannot account for the virtual, or the pool of genetic conditions where something new can emerge. For Deleuze, Kant and Kantians' biggest error was to understand the conditions (transcendental) by mapping them onto the conditioned (empirical), whilst the same conditions were supposed to explain the conditioned. This results in a circular argument of pre-suppositions, where synthetic *a priori* concepts are taken from experience, but are treated as transcendent. His approach is, in contrast, empiricist and pluralist. These derive from the two characteristics by which Whitehead defined empiricism: the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained; and the aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (creativity).²⁹¹

In this context, Deleuze calls his methodology transcendental empiricism. His empiricism, however, even though inspired by Hume, carries some fundamental differences. Empiricism for Deleuze is more than an epistemology based on the senses, even though it is primarily concerned with the *given* as well. If empiricism analyses and derives knowledge through positing the given as a primary epistemological category, Deleuze is concerned with what the conditions for the given are: the material and its cause and effect.²⁹² Thus, empiricism in *Difference and Repetition* does not refer to the view that all concepts originate in experience, as traditional empiricism might argue, explored through scientific methods of experimentation (despite the fact that Deleuze does focus a lot on experimentation). It is a method of bypassing representation in thinking. Deleuzian empiricism studies reality as

²⁹¹ G. Deleuze and C. Parnet, *Dialogues II*, p. vii.

²⁹² L. Bryant, 'Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism', in E. Willat and M. Lee eds, *Thinking Between Deleuze and Kant. A Strange Encounter*, Continuum, London, 2009, p. 28.

'intensities' that have been 'actualised', drawn from an immanent account of genesis.²⁹³

As Williams points out, it is important to realise that *Difference and Repetition* is itself an application of the methods laid out and defended within.²⁹⁴

Moreover, this allows Deleuze to start from a position in philosophy which does not presuppose the concepts it creates. In principle, that leads to a methodology which is capable of conceiving of immanence-in-itself, as well as reformulating the role of critique to focus on determinability arising from a problematic field.

2.2.3 The role of critique

At this point it is possible to see a transition of morality from a kind of dogmatism of common sense to a specific type of critique, now termed ethics, which arises out of Deleuze's transcendental empiricism. In his essay *To Have Done with Judgment*, Deleuze identifies the condition for judgment as "the relation between existence and the infinite in the order of time",²⁹⁵ drawing out the connection between morality and transcendent metaphysics. The dogmatic image of thought (as the presuppositions of transcendent philosophy) is precisely the foundation that maintains the common-sense illusion that moral laws are related to objective truth and are based on some form of shared universality. Similar to the way it produces a specific way of thinking, it also produces a specific relationship to truth and universality, which then serves as the basis for moral laws.²⁹⁶ This is particularly well exemplified with Kantian deontology. Kant understands the acquisition of moral knowledge as occurring through 'pure practical reason'. Pure practical reason is knowledge that comes *a priori*, as opposed to empirical knowledge, which Kant considers to be *a posteriori* - knowledge gained from an experience

²⁹³ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 264.

²⁹⁴ J. Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide*, p. 22.

²⁹⁵ G. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota, 1997, p. 127.

²⁹⁶ Y. Spangenberg, 'Thought Without an Image', *Phronimon*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2009, p. 89.

that is subjective and linked to a particular person. This *a priori* synthetic knowledge is transcendental and universal and constitutes moral laws.²⁹⁷

Thus, the move past the realm of judgment and towards immanent ethics depends on the success of Deleuze's critique of the image of thought. In the discussion of the postulates, it became clear that Deleuze posited a very specific type of critique – for it to be a true critique, it cannot be founded on the same postulates it is questioning. Even though he outlines the main features of such a critique in his formulation of transcendental empiricism, it is not until much later in his collaborative works with Guattari that he returns to the question of philosophy as critique itself. In order to understand this approach, in this section we look at how Deleuze redefines the method of critique in his discussion of 'problems', and then examine Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the role of philosophy as related to truth, universality and knowledge. The kind of philosophy they promote is not complicit with established values, but suggests the conditions for new ethics to emerge.²⁹⁸ In their last collaborative work, Deleuze and Guattari set out to trace an alternative history of philosophy – one that does not start with the failure of metaphysics. Deleuze and Guattari do not see the role of philosophy as unveiling the truth or clarifying ideas, but instead as a creative endeavour born out of immanent conditions. This critique is particularly important for my treatment of anarchist ethics, as the opposition to a transcendent approach to philosophy is applicable to anarchism as well, as we shall come to shortly.

Let us return briefly to *Difference and Repetition* where Deleuze outlines the method for discerning conditions which lies at the heart of his concept of 'problematic' (or Idea, which he uses more or less synonymously). Ideas, as first conceived by Plato and later by Kant and Hegel, refer to an ontological category of mental representations. In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Ideas allow for relocating reason in relation to abstract ideas. As we discussed in

²⁹⁷ G. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, Continuum, London, 2008, p. 52.

²⁹⁸ G. Deleuze and C. Parnet, *Dialogues*, p. vii.

the previous section, Kant discerns four types of knowledge, of which we shall examine three. First, there are empirical concepts, such as 'a mug', or 'a book', which are developed through experience; secondly, there are *a priori* analytic concepts, also called categories, which are applicable to any object, such as colour, size, shape, etc. The third kind of concept presented in Kant's *Critique* is the synthetic *a priori*, concepts that transcend the limits of possible experience – the domain of Ideas. For instance, speaking about pure love, or an absolute being like God is in the realm of Ideas as these concepts can never be experienced. For Deleuze, however, the main question, identified by Spangenberg, is what the conditions of real thought are.²⁹⁹

In chapter four, Deleuze identifies three aspects of Kant's concept of the Idea, which then serve as the foundation for his own concept of 'problematic'.³⁰⁰ Ideas are "undetermined with regard to their object, determinable with regard to objects of experience, and bearing the ideal of an infinite determination with regard to concepts of the understanding."³⁰¹ The first point means that an object outside of the limits of possible experience could not be known, positing problems as transcendent in relation to solutions; the second means that it is possible to determine Ideas if we compare them to objects of experience; and the last one, that Ideas serve as an ideal according to which concepts are judged. Thus, Deleuze goes on, because of their undeterminable aspect, Ideas are problematic and thus reason is reconfigured as "the faculty of posing problems in general."³⁰² The faculty of reason for Kant has two main applications. On one hand, there is theoretical reason which makes it possible to know how to obtain knowledge. On the other hand, Kant posits practical reason as the mechanism through which we are

²⁹⁹ Y. Spangenberg, loc. cit., p. 93.

³⁰⁰ In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze uses Ideas, problems and problematic synonymously, but does not persist with this usage of Idea anywhere else.

³⁰¹ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 216.

³⁰² *ibid.*, p. 218. We later oppose this to the Kantian notion of reason through the discussion of ethical knowledge in chapter 3, section xxx.

able to discern what ought to be.³⁰³

A problem-Idea, according to Deleuze, is an ontological category, rather than epistemological or psychological one.³⁰⁴ Although identifying problems (and thus making concepts) is the role of the philosopher, the term also designates something that is decidedly non-anthropocentric. Problems are the transformative field of processes of learning, a “differentiated complex that solicits the creation of concepts.”³⁰⁵ Ideas, in this sense, are ‘problems’ that organise thought but have no ‘solutions’ per se. They are the productive field of the genesis of thought and objects. Moreover, problems are not determined universally or subjectively as deficiencies of knowledge, they are connected to the state of affairs, and even when solutions appear, problems do not necessarily disappear. They are not inherently negative – they have no bearing of good or bad, they are merely a system of connections between different elements. A feature appears here which introduces a major theme in Deleuze’s philosophy: “it is the problem which orientates, conditions and engenders solutions, but these do not resemble the conditions of the problem.”³⁰⁶ As we will see, this lack of resemblance between a process and its product will structure Deleuze and Guattari’s approach to conceptualizing the unconscious in *Anti-Oedipus*, as well as serving as a methodological starting position. We will return to Ideas when we discuss Deleuze’s notion of the virtual and actual.

Deleuze thus rejects the categorisation of problems into *solvable* and *unsolvable*, and, unlike Kant, does not premise his formulation on representation. As we discussed earlier, the rejection of Platonic Forms against which concepts and objects are evaluated suggests that their

³⁰³ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Introduction. On the transcendental power of judgment as such, A 132/B 172.

³⁰⁴ L. Bryant, ‘The Ethics of the Event: Deleuze and Ethics without A□□□’, in N. Jun and D. Smith eds, *Deleuze and Ethics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2011, p. 36.

³⁰⁵ A. Sauvagnargues, ‘The Problematic Idea, Neo-Kantianism and Maimon’s Role in Deleuze’s Thought’, in C. Lungy and D. Voss eds, *At the Edges of Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2015, p. 52.

³⁰⁶ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 212.

'appearances' cannot be a representation of a transcendent realm. Drawing on the works of Henri Bergson, Deleuze identifies a different method of evaluating the philosophical truth of problems: "Apply the test of true and false to problems themselves."³⁰⁷ He continues to claim that in metaphysics, just as in mathematics, the formulation of the problem is where most of the creative work happens, and the possibility for solving the problems lies in how they are formulated. This is a rejection of the traditional philosophical approach that what makes a problem true is its solution, i.e. if there is a solution, then the problem also has bearing on the truth. For Deleuze, both true and false problems can be either soluble or insoluble, and their affinity to truth is not in a causal relationship with the possibility of solving them.³⁰⁸

The error arises, Deleuze argues, when philosophers posit truth as the condition of possibility for solving the problem, with false problems remaining insoluble. However, following Bergson and Spinoza, he discerns the act of identifying presuppositions as the proper test of truth and falsity in philosophy. Thus, "a solution always has the truth it deserves according to the problem to which it is a response."³⁰⁹ In other words, one can only achieve the solution that the conditions allow for. This inversion of thinking emphasises the way in which problems posit the limits of thoughts and production of the new – problems become productive when we dispense with a transcendent model of truth. To illustrate the concept of the problematic, Levi Bryant uses the example of a grape seed.³¹⁰ The vine is a product of the problematic surrounding the seed, its internal milieu of genetics, its external milieu of water, sunshine, soil, etc. In the end, if a vine doesn't produce enough grapes, we might perceive that as a problem for our designs of wine production, but for Deleuze this would be simply a solution for a different problem that the plant has implemented in response to its environmental

³⁰⁷ G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, Zone Books, New York, 1991, p. 15.

³⁰⁸ In the sense that they can dissipate, playfully analogous to the way sugar is soluble in water – it doesn't disappear, it just gets mixed in with other elements.

³⁰⁹ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 158–9.

³¹⁰ L. Bryant, 'The Ethics of the Event: Deleuze and Ethics without A□□□', pp. 37-39.

situation. The same example can be applied to political or ethical situations, which unfold as the product of a particular problematic – “the solution necessarily follows from the complete conditions under which the problem is determined as a problem.”³¹¹ This is quite a complex concept, but one which frames Deleuze’s attempts to make his philosophy applicable. He is concerned with what he sees as incorrect inferences about causal relations – symptoms being mistaken for their ‘diseases’, solutions being mistaken for their problems, and assemblages being mistaken for coherent ‘individuals’. In Deleuze’s work, problematisation is the driving force behind certain activities including philosophy. The task of philosophy might be to create problems, but prior to this creation is problematisation, the ‘plane of immanence’ which produces the need for these concepts. This is the point which we identified in the beginning as the marriage of theory and practice – the creation of concepts as a response to a problematic. Let us turn towards ‘the plane of immanence’ and creation.

In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the role of the ‘concept’ to dispense with philosophy’s relationship to truth and representation. Concepts, they claim, are complex entities comprised of different components – a multiplicity that has an expressive, rather than descriptive function.³¹² Concepts are not definitions or abstract ideas or a result of carefully delineated meanings, but are crafted to serve the needs of a particular problem: “concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as their solution emerges.”³¹³ The philosopher’s task then is to invent and shape concepts that express (elements of) the event.³¹⁴ Therefore, concepts have a history, but not necessarily a straightforward one – their meaning zigzags and changes, they relate to other concepts, they shift around. It might be useful to return to the Cartesian *cogito* as an example. ‘I think,

³¹¹ *ibid.*

³¹² G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 15.

³¹³ *ibid.*, p. 16.

³¹⁴ P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, pp. 13-14.

therefore I am' introduces the concept of the self, the I. It contains three elements – the thinking I, the being I and the doubting I.³¹⁵ We could trace precursors to this concept, other concepts that perhaps contain two elements that are the same but not the third one, or contain all three elements and a fourth one – and we can talk about being a Cartesian philosopher in the present by trying to apply this concept to contemporary problems that emerged much later. As Kerslake observes, Deleuze is operating against a Kantian framework here. A concept for Kant, such as 'a hundred thalers', would be something more like Hegel's idea of "a content-determination of my consciousness"³¹⁶ – a representation. Kerslake continues:

[A concept] is ultimately and intrinsically neither representational nor referential, but expressive of a reality . . . Both Hegel and Deleuze are against philosophies of representation because such philosophies claim to express what should be genuinely universal within a framework that remains relative to subjective representational experience (i.e. which has only been justified anthropologically), so that the concept of expression doesn't ever gain its full extension, and thought is denied its rightful access to being.³¹⁷

In other words, what Deleuze and Guattari want to emphasize is that we cannot take concepts as transcendent entities which cut through the history of ideas. We cannot assess them as being universally right or wrong. In fact, "concepts can only be assessed as a function of their problems and their plane."³¹⁸

The fundamental implication of this view is that, like other entities in Deleuze's metaphysics, concepts are immanent in themselves, rather than immanent in relation to something transcendent. The reason why, for example, the concepts from one philosopher feel connected is because they all

³¹⁵ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³¹⁶ C. Kerslake, 'The Vertigo of Philosophy: Deleuze and the Problem of Immanence', p. 11.

³¹⁷ *ibid.*

³¹⁸ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

come from one plane of immanence. The plane of immanence is the set of intuitions, questions, thoughts, experiences, etc, that make coming up with a certain concept sensical in the first place. The plane is pre-philosophical (because philosophy starts with the creation of concepts), but it's neither a concept itself nor the concept that contains all concepts.³¹⁹ Thus, we can think of the plane of immanence as the 'primordial soup' of a particular philosopher. However, Deleuze and Guattari also recognise the difficulty of determining such a plane without a recourse to transcendence:

Whenever immanence is interpreted as immanent "to" something a confusion of plane and concept results, so that the concept becomes a transcendent universal and the plane becomes an attribute in the concept. When misunderstood in this way, the plane of immanence revives the transcendent again: it is a simple field of phenomena that now only possesses in a secondary way that which first of all is attributed to the transcendent unity.³²⁰

By conceptualising the plane of immanence, and immanence, as a separate in-itself, Deleuze and Guattari are able to reveal the hidden danger of transcendence sneaking in. Immanence is only immanent to itself, it contains and captures all other concepts. Positing the plane of immanence as that which produces concepts allows us to, firstly, understand how transcendent concepts occur and, secondly, to reveal the reverse causality that is often taken for granted by philosophers – instead of understanding how a certain plane of immanence is the place of origin of concepts (including transcendent ones), we take transcendent concepts as being outside of this plane and therefore understand immanence as "a prison from which the Transcendent will save us."³²¹ The transcendent, in that sense, saves us through providing the basis for objective universal truths. Deleuze and Guattari's critique is directed against Plato and Sartre, but also Husserl and Kant. Nietzsche and

³¹⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

³²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 44.

³²¹ *ibid.*, p. 47.

Spinoza are listed among the philosophers who look at immanence-in-itself, Deleuze's precursors.

Finally, in *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari define the role of philosophy not as an epistemological endeavour of clarifying and analysing but as an ethical activity of creation.³²² Ridding ourselves of the transcendental 'ought' goes hand in hand with critique of philosophy, which, as Patton observes, is intended to orient political thought and action.³²³ As Colebrook remarks, we need to recognise that we think in a certain way because of the dominant paradigm of the image of thought, so our ethical activity is to consider the possibility of acting through 'thought without an image'.³²⁴ The primary domain of ethics for Deleuze is the Event, first encountered in *Logic of Sense*. This will be examined in detail in 2.3. Concepts are related to the Event, and the depth of our understanding of an Event is reliant on the conceptual tools that we produce to understand it. Thus, Deleuze and Guattari also define the task of philosophy as 'becoming worthy of the Event'.³²⁵

2.2.4 Difference

Having established Deleuze's critique of the image of thought and the methodology he proposes to think non-representationally, it is time to turn to the *content* of his critique. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze sets out to construct a philosophy of intensive difference. The canonical thinkers of Western philosophy, he claims, have almost universally taken the concept of identity as fundamental, with difference as its negative. Deleuze is driven by a desire to 'correct' this constitutive error in philosophy. Difference for Deleuze is itself a primary ontological category, not merely the opposition to

³²² G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 6.

³²³ P. Patton, 'The World Seen from Within: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Events', *Theory & Event*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1997. para 2.

³²⁴ C. Colebrook, *Deleuze: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Continuum, London, 2006, p. 115.

³²⁵ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, loc. cit., p. 160.

sameness or similarity. Usually, in the humanist tradition, when we claim that two things are different, we presuppose that they are *comparable*, that there is a fundamental level of sameness that allows us to compare them and understand them as different (or similar). For Deleuze the appearance of similarity here is just that – an appearance – and one that is formed from a simplifying imposition of order on a complex reality. No two entities are ever the same in any real sense, though, for example, two raindrops may share the same *processes of production*.³²⁶ Deleuze thus accepts identity only at this level (genesis), and only pure difference at the level of actual existing entities, separating out the thing from the way in which it came into being and the way it interacts with other things, processes and structures. The two premises Deleuze goes on to challenge with this notion are the privilege of Being (by developing an understanding of difference-in-itself) and representational modes of thought. The aim of this section is, thus, to outline the concept of difference that lies at the heart of Deleuzian metaphysics.

Here, I will draw from the critique of the Image of Thought to claim that difference-in-itself is a vital component of the reformulation of ethics as immanent. To be capable of opening up the possibilities for something new to emerge, ethics needs to be ‘done with judgment’. However, the main condition of judgment is that entities can be *compared* to a standard they are measured against, or, in other words, the bare condition of “the consciousness of being in debt to the deity.”³²⁷ Judgment, then, presupposes a fixed and stable identity both in what is being judged and in the standard. Deleuze’s project, on the contrary, reveals that identity only comes secondarily to difference, inverting the relationship between identity and morality. Rather than identity being the foundation for morality, it is through the dogmatic image of thought that identity becomes constructed as a primary ontological category. To correct this error, the problem is how to determine difference in itself without relying on identity or representation as supporting categories.

³²⁶ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 262-265.

³²⁷ G. Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, p. 126.

Deleuze starts by analysing four pivotal ways of understanding difference in the history of philosophy. This will allow us to see the shape of the problem before moving on to tackle it. Initially, difference was perceived in an Aristotelian sense, as difference between things – that which defines categories of being. An example might define dogs and humans beings through their differences; humans walk on two legs, use language to communicate, etc. Secondly, Hegelian difference refers to dialectical syntheses and antitheses, a process of constant negation of difference. Thirdly, Leibniz thought of difference as infinitely small, in a sense that no two things can be the same unless they share *all* properties. Finally, difference in Platonic idealism means everything differing from its ideal – this biscuit is different from the ideal Biscuit. Deleuze rejects these ways of conceptualising difference. He argues that rather than defining difference, these methods are always determined by identity and representation as primary.

Deleuze's first engagement with Aristotle revolves around the essence of difference, which is what Aristotle defines in relation to categories.³²⁸ For Aristotle, difference is neither diversity, nor otherness. He thinks of true difference as that which delineates sets of things or beings and defines categories, or, in other words, the essence of difference is captured where there is the greatest opposition. The greatest opposition, claims Aristotle, is found when we compare objects of the *same* set, because only then it is possible to have a well-determined concept of difference which is neither too small or too broad. For example, one can say that in the category of animals there are animals with wings and animals without wings. The difference between the two is true difference, as anything smaller (the difference between a pigeon and a starling) or bigger (the difference between animals and mountains) does not actually tell us enough about either of these categories that we can properly distinguish between them. Smaller 'differences' are instead best understood as diversity, while bigger

³²⁸ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 39.

'differences' are just otherness. In other words, we can only see pure difference when we oppose two sets that can be properly compared, like the sub-categories of a general category.

Deleuze's critique is twofold. On one hand, he criticizes Aristotle for not answering his own question of the greatest difference. Rather than this being the essence of difference, Deleuze argues that Aristotle has only shown relative difference. A full conceptualisation of difference-in-itself would be able to also explain differences between general sets. On the other hand, Aristotle's delineation between difference, diversity and otherness, is entirely dependent on an initial division of elements into categories, arranged in hierarchies of species-genus relations. The ability to categorise and identify individuals into sets (what Deleuze calls common sense) and to create a hierarchy between these sets (good sense) would not give us a definition of difference since it already presupposes that we know what difference is (to discern birds from dogs you need to already know what birds and dogs are). This implies, according to Deleuze, that the concept of difference in Aristotle is predicated on the category of identity – being is said *analogously* of different entities (to be contrasted with Deleuze's version of univocity). What Aristotle's conceptualisation does, then, is to make difference relative to identities (determinations), which are given rather than generated. In turn, Deleuze argues, this forces Aristotle to assume a particular conception of being as equivocal.

The key to understanding difference, Deleuze goes on to claim, is to avoid treating it as a derivative of identity as Hegel and Leibniz have also attempted to do. Both of these philosophers, according to Deleuze, try to re-think difference at the core of identity by reformulating the debate in terms of infinite limits. For example, for Hegel anything, including identity, is part of a process of contradiction. Contradiction is seen as the expression of difference – the product of thesis and antithesis. Thus, objects are defined synthetically through that which they are not: Being is to exist, so it is not nothingness. Pushing these limits further, Hegel is able to claim that difference is infinitely

great. Every time we think we are able to identify what a mountain is by what it is not, we could find something else to contradict it – ‘A mountain is not everything else’. Pure difference, then, is seen in the negation of these two categories, for example in the notion of becoming, which incorporates both being and nothingness.

On the other side of this spectrum, Deleuze examines Leibniz’ concept of difference and infinity. For Hegel, every time a seemingly final identity is reached, it opens up another negation, while for Leibniz one can never fully list all the predicates that make something what it is.³²⁹ This results in Leibniz’ engagement with infinitely small differences, which prevents him from ever being able to adequately define identity. Every time a final definition is reached, it can be undone by uncovering more tiny differences: This is a dog, she is a labrador, she is female, yellow, with orange colouring on her back and shoulders, her tail is often wagging, she likes to eat, she has had two operations, she likes to swim, *ad infinitum*. Thus, it becomes as impossible to define an object fully as to claim that this is it. Deleuze’s account of the relationship between difference and representation will clarify further the critiques of Leibniz and Hegel. This is the kind of transcendent metaphysics we outlined earlier, one which sees thought as infinite representation, such as Hegel’s idea of Spirit.

To understand the point at which Deleuze’s search for difference enters into conflict with the concept of representation, we need to return to Plato, who Deleuze charges with establishing the initial relationship between identity and representation. For Plato, difference is evident in the way we know the world via a hierarchical order: the original on top and its copies beneath it. The original is what possesses true identity and everything else is modelled on it. This original is in the realm of Ideas, of pure ideal forms, while the real world is simulating these Ideas. This naturally supports hierarchy – the closer a copy is to the original Idea, the better the copy is, while the further away it

³²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 52.

is, the less we can actually claim to 'know' it.

Thus, the first form of representation we discuss in this chapter is epistemological representation in the form of Platonic Ideas. Representation, in this sense, is the 'mediation' between things, which makes possible the comparison between the Idea and the copy: does the copy represent the pure form well? Is it a 'good' copy? Representation, in the form of resemblance, is the mechanism that preserves transcendence according to the Neo-Platonic triad of participation.³³⁰ In the triad, the claimant is validated only on the basis of its resemblance with the original, and not just any resemblance, but an internal noetic resemblance to the Idea. Of course, this naturally leads Plato to the question of essence – the goal of his philosophy becomes to detach each object from what it is immanent to and evaluate it in relation to the transcendent Idea of its pure essence. To briefly give an example, a 'table' is not understood through its immanent manifestation of an object where food is placed (*a table for our picnic was the grass*), but in relation to what the Idea of a table is in the abstract ('grass' is not a 'table'). This is the error Deleuze points at in Plato – difference is again subsumed under identity and resemblance. Thus, Deleuze identifies as his task the overturning (or reversing) of Plato's philosophy.³³¹

The main reason why these philosophers have been unable to conceptualise difference, Deleuze argues, is because they have presupposed the inherent difference of 'being'. The move Deleuze sees as necessary for a true understanding of difference-in-itself is one towards an understanding of all being as equally 'real'. Existence, Deleuze tells us, is applicable to all entities.³³² At the heart of Deleuze's ability to define difference is a notion which follows from Duns Scotus, Spinoza and Nietzsche – the univocity of Being. These philosophers, according to Deleuze, are united in their

³³⁰ The triad of the unparticipated, the participated and participant is what produces a hierarchy on the basis of proximity with the 'original'. For a more thorough discussion, see E. R. Dodds, *The Elements of Theology*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1963.

³³¹ G. Deleuze, op. cit., p. 71.

³³² *ibid.*, p. 233.

recognition that all events, objects and phenomena are equally real and part of the same being.³³³ This is essential for Deleuze's argument as he posits that only in univocity can we see pure difference. Moreover, it is through univocity that Deleuze ultimately grounds his metaphysics of immanence. Whilst Lambert argues that Deleuze avoids the problem of transcendence through the concept of the Other Person,³³⁴ I align with a more Spinozist approach, which we will explore next.

In a seminar on Scholasticism from his course of lectures in 1973-1974, Deleuze defines equivocity as follows:

Those who were called the partisans of equivocity, no matter who they were, argued a very simple thing: that the different senses of the word 'being' were without common measure and that, in all rigor – and what is interesting in theology are always the limit points at which heresy peeks out . . . Well then, the heretical point of equivocity is that those who said that being is said in several senses, and that these different senses have no common measure, understood that at the limit they would have preferred to say: 'God is not,' rather than to say 'He is' to the extent that 'He is' was an utterance which was said of the table or the chair. Or else He is in such an equivocal manner, such a different manner, without common measure with the being of the chair, with the being of man, etc... that, all things considered, it's much better to say: He is not, which means: He is superior to being.³³⁵

This double bind of, on one side, the necessity for the existence of God, and on the other, the impossibility of His existence to be the same as human existence, creates an interesting paradox. By positing the incomparable difference of 'being' at the heart of their theology, Scholastic philosophers had to rely on representation to extrapolate difference. Platonism, Deleuze argues,

³³³ Manuel DeLanda holds Deleuze to be realist philosopher on the basis of this claim. On this view, for Deleuze everything, including mental entities, is 'real' in a meaningful sense.

³³⁴ G. Lambert, *The Non-Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze*, Continuum, London, 2002, p. 10.

³³⁵ G. Deleuze, 'Seminar on Scholasticism and Spinoza, 14 January 1974', quoted in E. Kaufman, Klossowski, *Deleuze and Orthodoxy*, Diacritics, vol. 35, no. 1, 2005, p. 61.

is also supported by the notion of equivocity of being, whereby there is always a primary category, an 'original' that other beings are subordinate to.³³⁶ This heterogeneity of being also precludes the possibility of positive knowledge of the divine, positing it as transcendent of human experience. Equivocity, then, causes an insurmountable problem in Christian theology, which Nathan Widder exemplifies with an epistemological dilemma for moral knowledge reminiscent of Zeno's paradox:³³⁷ one cannot know God/Good if it is so infinitely removed from all being, and if it is impossible to know God, then it is impossible to hierarchically structure beings according to their relation to God.

However, Aristotle's method of analogy provided an answer to that problem. This holds that existence is said in different senses in relation to beings, but these senses are united under a commonality through relations of analogy.³³⁸ In relation to categories, when we say that something 'is', that existence is often thought to be different depending on the thing that exists. For example, a dog exists in a different way to a unicorn, or the concept of alienation. However, it is possible to place 'dog' in the category of animals by drawing an analogy with other animals, and 'unicorn' in the category of 'imaginary'. This example is particularly interesting, because the unicorn is also an animal, but would not be conceptualised as such because it is said to 'exist' in a different way. Categories, both in Aristotle and later in Kant, are groupings of the different senses of being, which means they can be either too universal (applicable to every possible object, such as in Hegel), or too differential (being is said in several senses at once).³³⁹

In Deleuze's words, this points to a problem where "analogy falls into an unresolvable difficulty: it must essentially relate being to particular existents, but at the same time it cannot say what constitutes their individuality. For it

³³⁶ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 45.

³³⁷ N. Widder, 'The Rights of Simulacra', *Continental Philosophy Review*, no. 34, 2001, p. 441.

³³⁸ G. Deleuze, 'Seminar on Scholasticism and Spinoza', p. 53.

³³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 55.

retains in the particular only that which conforms to the general (matter and form) and seeks the principle of individuation in this or that element of the fully constituted individuals."³⁴⁰ Thus, it explains being only insofar as it is understood through categories, but is incapable of formulating the difference between members of the category, and can only point at their different attributes. Even though both members are in the category of 'human', one is Socrates and the other Aristotle. Thus, the problem of conceptualising difference through analogy is that it is reliant on the notion of categories. Analogy, in that sense, is in opposition to univocity because it inverts the categories of commonality and difference.

Following Deleuze's argument, the only ontological proposition that remains available is univocity. This notion of univocity is indebted to Spinoza's understanding of attributes, affects and modes as all being part of the One (God in his case). Deleuze writes, "[b]eing is said in a single and same sense of everything of which it is said, but that of which it is said differs: it is said of difference itself."³⁴¹ In univocal systems, rather than existence being heterogeneous, all beings are said to exist equally, but are *expressed* in a different sense. In Spinozist terms, all Being is an expression of God. It is all the same substance, divided in different modes, attributes and affects. Thus, Deleuze is able to claim that, for example, mind and matter are not two binary opposed categories where one 'originates in' the other, but are attributes of the same Being; that, in fact, a human is both a mode of the attribute of mind and a mode of the attribute of matter.³⁴² Since all beings are equally 'real', this precludes the notion that there can be a Being (God or another transcendent entity), which is outside of it all. The notion of immanence is thus also contained in the univocity of Being. In his later work with Guattari, Deleuze would present this in the "magical" formula pluralism=monism.³⁴³ Deleuze's overturning of Platonism can only be achieved through a rejection of

³⁴⁰ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 38.

³⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 52.

³⁴² *ibid.*, p. 377.

³⁴³ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 30.

transcendence.³⁴⁴

Equivocity	Homogeneity	Different being, different expression, impossible to know
Analogy	Heterogeneity in homogeneity	Different being, but some commonality. Knowledge possible through analogy
Univocity	Heterogeneity	Same being, different expression

To return to difference, if univocity is necessary for conceptualising difference-in-itself, it also produces particular implications about what difference is. Univocity implies that difference is a real (as opposed to mental, or abstract) entity and can be conceptualised in itself, not merely as a secondary characteristic of each individual being. Instead of, for example, thinking of dogs (primary identity) as different in relation to their colour (secondary characteristic), it would mean thinking of each dog/colour as different in itself. Difference is the multiplicity of existence. Deleuze conceptualises it as follows:

Difference is the state in which one can speak of determination *as such*. The difference 'between' two things is only empirical, and the corresponding determinations are only extrinsic. However, instead of something distinguished from something else, imagine something which distinguishes itself - and yet that from which it distinguishes itself does

³⁴⁴ Alan Badiou's criticism of Deleuze in *The Clamor of Being*, which posits that univocity of Being does not liberate multiplicity (and therefore difference) is not explored here. Badiou claims that, through univocity, Deleuze merely establishes a "Platonism of the virtual". However, he is broadly considered to have misunderstood Deleuze on this point. For example, see N. Widder, 'The Rights of Simulacra'.

not distinguish itself from it.³⁴⁵

Levi Bryant gives an illuminating example of this notion: if the universe consisted of only one note, at the same frequency, for eternity, then that would constitute a complete lack of difference. The note would not differ from anything else, neither would it differ to anyone.³⁴⁶ Difference, he claims, is anything that 'makes a difference'. This is congruent with Deleuze's own critique of difference explained through categories. Here being is stasis, possible to be 'fixed' at either end of the spectrum of universal/differential. This analogical model is reliant on representational logic to signify equivocity in a univocal fashion. Deleuze's model of difference, instead, takes it as a fluid, active field. As Colebrook observes, "univocity precludes the idea that a state of completion or rest will ever come about".³⁴⁷

Williams claims that here Deleuze sets the ground for *A Thousand Plateaus'* later rumination on sedentary and nomadic distribution, aiming to show how categorisation operates in terms of univocity of Being.³⁴⁸ For Williams, this type of distribution of being corresponds to sedentary distribution, where "judgment operates by allocating things to different pre-established categories."³⁴⁹ Nomadic distribution is where things cannot be measured or fitted into categories, because we do not have access to the reason why things are distributed in such ways. Sedimentary distribution, thus, cannot account for the ways in which things change and evolve outside the categories they have been assigned.

To conclude this section, what we are left with after Deleuze's critique is a notion of difference-in-itself, expressed in the pure differentiation of one univocal being. The constitutive elements of reality are thus radically

³⁴⁵ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 28.

³⁴⁶ L. Bryant, 'Difference in itself', *Larval Subjects* [blog post], 21 Sep 2009, <<https://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2009/09/21/difference-in-itself/>>, accessed 20 Jan 2015.

³⁴⁷ C. Colebrook, 'Univocal', in A. Parr ed., *The Deleuze Dictionary. Revised Edition*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2010, p. 296.

³⁴⁸ J. Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide*, p. 65.

³⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 71.

heterogeneous, but with one common source. However, this conceptualization of difference poses a new problem for Deleuze. As Williams has convincingly argued, he needs to account for how things acquire any determinacy at all given the foundational role of difference.³⁵⁰ This is where the entry of the concept of repetition reveals the more process-oriented and materialist elements of Deleuze's philosophy.

2.2.5 Repetition

Repetition lies at the heart of difference and also Deleuze's understanding of time. It should not be understood as merely a process of repeating the same again and again. Rather, it is a process of re-occurrence, but one that also entails variation with every repetition. It is connected to difference in terms of being a process of production – producing difference in every repetition, but it is also what creates the impression of fixed identities and essence. Similar to Nietzsche's eternal return in *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the idea of eternal recurrence where entities repeat infinitely in the world is taken by Deleuze to complete his proposition of the univocity of Being as it allows him to account for new things emerging. The eternal return creates a continuation where a final state can never be achieved – everything continues to happen infinitely. However, it is not just the same being constantly repeated without anything radically new ever happening; the eternal return is joyful and affirming of life. In a move away from Hegel, the eternal return does not imply the repetition of the same historical moment over human development since there is no identity at the heart of repetition. On the contrary, if life is a process and everything that 'is' is the same Being, then difference exists in itself, not as a property of another object. Thus, if each event is different and transforms life, then life becomes different from itself with every return of the same. This is the repetition at the heart of difference which Deleuze discovers. Each repetition of difference is different – the

³⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 91.

eternal return of difference. Repetition is conceptualised by Deleuze through the three syntheses of time, which simultaneously reveal a complex understanding of time and space that is not reliant on narratives. We will now examine these in more detail.

The first synthesis of time is concerned with the relationship between past, present and future.³⁵¹ It emerges from Deleuze's initial critique of the image of thought. It is concerned with whether there is a pure beginning in philosophy, with the transcendental conditions of knowledge. The question: in a world of pure differences, what is the determined given that repetition is based on? Deleuze's answer to this is, again, the immanent, the 'living present'. This living present takes the form of cases or particular situations where something is expected, such as Hume's example of an AB, AB, AB, A series, where we expect B to follow. We also find it in Bergson's clock performing the sequence A', A'', A''', where the next strike is expected.³⁵² What Deleuze is trying to tease out is the relationship between repetition and expectancy. In traditional models of thinking, repetition would be conceptualised as the same event taking place at different moments of time, but Deleuze wants to show that repetition is not related to the instances that repeat. His argument is that there is no causal relationship between A and B explaining them following one another. Repetition, thus, has to be understood in the observation of A and B, rather than as a property of them, while expectation of B after A is a contraction of all the past into the instance of the A, mapped out indefinitely towards the future. Moreover, for the process of repetition to occur, the observer does not need to consciously think about repetition or expect it – it is an unconscious passive process of projecting onto the future through the living present. Thus, it follows that repetition is also not dependent on a specifically 'human' mind, a fully-formed 'individual

³⁵¹ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 91.

³⁵² *ibid.*

self', since it takes place in the unconscious.³⁵³ For Deleuze, it also follows that time is created by this form of habitual repetition: "habit is the foundation of time, the moving soil occupied by the passing present."³⁵⁴

The second synthesis of time, on the other hand, is about the present itself and its transience, occurring simultaneously with the first one. With the second synthesis, Deleuze is trying to account for memory – or remembering – in the present, but without having to ground it in a fully constructed human subjectivity. Again, memory, as it is usually thought of, involves a subject that is capable of preserving it. It is the act of remembering that brings the past back. However, Deleuze sticks to his materialist roots by arguing that the past is something outside of the human mind, existing independently of subjects and even physical records:

It is with respect to the pure element of the past, understood as the past in general, as an *a priori* past, that a given former present is reproducible and the present present is able to reflect itself.³⁵⁵

If habits found time, then memory grounds it. His position relies on a transcendental deduction of the present. First of all, the present always contains a bit of the past in itself. Every present is 'passing', which means that an aspect of it is already in the past. Secondly, this aspect of the present is always past for the future aspect of the present, but a 'past' that is constitutive of the aspects of the presents that have not passed yet. In a more mathematical sense, if we have two entities, we automatically have a third one as well (the sum of the two of them). In the same way, if we take the actual past as one of the entities and the past aspect of the present as the second entity, we will end up with the present present as the combination of both of these entities. So, the present is constituted by all the past events plus the immediate past present: "all of the past coexists with the new present in

³⁵³ Deleuze is sometimes called anti-humanist, based on remarks like this one. In this particular case he is merely suggesting that for any 'living' entity, repetition would take the form of unconscious process.

³⁵⁴ G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

³⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 102.

relation to which it is now past."³⁵⁶ To return to memory and remembering, if the present presupposes all the past events and all the past elements of each present through the virtue of being constituted by them, that then points to the need for a passive synthesis of the past which exists *a priori* for the present to happen. Finally, this synthesis is passive because it doesn't have to be actively 'remembered', but it is a condition for memory, or anything else, in the present, to exist.

Both the first and second syntheses of time are about contraction. The first regards a contraction of the present, past and future and the second all of the past. The third synthesis, however, is of the future and of the eternal return.³⁵⁷ Following a discussion about Kant's subject, Deleuze suggests that there is another synthesis of time, one which is concerned with the conditions for actions that create the new. This drive towards the new suggests a severance of the present – to lead to something new, the future cuts the present from the past in such a way as to project something new. However, once this cut is implemented, it also needs to assemble everything, to connect back the pure past with the future. And finally, during the re-assembly, some events from the past remain in the past and cannot return, while others are re-connected and can be relived. An example of the third synthesis (one familiar to anarchists) is to think about revolution as one event that entirely changes the present so that the past is structured in terms of that event.

The third synthesis might seem like a contradiction of the second one – the possibility of a cut where time radically changes combined with time as a totality of all past and present(s). This is precisely where Deleuze finds the eternal return and where the concepts of difference and repetition meet.³⁵⁸ What keeps returning after every cut in time is made is difference. Essence or identities are what disappear when a cut re-orders, but pure difference keeps coming back. To go deeper we need to understand reality in terms of

³⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 103.

³⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 110.

³⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 117.

something like the virtual and actual – terms that Deleuze argues express the complex processes and happenings in the world and the way we experience them as limited beings. To take an example of DeLanda's, a knife can be considered to be the actual knife that we can see and touch, but also contains the virtual, expressed in what a knife can do – the unfolding possibilities of cutting, chopping, blunting, but also, importantly, threatening, killing, performing.³⁵⁹

A common mistake, and one that Badiou makes too, is to map out the virtual directly onto the actual in the form of a transcendent pool of possibilities.³⁶⁰ However, for Deleuze the virtual does not translate directly onto the actual, neither does it entail some form of causality. The virtual is the field of intensities that is not always accounted for in the materiality of the object, but is nevertheless necessary for this object to exist. Thus, the virtual and the actual are not balanced. It is straightforward to point out that things that exist emerge out of a field of virtuals which is greater than the ones selected for actualization, but, more importantly, though many virtualities do not get translated in the actual they are nonetheless 'real'. A knife would not *be* a knife unless it contained these unactualised properties. However, we should be careful not to take as our formula 'virtual=potential' and 'actual=realised', as there is more to the virtual than a field of possibilities. The actual, containing discrete entities, is opposed to the virtual, containing Events, singularities and everything that is part of the pure past – in a sense, the virtual is best seen in the example of the second synthesis, where all of the past is contained in the present present. In a similar manner, all of the virtual is contained in the actual but it can never coincide entirely with it, and in a similar manner the virtual brings about the actual, but it does not identify with that actualisation. Moreover, that implies that the movement is not in a linear direction from the virtual to the actual, but that there is a circular

³⁵⁹ M. DeLanda, *Philosophy and Simulation. The Emergence of Synthetic Reason*, Continuum, London, 2011, p. 3.

³⁶⁰ For a rigorous response to Badiou's critique, see C. Crockett, *Deleuze Beyond Badiou: Ontology, Multiplicity and Event*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2013.

movement from the virtual to the actual, back to the virtual and round again. This circular conception of time owes a great deal to Bergson's formulation of time as *durée* rather than linear.³⁶¹ It is perhaps best to give an example. Similarly to the old philosophical problem of mind and body, today we have an unbridgeable (it seems) divide between human experiences and neuroscientific observation, where brain scans show us what the brain 'does', but cannot translate human experiences – we can see which areas of the brain light up, but cannot transfer that data into experience. A parallel exists with a story written on a computer. On one hand, the story exists as a combination of ones and zeros on a magnetic component, but on the other hand is something more than just that – it is a story with sense and meaning and, perhaps more importantly, contingently in a particular form and container. However, once someone begins to read it, it has entered a process of becoming something different than just bits. This is clearly not a relationship of causality, because there has not been a transition from computer code to human code in a cause-effect relationship. Indeed, both of these exist at the same time and are equally valid methods of 'understanding' the story. The virtual is a way of recognising this relationship as something in itself and not subsuming it under other forms.

Thus, Deleuze is able to claim that the virtual is also real – that is, the virtual properties of things produce real effects even if we cannot know or test them simply by examining an object in its current set of relations. These potential properties, the virtual, are actualised in a series of repetitions – “intensities come into relation with each other through repetition.”³⁶² It is important to introduce the notion of intensities here, as they are somewhat eliminated in the actual.³⁶³ The intensive field is what accounts for the movement from virtual to actual. In chapter five of *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze follows

³⁶¹ See H. Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, tr. A. Mitchell, Dover, New York, 1998 [1911]; G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*.

³⁶² J. Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide*, p. 11.

³⁶³ C. Boundas, 'Deleuze-Bergson: an Ontology of the Virtual', in P. Patton ed., *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1996, p. 90.

some distinctions from physics to discern intensive qualities from extensive ones. Intensities in physics are thought of as forces that cause a change in nature, rather than a change in degree. Temperature, for example, is an intensive relation, causing qualitative difference of feeling, while an extensive relation would cause change in the criterion for quantitative measurement. In the example of water, changing the intensive field of temperature past a certain threshold will turn water into steam, but will not change the number of molecules involved. For Deleuze, intensity is similarly used to refer to the intensification of quality, that is, the process through which the quality becomes itself.³⁶⁴ That becoming, however, is not the quality itself, as the becoming hot of water is not the quality of hotness that water can have. Reality therefore emerges from this complex relationship between the virtual and the actual, which is produced through intensive becomings.

Intensities, appearing through processes of repetition, are not a form of identity or essence for Deleuze. Repetition, he is clear from the very first page, should not be thought of in terms of representation or identity: "Repetition is not generality."³⁶⁵ Repetition, insofar as it is seen as this A sharing characteristics with that A, implies that all A's could be referred to as a form of general A. This is why repetition differs from resemblance – resemblance is what would allow us to generalise. Deleuze instead claims that "to repeat is to behave in a certain manner, but in relation to something unique or singular which has no equal or equivalent"³⁶⁶ – a 'repetition-in-itself'. In that sense, repetition is never purely repetition of the same, as a thing can never be the same as any other due to (perhaps only slight)³⁶⁷ variations. Therefore, repetition and difference always come together, as for one to exist it is reliant on the other. The significant difference between representation in a framework of transcendence and repetition in an immanent one is the aspect

³⁶⁴ M. Mader, 'Whence Intensity? Deleuze and the Revival of a Concept' in Beaulieu, A. ed., *Deleuze and Metaphysics*, Lexington Book, London, 2014, p. 225.

³⁶⁵ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 1.

³⁶⁶ *ibid.*

³⁶⁷ Though this variation may always cease to appear slight from a different perspective (that of chemical or nuclear processes, for example).

of production/creation.

To extend the problematisation of representation and move us towards a conceptualisation of non-representational ontology, we need to draw again on the virtual/actual. As we discussed, for Deleuze the actual and the virtual are asymmetrical fields, where “every actuality is accompanied by the virtual rather than pre-empted by the possible.”³⁶⁸ In practice this implies that the world is not given in advance as a set of possibilities that can be actualised at certain moments, or as a set of material re-presentations of true forms that exist in the ephemera. All virtualities and actualities come together and come at once. Thinking non-representationally therefore means acknowledging this immanence and rejecting the hierarchy of media – for example, understanding the photograph not as an image-representation of a book, but as a photograph in itself, as its own object that does something different to representing a book. Surely, this is not to deny that representation *happens*, but to reformulate it as a productive relationship, for example of photographing. The focus here then shifts from understanding certain practices as representation to understanding their productive aspect.

The notion that is at the core of Plato’s philosophy, which Deleuze wants to overturn, is that representation entails a relationship of signification between two different entities, usually termed ‘the original’ and ‘the copy. Plato’s effort to discern between reality and appearance, which Deleuze bases on a reading of the *Sophist*, is based on an ontology which prioritises identity and the conditions of possible, rather than real experience. Plato’s allegory of the cave famously presents representation as simulacra of true objects. As Widder explains, here “a physical object is a copy of its Form, while simulacra such as shadows, reflections, mirages, and even artwork, are copies of the physical object.”³⁶⁹ A simulacrum (representation) is thus merely a copy defined in relation to how accurately it portrays the original. In Plato, time is repetition

³⁶⁸ M. A. Doel, ‘Representation and Difference’ in B. Anderson and P. Harrison eds, *Taking-place: Non-representational Theories and Geography*, Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, 1988, p. 120.

³⁶⁹ N. Widder, ‘The Rights of Simulacra’, p. 448.

of the same, sameness always in the form of a representation of Ideas. Ideas, in that sense, are Ideal Forms. As Dorothea Olkowski observes, the critique provided by Deleuze is that simulacra have characteristics of their own which makes them distinct from being merely a 'copy'.³⁷⁰ Daniel W. Smith's example is that "empirically speaking, a mother is not only a mother, but also a daughter, a lover, perhaps a wife; but what Plato would call the Idea of a mother is a thing that would only be what it is, a mother that would be nothing but a mother."³⁷¹ Moreover, with Deleuze's reformulation of Ideas as transformative fields which we discussed earlier, simulacra are not simple imitation but "systems in which different relates to different by means of difference itself"³⁷² with no prior identity or resemblance which can serve as a foundation for representation. The simulacrum is based on internal disparity,³⁷³ on the differential nature of the Idea which does not come from a previous identity. Having already established univocity of being and immanence, Deleuze conceives of simulacra not as 'copies' of something outside this world, but as constitutive of reality.

In this sense, representation changes from a mediating relationship between different entities in the world, such as words and objects, or mediating between reality and the transcendent realm (of Ideas, Forms, etc), to having an expressive power, becoming co-productive of reality: repetition is a productive process of difference, rather than a representation of something 'outside'. Moreover, through this ontology of univocity and the conceptualisation of difference and repetition, we can also return to our initial statement that Deleuze is a materialist – that is, he focuses on bodies and the relations they enter. In the metaphysics of immanence so far, Deleuze is compelled to acknowledge that physical bodies are inextricably linked to what constitutes a 'being', which is itself an effect of processes of repetition.

³⁷⁰ D. Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999, p. 185.

³⁷¹ D. W. Smith, 'The concept of the simulacrum: Deleuze and the overturning of Platonism', *Continental Philosophy Review*, vol. 38, no. 1-2, 2005, p. 96.

³⁷² G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 372.

³⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 51.

The next step of our argument, then, is to examine his theory of individuation, or, to pose it as a question, what is the 'being' in which the three syntheses happen?

2.2.6 The theory of individuation

Deleuze's challenge in relation to subjectivity is well defined by Constantin Boundas:

A process philosophy, in order to support a purely heterological thought, has to be capable of doing without subjects steering the process (or being steered by it), without substantive names designating 'blocks' in motion, and without points of origin or destination marking the allowed trajectory. Only a process philosophy where process and product are the same can hope to prevent the subordination, in the final analysis, of difference to identity.³⁷⁴

Thus, what emerges from *Difference and Repetition* is a theory of individuation as preceding the individual – the individual as a product of a process of individuation. The notion of repetition we discussed earlier rejected an understanding of the individual as an agent in relation to time. The process of individuation is not simply genesis – it involves a field of intensities which becomes what Deleuze and Guattari later term the 'plane of immanence'. Individuation is the function which mediates the relation between the virtual and the actual, allowing Deleuze to shift the focus of transcendental philosophy from the possible to the real. As we have already discussed, the virtual and the actual do not correspond to the possible and the real as they are both already in the realm of the real.³⁷⁵ In addition, the virtual/actual differ from the possible/real in terms of the process of movement from one to the other. The virtual becomes actual through 'actualisation', which is

³⁷⁴ C. Boundas, 'What Difference does Deleuze's Difference Make?' in C. Boundas ed., *Deleuze and Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2006, p. 3.

³⁷⁵ G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, p. 96.

comprised of difference and creation while the possible becomes real through 'realisation', a process that includes limitation and resemblance.³⁷⁶

To expand on this, individuation is a process of actualization that equalizes intensities, and even though all intensities are unique to their own field, their actualities could resemble one another, which is why we tend to see the end product of this process as an identity between, say, all cats, all humans, all knives or all eyeballs. To put this another way, an individual is a result of the process of individuation, which, because of the processes of actualization, is the real process behind what we term 'representation' or 'identity'. The intensities that are the condition for actualization are not necessarily obvious at the end of the process. Moreover, this account of individuation provides an explanation for the appearance of binary oppositions and allows for taking a step beyond them. To emphasize Deleuze's materialism, difference is a process – it is not a noun; it is a process of *differentiation* in the actual and a process of *differenciation* in the virtual. Difference is the name of the process of moving from the virtual to the actual and back to the virtual, where we have not a linear progression but a constant movement from state of affairs to virtual tendencies and then back, into a transformed state of affairs.³⁷⁷ This becoming is what the 'individual' is – a multiplicity of different intensities that constantly shifts as some come into focus and others disappear.

The theory of individuation is drawn in part from the work of Jacques Lacan and his concept of the Other, though Deleuze (with Guattari) will later rail against Lacan's conclusions in *Anti-Oedipus*. Lacan constructs a theory of human subjectivity based on an interaction with the Other.³⁷⁸ An individual and their identity is created in a dialectical process of opposing oneself to the Other through language. This binary opposition sets the boundary between

³⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 97.

³⁷⁷ In *Introduction to Difference and Repetition*, James Williams argues that this process of determination and destruction is a dialectical one. However, this is a point of much contention. For example, Jon Roffe objects that this posits intensities entirely in the virtual, which seems to be at odds with *Difference and Repetition's* final chapter. For more, see J. Roffe, *Badiou's Deleuze*, Routledge, London, 2012, p. 149.

³⁷⁸ See, for example, J. Lacan, *Écrits, a Selection*, Tavistock, London, 1977.

oneself and the Other, which itself represents the unknown, the frightening and, subsequently, the excluded and marginalised. Unlike Lacan's theory, which is limited by always privileging one identity in the process of negation, thus constituting, for example, women as negation of men (a problem we discuss in 1.3.2), Deleuze's theory of individuation explains binary oppositions like gender (woman as the Other *par excellence*) as intensities on a continuum. The psychoanalytic model of One vs. the Other is replaced with a multiplicity of machines with different connections. The appearance of male and female gender clusters can be explained as a greater likelihood for the actualisation of these identities on a broad spectrum of virtualities – a likelihood increased due to the social structures immanent to the process. Another example of this production is the formation of a snowflake, where certain singularities tend to be more 'attractive', thus producing particular structural tendencies in the crystalline product. The result is that these appearances are taken to be essences, such that the essence of human is to be male or female, the essence of a woman is to be a mother, etc. Binaries are a simplification of a much wider range of possible outcomes which fail to account for the multiple ways people experience gender. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze further develops this notion:

As a general rule, two things are simultaneously affirmed only to the extent that their difference is denied, suppressed from within . . . it is generally *through identity* that opposites are affirmed at the same time, whether we accentuate one of the opposites in order to find the other, or whether we create a synthesis of the two.³⁷⁹

Difference is thus an essential part of the process of individuation, which results in its constant reproduction and demands a recognition of subjectivity as dynamic and in a process of becoming. Therefore, instead of discussing static subjectivity as a dialectical outcome, Deleuze prefers to engage with modes of individuation, as we will elaborate on later using his works with

³⁷⁹ G. Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, tr. M. Lester & C. J. Stivale, Continuum, London, 2001, p. 197.

Guattari.

2.3 Events and series

Having established the metaphysical foundation of difference, we can finally turn to ethics. The first thing to point out is that Deleuze is engaging with what is more commonly seen as 'metaethics', or the presuppositions of ethical philosophy, rather than applied or normative ethics. This is not to say that the distinction between philosophical presuppositions and practical ethics holds true for Deleuzian metaphysics, as I have already mentioned in relation to theory and practice in the introduction. The image of thought comes from practices and immediately has practical results. For this reason, it has been first necessary to establish the metaphysics of difference, repetition and sense as the context in which ethical problems appear both as 'ethical' and as 'problems'. In other words, the previous section addressed the conditions of possibility of an ethical event, while the main question of this section is the event itself.

2.3.1 Singularities and morphogenesis

Deleuze's account of what constitutes reality, and in particular his work on time and space, is so far both strangely deterministic and chaotic at the same time. Difference, encompassed in a univocal Being, is paired with repetition to produce a system apparently without scope for either randomness or agency. In our presentation so far, we have not adequately accounted for change, or the question of how change is possible. Even though there is always variation/difference in repetition, this cannot suffice to explain the appearance of something new. Indeed, it seems that reality is determined to follow a course of repeating patterns. *The Logic of Sense*, published in French in 1969, a year after *Difference and Repetition*, is concerned with conceptualising some elements of agency and the conditions of the new in the form of Events and series. It should not be taken to be a book about choice or

self-determination, or even about consequences of actions, however, it does introduce a crucial concept for our reformulation of ethics: the 'Event'. Before we disappear down the rabbit hole, I will clarify the concept of series, which is a useful way of understanding how patterns of repetition come to exist. This will enhance our understanding of genders from the previous example (as patterns of repetition), but also human subjectivity in general, as well as the production of social and environmental tendencies.

The production of series is a result of repetition and the way it forms structures of relations. Series, then, are repetitive patterns which are disrupted by events that introduce difference. Rather than seeing the world as a chaotic set of connections and bodies, the concept of series serves to explain the processes through which singularities become visible. Deleuze's own definition of singularity seems quite elusive, as exemplified in his claim that:

[s]ingularities are turning points and points of inflection; bottlenecks, knots, foyers, and centers; points of fusion and condensation, and boiling; points of tears and joy, sickness and health, hope and anxiety, 'sensitive' points.³⁸⁰

Singularity, in a way, could be taken to replace the concept of particularity, emphasizing the same focus on uniqueness. Manuel DeLanda points to the influence of the differential calculus of Gauss and Riemann on the Deleuzian notion of singularity.³⁸¹ Singularities in physics serve as attractors in a manifold ("a geometrical space with certain characteristic properties").³⁸² To explain manifolds, DeLanda gives an example: speed and space are two possible ways of understanding how an object (or system) can change. A pendulum (a relatively simple system) can only change in these two ways – momentum and position – while a (simplified model of a) dog, which has four paws, a tail, a head and a torso, can change in fourteen ways as each

³⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 63.

³⁸¹ M. DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, pp. 2-5.

³⁸² *ibid.*, p. 3.

different element can change position and momentum relative to the others. Thus, a pendulum would have two degrees of freedom and a dog would have fourteen. Each degree of freedom becomes a different dimension of the manifold, and can be mapped onto a possibility space, describing all possible relative positions of the elements.³⁸³ In a manifold, there can be any number of degrees of freedom and their trajectory could be completely random. Yet there are certain tendencies that emerge more often than others in models with more than two degrees of freedom. This recurrent behavior is due to topological features, which the mathematician Poincare named singularities.³⁸⁴ When modelled in this way, the tendencies of a system reveal themselves as attractors, causing certain distributions of probabilities which would be obscure in any static 'snapshot' of a system at any given point in time.

When it comes to non-mathematical patterns, singularities operate much the same way. They are still pre-individual, that is, preceding the composition of human subjectivity. Singularities, in that sense, serve to explain why certain features of bodies appear more often than others, instead of the completely heterogeneous system implied by difference and repetition. Thus, if we take, for example, subjectivity to be the *effect* of a problematic field, singularities are the focal points around which solutions are organised.³⁸⁵ We can apply this to the example of a snowflake, which, due to the tension and variety of forces between different particles, always ends up being hexagonal. The snowflake's shape is a direct result of surface tension and the constitution of water molecules in ice. Rather than understanding this feature to be the 'essence' of a snowflake, the notion of singularity allows us to understand the causal relationship between the environment and certain tendencies (i.e. to be hexagonal) appearing more often than others. The notion of singularity, moreover, does more than explain patterns, as it is directly related to the

³⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁸⁵ G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

Event, which we turn to next.

2.3.2 Willing the Event

An Event, introduced in *The Logic of Sense*, is a concept Deleuze initially borrows from the Stoics. It is an incorporeal entity which refers to the totality of the effects of different bodies.³⁸⁶ It runs through series and transforms the relations of sense in them, thus being also a singularity. Sense, another concept Deleuze introduces, is also incorporeal, and is best understood in relation to linguistics. Drawing on Bertrand Russell's three linguistic elements of denotation, manifestation and signification, Deleuze proposes that these are not sufficient to explain all elements of language. He explains sense as the attribution of importance on propositions. The role of sense is "to include changes in the relations of value-terms we associate with events."³⁸⁷ Thus, series are conceptualised as neutral systems of repetitive patterns in which sense brings in meaning or value. The Event breaks this series by creating the possibility to transform the collective, returning us to the realm of ethics.³⁸⁸ This transformation, however, is often structured in accordance with various points of attraction (singularities), which create certain tendencies towards which changes gravitate.

Rather than thinking about Events as something that occur in the mind, Events are "jets of singularities"³⁸⁹ that encompass a multiplicity of bodies, virtual structures, physical bodies and elements of signification such as language and morality. They are not necessarily limited to a period of time, but they always happen on two levels – the moment of actualisation of the event, when it is embodied in the state of affairs (both personally and collectively), and the future and past of the event which are not bound to the

³⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁸⁷ J. Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Logic of Sense. A Critical Introduction and Guide*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2008, p. 3.

³⁸⁸ Earlier, through Deleuze's division of ethics and morality, we reformulated ethics as concerned with immanent modes of existence rather than judgment.

³⁸⁹ G. Deleuze, *op. cit.* p. 64.

state of affairs.³⁹⁰ All bodies are causes in relation to each other. Deleuze goes on to say that:

[t]he distinction, however, is not between two sorts of events; rather, it is between the event, which is ideal by nature, and its spatio-temporal realization in a state of affairs. The distinction is between event and accident.³⁹¹

The 'ideal Event', however, does not refer back to Platonism, but puts an emphasis on the fact that events are "the necessary conditions for thinking of the constitution of new states of affairs, as well as for thinking the constitution of the states of affairs which will be understood as past in relation to these latter."³⁹² It is also for this reason that Deleuze suggests that Event is a verb, since it refers to a state in the past and the future, but its present is elusive. As in the example of Alice and the mushroom, 'to grow' is in both directions at the same time – it is to become larger than Alice is, but also smaller in relation to future Alice. This problematisation of there always being a determinable direction of becoming points to Deleuze's concern to reverse the common sense direction of cause and effect: "to be punished before having committed a fault, to cry before having pricked oneself."³⁹³ Thus, Deleuze binds the Event to *Aion*, infinite time, the time of the eternal return, which cannot be reduced to *Chronos*, the historical linearity of time in which events occur. Events, then, substitute Platonic essences as singularities that repeat indefinitely in time, suggesting a process-oriented ontology. Deleuze does this to move the Event from the domain of phenomenology into a pre-individuated state and thus become able to collapse individual/collective or particular/general distinctions.

The Event-singularity, therefore, is a central concept in Deleuze's thinking

³⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 64.

³⁹¹ *ibid.*

³⁹² S. Bowden, *The Priority of Events: Deleuze's Logic of Sense*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2011, p. 262.

³⁹³ G. Deleuze, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

about ethics. The Event is experienced both collectively and individually, encompassing both actual and virtual structures. But it should also not be understood as simply a new beginning or a radical break in a series – it is an alteration, a change in the series of processes. Unlike Badiou’s reformulation of the Event, for Deleuze to “simply declare the event to be the rupture of a continuous state is not only to grant an unwarranted normative status to that state, but also to posit the break with it in terms that are both blind and transcendent.”³⁹⁴ That is to say, the Event does not lose its virtual elements when it becomes actualised. The multi-levelled view of reality we presented earlier is preserved in relation to the Event. An Event runs through different series in a non-linear way, making it impossible to map out or predict. In this sense, series should not be taken as sequences, and their ‘logic’ is not formal and deductive, but fluid and changing.

Deleuze suggests the instance of a battle as the quintessential Event.³⁹⁵ The battle is an immanent combination of spatio-temporal arrangements, actors and actions, each of which are only able to grasp its actualisation but not its entirety. The battle is present, it hovers over the field, even though it is not tangible and material in the same sense as a weapon is. The two separate manifestations of the event, ideal and spatio-temporal, refer to its virtual and actual state, and each of them is manifested as both universal and particular, personal and collective. It is also in this sense that the battle is a process. Even when the physical battle is over, the Event-battle remains as an indefinite extension of this battle in the future, such as the lingering power of D-Day or the Battle of Hastings. The battle, however, is an easy example, as we might think of it as an ‘event’ in the common sense of the word anyway. Other examples Deleuze gives are a chair, a garden and the Great Pyramid.³⁹⁶ Chair as Event, for example, is the process of repetition of a singularity (which could be confused as essence), which has arisen out of a problematic field, in

³⁹⁴ K. A. Pearson, *Germinal Life. The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze*, Routledge, London, 1999, p. 132.

³⁹⁵ G. Deleuze, op. cit., p. 116.

³⁹⁶ J. Williams, ‘Event’ in C. J. Stivale ed., *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*, Routledge, 2014, pp. 82-83.

the Deleuzian sense of problems discussed earlier. In less Deleuzian language, somebody one day had the need for a chair, invented a four-legged platform to sit on, called it a 'chair', and since then we have been affirming it as the solution of the sitting-down problem through a continuous reproduction of chairs and the Idea of 'chairness'. The process of movement from ideal event to its spatio-temporal appearance is what we have referred to as actualization, and the reverse process of the event dissolving back into time is what Deleuze calls counter-actualization.³⁹⁷

At this point the role of actors within the Event becomes important. Deleuze-inspired onticologists such as Levi Bryant suggest that since it is relations that constitute collectivity, we can break away from anthropocentrism.³⁹⁸

Therefore, any object/individual/material or immaterial thing can be an actor, as long as it "modifies a state of affairs by making a difference."³⁹⁹ The example provided by Latour is the remote control, which modifies the state of affairs by turning someone into a couch potato. In this line of thought, the Event itself becomes one among a pool of actors. The importance of accepting objects, or even things such as the environment, as actors, according to Bryant, is that it allows us to understand how an event can also become an actor within a collective⁴⁰⁰ and change it in subsequent states of affairs. To go back to the example of the battle, it would exemplify how a battle can change one's life long after the fighting has finished – the event of the battle may have disappeared, but the actor-Battle has remained in the experiences of other participants.⁴⁰¹ Even if Deleuze does not explicitly align with this position, this seems to be mostly congruent with the way he talks about 'actors' in his later works with Guattari through the concept of machines. Finally, this compels us to acknowledge that the event is something that actors find themselves in, something that binds all actors together and

³⁹⁷ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 259.

³⁹⁸ See, for example, L. Bryant, *Democracy of Objects*, Open Humanities Press, London, 2011.

³⁹⁹ B. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005, p. 71.

⁴⁰⁰ The idea of a 'collective' is somewhat similar to Deleuze's assemblage or multiplicity.

⁴⁰¹ G. Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p. 35.

reorganizes that bond so that the collective is no longer what it was.

We have now arrived at a position in which we can refer to Deleuze's statement that, for his philosophy, ethics is concerned with "willing the event."⁴⁰² Keeping in mind that Deleuze does not conceive of ethics in the traditional way as predetermined principles applied to a certain situation, it would seem a bit anti-climactic to conclude that this statement means to simply will what happens, in a sort of passive acceptance. Instead, Deleuze suggests affirming the event, which is active, opposed to *ressentiment*, the reactive force drawn from Nietzsche's philosophy.⁴⁰³ In fact, active and reactive forces play such an important role in Deleuzian metaphysics that it is worth looking at how he conceptualises them in his analysis of Nietzsche. Through this it will become clear what 'affirming the event' might mean for us.

For Nietzsche, *ressentiment* is directly linked to his formulation of slave morality, to vengefulness and impotence. That is not to say that the individual cannot act, but that they always act in response *to* something. In other words, they are reactive rather than (pro-)active. This is the experience of being powerless, bitter towards the masters and their will to power. Slave morality is always defined through its negation of master morality, reactive to the positive forces of action, thus always negative and resentful. *Ressentiment* is, thus, a rejection of affirmation, of becoming, as it comes from negation and lacks creativity. For the sake of brevity, we will have to précis the related discussion on guilt.⁴⁰⁴ Nietzsche saw guilt as an expression of *ressentiment* constructed by Christianity and rejected the notion of God in favour of a more affirmative and creative approach to life. Taking this, Deleuze reminds us that "to will is to create new values."⁴⁰⁵ The meaning of 'willing the event', then, seems to be something akin to the Nietzschean will to power, affirmative and

⁴⁰² *ibid.*, p. 170.

⁴⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 169.

⁴⁰⁴ See, for example, S. Lash, 'Genealogy and the Body: Foucault/Deleuze/Nietzsche.' *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1984, pp. 1-17.

⁴⁰⁵ G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, tr. H. Tomlinson, Continuum, London, 2006, p. 85.

creative – in other words, an ethical situation is an opportunity to create new values, to positively affirm the collective/individual.

Following this, we are led to the question of how we might go about affirming the result of the Event (whilst avoiding the resignation which would belong to *ressentiment*). To be able to fully answer that question, we start with Deleuze's remark that "the mode of the event is problematic", that is, a productive field of genesis. Rather than an ethical subject who is faced with a dilemma of which way to pull the lever, solved through the application of moral principles,⁴⁰⁶ the moment of 'ethics' is transformed into the moment of a *production of values*. Affirmation, in this sense, is the act of production itself, and this is why it is understood as 'active'. Unlike Hegel and Lacan, Deleuze sees the role of negation as a creative force insufficient to explain the creation of the new. Thus, when Deleuze talks about affirmation, it is in opposition to the role that has been attributed to negation in philosophy, rather than negation itself.

Indeed, in this conceptualisation of the Event, affirmation is active, while the method adopted by traditional ethical theories is a passive relation of representation. In a representative ontology, the elements of a moral problem are accounted for in an abstract, general way according to a set of universal rules by which the event is judged. However, to affirm the Event means to understand its significance and sense, to balance representation with expression, to make the event productive. At this stage it might be helpful to map out the image of thought and 'thought without image' as active and reactive forces. Conway, for example, uses *Nietzsche and Philosophy* as a starting point for understanding other works by Deleuze in terms of affirmative and negative powers, utilised through the mechanism of repression. Repression, he argues, can be traced throughout all of Deleuze's works – in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* it takes the form of the repression of active

⁴⁰⁶ See, for example, D. Edmonds, *Would you kill the fat man?: The trolley problem and what your answer tells us about right and wrong*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2013.

forces, in *Anti-Oedipus* it is the repression of desiring-production and in *Difference and Repetition* and *What is Philosophy* there is a repression of philosophy, where repression is both negative in a sense that it creates the postulates (or paralogs in *Anti-Oedipus*) and positive, whereby it produces useful inventions (such as Platonic transcendence).⁴⁰⁷

Active Force	Reactive Force	Artist of Repression
The Philosopher	The Academic	Plato and Aristotle
The Master	The Slave	The Two Priests
The Schizo	The Neurotic	The Psychoanalyst

[Figure 1]⁴⁰⁸

To interpret the division of the above table, the image of thought can be framed as 'reactive', whilst Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of philosophy as creation of concepts is affirmative. We can clearly draw a parallel with morality based on the image of thought, and ethics as an act of production. It is also clearer how, at the heart of both philosophy and ethics, is the Idea-problem, or the ability to discern the presuppositions that result in the posing of a problem in a particular way. In that sense, affirming the Event is both an act of critique which is not based on established values, and the creation of new values itself. This is the activity at the heart of Deleuze's claim that ethics is to become worthy of what happens to us with (or not to be unworthy).⁴⁰⁹

2.4 Theory of the unconscious

Finally, the Cartesian distinction between active mind and passive body,

⁴⁰⁷ J. Conway, *Gilles Deleuze: Affirmation in Philosophy*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2010, p. 157.

⁴⁰⁸ Image taken from: *ibid.*, p. 158.

⁴⁰⁹ G. Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p. 149.

where the role of morality is to dominate the passions of the body, has to be reformulated in Deleuze's move from idealism to materialism. The theory of individuation discussed in 2.2.6 offers an account of subjectivity that is formed by attraction to singularities and organised around patterns, but we have yet to complete an immanent account of the subject. Thus, the argument of this section is that even though Deleuzian metaphysics appear to privilege processes of production and, to an extent, a form of determinism, the possibility for an 'ethical agent' can be conceptualised in immanence. This step is important for a consistent philosophy of immanence, because it allows for an answer to the question of how the mind can constitute itself without first of all having an idea of itself. In other words, a theory of the unconscious is vital for anarchist ethics, but it has to be understood in a way which is immanent. Unlike Kant and Hegel's solution of turning towards a transcendent category that is able to explain *a priori* understanding, such as the mind or Spirit, Deleuze and Guattari propose unconscious syntheses that are productive, an agent or individual coming *a posteriori*. The seeds for this understanding of subjectivity are visible in *Difference and Repetition*: "[s]elves are larval subjects; the world of passive syntheses constitutes the system of the self, under conditions yet to be determined, but it is the system of a dissolved self."⁴¹⁰ However, it is only in the later works with Guattari that Deleuze establishes a fuller understanding of the unconscious processes that he is hinting at here. This final section of this chapter outlines the concept of desire in Deleuze's first collaborative project with Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, which I take as containing a more comprehensive formulation of the traditional moral concept of 'subjectivity'. Moreover, a Deleuzian-Guattarian conceptualisation of 'subjectivity' allows us to move beyond categories of 'individual' and 'collective' as fundamentally distinct and diffuse the tension between them.

⁴¹⁰ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 107.

2.4.1 Critique of psychoanalysis

The first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is unique in the approach it takes towards blending theories of the unconscious with revolutionary political philosophy. Unlike other works at the time, Deleuze and Guattari were not focused on liberating desire from bourgeois/capitalist repression.⁴¹¹ Indeed, the ethical proposition *Anti-Oedipus* takes as its starting premise is the production of individuals as a result of processes of repetition and asks, given these, what are we capable of doing? In reference to Spinoza, Deleuze develops this question further through an analysis of the problem of desire. Similar to the move to reject the primacy of rationality in *Difference and Repetition*, *Anti-Oedipus* argues that actions and subjectivity are driven by desire, the flows of which are codified and stratified. Desire, in this sense, is similar to Spinoza's *conatus*, or Nietzsche's drives, as a force of production which is at the core of all being. Through this definition, Deleuze and Guattari reject the Platonic understanding of desire in the separation of body/mind introduced earlier in this chapter. The role of morality in controlling the desires of the body is therefore also rejected. In this sense, the formulation of desire both contains a critique of Freud and Lacan and builds on their insights: "The great discovery of psychoanalysis," Deleuze and Guattari write, "was that of the production of desire, of the productions of the unconscious".⁴¹² However, as we have seen, in Lacanian psychoanalysis, desire is negative, inevitably repressed and denies the possibility for action. Moreover, desire is located exclusively in the subject – the only social or collective aspect of desire is control over it. Conversely, Deleuze and Guattari develop desire as positive and productive, in opposition to desire conceived as 'lack' or regulated by law. The figure of 'Oedipus', in this sense, is the error they want to correct, as a representation of both of these contested aspects of desire – the prohibition and regulation of desire, as well as an understanding

⁴¹¹ F. Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007, p. 196.

⁴¹² G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 31.

of desiring that which we do not possess (desire as lack).

Before we engage with Deleuze and Guattari's own understanding of desire, it is important we address their criticisms of Lacanian (and Freudian) psychoanalysis. Though they seem less explicit in the practice of psychoanalysis today, ontologies of lack continue to be one of the major strands in radical political theory. Both Saul Newman and Simon Critchley incorporate elements of Freud and Lacan in the theories they present. Moreover, with this critique I intend to show that transcendent metaphysics are a core element of the concept of lack, and thus reject its applicability to this project. The approach here will be critique first and establishing immanent conditions second, arriving finally at a critique of representation and a model for the unconscious. We begin by identifying five erroneous conclusions (paralogisms) in Lacanian psychoanalysis described in *Anti-Oedipus*.⁴¹³ These paralogisms are at the core of the production of transcendent(al) illusions, but also support the dogmatic image of thought in relation to studies of the unconscious.⁴¹⁴

There are different presentations of the order of the paralogisms,⁴¹⁵ but we will follow Deleuze and Guattari's own argumentative steps. The paralogisms are expressed alongside *Anti-Oedipus'* formulation of the unconscious through three passive syntheses. This model will be addressed in due course. The first paralogism they identify is the paralogism of extrapolation – extrapolating the product of the principle as its cause.⁴¹⁶ Ian Buchanan gives the following explanation: “psychoanalysis converts a detachable partial object – e.g., the penis – into a detached complete object, namely the phallus, from which all subjects then derive by the power of its attribution of lack.”⁴¹⁷

⁴¹³ There has been much written on whether Deleuze and Guattari were responding to Lacan himself or Lacanians but this argument is not particularly pertinent for this thesis. For a detailed summary see C. Kerslake, *Deleuze and the Unconscious*, Continuum, New York, 2007.

⁴¹⁴ B. Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, MIT Press, London, 1992, p. 4.

⁴¹⁵ See, for example, E. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis*, Routledge, London, 1999.

⁴¹⁶ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, op. cit., p. 91.

⁴¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 67.

This object is then elevated into a transcendent signifier that starts to organise meaning around itself (thus becoming a despotic signifier such as Oedipus). The figure of Oedipus, in that sense, refers to something broader than the Freudian complex. Oedipus as a despotic signifier is not limited to desire but extends to a whole system of social production. Schuster, for example, claims that it “creates subjects adequate to a world ruled by money and labor.”⁴¹⁸ In other words, Oedipus is used to describe a particular social-historical subject formation, where one is always subjugated under another ‘master’, even if it is in the form of an all-encompassing signifier. As such, Deleuze and Guattari do not credit psychoanalysis with the invention of Oedipus but use it to explain the formal cause of Oedipus.⁴¹⁹ It makes the whole of sexuality shift into an Oedipal framework of desiring what we don’t have, e.g. women are envious and want a penis, while men are constantly apprehensive of the loss of their penis. The primacy given to the symbolic object simultaneously denies other sexual organs their variety and constructs desire in terms of lack.

The second paralogism concerns the double bind.⁴²⁰ It is the *method* of Oedipus, as it constitutes a choice between two equally undesirable outcomes. This is an illegitimate use of the second synthesis of the unconscious (inclusive disjunction), expressed in the maxim ‘either... or...’, whilst the second synthesis actually implies a continuation of ‘either... or... or...’, as we explore later. Deleuze and Guattari discuss the opposing demands placed on desire (want to have sex, but not too much, or only in the right circumstances; love your mother, but only in such way), which limit the possibilities for identification with anything else but the two exclusive choices. It points to the production of both genders and the nuclear family – you can be like Mummy or Daddy, but not in the middle, and certainly not like anyone else. This leads to a choice of either ‘dealing’ with and regulating one’s desire and all the anxieties and problems that follow or giving in to it and risking social

⁴¹⁸ A. Schuster, *The Trouble with Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis*, Cambridge MA, 2016, p. 128.

⁴¹⁹ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, op. cit., p. 91.

⁴²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 97.

rejection. For Deleuze and Guattari, the form of Oedipus is not only applicable to the family triad, as it is a schema whose function (rather than specific objects) regulate desire. For instance, it also applies to the prohibitive power of law and its constituted 'object' of desire. This double bind, however, is an illegitimate restriction of an unconscious synthesis done by positing it within the limits of transcendent use.⁴²¹ It reduces everything to binary terms, while an immanent understanding would affirm a multiplicity of difference, as we will see shortly when we explore the disjunctive synthesis in more detail.

The third paralogism is about application and is another illegitimate use of a synthesis.⁴²² It concerns the familial structures which are given primacy by psychoanalysis. The triad of mummy-daddy-me is taken to be the place of the subject in the world, the place where it is determined and developed.

Moreover, the triad/nuclear family is detached from the rest of society, thus limiting the forms of subjectivity that can be generated within it. This triad is then expanded to become the main framework we see the world through – an authority figure such as your boss becomes your father, etc. Psychoanalysis assumes that as adults, we always fall back onto patterns established in our childhood to understand new situations or unresolved problems. Moreover, it assumes that it can interpret subjectivities only through the lens of Oedipus and ignore the nuclear family's participation in larger social formations, as if the triad is somehow detached from the forces of social determination. Thus, the two main errors of this paralogism are the division between us and them, or the constitution of the Other, and its assumed universality, i.e. it is applicable to everything.

The final two paralogisms combine to form a critique of representation. The paralogism of displacement or lack is about the production of signifier/signified and referent. It is the problem of fictitious desire, where

⁴²¹ *ibid.*

⁴²² *ibid.*, p. 109.

desire is seen in the paradigm of lack – we desire that which we don't have; moreover, that which we can't have. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari want to invert the process: "The law tells us: You will not marry your mother, and you will not kill your father. And we docile subjects say to ourselves: so *that's* what I wanted!"⁴²³ The creation of desire is performed through the act of prohibition of desire, but it is not a mechanical process of cause and effect. Rather, Deleuze and Guattari understand it as a representational system where the signifier of prohibition (Oedipus) generates its signified. The signified, in turn, is distorted because it is produced by representation and becomes the Oedipal complex. The referent, which is added by Deleuze and Guattari, is the desire itself within that framework.⁴²⁴ The effect of this position of desire is that what is repressed itself is not desire, but the image produced by the signifier. This mis/displaces desire onto the signified within a system of representation. Here we reach the culmination of *Anti-Oedipus'* construction of desire as productive. Deleuze and Guattari argue that rather than desiring that which is prohibited, desire is actually *created* through this act of prohibition. Redefining Lacan's notion that the unconscious is a system of signs, Deleuze and Guattari claim that it is a multiplicity of signs that create productive connections, rather than establish representative connections. Looking in particular at the example of Oedipus, incestuous desire is prohibited and regulated by a system of representation in the form of law, social norms, etc. The basic assumption is that if something is prohibited, then we must desire it and it is only because of social restrictions that we are not able to act upon that desire. The implications of desire being governed by a system of representation, however, are not limited to the individual, but extend further onto social formations, as exemplified in the other paralogisms.

The final paralogism is that of the 'whole person', or subjectivity. It relates to the error of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, taking effects to be causes. It conceives of

⁴²³ *ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴²⁴ E. Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

social repression as secondary to psychic repression, positing that Oedipal repression of desire is represented in a form of social repression. To elaborate the two types of repression, psychic repression is unconsciously applied by the mind to the instincts, and social repression is a conscious one that the mind applies to the desires it has. In psychoanalysis, psychic repression is the one that matters, and social repression is its epiphenomenon. Thus, Oedipus is conceptualised in a position of transcendence across cultures, historical context, time, etc. However, Deleuze and Guattari argue that psychic repression is an instrument *of* social repression. This paralogism is an effect of all other paralogisms, but, having critiqued them, Oedipus needs to be dethroned from its position as the source of repression of desire. The family is not the cause for Oedipalization, it is its agent. It creates the conditions and then teaches us to desire social repression. The site of repression, though, is not an Oedipalised subject but desiring-production. Again, the subject is just an appearance which results from the mode of individuation – thus, Deleuze and Guattari prefer to talk about machines and factories to emphasize that desire does not represent anything, does not express lack, but produces something.

2.4.2 Desiring-production

We can now develop our account of the three syntheses of the unconscious and Deleuze and Guattari's reformulation of desire. In *Anti-Oedipus*, desire functions as a positive force that produces and sustains material flows. The subject comes into existence through desire. Rather than having an 'agent that desires', one becomes an agent through desire itself. It is also social, in so far as it directs collective experiences and forms connections. In opposition to the idealism at the core of psychoanalysis, their method, schizoanalysis, takes as its starting point a psyche that is materialist – that of a desiring-machine. A desiring-machine could be understood here as taking the place of what is traditionally thought of as 'subject' or maybe even 'agent', but also encompassing other entities under the umbrella of 'machine'. Machines are

bodies in the broadest possible sense, understood through the connections they 'plug' into, such as the mouth-breast connection of the baby and the mother, or the hand-slot connection of the person and an ATM machine.

Insofar as this is to relate to ethics, we should first briefly revisit the syntheses of time from *Difference and Repetition*. The second synthesis of the present which is constructed via a contraction of the past and the past present questions the idea that we have full determinacy of our actions, a cornerstone of most traditional ethical frameworks. Repetition in the form of habits is not conscious and not random – it is a product of the past as much as it is of the present. Thus, an ethical activity is not one that happens now and is projected towards the future, but one which eternally occurs. The possibility of creation and change lies in laying the conditions for it in the pure past and the past present. This moves us to the third synthesis of time – the eternal return and the cut. An ethical situation, or an Event, is one where pure difference is revealed. Time is cut and re-assembled. However, if both of these precede (human) consciousness, who is the actor capable of constructing an ethical action? Moreover, since the 'I' is only actualised at particular moments and is a product of processes of repetition, then habits must be understood as underlying self-determination and making it possible via its function as efficient energy-distributor. Grosz comments that:

[h]abit schematizes both the ways of being and acting of living things and the effects of the forces that impinge on and affect living things. It is thus an index not only of the internal organization of living beings; it also signals a milieu or environment that living beings must internalize in order to live in comfort and with minimal energy expenditure – a cohesion between living being's activities and its milieu.⁴²⁵

In other words, if we had to choose and determine every single action of our lives, we wouldn't be able to focus sufficiently on the actions that matter.

⁴²⁵ E. Grosz, 'Habit Today: Ravaisson, Bergson, Deleuze and Us', *Body and Society*, vol. 19, no. 2, 2013, p. 218.

Through processes of repetition, humans appear as consistent and coherent entities. These mechanical processes, these syntheses, are thus habitual and productive. They form an entity which is then described and coded upon as an individual. A habit is both passive and active – it is often repeated unconsciously but can also be actively created or destroyed. Taking subjectivity as a multiplicity of heterogeneous elements that are always in a process of becoming, habits are the tendencies developed on the basis of various points of attraction (singularities). In Deleuze's own words "We start with atomic parts, but these atomic parts have transitions, passages, 'tendencies', which circulate from one to another. These tendencies give rise to *habits*."⁴²⁶ Brian Keeffe, for example, describes them as particles in Brownian motion, which form clusters and coalesce.⁴²⁷

Moreover, it is in the question of desire that Deleuze and Guattari find the tools to fully develop this ethical subjectivity and intentionality. Buchanan remarks on the uniqueness of *Anti-Oedipus'* combination of Freudian (desire) and Marxian (social production) analysis for political philosophy.⁴²⁸ The first chapter of the book sets out the conditions for this approach – firstly, to introduce desire into social production and reproduction, and secondly, to introduce production into desire. Deleuze and Guattari explain their motivation as follows:

In what he termed the critical revolution, Kant intended to discover criteria immanent to understanding so as to distinguish the legitimate and illegitimate uses of the syntheses of consciousness. In the name of transcendental philosophy (immanence of criteria), he therefore denounced the transcendent use of syntheses such as appeared in metaphysics. In like fashion we are compelled to say that psychoanalysis has its metaphysics – its name is Oedipus. And that a revolution – this time materialist – can proceed only by way of a critique of Oedipus, by

⁴²⁶ G. Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, tr. C. Boundas, Columbia University Press, New York, 1991, p. x.

⁴²⁷ B. O'Keeffe, 'Deleuze on Habits', *The Comparatist*, vol. 40, 2016, p. 74.

⁴²⁸ I. Buchanan, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus. A reader's guide*, Continuum, London, 2008, p. 39.

denouncing the illegitimate use of the syntheses of the unconscious as found in Oedipal psychoanalysis, so as to rediscover a transcendental unconscious defined by the immanence of its criteria, and a corresponding practice that we shall call schizoanalysis.⁴²⁹

In *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, certain aspects of 'subjectivity' are translated into the concept of the machinic. Machines are physical entities, bodies, processes and flows, constituted by their connections. The machinic is a metaphysical, rather than purely instrumental notion. "The machine," Guattari writes, "every species of the machine, is always at the junction of the finite and infinite, at this point of negotiation between complexity and chaos."⁴³⁰ Machines are opposed to organisms and mechanisms. "Everything is a machine,"⁴³¹ as they famously state at the beginning of *Anti-Oedipus*, and this should not be taken as a metaphor. Machines substitute both (Cartesian) minds and bodies – there is an input and an output, a machine always produces something, it either works or is broken (or works by breaking down).⁴³² A body, for example, is a machinic assemblage, a multiplicity (as opposed to a unity, made of various heterogeneous elements). Deleuze and Guattari reject the value of the interior (identity, essence or truth) as meaning-making, and instead define machines on the basis of the connections they plug into. This is to say that the concept of a machine should not be taken to constitute the 'essence' of the subject, but rather that the 'subject' is a process of connecting with and disconnecting from other machines.

As with *Difference and Repetition's* syntheses of time, the syntheses which form the basis on which desiring-machines operate are passive, or unconscious, preceding a fully-formed individual. They are: the connective synthesis of production, the disjunctive synthesis of recording and the conjunctive synthesis of consumption/consummation. They could roughly be described

⁴²⁹ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, op. cit., p. 89.

⁴³⁰ F. Guattari, *Chaosmosis. An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1995, p. 111.

⁴³¹ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 2.

⁴³² I. Buchanan, 'The Problem of the Body in Deleuze and Guattari, Or, What Can a Body Do?', *Body and Society*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1997, p. 83.

as what processes and constitutes experience. Rather than being simply a description of the micro-operations of desire, these are also mechanisms that can be used to understand political issues, such as the formation of collective subjectivity and production of tendencies. The next pages outline these syntheses, and their role in forming the subject.

The connective synthesis

The connective synthesis is explained with the formula for connection: 'and... and then... and then...', emphasizing that many connections are possible at the same time, rather than just two, as in dialectical systems for example. It refers to drives and instinct – desire is productive through its constant impetus to make connection. These connections are not necessarily between 'subjects' (man and woman, for example), but between part-objects or organ-machines, as Deleuze and Guattari call them. For example, the baby's mouth connects to the breast, as two organ-machines, but to completely grasp the synthesis, there is also a connection between the baby's eye and the dangling toy, the baby's forehead and the mother's hand, etc. From the point of view of the connective synthesis there are two separate relations – the mouth/breast and the eye/toy, which could happen simultaneously but without taking account of the 'whole body' of the baby or mother. Moreover, there can be multiple heterogeneous connective syntheses happening at the same time. Finally, this synthesis is productive because it necessarily serves the purpose of satisfaction – for example, nourishment or entertainment. The breast-mouth and the satisfaction it brings comprise a dynamic unity of producing and product, which Deleuze and Guattari relate to the 'body without organs'. The body without organs, a concept developed from the writing of Antonin Artaud, designates dimensions of embodiment, or, in other words, explains *how* bodies become organ-ised. This concept is necessary to account for *becoming* in the form of the different/ciation of elements of undifferentiated mass into organs, something that is neglected when being is taken as static or

'organic'.⁴³³ This undifferentiated mass is the pre-subjective state of the psyche, which helps elucidate how the body becomes an organism and the possibility of other forms of organisation.⁴³⁴ The body is not seen as a single coherent whole, but a combination of various 'organs', which function differently depending on the task we perform, such as typing with your fingers, but also holding a glass, or scratching, or poking. Thus, the body without organs serves to replace the transcendent model of a well-functioning machine, made up of discrete organs and controlled by a sovereign mind – the 'hylomorphic schema'⁴³⁵ of philosophy which imposes order from without. Instead Deleuze conceptualises the immanent self-organising, form-generating capacities of matter.

Moreover, the body without organs should not be taken to refer only to 'human body' or 'animal body', but also to the formation of social bodies, in the ways that they organise *themselves*. Ian Buchanan, for example, argues that: "Communities are formed in the same way as subjects: an aggregate of syntheses gives rise to a 'whole' that acts retroactively on the syntheses to yield an entity qualitatively different from its component parts."⁴³⁶ Not only does this enable Deleuze and Guattari to apply their concept of desiring-production to social production, it allows them to have an all-encompassing theory of how bodies transition from a state of pre-determination (virtual) to an actualised state which does not map directly onto the virtual.

Synthesis of disjunction

The second synthesis of disjunction/recording is an emergent product of the first one. Its formula is "either... or... or" (but never just "either... or" as that would be an illegitimate synthesis), referring to iteration or repetition. It is the process of recording in the psyche, which does not rely on representation. To understand the second synthesis, it might be useful look at Eugene Holland's

⁴³³ *ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴³⁵ D. W. Smith, *Essays on Deleuze*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2012, p. 100.

⁴³⁶ I. Buchanan, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus. A reader's guide*, p. 95.

parallel with *Difference and Repetition*,⁴³⁷ specifically, that the second synthesis is about the form of repetition that Deleuze conceptualises in relation to difference, not just mechanical repetition of the same, but repetition with variation and improvisation. The disjunction, therefore, is the impetus to interrupt the connective synthesis. Instead of a constant mouth/breast synthesis, it is also possible to interrupt it and have a mouth/toy or mouth/bottle synthesis. This interruption ceases the process of production but allows for the recording of various connections that happen in the psyche (written on the surface of the body without organs) through identifying where they go. The first two syntheses thus refer to the organisation and disorganisation of the body. The process of recording, in these terms, is the embedding of signs in the unconscious.⁴³⁸ Similarly to Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari see the unconscious as the field of signs, but unlike him, they do not see this encoding as linear and based on a search for the long-lost object of desire. The unconscious is where signs freely associate and form complex relations without fixed meaning and code. The body without organs, in this sense, is where the recording of these signs happens, via the processes of production (first synthesis) and anti-production (second synthesis) of desire, with a multiplicity of connections (either... or... or).

Synthesis of conjunction

The last synthesis, the conjunctive synthesis of consumption/consummation, is dependent on the second synthesis. Its formula is 'so that's what it is...' – the concept of recognition. It is the place where subjectivity arises, but not necessarily as a single coherent identity.⁴³⁹ As we have seen, the body without organs is produced in the first synthesis, is distributed during the second synthesis and during the third synthesis it starts appearing as what we might call the 'subject'. However, we should not think of it as the aim of the synthesis or its agent, but more of as a by-product of desire that occurs during

⁴³⁷ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, op. cit. p. 28.

⁴³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 29.

the first and second syntheses. The conflict of connection and disjunction results in various types of subjectivity, two examples of which Deleuze and Guattari name: the neurotic and the pervert.⁴⁴⁰ The first is a product of the forces of anti-production, where desire is denied and therefore the connections that are made are unsatisfying; in the second the productive forces prevail and all sorts of desire-connections are created despite their unorthodoxy. Again, it is important to emphasize that these (or other) subjectivities arise from the connective/disjunctive forces of desire and not the other way around – the claim that we can ‘choose’ our desires is merely an illusion. What happens in the third synthesis is the recognition of that desire, “so that’s what it is...” and as such is necessarily retrospective. The (undeveloped) subject is formed in the recognition of its desires. However, we can only come to see this process in reverse, attributing these desires as originating in ‘subjectivity’.

These syntheses, in addition, are not only applicable to what we might see as an individual subject. Collective subjectivity moves along the same lines, but also other entities, such as institutions and objects. The key to understand how this is possible is to reject the view of ‘desire’ as psychic experience or internal urge to fulfil a ‘lack’ and to conceptualise it as positive, active force. In other words, these syntheses are virtual, and as such not applicable to only one type of actual ‘being’. For example, Ian Buchanan illustrates very clearly how the three syntheses are reflected in the development of capitalism and are not necessarily applicable only to the unconscious. Using Marx’s formula of MCM’ (money-capital-money) it is possible to understand not only the production of commodity capital and expanded capital, but also the historical trajectory of capitalism. The formula MCM’ refers to money capital (M), which sets production in motion by converting raw materials to commodities, then commodity capital (C), which is the capital invested in ‘input-output combinations’ to achieve profit, and then the expanded money capital (M’)

⁴⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 30.

which is the result of investment, and so more flexibility and choice. Buchanan emphasises that what is particularly important for this formula is that money capital is not just invested in production as an end in itself, but only in production that offers a potential for greater flexibility of investment.⁴⁴¹ In terms of the three syntheses, we can draw a parallel with the three stages of the formula. The first synthesis of connection is the primitive accumulation of capital, the stage of free labour and connections. The second synthesis of disjunction is when capital soaks up the power of the workers and starts investing in industries. Finally, the third synthesis of conjunction is when banking, insurance, derivatives, etc are used to free money capital again. It is possible to take this a step further and engage in a question of how, under capitalism, certain desires are retrospectively understood as the desire to 'do/be something' and are placed in the symbolic. Through what Deleuze and Guattari call 'coding', flows (the flow of capital being one such example, but also human flows etc.) become codified and meaning is (later) produced.

We arrive, then, at Deleuze and Guattari's reformulation of desire, described now through the concept of flows. At this stage we move beyond the unconscious of individuals to see flows as being part of social processes of coding and decoding. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari claim that a "general theory of society is a generalized theory of flows,"⁴⁴² with flows comprising anything from money, capital, water or sewage to menstrual blood, pleasure, matter and sweat, all of which are coded and subsequently fixed into meaning. The means by which flows are fixed in particular relations imbued with meaning is coding. The stricter these relations are, the more stratified the flows are. Desire is also part of that infrastructure⁴⁴³ and, as

⁴⁴¹ I. Buchanan, op. cit., p. 54.

⁴⁴² G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, op. cit., p. 262.

⁴⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 104.

such, is immediately coded by society.⁴⁴⁴

Through the rejection of the transcendent, it becomes impossible to conceptualise desire as anything but an immanent productive force functioning through codified channels. On the other hand, desire is always revolutionary in a sense that “it always wants more connections and assemblages”⁴⁴⁵. Desire, in this sense, is not just a life-force that ‘flows’, but a network of shifting connections which constitutes reality. From that perspective, ‘good’ assemblages are those that allow desire to shift freely, whilst ‘bad’ ones are those that cause blockages. Free flows of desire, through their production of new connections, result in a bigger intensive field, which subsequently gives the body more capacities to engage with its environment. Intensities, as we mentioned previously, refer to the virtual/actual aspects of reality, defined as virtual differences in potential⁴⁴⁶. A bolt of lightning, for example, is an expression of an intensity which is the difference in the potential of positive and negative electric charge. In practical terms, this is a process of creating a functioning assemblage through a collective increase of power to affect and be affected. The increase of power comes through a transition, a becoming of a different kind. Desire produces the ‘self’, but also enters into various connections – and it is in this sense that it is machinic, there is no ‘meaning’ to be gleaned from its connections, it is merely being plugged in whatever outlets are available.

In this context, Deleuze and Guattari talk about the tendency of advanced capitalism to create both the embrace and rejection of the same drives. In feminism, Braidotti refers to the double-pull of simultaneous displacement of gender binaries and the enforcement of stricter gender roles.⁴⁴⁷ Translating into Nietzschean drives, there is the drive to be a good feminist, but also the

⁴⁴⁴ This is the moment where Deleuze and Guattari have been accused of having crypto-normative ethics, or of having an implicit ethical position, which consists of a push towards liberating desire. I do agree that they have chosen this analysis because it is ethically better, as it espouses the ways in which desire is limited. However, this is not of importance to my overall project.

⁴⁴⁵ G. Deleuze and C. Parnet, *Dialogues II*, p. 79.

⁴⁴⁶ D. Smith, *Essays On Deleuze*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2012, p. 254.

⁴⁴⁷ R. Braidotti, *Transpositions*, p. 49.

pull towards entertainment and belonging to the group manifested in, for example, laughing at a sexist joke. The conscious alignment of the 'self' with the first one does not erase the second one. However, it is important here not to think of the 'self' as two dialectically opposed sides of 'good' and 'bad' that are fighting with each other, but of a flux of desire that constantly shifts its direction. "When the lambs say, 'birds of prey are evil,' they are presuming that the bird of prey is able to not manifest its force, that it can hold back from its effects and separate itself from what it can do,"⁴⁴⁸ thus, the birds of prey let their 'bad' drives dominate them, while in fact, the birds of prey cannot choose to eat grass instead of lambs. The drive which ends up being the dominating one is not consciously chosen and could sometimes be the only possible one, but, to tread carefully, this does not imply that we are exempt from responsibility for our actions. This is to say, I agree with Ian Buchanan when he claims that 'there is nothing at all within Deleuze and Guattari's theory of desire that can tell us either how we should live or how we should treat others'⁴⁴⁹, but I think there is something within their theory of desire which, by revealing false causality and providing a complex ontology can result in being able to de-code desire. We shall address that later.

Through all this, the notion of ethical subjectivity as seen in traditional ethics disappears. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari present us with 'subjects' that are products of various processes of social formation. In capitalism, that relationship is organised via identity categories, both personal and collective.⁴⁵⁰ Tamsin Lorraine unfolds this notion as follows: "all desires of the body are of one body with a psychic self that is (more or less) unified with a coherent history that can be represented and collated with the narratives of other members of the community."⁴⁵¹ What we call 'identity' is in that sense a

⁴⁴⁸ D. W Smith, 'Deleuze and the Question of Desire: Towards an Immanent Theory of Ethics', p. 131.

⁴⁴⁹ I. Buchanan, 'Desire and Ethics', *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 5, supplement, p. 18.

⁴⁵⁰ Deleuze and Guattari also examine other social forms, termed the 'primitive' and 'despotic'. Although these are important concepts, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to introduce them into the analysis.

⁴⁵¹ T. Lorraine, *Deleuze and Guattari's Immanent Ethics: Theory, Subjectivity, and Duration*, SUNY Press, New York, 2011, p. 66.

habitual repetitive orientation of “physiological, social, and cultural processes that constitute one as an embodied human subject.”⁴⁵² This idea of ‘subjectivity’ is utilised in the next chapter in relation to ethics.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, we started by tracing Deleuze’s understanding of morality as judgment and transcendence and ethics as immanent. Even though immanence is a central concept here, it proves to be difficult to define. Thus, we started with the critique of the image of thought, or the myriad of ways Western philosophy relies on transcendence to ground its epistemology. Rejecting this approach, Deleuze suggests a ground-breaking methodology which is capable of conceptualising pure immanence, by incorporating two seemingly contradictory approaches under the name transcendental empiricism. However, even if this approach is enough to show that morality as based on the dogmatic image of thought, we have argued that purely immanent ethics cannot be grounded on the same philosophical presuppositions as the ones it attempts to critique. Thus, the method we suggested was a Deleuzian understanding of problem-Ideas and philosophy as the creation of concepts, as he proposes with Guattari.

The next step of our journey into immanence was to turn to the concept of difference. Deleuze’s starting point in *Difference and Repetition* is that no philosopher has yet managed to understand difference-in-itself which isn’t derivative of ‘identity’. Through a critique of Aristotle, Hegel, Leibniz and Plato, he rejects various ways of conceptualising difference and argues that, to understand difference, philosophy needs a different starting assumption about the nature of Being. Unlike Plato and the Scholastic equivocity, or Aristotle’s analogy, Deleuze follows Spinoza into the univocity of Being. The concept of univocity not only allows Deleuze to conceptualise pure difference,

⁴⁵² *ibid.*, p. 71.

but also gives him a foundation for pure immanence. Having established this, we run into other problems. An ontology based on difference leaves no scope for explaining how, or when, anything happens. Difference-in-itself results in complete chaos, unless coupled with the concept of repetition. Repetition, for Deleuze, is constitutive of time, but also gives us an understanding of reality as virtual/actual. It is also through repetition that the effect of 'subjectivity' is created, which we explained with Deleuze's theory of individuation. Moreover, having posited univocity of Being at the heart of his metaphysics, Deleuze is compelled to understanding everything as equally 'real' and existing independently of mind.

Deleuze's metaphysics of difference are finally put in relation to his understanding of ethics as an Event. So far, we have discussed repetition, habitual activity and a seemingly deterministic account of reality, but the Event implies transformation. Ethics, in that sense, is when something new appears, rather than the issuing of judgment. Even though we have rejected the notion of 'agency', there is still the possibility of 'making a difference', which we expanded on in relation to active and reactive forces. Finally, we turned to Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative works to conceptualise a form of 'subjectivity' that allows for action, and argued that an understanding of the unconscious is vital for an immanent ethical theory. In the final section, we explored the productive aspect of desire in *Anti-Oedipus*. The third and final chapter takes this foundation and presents a form of immanent ethics which can serve to rescue anarchism from transcendence and open up the possibility for new ethical modes of existence.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction to Immanent Anarchist Ethics

The primary argument of this thesis, introduced in chapter one, is that an anarchism (and by extension post-anarchism) which is committed to non-oppressive structures, organisation and conduct must be considered incompatible with a transcendent ontological framework. I started by exploring the poststructuralist foundations of the postanarchist critique of representation, essentialism and oppressive morality and agreed with their epistemological position. I then argued that this epistemology alone is insufficient to answer the ethical challenges posed by postanarchists, and what is needed is a strong metaphysical foundation. There are predominantly two types of metaphysics found in contemporary anarchist literature: the 'strong' metaphysics of universal normativity suggested by Todd May's multi-value consequentialism and Benjamin Franks' virtue ethics, and the 'weak' metaphysics of Saul Newman and Simon Critchley, both tending towards a Lacanian/Levinasian ontology with lack at its core. We argued that neither of these responds to the anarchist criteria adequately, as Franks' and May's are reliant on universal notions of 'subjectivity' and ethical knowledge (which contain a recourse to potentially coercive practices), while ontologies of lack are, on one hand, essentialist and, on the other hand, reliant on a binary thinking that prioritises signification and thus promotes the representational practices postanarchists reject. Moreover, we argued that a transcendent metaphysics is incompatible with the anarchist project because it requires positing an 'outside', something which precludes both a dynamic understanding of the possibilities for change and the practical tools for achieving them.

In chapter two we introduced our methodological tools through an elucidation of Deleuze's metaphysics. We began by outlining a distinction between ethics and morality and introduced the notion of immanence and its

role in Deleuze's philosophy. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze focused on a critique of transcendence and the ontological categories produced by transcendent metaphysics. Through the concept of univocity we established the category of difference-in-itself as primary and asserted the role of repetition in constituting reality. To fully account for immanence, we also introduced the concepts of virtual and actual, as well as a theory of time and individuation. We then moved on to discuss Deleuze's own reformulation of ethics as immanent through the form of the Event and affirmation of active forces. Finally, I introduced one element from Deleuze's collaborative work with Guattari which is important for understanding ethical subjectivity and ethical action which does not rely on the primacy of the symbolic, the critique of the psychoanalytic understanding of the unconscious and the subsequent notion of desire at the core of subjectivity.

In this last chapter, I use the Deleuzian metaphysical framework of difference, repetition and the machinic to understand the possibilities for ethical action. The main argument, drawing on Deleuze's work on Nietzsche and Spinoza, is that ethics based on a transcendent ontology supports existing values, and thus, despite a desire to do the opposite, functions to preserve the status-quo. Whilst other moral theories use transcendence as a way of 'grounding' their normative dimension, I side with Deleuze to claim that transcendence *prevents* ethics from taking place by restricting one's capacity to act. Daniel W. Smith remarks that "whereas other moral theories see transcendence as a necessary principle - the transcendence of the moral law in Kant, for instance, or the transcendence of the Other in Levinas - for Deleuze transcendence is the fundamental *problem* of ethics."⁴⁵³ Establishing a transcendent foundation for morality is fundamentally a rejection of the ability to make ethical decisions as it separates us from our capacity to act and requires us to follow pre-determined rules and courses of action.

In *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, Todd May identifies the

⁴⁵³ D. W. Smith, 'Deleuze and the Question of Desire: Towards an Immanent Theory of Ethics', p. 126.

main question of moral philosophy as the question of ‘what ought we to do?’, and the question of metaphysics as ‘what is it?’⁴⁵⁴ The task of political philosophy, then, is to mediate between the two. Overturning this principle, we start this chapter with the premise ‘given what it is, what can it be?’, thus preserving the relationship of continuum between metaphysics and ethics. The reformulation of this question is important for two reasons: first of all, to break away from the prescriptive and move to the analytical and, secondly, to highlight the materialism at the core of anarchist ethics. This position is congruent with Nietzsche’s in the recognition that there are things one can only think and do if they are in a particular position.⁴⁵⁵ Thus, we ask ‘what is the position we find ourselves in as anarchists’ and ‘what are the possible paths that can be taken’.

In pursuit of this goal, the first section outlines what these immanent ethics might look like if they are taken as ‘modes of existence’. The first task, then, is to reformulate the anarchist ethical question outlined in chapter 1. Rather than a question of delineating anarchist values and their specific meanings, or suggesting ways of being an anarchist, the purpose of ethics becomes figuring out ways of working together (more technically, creating a functioning assemblage). How can we come together, how can we work, enjoy, exist collectively, without limiting or suppressing each other’s power, desire and potential? Not in the future, not in some ideal society, but here and now. Moreover, it becomes a question of the possibilities of being an anarchist, if anarchism is about immanent critique and the problem of creating the conditions for change. The way the word ‘change’ is used in this chapter may at times be in terms of ‘social change’, but is generally deployed with the more abstract meaning of anything that transgresses norms or breaks dogmatism, and, in this sense, is related to the practices of ‘experimentation’

⁴⁵⁴ T. May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, p. 1.

⁴⁵⁵ This refers to Nietzsche’s famous division between master and slave mentality. It is most notably expressed in the parable of the lamb and birds of prey in F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil/ On Genealogy of Morals*, tr. A. del Caro, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2014, p. 236.

discussed by postanarchists.⁴⁵⁶ The main difference between their approach and the one in this chapter is discussed later.

Thus, it hardly comes as a surprise that many of the arguments this chapter brings to bear are precisely about how we can do that better. In following this trajectory, I take two paths simultaneously. Firstly, I identify the dogmatic image of thought in anarchist practices. This takes the form of ethical presuppositions that are exemplified with contemporary debates in anarchist organising. It is important to start with a critique of the image of thought because it “sustains a complacent conception of thought which is incapable of criticising established values.”⁴⁵⁷ Moreover, it is important to relay theory back to practices, both to pierce the blockages of theory and contribute to understanding what we *do*. Secondly, rather than attempting to answer these questions by appealing to an ultimate form of anarchist normativity such as that required by other ‘strong’ ontologies, I join a number of Deleuze-inspired philosophers to claim that his philosophy is conducive to a type of immanent normativity that is built collectively and through a common attribution of significance, only valid within the specific situations it entails. With this, I address the possibilities for change, and the emergence of new configurations. Finally, even though this chapter is concerned with ‘applied’ ethics in the sense that it draws examples from anarchist practices, it might seem that it does not provide satisfying practical answers. Rather than pointing towards anarchist ‘values’ or blueprints for how to act, I focus on ways of breaking the stagnation and boundaries of ethical debates. Having reformulated ethics as immanent, I argue with Karen Houle that “the better view of reality is the one that enables the greatest capacity to respond to reality,”⁴⁵⁸ rather than the one that gives us the most straightforward answers. In this sense, I claim that we

⁴⁵⁶ Nathan Jun, for example, draws on Malatesta to claim that for anarchists, “political action is always experimentation,” while Saul Newman regards anarchist prefigurative practices as contingent, uncertain and “having to be experimented with” in order to be reinvented. For more, see N. Jun, *Anarchism and Political Modernity*, Continuum, New York, 2012 and S. Newman, *Postanarchism*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2016.

⁴⁵⁷ P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p. 22.

⁴⁵⁸ K. Houle, *Responsibility, Complexity, Abortion: Toward a New Image of Ethical Thought*, p. 143.

do not in fact need more answers, we need new ways of *responding* to the world. Roughly speaking, I have used the following set of reconfigurations as a guideline:

transcendent ethics	➔	immanent ethics
judgment		response
representation		production
unified subject		desiring-machine
reason		problematic
pre-given		given
reactive		active
essence		assemblage

Beyond presenting an epistemological critique of transcendence, or its incompatibility with anarchist values, in the following pages we explore reformulations of three traditional spheres of engagement in ethics – ethical knowledge (and methods for acquiring it), ethical subjectivity and, finally, ethical situations. In a sense, these three correspond broadly to the three pillars of the postanarchist epistemological critique. The discussion about ethical knowledge relates to the critique of universalism, the rejection of essentialism leads to our reformulation of immanent subjectivity, and the exploration of ethical ‘problems’ is our response to the discussion on representation. In turn, I map these onto immanent metaphysics using the tools given to us by Deleuze and Guattari. All three elements come together in immanent ethics to constitute a type of normativity which does not resort to a transcendent grounding. The purpose of this chapter then, is to suggest possible ways of applying Deleuzian immanent metaphysics to anarchist

ethics.

3.1 Immanent normativity

The Deleuzian understanding of ethics as the ability to re-define values compels us to return to the problem of normativity or, more specifically, the need for some form of binding communality which is outside (not subjective) to agents and thus serves as a referent of good/bad which is universally applicable. Normativity is defined by Korsgaard as ethical standards that “do not merely *describe* the way in which we in fact regulate our conduct. They make *claims* on us; they command, oblige, recommend, or guide.”⁴⁵⁹ In chapter two, we outlined how the concept of an external arbiter creates tension between modern anarchists and postanarchists through the problematic of moral relativism versus moral universalism. The problem with universals that anarchist theorists seem to struggle with, especially in the form of universal morality, has its counterpart in other strands of political philosophy where universalist assumptions are criticised as epistemologically dubious to say the least and coercive at worst, while also taken as a necessary condition for collective politics.⁴⁶⁰ Thus, in the opening section of the chapter, we return to this question and explore it in the light of immanent ethics.

As the discussion on the works of Benjamin Franks, Saul Newman and Todd May in chapter two exemplifies, postanarchists and other anarchist theorists have recognised the problem of morality being coercive when grounded on universals. This presents a double-bind for establishing normative anarchist ethics. On one hand, without external grounding, some (post)anarchists argue, there is no arbiter for judging actions, which would lead to a lack of collective boundaries. On the other hand, anarchism is positioned as against coercion, thus preventing us from imposing or recognising universal values/rules. This is often solved by positing an ethical framework as

⁴⁵⁹ C. M. Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*, p. 8.

⁴⁶⁰ For example, Badiou, Laclau, and Žižek. See our discussion in 1.3.1 on weak and strong ontologies.

'blueprints', guidelines etc., which are 'optional' instead of coercively imposed.⁴⁶¹ Moreover, in practice it often results in a set of unspoken rules and an expectation to 'self-monitor' one's behaviour for deviation from these rules. We address both of these later in this chapter.

I put forward the claim that this paradox is established because transcendent universals are perceived as the only possible foundation for providing normative grounding. Moreover, this problem cannot be solved by offering blueprints which are only a suggestion – a disclaimer that an author does not intend something to be 'coercive' does not preclude the possibility of it becoming so. If suggestions and blueprints appeal to a transcendent ontology, they ultimately create the same problems for anarchist politics as strict moral rules. In other words, coercing somebody to follow a set of rules is not ultimately qualitatively different from suggesting a set of rules they should agree to follow if they wish to call themselves an anarchist (or be considered one by others). This type of transcendent normativity posits an 'outside' that regulates being, while the immanent normativity I would like to propose asserts that being can only be understood through the processes it is part of. The object is constituted *through* the action itself, such that, for instance, the ethics of what we do are found within the practices themselves.

The form of transcendent morality we have problematised, starting with the debate between Foucault and Habermas and moving towards postanarchism, relies on a normative 'objective foundation' in the form of human nature, essence, or state law. As Braidotti contends, "[n]ormativity is traditionally expected to be structured around and to implement a number of axioms which are drawn either from a canonical set of universal rules – as postulated in the Kantian tradition – or by coercive reference to a master signifier, as

⁴⁶¹ See R. Kinna, 'Utopianism and prefiguration' in S. Chrostowska & J. Ingram eds, *Political Uses of Utopia: New Marxist, Anarchist, and Radical Democratic Perspectives*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2016, pp. 198-218; S. Shukaitis, 'An Ethnography of Nowhere: Notes Towards a Re-envisioning of Utopian Thinking' in N. Jun & S. Wahl eds., *New Perspectives on Anarchism*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, 2010, pp. 303-314.

argued by Lacan and Derrida."⁴⁶² This is not dissimilar to postanarchist attempts we examined in Chapter 1, such as Saul Newman's positing of a paradoxical 'outside' and Todd May's attempt to outline a 'poststructuralist' normativity in the form of a moral theory. However, it would be an error to assume that just because there is no transcendent or universal grounding for normativity, it becomes 'relativist', or that it is irrelevant for anarchist ethics. The key to grounding immanent normativity is in the division between ethics and morality we established with Deleuze. Following his philosophy, metaphysics and ethics are not construed as two separate entities, but rather as a continuum. Immanent ethics is distinct from morality – it is not concerned with values, judgment or duty, but instead with the state of affairs, with what we *do*. Morality is founded upon essentialism and values – "In a morality it is always a matter of realising the essence."⁴⁶³ Thus, an immanent ontology cannot arise from morality, and, conversely, if we start with an ontology of immanence, we cannot arrive at morality, which always refers to a higher, transcendent entity (i.e. God or Good). Deleuze discusses this in his lecture on Spinoza:

In a morality, you always have the following operation: you do something, you say something, you judge it yourself. It is the system of judgement. Morality is the system of judgement. Of double judgement, you judge yourself and you are judged. Those who have the taste for morality are those who have the taste for judgement. Judging always implies an authority superior to Being, it always implies something superior to an ontology.⁴⁶⁴

Following the notion that ethics is concerned with *doing*, in *What is Philosophy?* we saw that Deleuze and Guattari conceptualise ethical activity as creation, transforming metaphysics so that new concepts, new ways of thinking can

⁴⁶² R. Braidotti and P. Pisters, 'Introduction' in R. Braidotti and P. Pisters eds, *Revisiting Normativity with Deleuze*, Bloomsbury, London, 2012, p. 1.

⁴⁶³ Deleuze, G., 'Ontologie-Ethique', *Cours Vincennes* lecture, 21 Dec 1980, tr. S. Duffy, <<https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/190>>, accessed 13 Feb 2015, para. 4.

⁴⁶⁴ *ibid.*, para. 15.

emerge.⁴⁶⁵ It is this impulse to create new ways of thinking that Ian Buchanan considers to provoke a “properly utopian confidence,”⁴⁶⁶ with Deleuze’s comparative approach providing an antidote to the fantasy that there are no other ways of organising society. In rejecting the Kantian *a priori* concepts of universality and necessity, Deleuze posits that necessity “has to be established as immanent conditions of *what we do*”⁴⁶⁷ or, in other words, the principles of what we do are within the practice itself. As the example goes, to play football we need to conform to the rules of the game, otherwise it wouldn’t be a game of *football*.

Outside the anarchist tradition, a number of notable authors have utilised Deleuze and Guattari’s work in the formulation of new normativities. For example, the possibility for immanent normativity is put forward by Colebrook in the form of a neo-Kantian self. Since there is no universal grounding for humanity, she argues, subjects come into existence through their own self-regulation – “*in the absence of nature and essence, ‘I am nothing other than a lawfulness that I grant to myself.*”⁴⁶⁸ Moreover, she uses Foucault to analyse how subjects are constituted through social normativity and recognition, arguing against essentialised normalisation. Paul Patton has also suggested a form of political normativity through the concept of deterritorialisation.⁴⁶⁹ We engage with the meaning of this later, but for now I note that processes of self-reflexivity and critique are defining elements of his immanent normativity. Finally, Rosi Braidotti also rejects transcendent normativity in favour of nomadic subjectivity and “ethical accountability in the sense of a fundamental reconfiguration of our being in a world that is technologically and globally mediated.”⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁵ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 28.

⁴⁶⁶ I. Buchanan, *Deleuzism: A Metacommentary*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000, p. 119.

⁴⁶⁷ A. Kristensen, ‘Thinking and Normativity in Deleuze’s Philosophy’, in *Revisiting Normativity*, p. 13.

⁴⁶⁸ C. Colebrook, ‘Norm Wars’ in R. Braidotti & P. Pisters eds, *Revisiting Normativity with Deleuze*, Bloomsbury, London, 2012, p. 91.

⁴⁶⁹ P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p. 106.

⁴⁷⁰ R. Braidotti, ‘Affirmation versus Vulnerability: On Contemporary Ethical Debates’, *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, vol. 10, no. 1, Spring 2006, p. 236.

The features of immanent normativity that I propose here are defined through the concept of assemblage. Normativity, in this sense, has to be seen in relation to the assemblage it is part of, otherwise it becomes transcendent. Moreover, immanent normativity can only be glimpsed through its functioning within the assemblage. An example might be when we talk about codes of conduct at the workplace, such as doctor-patient ethics, or teacher ethics. These are based around problems, offering the best way to produce, respond to or avoid certain situations or configurations. Understood in this way, it seems obvious to say that, for instance, bartenders do not have to follow the ethical standards of doctors. These standards only apply within a specific set of relations and allow this set of elements and relations to function as a whole. This approach echoes Franks' own argument about prefigurative politics. He also recognises the importance of generating immanent 'goods' within the practice, such as that to get the benefits of playing chess you need to observe the rules of chess. The difference with the ethics I am arguing for here is that they do not necessarily lead to 'goods' or benefits in the way Franks conceptualises them as virtues, and there is no orientation towards external, end-result 'goods'.⁴⁷¹ The formula is simpler: if you want to play chess, you need to observe its rules.

The word assemblage is commonly chosen to translate the French word *agencement* though, as Ian Buchanan notes, this fails to capture the full implication of the concept.⁴⁷² The English word signifies a union or joining, while *agencement*, on the other hand, signals an configuration of heterogeneous elements.⁴⁷³ Buchanan emphasizes that assemblage could also be translated as 'arrangement', thus preserving the nuances in 'working arrangement', or 'musical arrangement'.⁴⁷⁴ The difference, Nail argues, is crucial, as assemblages should not be thought of as a united or uniform entity,

⁴⁷¹ B. Franks, 'Anti-fascism and the ethics of prefiguration', *Affinities: Journal of Radical Theory*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2014, p. 54.

⁴⁷² Buchanan, I., 'Assemblage Theory and Its Discontents', in *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2015, p. 384.

⁴⁷³ T. Nail, 'What is an Assemblage?', *SubStance*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2017, p. 22.

⁴⁷⁴ *ibid.*

such as organs functioning together in the human body. Rather, assemblages are closer to multiplicities, where the entity is defined through its relations and elements can be added and removed at any time. None of the elements is necessarily essential for the continuation of the entity, nor is it dysfunctional on its own. Like the ship of Theseus, what makes an assemblage is not its parts, but the relationships between them.⁴⁷⁵ Beyond this, the interpretation of the concept is quite contested, with philosophical 'close' readings competing with the functional models found in disciplines such as geography, cultural studies and political science. Buchanan makes an argument for the analytic, rather than descriptive role of the assemblage. He charges assemblage theory with reformulating the Deleuzian-Guattarian question from 'how does it work?' to 'what does it mean?', thus removing the analytic power of the concept of assemblage and making it purely adjectival.⁴⁷⁶ Instead, he proposes four features of assemblages.⁴⁷⁷ Firstly, assemblages are explanatory of reality, and not an entity in the world. In this sense, assemblage is a concept according to Deleuze and Guattari's definition of concepts. Secondly, they are constitutive and constituted by reality. Thirdly, they have limits of what is acceptable and what is not, operating under some form of sense. Finally, assemblages tend to persist in the way they are, maintaining their tendencies. As such, they are defined through both their form of content, which Buchanan claims is 'machinic assemblages' and their form of expression, called 'collective assemblages of enunciation'.

Similarly, Nail points to some formal aspects of the concept of assemblage (formal in a sense that it does not refer to particular applications such as enunciation, language, machines, etc.) The first is the constitutive importance of the relations of elements we just mentioned, referred to by Deleuze and

⁴⁷⁵ G. Deleuze and C. Parnet, *Dialogues II*, p. viii.

⁴⁷⁶ This position is expressed most forcefully in I. Buchanan, 'Assemblage Theory, or, the Future of an Illusion', *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2017, pp. 457-474. For the most part I follow Buchanan in aligning my reading as closely as possible to Deleuze and Guattari's explication of assemblage. Weighing the relative value of the approaches of assemblage theory and actor-network theory is sadly beyond the scope of this thesis.

⁴⁷⁷ I. Buchanan, 'Assemblage Theory, or, the Future of an Illusion', p. 463.

Guattari as an 'abstract machine'. An abstract machine is the immanent combination of a set of relationships that define the assemblage. It is thus not a transcendent framework of organisation nor an expression of a normative telos. It also not a representational model of anything. For this reason, abstract machines are only properly designated by their own name. For instance, instead of 'a protest' (which implies an essentialist category of entities defined by a certain identity), one might refer to 'the assemblage of the COP15', or 'G20' (though these are only really a step closer to a proper designation). Secondly, the existing embodied elements that make an assemblage are the 'concrete assemblage'. They are the working parts of the assemblage and form a mutually transformative symbiosis with the abstract machine. Neither of these two features of the assemblage is primary or 'essential', and they change in correspondence with one another. Thirdly, assemblages are defined by the presence of 'personae', or agents.⁴⁷⁸ These are not self-determining subjects, but rather roles of connecting and relaying concrete elements to abstract machines. Again, personae are immanent to the assemblage they are part of, the same way the assemblage is immanent to the personae. Deleuze and Guattari state that "personae is needed to relate concepts on the plane, just as the plane itself needs to be laid out."⁴⁷⁹

Keeping this in mind, I would like to suggest a reconceptualization of anarchism using these concepts and vocabulary. I believe that the productive way to avoid constructing a straw-man of 'classical' anarchism or 'post' anarchism (risking the reduction of a whole tradition of theory and practice to generalisations) is to start with the premise that anarchism is not best understood first and foremost as a political ideology, or even a political or social movement with particular end goals.⁴⁸⁰ In the first chapter we pointed to Gordon, Franks and Graeber's use of such definitions of anarchism, whilst Newman and Critchley tended towards conceptualisations of anarchism as

⁴⁷⁸ Buchanan's term is 'actants', emphasizing that they are not necessarily human.

⁴⁷⁹ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 73.

⁴⁸⁰ At least not in the way sociologists might talk about social movements. See, for example, R. Day, *Gramsci is Dead, Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*, Pluto Press, London, 2005.

ethics, a system of values, 'politics of anti-politics', etc. While these definitions are undoubtedly useful for their respective projects, these approaches tend to prioritise the delineation of anarchism on the level of signification/meaning/discourse – the definition given is based around a common, shared understanding of the meaning of the various constitutive elements. For instance, in *Rebel Alliances*, Benjamin Franks moves from "anarchism is a historically located set of movements,"⁴⁸¹ to anarchism as a combination of various ideas and practices with shared principles,⁴⁸² to anarchism as political philosophy which provides an evaluative ethical framework.⁴⁸³ Franks' definition is a response, on the one hand, to critics of anarchism who claim that it is too diverse a field to be a coherent political ideology⁴⁸⁴ and, on the other, to approaches that try to incorporate all distinct types of 'anarchism' into one definition.⁴⁸⁵

I would like to argue that such an approach situates the 'limits' of anarchism in the wrong place. Conceptualising anarchism as a static politico-ethical position can result in excluding particular parts of anarchism from the 'official' canon and re-writing history to either claim 'problematic' people were not anarchist, or to claim that they were somewhat mistaken and confused.⁴⁸⁶ This is analogous to what we referred to in 1.3.3 as employing 'mental gymnastics', justifying that anarchists were 'the good guys' after all. A good example is the problem of 'anarcho-purism' which seems to lie at the core of various organising problems. In 2009, in the aftermath of Seattle, Sasha K defined anarcho-purism as "a morality that tries to keep anarchism pure and separate from certain tactics or from working with certain groups for the

⁴⁸¹ B. Franks, *Rebel Alliances: The Means and Ends of Contemporary British Anarchisms*, p. 15.

⁴⁸² *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 93.

⁴⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁸⁶ S. Evren, for example, provides a similar critique of Woodcock's reductive account of anarchism, as well as more 'mainstream' ideological presentations in S. Evren, 'What is Anarchism? A reflection on the canon and the constructive potential of its destruction'.

sake of purity.”⁴⁸⁷ It is a system of judgment whereby activists judge themselves and others to be ‘true’ anarchists on the basis of a rigid set of qualities/behaviours they exhibit. More recently, again in Seattle, Frances Lee comments: “There is an underlying current of fear in my activist communities . . . It is the fear of appearing impure. Social death follows when being labelled a ‘bad’ activist or simply ‘problematic’ enough times.”⁴⁸⁸

They also talk about rejecting the label ‘activist’ and the practices which activist communities adopt to self-police – punishment, preaching, but also more subtle behaviour like dismissing people who haven’t read the ‘sacred’ texts (i.e. of feminism, postcolonialism, etc.), or not respecting people who are not immediately identifiable in their appearance as ‘anarchist’, ‘queer’, etc. Anarcho-purism, then, is a result of drawing lines that define anarchism through a system of signification where (revolutionary) value is attributed to some actions and not to others.

The anarchist search for ‘purity’ or strict definitions results in the de-valorisation of certain practices or theories and a tendency to exclude the ‘uncomfortable’ or ‘ill-fitting’ anarchists from communities/canon. A similar critique is put forward by the Invisible Committee:

Since the catastrophic defeat of the 1970s, the *moral* question of radicality has gradually replaced the *strategic* question of revolution. That is, revolution has suffered the same fate as everything else in those decades: it has been privatised. It has become an opportunity for personal validation, with radicality as the standard of evaluation . . . What happens instead is that a *form* is extracted from each [revolutionary act].⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁷ Sasha K, “‘Activism and ‘Anarcho-Purism’”, *The Anarchist Library*, 2009, <<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/sasha-k-activism-and-anarcho-purism>>, accessed 24 Sep 2014, para. 8.

⁴⁸⁸ F. Lee, ‘Excommunicate Me from the Church of Social Justice’, *Kin Aesthetics* [blog post], 10 July 2017, <<http://www.catalystwedco.com/blog/2017/7/10/kin-aesthetics-excommunicate-me-from-the-church-of-social-justice>>, accessed 10 Jan 2018, para. 2.

⁴⁸⁹ The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, p. 142.

Thus, in exploring anarchism as an assemblage, without anything pre-given, 'anarchist' shifts from being an identity one takes on to a position one occupies in particular places and times vis-à-vis power. If the body, or location, or time changes, the same action in the same assemblage will have a completely different *ethical significance*. The value, understood as the 'radicality' of an action,⁴⁹⁰ is constructed together by the actors rather than being something inherent in the action itself, making it, first, impossible to pre-define and, second, impossible to replicate.⁴⁹¹ Analysing anarchism as an assemblage allows us to see precisely this significance in the moment it occurs. Moreover, it allows us to incorporate seemingly contrary actions as all being part of anarchist politics (punching a Nazi at a march and staying at home and not attending the march, for example).

Eschewing transcendent metaphysics, this notion of anarchism avoids positing a fixed set of pre-defined actions, values and structures that need to be followed. Anarchism as assemblage is a collective creation of sense, a tendency of a particular way of becoming and acting in a specific situation. This would imply that whether a response in a particular situation is 'anarchist' is defined through the relations into which it enters. For example, in Calais, France an anarchist response to state oppression might be starting a free kitchen and providing refugees with tents. In London, on the other hand, an anarchist action might be to lock oneself to the gates of a detention centre to prevent people from being deported. These are fairly straightforward examples that few anarchists would think are problematic 'ethically'. However, there are certainly more difficult situations – for instance, in one specific context getting married and, conversely, not getting married. Two completely opposing actions can both be radical depending on the collective assemblage of enunciation they enter. A judgment on these actions, in this

⁴⁹⁰ This use of radicality is intended to refer to a system of judgment where 'radicality' is posited as an idea principle around which normativity as well as judgement is configured. Beyond this I do not develop a notion of 'radical' except to say that it is part of the anarchist/activist/radical milieu.

⁴⁹¹ Here I am still following Levi Bryant in identifying the actors as more than just human actors, thus including objects, the environment, and non-material entities.

sense, is always going to appeal to some form of authority, principle, or value, and the question we need to ask, in that situation, is: given this action, how does the assemblage function?

So far, we have outlined some formal features of assemblages, but let us examine two instances of the application of assemblages in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's critique of representation. In the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* they discuss two types of assemblage. Machinic assemblages are physical/structuring, function-oriented entities; collective assemblages of enunciation could be thought of as the unconscious, molecular order which operates in terms of signs, not symbols. Signs here should be taken as a broad category that subsumes both language and symbols. The example Deleuze and Guattari give to illustrate the difference between signs and symbols is drawn from Benveniste's research on bee communication. Bees transmit information to each other through signs (a certain shape-sign means there is food in a particular field), but these signs cannot be understood as language because they lack the 'representative' element of re-telling, namely, a bee cannot tell a third bee what the first has communicated. The subtle difference is that a bee is capable of transmitting information it has acquired to another bee, but not capable of transmitting second-hand information.

In politics or philosophy, anarchism is most often taken to be something like a collective assemblage of enunciation, as with the examples we mentioned previously that tended to situate anarchism on the level of signification, identifying shared political principles, ethical values, anarchist 'ethos', anarchist practices etc. Likewise, historical approaches often see anarchism as something like a machinic assemblage⁴⁹² and, rarely, we find an author who also writes about the political aspects of anarchism as a machinic assemblage,

⁴⁹² For example, M. Schmidt, *Cartography of Revolutionary Anarchism*, AK Press, Oakland, 2013 outlines a selection of actors, situations and changes.

such as Colin Ward.⁴⁹³ The benefit of the definition I propose here is that it includes both machinic and symbolic elements, without privileging one over the other. Anarchism, thus, is an assemblage that consists of both the material environment and conditions *and* the meaning and signification we attribute to it, our actions and responses. As a result of this definition, it might appear that some elements of 'self-defined' anarchism should be disregarded as superfluous and we might perhaps incorporate some things that are not explicitly anarchist as part of the same assemblage. However, what is important is that it does not take any of these as given in advance. The focus is not what is included or excluded in a definition but how the struggle to achieve radical social change through direct action plays out and draws in various actors, institutions, regimes of discourse etc. Through this, in a sense, we get only the definitions that 'fit'.

To attempt to properly map out the anarchist assemblage would be beyond the scope of this work, but I would like to propose a few possible paths. The starting position would be Deleuze and Guattari's: to ask what kind of machine is capable of producing the effects we are given. In other words, a cartography of the elements within the assemblage is necessary. For example, physical bodies, capitalism and the State-form, but also flows of money, aeroplanes that enable summit-hopping, climate change, police and border control, philosophy, literature and art, etc. However, these are not enough to provide a method for understanding anarchism, not least because they can be elements of any other assemblage. The anarchist assemblage is defined specifically through the relationships between those elements, and the shared collective significance they are attributed. Even though this is not going to be explored in the depth it deserves, the rest of this chapter is to an extent concerned with how this works. I argue that the definition of anarchism as an assemblage captures anarchism as a living force, a historical fact and a theoretical field, and calls for a pragmatic approach rather than a dogmatic

⁴⁹³ Colin Ward promoted anarchism as a pragmatic approach towards organisation. See, for example, C. Ward, 'Anarchism as a Theory of Organization', *Anarchy*, vol. 62, 1966, pp. 97-109.

one. To make the terms of this re-definition doubly clear, I argue for its necessity on two fronts. First of all, if we were to think of metaphysics as entirely immanent, rejecting the notion of judgment or blueprints, then anarchism cannot be defined as any ahistorical, universal commonality between all anarchists (or their practices, their values, etc.) A definition claiming to trace shared practices or ethics among anarchists risks positing or searching for a transcendent ideal to compare them through, rather than looking at these practices as the immanent configurations they are. Secondly, such a definition follows an image of thought that resists identification of the conditions of change by positing what (or who) is desirable and acceptable *a priori*. By claiming certain elements as inherently anarchist, the result is that only certain practices are taken to be 'revolutionary' or constitutive of change, while we risk becoming incapable of recognising the radical possibilities of other practices. The concept of an assemblage in that sense replaces the idea of an 'essence'. We have already outlined a critique of human essence in the discussion on postanarchism, but similar objections can be raised towards providing static categories of definition such as 'anarchism as a political ideology' or 'anarchism as ethics'. Essence, as that which uniquely and necessarily defines an entity, requires a circular logic of assuming the thing to be complete. The task of providing definitions is then to explicate its enduring features in past and present and posit them as the necessary and sufficient conditions for the entity to be itself. If we apply Deleuze's ontology of pure difference, we cannot define anarchism on the basis of its 'identity', as this is only secondary.

In accordance with this critique, moreover, we need to ask the question: why do we even bother using anarchism as a term or a concept? Wouldn't the most obvious solution be to reject it entirely? By naming an assemblage, we already risk a potential spiral down towards the singularity (no name can capture it fully unless the name *is* the thing itself, a one-to-one correspondence). This is similar to the problem Deleuze and Guattari open with in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where they question their own continued use of

'I', after so deeply rejecting the concept of the 'self' in *Anti-Oedipus*. It is out of habit, they say, and similarly, it is perhaps out of convenience that I continue to refer to anarchism. Ultimately, however, I choose to use 'anarchism' because it is an order-word with great power and utility. Order-word is a term Deleuze and Guattari use in their rejection of the idea of language as representative. It refers to actions that are "accomplished in the statement."⁴⁹⁴ 'I', they claim, is an order-word, evoking a transformation of partial objects into a coherent single self, making a certain body *me*.⁴⁹⁵

In the plateau '20th November, The Postulate of Linguistics', Deleuze and Guattari consider J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts and the notion of performativity.⁴⁹⁶ Their interest lies in Austin's critique of logical positivism, a strand in linguistics which claims that the role of language is to represent the world, to provide an accurate description of feelings, objects, humans, and the rest of reality. Drawing on Austin and John Searle, Deleuze and Guattari point out three aspects of language: locutionary, or what is said; illocutionary, or what is intended; and perlocutionary, the result of the action of speaking. The illocutionary is particularly important, as it is where the concept of language as performative arises, in the sense that it not only describes/represents, but also *does* what it says – the act is done through the speech itself. These enunciations are order-words – not a category of types of statements, but a type of direct relation of performing, between the statement and the act. An example is that by saying 'I swear' one performs the act of swearing itself; 'I promise' is the act of promising but so could the statement 'I love you' be, depending on the context. Rather than being communication or information, Deleuze and Guattari claim the basic unit of language is the

⁴⁹⁴ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 87.

⁴⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴⁹⁶ Even though they share the same term, Austin's notion of performativity differs from Judith Butler's, the biggest difference, perhaps, being the importance Butler places on the symbolic and discursive practices that constitute gender. Austin and non-representational theorists seem to want to break with the symbolic and language as a mediator between mind and reality. It is this aspect that Deleuze and Guattari are particularly interested in.

order-word.⁴⁹⁷ These order-words are an immanent function of language that causes an incorporeal transformation, such as when a person becomes a convict as the judge announces 'guilty'. An order-word is not necessarily a command word, but one that brings about something new. Moreover, they can only create an incorporeal transformation under the correct circumstances – not every time that we say 'I do' do we get married.

Thus, it becomes clear that there are no purely linguistic assemblages. Language becomes inseparable from action. Any attempt to extract language from its concrete expression posits form as transcendent and universal. Moreover, "[t]he collective symbolic order is that by which its members make sense of the world, within which they organise their experience and justify their actions."⁴⁹⁸ Collective assemblages of enunciation play a similar role in that they simultaneously construct and are constructed by the members of the assemblages as 'making things make sense'. In the next section, we further examine the question of production raised by this conceptualisation.

To conclude the defence of my attachment to 'anarchism', the term remains in use throughout this chapter for two further reasons. First of all, this work is part of the habitual repetition which re-produces anarchism as an assemblage of practices and ideas. This makes it possible to situate it in a historical and contemporary context. Secondly, through the use of anarchism as an order-word, this work participates in the re-formulation of the assemblage in a certain way and delineates the limits of anarchism in new configuration. This does not imply a commitment to the 'essence' of anarchism, but to its eternal return as a process. Attaching an identity to anarchism would, as Elizabeth Grosz' argues in relation to feminism, fail to produce a definition of a group which acknowledges its multiplicity and interconnectedness to other groups.⁴⁹⁹ Instead of providing a different definition and returning to the realm of symbolic and signification by asking 'what is anarchism', we have

⁴⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁸ B. Anderson, *Taking-place: Non-representational Theories and Geography*, p. 4.

⁴⁹⁹ E. Grosz, 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics', *Topoi*, vol. 12, 1993, p. 170.

turned to the question of 'how is anarchism', concerned with its functions.

This inevitably implies a new take on normativity, but one that is immanent and held collectively through the re-creation of anarchism as such. To return to the problem of universals, this reformulation of anarchism might be labelled 'relativist' by proponents of strong ontologies. Indeed, in an immanent cartography of anarchism it might make it appear that the boundaries are very fuzzy. However, I would like to stress again that fuzzy boundaries are only a problem if seen through the lens of transcendence, that is, an atemporal, universal, all-encompassing position of absolute knowledge. Viewed from our own limited human situation, these are the only boundaries there are. Determining the boundaries *is* difficult. It is also *a process*, one which we go through every time in a new community, new group, with old friendships. If anarchism is defined as an assemblage then determining who is 'in' and who/what is 'out' necessarily becomes difficult, and this should not come as a surprise or be refused. Pretending it is easy is what creates problems and setting a criterion for inclusion/exclusion only satisfies over-zealous activists with a tendency for dogmatism. Thus, in the rest of this chapter, we trace some of the features of this immanent normativity and the possible paths it might lead us down.

3.2 Ethical Knowledge

To begin with, a central aspect of transcendent ontologies with claims to universal morality is the necessary link between these universals and moral knowledge. In traditional ethical theories, ethics is usually taken to rely on an intelligible rational model. In Section 2.2.1 we discussed the primacy of rationality in moral thinking in relation to Kant's understanding of moral knowledge, which I expand on now. Kant postulated that moral knowledge is a synthetic *a priori*, one that comes before experience because it is based on reason. In other words, we cannot know how we should act from merely experiencing how people act. The ability to reason, in this sense, is the ability

to discern subjective from objective knowledge, which is not a conscious process, but a synthesis of the faculties. In Kant's words, "error is only effected through the unnoticed influence of sensibility on understanding, through which it happens that the subjective grounds of the judgment join with the objective ones."⁵⁰⁰ For example, to check the veracity of a fact, such as if I am indeed thirty years old, we might compare it to other facts in the world, such as 'I was born in 1988' and 'it is now the year 2018'. If all factors point towards the same result, i.e. there is unity of reason, then we rationally synthesise this statement as true.⁵⁰¹

Kantian deontology thus rests on three aspects of reason. First, everyone is capable of rational thinking, which makes rationality a transcendent capacity. It implies that regardless of culture, religion, historical era or other factors, human beings all possess the same brain attribute that, if used correctly, would lead them to the same (universal) truth. Secondly, in his rejection of the possibility of knowing whether transcendent entities exist, Kant considers reason the only cognitive tool that allows for judgment – not only moral judgment, but also a general understanding of truth and error. Therefore, rationality is posited as the supreme method of morality. Finally, reason functions as the means for perceiving a relation between cause and effect, such as the ability to discern that if I touch something hot, I will burn myself. Most importantly, this leads us to believe that the experiences of the faculties are united by reason – it helps us understand (and judge) our experiences.

Rationality, then, is seen as an attribute of the moral agent, or, more specifically, as an attribute that an agent needs to *exhibit* to be considered moral. This is the traditional Cartesian-Kantian subject which lies at the core of modern political philosophy, but also underpins the modern anarchist conceptualisations of ethical subjectivity. Prefigurative virtue ethics or multi-

⁵⁰⁰ I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trs & eds P. Guyer & A. Wood, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, A294.

⁵⁰¹ See P. Guyer, 'The Unity of Reason: Pure Reason as Practical Reason in Kant's Early Concept of the Transcendental Dialectic', *Monist*, vol. 72, 1989, pp. 139-67.

value consequentialism, for instance, both rely on a form of rationality to determine a causal relationship between action and result, as we discussed previously. Through the Spinozian/Deleuzian critique, however, reason ceases to be the method for reaching ethical solutions and becomes instead the method for justifying the desired outcome. This is clear, for example, when determining the right or wrong action – the ‘right’ one being the one we are able to provide reasons for, one for which we can demonstrate these reasons and that they are within the limits of what is considered acceptable. The main claim this section puts forward, then, is that the relationship between reason and truth operates in the inverse to the Kantian understanding of reason. Rather than being a tool for moral judgement such as making a rational choice – using reason to weigh the arguments – rationality is used to *justify* one’s desired outcome.

Virtually the whole domain of ethics is oriented around judging, evaluating and logically constructing an argument for or against a particular decision, while moral responsibility is about giving an account of oneself, being able to coherently list reasons for one’s decision (and recognise when atonement for bad decisions is required). Similarly, an ethical individual is seen as someone who is *reasonable*, or can be reasoned with, able to logically defend their position and actions. This process is articulated by Nathan Jun:

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.⁵⁰²

In terms of collective assemblages of enunciation, this situates ethics on the

⁵⁰² N. Jun, ‘Deleuze, Values, and Normativity’, in N. Jun & D. W. Smith eds, *Deleuze and Ethics*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2011, p. 94.

symbolic plane, encompassing elements such as truth and universality. Thus, it would seem that the place taken by rationality and justification as primary elements of the domain of ethics reinforces the status-quo of 'problem → solution' and the ethical image of thought, effectively restricting an affective engagement with the Event. Moreover, the Kantian understanding of reason points to a liberal conception of an individual subject being solely responsible for the use of their faculties, whilst in practice it relies on the *shared collective* participation in the processes of reasoning, both to produce meaning and recognise it. De Acosta exemplifies this particular form of representative thinking with the following progression:

Anarchists are against the State and Church

implies...

Anarchists are against the structures of representation and power at work in the State and Church

implies...

Anarchists are against any other structures of representation analogous to those at work in the State and Church

implies...

Anarchists are against any structure of representation and power

implies...

Anarchists are against all authority, all representation

*implies...*⁵⁰³

To illustrate this problem, it might be useful to offer an example. Karen Houle discusses the primacy of reason in relation to abortion, specifically the use of

⁵⁰³ A. de Acosta, 'Its Core is the Negation,' in *Anarchist Magazine*, 2013, <<http://anarchymag.org/index.php/content/current-issue>>, accessed 19 March 13.

abortion as an ethical problem in the classroom. She claims that this approach often misses the point of providing a method for making such a decision in real life, if it becomes necessary. Teaching abortion as a hypothetical situation where participants have a clear ethical choice between 'pro' or 'anti' is supposed to "[cultivate] in all . . . individuals the same basic capacity to think through the issue such that later, outside the classroom, if and when they encounter it in real life they will be better equipped to handle it."⁵⁰⁴ In other words, it is taken to cultivate ability to reason, to 'detach' oneself in order to reach 'objective' knowledge via rational thinking. However, she observes, in practice this method posits the decision-making process outside of context and can actually be more detrimental than helpful. Her argument is that by 'rationalising' the two sides of the debate, it becomes possible to learn how to justify our desired outcome, rather than learn to determine which decision is *better* in a particular situation. By not taking into account the specificities, experiences and concerns of the actors in a situation and positing it as a 'moral problem' in the classroom, we solidify and consolidate people's preferences instead of teaching them to come up with new solutions or reconfigurations of the problem.

In moral philosophy, Braidotti comments, one upsets the predominance of Kantian moral universalism "at one's own peril."⁵⁰⁵ Likewise, in anarchist moral philosophy, the primacy of reason has also remained largely undisputed. For example, in the postanarchist theories we discussed earlier there is also a critique of rationality – discussed in relation to the rejection of a 'universal rational subject' – mostly expressed by Saul Newman and Simon Critchley. Newman's critique of rationality starts with Stirner, who argues that it serves as an oppressive method of domination by the ego: rationality as a method for searching for truth results in the rejection of individual

⁵⁰⁴ K. Houle, *Responsibility, Complexity, Abortion: Toward a New Image of Ethical Thought*, p. 72.

⁵⁰⁵ R. Braidotti, 'Affirmation versus Vulnerability: On Contemporary Ethical Debates', *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, vol. 10, no. 1, Spring 2006, p. 236.

perspectives and truths and as such is just another 'spook'.⁵⁰⁶ Newman continues to pile up the reflections of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Derrida and Lacan on rationality, rejecting it once more as one of the 'metaphysical first principles' used for domination over the individual.⁵⁰⁷ In the postanarchist ethics he proposes, however, rationality returns as a necessary condition for the critique of authority.⁵⁰⁸ This time, it is not as part of an essentialised human nature, but an 'empty signifier' in Laclau's sense. Since Newman himself does not make it clear how this change affects the use of reason in ethics, I turn briefly to Laclau.

In chapter two, we placed Laclau, together with Newman and Critchley on the side of 'ontologies of lack', which are characterised by a tendency towards privileging the 'social' in the society vs. nature debate. This results in the primacy of the symbolic order as constitutive of ethics and politics. The notion of the empty signifier is a main constitutive element of the symbolic. It is derived from Saussure's linguistic theory, in which the sign is composed of a signifier (for example, the word tea), and a signified (the idea of tea). An empty signifier, in that sense, is a signifier without signified, an element of the symbolic that has no referent in the 'real' world. This is Laclau's starting point, which leads him to differentiate between floating and empty signifiers, the first being equivocal or ambiguous, while the latter is only possible if "there is a structural impossibility in signification as such."⁵⁰⁹ Newman takes that possibility to be expressed in the Lacanian Real, something which cannot be signified. If taken as foundational for postanarchist epistemology, this approach poses a few problems. First of all, it falls prey to our initial criticism that, operating through a transcendent framework of representation, the process of reasoning is not a suitable method for making an ethical choice. In Lacan, the Real is not a kind of first being which is exempt from signification,

⁵⁰⁶ Newman, S., *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, p. 64.

⁵⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 161.

⁵⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 164.

⁵⁰⁹ E. Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, Verso, London, 1996, p. 37.

but it is itself part of the domain of representation and signification.⁵¹⁰ Indeed, Newman's own proposal to move beyond representation and Todd May's anti-representational principle both provide an adequate critique of the primacy of signification and meaning which is at the core of ontologies of lack. Second, from Deleuze's position, signification is an obstacle that prevents us from grasping the immanent relations of reality. His critique of representation is also a critique of the Lacanian Real that posits lack at the heart of signification. In the previous chapter we addressed Deleuze and Guattari's critique of Oedipus and desire, thus reformulating representation as productive, rather than as a signifying relationship.

Critchley, on the other hand, suggests a theoretical critique of the 'fact of reason', claiming that Kantian moral law is only binding insofar as there are agents that recognise it as binding.⁵¹¹ His own ethics dispense with reason through an infinite loop of demand-approval, which does not require a method for deciding or justifying. The problem with this, as already discussed, is the transcendence of the demand, which, as we argued with Deleuze, prevents ethics from actually taking place. As Bestigui observes, Deleuze is in fact entirely in opposition to Levinas with his analysis that the "history of ontology is actually a systemic subordination of ontology to morality, a transcendent ontology."⁵¹²

Despite the commitments of the postanarchists, then, Kantian rationality has not been sufficiently displaced by a specifically anarchist (ethical) epistemology.⁵¹³ Using Deleuze's transcendental empiricism, however, it is possible to critique the fundamental problems of Kantian ontology by

⁵¹⁰ A. Schuster, *The Trouble with Pleasure: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis*, Cambridge MA, 2016, p. 45.

⁵¹¹ S. Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*, p. 30.

⁵¹² M. de Beistegui, *Immanence – Deleuze and Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2010, p. 106.

⁵¹³ In the introduction we mentioned some anarchist approaches to knowledge production in the social sciences, such as a questioning of the participant/observer divide. These approaches are concerned with the ethics of engagement between academics and activists, thus touching upon questions of ethical epistemology. However, the main focus of anarchist ethical engagement I argue for is not what, but *how* we know, for example, what the ethical implications of being a participant are, as opposed to being an observer.

examining the limits of *real* experience. The problem for Deleuze is not reason or rationality itself, but its orthodoxy in philosophy and thinking – a dogmatic position which is founded on the notion of transcendence. In Deleuzian ethics, rationality comes after desire – our unconscious is the productive element and reason is the method we apply to validate our desires: “Once interests have been defined within the confines of a society, the rational is the way in which people pursue those interests and attempt to realize them.”⁵¹⁴ Desire is not driven by rationality or logical thought. Desire is produced within the limits of what is possible in a particular context, which, in turn, is what makes the unconscious a factory. Thus, rationality cannot be the process for discerning an ethical choice as it is subsequent to the choice; it is the tool used for justifying the choice *after it has been ‘made’*. This inversion of the relationship between choice and reason is a sufficient condition to reject the transcendence of reason as a method for reaching moral truths.

To replace the primacy of reason we offered a Deleuzian conceptualisation of the problematic. As James Williams comments, “Deleuzian empiricism is the creation of concepts in response to individual problems, but individual problems are a take on the whole of the actual and the virtual.”⁵¹⁵ Problem-Ideas are concerned with conditions, rather than decisions or justification. As we have seen, like Kant, Deleuze conceives of problems as transcendental, but rather than being concerned with the conditions of possible experience, they are concerned with the conditions of genesis of real experience. There are two main reasons why such an approach is better for anarchist ethics. First of all, it bypasses the need for representation in thinking. Representational thinking, as exposed in the image of thought, relies on recognition as the ‘mediating’ faculty. An ethical methodology of problem-Ideas, however, reveals the possibilities of change. Ideas, as we established, are multiplicities created by a set of differential relations and elements that we named singularities. The

⁵¹⁴ Deleuze, G., *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2004, pp. 262-3.

⁵¹⁵ J. Williams, *Gilles Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide*, p. 30.

purpose of an Idea is to structure these intensive processes into patterns. In that sense, bodies and individuals are both 'solutions' to problems. In ethical practice, such a transformation would imply, for example, an understanding of people's choice to engage in violent protest as the solution of certain conditions, rather than compelling a judgement or condemning specific tactics as ethically 'wrong'. The violence argument is particularly common and divisive in anarchist organising, so let's explore it as an example.

There have been numerous texts written and discussions had of whether violence in the form of property destruction, acts of physical violence against the police and state representatives or individual attacks against oppressive behaviour are justifiable from an anarchist perspective.⁵¹⁶ Peter Gelderloos, for example, identifies seven reasons why non-violence as a tactic in protest action is not compatible with the values that anarchism holds.⁵¹⁷ Non-violence is racist and sexist, he argues, as it ignores the fact that women, people of colour, or people of the global South are subjected to violence on a daily basis, and only white, male, privileged people live in a world of 'safety' – being arrested for protest violence, for example, can be a wildly different experience for different bodies. Similarly, the principle of non-violence supports the state by admitting that only the state has the legitimacy to use violence.⁵¹⁸

The framing of this as an ethical 'problem' which can be solved with the use of reason is indeed clear in Gelderloos' approach of appealing to an

⁵¹⁶ See, for example E. Malatesta, *Life and Ideas.: The Anarchist Writings of Errico Malatesta*, ed. V. Richards, PM Press, Oakland, 2015; E. Goldman, *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader*, ed. A. Shulman, Humanity Books, New York, 1998; M. Bakunin, *God and the State*, Dover Publications, New York, 1970 [1916];

More recently, the writings of T. May, *Nonviolent Resistance: A Philosophical Introduction*, Polity, Cambridge, 2015; R. Vernon, *Violence and Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London, 1983.

Also recent zines, such as R. Vernon, *Violence and Anarchism*, Freedom Press, London, 1983; J. Bowser, *Elements of Resistance: Violence, Nonviolence, and the State*, Hampton Institute Press, New York, 2015; Ashen Ruins, 'Against the Corpse Machine: Defining a Post-Leftist Anarchist Critique of Violence', *The Anarchist Library*, 2009, <<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/ashen-ruins-against-the-corpse-machine-defining-a-post-leftist-anarchist-critique-of-violence>>, accessed 31 May 2013; Green Mountain Collective, 'On the Question of Violence and Nonviolence as Tactic and Strategy Within the Social Protest Movement', [zine], Black Clover Press, Montpelier VT, 2001; T. Eanelli, 'Bash Back! Is Dead; Bash Back Forever!: Concluding Notes' in F. Baroque & T. Eanelli eds, *Queer Ultraviolence: Bash Back! Anthology*, Ardent Press, 2011.

⁵¹⁷ P. Gelderloos, *How Nonviolence Protects the State*, South End Press, Boston, 2007.

⁵¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 45.

argumentative form positioned against the state. However, regardless of whether the violence argument is 'better' logically, or more fitting with anarchist values, or more compellingly made, a person's decision is already determined by the conditions which push them towards privileging one set of values over the other. The possibility of changing one's mind, or of accepting 'diversity of tactics', is determined even before the event – any event – by framing the argument as an exclusive disjunction of 'either... or...'. Rather, approaching this question from a methodology of Deleuzian problems, we can analyse and understand the conditions that have created the (im)possibility for violence during a protest. For example, throwing a brick at a McDonald's window during a big demonstration with thousands of people, in a group of close friends all dressed in black and wearing face masks is a result of certain conditions – the force of the reason the demonstration is happening, existence of black clothes and the tactic of wearing them to avoid being recognised, prior experience of the tactic, as well as conversations to ensure that everyone in the group has the same intention, a person's own physical and mental preparedness, lack of video recording equipment nearby, and many others, some going back years or even centuries. Similarly, not engaging in destruction of property is not necessarily a result of an ethical choice, but of the lack of conditions to perceive the alternative as an ethical choice. That is to say, throwing bricks is a result of a particular configuration of singularities that produces an intensive field which makes it possible. In fact, being 'convinced' to participate in a violent action through a compelling argument might have the opposite effect of feeling coerced to do something, which the person was not prepared for. Thus, an understanding of the conditions is vital if we want to change the outcome. We discuss this further later in the chapter in relation to the Event.

Replacing reason with problems means that ethics is not situated exclusively on the symbolic plane. Taking ethics as a collective assemblage of enunciation and reason as an 'empty signifier' is at the heart of the problem of universalism versus relativism. It follows the logic that ethics or values are

about the *meaning* of actions/characteristics, that meaning could either be objective or subjective, and that it is either possible to construct that shared meaning or not. Reason is then erroneously posited as the condition for shared meaning. As Rolando Perez comments, reason is “the guiding Structure of all structures, the Structures that makes it possible to see the world in terms of structures.”⁵¹⁹ Thinking of ethical situations as Ideas avoids the problem of relativism and universalism because there is no meaning to be attributed to conditions. It takes ethics away from coded desire and imposing signifying regimes, into a-signifying regimes where the relationship of representation becomes one of production.

In this sense, we need to return to Deleuze and Guattari’s *What is Philosophy?* and the concept of thinking. *Thinking* for them happens when there is an encounter with something unknown and the mind is provoked to engage with it. This is what a problem/Idea is – a disruption of habitual thoughts of ‘common sense’ and ‘good sense’. Thus, this understanding of thinking is what is deployed when re-formulation of the anarchist limits occurs. Ethical knowledge is acquired as a methodology through various ethical *encounters*. This also implies that thinking is a collective process, not too dissimilar to Wolfi Landstreicher’s definition of theory as “the unitary body of thought that we *consciously* construct *for our own use*. We construct it when we make an analysis of why our lives are the way they are, why the world is the way it is, and when we simultaneously develop a strategy and tactics of practice – of how to get what we really most desire for our lives.”⁵²⁰

Approaching ethical situations in this way allows us to see the conditions that have produced a specific result, rather than simply justify it. Moreover, such an approach precludes the possibility for ‘moralising’ in the form of imposing guilt, judgment or rules under the guise of ‘critique’. By starting from what is

⁵¹⁹ R. Perez, *On (An)archy and Schizoanalysis*, Autonomedia, New York, 1990, p. 77.

⁵²⁰ Wolfi Landstreicher, ‘Critical Thinking as an Anarchist Weapon’, [zine], *Venomous Butterfly Publications*, [date unknown], <https://ia601306.us.archive.org/30/items/CriticalThinkingAsAnarchistWeapon/critical_thinking.pdf>, accessed 23 Apr 2016, p. 26.

given, problems do not claim legitimacy of their answers on the basis of 'objective' thinking but eschew entirely the categories of subjective and objective. Just like water, sun and soil are subjective factors responsible for the grape seed's growth, and at the same time objective factors for everyone, a problematic starts from what is given and proceeds to identify processes, rather than final solutions.

Truth

This critique of reason has further implications for ethics that claim universality on the basis of objective truth. In a dualist system of representational thinking, rationality is opposed to 'emotions', sometimes also framed as 'objective' and 'subjective' thinking. Slightly diverging in meaning from Deleuze's objective and subjective presuppositions in philosophy's image of thought, objectivity in ethics is the idea that it is possible to step outside of one's position and consider all sides of a debate on equal terms, with subjectivity meaning thinking from a particular point of view, often involving emotions and preferences which guide the decision-making process. Objectivity is based on the fallacy of inclusivity – "that it is right and good to include all relevant parties or evidence."⁵²¹ It is through 'objective' thinking that rationality completes its full circle of representing that which is universally known – by rationalising one's choice, common sense moral values are re-created, thus once more positioning reason as the ultimate method of ethics. This is precisely the mental gymnastics which allow the justification of any action as long as it represents common knowledge through the method of reason. As Levi Bryant puts it,

[S]o long as philosophy assumes that thought has a natural affinity with the true (a naturally upright thought), a specific form of objectivity (natural common sense), and bases itself on the model of recognition, thought cannot help but become unconsciously trapped in its own implicit presuppositions which are culturally, historically, and socially

⁵²¹ K. Houle, *Responsibility, Complexity, Abortion: Towards a New Image of Ethical Thought*, p. 127.

contingent.⁵²²

In other words, truth, as that which is 'real', becomes dependent on reason and representation – through reason, we are able to represent the real world in a way which is 'truthful'.

In order to explore the concept of truth further, we need to turn to the understanding of time in *Difference and Repetition*. The concept of objective, universal truth, Daniel W. Smith argues, is based in a disconnection from time: "a proposition is true when it is true universally, eternally, in all times and in all places."⁵²³ Indeed, the objective/subjective division of ethics is often mapped out onto the universal/relativist debate around the nature of truth. Universal truths in this case are atemporal and always valid, with relative truths only valid for a particular situation in time. This division, however, is reliant on a conceptualisation of time as abstraction, which Deleuze argues is already visible in Kant.⁵²⁴ For Kant, time ceased being a unit used to measure movements and became a pure and empty form with various modes such as simultaneity or series.⁵²⁵ In contrast, Deleuze proposes the three syntheses of time discussed previously. They reformulate past, present and future so as to propose a different *form* of time. The first synthesis of the present is a passive synthesis of habits and repetition. The second synthesis proposes an idea of a pure past which creates the flow of time. The third synthesis of future is the condition for production of the new.

In Deleuze's form of time, 'truth' is downgraded from its role as the ultimate goal of philosophy, or as a transcendent value, to a concept which, along with other concepts, comes from a particular plane of immanence. With regard to ethics, this implies that Deleuze considers concepts such as 'universal' and 'relative' as only applicable to a specific form of truth, dependent on a specific concept of time. Of course, this is a path that starts with Nietzsche and

⁵²² L. Bryant, *Difference and Givenness*, p. 19.

⁵²³ D. W. Smith, 'Temporality and truth', *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2013, p. 377.

⁵²⁴ G. Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, p. vii.

⁵²⁵ C. Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy*, p. 170.

weaves its way through other poststructuralist texts. The question of objective truth, for example, haunted Foucault's work from the very beginning, culminating in his identification of 'regimes of truth' as mechanisms that produce discourses perceived as 'true' in that particular time and context. "Each society has its regime of truth", he writes. These regimes of truth are identified as:

1. "the types of discourse [society] harbours and causes to function as true"
2. "the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true from false statements"
3. "the way in which each is sanctioned"
4. "the techniques and procedures which are valorised for obtaining truth"
5. "the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true."⁵²⁶

Similarly to Foucault's regimes of truth, Deleuze and Guattari identify the role of philosophy as a problem-solving activity, where truths arise from within the process of creating concepts. In anarchist practices, this is especially evident through processes of community-building and community responses to problems. The practical impossibility of repeating these processes in other places and times points to their function as immanent modes of existence. Anarchism, moreover, has always had a special relationship with time, its writings mostly transient and its practices often re-defined and re-situated. To claim universality of truth, Deleuze and Guattari argue, would be to surrender the possibility of critiquing established values.⁵²⁷ Moreover, such a rejection of universal truth presents the possibility of reaching a pragmatic understanding of the world through situated response, through the ways in which reality is enacted rather than pre-given.

Smooth and striated

To assume that ethical thinking is only possible from an objective or a

⁵²⁶ M. Foucault, 'The political function of the intellectual', p. 13.

⁵²⁷ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 46.

subjective position is a function of what Houle terms 'striated metaphysics'.⁵²⁸ Deriving from Deleuze and Guattari's notion of smooth and striated spaces,⁵²⁹ striated metaphysics refers to a clearly divided, categorised way of seeing the world, also called arborescent thought in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In the plateau on *Nomadology*, striated space for Deleuze and Guattari is a space⁵³⁰ that is clearly organised, such as when we look down from an aeroplane and see fields neatly divided by borders, or a town with each property delineated with a fence. It is a way of describing, for example, social structures as hierarchical vectors of constraining identities. Similarly, striated metaphysics offers clear, rigid lines of thinking: "We are either dead or alive. A body is either me, or it is you . . . [It] also presumes a definitive step-wise linear sequence to human development."⁵³¹

Striated metaphysics is binarizing. It assumes that there is a clear-cut point at which life begins or ends, that genitalia and sexes can be neatly divided into two groups without any ambivalence, or that human beings have an identity (sometimes called essence) which never changes and stays with them for the rest of their lives and the life of the species. This logic is dangerous, claims Houle, because it shifts the terms of ethical debates so that they become unsolvable.⁵³² For instance, in the ethical discussion of abortion this implies that there are two ethical positions, pro-life and pro-choice (and perhaps everyone in the middle is simply confused). Moreover, it implies that there should be a moment we can identify (even if through negotiation and compromise) where 'life' starts, when a bunch of cells becomes a human being and lives, to subsequently die in a moment of ethical significance. Therefore, the ethical debate is shifted to the question of when exactly a foetus becomes a human which has the right to live, with pro-life supporters

⁵²⁸ K. Houle, op. cit., p. 60.

⁵²⁹ These concepts are most explicitly developed in '1227: Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine', G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 369-441.

⁵³⁰ Not necessarily a physical space, but also space in the abstract, such as a dimension, or even a system of signification.

⁵³¹ K. Houle, *ibid.*

⁵³² *ibid.*

generally claiming that this is the moment of conception and pro-choice supporters claiming it is somewhere around the third to fourth month of pregnancy.

Using a Deleuzian lens to explore this discussion, it seems first of all that striated metaphysics is not a conducive way of thinking to achieve a solution to this debate – though, clearly, we are required to have a position. It might be said that nowadays such debates are easily solved with science, by precisely determining the moment when the heartbeat starts, when the brain starts to function, or when the foetus resembles a human in form. However, of course this has not resulted in a solution to the problem. Such an approach resembles Leibniz' search for infinitesimal difference which Deleuze outlined in *Difference and Repetition*. Every time we reach a certain definition through difference, we can always subdivide it to even smaller differences, thus never able to reach a final definition of when a foetus becomes a human. Houle states:

This sort of metaphysics often runs aground in the face of embodied, practical matters. That abortion law cannot agree on the actual moment when the so-called personhood happens to the foetus in utero testifies to that.⁵³³

In addition to striated space, Deleuze and Guattari theorise 'smooth space'. If we imagine the same clearly divided fields and territories to be at war, there will be lines and spaces that will become more important than others, such as roads, embankments or rivers. These lines will be fluid, criss-crossing and constructed on the basis of an immanent meaning. For example, an army will have a completely different tactical relationship to a field on the day it is attacking to the day it is retreating. Smooth space is a space of intensities and events. Similarly, if we were to reject the notion that there is such a thing as a universal rationality, we can understand why people often act in non-binary,

⁵³³ *ibid.*, p. 61.

paradoxical ways, often inconsistent and uncertain. One individual, in their teenage years, might be a Christian dedicated to fighting against abortion; the same person, once the lines and vectors of importance have shifted in the space they occupy (what Deleuze and Guattari call the plane of consistency), might end up having an abortion and defending other people's decisions to make that choice. A smooth space thus exists as a state of differentiation where the elements are configured immanently according to their function. The constant fluidity of moving between smooth and striated spaces is what is important, positing the ability of knowledge to produce values.

To return to anarchism, this binarising logic of a striated space can also be seen in our example of violence, both in relationships and in collective action. For example, in the zine 'What have we done for us lately?' Dot Matrix analyses situations of domestic abuse where anarchists take an approach of splitting the conflict into fixed categories of abuser/victim. We either blame the accused, or the accuser. We either support one, or the other. Furthermore, either we exclude and ostracise the abuser, or the victim will never be safe in the community (or, to return to the question of purity, we either ostracise the abuser or we're not good feminists⁵³⁴). The abuser either self-flagellates and atones, or leaves the community: "The accuser is put in a position of either completely turning on the partner, or of not being taken seriously as a victim/survivor."⁵³⁵ Such an approach reduces a complex situation into black and white choices which do not allow for new solutions and ways of acting and relating to each other. The essay argues, "This all-or-nothing attitude is a cultural response that might arguably be meaningful for violence from strangers, but definitely is not useful for dealing with people who have loved/cared for each other, who share family, friends, spaces, goals."⁵³⁶

To foreshadow the question of the ethical subject which is taken up in the next section, an ethical framework with a striated metaphysics relies on a

⁵³⁴ This is not to imply a heteronormative male/female mapping of abuser/victim.

⁵³⁵ D. Matrix, 'What have we done for us lately?', [zine], 2008, [unknown source], p. 4.

⁵³⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

coherent subject as the location where ethics happens, and moreover, proceeds to assume that this subject is capable of and responsible for rational decision-making. Being 'responsible' is taken to mean giving a rational account of one's actions, making a logical, reasonable justification. To return to the women in the abortion clinic, we can also add an element of collectiveness – their action was moral only insofar as they were able to give a reason that *other actors in that situation were able to recognise as rational*. Similarly, a great value is placed on 'consistency' – sticking to one single ethical framework and logic. Not being consistent is often taken as valid grounds to reject somebody's decision (*You eat meat so who are you to talk about the benefits of veganism?*) That human beings are complete, self-determinable subjects has already been disputed in the previous chapter, but in terms of ethical questions, the primacy of reason further results in hampering the capacity to build alliances and engender collective action. Moreover, it simplifies complex situations where feelings and emotions can be equally valid and important down to a single aspect of the situation – that which is rational.

To conclude the discussion on the rejection of the primacy of reason in ethical situations, I briefly mention again the criticism that the ideas of post-structuralists theories lead to a dangerously relativist position of 'anything goes'. To claim that truth is either objective and therefore universally valid, or relativist and therefore ultimately meaningless is to continue thinking in terms of striated space, where these two positions are binarized and put into opposition. Instead, it is possible to simultaneously claim that certain functions of power and discourse produce contingent 'truths' which are then posited as ahistorical and universal, and that this contingency does not imply that anything is acceptable and everything is meaningless. In other words, it is possible to have ethics which start from the critique of universal truths, and indeed, do not imply that 'anything goes', as we shall be examining in the final section. The immanent method we argued for compels us to discern the problematic field of certain ethical responses, which still allows us to discern

which practices are acceptable, but now in relation to an immanent understanding of their purposes. This dispenses with judgment and guilt, while still holding an idea of the shared, collective boundary/truth.

3.3 Virtuous Machines

We begin this section by outlining the role of the unconscious in ethics. This initially situates us in one of the classic debates of traditional ethical philosophy. Here, habits are usually taken to be a form of bridge between body and mind, seen as a form of unconscious signal from the mind that directs the actions of the body.⁵³⁷ Habits are seen as something the individual needs to either control or embrace. For example, Kant rejected mindless action as dangerous and passive, while seeing moral action as always deliberate and active. Conversely, Aristotle's virtue ethics are all about cultivating and acquiring good habits which then form the virtuous character.⁵³⁸ Both of these approaches to understanding unconscious acts still operate within a transcendent framework of judgment according to which habits can be evaluated as good or bad. In Saul Newman's work, which relies heavily on Lacan, the question of the unconscious returns as the subject of Lack, which we discussed in 1.3.2. Rather than defining the unconscious in terms of a value judgment, this serves as the *grounding*, i.e. the transcendent arbiter, of such a judgment.

Whereas these traditional accounts of ethics understand habits as delineated by a framework of conscious/unconscious actions performed by a subject, for Deleuze habits are what give the impression of a subject and act as a form of 'glue' for social life. Applying this to ethics, there are two questions that might arise from this conceptualisation of habits. The first is whether ethical

⁵³⁷ See, for example, Plato's chariot discussed in section 2.1.2, or Descartes's conception of nature in relation to mind-body dualism, examined in, for example, S. Patterson and J. Cottingham, 'Descartes on Nature, Habit, and the Corporeal World', *Aristotelian Society*, vol. 87, 2013, pp. 235-258.

⁵³⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, tr. R. Williams, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1989, pp. 19-25.

activity in that sense might be analogous to the cultivation of good habits, or a virtuous character, as in Aristotle's ethics or Frank's prefigurative virtue-ethics. The second is where the possibility of agency lies. In both questions, the underlying problem is one of immanent metaphysics' understanding of the *acquisition* of habits. These two questions are addressed in the next two sections.

All forms of virtue ethics we have discussed are teleological accounts based on some form of external judgment. This poses a problem, since in immanent ethics habits are constitutive of the self but cannot be consciously manipulated towards a desired outcome. Unlike reason, which through a process of logical steps proceeds to create a principle, Deleuzian habits are not acquired through an 'objective' weighing of arguments and facts. Neither is the causality of habits a straightforward Aristotelian progression of acquiring good habits leading to an ethical life. This implies a circular logic of 'we define an ethical life as one led by a person with virtuous character'. The task of ethics here becomes acquiring a virtuous character. In anarchist terms, if we stipulate that anarchist ethics is about not oppressing others, then not oppressing others becomes the goal of anarchism. Such a circular image of thought does not adequately question the framework of 'who does the defining?', 'where does this definition come from?', and 'what compels us to define it in such a way?'

In traditional ethics, these questions are answered through an identity category - anarchist ethics is defined as not oppressing others, because the essence of anarchism is the desire for freedom from oppression. In Deleuzian ethics, such a move is not possible. Instead, we start from what is given. Thus, the normative dimension of habits in immanent metaphysics comes from the notion of machines. This understanding of habits takes us away from the Aristotelian judgment of virtuous and vicious character and Franks' notion of multiple *telē* and situates us back in the material. Thus, the notion of machines/machinic plays two important roles in our discussion - firstly, it takes away the categories of good/evil and, secondly, creates a material basis

for ethics. Through their rejection of the value of the interior as meaning-making (identity, essence or truth) Deleuze and Guattari define machines on the basis of the connections they plug into. This is to say that the concept of a machine should not be taken to constitute the 'essence' of the subject, but rather that the 'subject' is a process of connecting with and disconnecting from other machines.

Machines operate through active and reactive *forces*, or one force with two manifestations. In section 2.3.2, we introduced affirmation as an active force, with representation as a reactive one. In relation to ethics, these forces can be understood as good/bad or positive/negative but only on the *level of life itself*, i.e. only in relation to whether these are destructive of the machine or increase its affects. In a Spinozist approach, active forces (also called forces of desire in *Nietzsche in Philosophy*), go to the limits of their power, while reactive forces (also called oedipal in *Anti-Oedipus*) reduce power through regulation or blockages.⁵³⁹ In this sense, 'good' machines are those that are life-affirming, rather than those judged through an external conception of the good. To return to the question of whether immanent ethics should be concerned with the cultivation of virtues, in immanence it becomes impossible to define virtues or vices that are not intrinsic to the assemblage. It then follows that any notion of 'cultivation' of specific virtues is illusory, because the 'virtue' is not necessarily to be found outside of the assemblage. Moreover, habits are not consciously 'selected' on any basis, as they are pre-conscious. Despite this, it is possible to conceptualise some form of 'training' of oneself within immanent ethics, but it will require a reworking of the understanding of virtues and cultivation.

The possibility for a form of cultivation lies in the revolutionary potential of desire. As we have seen, desire is positive and productive, and this is what accounts for the 'plugging in' of machines into other machines. The unconscious is a factory, and the body becomes a desiring-machine. What in

⁵³⁹ G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche And Philosophy*, p. 33.

traditional ethical theories would be conceptualised as an 'agent' is here subsumed into the concept of the desiring-machine. Desiring-machines also operate on unconscious syntheses, which posits subjectivity as a process of multiple directions and contradictory tendencies, only retroactively understood as a 'self'. Thus, it becomes possible for an individual to be pulled towards different connections, such as being driven to smoke and wishing to stop. It is possible to wholeheartedly subscribe to the values of freedom and equality yet act misogynistically at the same time.

A desiring-machine, thus, produces all sorts of connections, some of which are productive and some which are not. The machinic does not produce or contain meaning and cannot be evaluated in ethical terms such as good/bad. Machines are assessed on the basis of what they do – whether they produce something. When a seed is 'bad', it is incapable of sprouting and growing. For a seed to grow, it needs certain conditions, such as water, warmth, soil. Depending on the quality and quantity of these conditions, it will either grow to be a fruit-bearing tree, or it will be unable to produce fruits, or it will wither away while it is young. Similarly, desire is channelled on the basis of the conditions that are available. To return to the question of smoking – a nice summer evening spent with friends enjoying a drink and an available pack of cigarettes might be conditions channelling the 'desire' to smoke, which is a flow that has been codified. This compulsion may come from being a smoker for many years, the influence of the media, a drive to be part of the group, or another 'coding' that has occurred on the unconscious at some point.

The first step in an immanent 'training for good habits', in that sense, is an embrace of the uncertainty in the connections desire makes. The revolutionary potential of desire is in creating more connections, and not putting limits on this is vital. The logic of affinity groups in anarchist organising comes to mind, as the practice of creating short or long-lived collectives through shared problems or actions. Rather than rejecting organising in 'single-issue campaigns', for example, these could be seen as ways of connecting that have not previously existed and can only enhance the

affect of the anarchist assemblage. Notions of a 'revolutionary programme' which encompasses such affinity groups in a bigger project are attempts at codifying desire. In the previous section we discussed how particular drives (flows of desire) come to be codified, and subsequently acquire meaning as 'good' and 'bad'. The role of traditional morality, in this sense, is to perform the coding, imbuing actions and drives with social significance and meaning. This might suggest that in immanence, the goal of ethics is to 'liberate' desire from its coding or alternatively channel it towards particular end goals. Such an approach, however, is not possible, because desire cannot be 'controlled'.

Codes, Deleuze and Guattari claim, are imposed on desire to make it enter, and remain in specific relations (capturing desire). The more that specific desires are codified, the more rigid these structures become and the less 'revolutionary' desire is. Society's main function here is to code the flows of desire.⁵⁴⁰ Moreover, desire should not be understood in its already coded form – for example, the desire to be free, or the desire to eat pizza for dinner. Anarchists are frequently portrayed as desiring freedom above all else.⁵⁴¹ To talk about the anarchist 'desire for freedom', in this sense, is an error in understanding desire and is best understood as an expression of the way it has been codified in contemporary society. It implies a progression from an abstract principle of 'desiring freedom' towards material fighting of oppressive practices, whilst I argue that such 'desire' is produced by, and a result of, a problematic (such as experiences of oppression), rather than constituting an ideal principle or value. Thus, once the economic and social structures change, what we might 'desire' as freedom is likely to shift and reform. The Invisible Committee note the vulnerability that this understanding of freedom produces for anarchists:

Only free subjects, taken en masse, are governed. Individual freedom is

⁵⁴⁰ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 139.

⁵⁴¹ See W. Price, 'Do Anarchists Believe in Freedom?', *Anarkismo* [blog post], 24 Jun 2008, <<http://www.anarkismo.net/article/9206>>, accessed 02 May 2015 and M. Wilson, *Rules Without Rulers: The Possibilities and Limits of Anarchism*, Zero Books, Alresford, 2014.

not something that can be brandished against the government, for it is the very mechanism on which government depends, the one it regulates as closely as possible in order to obtain, from the amalgamation of all these freedoms, the anticipated mass effect.⁵⁴²

Thus, the 'desire' for freedom should be understood as a coded flow, where 'freedom' is specific to the conditions that have produced it, rather than a transcendent principle. This also suggests that there is no simple causal relationship between 'freeing' our desires from internalised oppressive practices and achieving large-scale social change.⁵⁴³

To conclude this section, we have identified two problems that prevent us from positing an Aristotelian-style cultivation of good habits as an ethical act. First of all, acquiring habits is a chaotic process of connection and disjunction, in a complex network of intensive fields, which prevents us from positing a straightforward causal relationship between 'good' habits and virtuous character. Moreover, since habits and repetition come pre-individuation, there is no 'self' that is capable of deciding which habits are to be cultivated and which rejected. Secondly, we cannot direct desire towards a preferred outcome. Desire is coded in complex ways and stratified into particular tendencies, and subsequently destratified by others. So far, despite our account of intentionality through the theory of the unconscious in 2.4, this formulation of desire/subjectivity still appears to produce too deterministic an account of ethical activity. The coding and decoding of desire, as well as the constitutive role of habitual actions to individuals seem to leave little scope for agency. Indeed, in traditional ethical ontologies, determination and self-determinism form a binary pair that is posited at the heart of ethical activity. In immanent metaphysics, however, it is more useful to understand determination, or 'agency' as processes, rather than fixed sets of relations.

⁵⁴² The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, p. 126

⁵⁴³ This idea might be developed further in relation to Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of the molecular and the molar. See, for example, J. Windsor, 'Desire lines: Deleuze and Guattari on Molar Lines, Molecular Lines, and Lines of Flight', *New Zealand Sociology*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2015, pp. 156-171; B. Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*, MIT press, Cambridge MA, 1992, et al.

That a 'subject' is an effect of our habitual ways of thinking and existing does not imply pre-determination – though it does imply a certain degree of determination, or, rather, a certain model of determination. Moreover, we should not forget that for Deleuze, transcendence and judgment are the ultimate agents of determination, as they deny the individual's capability to act within the immanent conditions it is part of. Given this, it seems futile to pursue the question of ethical agency further, especially in the traditional moral form of 'what should I do?' I would like to argue, however, that the reason to jettison this question is not the perceived determinism of Deleuzian-Guattarian ethics, but because of the erroneous position of the 'I' in it. Despite the underlying unconscious syntheses that constitute the subject, partial objects are nevertheless capable of establishing connections, which can be fostered and nurtured. Similarly, Daniel W. Smith formulates the ethical question of desire as a question of 'what am I capable of doing given my degree of power',⁵⁴⁴ which I would agree with, insofar as we take the 'I' to be comprised of partial object/organ-machines.

To supplement this, I propose an understanding of bodies in terms of the cartographic notion of scale. Zooming out from our focus on the individual as an agent, it is possible to understand collective bodies utilising the same concept of desire through mapping it out on a larger scale.⁵⁴⁵ The same way

⁵⁴⁴ D. W. Smith, 'Deleuze and the Question of Desire: Towards an Immanent Theory of Ethics', p. 125.

⁵⁴⁵ This notion should not be confused with what Buchanan calls the problematic of 'scaling up'. In *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus*, Buchanan makes the point that Deleuze and Guattari understand the social in terms of the law of large numbers, specifically in terms of 'populations and coefficients of speed'. However, we should not reduce our understanding of social formations to these terms, which denote something like the "limit-points of social formations" (p. 91) and do not explain their endurance. Thus, we have the concept of 'coding' added to our concepts of populations and speeds. The addition is important here because coding is ambivalent, obscuring the question of the nature of the distinction between the linguistic and the non-linguistic and at the same time enabling a re-working of the distinction in terms of codes (for example, linguistic and non-linguistic codes may all share basic fundamental features that derive from being codes). It is here that Buchanan offers a criticism of assemblage theory's 'scaling up', arguing that despite the use of populations and speeds as central analytical tools it is not sufficient to take micro- factors and simply scale them up to macro- effects: "What DeLanda excises from Deleuze and Guattari's theory is the difference in kind between the two regimes of desiring-production . . . In a 'field of immanence' all relations are interior to the terms inasmuch that the terms themselves are simply states of intensity through which desire passes. There is no 'scaling up' from the schizo delirium to the social field, instead one has to bring about an alteration in the regime of desiring-production for change to occur. In other words, what DeLanda eliminates from Deleuze and Guattari is desire itself" (p. 92).

that a body is an assemblage of various partial objects which are taken to be a single 'self', the anarchist assemblage is also composed of partial objects that establish various connections with each other and with 'outside' elements. In other words, all people, towns, squats, political issues, anger, flows of capital, that are part of the assemblage we consider anarchism, are also part of and connect to, various other assemblages, such as nation-states, party politics, mouldy walls, means of transport, and this is applicable to the smaller scale of 'human individuals'. This de-focusing of ethical activity from the human as the central actor is also put forward by various post-human theorists. The enhancement of one's degree of power, in this sense, means to increase the ways desire flows within and outside of the assemblage. Since desire is always seeking more connections, the simple answer seems to be to just let it be.⁵⁴⁶ However, it is here that we encounter the greatest problem of desire. As Deleuze and Guattari put it:

The astonishing thing is not that some people steal or that others occasionally go out on strike, but rather that all those who are starving do not steal as a regular practice, and all those who are exploited are not continually out on strike.⁵⁴⁷

Or, invoking Wilhelm Reich, why do people appear to desire their own oppression? It is beyond the scope of this thesis to present a full theory of capitalism's control over the flow of desires, or all the ways desire gets coded, but it is worth mentioning Braidotti's criticism of the notion of capitalist progress. Attributing a positive notion of 'progress' to capitalism's processes of deterritorialisation and subsequent reterritorialisation is fatal for radical politics, she argues, because it only serves to commodify transgressive practices (for example, being an anarchist collapses into wearing a punk t-shirt).⁵⁴⁸ However, it is worth exploring the collective and individual processes of de-coding that are latent in some assemblages. Paul Patton

⁵⁴⁶ Ian Buchanan discusses the 'let it be' approach to desire in I. Buchanan, 'Desire and Ethics', *Deleuze Studies*, vol. 5, supplement, pp. 7-20.

⁵⁴⁷ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 31

⁵⁴⁸ R. Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*, p. 219.

observes that Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between types of assemblages that are “fixed or delimited in particular ways, shut off from all but certain specified relations to the outside, and on the other, more fluid and open-ended assemblages in which new connections and new forms of the relation to the outside are always possible, even at the risk of transforming the assemblage into some other kind of body.”⁵⁴⁹

Thus, it would appear that one ethical activity would be to keep the anarchist assemblage (and others) open to new connections that would enhance its power. In other words, what is needed is to find mechanisms for creating bonds within and outside of the assemblage so as to destroy the very assemblage that is constituted by those bonds. To return to the question of cultivating good habits, the possibility of ethical activity is then to ‘train’ oneself to ‘create’ relations. Rather than ‘training’ with a specific goal in mind, such as training for the revolution, for example, it is ‘training’ in the sense of increasing one’s capacity to respond to the state of affairs (*respond*, here, instead of *judge*). Thus, there is no particular telos which orientates the cultivation, such as in virtue-ethics, but a rejection of the method which stratifies desire so as to allow for new habits to become formative. Training, in this sense, is more open-ended than cultivation, and less certain, since it is training for the unknown. The anarchists *Do Or Die*, for example, conceptualise this very well in their call for an insurrection:

It is through acting and learning to act, not propaganda, that we will open the path to insurrection – although obviously analysis and discussion have a role in clarifying how to act. Waiting only teaches waiting; in acting one learns to act. Yet it is important to note that the force of an insurrection is social, not military. The measure for evaluating the importance of a generalised revolt is not the armed clash, but, on the contrary, the extent of the paralysis of the economy, of normality. If students continue to study, workers and office employees to work, the

⁵⁴⁹ P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p. 77.

unemployed to solely strive for employment, then no change is possible.⁵⁵⁰

Moreover, the capacity to respond is precisely what Deleuze and Guattari intend by the term 'affect'. In his famous interview with Claire Parnet, Deleuze comments that he is fascinated by animals with limited affect, such as insects.⁵⁵¹ For example, we can point to three affects of a tick – it is attracted by light (to climb to higher positions), by odour (to find an animal), and to find a warm, less hairy place where it can reach the skin of that animal. Deleuze's fascination comes from the fact that in a world of immense potential, a tick is only really capable of these three degrees of freedom. Thus, he is compelled to reaffirm, "we don't know what a body can do" – humans tend to think they have unlimited affect, but this is only true because we do not know what other possible affects there are. The concept of affects, in this sense, is Deleuze's re-working of the concept of power. Unlike Foucauldian power, which for Deleuze and Guattari more closely resembles their notion of desire, power is a positive Nietzschean-Spinozian force of 'power-to'. Power is the capacity to affect and be affected, and conversely, having no or little power means that there is a limit on the relations into which one can enter. In the example of violent tactics and pacifism, the lack of appropriate conditions effectively results in limiting people's affects by separating them from the power to act, a limit in the ways they can affect and be affected.

To return to the question of activism, a problem often arises from the assumption that *all* humans have the same (unlimited number of) affects, while there are often limitations on what certain bodies can do which others do not have. For instance, this is something discussions around sexual consent often try to bring forward – that certain people (often those socialised as female), in certain situations, do not have genuine capacity to 'say no', for example. In *Learning about good consent*, an anonymous author discusses

⁵⁵⁰ 'Insurrectionary Anarchy: Organising for Attack!', *Do or Die*, issue 10, 2003, <<http://www.eco-action.org/dod/no10/anarchy.htm>>, accessed 16 Mar 2015, para. 5.

⁵⁵¹ G. Deleuze and C. Parnet, *Dialogues II*, p. 60.

domestic abuse and consent, claiming that if one is under threat of violence, for example, consenting to sex is not a genuine consent.⁵⁵² We can draw a parallel with ideas of 'privilege' and the concept of affects through the suggestion that white or male privilege, for example, grants a number of affects on certain bodies whilst denying them for others. An ethical activity, in that sense, affirms the Event in the way it transforms the assemblage through increasing one's and the other's capacities to respond.

Such an understanding is not too dissimilar to Brian Massumi's politics of affect, articulated in an interview as taking "little, practical, experimental, strategic measures to expand our emotional register, or limber up our thinking, [so that] we can access more of our potential at each step, have more of it actually available."⁵⁵³ Massumi advocates increasing one's affects in order to avoid being bound by our situation – in every situation, there is some degree of freedom, and affirming it makes more intense becomings possible. This method of enhancing one's power and relationality is, unsurprisingly, also reminiscent of the 'politics of experimentation' advocated by postanarchists. Undoubtedly, this is a path often trodden by Deleuze-inspired political theorists. However, experimentation in the sense it has been advocated by postanarchist seems to boil down to protest tactics of humour, carnivals, satire and parody,⁵⁵⁴ rather than a fully conceptualised understanding of the relations anarchist bodies (both collective and individual) enter into, such as the one I am proposing here. These would include, for example, possibilities of creating new ways of existing with the planet, which green anarchism has been attempting to address, but also new ways of co-existing with black holes, with supporters of the Tory party, with computers, etc. The possibilities for creating such open-ended assemblages lie in processes of intensification. To enter more speculative grounds, these

⁵⁵² Philly's Pissed, 'Learning Good Consent', [zine], 2008, <<https://www.phillyspissed.net/node/32>>, accessed 14 Jan 2014, p. 43.

⁵⁵³ B. Massumi, *Politics of Affect*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2015, p. 6.

⁵⁵⁴ See, for example, T. May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, pp. 87-121; S. Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, p. 123; D. Graeber, *The New Anarchists*, p. 6-7.

might be seen as the processes that are at the heart of spontaneous riots, for example, where the field of intensities has reached such a boiling point that it becomes actualised, such as the 2011 riots in London. Insurrectionary anarchists, for example, identify such collective expressions as the 'authentic' revolutionary subject, as opposed to managed revolutions.⁵⁵⁵ However, these processes do not happen only in 'natural' as opposed to 'artificially' engendered protests, as intensities can become actualised through a range of different modes of existence. On a larger scale, the anarchist revival of the beginning of this century was an expression of precisely these processes of intensification through their expression in Occupy, the Arab Spring, and the proliferation of activist causes – a production of anarchism. The cultivation of active forces as those that increase one's capacities for connection is therefore a possible and desirable act for the anarchist assemblage.

Moreover, to invoke Patton's sentiment,⁵⁵⁶ these activities can indeed lead to such a deep transformation of the assemblage that it would not be recognisable as such. Undoubtedly this will cause some anxiety for anarcho-purists, who might perceive such an activity as destructive for anarchism. There are two responses to this. First of all, the passion to destroy is a creative passion, carrying with itself the possibility of something new. In Deleuzian language, flows of desire cannot be destratified without destroying the current stratification. An anarchism which is stratified, I would argue, is not an anarchism worth having, as it has lost its creative potential. In that sense, anarchist ethical activity is an eternal return of destruction, of an anarchism that is re-negotiating its limits and positioning – very punk, in fact. This destruction is directed both outwardly, towards the connections the assemblage makes with the world, but also inwardly, towards itself, until the anarchist body we have is unrecognisable from the one we started with, and from the one it will continue becoming.

⁵⁵⁵ See, for example, Sasha K, 'Some Notes on Insurrectionary Anarchism' in *Killing King Abacus #2: 'For relations without measure*, [zine], 2001, <https://archive.org/details/killing_king_abacus_2>, accessed 02 Jul 15.

⁵⁵⁶ P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, p. 77.

An ethical becoming, in this sense, emphasises process and change rather than fixed states. Affirmation is not to adopt a feeling of resentment, such as rejecting one's positionality, but instead to be responsive, embody one's affects. Examples of such becomings, Deleuze and Guattari contend, are a becoming-woman or becoming-animal. Both of these are revolutionary insofar as they increase one's capacity to affect and be affected. This implies that a revolutionary path is constituted as such depending on one's position, relating to what Braidotti refers to as politics of location – unmasking and reflecting on the socio-economic-cultural-world intersection each one of us inhabits as a subject and the power relations that we participate in.⁵⁵⁷ More importantly, becoming should not be taken as a pre-defined path, but an expression of forces of affirmation, negation or denial, which always differ. Thus, when Deleuze and Guattari discuss becoming-woman, it is not to claim that revolutionary politics is bound to a particular (female) expression of humanity, but rather to the constant production of immanent difference. Braidotti comments, "The reference to 'woman' in the process of 'becoming-woman' ... does not refer to empirical females, but rather to topological positions, degrees and levels of intensity, affective states."⁵⁵⁸

Politics of location play a vital role in both conceptualising revolutionary becomings, and disentangling Deleuze and Guattari's work from the charges feminist critiques have laid at them.⁵⁵⁹ Braidotti suggests an understanding of becoming which does not imply "a symmetry between the sexes [which] results in attributing the same psychic, conceptual and deconstructive itineraries to both."⁵⁶⁰ To be committed to a politics of difference, she continues, is to recognize the asymmetry of the sexes. In this respect, Braidotti

⁵⁵⁷ See R. Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*, pp. 91-95 and A. Rich, 'Notes Towards a Politics of Location (1984)', in A. Rich ed., *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985*, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 1994, pp. 211-231.

⁵⁵⁸ R. Braidotti, *Metamorphoses. Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, p. 79.

⁵⁵⁹ Braidotti suggests that "what Deleuze finds objectionable in feminist theory is that it perpetuates flat repetitions of dominant values or identities, which it claims to have repossessed dialectically" (*Metamorphoses*, p. 81). The implication is that feminism is taken to be subversive only in so far as it is actively participating in the deconstruction of the concept of woman and the creation of a new type of multiplicity which is not specifically 'feminine' (substitute with 'black', 'immigrant', 'Asian', etc).

⁵⁶⁰ *ibid.*

adopts Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of majority and minority. Majority and minority do not refer to numbers, but to a kind of difference that is evident in politics. Majority corresponds to what is constructed as the standard, ideal member of society, and as such is always in position of domination.⁵⁶¹ In Western society, for example, the majority might correspond to the white, heterosexual, male, middle-class, able-bodied, middle-aged, married, etc. Conversely, minority is that which is not part of the majority, often with less clear boundaries or definition. It contains what is separated from the majority on a specific axis – for example, women differ from the majority on the axis of gender, which redefines them as a minority. Deleuze and Guattari characterise a minority as “multiplicities of escape and flux.”⁵⁶² Moreover, they claim, the minority is where revolutionary potential lies:

[The power of a minority] is not measured by their capacity to enter and make themselves felt within the majority system, nor even to reverse the necessarily tautological criterion of the majority, but to bring to bear the force of the non-denumerable sets, however small they may be, against the denumerable sets.⁵⁶³

A revolutionary becoming is not one that fights for the rights of a certain group to be recognised (for example, identity politics focused on the right to vote, abortion rights or gay marriage) or one that wants the replacement of dominant values with another set of values (for instance, misandry) but one that is able to create and sustain a system of multiplicities – here I am contrasting multiplicity with plurality, following Houle.⁵⁶⁴ Plurality is a feature of numerable sets which “refers to a proliferation through the elaboration of a thematic continuity, or, through repetition of a single operation.”⁵⁶⁵ All elements are said to belong to the same interior, divided

⁵⁶¹ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 122.

⁵⁶² *ibid.*, p. 470.

⁵⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 546.

⁵⁶⁴ K. Houle, *Responsibility, Complexity, Abortion: Toward a New Image of Ethical Thought*, p. 139.

⁵⁶⁵ *ibid.*

and ordered into categories. They can all be referred to the same (transcendent) criterion to understand their meaning. Multiplicity, on the other hand, is a product of mechanical operations. It is a feature of non-denumerable sets and thus minorities, because they cannot be reduced to a common denominator which lies outside their immanent meaning. A rhizome is a multiplicity. To return to their previous statement, Deleuze and Guattari imply that a minority has the potential to create new systems of meaning, but also new connections and structures. Thus, majority/minority is not a dualism, and their revolutionary becomings are not symmetrical. A majority can become revolutionary in a minoritarian becoming, such as a becoming-woman, but a revolutionary becoming of women could be the assertion of positive sexual difference (women have been becoming-women for all of their lives!) Breaking away from binarizing thought in this way implies the recognition that our revolutionary paths are not the same, that there is no opposing Other that follows a perfectly symmetrical trajectory to reach an ideal place of (anarchist) synthesis. Finally, if we were to understand revolutionary becomings in terms of minority/majority, it becomes clear that the axes of divergence/the axes of oppression are contextual positions where individuals fall in relation to majoritarian politics. This is precisely what the editors of *Queering Anarchism: Addressing and Undressing Power and Desire* refer to here:

[P]art of why 'queer' began to be used as shorthand for sexual and gender minorities of all kinds was due to some of these debates over who 'belonged' [in the LGBT community], in what contexts, and how we might think about our sexual and gendered selves in ways that weren't based on identities.⁵⁶⁶

Queer has thus been used to describe a variety of people who do not share the same 'identity' in a strict sense. Queer is defined through its opposition to

⁵⁶⁶ C. B. Daring et al., 'Introduction: Queer Meet Anarchism, Anarchism Meet Queer', in C. B. Daring et al. eds, *Queering Anarchism: Addressing and Undressing Power and Desire*, AK Press, Edinburgh, 2012, p. 10.

what is 'normal' or 'dominant', and as such has no essence. Moreover, as what is 'normal', and 'dominant' is constantly in flux, so queer becomes a dynamic position which translates differently in different contexts and points in time.

That said, becoming-minoritarian or being part of an oppressed, marginalised group is clearly not a sufficient condition for radical politics. Even if a particular configuration is presently pushing boundaries against dogmatism and is in this sense 'radical', the processes of coding still channel affects and bodies into their assigned categories. Brian Massumi illustrates this with the plane of transcendence:

The life cycle of a plane of transcendence: 1) production of a coded image, 2) application of the code to bodies/infolding into habit, 3) unfolding into life's paths, 4) reproduction of the code in new images (most likely with defects or selective modifications). A plane of transcendence is a cycle of becoming-transcendent, becoming-immanent, and rebecoming-transcendent: A special kind of virtual-actual circuit.⁵⁶⁷

Not only are revolutionary becomings different, but they are also 'revolutionary' only for a limited period of time. The application of codes reconfigures the assemblage so as to bring out the potential for dogmatic normativity. For example, activist practices such as the search for authenticity and glorification of individuals tend to focus precisely on this becoming-majoritarian. What I mean is that by inverting hierarchies and prioritising certain 'anarchist' practices over others, we can create a new normativity, new rules that people should follow to be an authentic 'queer', authentically 'black', and so on – and this lacks the potential for change. Abbie Volcano's critique here is spot on:

[T]he ways we fuck, love, and gender ourselves are not inherently revolutionary. But creating a politics that refuses the hierarchical

⁵⁶⁷ B. Massumi, *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 114.

arrangement of people because of their sexual and/or gender practices – and, importantly, one that does not pressure people into certain practices under the auspices of being more authentically “queer” – does, indeed, have radical implications.⁵⁶⁸

This is not to say that inverting hierarchies is to be avoided. On the contrary, it is important that marginalised people have power in contexts they wouldn't normally be. Indeed, this leads us towards recognizing levels of political situatedness rather than a generalised notion of collective becoming.

We have now arrived at a position from which we can assert our immanent form of subjectivity. In Braidotti's feminism, taking difference as primary ontological category entails not only the differences between men and women, but also the differences among women and among men, and within themselves as well (each of us is several).⁵⁶⁹ This last step is crucial for immanent anarchist ethics as well. It serves to separate 'identity' from political subjectivity. Identity, Braidotti argues,

is a play of multiple, fractured aspects of the self; it is relational, in that it requires a bond to the 'other'; it is retrospective, in that it is fixed through memories and recollections, in a genealogical process. Last, but not least, identity is made of successive identifications, that is to say, unconscious internalized images that escape rational control.⁵⁷⁰

Taking difference as a primary ontological category entails the recognition, and creation, of a 'thousand tiny anarchisms',⁵⁷¹ pushing us towards relinquishing any idea of essentialised or stable (revolutionary) subjectivities. Through their fragmentation and the revolutionary aspect of desire, subjects act ethically by increasing their affects both collectively and individually. This increase of capacities to affect and be affected is a form of 'cultivation of good

⁵⁶⁸ A. Volcano, 'Police at the Borders', in C. B. Daring et al. eds, *Queering Anarchism: Addressing and Undressing Power and Desire*, AK Press, Edinburgh, 2012, p. 35.

⁵⁶⁹ R. Braidotti, *Nomadic subjects: Embodiment and sexual difference in contemporary feminist theory*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, p. 146.

⁵⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 166.

⁵⁷¹ See E. Grosz, 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics'.

habits' we called becoming. Moreover, with Braidotti's politics of location, we argued that an immanent analysis of ethical becoming includes recognising the starting position, and asymmetry, of different paths. Political subjectivity, thus, is reformulated as a form of pragmatic, embodied moment of a particular location, the final articulation of which appears in the next section in the form of the Event.

3.4 The Event

In this section, we focus on the question: what are the conditions for ethics to emerge? Or, to paraphrase, when is an ethical action possible? For the postanarchists, anarchism is always already ethics; it is 'politics of ethics'.⁵⁷² As we have seen, this claim presupposes that an anarchist is somebody who is primarily concerned with what is good – if one subscribes to principles of non-coercion, anti-hierarchy, anti-capitalism etc. (i.e. *is* an anarchist), then what is the 'right' action? This puts an unbearable burden on the individual to constantly scrutinise one's actions – it implies that *all* actions are somehow concerned with ethics; it implies that in any given situation there is the *right* thing to do. What follows is that ethics entails a life of constant judgment and self-judgement, of structuring one's life so that it is always as close as possible to the ideal – not too dissimilar, in fact, to the infinitely demanding ethics which Simon Critchley advocates. Moreover, it assumes that ethical problems always have a solution, an ultimate end – there is a 'truth' or solution to resolve the 'problem' of abortion, for example, if only we are capable of mustering it. Activism in particular suffers from such an unsustainable burden, seen in the discussion of anarcho-purism, where individuals are expected to constantly behave according to unattainable ideals (or prefigure their actions as such). In addition to risking social expulsion when 'wrong', such demands cause widespread issues such as 'burn-out', taken as the

⁵⁷² See, for example, S. Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan*, p. 166; R. Day, *Gramsci is Dead*, p. 42; A. Antliff, 'Anarchy, Power, and Poststructuralism'.

difficulty of keeping up with the high standard of political activity activists set for themselves (or others).⁵⁷³

My position, however, is different. For immanent metaphysics, ethics is not part of everyday life in the sense of being faced with ethical decisions all the time. Rather, ethics is concerned with the Event, the moment when a transformation happens. This is not to imply that there are certain moments in which ethics happens, separate from our daily lives. On the contrary, an Event is something that contains the possibility for both a collective and individual change within its immanent conditions – an Event is when an incorporeal transformation takes place. This idea of the Event is not dissimilar to the ethical approach of contextual ethics, whereby ethics only happen in ethical ‘situations’. Peter Unger, for example, defines certain (semantic) contexts as ethically demanding, and others as ethically lenient.⁵⁷⁴ However, this notion of context is still evaluated in relation to an external ethical standard,⁵⁷⁵ while the Event is posited in immanent metaphysics. In other words, the Event is the moment where a new path could open up in the current state of affairs and it becomes possible to reconfigure it. That ethics is connected to the Event should be understood first of all as a claim that there exists the possibility for change in certain moments and, secondly, as ethical situations which are part of an assemblage which cannot be pre-judged. The possibility of agency, in this sense, interrupts the machinic repetition that habits entail, both on the individual and collective level. As Deleuze comments,

⁵⁷³ There have been lots of amazing discussions on anarchist burnout in various zines. See: The Tragic Community, ‘5 Theses on the Politics of Cruelty,’ *Hostis*, 2015, <<https://thetragiccommunity.wordpress.com/2015/12/01/5-theses-on-the-politics-of-cruelty/>>, accessed 04 May 17; D. Ellington, ‘The Making of a Radical,’ *Industrial Worker*, 1991, <<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/dick-ellington-the-making-of-a-radical/>>, accessed 06 May 17.

⁵⁷⁴ P. Unger, ‘Contextual Analysis in Ethics’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 55, no. 1, 1995.

⁵⁷⁵ Contextual ethics aims to explore the role of semantic context in ethical situations. Similarly to Spinoza critique, in contextual ethics a statement is taken to be *good*, if it satisfies the requirements of the speaker. For example, ‘the weather is good’ means different things for a tourist and for a farmer. (G. Bjornsson, *Contextualism in Ethics*, p. 2) It is also a call to recognise that ‘ought’ is a pragmatic utterance, rather than universal one. For example, in the command ‘you ought to brush your teeth’, what is latent is the continuation ‘if you want healthy teeth’, which is a practical statement of cause and effect rather than a moral one

There is no reason, as with some philosophers, to subject all the actions we do to the criterion: is it free or not? Freedom is only for certain acts. There are all kinds of acts that do not have to be confronted with the problems of freedom. They are only done, I would say, to calm our anxiety: all our machinic and habitual acts. One can speak of freedom only when the question arises of an act capable or not of filling the amplitude of the soul at a given moment.⁵⁷⁶

The Event, as outlined in 2.3, is a concept Deleuze takes from the Stoics to refer to a situation that transforms the actors and conditions around it. Ethics is therefore concerned with the Event insofar as it is

concerned with affective relations among bodies in a composite or collective, and those assemblages that fit together in such a way so as to enhance the power of acting among the elements of the collective and those that are unable to fit together.⁵⁷⁷

Here, the order of ethical deliberation is reversed – it is not individual actors who make a judgment about the Event, but the Event that draws actors in and creates a new collective that is compelled to respond to it.

Given this, an Event is not an ethical ‘problem’ in the way traditional ethics frames problems (the trolley problem, abortion, euthanasia, etc.), even if it is related to the problem-Idea. Neither is it an ethical ‘problem’ in the sense of a conflict between one’s desires and duties, for example, or an internal deliberation. The Event is indifferent to categories of good and bad – it speaks simultaneously to “the individual and the collective . . . because it is actualised in diverse manners at once, and because each participant may grasp it at a different level of actualisation within its variable present.”⁵⁷⁸ Events, moreover, persist because they are bound to the eternal return, and subsequently are never simply ‘solved’ once and for all. To make an analogy

⁵⁷⁶ G. Deleuze, ‘La Taverne’, *Cours Vincennes – St. Denis* lecture, 24 Feb 1987, <<https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/139>>, accessed 22 Feb 2015.

⁵⁷⁷ L. Bryant, ‘The Ethics of the Event: Deleuze and Ethics without A□□□’, p. 33.

⁵⁷⁸ G. Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p. 100.

with processes in chemistry, the Event might dissolve into the state of affairs under certain intensities, and it might crystallise again under others.

One of the more obvious examples of an Event in anarchism is a protest. Seattle was an Event where intensities were actualised in a mobilisation on a scale and in a form not seen before. I was not in Seattle, yet it is part of the collective (American) anarchist imagination which re-produces to such an extent that I am part of its eternal return. Recently, for instance, the 'Welcome to Hell' week of protests against the G20 meeting in Hamburg in 2017 created similar a transformation for its participants. Following Bryant's approach, we can identify the actors in it - the twenty world leaders, protestors who gathered from all over Europe, police and private security, but also the issues that were debated by the politicians, and the radical left history of Hamburg as a city, all the spaces where people met and engaged, the anarchist social centre Rote Flora which was just around the corner from the G20 meetings, weapons such as molotovs, etc. It is the Event of G20 that drew in all these people, and, from an anarchist perspective, made activists get together and work together in a way that transformed them (or did not). The Event, in this sense, issues a challenge for activists that, through its unfolding, given the right conditions, a new path is possible. In other words, as the Invisible Committee observe, we encounter an inverse relationship - "[i]t is not the people that produce an uprising; it is the uprising that produces its people."⁵⁷⁹

Yet, the Event is not simply the demonstration itself. It is something that 'hovers' above it and captures a variety of actors. The ethical act, as we discussed in the previous chapter, is becoming worthy of the Event. This becoming worthy is expressed in two modes - 'training' for the conditions for something new to emerge by unblocking flows of desire, and affirming change, if it happens, rather than preventing it. This transformation of the assemblage, however, does not entail an ethical principle of constant change for the sake of change. Positing it in this way would necessitate a recourse to

⁵⁷⁹ The Invisible Committee, op. cit., p. 44.

transcendence in the form of a positive principle of change, along the lines of Todd May's principle of affirming difference. Rather, it should be taken more analytically than prescriptively that, if you want to act ethically, then the event is when such an activity is possible in that it allows for change at the level of life. What is important about the Event is that this change is not just linguistic (such as in contextual ethics), or a 'rupture' (such as, for example, in the way Badiou understands the Event), but re-evaluates both in terms of something else (desiring-production, for example).

In the anarchist assemblage, change as the ability to redefine existing values and the state of affairs is vital. For example, Daniel Colson defines anarchism as "first and foremost the rejection of any first principle,"⁵⁸⁰ and I would like to extend this to claim that an assemblage with dogmatic rules or principles does not 'work' as an anarchist one, but of course may work very well as one which is complicit with established values. As with Nietzsche's active and reactive poles, anarchist bodies are pulled always backwards and forwards between affirming the anarchist 'conatus', and thus making anarchism more 'anarchist', or swinging towards the reactive pole and destroying anarchism as it is. This is a choice anarchist (personal and collective) bodies are constantly discovering, encountering and reaffirming. The Event, thus, is a problematic, because it is an unfolding of conditions, that is, a response to the challenges set by the environment, in the broadest possible sense of the term. The results of the Event are not based on an actualisation of a transcendent form but are the resolution of a complex equation. For example, one argument against using violent action during protests and demonstration is that women (one of the many categories of people often cited alongside undocumented people, people of colour, disabled people, etc.) are not able to participate on equal measure with men. The solution is thus to advocate for the adoption of non-violent tactics in the name of inclusivity. Such behaviour not only exhibits the binary thinking we rejected earlier but refuses to

⁵⁸⁰ D. Colson, *Petit Lexique philosophique de l'anarchisme. De Proudhon à Deleuze*, Le Livre de Poche, Paris, 2001, p. 26.

acknowledge that we are capable of changing or creating the conditions for women (and others) to participate in violent tactics. Indeed, the problem is not that certain people cannot participate, with the respective solution being to advocate for non-violent tactics; the *solution* is that certain people do not participate, and the problem is that the environment for their participation to occur has not been created. Inverting this problematic by advocating for non-violent tactics obviates the fact that this argument results in keeping certain tactics from certain people by not creating the conditions for them to increase their capacity to act – through support (physical, emotional or legal, for example). Finally, the affirmation of the Event can only be done if we leave space for failure as well. Ethics, as a constant process of change and experimentation, cannot function if limited through judgment that produces guilt and social expulsion. Immanent ethics reject a fixed notion of the individual, who, once having learnt ‘the proper way’, never makes mistakes. In this sense, an immanent ethics of re-defining the assemblage carries with it the implication that the only ‘true’ anarchist is the person who ‘fails’ to be an anarchist.

Following this, it is possible to see how the Event can have both a collective and individual expression. This does not mean, however, that all Events encompass necessarily a large number of (human) actors. In a fragmented self, an ethical Event can be a small-scale affair as well, which should be understood through its interconnectedness with the rest of the world. To draw from the previous sections on thinking and subjectivity, an ethical response is constituted by its connections in relation to its response to the Event. Earlier in this chapter, we defined the ethical question as one of existing and working together, and in this final section we return to this in the form of anarchist solidarity as a defining factor in anarchist subjectivity.

Even as far back as the beginning of the century, Kropotkin placed solidarity at the core of anarchist morality. Solidarity, he claimed, is a general feeling of

connectedness which compels us to perform acts of mutual aid.⁵⁸¹ His ethics were also pragmatically oriented towards building this 'something more than brotherhood.'⁵⁸² Similarly, I would like to argue that through our reformulation of representation in 2.2, in immanent ethics the political bond becomes one of *production*. Solidarity, therefore, has two functions. On one hand, it brings the anarchist assemblage into existence and re-produces it through the act of creating a certain type of relations. This activity simultaneously regulates the normative dimension of the assemblage. On the other hand, it fosters an *individual* ethical becoming through an emphasis on one's immanent connected position in the assemblage. Solidarity, in that sense, emphasizes a political becoming of individuals through their acceptance and location within anarchism.

Houle articulates a similar notion in the form of immanent accountability, which she defines as a "habitual opening oneself up to affect", to what one might become.⁵⁸³ Rather than being prohibitive, accountability has a productive role in relations of value. In this conceptualisation there is no 'punishment' or 'guilt', but an understanding that both an individual and collective becoming happens through the fostering of certain types of relationships. In some feminisms of sexual difference, a similar notion is articulated as ethics of sustainability.⁵⁸⁴ For instance, Braidotti defines sustainable ethics as those that push us towards the limits of what we can become and then further. Sustainability is reached in a momentary state of equilibrium and co-existence with the world, disrupted by the building up of tension through intensities. Such ethics, she continues, are deeply embedded in the material world, but also recognise that existence is a process. Moreover, she argues, such ethics are "based on the shared capacity of humans to feel empathy for, develop affinity with and hence enter in relation with other

⁵⁸¹ P. A. Kropotkin, *Ethics: Origin and Development*, tr. L. S. Friedland & J. R. Piroshnikoff, Thoemmes Press, Bristol, 1993 [1922], pp. 225-251.

⁵⁸² *ibid.*, p. xii.

⁵⁸³ K. Houle, *Responsibility, Complexity, Abortion: Toward a New Image of Ethical Thought*, p. 112.

⁵⁸⁴ For example, D. Haraway and L. Irigaray.

forces, entities, beings, waves of intensity.”⁵⁸⁵

With this, I want to put forward a notion of care, and argue with Shukaitis that the ethical becomings and collective increase in our capacities to affect and be affected by the world means that personal relationships and caring become a significant, if not primary, aspect of anarchist politics.⁵⁸⁶ Caring, and the feeling of interconnectedness that solidarity brings forth, is a productive relationship insofar as it is an *act*, it has to be done. It is, therefore, active and responsive. Indigenous Action Media articulate this notion in their critique of ally-ship. It is not allies we need, they claim, but ‘accomplices’, people who *do* things together:

Accomplices are realized through mutual consent and build trust. They don’t just have our backs; they are at our side, or in their own spaces confronting and unsettling colonialism. *As accomplices, we are compelled to become accountable and responsible to each other; that is the nature of trust.*⁵⁸⁷

The concept of ‘production’, or *doing*, however, should not be confused with anarchist propaganda of the deed or similar. Neither should it be thought of in terms of prefiguration where the actions are supposed to reflect values or plans for future society. On the contrary, immanent ethics allows for the unfolding of complex phenomena in ways which allow us to better understand and approach them. Non-representational thinking and affective relations play a crucial role in these ethics – they *enable* us; that is, they create the conditions in which we can respond to reality. Concomitantly, they increase our capacity to be ‘ethical’ by demanding recognition of all the relations involved in an ethical Event and increase our becoming ethical agents. The type of solidarity expressed in immanent ethics is conceptualised

⁵⁸⁵ R. Braidotti, ‘The Ethics of Becoming Imperceptible’ in Boundas, C. ed., *Deleuze and Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2006, p. 141.

⁵⁸⁶ Shukaitis, S., ‘Nobody Knows What an Insurgent Body Can Do: Questions for Affective Resistance’ in R. Cleminson & J. Heckert eds, *Anarchism & Sexuality: Ethics, Relationships and Power*, Routledge, London, 2011, p. 32.

⁵⁸⁷ Indigenous Action Media (an Indigenous perspective), ‘Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex’ in C. Milstein ed., *Taking Sides: Revolutionary Solidarity and the Poverty of Liberalism*, AK Press, Oakland, 2015, p. 96.

by Thomas Nail as a relationship where “political bodies adopt each other’s struggles as their own.”⁵⁸⁸ They do not fight together out of charity or altruism, neither notions of duty or shared goals, but out of a mutual understanding of their interconnectedness. By understanding, however, we should be careful not to recourse back to transcendence by assuming ‘understanding’ is passive and ‘doing something about it’ is active. In Deleuze-Guattarian language, there is no distinction between what something is and what it does.⁵⁸⁹ Passive solidarity based on the symbolic loses its significance as a revolutionary order-word, as its ‘function’ as glue for the struggle is lost.

On the other hand, as Berardi comments, migrants, refugees, low-paid workers, and all those with precarious lives share a similar position, yet cannot find commonality.⁵⁹⁰ Indeed, problems with building a shared struggle on the Left have existed since Marx and Bakunin’s argument during the First International and I do not claim to have found a solution. However, through this idea of solidarity, I want to put forward an argument for the insurrectionary idea of the revolution as an active, unending process of the here and now. The Event requires a questioning of the basic causality suggested by traditional ethics that the right action produces the desired result (propaganda → revolution; class consciousness → revolution, etc). Action-effect does not exist in a linear progression of time but in the interchange between the virtual and the actual. In immanent ethics, nothing about the constitution of bodies, entities or assemblages is given independently of the material processes that produce them. This also requires us to re-think simplistic notions of the revolution being one among many ‘possibilities’ that can be actualised. It is rather something that comes forth and, through attraction to singularities, becomes actualised through *desire*.

⁵⁸⁸ T. Nail, *Returning to Revolution: Deleuze, Guattari and Zapatismo*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2012, p. 153.

⁵⁸⁹ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 9.

⁵⁹⁰ F. Berardi, *After the Future*, tr. A. Bove et al., eds G. Genosko and N. Thoburn, AK Press, Edinburgh, 2011, p. 129.

The Event, in this sense, is the stimulus that provokes a response, bringing the potential of new actualisations.

Similarly, in insurrectionary anarchism, Bonano argues, the revolution is a concrete event which is built in everyday life through small actions, none of which is directly 'liberatory' or explicitly related to a large-scale social and political revolution.⁵⁹¹ These are activities which serve as preparation for a future society, but one whose outlines we cannot see yet. To return to the question of the anarchist assemblage, the practices Bonano promotes could be seen as an ethical activity: an open-ended process of 'pushing' oneself to the limits of what they can do through an increase in their individual or collective affectivity. In this sense, as Colson argues, "[t]he event, whether fortunate or unfortunate, each time singular and indefinitely repeated in its singularity, is the most constant, direct, immediate and positive experimentation with the limits inherent to all domination and the possibility of affirming another order that would liberate the power that this domination confines."⁵⁹² Through affirmation of the Event, then, anarchism can free itself from the limits that it self-imposes.

3.5 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued for the adoption of an immanent ethical framework in (post)anarchist theory and practice. The entire work has been informed by three ethical questions. The first is the question of how we should act (as anarchists), which I explored through the postanarchist critique of morality, its reliance on essentialism, universalism and representation. Despite the perhaps reductive construction of 'classical' anarchism, I argued that they are correct in positing anarchist ethics at odds with such epistemological foundations. In addition, I argued that future anarchist ethics

⁵⁹¹ A. Bonano, 'Why Insurrection?', *Pantagruel*, [pamphlet], 1982, <<http://pantagruel-provocazione.blogspot.co.uk/search/label/Why%20Insurrection>>, accessed 30 March 17.

⁵⁹² D. Colson, loc. cit., p. 113.

can no longer be satisfied with an epistemological critique. They need to be grounded in a strong metaphysical foundation capable of supporting an anarchism which is neither essentialist, nor universal, nor representational. I argued that these three categories are, in fact, a symptom of transcendent metaphysics, which extended the applicability of the critique of 'classical' anarchism and led us to suggest that postanarchist metaphysics should be immanent.

The second ethical question was 'how do we act?' Here, I problematised the traditional understanding of ethics and morality as interchangeable. Instead, ethics is understood as immanent modes of existence, suggesting a materialist approach (through the *given*). To answer the question, I needed a philosopher of immanence and took Deleuze's philosophy to be the best available example of articulating immanence-in-itself. Through a critique of Western philosophy and the nature of thinking, Deleuze identifies the danger of transcendence in philosophy. At the core of our conceptual tools is his work on difference and repetition, which leads him to claim the univocity of Being. Furthermore, we engaged with two specifically ethical concepts in his work – the Event, which is understood as the possibility of change, and the concept of desire which Deleuze and Guattari develop together.

In the last chapter, these immanent tools were applied to a re-definition of anarchism as an assemblage and therefore established the conditions for immanent normativity. We then transmuted three elements of ethical activity, in turn re-posing our third ethical question as 'how can we act?' The first element was ethical knowledge, which changes from Kantian reason to a process of responsive engagement with problems, leading to the production of new concepts/theory/understanding. The result of this reformulation was to dethrone universal truths and binary thinking in the form of striated metaphysics. Second, we reformulated the position of the ethical subject from being a primary agent within transcendent metaphysics to a Deleuzian-Guattarian machine, operating on the basis of desiring-production. The possibility of ethical activity appeared in the form of increasing one's affects

as a form of 'training' and a process of ethical becoming. Third, we defined the moment of ethics as the moment of change through the Event. I pointed towards an immanent understanding of revolution as an ongoing activity of building solidarity.

Some limitations of this work could be addressed in future applications of immanent metaphysics to anarchism. For instance, Matt Lee suggests that Deleuze's philosophy of immanence necessitates beginning with a 'case', otherwise the thinking of immanence becomes difficult to maintain.⁵⁹³ A starting position from a specific anarchist ethical 'problem', I would agree, allows for a more focused application of Deleuze's methodology. Moreover, to relate to Events and actors through an immanent epistemology might suggest creating new concepts, which this work did attempt. Other fruitful future paths would include widening the scope of immanent ethics even further to develop the role of non-human agents, such as in the intersections between animal rights and anarchism, or anarchism and nature/physical environment.⁵⁹⁴ Perhaps towards the end we will end up/have ended up with something which does not immediately look like anarchism, but achieves the function we have identified for anarchism. Unlike Ibáñez,⁵⁹⁵ I do not think that the anarchism-to-come needs to exhibit certain elements to continue calling itself anarchism. The practices, thoughts and networks of anarchism underpin the politics through our commitment, wherever the battleground arises.

⁵⁹³ M. Lee, *Oceanic Ontology and Problematic Thought*, Barnes & Noble, 2011, Ebook Library [online database], accessed 15 Dec 2016, 'Chapter 2: Affect, Sense and Event.'

⁵⁹⁴ An interesting anthology in this respect is N. Giffney and M. Hird, *Queering the non/human*, Ashgate Publishing, Burlington, 2008.

⁵⁹⁵ T. Ibáñez, 'El anarquismo que viene', *Libre Pensamiento*, no. 88, 20 Mar 2017, pp. 50-59.

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