

Schizoanalysis and Empiricism

Eugene W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1999)

Patrick Hayden, *Multiplicity and Becoming: The Pluralist Empiricism of Gilles Deleuze*, *Studies in European Thought XV* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998)

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In a recent edition of the *Guardian*, Steven Poole posed the question 'What do psychedelic rock band Kula Shaker and French thinker Gilles Deleuze have in common?' He proceeded to answer 'easy: they're both rubbish'.¹ Whilst the *Guardian* could hardly be described as a philosophically rigorous publication, this is fairly representative of how large sections of Anglo-American academia regard Deleuze and his sometime collaborator Félix Guattari. Unfortunately, this view is given credence by the uses to which Deleuze and Guattari's work is put by some commentators, who either do little more than deploy samples of the more colourful terminology with no clear understanding of what its role is within the dense and difficult books which they have lifted such terminology from; or, where an attempt is made to engage with the material, display a poor or partial understanding of the works themselves. In fact, one could go so far as to say that there is a large body of material which cannot be seen as a serious attempt to engage with the subject matter.

Happily the secondary literature is not universally bad, one simply has to pick and choose between it. Two recent examples of books which do attempt a serious engagement with Deleuze and Guattari are those written by Eugene W. Holland and Patrick Hayden. The main similarities between

¹ Steven Poole, 'Small, Imperfectly Formed', *Guardian*, 10 June 1999, pp. 12-13.

the two books are that both are divided into four chapters, with the final one in each case being an attempt to link the philosophy to more broadly political concerns (Marxism, ecological politics, and feminism in the case of Holland; ecological politics in the case of Hayden). However, they tackle their subjects in very different ways.

A Deleuze and Guattari primer

Holland lays his cards on the table in the opening sentences of his Preface: 'This book is intended as an introduction to reading Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, not as a substitute for it. [...] Anyone who reads this book instead of the original, however, will be making a sorry mistake' (p. vii). Consequently for Holland's book to have any value whatsoever, it must act as a guide through the intricacies of the text of *Anti-Oedipus*, making the latter both more comprehensible and hopefully revealing ways in which it can be put to work. The very full referencing throughout Holland's book gives it particular value as a companion volume, as the index in *Anti-Oedipus* is woefully inadequate.

One way in which Holland tries to simplify things for his readers is by avoiding Deleuze and Guattari's own terminology as much as is practically possible; a tactic that, given the remit of the book, can only be beneficial as *Anti-Oedipus*, from the opening pages onwards, tends to swamp the first-time reader with neologisms and terms deployed in novel contexts. This can put off many people, particularly those with more 'traditional' philosophical leanings. Admittedly the writing style and terminology also tends to attract readers to *Anti-Oedipus* for much the same reason, but even for this latter group, Holland's attempt to cut this down can have advantages, as this approach helps to situate Deleuze and Guattari within a broader tradition by translating their concepts into a different idiom. The terminology which he does retain (such as the body without organs) is clearly and carefully analyzed.

Holland not only restricts himself to the one book, but also limits his approach to *Anti-Oedipus* to an elucidation of schizoanalysis as a form of materialist psychiatry which takes psychoanalysis to the point of autocritique, and then brings its critical apparatus to bear upon society. Whilst this inevitably means that some readers will be disappointed by what has been missed out (the wealth of material drawn from biology and literature spring immediately to mind), it does have the benefit that

Holland is able to give a thorough explanation of what is arguably the main element of the book: the ‘attempt to negotiate or forge relations among Freud, Marx, Nietzsche’ (Holland, p. 4). He shows how a relationship is developed between Freud’s concept of libido and Marxist labour-power via Nietzsche’s will to power, and that this is not a grand synthesis, but rather a set of reciprocal correctives. Schizoanalysis is then able to transform Marxist political economy into social production, and psychoanalysis into desiring production, analyzing the former in terms of industrial privatization and the latter in terms of the nuclear family. These are identical in nature, but different in régime, being isolated under capitalism via the process of alienation.²

Holland claims that ‘the book functions overall as a tendentious joke’ (p. 19). This is due to the fact that the link between labour and desire is lexically forged by the use of the same terminology (desiring-machines, deterritorialization, etc.) to describe both régimes. This is to approach the text in the same manner in which it is written, in a spirit of playfulness; ‘schizoanalytic therapy, were such a thing to exist, would end with a hearty chuckle, not a rueful sigh’ (Holland, p. 22). Here, once again, his strategy pays dividends, as it maintains something of the original tone of the book, which is one of the things which makes Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy so unique and enjoyable.

The tactic of concentrating upon a single aspect of *Anti-Oedipus* does have one danger, in that certain features of the material are elided or occasionally misinterpreted. This is particularly apparent in Holland’s claim that, for Deleuze and Guattari, the terms decoding and recoding ‘bear on representations rather than on concrete objects’ (p. 20). This is simply wrong, as can be seen from the discussion of surplus value of code in the famous example of the wasp and the orchid (*Anti-Oedipus*, p. 39). For Deleuze and Guattari, code is not simply some form of representational signficatory system, codes bear absolutely on concrete objects, in that they do not have to operate representationally. The only reason for Holland making this error is that his avoidance of the biological

² ‘There is never any difference in nature between the desiring-machines and the technical social machines. There is a certain distinction between them, but it is merely a distinction of régime, depending on *their* relationships of size. Except for this difference in régime, they are the same machines, as group fantasies clearly prove’ (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: The Athlone Press, 1984), p. 31, original italics).

examples allows him to overlook some of the uses to which Deleuze and Guattari put coding, and so not pick up on its non-representational affects.³

On the positive side, Holland's approach means that he does not ignore Deleuze and Guattari's Lacanian heritage, but on the contrary acknowledges the parts of Lacan's work towards which they are favourable and draw upon.⁴ He also outlines their deviations from Lacan, but it makes a refreshing change to see Lacan being given due credit, as too many readers refuse to acknowledge the positive debt which *Anti-Oedipus* owes to him, preferring to see the book as an all out attack upon psychoanalysis. However,

psychoanalysis is not rejected wholesale: in the process of transforming psychoanalysis, schizoanalysis – drawing now on Freud and especially Lacan – transforms historical materialism so as to include the full scope of libidinal and semiotic factors in its explanation of social structure and development (Holland, p. 4).⁵

Holland's commentary provides an interesting and informative corrective to this refusal, although one might wonder if he is going slightly too far when twice within three pages he quotes Deleuze and Guattari's reference to 'Lacan's admirable theory of desire'.⁶

Another link which Holland draws is between schizoanalysis and Georges Bataille's theory of the accursed share and the notion of expenditure: 'Bataille's insights are so important that, had he not existed, schizoanalysis would have had to invent them' (Holland, p. 62). His key point here is that the concept of anti-production is derived directly from Bataille's claim that the main problem which societies face is how to deal with excess, rather than that of producing enough to ensure survival, and that this is how Deleuze and Guattari are able to provide correctives to: the concept of desire as lack; Marx's stress upon the forces of production at

³ For example: 'Transmission is second in relation to an information or a communication. The genetic revolution occurred when it was discovered that, strictly speaking, there is no transmission of flows, but a communication of a code or an axiomatic, of a combinative apparatus informing the flows' (*Anti-Oedipus*, p. 276).

⁴ One such example may be found on page 30, where he draws out the resemblances between the body without organs and the Lacanian unary trait

⁵ Reich should also be mentioned in this context, and indeed Holland does so a bit further on.

⁶ *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 27, footnote. Holland's citations are endnote 41 to page 51, and page 53.

the expense of power; and the exchangeism of Lévi-Strauss. Whilst this is an interesting thesis, Holland by no means succeeds in proving the debt that Deleuze and Guattari have to Bataille. This is due in no small part to his claim, cited above, that it is in fact Nietzsche who allows these correctives to be made. There is no doubt that the concept of anti-production functions roughly as Holland claims that it does in *Anti-Oedipus*, but one could equally argue that it was derived more from the affirmative philosophies of Nietzsche and Spinoza than from Bataille, and find more evidence in the text to back up this latter claim.⁷ Nonetheless, the links which Holland draws with Bataille are interesting from the point of comparison. They also help to cache out how the concept of anti-production is deployed by Deleuze and Guattari.

Deleuze the empiricist

Hayden tries to read Deleuze as he himself suggests he should be read, as a pluralist empiricist; something which Hayden thinks is not widely done in the English-speaking world: 'Deleuze's claim of allegiance to empiricism, [...] has gone virtually unremarked upon and unexamined by commentators and expositors' (Hayden, p. 1). Deleuze's pluralist empiricism takes the form of refusing to separate experience from its conditions of possibility, and making difference the object of experimentation.⁸ This experimentation entails a consideration of exterior relations without the application of principles to such relations; the latter course being that of Kant, when he inquires into the transcendental conditions of possibility of knowledge, and then universalizes those conditions.⁹ Universal principles impose rules of interpretation upon relations and are therefore representational and transcendent. The lack of principles allows the empiricist to generate novelty rather than simply forcing exterior relations into a pre-established pattern. This leads to a

⁷ Holland himself gives weight to such an assertion, when he correctly describes Bataille's theory of the accursed share as 'a devastating *Nietzschean* critique of bourgeois political economy and utilitarian philosophy' (p. 62, italics added).

⁸ It is because he sees empiricism as experimentation that Deleuze can claim that 'empiricism is a philosophy of the imagination and not a philosophy of the senses' (*Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, trans. by Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 110).

⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

constructivist philosophy: 'Transcendental empiricism receives its name precisely because it seeks to understand the *actual conditions* under which new things (from ideas to political organizations) are created and produced' (Hayden, p. 30).

Concentrating upon Deleuze as empiricist inevitably leads to the claim that there is a common thread which runs throughout his work (both with and without Guattari) and, whilst this is undoubtedly so, it has the corollary effect of covering over some of the differences which Deleuze's thought passes through as it evolves.¹⁰ To be fair to Hayden, he does not really have the space to go into this issue, and his identification of radical empiricism as a major theme in Deleuze's work holds up very well, and makes a refreshing counterpoint to the links which many secondary texts (Holland's included) constantly make between Deleuze's thought and poststructuralism. This is not to say that Deleuze and Guattari cannot, or ought not, to be read in the light of poststructuralism (Hayden himself refers to Deleuze as a poststructuralist on page 103), rather that this is not the only way in which one can have a productive engagement with the material. When there is general agreement as to how to pigeonhole a particular thinker, it tends to lead to reductive reading of the work, as it becomes readily assumed that one knows what that thinker is actually doing; in this case, 'merely' reacting to structuralism.¹¹

The first chapter of *Multiplicity and Becoming* is, for the most part, a very valuable reading of *Difference and Repetition* in terms of its empiricist project and anti-representationalist foundations. Whilst necessarily sketchy given the complexities of this, the most dense of all Deleuze's works, Hayden provides a competent and readable account of some of the main tenets of *Difference and Repetition*. Occasionally, however, he is far too hasty as, for example, when he denies that transcendental empiricism is a doctrine of the faculties.¹² What Deleuze

¹⁰ For example, the very different treatments of Lacan which are to be found in *The Logic of Sense* and *Anti-Oedipus*.

¹¹ The obvious parallel here is with Deleuze's discussion of common sense, out of which philosophy derives the image of thought: 'It is *in terms* of this image that everybody knows and is presumed to know what it means to think' (Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (London: The Athlone Press, 1994), p. 131, original italics. Hereafter abbreviated to 'D&R'). In this way, the image of thought verifies itself, as it tells subjects how to think, and they then think in line with it.

¹² 'We should note Deleuze's remark that transcendental empiricism is not a "doctrine of the faculties"' (D&R, p. 144). This is so because the exercise and limits of the

actually says is ‘our concern *here* [i.e in ‘The Image of Thought’ chapter] is not to establish a doctrine of the faculties. We seek only to determine the nature of its requirements’ (D&R, p. 144, italics added). This should be compared to the previous page, where we find ‘despite the fact that it has become discredited today, the doctrine of the faculties is an entirely necessary component of the system of philosophy’ (D&R, p. 143).

The speed with which Hayden traverses large sections of Deleuze’s *oeuvre* serves to show the value of a book like Holland’s, which has a much tighter focus of attention. This is most apparent in chapter two of Hayden’s book where he attempts to outline Deleuze’s reading of three major thinkers as empiricists: Bergson, Nietzsche, and Spinoza. Each of these outlines achieves little more than a brief description of Deleuze’s writings on the three authors, with no space to go into any detail whatsoever.¹³ It would have been better if Hayden had been able to go into Deleuze’s deviations from his subjects in some depth in order to consider how forced the claimed links with empiricism were.

To consider briefly the section on Spinoza: It begins with a detour through Plotinus, Scholasticism, and Descartes which, whilst serving as a précis of some of Deleuze’s claims in *Expressionism in Philosophy*, actually adds nothing to the main thrust of Hayden’s book; it merely serves as a lead in to why Spinoza’s theory of expression is important for Deleuze. In fact Hayden only ties Spinoza back to empiricism at the end of the section, and then in a most perfunctory manner. This section is particularly superfluous, as Hayden returns to Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza in his final chapter, when he outlines the latter’s naturalism, in a manner which is much more germane to the overall concerns of the book.¹⁴

The latter half of *Multiplicity and Becoming*, however, is much better constructed and a lot more interesting, as Hayden maps less obvious connections with Deleuze. The third chapter is a comparison of the radical empiricism of William James with that of Deleuze, demonstrating how the empiricism of both philosophers leads to pluralism. Deleuze makes only passing references to James, but Hayden builds up a convincing case for this comparison, showing how James thinks that it is the treatment of

faculties are transformable, and because there are perhaps “faculties yet to be discovered, whose existence is not yet suspected” or that were “repressed by that form of common sense” (D&R, 143-144)’ (Hayden, p. 32).

¹³ There are only ten pages on Bergson, for example.

¹⁴ ‘This theme that freedom must constantly be created as the actual effect or product of the process of our “becoming active” reveals, Deleuze says, Spinoza’s “profoundly empiricist” inspiration’ (Hayden, p. 67).

relations which generates a radical empiricism. Hayden ‘stress[es] that the aim of this discussion is not to make Deleuze out to be a “Jamesian”, nor to make James into a “Deleuzian”’ (p. 85). Rather he attempts to set up an engagement between the two thinkers’ stress upon external relations in an attempt to shed light upon how Deleuze’s radical empiricism actually operates. This is then followed by a demonstration of the theory of external relations at work in Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of rhizomatics: ‘a full-blown constructivism of multiplicity’ (Hayden, p. 94).¹⁵

Practical philosophy

Both authors attempt to put this full-blown constructivism of multiplicity to work in their final chapters. Hayden attempts to demonstrate how Deleuze rethinks naturalism, seeing Deleuze’s naturalism as having an affinity with contemporary American naturalism (p. 105). His claim is that ‘Deleuze regards naturalism as a critical practice aimed at eliminating the great static dualisms, such as human/nature, reason/nature, mind/body, and culture/nature, so important to the Platonic and Cartesian traditions’ (p. 111). Consequently the human does not become split off from nature, but rather exists in a milieu which ‘is the site, habitat, or medium of ecological interaction and encounter’ (Hayden, p. 115). However these milieux are always non-hierarchical, open, and subject to becoming. Hayden then makes a strong case that one can read Deleuze’s claim that the world is composed of multiplicities and becomings ‘as an endorsement of the concept of biodiversity’ (Hayden, p. 118).

This leads to an appreciation of the fact that ethical evaluation can neither be universalized, nor considered solely from a human standpoint.¹⁶ Therefore, ethics must be worked out at a micropolitical level, referring to specific situations which take account of nonhuman as well as human social institutions.¹⁷ The link with ecological politics becomes glaringly

¹⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), especially pp. 3-25).

¹⁶ It is at this point that Hayden outlines Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza in a more relevant manner than in his second chapter.

¹⁷ To Hayden’s credit he does not overlook the fact that for Deleuze and Guattari micropolitics is inextricably linked with macropolitics. Rather ‘larger social structures and forms of organization are typically generated by the intersections of multiple

apparent at this point. The chapter ends with an extremely valuable section where Hayden compares and contrasts the DeleuzoGuattarian position with those of two contemporary ecological movements, social ecology and deep ecology. Unsurprisingly, given the book's subject matter, he comes out on the side of Deleuze and Guattari.

Holland's attempt to link Deleuze and Guattari to broader political concerns has the same weaknesses that Hayden's second chapter does; it is far too short to provide anything but the most sketchy of outlines. The most worked out section is that on feminism and gender, but even here it serves little more purpose than to direct the reader to more fully worked out engagements (notably that of Judith Butler). It may not be fair to criticize Holland for this as his book is explicitly an introductory one, and the fact that he draws the reader's attention to links with contemporary political concerns is in itself valuable and gives scope for further reading.

In conclusion, both these books are extremely worthwhile, but for different reasons. Holland achieves what he sets out to do, in that he does provide an accessible way into *Anti-Oedipus* without making the reader feel that it is unnecessary to look at the original text. For the most part Hayden's book succeeds in reading Deleuze as a pluralist empiricist, but it really comes into its own when he stops doing exegesis and starts to compare and contrast Deleuze and Guattari with James and the ecological movements. The main drawback with *Multiplicity and Becoming* is the fact that it is only available in hardback and therefore prohibitively expensive. Apparently there is a possibility that the publishers will release a paperback edition later this year; we can only hope that this will come about.

smaller, local practices and conditions, which in themselves effected by the influences and activities of macropolitical institutions' (Hayden, p. 124).