

DARK DELEUZE



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DARK Deleuze rehabilitates the forgotten negativity in the work of Gilles Deleuze. I initially proposed it in the book of that name, following the advice Deleuze offered in a letter to Arnaud Villani, that a worthwhile book of philosophy fulfills three functions: polemics, recovery, and creativity. The polemics show that previous scholarship has committed an error, the recovery reveals that something essential has been overlooked, and creativity introduces a new idea.

Polemically, *Dark Deleuze* is set against those “affirmationists” who interpret Deleuze as a naïve thinker of positivity who joyfully affirms the wonder of this world. It criticizes those cosmic materialists who populate the plane of immanence with complex assemblages undergoing the endless processes of differentiation. It takes issue with their joyous commitment to radical constructivism because they replace critical philosophy with the task of creating conceptions. For *Dark Deleuze*, the problem with these thinkers is typical of the figure of Nietzsche’s braying ass, which always says yes because it is incapable of saying no, reiterated in their inability to find “something intolerable in the world” that would conjure Heidegger’s claim that we are still not thinking (*Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 178-186; *Cinema 2*, 170). Two sides of this ‘canon of joy’ are found in connectivism and productivism.

Connectivism is the result of a particular image of thought whereby the world appears as a single open-ended network of

becoming. To offer a few examples, such connectivism is found in the Guattarian chaosophy that intersects transversal lines between molecular subjects in the process of becoming, the Spinozism of joyous encounters organized on a plane of immanence to increase a body's power, and the flat ontology of assemblages that produce accordant networks of singularities. Inspired by Deleuze's late essay on cybernetic control societies, Dark Deleuze critiques connectivism for elevating connections in-of-themselves to a political ideal – something already exploited by the digital technology giants Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon. It draws on the terrible geopolitical consequences of Google's connectivity thesis to locate the implications of connectivism in the recent scholarly fields of political ontology, assemblage theory, affect theory, and philosophy of science. Concluding that capitalism readily appears as the most rhizomatic force in the world, it holds Deleuze and Guattari's warning not to believe "that a smooth space will suffice to save us" should extend to all concepts based on an ethics of connection (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 500).

Productivism is the result of the auto-productive "production of production" when taken as an intellectual or political end (*Anti-Oedipus*, 5-6). Two prevailing productivisms are the philosophy of vitalism and the Marxist development of productive forces. Vitalism has seen a resurgence attributed to Deleuze's reading of Henri Bergson and Baruch Spinoza, popular in the 1990s with Anglophone scholars drawing on dynamical systems theory (such as Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana's *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living*), and more recently, New Materialism's epistemological project of representing worldly phenomena as animated by biological or material agency. The other productivism is

an elaboration on Deleuze and Guattari's Spinozist formulation that "God = nature = industry," proposing even-more productive alternatives to capitalism's relative development of the forces of production, such as Deleuze and Guattari's schizo subject of revolutionary investment (*Anti-Oedipus*, 345-346), Nick Land's accelerationist inhuman marketization of everything ("Machinic Unconscious," 340-341), Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's collective global subject creative enough to "push through ... to the other side" (218), and Manuel De Landa's Braudelian promotion of decentralized markets in *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear Philosophy*. Dark Deleuze criticizes productivism for its reliance on models of reproduction and accumulation, the former seen in existential liberalism that only valorizes production that can be reproduced on an expanded scale (what Vladimir Lenin named the 'imperialism' of capitalism), the second embodied by liberal Marxisms that attempt to outproduce the capitalist world system through the total mobilization of society (similar criticized by Herbert Marcuse in *Soviet Marxism*). In contrast, it proposes interruption and a renewed focus on Deleuze and Guattari's proposition that societies be defined through their mode of antiproduction, which is to say, not what is produced but what is prevented from escaping (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 435).

Dark Deleuze recovers the forgotten negativity that impregnates Deleuze's collected works. This negativity has affinities with Walter Benjamin's destructive character and Maurice Blanchot's great refusal. The book *Dark Deleuze* proceeds by way of close reading, with particular attention to his characteristic ambivalence as seen in his use of de-, a-, in-, and non-prefixes. The result is a series of 'contraries,' which offer alternative terms to the canon of joy. The 'contrary' in this sense is an alternative to be taken, such as a fork in

the road rather than a tendential opposite, dialectical antimony, or complementary pole – to name all seventeen, a philosophical task of “destroying worlds” in contrast to “creating concepts,” a theory of the subject of “un-becoming” in contrast to “assemblages,” an analysis of existence through “transformation” in contrast to “genesis,” an ontology derived from “materialism” in contrast to “realism,” a use of difference as “exclusive disjunction” in contrast to “inclusive disjunction,” a diagrammatics of “asymmetry” in contrast to “complexity,” a form of organization of “asymmetry” in contrast to “the rhizome,” an ethics of “conspiratorical communism” in contrast to “processural democracy,” an analysis of affects of “cruelty” in contrast to “intensity,” an inquiry into speed as “escape” in contrast to “acceleration,” a theory of flows as “interruption” in contrast to “production,” a focus on the substance of “political anthropology” in contrast to “techno-science,” a nomadism of the “barbarian” in contrast to the “pastoral,” a distribution of “the outside” in contrast to “nomos,” a politics of “cataclysm” in contrast to “the molecular,” a cinema of “the power of the false” in contrast to “the force of bodies,” and a theory of the sensible as “indiscernibility” in contrast to “experience.”

Deleuze is taken here as first-and-foremost a thinker of power. As such, Dark Deleuze proposes that the role of thought is to make a partisan intervention that interrupts what is intolerable about the present. While Deleuze once called himself a “pure metaphysician,” it is clear that he did not see the role of thought as revealing truth, generating anything but practical knowledge, or partaking in the “rhapsody of sensations” (*Difference and Repetition*, 56). Around the same time, he wrote with Guattari that the purpose of philosophy is a utopian strike against capitalism, he also made remarks so

pessimistic about the traditional role of philosophy as contemplation, reflection, or communication that he called for the creation of vacuoles of non-communication. Dark Deleuze makes its case by returning to Deleuze and Guattari's insistence to "make thought a war machine" (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 376-377). The case is substantiated through Deleuze's repeated use of Black Panther George Jackson's attempted escape from prison as a paradigmatic figure of the line of flight. In fact, it was likely Deleuze's pen that wrote "Après l'assassinat," an unattributed essay praising Jackson in third issue of *Intolérable*, the magazine published by the Prison Information Group.

Creatively, Dark Deleuze proposes a 'hatred for this world' as the ambivalent double to the joyous 'believing in this world.' Deleuze usually presents power as ambivalent: affects can be ruled by tyrants, nomadic war machines can be captured by states, and concept creation can be used for commercial professional training. Dark Deleuze links thought with its time by completing the progression started by Nietzsche and advanced by Foucault, resulting in three deaths: The Death of God, The Death of Man, and the Death of This World. In his preface to *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze notes with a sense of regret that "it should have been an apocalyptic book" (xxi). Apocalyptic because his goal was to undermine the coherence of god, the human self, and the world. The conclusion of Dark Deleuze's creative project is cataclysmic transformation. It proposes an end to the worldly thinking first diagnosed by Heidegger as the production of a "world picture," but instead of a concern about technological enframing, Dark Deleuze concerns itself with the insufficiency of constructivist world-building as a response to the issues of our time – rhizomatic micro-fascisms, global antiblack violence, the Sixth

Extinction of natural life, a new megamachine of enslavement revived by cybernetic and informational machines, and planetary-scale exploitation/dispossession driven by integrated worldwide capitalism. Reformulating Deleuze's 'finding reasons to believe in the world' based on a remark in his commentary on Foucault ("the ambivalence of hatred"), it locates what is intolerable about this world as the impetus for thought and the secret conspiracy Deleuze and Guattari launch in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* and is echoed by Deleuze's support of Pierre Klossowski's conspiratorial communism.