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Source: *Deleuze Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 3, Deleuze in China Papers from the 2012 Kaifeng International Deleuze Conference (2013), pp. 406-420
Published by: Edinburgh University Press
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/45331557
Accessed: 03-07-2024 00:50 +00:00

Deleuze's Conception of Desire

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Abstract

Desire is a key concept in Deleuzian philosophy. Deleuze's desire is quite different from that of other thinkers. Both in the West and in China, in the past as well in the present, desire is usually understood as something abnormal, avaricious and excessive, the opposite of rationality, to be controlled and suppressed in man. Deleuze's desire is much wider, referring not only to man, but also to animals, objects and social institutions. In Deleuze's view, desire is not a psychic existence, not lack, but an active and positive reality, an affirmative vital force. Desire has neither object, nor fixed subject. It is like labour in essence, productive and actualisable only through practice. This paper discusses the formation, evolution and limitation of Deleuzian desire.

Keywords: Deleuze, desire, philosophy, Marx, Foucault

Deleuze holds that philosophy is concerned with the creation of concepts, and a new concept may bring about a new way of thinking, then thereby a new way of living. On the one hand, Deleuze put forward many new concepts; on the other hand, he offered new interpretations to many existing concepts. Take the concept of desire as an example. It is taken as a pejorative word in both West and East, signifying something excessive, unjustified and wanton. That is why in China we have the Confucian motto of 'abiding by heavenly justice to suppress human desire', and society looks up to people who are upright as a result of exterminating individual desire. Plato in his *Republic* takes desire as the opposite of reason, something to be controlled.[1] Deleuze, based on his critique of the traditional, orthodox Western philosophy, holds that desire is a positive force, it is not purely psychic, not a lack as usually

Deleuze Studies 7.3 (2013): 406–420
DOI: 10.3366/dls.2013.0120

www.euppublishing.com/dls

understood but productive in nature; like labour, desire is actualised in the course of practice. This paper discusses the evolution of Deleuze's conception of desire and the many implications of this conception.

Western philosophy since Plato has been emphasising the opposition between mind and body, taking mind as superior to body, rationality as preferable to desire. Representational thinking, Deleuze says, is State philosophy and rationalism derived from Plato and it characterises Western metaphysics. Traditional Western philosophy only cherishes the Platonic and Aristotelian belief that fixity is a nobler and worthier thing than change. Deleuze in his Conclusion to *Difference and Repetition* offers a critique of representational thinking, calling it a site of transcendental illusion. This illusion, according to Deleuze, comes in four interrelated forms which correspond particularly to thought, sensibility, the idea and being.

> In effect, thought is covered over by an image made up of postulates which distort both its operation and its genesis. These postulates culminate in the position of an identical thinking subject, which functions as a principle of identity for concepts in general. (Deleuze 1994: 265)

Deleuze believes there is no such thing as identical thinking subject, and concepts have no fixed, singular meaning.

According to Deleuze, the concept of desire has been misunderstood from the very beginning in Plato. Plato divides the human soul into three components of reason, spirit and desire, in which desire is the opposite of reason and is to be governed by reason:

> Platonic logic of desire forces us to make a choice between production and acquisition. From the moment that we place desire on the side of acquisition, we make desire an idealistic (dialectical, nihilistic) conception, which causes us to look upon it as primarily a lack: a lack of an object. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 25)

The productive side of desire has been neglected until Kant attributed to it the faculty of being, through its representations, the cause of the reality of the objects of these representations. But in Kant, according to Deleuze, the reality of the object is only a psychic reality, so Kant's critical revolution changes nothing essential, and this way of conceiving of productivity does not question the validity of the classical conception of desire as a lack. On the contrary, it reaffirms the validity of representational thinking, uses this conception as a support and a buttress, and merely examines its implications more carefully. Deleuze takes desire not simply as some psychic reality but as something real:

> If desire produces, its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality. Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack the object. It is, rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject unless there is repression. Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it. (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 26)

In her PhD dissertation, published as *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (Butler 1987), Judith Butler discusses how Hegel in his *The Phenomenology of Spirit* elaborates on the concept of desire. According to Butler, Hegel's discussion of human desire in the sections of The Truth of Self-certainty and Lordship and Bondage was derived from Spinoza's notion of desire as the essence of man, and the endeavour to persist in one's own being. Butler believes that Hegel endorses Spinoza's monistic refutation of the Cartesian mind–body dualism (Butler 1987: 46). Deleuze holds that desire is what makes humanity human. It does not point to any specific object, nor is it the Freudian drive of libido. Kojève, in his famous *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit* (1980), elaborated on the dialectics of Lord and Slave, and concluded that man is his desire.[2] This understanding of desire is highly appreciated by Deleuze.

When interviewed, Deleuze says:

> It was on Spinoza that I worked the most seriously according to the norms of the history of philosophy – but it was Spinoza more than any other that gave me the feeling of a gust of air that pushes you on the back each time you read him. We have not yet begun to understand Spinoza, and I myself no more than others. (Deleuze and Parnet 1987: 15)

Michael Hardt, tracing the development of Deleuzian philosophy, emphasises the influences on Deleuze by earlier philosophers such as Spinoza, Bergson and Nietzsche: 'With Bergson, Deleuze develops an ontology. With Nietzsche, he sets that ontology in motion to constitute an ethics. With Spinoza, we will take a further step in this evolution, toward politics' (Hardt 1993: 57). Deleuze agrees with Marx that in the human realm, 'what exists in fact is not lack, but passion, as a natural and sensuous object. Desire is not bolstered by needs, but rather the contrary; needs are derived from desire' (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 27). Deleuze holds that social production and desiring production are one and the same thing, they are inseparable.

> The truth of the matter is that *social production is purely and simply desiring production itself under determinate conditions.* We maintain that the social field is immediately invested by desire, that it is the historically determined product of desire, and that libido has no need of any mediation or sublimation, any psychic operation, any transformation, in order to invade and invest the productive forces and the relations of production. *There is only desire and the social, and nothing else.* (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 29)

There is no difference in nature between the desiring machines and the technical social machines, says Deleuze. There is a certain distinction between them in the field of régime, depending on their relationships to size:

> In the first place, technical machines obviously work only if they are not out of order; they ordinarily stop working not because they break down but because they wear out. Marx makes use of this simple principle to show that the régime of technical machines is characterized by a strict distinction between the means of production and the product. Thanks to this distinction, the machine transmits value to the product, but only the value that machine itself loses as it wears out. Desiring machines, on the contrary, continually breaks down as they run, and in fact run only when they are not functioning properly; the product is always an offshoot of production, and at the same time the parts of the machine are the fuel that makes it run. (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 31)

On the one hand, we can say that social production under determinate conditions derives primarily from desiring production; that is to say, natural man comes first. On the other hand, however, desiring production is first and foremost social in nature, and tends to free itself only at the end; that is to say, social man comes first. The double nature of human being as both natural and social determines the dialectics of desire and production.

In expounding Deleuze's conception of desire, Claire Colebrook emphasises the connectivity of desiring machines. Desiring machines are nothing more than their connections or experiences according to her. From the connections of bodies or from experiences, human minds form ideas:

> The child's mouth, for example, that has experienced pleasure at the breast comes to desire or anticipate the breast. In this expectation desire can produce an image or investment. This is what Deleuze means when he says that desire is productive. We often think that desire is for what we lack, but for Deleuze desire is more than the actual. In the case of the child, the mouth's past pleasure produces an idea or image of further pleasure, and this creates an investment. The breast becomes more than what is actually is (a body part)

> and takes on an added virtual dimension – the breast of fantasy, pleasure and desire. (Colebrook 2002: 82)

Desire begins from connection, she asserts. Life strives to preserve and enhance itself and does so by connecting with other desires. These connections and productions eventually form social wholes. When bodies connect with other bodies to enhance their power they eventually form communities or societies. Against the idea that social wholes are formed through ideology, Deleuze argues for social wholes as positive and productive. Social wholes take desires in order to produce interests, coded, regular, collective and organised forms of desire.

In his *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Brian Massumi interprets Deleuze's concept of desire as follows: desire is not desire for an object, except to the extent that whole attractors are imposed on the body by reactive forces. It is not a drive in the Freudian sense, and it is not a structure in the sense that language is a structure in the Saussurian model adopted by Lacanians. Desire is the production of singular states of intensity by the repulsion–attraction of limitative bodies without organs (governed by deterministic whole attractors) and non-limitative bodies without organs (governed by chance-ridden fractal attractors). In its widest connotation, it is the plane of consistency as multiple co-causal becoming. On the human level, it is never a strictly personal affair, but a tension between sub- and super-personal tendencies that intersect in the person as empty category. In *Anti-Oedipus*, a tendency of this kind was called a 'desiring machine'. Due to persistent subjectivist misunderstandings, in *A Thousand Plateaus* the word was changed to the more neutral 'assemblage' (Massumi 1992: 82).

We can trace the evolution of Deleuze's conception of desire by a rough examination of his books. In *Difference and Repetition* (1968) Deleuze launches a devastating criticism of representational thinking but does not discuss desire. In *The Logic of Sense* (1969) he mentions desire in several places and discusses it in some detail. In his essay 'Michel Tournier and the World without Others', for example, Deleuze makes an analysis of Tournier's novel *Friday*, which is a rewriting and parody of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. The essay is about perversion, and Deleuze makes it clear that the world of the pervert is a world without Others, and thus a world without the possible. The Other is what makes the possible possible, and the existence of the Other is the condition for the extinction of perversion. On the barren island, without the Other, both Robinson and Friday become pervert. Deleuze calls the concept of

perversion a bastard concept – half juridical and half medical, but neither medicine nor law is entirely suited to it. Perversion, as he says, is not defined by the force of a certain desire in the system of drives. The pervert is not someone who desires, but someone who introduces desire into an entirely different system and makes it play the role of an internal limit, a virtual centre or zero point (Deleuze 1990: 304).

Deleuze believes that the pervert lives in a world without others. When catastrophes fall on the island, Deleuze says, the newly erected desire learns the nature of its true object. Nature and the earth have already told us that the object of desire is neither the body nor the thing, but only the Image. When we desire Others, our desires are brought to bear upon this expressed small possible world which the other wrongly envelops. And when we observe a butterfly pillaging a flower that exactly resembles the abdomen of the female of the species and then leaving the flower carrying on its head two horns of pollen, we are tempted to conclude that bodies are but detours to the attainment of Images, and that sexuality reaches its goal much better and much more promptly to the extent that it economises this detour and addresses itself directly to Images and to the Elements freed from bodies (Deleuze 1990: 313).

When Kierkegaard's hero demands 'the possible, the possible or I shall suffocate', when James longs for the 'oxygen of possibility', Deleuze suggests, they are only invoking the a priori Other. Even desire, whether it be desire for the object or desire for Others, depends on this structure. I desire an object only as expressed by the Other in the mode of the possible; I desire in the Other only the possible worlds the Other expresses. The Other appears as that which organises Elements into Earth, and Earth into bodies, bodies into objects, and which regulates and measures object, perception and desire all at once (Deleuze 1990: 318).

It seems that in *The Logic of Sense* (1969), Deleuze has not yet fully developed his notion of desire, relying heavily on Sartre and others while discussing the Other, perversion, desire, and so on. By *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) he has fairly well developed this concept with Guattari and in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) he has fully developed this concept. In the chapter 'How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?', Deleuze and Guattari write:

> Every time desire is betrayed, cursed, uprooted from its field of immanence, a priest is behind it. The priest cast the triple curse on desire: the negative law, the extrinsic rule, and the transcendent ideal. Facing north, the priest said, Desire is lack. The priest carried out the first sacrifice, named castration, and all the men and women of the north lined up behind him, crying in cadence,

> 'Lack, lack, it's the common law.' Then, facing south, the priest linked desire to pleasure. For there are hedonistic, even orgiastic, priests. Desire will be assuaged by pleasure; and not only will the pleasure obtained silence desire for a moment but the process of obtaining it is already a way of interrupting it, of instantly discharging it and unburdening oneself of it. Pleasure as discharge: the priest carries out the second sacrifice, named masturbation. Then facing east, he exclaimed: *Jouissance* is impossible, but impossible *jouissance* is inscribed in desire. For that, in its very impossibility, is the ideal. The priest carried out the third sacrifice, phantasy or the thousand and one nights, the one hundred twenty days, while the men of the east chanted: Yes, we will be your phantasy, your ideal and impossibility, yours and also our own. The priest did not turn to the west. He knew that in the west lay a plane of consistency, but he thought that the way was blocked by the columns of Hercules, that it led nowhere and was uninhabited by people. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 154)

We notice several things in the quotation. First, the figurative use of words such as priest, facing north, south, east, sacrifice, and so on, which gives the reader vivid images of different understandings of desire by different people. Deleuze admits having been charged with over-quoting literary works, and his own style of writing philosophical treatises has always been literary. The translator Brian Massumi reserved the French word *jouissance* in its original form, to express exactly what English words could not convey: the combination of happiness and pleasure. The irony is that the priest uses castration to annihilate lack, masturbation to satisfy pleasure, and phantasy to achieve a virtual ideal. The directions are not accidentally chosen. People in the north suffer from severe cold, their temperament is usually austere and solemn, and they practise asceticism and have a better experience of what lack is. Southern people are romantic, easy-going and pleasure seeking; they would use every means to find pleasure, even by masturbation. The East is mysterious to Westerners, the place of one thousand and one nights, people there are both lusty and idealistic, and more likely to enjoy a sort of virtual *jouissance*. The priest did not turn to the west as he knows human nature better than to try that; the way to heaven is blocked by the Pillars of Hercules. Second, we come across two key Deleuzian concepts in the quotation, one at the beginning – 'field of immanence'– the other at the end – 'plane of consistency'. We quote Deleuze himself to explain the concepts:

> The field of immanence is not internal to the self, but neither does it come from an external self or a non-self. Rather, it is like the absolute Outside that knows no Selves because interior and exterior are equally a part of the

> immanence in which they have fused. The slightest caress may be as strong as an orgasm; orgasm is a mere fact, a rather deplorable one, in relation to desire in pursuit of its principle. Everything is allowed: all that accounts is for pleasure to be the flow of desire itself. If pleasure is not the norm of desire, it is not by virtue of a lack that is impossible to fill but, on the contrary, by virtue of its positivity, in other words, the plane of consistency it draws in the course of its process. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 157)

Again the two concepts appear together, and again one at the beginning, the other at the end. In his analyses of Proust, Sade and Masoch, Deleuze finds that they all explore a curious inter-world, in which bodies, words, things and ideas interpenetrate and the traditional demarcations between the physical and the metaphysical become blurred. For Deleuze, plateau, body without organs (BwO), field of immanence and plane of consistency are equated. They are interpenetrating and interconnected, and mutually nested and overlapping. Hence the configurations of a thousand plateaus of interconnections of thought are formed. Deleuze and Guattari give an authoritative interpretation of the plane of immanence. They say that the event does not relate to a transcendent subject (self), but on the contrary, is related to the immanent survey of field without subject. They illustrate the notion of the plane of immanence by stressing its impersonality. For example:

> The BwO is desire; it is that which one desires and by which one desires. And not only because it is the plane of consistency or the field of immanence of desire. Even when it falls into the void of too-sudden destratification, or into the proliferation of a cancerous stratum, it is still desire. Desire stretches that far: desiring one's own annihilation, or desiring the power to annihilate. Money, army, police, and state desire, fascist desire, even fascism is desire. There is desire whenever there is the constitution of a BwO under one relation or another. It is a problem not of ideology but of pure matter, a phenomenon of physical, biological, psychic, social, or cosmic matter. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 165)

Here Deleuze equates BwO with the plane of consistency and the field of immanence, and by logic the three are identical. In the following quotation, Deleuze introduces another concept that is still connected with the exposition of desire:

> Desire is never separable from complex assemblages that necessarily tie into molecular levels, from micro-formations already shaping postures, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, semiotic systems, etc. Desire is never an undifferentiated instinctual energy, but itself results from a highly developed, engineered setup rich in interactions: a whole supple segmentarity

> that processes molecular energies and potentially gives desire a fascist determination. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 215)

Desire is then inseparable from complex assemblages, and assemblages are passional compositions of desire:

> Desire has nothing to do with a natural or spontaneous determination; there is no desire but assembling, assembled, desire. The rationality, the efficiency, of the assemblage does not exist without the passions the assemblage brings into play, without the desires that constitute it as much as it constitutes them. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 399)

For Deleuze, life and work were a synthesis or assemblage of desire, and there is no distinction between public and private, domestic and academic. In fact, he had integrated writing and life as inseparable from each other, and reached an impersonal flux of desire. For him, writing is an experience of life, and life is an approach to academic research. In his mind, philosophy and art do not belong to separate domains of truth and fiction, or of objectivity and subjectivity, but inhabit a single realm of thought, whose fundamental goal is the creation of new possibilities of life.

Deleuze holds that to write is not to impose a form of expression on the matter of lived experience. Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any liveable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of life that traverses both the liveable and the lived. Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing, one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or vegetable, becomes-molecule to the point of becoming imperceptible. Also, to write is not to recount one's memories and travels; one's loves and griefs; one's dreams and fantasies. In this respect, he is like T. S. Eliot, advocating a kind of impersonal writing. He admits that all literature involves imagination (fabulation), but fabulation does not consist in imagining or projecting an ego. We do not write with our neuroses, because neuroses or psychoses are not passages of life, but states into which we fall when the process is interrupted, blocked or plugged up. Illness is not a process but a stopping of the process. Moreover, the writer as such is not a patient but rather a physician, the physician of himself and of the world.

In this sense, literature appears as an enterprise of health: not that the writer would necessarily be in good health, but he possesses an irresistible and delicate health that stems from what he has seen and heard of things too big for him, too strong for him, suffocating things whose passage exhausts him, while nonetheless giving him

the becomings that a dominant and substantial health would render impossible. The writer returns from what he has seen and heard with bloodshot eyes and pierced eardrums, and sits down to recount what he has experienced. The ultimate aim of literature is to set free, in the delirium, this creation of a health or this invention of a people, that is, a possibility of life.

The desire to become a writer must be supported by vital impulse. Deleuze, on the basis of the inseparable relation between the virtual and the actual, defines the vital impulse as 'a case of virtuality in the process of being actualized, simplicity in the process of differentiating, a totality in the process of dividing up' (Deleuze 1988: 94). Here, Deleuze stresses the virtuality of vital impulse and its corresponding actualisation in matter. Vital impulse is virtual, pre-individual and impersonal. But it can be actualised in matter. The process of virtuality being actualised is also called differentiation.

Deleuze believes that

> nomads in the strict, geographical sense are neither migrants nor travellers, but on the contrary, are those who do not move, those who cling on to the steppe, who are immobile with big strides, following a line of flight on the spot, the greatest inventors of new weapons. (Deleuze 1988: 99)

In this respect, his idea is similar to that of Lao Zi, the great Chinese sage, who says:

> Without leaving his door
> He knows everything under heaven
> Without looking out of his window
> He knows all the ways of heaven
> For the further one travels the less one knows
> Therefore the sage arrives without going
> Sees all without looking
> Does nothing, yet achieves everything. (Lao Zi 1995)[3]

Deleuze sees in Taoism a good example of desire being channelled into healthy use. For example, in Taoism there is the formation of a circuit of intensities between female and male energy, with the woman playing the role of the innate or instinctive force (yin) stolen by or transmitted to the man (yang) in such a way that the transmitted force of the man (yang) in turn becomes innate, all the more innate: an augmentation of powers. The purpose of this practice is for the balance between yin and yang in the human body, and for longevity. The condition for this circulation and multiplication is that the man does not ejaculate. It is not a question

of experiencing desire as an internal lack, nor of delaying pleasure in order to produce a kind of externalisable surplus value, says Deleuze, but instead of constituting an intensive body without organs, Tao, a field of immanence in which desire lacks nothing and therefore cannot be linked to any external or transcendent criterion. It is true that the whole circuit can be channelled towards procreative ends, that is, ejaculation when the energies are right; that is how Confucianism understands it:

> But this is true only for one side of the assemblage of desire, the side facing the strata, organisms, state, and family. It is not true for the other side, the Tao side of destratification that draws a plane of consistency proper to desire. The field of immanence or plane of consistency must be constructed. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 157)

In this passage, Deleuze equates Tao with assemblage of desire, with the BwO, with the field of immanence and plane of consistency. In his view, Confucianism stands for strata, organisms, State and family, while Taoism stands for destratification, for a new possibility of life. We notice Deleuze's use of Marx's idea of surplus value and his praise of the Taoist way of achieving the BwO or the field of immanence and plane of consistency, or assemblage of desire. In Oriental philosophy, Deleuze rests his critique of Western orthodox ideas.

Desire is a key concept in Deleuzian philosophy, and many critics call his philosophy the philosophy of desire. Deleuze holds that all philosophy is political in nature, and his conception of desire is highly political. Deleuze was deeply influenced by the May Movement of 1968 in France, and his philosophy is that which, to a certain extent, stands for the rebellion of the deprived against those in power, a subversion of the marginal towards the centre, a challenge of the buried histories to the established history. It reflects typically many postmodern trends. About the rise of fascism before World War II, scholars have done much research and put forward many valuable explanations. From Deleuze's conception of desire, we can say fascism is desire, is a desiring machine, a desiring assemblage. The thoughts of Hitler, his desire to rid Germany of the shame as a result of World War I, and his ambition to make Germany the greatest power in Europe, even in the world, were widely shared by the masses of Germany. Deleuze agrees with Wilhelm Reich that the German masses were not innocent dupes, that at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they wanted fascism, and it is this perversion of the desire of the masses that explains the rise of fascism in Germany in the 1930s.[4] That is also why the German people are more willing to take historical responsibility instead of shifting all the guilt to

Hitler alone. But Reich does not go further, according to Deleuze, falling back to the old division of rationality and irrationality in the human psyche, 'failing to discover the *common denominator or the coextension of the social field and desire*' (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 29). In Deleuze's view, we cannot judge desire from the perspective of morality or ethics, as desire is 'beyond good and evil', a Nietzschean notion.

In a political elaboration of structuralist premises, Foucault argues that, first, language is always structured in a specific historical form and is, therefore, always a kind of discourse; second, this discourse invariably recapitulates and produces given historical relations of power; and third, these power-laden discourses produce desire through their regulatory practices. Hence, for Foucault, there is no desire outside of discourse, and no discourse freed of power relations. Deleuze does not make any comment on Foucault's idea, but the two of them share a lot from their readings of Marx.

They both agree with Marx's thesis, 'Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it' (Marx 1845: 3). They both assent to Marx's assertion:

> The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appears at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.–real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. (Marx 1846: 8)

Deleuze in his elaboration and conception of desire uses quite a lot of Marxian terms such as capital, exchange, circulation, consumption and surplus value. He equates desiring production with social production, the accumulation and release of desire with the buying and using of commodities.

Deleuze makes a distinction between philosophy, science and art. In his view, science aims at the representation of objects and states of affairs by means of mathematical or propositional functions, art aims at the capture and expression of the objective content of particular sensations–affects and percepts–in a given medium, while philosophy

aims at creating concepts, the function of which is to transform existing forms of thought and practice. Here lies the political nature of philosophy. Though influenced by Marx's political economy, Deleuze pays more attention to the micropolitics that involves subterranean movements of individual and collective sensibility, affect and allegiance, than to the macropolitics that involves social classes and the institutions of political government. Paul Patton thinks that the tripartite division of thought outlined in Deleuze's *What Is Philosophy?* resembles the division found in Kant's three critiques, and that science, philosophy and art as distinct modalities of thought correspond to the Kantian domains of theoretical, practical and teleological reason. Kant distinguishes theoretical from practical reason by suggesting that theoretical reason is concerned with the knowledge of objects that are given to us by means of the senses, whereas practical reason is concerned with objects that we produce by means of action in accordance with certain principles. In this regard, Deleuze's philosophy is a form of practical reason (Patton 2010: 138–9).[5]

It is impossible to give Deleuze and his philosophy a fixed label, as can be seen from our discussion of his conception of desire. The conception of desire in Deleuze, like Deleuze himself, is a desiring machine or desiring assemblage, full of vital forces but also contradictions and conflicts. When reading *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, we are struck by his erudition, as the books touch on almost all the subjects of human knowledge. The subtitles of the two books are identical: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* His basic logic is that capitalism creates schizophrenia, and his ambition is to find a remedy for the illness of society. Successful or not, we are not sure, but we should accept Fredric Jameson's comment about Deleuze:

> The greatness of Gilles Deleuze was to have confronted omnivorously the immense field of everything that was thought and published. No one can read the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* without being stunned by the ceaseless flood of references that tirelessly nourish these texts, and which are processed into content and organized into dualism [...] It seems to me misguided to search for a system or a central idea in Deleuze: in fact there are many of those. It seems preferable to observe the extraordinary process whereby his intelligence rewrites and transcodes its overpopulated conceptual environment, and organizes it into force fields. But that organization, often so luminously schematic, does not aim to give us the truth, but rather a series of extraordinary representations. (Jameson 1997: 395)[6]

If we aim at finding definite, final, universally applicable truth in Deleuze's writings, we are doomed to failure, but if we aim at finding

the infinite complexities, the paradoxes, and behind them, the interesting ways of reasoning, narrating and arguing, we are sure to be rewarded plentifully.

Notes

1. See *Book Nine* of *Republic*, where Plato divides the human soul into three parts, corresponding to three desires and three kinds of people: those loving wisdom, those loving honour and those loving money. He argues that those loving wisdom are the noblest, those loving honour are good and those loving money are bad. Also in *Book Four* of *Republic*, he says that there are two things in the human soul: one is rational for the purpose of thinking and reasoning, the other is irrational, which is promoted by the sensual desire for the satisfaction of physical needs such as hunger and thirst, and so on.
2. Here Kojève's rationale is as follows: the basic driving force of history is man's pursuit for recognition, exhibited most clearly in the realm of politics. One person's desire for success is inevitably in conflict with that of another; those who win in the conflict become masters, and those who lose become slaves. Thus we see the perpetual struggle between master and slave and the forced labour of the slave (Kojève 1980).
3. Lao Zi (571–471 BC) was the tutor of Confucius (551–479 BC), and the founder of Taoism, a philosophy that emphasises the connection between metaphysical and ethical notions. Given the elusive nature of the universal truth, the Tao, Lao Zi conceives a sceptical philosophy that defines the notion of good based on the absence of intentionality and beliefs. According to Taoism, the world is originally one integral, inseparable whole. As the world evolves, the unity divides into two polar extremes, with yin (female) representing passiveness and yang (male) representing activeness. The two are interdependent and mutually enhancing. A movement towards one polar extreme often results in movements in the opposing extreme and when one extreme gets too violent, the tension will cause its opposing extreme to prosper.
4. See Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (Reich 1970), in which Reich gives a thorough and in-depth analysis of the rise of fascism in Germany in the 1930s, which finally led Germany into World War II.
5. Paul Patton believes that all philosophy is essentially political, Deleuze's philosophy is particularly so. In *Deleuze and the Political* Patton elaborates further on the political nature of the Deleuzian philosophy.
6. *A Deleuzian Century?* is the journal's special issue on Deleuze, the title being taken from Foucault's assertion that the twentieth century would one day be known as the century of Gilles Deleuze. Jameson's essay is the first in the volume of fourteen essays.

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