

## GUEST EDITOR'S PREFACE

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“The digital language of control is made up of codes indicating whether access to some information should be allowed or denied. We're no longer dealing with a duality of mass and individual. Individuals become ‘dividuals,’ and masses become samples, data, markets, or banks.”<sup>1</sup> Such a sentence, excerpted from Deleuze’s *Postscript on Control Society*, even after more than twenty-five years could be thought as the symbol of the present situation, characterised by the fulfilment of the so called *platform capitalism*, i.e., the most advanced step of the neoliberal turn that began during the Seventies with Thatcher and Reagan’s conservative revolution. Platform capitalism, which ties together several economical forms – Sharing Economy, Gig Economy, Big Data Economy, Collaborative Economy, Crowdfunding Economy – is based indeed not only on the almost absolute deregulation of Market’s flows, but also on the systematic extraction of value from digital traces (data) and on a new form of hybridation between human and machines. To understand the nature and the effects of such capitalistic step, means to understand the deepest implications of what Deleuze expressed with the term “control” and with “capitalistic axiomatic”. Consequently, then, this kind of analysis could lead us to grasp the actuality of Deleuze’s political thought, which is the primary goal of the present issue of *Ethics&Politics*.

“Perhaps, one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian”<sup>2</sup>. Today we are witnessing this secularization ironically anticipated by Foucault. Yet, such a secularization is anything but a good news for Deleuze. Rather, it is much more similar to a perversion of Deleuzian ideals and concepts, to the extent

<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” October 59, Winter 1992, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Foucault, “Theatrum Philosophicum”, *Critique*, 282(1970), 885.

that these very concepts have been re-captured by neoliberalism: the valorisation of differences, singularities, immanence of the network, human-machine hybridation, smooth space, deterritorialization, nomadism, and so on. Nevertheless, such a semantic capture didn't act in preventing any further developments of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical perspective, as it can be demonstrated through several examples: Toni Negri and Michael Hardt "Empire" and "Multitude", Maurizio Lazzarato and Eric Alliez "debt" and "war machines", Rosi Braidotti's formulations of *post-humanism*, based on "becoming-animal" and "becoming-woman", Matteo Pasquinelli's concept of "net-value", etc. These examples, among others, describe indeed a fruitful updating and political use of Deleuze and Guattari's thought.

Deleuze and Guattari, which were already foreseeing the symptoms of this occupation of the semantic space by neoliberalism, designated in *What is Philosophy?* the heart of the problem as residing in the word 'concept': "Finally, the most shameful moment came when computer science, marketing, design, and advertising, all the disciplines of communication, seized hold of the world concept itself and said: 'This is our concern, we are the creative ones, we are the ideas men! We are the friends of the concept, we put it in our computers'."<sup>3</sup>

For Deleuze and Guattari instead, what distinguishes philosophy, science and the arts from marketing and from the "thought-for-the-market"<sup>4</sup>, is the essential union of critique and creation that animates them, and of which they make their own specific goal, in order to act against the present, against the "meanness and vulgarity of existence that haunts democracies"<sup>5</sup>, as Nietzsche did, and towards a time – and institutions – to come. In front of societies of control, Deleuze imagined a kind of inactuality or intempestivity, that is an attempt to exit from the "century" precisely when it *tragically* became deleuzian.

According to Deleuze, between critique and creation there is clinic, as indicates the French philosopher's last book, *Essays on Critical and Clinical*, whose theoretical effort is addressed towards the invention of the New, that is, the creation of new institutions through the development of a collective dimension of desire, life and knowledge. Such an invention, which could be thought as the invention of the commons, is essentially linked to a symptomatological attention to the diseases of the present, which has been indicated by Deleuze through a metonymy based on Paul Klee's sentence "the people lacks". All this said, we can affirm that the actuality of a thinker has to be measured in relation to his ability of digging a gap between the present of

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Verso, 1994), 110.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem.*

identity and the variation involved in Foucault's concept of "actual", and to his intention towards a conceptual creation, which should be able to transform, or to "counter-effect", the symptoms of collective disease in view of a new collective health, that is, of a new people to which the concepts should be addressed.

"It's not a question of worrying or of hoping for the best, but of finding new weapons."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps this is the most powerful form of such a call for a people to come, as written in the *Postscript*. New critical and conceptual weapons, new alliances and hybridations with non-human agents, new cartographies of our society and of its transformations. Such a tension towards the 'necessary new' was already present in *Anti-Oedipus*, a famous passage of which, taken from the chapter entitled 'Civilized Capitalistic Machine', has recently been proposed as the symbol of leftist accelerationism. In this passage Deleuze and Guattari were concerned with the possibility of a new revolutionary strategy, in front of the newly emerging global order of capitalism. Their suggestion was to push further the deterritorialization of capitalistic flows, in a kind of mimetic behaviour with Nietzsche's intention to accelerate the process of nihilism. Instead of withdrawing from the movement of the market towards decoding, Deleuze and Guattari's political recipe was "to go further, to 'accelerate the process', as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven't seen anything yet."<sup>7</sup> This sentence seems today to express a kind of immanentist politics, close to Negri and Hardt's political project, and to Srnicek and Williams' *Manifesto for an accelerationist politics*, which calls for a new leftist hegemony based on technological expertise and on the power to take advantage of technological innovation. It is hard to imagine whether Deleuze and Guattari could be accelerationists today, at least if we follow Antoinette Rouvroy e Thomas Berns' analysis of what they call "algorithmic governmentality" as a new form of social, political and financial control based on "data behaviourism". Indeed, following Rouvroy and Berns we can see how the Market, through digital technologies, has captured the very micropolitics of social relations and the very molecular fluxes on which the schizoanalytic strategy of *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaux* was based on. In this vein, the task of a Deleuzian perspective, today, should be perhaps to understand how inventing a line of flight worthy of what happens today, that is, a creative flight able to transform our symptoms in new weapons for a new critique of capitalism.

The papers collected in this issue of *Ethics&Politics* match with these questions and problems by inquiring the actuality of Deleuze's political thought.

<sup>6</sup> Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control", 6.

<sup>7</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Penguin, 1977), 239.

Considering the amazing interdisciplinary dissemination of Deleuze's concepts, the critical path here proposed has among its goals a sort of feedback movement, by which Deleuzian actuality, that is its critical approach to our times, will be recombined through a patchwork of points of view coming from different disciplines and fields of knowledge: political philosophy, theoretical philosophy, ethics, sociology, aesthetics, but also semiotics and philosophy of Law. The function of the patchwork, along with the suggestions developed in *A Thousand Plateaus* and then in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, is to show a kind of principle of complicity between the authors, which expresses itself at the borders of each discipline. As the same time and with the same action, such a complicity deterritorializes both the disciplinary fields and the very thought of Deleuze.

In this sense, Laura Bazzicalupo's paper represents an exhaustive and powerful recognition of Deleuze's most important political elements and it shows the intrinsically political dimension of Deleuzian theoretical thought. In particular, the author emphasises the choice of a bio-political plane of immanence as the strongest point of Deleuze's political-theoretical work. She also shows as Deleuze is forced to think unceasingly such a plane because the Market, with its crossing of choices, desires, communication proposals, and proliferation of differences, seems to capture nothing less than the very Deleuzian theoretical revolution. Thus, the issue becomes to renew Deleuze's critique and creation beyond Oedipus and the debt, towards the invention of new institutions, inspired by the pragmatic plane of Humean tradition. The reader could consider Bazzicalupo's paper as a sort of theoretical base from which the other papers take their own line of flight always keeping a certain degree of complicity.

Gianvito Brindisi's contribution is focused on Deleuze's actuality in relation to philosophy of Law as a thin line crossing almost its entire work. The critical contribution of this paper, competently conducted between theoretical philosophy and philosophy of Law, is mainly based on the fact that Brindisi stresses the tension between Deleuze's critique of the doctrine of judgment, due to the power to segment and weaken the existence, and Deleuzian love for creative jurisprudence. Such a tension is conceived by the author as a polarity between a low (moral) grade and a high (ethical) grade of the experience. By retracing Deleuze's courses of the Eighties, Brindisi deeply explores the ethical tenor of the jurisprudence, considering it as a selective practice that is exercised on social situations. Nevertheless, Brindisi continues to highlight Deleuzian suspect for any kind of judicial dimension even if "creative" and by this to discover more than a reason to describe Deleuze as an important thinker to be considered in order to reassess the critical attitude of the philosophy of law.

Federico Chicchi's essay attempts to reconsider and update the concept of exploitation in order to understand the most recent transformation of capitalism. Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of capitalism and its axiomatic are thus strategic precisely to the extent that "capitalistic axiomatic" is the operative law of capitalism based on its continue deterritorialization. The central and original concept developed by Chicchi, the *Imprinting* of subjectivity, belongs in its turn to a deep Deleuzian methodology, the one that deconstruct dialectics and promote a multiplicity of planes in order to understand capitalism. In particular, the author, which also uses Lacan in an interesting composition with Deleuze and Guattari, highlights the necessity of reading the exploitation in the contemporary capitalism according to a double logic: on the one hand a dialectic logic based on the *subsumption* of labour to capital, on the other hand an axiomatic logic based on the *impression* of the subjectivity to capital. Such an impression is what technology, new modes of production and new kinds of exploitation seems to concretize in this Deleuzian Century, and for this reason any critique needs the creation of a new concept, *imprinting*, able to diagnose such situation.

Francesco Galofaro's paper focuses on the notions of desiring machine and abstract machine proposed by Deleuze and Guattari in their *Anti-Oedipus*. Since the authors already prevented the reader to consider such notions as metaphors, in the first part Galofaro competently reflects on the technical features of "abstract machine" by comparing it to the probabilistic turn in linguistics, information retrieval, and machine learning, finally showing that desiring machines overwhelm the computational powers of a Turing machine: "These features, and the corresponding framework on the relation between the subject and its environment seem to anticipate the future of philosophy". Another issue of the paper, essentially related to the first one, concerns the controversial notion of schizophrenia as it is described in *Anti-Oedipus*, and in particular in its association with the political revolutionary process within society. Such a critique is lead by using ethnosemiotical tools with extreme pertinence and towards a strategic reconsideration of the distinction between the normal and the pathological within the new regimes of production.

In his paper, Fabio Treppiedi emphasizes the idea of resistance as one of the most important Deleuzian philosophical topics, which has been developed along the whole philosophical production of the French thinker. In this vein, Treppiedi gives a precise insight on Deleuze's reading of Foucault's theory of power precisely in order to confront Deleuze and Foucault on what could resistance mean in philosophical and political terms. Indeed, the paper attempts to show at the same time the theoretical implication of resistance – the un-

thought and the problematic opposition between inside and outside – the relation between resistance and conceptual creation and the actuality of resisting in our “society of control”. One of the most powerful results of such confrontation is a kind of suggestion for Deleuzian and Foucauldian philosophers of the XXI Century: to invent new conditions of possibility for the events, that is new affects, new languages, new kind of individuations inside the society of control in order to break their invisible walls and (try to) go outside.

In a kind of indirect dialogue with Treppiedi, Sara Baranzoni focuses on Deleuze’s ethical and political thought starting from the famous sentences about “believing in the world” and “the exhaustion of the possible”, projecting them into the issues of our time. In particular, Baranzoni analyses the transformations of power caused by technological innovation and the consequent automatization of human relations with the world, as it has been described both by Antoinette Rouvroy and Bernard Stiegler, in particular for what concerns computational capitalism. The paper provides then a deep and original relation between Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of capitalism through decodification of flows and the continuous updating of neoliberal strategies that today determines the need of new forms of counter-power, starting from political thought and, precisely, believing in a new *thinkable* world.

Benoît Dillet’s paper largely discusses Benjamin Noys’ thesis on accelerationism, in order to evaluate the origins of the term and of the debate, thus highlighting his strong critique, especially when the author of *Malign Velocities: Accelerationism and Capitalism* analyses accelerationism as a symptom and ideology of neoliberal capitalism, even in its leftist renewal. From his own point of view, although he acknowledges some political merits to leftist accelerationism (the project of a basic income, the struggle for a new kind of ideology, etc.) Dillet is concerned with the fact that such a perspective omits all kinds of social symptoms that could be exacerbated by a disruptive acceleration, as in particular several prototypes of neo-fascism that haunts Europe and the United States are. Here the reader could find a pertinent re-activation of Deleuzian symptomatological critique.

Finally, Paolo Vignola attempts to actualize Deleuze’s thought by using Thomas Berns and Antoinette Rouvroy’s concept of algorithmic governmentality. By following Stiegler’s interpretation of such a concept, Vignola tries to read our present as a kind of computational nihilism. Taking one of the giants of the Web, Amazon.com, as a symptom of such a nihilism, whose process has been empowered by neo-liberalism, the paper attempts to elaborate a new kind of relationship between technology, environment and social ties, inspired by Amazonian perspectivism. Such a perspective is presented by the author as an

alternative to leftist accelerationism, already described and criticized by Dillet. Starting from this consideration, Deleuzian nomadology could be understood as a way of placing Nietzsche in the Amazon, with “all the names of history” he carries with him in Deleuze’s *Nomadic Thought*.