Title: Ethics to Politics in *A Thousand Plateaus*: Agency without Subject

Abstract:

In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer a cosmology that denies an opposition between the one and the many. Their cosmology, which is ethical in nature and which appears to radically revise key Kantian paradigms, identifies being with the action of becoming, rather than with the intention of an autonomous will. While we find concepts of autonomy and agency within this cosmology, the modern connotations of those concepts have been altered. In this new context, agency and autonomy function without need of the modern concept of subject, especially insofar as that concept connotes negativity (or lack), both metaphysically and politically. Deleuze and Guattari offer an alternative to many tenets of Kantian moral philosophy and Aristotelian metaphysics, but in locating the possibility of a political model suited to Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmology, here I will suggest a conjunction of their rendering of existence with ethical, social, and political aspects of Aristotle’s and Kant’s philosophies. In short, Deleuze and Guattari’s apparently radical anti-Kantian cosmology—a cosmology also apparently anti-Aristotelian—turns out to be much less so upon close examination.
Ethics to Politics in *A Thousand Plateaus*:
Agency without Subject

Although he is not the first to insist upon the necessity of agency for morality, the manner in which Immanuel Kant renders individual autonomy raises it to its modern metaphysical peak, which arguably necessitates a subject—the specific individual in whom an autonomous will inheres. Kant’s use of the term, “autonomy,” which originally denoted state sovereignty, to refer to a property of an individual, suggests the nuanced way in which Kant conflates ethics and politics. If we accept such an application of the term, “autonomy,” we implicitly further accept a relationship between the individual (the one) and the state (the many) that bears further investigation. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer a cosmology that denies an opposition between the one and the many, without reducing systematically the many to the one, or exploding the one chaotically into many.\(^1\) Their cosmology, which is ethical in nature and which appears to radically revise key Kantian paradigms, identifies being with the action of becoming, rather than with the intention of an autonomous will. While we find concepts of autonomy and agency within this cosmology, the modern connotations of those concepts have been altered. In this new context, agency and autonomy function without need of the modern concept of subject, especially insofar as that concept connotes negativity (or lack), both metaphysically and politically. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmology redefines conceptions of form and matter; it is this project, in fact, which allows the full creative richness of their philosophy to shine through. Deleuze and Guattari offer an alternative to many tenets of Kantian moral philosophy and Aristotelian metaphysics, but in locating the possibility of a political model suited to Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmology

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\(^1\) Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). All references to this work will be parenthetically inserted in the text and consist of the abbreviation “TP” followed by a page number. All emphasis is in the original.
here, I will suggest a conjunction of their rendering of existence with ethical, social, and political aspects of Aristotle’s and Kant’s philosophies. In short, Deleuze and Guattari’s apparently radical anti-Kantian cosmology—a cosmology also apparently anti-Aristotelian—turns out to be much less so upon close examination.

I have chosen Kant to represent modernity’s insistence that autonomy, agency, and subject are necessities not only of ethical action, but also of morality in total. The terms “ethics” and “morality” often are used interchangeably in Kant. Yet his usage almost exclusively of “morals,” in terms of frequency, suggests a nuanced difference between the terms that further exemplifies a metaphysical paradox between the one and the many found throughout the Western philosophical tradition. As Aristotle defined it, ethics is concerned with action, or practice, whereas morality has to do with principles, or mores, that are more general and may guide action.2 When Kant conflates the two terms, he creates a paradox, the possibility of which Aristotle was keenly aware: how exactly is one to bridge the gap between a principle for action and a specific action? In Kant, this same paradox can be characterized in two ways: the tension between individual and community, as well as the tension between universal principles and the particulars that instantiate those principles.3 In his critical guide to TP, Brent Adkins refers to this paradoxical relationship as the “discontinuity thesis.”4 Both Kant and Aristotle try to solve this paradox, which also is metaphysical, with an “autonomous” subject, an ethical or moral agent. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmology offers continuity as a means to avoid this paradox entirely.

Key among the ways in which Deleuze and Guattari will try to achieve continuity is by insisting that the activity of becoming is continuous and without some substantial endpoint. There is a continuum within which this activity occurs. Some activity will tend toward stasis, while other activity will tend toward change. The possibility of ethics arises with the proper construction of the continuum. If the construction is proper, it will function well; its functioning well is a part of its proper construction: the continuum’s being is its becoming. The nature of the continuum’s constitutive components makes clear that it functions simultaneously on the level of the individual and of the group, ethical and moral (or political). So, in Aristotle we find grounds to characterize Deleuze and Guattari’s continuum as ethical via a function argument. Then, we can establish a political model that incorporates Kant’s concept of the kingdom of ends. This goal requires that we first distinguish Deleuze and Guattari’s autonomy and agency from the Western modern tradition, which will enable us to sufficiently address how their philosophy attempts to dissolve the discontinuity thesis in favor of continuity.

**Autonomy and Agency**

For Deleuze and Guattari, the power to initiate becoming is the lifeblood of autonomy and agency. Because Deleuze and Guattari endeavor toward a cosmology of continuity, they see the process of becoming just as being. So, the power of becoming can only be sustained within its own process: it is created as it creates. To make this clear, as well as how their account of agency differs from that of Kant, we must describe the key steps in the process of becoming and the devices that create the process while also being created by the process. This will necessitate an understanding of the outline of Deleuze and Guattari’s entire cosmology, because these devices are constitutively embedded in the continual process of becoming. We will begin with
what Deleuze and Guattari term the “body without organs” (BwO). The BwO is the site of becoming. In order to avoid discontinuity, their cosmology requires “a fusional multiplicity that effectively goes beyond any opposition between the one and the multiple” (TP 154). This multiplicity, one of pure heterogeneity, is a continuum of all matter. Deleuze and Guattari characterize matter as the stuff of life, but with as much ambiguity as possible—that is, with as few restrictions as possible. On the plane of consistency, matter is particulate, or atomistic, in the ancient sense (TP 489). Restrictions on the shape, or form, of matter would only stunt the creative potential of the BwO, or, even worse, would necessitate something external to the process to effectuate being. For Deleuze and Guattari, the principle of multiplicity is effectuated “only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive […] that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object […] There is no unity to serve as a pivot in the object, or to divide in the subject. There is not even the unity to abort in the object or ‘return’ in the subject” (TP 8). Their dislike of the modern conception of a subject is quite clear. There is nothing external, a “subject” or an object, to that which “truly” exists, a universal (be it akin to Plato’s forms, Kant’s universal moral law, or Hegel’s Absolute Spirit). Moreover, the movement of becoming is not initiated by a lack, by something missing that is required and, thus, sought after. The full BwO always already contains everything it needs to create, which brings to light an important note of confluence with Kant. His conception of autonomy pursues a kind of immanence, but in its difference from Deleuze and Guattari’s immanence, we can flush out a more robust understanding of discontinuity’s implications for Deleuze and Guattari. It is perhaps the causal nature of Kant’s conception of will, and its necessitation of a modern subject, that is the sharpest contrast to Deleuze and Guattari.
Kant’s focus on autonomy pursues an immanence akin to Deleuze and Guattari’s, but it is one cultivated on different metaphysical ground. Kant states, “In every case where an object of the will must be laid down as the foundation for prescribing a rule to determine the will, there the rule is nothing but heteronomy.”\(^5\) If an object of the will determines the will’s action, the immorality of that action is two-fold. First, moral actions can have no object except the moral law itself; and second, intentions cannot be extrinsic by definition. Kant states, “An absolutely good will, whose principle must be a categorical imperative, will therefore be indeterminate as regards all objects and will contain merely the form of willing; and indeed that form is autonomy.”\(^6\) Kant’s immanence is based on the interiority of intention to a subject. Indeed autonomy is morality for Kant. However, the source of normativity for the subject, the universal moral law, is something that is not constitutive of the subject, there only is a causal connection between the moral law, or universal will, and the individual’s will, which Deleuze and Guattari find unconvincing.\(^7\) This also creates a subordination of particular to universal that cannot support a philosophy of becoming, because we cannot grasp, except by analogical inference, how the universal “creates” the particular.\(^8\) Deleuze and Guattari allow that there is power in this kind of stratified, chronic organization, but argue that this power must be tempered.

To understand why causal determinacy is not sufficient for Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmology, we need a better understanding of how time functions within their cosmology. All the aspects of their cosmology taken together are called an assemblage (TP 4, 504-5). These aspects, at their most general, consist in two planes, consistency and organization, and two

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\(^6\) Kant, 48.

\(^7\) One is reminded here of Hume’s proof that our conception of causality is instead “custom,” or “habit,” created from the repetition of coincident events.

\(^8\) Perhaps the best example of analogical inference from particular to universal is, of course, the allegory of the cave in Plato’s *Republic*.
movements, deterritorialization and territorialization. The BwO and the plane of consistency rival the plane of organization (TP 507). The plane of consistency represents the deterritorial aspect of an assemblage, where matter exists with a minimum of form (TP 512). The movements of deterritorialization remove structures put in place on the territorialized, striated plane of organization. This movement makes the substance, or subjects, of the plane of organization indiscernible. It draws all of their content into proximity with the content of all the other substances or subjects deterritorialized, and, thus, it gains the power of becoming (TP 101, 225, 279). The power of becoming gained is not the only power; there is a power found on the plane of organization as well. Organizing power is *pouvoir*, whereas becoming power is *puissance*, and the two are not directly opposed. Rather, “it is a treatment of the variable [on the plane of organization] opposed to the other kind of treatment, or continuous variation [on the plane of consistency]” (TP 103). We will return to the interlocking nature of the plane of consistency and the plane of organization in the next section, but here it is important to note that becoming is always happening at many levels, on many different plateaus, at the same time. The plane of organization represents linear, chronic time, and the plane of consistency represents non-linear, cosmic time. Causal determinacy has its place on the plane of organization, in chronic time only, away from the plane of becoming and agency. So, for our ultimate project to succeed, we will need to replace Kant’s notion of autonomy as based on intention grounded in universal will with Deleuze and Guattari’s action-based autonomy.

Not only is the BwO created as it creates, but so is the assemblage. Being is immanent to the process of becoming, and the process of becoming requires the BwO as a field of immanence that is created as it creates. This kind of self-presupposing activity is agency and autonomy in Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmology. Furthermore, it is an activity defined as “desire.” Deleuze
and Guattari tell us that, “The BwO is the *field of immanence* of desire, the *plane of consistency* specific to desire (with desire defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows it out or a pleasure that fills it)” (TP 154). This concept of desire is not a hedonistic one, centered on a *summum bonum* rooted in pleasure over pain for a specific subject. Rather, desire is a sort of magnetism that ignites creation in a speculative, performative way without depending on negativity. Desire’s exact nature, as befits its function, is best understood through becoming. Because we require a BwO to initiate becoming, we must construct it. There are two steps: “what comes to pass on the BwO is not exactly the same as how you make yourself one. […] One phase is for the fabrication of the BwO, the other to make something circulate on it or pass across it; the same procedures are nevertheless in both phases, but they must be done over, done twice” (TP 152). In other words, the BwO represents a space, though not necessarily a physical space. It is the *nomos*, the nondelimited, or an open space, the *Spatium* (TP 481). In order to make something move across this space, which would be the activity of becoming, one must first make it smooth. But, the making-smooth of a space is precisely how one builds a BwO. Deleuze and Guattari state, “The BwO is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole” (TP 151). We are removing any system—any organs, because they organ-ize—already imposed on the plane of organization.

Making something move across the BwO is the movement of becoming. In exploring the nature of this movement, we complete Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of autonomy. They write, “In a way, we must start at the end: all becomings are already molecular. That is because

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9 Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmology is truly reflective of the distinction “speculative” in that it “looks” at the process of becoming from the inside. This is reminiscent of Hegel’s use of the term in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, especially §§759-761. The word “speculative” comes from the Latin verb *specere*, to look at, the instrumental form of which is *speculum*, or mirror.
becoming is not to imitate or identify with something or someone. Nor is it to proportion formal relations” (TP 272-3). Becoming as imitation or identification would be molar, or static and organ-ized, at least to the extent that such a becoming might attempt to reproduce in one thing the complete material likeness, an exact replication, of some other thing. While there may be a certain amount of imitation effected in becoming, there is not a “subject” and an “object,” no filial, or hereditarily lineal, production that constructs material characteristics in one that have been drawn out of another. Instead, becoming is the involvement of one thing’s molecules in those of another thing. As such, Deleuze and Guattari choose the word “involution” rather than “evolution” (TP 239). They state that becoming “concerns alliance. […] It] is in the domain of *symbioses* that bring into play beings of totally different scales and kingdoms, with no possible filiation” (TP 238). The symbioses of which Deleuze and Guattari write here are called “unnatural participations.” They are unnatural in that they do not employ a traditional conception of “natural” creation—that is, hereditary, or filial, creation. There is a contagion, a magnetism, at work that causes entirely different things to intermingle and create blocks, or lines, of becoming, in which infected, or “involved,” things transform. For Deleuze and Guattari, becoming and multiplicity are the same thing. A multiplicity is defined not by its elements, nor by a center of unification or comprehension. […] Since its variations and dimensions are immanent to it, it amounts to the same thing to say that each multiplicity is already composed of heterogeneous terms in symbiosis, and that a multiplicity is continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors (TP 249).

Thus, there is a line, or block, of becoming shared by each individual multiplicity, but also by the assemblage as a whole, and at many levels in between. There is a “shared deterritorialization”—that is, the removal of form, or structure, present in the participants so as to create a smooth space for the easy travel of contagions, the becomings of the new (TP 293).
The contagion is desire, for Deleuze and Guattari. Again, it is important to remember that desire is immanent, and this immanence is key to avoiding discontinuity. Desire is a flow; it is “[i]mmanence, instead of a measure that interrupts it or delivers it to the three phantoms, namely, internal lack, higher transcendence, and apparent exteriority” (TP 156-7). Even though the plane of consistency is populated by multiplicities, molecules with a minimum of form, these multiplicities will aggregate loosely according to affects, the limits of which are called the “anomalous.” In French, anomalous “refers to that which is outside rules or goes against the rules,” and in Greek “designates the unequal, the coarse, the rough, the cutting edge of deterritorialization” (TP 244). As the delimiting powers of the multiplicity, the anomalous provides unity to the multiplicity while simultaneously effectuating the possibility of alliance with, and interpenetration into, other multiplicities (TP 240). Thus, the anomalous is a line, or “cutting edge,” of deterritorialization necessary for creation because it blurs the line between multiplicities, helping to create a zone of proximity, or indiscernibility “that extracts a shared element” (TP 279). The points of alliance, the exceptional individuals, positioned in the anomalous of multiplicities are called “haecceities” (TP 261). Haecceities are exceptional individual events that initiate becoming, act as thresholds to the new, from within the zone of indiscernibility. At these thresholds, desire has drawn two, or more, affects together, at their limits. Hence, these events always represent a “copresence.” At first blush, this might seem an uncontrollable process. It is precisely because the power of becoming (puissance) is so rich that Deleuze and Guattari repeatedly encourage caution. We heed this warning by way of careful, ethical, production of the BwO.
Production of the BwO as an Ethical Activity

Deleuze and Guattari call their ethics an “ethology.” Furthermore, they overtly identify ethology with the production of the BwO: “we avoided defining a body by its organs and functions […] instead we will seek to count its affects. This kind of study is called ethology” (TP 257). In other words, a body is defined by its capacity to create, which, in turn, is determined by the number of affects it contains. A body with maximal capacity to create is a BwO. Thus, the proper production of the BwO is an ethical activity for Deleuze and Guattari. In her essay collection, The Constitution of Agency, Christine Korsgaard offers readings of Kant and Aristotle that provide a framework within which to make clear not only the ethics of, but also a potential politics for, Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmology.10 Producing a BwO adheres to what Korsgaard terms a “constitutive principle.” A constitutive principle is a type of constitutive standard, which she defines as “one that arises from the very nature of the object […] to which it applies.”11 This should sound familiar as akin to the self-presupposing activity by which we characterized the production of the BwO, and consequently the production of the entire assemblage. There are two key aspects of constitutive standards, according to Korsgaard, which make them of particular interest to us. First, they are both descriptive and normative: “They are descriptive because an object must meet them, or at least aspire to meet them, in order to be what it is. And they are normative because an object to which they apply can fail to meet them, at least to some extent, and is subject to criticism if it does not.”12 Second, “constitutive standards meet challenges to their normativity with ease: someone who asks why […] an encyclopedia should record the truth, shows that he just doesn’t understand what these objects are for, and therefore, since they are

11 Ibid., 7.
12 Ibid., 8.
functional objects, what they are.” Constitutive principles, then, are constitutive standards having to do with activities, rather than objects. These principles, like the standards of which they are a kind, are descriptive and normative. They describe a process that we can have varying levels of success or failure in following. This also should remind us of Aristotle’s function argument from the *Nicomachean Ethics*: an object is good, Aristotle tells us, to the extent that the object performs its function well. Granted, we are not referring here to the function of humankind; rather, we are applying the general concept of Aristotle’s function argument to Deleuze and Guattari’s process of becoming. What is uniquely important in our application of the concept of constitutive principles is that their status as activities helps them adhere to Deleuze and Guattari’s continuity thesis, rather than suggesting a sort of argument by analogy necessary to make the concept suit objects.

Deleuze and Guattari’s process of becoming adheres to a constitutive principle, especially when viewed in relief against the “bad” BwO’s we might construct. They state, “Although there is no preformed logical order to becomings and multiplicities, there are criteria, and the important thing is […] that they be sufficient to guide us through the dangers” (TP 251). There are two varieties of danger in becoming: the production of a cancerous BwO or the production of an empty BwO. In other words, one can disproportionately stratify, or organize, a BwO, or one can deterritorialize a BwO too significantly and empty it out. Just as becoming represents a shared deterritorialization, it also represents a territorialization: “It is the BwO that is stratified. It swings between two poles, the surfaces of stratification into which it is recoiled […] and the plane of consistency in which it unfurls and opens to experimentation” (TP 159). Thus, there is not a strict opposition between the two planes of an assemblage, because BwO’s exist already on

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13 Korsgaard, 8.
14 Aristotle, 1097b25-1098a20.
the plane of organization within the strata of various becomings, while at the same time other BwO’s exist on the plane of consistency awaiting haecceities. This creates what Deleuze and Guattari call “the three-body problem” (TP 163). We must learn to tell the difference between the three possible BwO’s: the full BwO, the cancerous BwO, and the empty BwO. Only by producing a full BwO—and thereby achieving our goal—can we prevent the production of the cancerous or empty BwO’s. We do this by watching over desire, the contagion of becoming: “It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds” (TP 161). There is no disconnecting the plane of consistency from the plane of organization, nor would one want to do so; only in the proper relation to one another do we produce a full BwO. Deleuze and Guattari explain:

The test of desire: not denouncing false desires, but distinguishing within desire between that which pertains to stratic proliferation, or else too-violent destratification, and that which pertains to the construction of the plane of consistency [...]. The plane of consistency is not simply that which is constituted by the sum of all BwO’s. There are things it rejects; the BwO chooses. (TP 165)

The BwO is a limit, beyond which is a threshold, a creation of something new. Deleuze and Guattari call the plane of consistency “a row of doors,” doors that are either open or closed according to the concrete rules for constructing a BwO and the plane in general. In its selective role, the BwO retains “only that which increases the number of connections at each level of division or composition” (TP 508). It preserves diversity by preserving the process of becoming, which will traverse the plane of organization necessarily, returning new fodder for becoming to the plane of consistency, creating new full BwO’s in its mindful march. As Deleuze and Guattari state, “in Ethics [...] we know nothing about a body until we know [...] its affects [...]; how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, [...] either to destroy [...] or to be destroyed [...], either to exchange actions and passions [...] or to join [...] in composing a more...
powerful body” (TP 257). This shows not only the ethics of this process, but also the agency inherent in it.

From Ethics to Politics

Deleuze and Guattari offer many illustrative examples from literature, history, mythology, art, psychology, and philosophy in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In particular, two of their nautically themed examples show well the process of becoming and how that process, writ large (at another level of the assemblage), is political. These examples are from literature, through Captain Ahab and Moby-Dick, and from history, through maritime navigational history. Moreover, these examples will show how the event of one becoming is an assemblage, just as it also shares in the larger assemblage encompassing all becomings.

Deleuze and Guattari tell us that “Moby-Dick is the White Wall bordering the pack; he is also the demonic *Term of the Alliance*; finally he is the terrible *Fishing Line* with nothing on the other end, the line that crosses the wall and drags the captain…where? Into the void…” (TP 249-50). In this quotation, Moby-Dick and Ahab represent haecceities, exceptional individuals, events, in which an alliance will be formed. The alliance of the two deterritorializes them both, even while it represents their territorialization into something new. Ahab could be carried beyond a new becoming, into total particularization, annihilation. Or else, Moby-Dick could become “bogged down,” become over-stratified (TP 250). The sea is the archetype of smooth space for Deleuze and Guattari, a fitting home for Ahab and Moby-Dick. It also is the first space “to undergo a gradual striation gridding it in one place, then another, on this side and that” (TP 479-

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80). By this, Deleuze and Guattari mean that the sea originally was a passage to the new, a space for unlimited exploration, experimentation, and becoming. Over time, the sea was striated by means of astrologically calculated bearings and the imposition of longitude and latitude. Importantly, these examples show us that there always is an interplay between smooth and striated spaces. Movement is not just in one direction: “in the aftermath of striation, the sea reimports a kind of smooth space,” and Deleuze and Guattari remind us that the “smooth always possesses a greater power of deterritorialization than the striated” (TP 480). In short, puissance is stronger than pouvoir. But just as Moby-Dick represents a deterritorialization of Ahab, a smoothing of space, the becoming initiated could develop into a cancerous one. Deleuze and Guattari use the further example of a submarine. The submarine can move beneath the grid of latitude and longitude, reinstituting a smooth space. Yet the submarine’s purpose is one of capture, or organization: “in the strangest of reversals, it is for the purpose of controlling striated space more completely” (TP 480). Also, if we compare the submarine to the Ahab-Moby-Dick example, we find similarities between the submarine and both Ahab and Moby-Dick, although not in equal measure. This demonstrates not only the movements between the planes of an assemblage, but also their dissymmetrical nature. To further extend the example, Deleuze and Guattari claim that “the city is the striated space par excellence; […] it is the force of striation that reimports smooth space, puts it back into operation everywhere, on earth and in the other elements, outside but also inside itself” (TP 481). Now we see how the assemblage moves both centrifugally and centripetally. Moreover, Deleuze and Guattari’s ethics necessarily suggests a politics precisely because it is a cosmology. In the ethical construction of the BwO, we allow only the doors that encourage the fullness of diversity to stay open; we close doors that would either annihilate or over-stratify the BwO. Furthermore, because “[e]ach multiplicity is
symbiotic; its becoming ties together animals, plants, microorganisms, mad particles, a whole galaxy” (TP 250). This tying together is a community, a polity, albeit one different from those existing today.16

In Kant, we find hope for such a political model. Korsgaard argues that Kant’s principles of practical reason, or ethics, are constitutive principles that constitute action. As such they are not external at all.17 While this solves one issue of discontinuity in Kant (the relation between particular and universal), it leaves the other (the relation between individual and group) still to be resolved. As I suggested above, a resolution of this second kind of discontinuity might be solved by a conjunction of Deleuze and Guattari’s agency, or autonomy, with Kant’s concept of the kingdom of ends, which is another formulation of the categorical imperative. According to Kant, a “kingdom” is a “systematic union of different rational beings through common laws.”18 As Korsgaard points out, “According to the Kantian conception, to be rational just is to be autonomous. That is: to be governed by reason, and to govern yourself, are one and the same thing.”19 So, were we to replace Kant’s autonomy with Deleuze and Guattari’s autonomy, we arrive at a systematic union of multiplicities through common laws. These laws would be the constitutive principles of the BwO. Thus, as Kant states, we would have

a kingdom that may be called a kingdom of ends (certainly only an ideal), inasmuch as these laws have in view the very relation of such beings to one another as ends and means. [...] Hence morality consists in the relation of all action to that legislation whereby alone a kingdom of ends is possible.20

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16 Again, this cosmology is an ethics, or an “ethology,” in Deleuze and Guattari’s terminology. They state, “‘Ethology’ then can be understood as a very privileged molar domain for demonstrating how the most varied components (biochemical, behavioral, perceptive, hereditary, acquired, improvised, social, etc.) can crystallize in assemblages that respect neither the distinction between orders nor the hierarchy of forms” (TP 336).
17 Korsgaard, 31.
18 Kant, 39.
19 Korsgaard, 31.
20 Kant, 39-40.
This kingdom’s status as an ideal for Kant is all the more suitable to Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of becoming as being. If the entire assemblage is constantly in motion, there is not some conceived endpoint, especially because the plane of becoming is not chronic. The necessity of the plane of organization to the plane of becoming, or consistency, can offer only brief glimpses of a kind of kingdom of ends. The true effectuation of the kingdom actually entails continuous movement between the two planes, because that is what fuels becoming. Kant’s view of this “ideal,” especially as read through Korsgaard’s interpretation of his practical principles, is consistent with Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmology.\textsuperscript{21} Kant’s kingdom of ends, thus modified, represents a community guided by an ethics, which we can call a “polity.”

\textit{Conclusion}

In 1972, during a conversation with Michel Foucault, Deleuze offered many comments regarding his own philosophy and his view of the purposes, or functions, of philosophy in general. In his responses, we find parallels to that which I have argued here. Regarding theory and practice, Deleuze states

 Possibly we’re in the process of experiencing a new relationship between theory and practice. At one time, practice was considered an application of theory, a consequence; at other times, it had an opposite sense and it was thought to inspire theory, to be indispensable for the creation of future theoretical forms. […] For us, however, the question is seen in a different light. The relationships between theory and practice are far more partial and fragmentary. […] 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.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{21}Korsgaard suggests a different means of manifesting Kant’s kingdom of ends, one that retains a significant conception of subject. Despite the hurdle this might represent for conjunction with Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, Korsgaard’s theory posits an interesting account of how we might assign moral persons with responsibility.

\textsuperscript{22}Michel Foucault, \textit{Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault}, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 205.
The concept of “practice” outlined by Deleuze here is precisely the process of becoming, which is the process of the entire assemblage, or Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmology as a whole. They often refer to their theory as “pragmatics” or “schizoanalysis,” as well (TP 2, 43, 146, 165). Later in his conversation with Foucault, Deleuze says, “A theory is exactly like a box of tools. […] It must be useful. It must function.”23 In other words, a theory, or philosophy, is valuable to the extent that it performs its function well.

For some, Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy does not perform its function well; it doesn’t actually pierce the wall blocking its relay, or impeding its process. For example, if one understands Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy as a petition to embrace the multiple, *instead* of the one, as a means to overcoming the discontinuity thesis, then certainly no significant alternative has been offered by Deleuze and Guattari. In that instance, the multiple would merely be a reconstitution of the One in another form. Indeed, this is exactly what Deleuze and Guattari want to avoid. They state, “It is not enough, however, to replace the opposition between the One and the multiple with a distinction between types of multiplicities. For the distinction between the two types does not preclude their immanence to each other, each ‘issuing’ from the other after its fashion” (TP 506). In fact, Deleuze and Guattari’s cosmology offers unique explanatory power for understanding instances when the interplay between order and chaos is suppressed. By this, I refer to the cancerous and the empty BwO’s, which are consequences of bad constructions of the BwO—consequences of practices that failed to pierce the wall.

A further criticism of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, and one suggested by the title of this essay, is that there is no concept of subject. In his discussion with Foucault, Deleuze comments, “A theorising intellectual, for us, is no longer a subject, a representing or representative consciousness. […] It is always a multiplicity, even within the person who speaks

23 Foucault, 208.
and acts. All of us are ‘groupuscules.’”24 It is not so much that the conception of subject a la the modern project is entirely absent from Deleuze and Guattari; however, that conception certainly is not primary in their thought. The subject is not the source of agency and autonomy, as I argued above. It is in grasping our place within a larger movement, one which we do not exclusively control, that we can ground a society and a world. Deleuze and Guattari state, “becoming-everybody/everything […] is to world, to make a world […] a world in which it is the world that becomes” (TP 280). The beauty of such a world also is that inherent to it is a politics that is an ethics.

24 Foucault, 206.