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METAMORPHO-LOGIC: BODIES AND POWERS IN *A THOUSAND PLATEAUS*

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Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* is a rhizome book, made up of a series of textual plateaus, rather than chapters, which deal with an apparently heterogeneous array of contents. The successive plateaus do not develop an argument so much as construct a number of concepts, in the course of outlining a series of theoretical domains invented by the authors, such as schizoanalysis, social cartography, pragmatics or nomadology. As a result, it is difficult to say what the book is about. *A Thousand Plateaus* is "about" all kinds of things: language, desire, music, forms of thought and forms of social and political organisation. From the outset, it is apparent that the form of the text is an important element of the project. Deleuze and Guattari insist that "there is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made".[1] In effect, this book is a conscious attempt to invent, not just a new style of writing but a new style of thought which they call nomad thought. Accordingly, it is a matter of principle that it has no single, well-defined object or domain of enquiry. But this does not mean that it is without unity or structure of any kind. The unity of this book lies in the fact that it theorises a succession of assemblages, while assuming itself the form of a particular kind of assemblage, a rhizome, in contrast to the tree structures which are more commonly found in books of philosophy. Arborescent structures are hierarchical, bounded systems with foundations or central axes which provide clear-cut conditions of identity. Rhizomes, by contrast, are flat, open-ended multiplicities defined only by thresholds beyond which an increase of dimensions will involve a change in the nature of the system as a whole.

As a rhizome book, *A Thousand Plateaus* has the kind of repetitive, anarchic structure attributed to such forms of plant life. What it repeats across the several plateaus is the descriptive analysis of different kinds of assemblage. The discusssion of the various contents with which it deals invariably takes the form of theorising a certain type of assemblage: assemblages of desire under the heading of schizoanalysis, assemblages of language use or utterance under the heading of pragmatics and so on. The concepts which are constructed along the way include various types of strata and lines in terms of which assemblages are defined, such as molar lines, molecular lines and lines of flight or deterritorialisation. They include social processes of nomadic movement as opposed to forms of capture, as well as the affects or becomings which characterise certain kinds of biological and social bodies. Such concepts are developed and deployed in one context, only to be extended and distorted by being deployed in new and unrelated

contexts. By this means, Deleuze and Guattari render explicit the character of these concepts as themselves assemblages which change their nature as new connections create additional dimensions of meaning. What exactly is an assemblage? An assemblage is a multiplicity of heterogeneous objects, whose unity comes solely from the fact that these items function together, that they "work" together as a functional entity.[2] The components of an assemblage may be divided into two categories: states of bodies or things, on the one hand, and regimes of signs or utterances on the other. In this respect, assemblages are not unlike the objects that Foucault studies under the name of "apparatuses" of power and knowledge, such as the carceral apparatus or the modern "experience" of sexuality. Like these objects, assemblages include both discursive and non-discursive components. However, Deleuze and Guattari's approach to the analysis of assemblages is neither structural nor genealogical but functional or machinic. Hence they introduce another axis along which assemblages are always divided: this is the axis of the movements which animate an assemblage, or the character of the processes which it sustains. On the one hand, there is the constitution of a territory, a movement of reterritorialisation. On the other hand, there is always a movement of deterritorialisation, a line of flight along which the assemblage breaks down or becomes transformed into something else. At the beginning of *A Thousand Plateaus,* the same idea of the two sides to any assemblage is introduced in terms of the difference between an organism and a body without organs: "one side of a machinic assemblage faces the strata, which doubtless make it a kind of organism, or signifying totality, or determination attributable to a subject; it also has a side facing a body without organs, which is continually dismantling the organism, causing asignifying particles or pure intensities to pass or circulate..." [3]

As this terminology suggests, animate bodies may be counted among assemblages. Indeed, the concept of assemblage may be regarded as no more than an abstract conception of bodies of all kinds, one which does not discriminate between animate and inanimate bodies, individual or collective bodies, biological or social bodies: "A body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea; it can be a linguistic corpus, a social body, a collectivity".[4] What makes a given arrangement of parts into a body is precisely their co-operation. What distinguishes one type of body from another is the specific capacities it has for being or acting in certain ways, as well as its capacities for interaction with other bodies. Deleuze and Guattari employ Spinoza's term *affects* to characterise such capacities: "We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body".[5] This characterisation of bodies in terms of affects leads to a novel conception: bodies no longer understood in terms of their form, or even in terms of the substance of which they are

composed, but in terms of their capacities to affect and be affected. In other words, this is a conception of bodies defined in terms of their powers.

More generally, the theory of assemblages developed in *A Thousand Plateaus* may be read as a theory of power. In view of the structural role of this concept in providing the thread of unity within difference which characterises the book as a whole, the theory of assemblages may be regarded as a kind of formal language, open to various semantic interpretations. Treating the language of assemblages as a way of defining particular bodies in terms of their characteristic powers, and as a way of distinguishing modalities of the exercise of power, is therefore one possible interpretation. The interest of this interpretation lies in the manner in which it highlights some ethical and political implications of the Deleuzian enterprise. As unlikely as it might seem, the abstract and inhuman language of *A Thousand Plateaus* contains a novel approach to the ethics and politics of difference. Before we can show this, however, some terminological clarification is required in order to make this interpretation plausible.

After all, there are passages in *A Thousand Plateaus* which appear to conflict with this interpretation of the theory of assemblages as a theory of power. In a footnote in which the authors state their points of disagreement with Foucault, they assert two things:

> (1) to us the assemblages seem fundamentally to be assemblages not of power but of desire (desire is always assembled), and power seems to be a stratified dimension of the assemblage; (2) the diagram and abstract machine have lines of flight that are primary, which are not phenomena of resistance or counterattack in an assemblage, but cutting edges of creation and deterritorialization.[6]

However, we need to ask how these terms "power" and "desire" are being used in this context. Ordinarily, when political theorists speak of power they have in mind a certain kind of action upon the actions of others. Power may be exercised by individuals, groups or institutions, but it always involves some kind of direction or control of the actions of others. In short, political power is taken to mean power over others. However, power understood in this manner presupposes another concept of power: the power to be or do certain things, which both the agent exercising power and the one over whom it is being exercised must be supposed to possess. This ability to do certain things or to act in various ways is the primary sense of "power", both in relation to the capacity (supposing it exists) to exercise power over others, and in relation to the desire to do so. Hobbes defines a man's power as his present means to obtain some future apparent good. However, once he moves beyond the natural endowments of the agent to consider "instrumental" powers, which are the means by which individuals can enhance their own powers, he mentions only those things which enable individuals to control the powers of others, such as riches, reputation or friendship.[7]

The Foucault with whom Deleuze and Guattari are disagreeing in the passage quoted above addresses a different set of mechanisms for the exercise of power over others. This is the Foucault of *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality: Volume I,* for whom the study of power

relations meant primarily the study of those means by which the thoughts and actions of individuals are governed, by others, from without. "Discipline", as Foucault describes it, comprises a set of techniques for the exercise of power over bodies. It is a generalisable mechanism, a "diagramme", which may be employed across a range of institutions in order to produce both an increase in the individual and collective forces of those subject to discipline, and an increase in their docility or subjection to higher authority. "Sexuality" likewise involves a regulation of individual and collective desires, beliefs and behaviours such that modern individuals are constituted as sexual subjects in certain ways rather than others, as a result of historical processes external to them. In both cases, discipline and sexuality are presumed to involve the exercise of power over the bodies, beliefs and pleasures of individuals. However, Foucault's text makes it apparent that the bodies on which power was exercised were bodies endowed with forces or capacities which it was the aim of authorities to control. While he does not always draw the distinction between the powers of bodies and the powers exercised over them in explicit terms, such a distinction was in fact implicit in all his earlier work.[8]

A similar distinction is at work in Deleuze and Guattari's text. For them too, power is defined in terms or a relation to certain active primary forces or processes: it is a power over something else. Thus, on the one hand, they tend to reserve the term "power" for the sense of power over other agents or processes. For example, they define centres of power, whether in a social or an organic body, in terms of the tendency to fix or stratify more fluid movements. In these terms, they assert that "the man of power will always want to stop the lines of flight".[9] On the other hand, with regard to the nature of assemblages in general, Deleuze and Guattari contrast power with desire, as they do in the passage above detailing what they take to be their differences with Foucault. It is therefore apparent that "power" in this passage must be understood as power over the primary forces or processes with a given assemblage. At the same time, "desire" understood as active forces or processes is equivalent to power in its primary sense, that is the ability to do or to become certain things.

> "Desire: who, except priests, would want to call it "lack"? Nietzsche called it "Will to Power". There are other names for it. For example, "Grace"... [also] the process of desire is called "Joy".[10]

Deleuze and Guattari reject not only Freudian conceptions of desire as lack, but the whole tradition of thought, extending back to Plato, which understands desire in these terms. Typically, this involves a conception of being as divided in such a way that desire (in the *Phaedrus,* love) may be understood in terms of a lack of being. Instead, they follow Spinoza and Nietzsche, among others, in adopting a conception of being as undivided, univocal and as identical with "full" desire. On this view, Being/desire is the active principle of nature itself, the "inner will" in all events and processes that Nietzsche called "will to power". Understood in this manner, desire is a

real abstraction. Like nature, it exists only in determinate systems and processes, which Deleuze and Guattari call assemblages: "Desire is always assembled: it is what the assemblage determines it to be".[11] Assemblages are what determine the operations of this active nature at all levels, from the micro-biological to the cosmic. For this reason, the operations of this desire or power in its primary sense must be understood in terms of the theory of assemblages developed in *A Thousand Plateaus:* the Deleuzian theory of Being/desire/power takes the form of a theory of assemblages.

In order to suggest political and ethical consequences of this Deleuzian theory of power, we need to examine more closely the different ways in which power can be exercised, in relation to the details of particular assemblages and processes described in *A Thousand Plateaus.* I suggested above that political theory is concerned with power understood as action upon others. As a definition of power, however, this is too broad. Political theory tends to treat power as a normative concept, and restrict its scope to certain kinds of action upon others; namely, those actions which limit or distort the other's capacity to act in certain ways. Within the liberal tradition, power is always understood as being exercised at the expense of individual freedom. Power is therefore that which must be opposed, or rendered legitimate in those cases where its exercise is thought to be unavoidable. Socialist traditions have developed within broadly the same framework of judgement: revolutionary politics tends to be understood in terms of the liberation of subject groups or individuals from their subjection to a power which is repressive, hostile to their "real" interests, or restrictive of their possibilities for development. Eschewing the language of "interests", and assuming that insofar as power is contested it involves action upon the sphere of action of beings endowed with powers and capacities of their own, we can follow Foucault and define domination as a particular kind of action upon the actions of others, namely one which seeks to establish a regular pattern of control. Domination occurs when otherwise fluid and mobile states of relative power become fixed into more or less stable and asymmetrical arrangements. Systems of domination allow some to direct or govern the actions of others.[12]

To the extent that individuals or groups possess this ability to direct the actions of others, they are in a position to extract benefit from the use of others' powers. C. B. Macpherson coined the term *extractive power* in order to describe this capacity which some acquire to employ the capacities of others.[13] The extractive power of an individual or class is typically sustained only by specific mechanisms for the exercise of *power over others:* for example, property relations in societies based upon the exploitation of labour, or social and legal relations between the sexes in societies in which males benefit from the subordination of women. When they are entrenched as more or less stable systems of domination, such mechanisms amount to a system of continuous capture of at least some part of the power of others.

Deleuze and Guattari also define political power or sovereignty in terms of a notion of capture. Sovereignty is defined in terms of a particular assemblage or abstract machine which they call the State-form. This is not be confused with particular systems or apparatuses of political rule. Rather, it is the principle common to all such empirical forms of state, the "essential moment" of all States: "the State is sovereignty".[14] Deleuze and Guattari define this abstract State-machine, by reference to two processes: the first is its tendency to create milieus of interiority, since "sovereignty only reigns over what it is capable of internalizing, of appropriating locally".[15] The State machine constitutes a certain kind of social space, enclosed and striated; it draws lines, border lines, lines of division or lines of communication which give rise to a social space quite different from the open, smooth space of nomadic existence. Secondly and most importantly, the State is defined by the process of capture. The State is indissociable from "a process of capture of flows of all kinds, populations, commodities, or commerce, money or capital, etc.".[16] Already to describe it in this manner is to make the essence of the State a reactive or dependent process, one which can only operate in relation to primary, active flows of matter and activity. In this sense the State is a secondary formation, one which extracts from these flows a surplus, which then becomes a means to maintain and enhance its own power. Sovereignty as Deleuze and Guattari define it is essentially an extractive power; only the mechanisms of extraction vary from one form of State to the next.

The operation of capture always involves two things: the constitution of a general space of comparison and the establishment of a centre of appropriation. The modern electoral process might be seen to exemplify this process insofar as it constitutes a form of capture of the political will of the population. "Political will" here means the capacity for active participation in decisions affecting the community as a whole. Electoral politics first reduces the involvement of each participant to that of a uniform vote or voice in a poll, then it assigns a value to that voice in relation to a pre-given agenda or an already established set of alternatives. The possibility of answering yes or no, party *A* or party *B*, is all that the elector subject can hope for by way of involvement in the process of collective decision making. Or consider the capture of human activity in the form of labour, a mechanism perfected by capitalism but already practised in the archaic imperial States. Productive activity may proceed under what Deleuze and Guattari call a regime of "free action" or activity in continuous variation such as may be found in some "primitive" societies. Once a standard of comparison is imposed, however, in the form of a quantity to be produced or a time to be worked, then there is the possibility of hiving off a surplus. The transformation of free activity into labour and the extraction of a suplus, they suggest, go together.[17]

While this definition of the State-form as a certain kind of abstract machine is intended to encompass the apparatuses of political domination it

is by no means confined to them. Bentham's Panopticon, which Foucault describes as a diagram of a generalisable mechanism of power, as well as an architectural model of the techniques of disciplinary power, also illustrates the twin procedures of direct comparison and monopolistic appropriation. In its most literal form, the central observation tower establishes a uniform field of surveillance across the cells, and appropriates a "surplus" of control over the inmates. More generally, the disciplinary techniques themselves provide means for the capture of a whole range of human activities, educational, military or religious as well as productive. Through their role in the constitution of knowledge, Foucault points to the possibilities for the epistemological capture of non-human or trans-human flows of disease, aptitude or capacity. The example of discipline as a specific technology or set of mechanisms of capture also points to the link between processes of capture and those of normalisation or standardisation. This is one reason why the resistance to sovereignty or State-forms, in the broad sense which Deleuze and Guattari give to these notions, will always involve the assertion of difference: the maintenance of an irreducible difference is to refuse the first step in the process of capture, namely the reduction to a uniform field of sameness or identity, whether as workers, women, consumers or citizens. Who or what is the source of such refusal? For Deleuze and Guattari, resistance to domination cannot be grounded in an essentially free human nature. Rather, it must be understood in terms of a relation between different kinds of assemblage. For this reason, the figure which opposes or resists the operations of the State is another type of assemblage which they call the war-machine. This supports all those processes which remain outside the forms of State, all those movements which resist the process of capture and which are hostile to the state by their very nature: "In every respect, the war-machine is of another species, another nature, another origin than the State apparatus".[18] Contrary to what is suggested by the name, the war-machine has no necessary relation to war. Nor indeed does the state, since its essential operation relies upon other more insidious forms of violence. Rather, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, war is what results from the collision between these two irreducibly different processes, or what emerges as the dominant aim of those forms of war-machine which have been themselves captured by forms of State. In its essence, the war machine is related to the establishment and occupation of a smooth space, by contrast with the striated space of state-governed existence. "1227: Treatise on Nomadology–The War Machine" develops a detailed differential analysis of the State and war-machine, specifying each assemblage by contrasting such things as their respective forms of internal organisation, their different regimes of violence, their different affinities to modes of symbolic expression, to passions and to forms of physical activity. It is an axiom of this account that the war machine was invented by nomads, so that much of the analysis proceeds by specifying the conditions of nomadic existence.

The essential traits are the nomad's relation to space and the kind of space

inhabited: this is a smooth space, one without the enclosures, borders or paths characteristic of striated space. Nomadic space is essentially fluid, broken up only by temporary and fluctuating surface traits such as the sand dunes in a desert. It is a rhizomatic space, serving as pure surface for nomadic existence which is always mobile, en route, deterritorialised, not in the sense that they have no territory but in the sense that their existence on it never becomes fixed in a single place. Moreover, the relationship between nomadic existence and smooth space is an active one, "for it has been established that the nomads make the desert no less than they are made by it. They are vectors of deterritorialisation...".[19] It is this productive relation to smooth space that constitutes the essence of the war-machine. It is the active element in the propagation of smooth or rhizomatic space, a revolutionary machine of mutation and change, the objective of which is to emit quanta of de-territorialisation, to "increase the desert". One is reminded of Nietzsche's desert, "where the strong, independent spirits withdraw and become lonely".[20] Such spirits are, for Nietzsche, above all the creators of new values. Similarly, the war-machine is what provides the creative power, the capacity for transmutation and free movement which are realised along lines of flight: "Writing and music can be war machines. The more an assemblage opens and multiplies connections and draws a plane of consistency with its quantifiers of intensities and of consolidation, the closer it is to the living abstract machine".[21]

Deleuze and Guattari introduce the notions of State and war-machine in the context of elaborating a machinic theory of history; that is, one in which particular social formations are to be understood in terms of the machinic processes realised within them. These processes in turn are defined by the two types of abstract machine which inhabit the social field, constituting as it were two opposing poles. These two poles have always co-existed, States and forms of nomadism competing "in a perpetual field of interaction". As well as real independence from one another, there is a formal difference between them: since it always creates a milieu of interiority, the State reproduces itself, remaining the same across its variant forms; by contrast, since it is a machine of mutation which has an essential relation to the exterior, the war-machine exists only in its own metamorphoses, which can take diverse forms such as that of an industrial innovation, a commercial circuit or a religious creation. Nevertheless, Deleuze and Guattari claim "the same field circumscribes its interiority in States, but describes its exteriority in what escapes States or stands against them".[22] The field of which these two abstract machines are both expressions must therefore be nature or life itself, an abstract power prior to any determinate modality of action. While this power to act is primary, the State-form and war-machine are each defined by reference to a particular modality of power: the power of appropriation of the State and the power of metamorphosis of the war-machine.[23] The fact that the figure "opposed" to the State is not defined in opposition to it, or in terms of the absence of forms of capture, but in terms of its own positive power,

already suggests a different conception of "oppositional" politics.

The traditional conception of revolutionary politics as directed against forms of domination presupposes both a conception of the subjects on whom power is exercised as subjects endowed with certain essential capacities in terms of which their freedom, emancipation or "real" interests might be defined – and a conception of the nature of power as exercised over others – as negative, restrictive or repressive. Foucault's analyses of disciplinary power and the *dispositif* of sexuality expose the inadequacy of this conception on both counts. The invention of normal and pathological sexualities, for example, shows that power can be exercised in productive ways; and that forms of subjectivity may themselves be effects of power, involving new forms of social and individual existence. Even so, such effects of power still amount to restrictions upon possible ways of being or acting. Insofar as they concern the exercise of power over the forces and capacities of human bodies in order to shape or turn these to certain strategic ends which are defined by other forces, Foucault's accounts of discipline and sexuality as technologies of power applied to bodies and populations do not entirely escape from a focus upon the negative forms of exercise of power.

However, not all action upon the actions of others is of this negative or restrictive kind. Leaving aside the difficult question of actions supposed to be in the interests of those whose actions are affected, there are many ways in which one can exercise power over others without decreasing their powers or setting limits to the sphere of exercise of their powers. It is even possible to enhance the powers of others by providing advice, support or simply stimulation of their own powers. Why, Nietzsche asks, is making others joyful the greatest of all joys? One answer emerges from his observation elsewhere that we sometimes increase the power of others in order to increase our own. It is a way of showing others how advantageous it is to be in our power, "that way they will become satisfied with their condition and more hostile to and willing to fight against the enemies of our power".[24] Hobbes, by contrast, in simply listing all the means by which a man may gain power over the power of others – riches, reputation, friendship – draws no distinction among the kinds of interaction with others by which an individual might enhance his or her own power. Yet such a distinction is of crucial importance for an ethics or politics of difference. If the first step towards such an ethics is to refuse the reduction of differences, the treatment of bodies only upon a uniform plane of sameness, then a second step must involve means of discriminating among modes of interaction between unequal beings.[25] What are the possible forms of interaction? What are the possible means of discrimination among them?

One obvious distinction to be drawn at the outset is that between hostile interactions of the kind which arise whenever the desire or mode of operation of one body enters into conflict with the desires or mode of operation of

another, and sympathetic encounters which occur whenever bodies are able to act together in ways which enhance the capacity of each to pursue its own operation. Relations between State-form assemblages and war-machines are of the first kind. These are beings irresolvably hostile and dangerous to one another. Considered separately, however, each of these assemblages embodies a different mode of relation with other bodies.

They encode two different means by which a body may increase its own power: as an apparatus of capture, the State-form represents a purely quantitative or linear model of increase of power. It involves the incorporation of other bodies, either because their substance feeds the powers of the capturing body, or because their powers may be added to its own. By contrast, as an apparatus of metamorphosis, the war-machine represents a more qualitative or multi-dimensional model of increase of power. The metamorphosed body is not simply the repetition of the same on a larger scale but the production of something different, a becoming-other.

Such *becomings* may in turn be singled out for analysis as a specific mode of interaction between unequal bodies. The Deleuzian analysis of *becomings* is inseparable from the conception of bodies as assemblages of *affects* or powers. Understood in this manner, bodies are not defined in terms of a determinate form or substance but in terms of a given multiplicity of *affects*. All manner of things may constitute a body in these terms: part of a day, a season, a life or a social movement. Such bodies, or *haecceities* as Deleuze and Guattari call them, are in effect simply combinations of certain degrees of power to affect and be affected. Moreover, thus understood, bodies are capable of various kinds of action or interaction with other bodies. We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, what are its *affects*. Among the *affects* of a body may be the capacity to enter into certain kinds of becoming: "Affects are becomings".[26]

The analysis proceeds by distinguishing between different ways in which bodies can become-other. One way is for them to form alliances with other bodies such that each may reinforce or enhance the powers of the other. Some political movements and some inter-personal relations, such as friendship, may involve alliances of this kind. In extreme cases, such mutually beneficial forms of interaction may constitute new, composite bodies. The body politic of classical social contract theory might be considered a body of this kind, at least so long as it is considered only as an association entered into by equals, without regard to the bodies of women and others whose incorporation is simply a result of their subordination. Or consider the symbiosis of the wasp and the orchid, whereby each enters into the reproductive process of the other: "The orchid seems to form a wasp-image, but in fact there is a wasp-becoming of the orchid and an orchid-becoming of the wasp, a double-capture... The wasp becomes part of the orchid's reproductive apparatus at the same time as the orchid becomes the sexual organ of the wasp".[27] *Becomings* of this kind may be taken to

exemplify a modality of power which is neither purely negative, as occurs when two bodies are mutually destructive, nor positive only in one direction, as occurs when one body incorporates or otherwise subordinates another to its own ends. They involve a metamorphosis in the bodies concerned, where these are understood as assemblages of powers engaged in real interaction with other bodies.

Another kind of becoming-other occurs when bodies form a kind of virtual alliance with other bodies or states of being. For example, we learn from myths, anthropological accounts and religious practices that human beings are capable of a variety of becomings-animal. On the one hand, Deleuze and Guattari suggest, these have to do with attaining certain states or levels of intensity by entering into a kind of proximity to the animal, forming an inter-individual body with the powers of the animal in question. On the other hand, such processes of becoming are essentially of the war-machine type: "There is an entire politics of becomings-animal, as well as a politics of sorcery, which is elaborated in assemblages that are neither those of the family nor of religion nor of the State. Instead they express minoritarian groups, or groups that are oppressed, prohibited, in revolt, or always on the fringe of recognized institutions..."[28]

"1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming Imperceptible ..." is devoted to the analysis of specific *becomings* of this kind. These are not phenomena of imitation or assimilation. Rather, they involve taking on, reproducing or otherwise acquiring powers specific to altogether different kinds of body. Such *becomings* involve a creative process undertaken by the subject body, an extension or enhancement of its own powers in relation to the powers of another. Writers and artists are particularly susceptible to this kind of becoming. Consider, for example, the becoming-woman of Nietzsche/Zarathustra: the former declares himself one "who *knows* women", while the latter announces as his greatest concern the desire for "his children".[29] Zarathustra aspires to a procreative power which is entirely maternal, a power or giving life to new ideas and to new values. Nietzsche, as is well known, presents the procreative body as one of the figures of woman. His becoming-woman is not a matter of really becoming female, although it is no less real for all that. It is a matter of attempting to produce in himself a version of this maternal power of giving birth to something other than himself, a matter of becoming a body which becomes itself only by becoming-other.

The importance of *becomings,* as a specific capacity of bodies, is that they are a creative process of increase or enhancement in the powers of one body, carried out in relation to the powers of another but without involving appropriation of those powers. They are a kind of action in relation to, but at a distance from, other bodies, "something which passes or happens between two as though under a potential difference".[30] The invocation of potential

difference here underscores the fact that *becomings* are a particular mode of (real or virtual) interaction between unequal bodies. In either form, they represent a creative, life-enhancing mode of interaction. Distinguishing such interactions from processes of capture provides a means of discriminating among different modes of exercising *power* over other bodies. Distinguishing different kinds of becoming provides a way of further discriminating among the means by which bodies can increase or modify their own power. Such distinctions advance the cause of an ethics and a politics of difference to the extent that they provide a means of describing the positive forms of personal and social interaction which take place outside or beyond mechanisms of domination or capture.[31]

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20. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals / Ecce Homo,* translated by W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), p. 109 (Third Essay, Section 8).
21. *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 513.
22. *A Thousand Plateaus,* pp. 360-361.
23. *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 437.
24. Nietzsche, *Daybreak,* translated by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 177 (Book IV, para. 422); *The Gay Science,* translated by W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 86 (para. 13).
25. I use "unequal" here and in what follows simply to refer to bodies endowed with *different* powers and capacities. Such difference need not imply social or political inequality.
26. *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 256.

27. *Dialogues,* p. 2.
28. *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 247.
29. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals/Ecce Homo,* p. 256; *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* translated by R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1961), pp. 181, 334
30. *Dialogues,* p. 6.
31. I am indebted to Moira Gatens for her careful comments on this paper, and many conversations on these issues.