

Preface

For a *People-Yet-to-Come*: Deleuze, Guattari, Politics and Education

Matthew Carlin and Jason J. Wallin

Over the past decade, a number of works have appeared that focus on the significance of *Deleuzian* thought for education. Perhaps most notable amongst these projects are Kaustav Roy's *Teachers in Nomadic Spaces* (2008), Inna Semetsky's *Nomadic Education* (2008), and William Reynolds and Julie Weaver's *Expanding Curriculum Theory* (2002). Operationalizing *Deleuze and Guattari's* challenge for contemporary education, this emerging line of scholarship has begun to mobilize original conceptual resources for thought and action, and further, provokes us to do what Deleuze did: that is, create concepts for productively escaping those impasses of thought and expression to which life is made to habitually conform – including our conception of habit itself. Implicated herein are those territories of thought Deleuze and Guattari refer to as *Oedipal* – the regulation of social flows or differences under strict regimes of *statistical* and *identitarian* organization. The problematic that Deleuze (2003) brings to bear throughout his philosophical project is one of *a people*, or more specifically, the *absence of a people* not yet anticipated by models of political, social, psychological, and pedagogical capture. The task of philosophy, Deleuze claims, is not simply one of representing a people as *this* or *that*, but rather, of fabulating *a people* in the process of becoming, or rather, *a people-yet-to-come*. This political-philosophical entreaty is bound to the contemporary consideration of life itself. That is, if life is continually tethered to prior categories of expression, the question of a future not already anticipated by prior habits of thought becomes violently overdetermined. The danger of such overdetermination inheres to the contemporary problems in which much of the Euro-American educational project finds itself today. Specifically, whether it intends to or not, the contemporary educational project already presumes how it is that *a life* will go. Even the most forward-thinking work of arts-based educators, philosophers of education, and curriculum theorists all too often posits an image of life that fails to problematize the socio-political *individual*, the psychoanalytic

conceptualization of *desire* as *lack*, and the continued production of transcendent foundations upon which such images of thought rely.

Such a rethinking might begin with an articulation of the political character of contemporary education in relation to what Deleuze dubs *control society* that, for the school system, is evident as ‘the effect on the school of perpetual training, the corresponding abandonment of all university research, the introduction of the “corporation” at all levels of schooling’ (Deleuze, 1992, p. 7). This is to say that modes of social control have undergone a marked transformation in the past half century. While Foucault’s genealogy of disciplinary society articulates a mechanism of control predicated on panoptic (centralized) power, the confinement of the subject into spaces of surveillance, and the subject’s willing internalization of social norms, contemporary neo-liberal capitalism has profoundly mutated this image of social power. As Deleuze documents, we live in an era in which bio-political power functions in collusion with the decoding of social codes under capitalism. While panoptic power functioned by means of restraint and confinement, what Deleuze dubs *control society* functions by ‘freeing the subject’ into complex meshworks of registration and consumption. This turn is apparent in the contemporary reconceptualization of the University as a space of ‘consumer choice’, flexible transfer credits, and pliable modes of distance delivery. It is the integration and use of new technologies that not only makes the transition from consumer life to school seamless, but also enables the new corporate model of schooling to further encroach upon the lives of students and teachers who are now identified and measured merely as so many potential producers of surplus value and profit. While existing within the context of classrooms and institutions of formal learning, the increasing formal curricular focus on job preparation and entrepreneurship¹ leaves little doubt as to the extent to which the corporate model has seeped over its original boundaries to saturate schools at all levels – a contemporary occurrence that has built upon, and seemingly perfected, the techniques of the *fabbrica diffusa* – the term first utilized in 1970’s Italy to describe the way that workers were tracked down by capital in other spheres of everyday life after their exodus from the degrading existence of factory work.² While it is certainly the case that schools have never been immune from the axiom of profit or capital, it is also the case that there

¹ The focus on entrepreneurship is most clearly exemplified in new developments in the field of neuroscience where the brain is becoming the site of new forms of manipulation in order to create the ideal capitalist. See, for example, Yale Psychiatrist Bruce Wexler’s work on utilizing particular brain exercises to create better entrepreneurs, work that was initially experiments on rats and has since moved on to working on humans in Connecticut, and Harlem.

² See Raunig, 2013 for more on the *fabbrica diffusa* and its relationship to contemporary education.

is continually less and less space available in which to contest and escape such economic truths.

Within this model, education mutates into an open system of training that is itself rhizomatic (smooth). That is, the commodification of contemporary education is characterized by the often valorized notions of *perpetual becoming*, *interminable prolongation*, and *recommencement* – most clearly expressed in the increasing axiological weight given to the notion of ‘life-long learning’. Ostensibly, the commodification of education desires both to attract and to produce *vagabonds*, subjects constantly on the move for whom new forms of flexible training and registration (educational ‘services’) can be continuously mobilized.

While not inherently negative, the reterritorialization of the University upon the body of capital has had more dire effects. Today we see the decomposition of the university into ever greater forms of surveillance and tracking, work in academia becoming more indistinguishable from grant writing, and universities and colleges being utilized more for conference organizing and as spaces for corporate advertising than for teaching and research. The implications of this shift in control requires focused political intervention, since much of the anti-oppressive educational project remains wedded to the ostensibly liberatory goal of unfettering its subject. Problematically, while the forms of control documented by such radical pedagogues as the Marxian-inspired Paulo Freire have become outmoded, they continue to serve as the dominant mode of inquiry around which much critically engaged pedagogy revolves.

What is required for a political pedagogy today is a reinvigorated look at the reorganization of the social field at the end of modernity and the cessation of the *banking model of education* critiqued by Freire. It is via such an analytic re-launch that we might begin to cast suspicion on the new rhetorics of complexity and contradiction that have become synonymous with radical thought in contemporary educational theory. Simply, that capitalism thrives on the projects of *crisis*, *contradiction* and *complexity* lauded in much ‘liberatory’ curriculum thought has yet to be fully detected by anti-oppressive theorists in education. Concomitantly, the valorization of *incompleteness*, *process* and *life-long learning* in much arts-based and educational theorizing functions as an ideal corollary for a market economy no longer premised on enclosure, but rather, the production of an interminable *debt*. Put differently, neo-liberal market economics requires a subject that is always already in a process of seeking out new tastes, sensibilities, and images. For neo-liberal economics, the ‘complete’ subject is to be avoided ‘at all costs’, in so far as its sedimentation is

counterposed to perpetual marketing, self-styling, and the aesthetic sampling of popular ‘tastes’. It is in response to the ways in which our conception of liberation has been reterritorialized in new tyrannies that this book aims to educe a genuine image of education and learning able to elude the grasp of the most readily available and acceptable conceptual tools at our disposal.

This task suggests the need to create new *grounds* (as a concept distinct from ready-made territories) for political action in education. Such a project might occur through the mobilization of new conceptual resources for a style of political thought capable of maximizing expressive potentials for a people not yet figured in the majoritarian (statistical, binaristic, transcendent) image of State thought – a sphere of existence that Deleuze and Guattari argue has not disappeared with the advance of capital, but rather merely become indistinguishable from everyday life and society as such.

Avoiding the capture of the State entails creating a unique style of political thought drawing from multiple fields, and further, the theorization of a politics drawing from creative philosophical, artistic and social *micromovements* alive today that have abandoned traditional party politics revolving around the Leninist pedagogical narrative of ‘the one who knows’ in favour of new transversally inspired forms of collective organization. This tactical shift is foregrounded in the political and philosophical work of Deleuze and Guattari, whose *oeuvre* is composed via a continuous non-philosophical approach to philosophizing. In this task, this book takes seriously those *minoritarian* forms of expression being created at the peripheries of standardized education, exploring the potential forms of non-integration, refusal and exodus alive in the social field today, adopting for education ‘those revolutions going on elsewhere, in other domains, or those that are being prepared’ (Deleuze, 2004, p. 138). As Deleuze states, ‘there is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons’ (1992, p. 4).

In an age marked by the increasing overdetermination of education in the image of instrumental thought and universal standardization, the Deleuzian and Guattarian notion of *singularity* assumes political significance. Originally employed in mathematics as a means of surveying the different ways in which a particular problem might be solved, the concept of singularity takes as its focus the notion of the problem *itself*. In educational terms, this development is significant in so far as it suggests that the contemporary image of education is but one of many. Taking the notion of singularity seriously, this book attends to not only the *actual* state of affairs in which contemporary education has become territorialized, but further, to those ‘problem(s)’ that the contemporary image of education attempts to resolve. It is hence towards such problems as how a

public is made, the organization of student desire, and the question of what it means to *learn* that this book is organized. In this commitment to the *problems* of education, however, this book aims to do more than pose solutions. As Deleuze (2004) writes, we have been led to believe that problems emerge *ready-made*, only to disappear through the formulation of responses or solutions. This illusion, Deleuze contends, suggests that *problems* emerge prior to solutions in causal relation. Rethinking this problem–solution binary, Deleuze argues that problems and solutions are concurrent – a position that does nothing but arouse suspicion at the prospects for success of new educational policy. As such we might understand the problems of contemporary education as immanent to the quality of solutions that have been projected upon it. In this vein, this book begins to introduce new problems for contemporary education – pedagogy being only as good as the problems it creates.

Following Deleuze's intent to conceive of philosophy and art as the creation of new pathways, we mean to use Deleuze's (1953) discussion of empiricism as a springboard to begin to counter the communicational compulsions and associated informational automatisms that have come to typify the institutionalized approach to education endemic to the control society. Specifically, this book challenges formal schooling's dominant mantra of skills and knowledge that relegates education to the mere acquisition of information and recitation of subjective presuppositions in the quest to overcome ignorance. Through focusing on Deleuze's work on empiricism and attendant reprioritization of experimentation we begin to think how education might inherently depend on new conceptual relations with objects and the world – both in terms of their use as a locus for the proliferation of desire, and also as a concomitant generator of new subjectivities. Instead of the transcendence inherent to the acquisition of skills and knowledge proffered by institutions, the empiricism of Deleuze inspires a trust and corresponding experimentation with this world that resituates ignorance as not only a productive force, but one essential to imagination and creative discovery. In other words, it is only through abandoning predictive and formulaic engagements with the world that new potentialities might appear. In our estimation, Deleuze's thought with regard to objects and the world, one that goes as far as to blur the line between the taken-for-granted separation between humans and non-humans, offers educational practitioners and researchers emerging pathways and linkages to begin to experiment and create new relationships with our surroundings.

Our intention is to generate work that seeks to replace the understanding of education as the institutionalized acquisition of information and skills with

one based on a new conceptual engagement with the world generated from contact with something outside the parameters of institutionally verified and compartmentalized forms of knowledge (Deleuze, 2000). We argue that these and other contemporary issues related to schooling, learning and teaching specifically necessitate an engagement with the political thought of Deleuze and Guattari. This collection of essays is not a call to become Deleuzian or Guattarian, but rather a call to think with and from their political thought in order to outmanoeuvre the modulating effects of the corporate subsumption of education and instigate new forms of institutional life and social organization.

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