

Foucault Studies

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ISSN: 1832-5203

Foucault Studies, No. 17, pp. 259-263, April 2014

REVIEW

Mark Bonta and John Protevi, *Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Guide and Glossary*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), ISBN: 978-0748618392

Deleuze and Guattari famously open *A Thousand Plateaus* (ATP) with “The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd.”¹ The coauthored *Deleuze and Geophilosophy* brings additional voices to the conversation with an aim to strengthen the dialogue between different specialties within geography, as well as between science and philosophy in general. Moreover, the clamor of voices is intensified by the need to consider Foucault’s contributions to geography in light of key compatibilities between his and Deleuze and Guattari’s work. Most importantly, however, this book remains timely and stops just short of an impassioned call to *all* researchers to reevaluate the ontological and epistemological foundations of their work.

Foucault’s relationship with geography was made explicit in a well-known 1976 interview conducted by the editors of the radical geography journal *Hérodote*. Therein Foucault asserts that his ‘spatial obsessions’ were not a result of his interest in space as such, but rather a necessary and strategic maneuver to explore the possible relationships between power and knowledge.² Foucault’s sensitivity to how space and place are inextricably entangled with history produces a much more textured account of emergent phenomena—madness, discipline, sexuality—than a purely temporal account.³ It is crucial for those of us in the social sciences and humanities to consider Foucault in this light: as a thinker who still has much to teach us about *how* to do research.

The key point here is to situate Foucault’s geography within his larger research program, which might be broadly understood via two of his own comments. First, in an interview with Paul Rabinow following the *Hérodote* interview, Foucault speaks of what he sees as the central issue for philosophy and critical thought: interrogating Reason, its historical effects, limits and dangers, explicitly as subjects practicing rationality fraught with intrinsic dangers.⁴

¹ Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3.

² Michel Foucault, “Questions on Geography,” in *Power Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, edited and translated by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 69.

³ Chris Philo, “Foucault’s Geography,” in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1991), 137.

⁴ Michel Foucault, “Space, Knowledge and Power,” in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 249.

Second, in his essay “The Subject and Power,” Foucault states that the goal of his research lies in creating “a history of the different modes by which human beings, in our culture, are made subjects,” rather than merely analyzing power.⁵

That space and geography do not appear as engines of critical thought for Foucault does not diminish their importance, though the parade of geographers constantly seeking to reassert the value of space in social thought might suggest otherwise. As Jeremy Crampton and Stuart Elden articulate in their introduction to *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, Foucault’s genuine concern with geography as a tool is reinforced by the follow-up questions he asks the *Hérodote* editors. Among other inquiries, Foucault seeks the geographers’ specialized knowledge regarding the concept of ‘strategy’ in relation to knowledge and power, how they understand power and whether or not they think it can be wielded.⁶ And though Foucault’s explicit concern with spatiality wanes in his later works, one might say that his shifting focus to corporeal practices in the last two volumes of the *History of Sexuality* nevertheless continues to demonstrate a sensitivity to space via strategies relating the body to its milieu.

Of course, the question remains: what can Deleuze and Guattari (D&G) bring to geographic inquiry, considering Foucault’s acknowledged and invaluable insights? One potential response is in an essay on Foucault’s account of neoliberalism, in which John Protevi demonstrates how Foucault’s differential historical methodology largely fits within Deleuze’s metaphysics. He makes three major points: the field of forces or actions that Foucault traces, are synonymous with Deleuze’s notion of a heterogeneous and dynamic multiplicity; the integration of these forces into *dispositifs* corresponds to Deleuze’s concept of differentiation (actualization); and Foucault’s tracing of immanent historical realities satisfies Deleuze’s insistence that the conditions of possibility for experience must be shown in the actualization of a differential field.⁷

Given this compatibility, Deleuze’s discussion of virtual ‘spaces of sense’ that emerge alongside perceptions of actual space goes deeper than Foucault’s tracing of actual spaces.⁸ In Foucault’s historical realism, sense is – for all practical matters – bound up in the *dispositifs* that order the world. For Deleuze, however, the actual and the virtual are reciprocal determinations of the real: any event unfolding in actual space produces a parallel event in virtual space, causing sense to emerge as decoupled from the actual. As the realm of memory and imagination, sense is crucial for constructing ideas of alternative worlds, and therefore immanent politics. Perhaps even more radically, D&G proffer the idea of *incorporeal transformations*, which describe modulations in the field of potential subjectivities. Whereas Foucault’s contribution to politics might be best characterized as assessing and problematizing the current state

⁵ Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in *The Essential Foucault*, edited by Paul Rabinow & Nikolas Rose. (New York: The New Press, 2003), 126.

⁶ Jeremy Crampton & Stuart Elden (eds.), *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography* (Hampshire, England: Ashgate, 2007), 3.

⁷ John Protevi, “What does Foucault think is New about Neoliberalism?” in *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, 21, (2010) 1-25.

⁸ Claire Colebrook, “The Space of Man: On the Specificity of Affect in Deleuze and Guattari,” in *Deleuze & Space*, edited by Ian Buchanan & Gregg Lambert (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 191.

of affairs, and his normative position is often criticized as vague, D&G embrace the fullness of the 'pure present'. For them, *all past potentialities are contained within the present* as the virtual, enabling any combination thereof to be selected and pursued in the direction of life-affirming possible worlds.

Finally, we might turn to a conversation between Foucault and Deleuze for a third answer. For all of Foucault's investigations into the rationality that ultimately shapes subjectivities, Deleuze has one key insight: rational interests are indeed crucial, but if one is really committed to tracing their emergence, one should be examining desire, for it shapes rational interests and molds and distributes power.⁹ Together, these Deleuzian interventions gesture toward how Foucauldian scholars in general, or geographers in particular, might benefit from an engagement with the former, especially when confronting a field of dynamic forces or actions that is hereby pushed into the even more stochastic territory of human imagination and competing desires.

Within this context, Mark Bonta and Protevi elaborate on how such a crossover between a hybrid social/physical science like geography and the acute developments of Deleuzoguattarian philosophy might be achieved. The text is organized into three equally important sections: a guide that serves as an introduction and gives the reader the necessary context, in which to situate the strength of D&G's thinking, a glossary of terms, and a case study from Bonta's research. The centerpiece of the guide is an explication of complexity theory as it relates to Deleuzoguattarian thought, explicitly directed toward questions confronting geographers, yet it should also be understood as an attempt to bridge linguistic and conceptual impasses between science and philosophy in general. A critical element here is thus Deleuze's stated interest in producing a metaphysics/ontology that is adequate to contemporary scientific thought.¹⁰

Bonta and Protevi adopt Manuel Delanda's 'flattened' reconstruction of Deleuze's ontology. Delanda's strategy is to downplay the level of the social in an effort to avoid anthropocentrism, thereby acknowledging the sensing and contemplating capacities of all entities, and the inherent affective ability of all organisms.¹¹ This tactic potentially obscures some of the conceptual ammunition essential for researching emergent social phenomena (here loosely defined as state formation, institutional practices and individual/group formation). While recognizing the entire sensing world on equal terms is necessary to minimize the privileging of human activity, researchers still must account for the social production. Bonta and Protevi are sensitive to this, as can be seen in their discussion of the structure/agency debate, in which they argue that D&G's view incorporates the emergent capacities of the subject as well as the social forces that structure behavior, thereby circumventing the binary argument that has become entrenched in many academic circles. Nevertheless, perhaps due to its focus on complexity theory, the Guide tends toward a mechanical explanation of the world and, we would

⁹ Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power" in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited by Donald F. Bouchard, translated by Donald F. Bouchard & Sherry Simon (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1980), 215.

¹⁰ Mark Bonta & John Protevi, *Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Guide and Glossary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 12.

¹¹ Manuel De Landa, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (London; New York: Continuum, 2002), 162.

argue, does not pay sufficient attention to *Anti-Oedipus* (AO) and emergence above the level of the subject: namely, the social machines that overcode flows of desiring production at the emergent level of the subject.¹²

To an uninitiated human geographer, for example, this particular framing of D&G's thinking in relation to the social sphere may appear insufficient. Had the authors more fully engaged the concept of attraction and bifurcation points in order to understand a variety of phenomena, the range of relevance might be more evident at the outset. While an 'ecosystem' example is very clear, how might this concept be put to work in a phenomenon like the *War on Terror*, with the events of 9/11 serving as a bifurcation point that unsettled the basin of attraction of peace-time relations with the Middle East? However, what the Guide lacks in socio-political examples, it makes up for in the extensive glossary of terms. We therefore encourage readers to produce their own relevant examples, refer often to the glossary, and begin the arduous yet rewarding process of reading both AO and ATP.

The final section of the Guide reveals what is at stake, intellectually, in order to fully embrace this orientation. The authors strive to offer an alternative way of thinking and producing knowledge, challenging not only disciplines, but also ontological and epistemological frameworks, in order to create a more collegial terrain upon which the various sciences can communicate in a more productive way. In *What is Philosophy?*, D&G assert that Science, Philosophy, and Art inform and are informed by one another, and are equally important by virtue of their unique perspectives.¹³ In this same spirit, the authors argue for researchers to disavow 'royal science' by reconsidering what constitutes legitimate objects of study, and to rhizomatically connect with disparate bodies of literature, not because they align with entrenched positions, but rather because they can provide a more robust account of a particular space.

The Glossary forms the bulk of the text and presents definitions of concepts and ideas that form the building blocks of AO and ATP and/or specifically apply to geographical inquiry. By sketching out the conceptual point of entry for the readers, it establishes a critical base from which to approach these formidable texts, both on their own terms and in relation to geography. However, while the concepts that inform ATP are well represented, the critical underlying concepts developed in AO are lacking the same treatment. Across both texts, D&G produce a conceptual framework with which to analyze the lines of force or desire that course through individuals and larger group formations, and which has immediate practical and political implications. This mode of analysis, variously referred to as schizo-analysis, pragmatics, and rhizomatics, enables the researcher to examine the movement between emergence at the level of the subject, in relation to emergence at the level above the subject. This critical maneuver by D&G is not given adequate attention within this text.

The excellent case study that concludes the book reveals the contribution of D&G's work to research methodology. It provides an account of a rural area of Honduras that is home to multiple layers of use and meaning, as well as perspectives produced by competing

¹² Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem & Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

¹³ Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson & Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

desires. By striving to see a location in its complexity, the researcher can begin to track the various forces that have produced its distinct spaces. The space in question can no longer be conceived of as containing one primary use; rather, it reveals spaces of entanglement, where perceptions of use no longer determine what constitutes a legitimate practice. Ultimately, the multiplicity of heterogeneous uses gives rise to rhizomatic connections that help users conceive of alternative worlds where the State is but one actor. This framework for analyzing empirical data thus empowers the researcher to present multiple voices, but it also has real political import: it empowers the subjects of the case study by revealing the multiple lines of competing desires that flow through a particular space, and outlining a way to rethink what they recognize to be permissible practices. In conclusion, Bonta and Protevi's intervention bolsters the claim that Deleuzoguattarian thought has much to offer the discipline of geography, and reading it in light of Foucault's widely acknowledged contributions opens up new realms of potentiality in research and on the ground.

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