

Towards a Critique of the Politics of the Void: Notes Towards a Politics of Assemblages

1. Subject, Void, and the Impasse of Theories of Change

One of the burning questions of contemporary Continental social and political theory is that of how change is possible. As Žižek observes in the documentary *Žižek!*, our historical moment is such that capitalism appears as the unsurpassable horizon of all social relations, such that alternatives are not even discussed or entertained. Where forty years ago there were passionate debates as to whether society should be organized along the lines of fascism, socialism, or liberal democracy, today these questions have largely disappeared from the social field. Capitalism, as it were, has triumphed and there is an unspoken and sometimes not so unspoken consensus that there is no other alternative. As is so often observed, capitalism, unlike other forms of social organization, has the daunting capacity to assimilate all forms of critique, turning resistance to capitalism to the ends of capitalistic production and growth.¹ Likewise, much contemporary Continental social and political theory seems to be haunted by the implicit fear that agency-- a subject of the political --is impossible or that all *apparent* political agency already furtively acts at the behest of existing social structure, merely reproducing that structure rather than challenging it. Having learned well the lessons of Althusser, Foucault, and Adorno, there seems to be no place or vantage from which it would be possible to deploy action that is not already overdetermined by ideology (Althusser), power (Foucault), or the culture machine (Adorno). In each case, since the political subject is already a product of these systems, action undertaken by the agent simply reproduces these systems.

¹ Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello provide a particularly illuminating analysis of this process, showing how the aesthetic and political critiques of capitalism during the sixties came to be integrated into the management literature of the nineties, effectively integrating these critiques and transforming the workplace based on the model of these critiques. Cf. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, New York: Verso, 2005.

As a consequence, discerning that agents are a product of the social, the only recourse or potential for resistance lies in positing a void or empty place within social structure, where action undetermined by the social field might become possible.² The thesis seems to be that only a void can save us. We are presented with the stark alternative between either an agent completely determined by social structure or a subject able to transcend or escape its social conditions by virtue of inhabiting the space of the void. Thus thinkers such as Slavoj Žižek will argue for the existence of a split subject, irreducible to structure, occupying the space of the void or the empty place within social structure. As Žižek puts it, “[t]he Subject is nothing but the gap in... Substance [social structure], the inadequacy of... Substance to itself...”³ Subject would thus be the condition for the possibility of an Act, of an escape from social structure, of the possibility of overturning existing social structures, by virtue of embodying the inadequacy of social structure to itself and thereby offering a space of freedom. Likewise, Badiou will argue that every situation is haunted by a void at the edge of which an event might be possible, allowing for the emergence of a subject and truth-procedures that might allow the situation to be transformed through the reconfiguration of all elements belonging to the situation.⁴

Nonetheless, as fascinating as these positions are and as important as are their contributions, they still seem to be problematic in a number of respects. On the one hand, there is a marked absence of attention to questions of technology, geographical migration and distribution, ecological conditions, and economy within the political thought of philosophers such as Badiou, Žižek, Butler, Derrida, and Rancière. Indeed, among many of these thinkers

² It is worth noting that Lèvi-Strauss had already posited the existence of such a void within social structure at the very beginning of his work. Cf. Claude Lèvi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, London: Routledge, 1987, pgs. 63-64.

³ Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, New York: Verso, 2002, pg. 131.

⁴ Cf. Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, New York: Continuum, 2005.

there is a sharp division and separation between politics and economy. More recently Žižek has formulated a “parallax” between politics and economy⁵, but to date he has made no specific or concrete proposals as to just how questions of economy are to fit into social and political theory. Questions of technology, geographical migrations, and ecological conditions are almost entirely absent among these thinkers. Certainly these dimensions of the social sphere are crucial to understanding how it might be possible to produce political change. Second, and in a closely related vein, these political theorists focus almost entirely on the cultural sphere to the detriment of anything outside this sphere. While the importance of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the plane of expression cannot be denied, it is highly questionable to suppose that political transformation should either target the plane of expression alone or that it is to be produced through the plane of expression alone. In any event, it is difficult to see how these sorts of political theories can produce the sort of change they call for.

Perhaps, rather than proposing another theory of how political change is possible, it would be more productive to ask whether the problem from which this question emerges has been posed in the proper way. As Deleuze remarks, “[a]pply the test of true and false to problems themselves. Condemn false problems and reconcile truth and creation at the level of problems.”⁶ In this spirit we can ask what are the implicit presuppositions underlying the question of how change is possible and the proposal of the void as a solution to this problem? Such a line of inquiry might reveal that there are significant-- and flawed --ontological assumptions underlying just how these theoretical orientations conceive both being and the nature of the social, foreclosing alternative strategies of engagement and political *praxis*. Additionally, it might become clear that the question of how change is possible arises not from

⁵ Cf. Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006.

⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, New York: Zone Books, 1991, pg. 15.

any absence of change in the social field, but rather from the manner in which the social is being thought at the level of political theory. These theoretical errors would have significant effects on the field of *praxis*, drawing our attention away from more fruitful forms of theoretical and political engagement. In contrast to these structuralist orientations of political thought, I will argue that the actor-network-theory of Bruno Latour and Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomeanalysis provide us with far more productive conceptual tools for conceptualizing political change.

2. Four Implicit Assumptions of Contemporary Continental Political Theory

Although thinkers such as Badiou and Žižek are, in their own ways, critics of structuralism, the problematic from which their thought emerges is thoroughly informed by implicit structuralist assumptions. Žižek, of course, tirelessly reveals the functioning of the real as that which undermines the completeness of the symbolic. Badiou seeks an ontology subtracted from language, where being is no longer subordinated to the order of language. Nonetheless, their respective conceptions of the social field are deeply structuralist in character. First, among these thinkers the distinction between language and speech, *langue* and *parole*, can be seen to be everywhere present, generating an entire field of insoluble problems. In the social field this distinction manifests itself as a distinction between social structure or system on the one hand and actions on the other hand. Here social structure would be roughly equivalent to what Badiou refers to as the "structure of situations" and the operations of the count-as-one and what Žižek refers to as the big Other and the symbolic. Social structure functions as a code-- as in the case of Lévi-Strauss and his kinship structures --such that every act on the part of an agent is always already overdetermined by social structure. In short, social structure as *langue* is the transcendent and invariant condition for any and all action. As Ricoeur puts it in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, structuralism presents us with a Kantianism without a transcendental subject.

Language comes to function as the transcendental condition for any and all action, just as the *a priori* categories of the understanding in Kant function as the condition for the possibility of any and all experience. And just as the categories of the understanding are not transformed by the empirical manifold of sensation, but rather themselves overdetermine all sensation, speech, *parole*, and objects cannot affect language. As a consequence, change must be sought elsewhere than in speech or language. It becomes necessary to find some absolute other, something that falls outside language, in order for any change to be possible. It is for this reason that post-structuralists will become obsessed with formal aporia and demonstrations of incompleteness as they point to the possibility of an outside.

Closely connected to the distinction between language and speech, these theoretical orientations are haunted by the distinction between synchrony and diachrony. From the perspective of this distinction, social structure takes on the appearance of an interdependent totality-- a self-enclosed synchronous system --such that diachrony or history is always-already *predelineated* by the synchronous social structure. As a result, the question of the absolutely new emerges, for where the social system is already overdetermined by the synchronous structure of the social, all emergences must be mere variations of this synchronous structure. In order for there to be genuine history rather than the mere diachronous repetition of structure it becomes necessary to postulate events and breaks that are completely outside the synchronous social structure. It is also worth noting that where language and social structure are conceived as a synchronous system, as a system of constants, the analyst is led to examine speech acts and cultural artifacts independent of any situated context as these artifacts are but iterations of social structure.

Mirroring the distinction between language and speech and synchrony and diachrony, these theoretical orientations also implicitly presuppose a distinction between codes and messages. Messages are but carriers of shared social codes, delivery devices, unable to rebound back on these codes themselves to change them. Likewise, the medium through which messages are transmitted as information-- photographic, written, video, acoustic, electronic, etc. --is irrelevant to the informatic value of the message itself. On the one hand, this leads to a focus on the coded *content* of messages, to a focus on what messages are *about*, to the detriment of messages as *material events* or happenings and their degree of proliferation throughout the social sphere. This leads to a focus on interpreting and decoding and critiquing various messages and artifacts as one route to political transformation, to the detriment of proliferating messages and the analysis of networks of communication and how they function to perpetuate certain social relations. On the other hand, insofar as messages are merely carriers of pre-existent codes it follows that messages can produce very little in the way of change through speech acts. It becomes necessary to search for a very special sort of speech-act, one that is without a code, to explain the conditions under which change is possible.

Finally, because social structure and/or language are treated as the transcendental condition of experience, the entire world takes on the appearance of being a text. This move was already foreshadowed in *The Fashion System* by Roland Barthes, where clothing is not directly analyzed in its material being, but rather where writings about clothing in fashion magazines are the object of analysis. If this move is warranted within structuralist approaches, then this is because it is argued that all thought, relations to others, and relations to the world are mediated by language, such that language functions as the condition for everything else. Derrida made this premise explicit in his declaration that there is nothing outside the text, while it could be said

that Žižek radicalized this thesis turning the entire world into a text to be interpreted. The net result of this move is that extra-linguistic factors belonging to the social world fade from theorists view and become invisible. In short, all those elements belonging to what Deleuze and Guattari call the *plane of content* lose their visibility. Thus questions of the availability of resources, modes of travel, networks of roads, technologies used in factories and the workplaces, the statistical proliferation of particular utterances and images through various media, the paths and networks among various agents, and all the rest fall out of the analysis.

3. Strings, Puppets, Society, and the Splendor of Marx

My aim here is not to refute these standard structuralist axioms. As Badiou observes, it is strictly speaking impossible to refute the constructivist orientation of thought.⁷ As a consequence, my aim is instead to indicate how a body of proposed solutions to the question of how change is possible emerge from a set of implicit assumptions about the nature of the social. As Deleuze famously observed in a roundtable discussion with Foucault,

...a theory is... exactly like a tool box. It has nothing to do with the signifier... A theory has to be used, it has to work. And not just for itself. If there is no one to use it, starting with the theorist himself who, as soon as he uses it ceases to be a theorist, then the theory is worthless, or its time has not yet arrived.⁸

Ordinarily this remark is taken to endorse a sort of pragmatism where we have a tool box of concepts that, just as in the case of an ordinary tool box, we pull tools from or ignore tools depending on the needs of the moment. However, this claim can also be taken to assert that, on the one hand, theories do not simply represent the world but *act* on the world; and also, on the other hand, that the tools of theory create their own *problems* and potentials in working over the material of the world. Just as a stone knife and an iron knife generate very different problems in

⁷ Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, pg. 300.

⁸ Gilles Deleuze, "Intellectuals and Power", in *Desert Island and Other Texts*, New York: Semiotext(e), 2004, pg. 208.

working world, concepts generate very different problems in engaging the world. In this respect, the question of how change is possible could be thought as a function of the concepts that generate this specific problem. If we find ourselves at an impasse with these concepts, perhaps it is time to adopt new concepts.

In *Reassembling the Social*, Bruno Latour dramatically remarks that “...if there is a society, then no politics is possible.”⁹ If politics is not possible if society exists, then this is because wherever the social-- whether in the form of language, power, forces, structures, etc. --is treated as what *explains* the actions of agents, actors are reduced to puppets on the strings of the puppeteer of society. The issue here is not one of following Margaret Thatcher and claiming “society does not exist.” Nor is it a question of renewing humanism and reducing everything to sovereign individuals. Rather it is a question of the order of explanation. As Latour puts, “...society is the consequence of associations and not their cause.”¹⁰ Where structuralist orientations of thought treat the social as what explains-- thereby encountering a whole set of deadlocks --the whole issue for Latour as well as Deleuze and Guattari is one of accounting for how certain organizations come into existence, maintain themselves, and change.

The battle cry of Deleuze and Guattari, as well as Latour, is that there is no difference that does not make a difference. If the question of agency emerges from within structurally inflected orientations of political theory, then this is because actors do not make a difference, contribute a difference, but rather there is a direct transport of social codes to actors. Indeed, actors are conceived as nothing but vehicles for social structure and codes. In contrast to this, Deleuze will declare that “...difference is made, or makes itself, as in the expression ‘make the

⁹ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, pg. 250.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pg. 238.

difference’.”¹¹ In short, as Deleuze and Guattari will observe in their celebrated comparison of the games of chess and go, there is no relation between terms that does not produce a difference in the terms involved. Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari develop an intricate theoretical vocabulary surrounding concepts like territory, deterritorialization, reterritorialization, coding, decoding, line of flight, and all the rest to trace these shifts and the transformations they produce. When Deleuze and Guattari tell us that a club is a deterritorialized branch that has been reterritorialized in the hand¹², the whole point is to draw our attention to the manner in which migrations from one territory to another, from one assemblage to another, transform the nature of the being opening a very different field of potentialities. Here there can be no question of a transcendent structure overdetermining all actors within the system, but rather it is a question of ever shifting elements in networks or assemblages. In fact, it is already misleading to speak of networks or assemblages as this implies fixed and static beings. Rather, we should speak of assembling and networking, where elements brought together evoke action in one another, producing unforeseeable results and configurations. The question is thus no longer that of how change is possible, but rather that of how relatively stable configurations continue to exist.

In a similar vein, Latour declares that there is no transportation without translation.¹³ Initially it might appear that Latour is simply making a semiotic point with regard to the thesis that for the transmission or transportation of any message from a speaker to a receiver it is necessary for this message to be translated or decoded by the receiver. Communication would thus involve a shared code that the message transports. In point of fact, his meaning is quite different. To speak of translation is not to speak of an exchange of code, but rather the manner

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, pg. 28.

¹² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, pg. 172.

¹³ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, pg. 215.

in which things are transformed in being conveyed from one medium to another. As Latour remarks, the problem “...with the metaphor of marionettes [is] not their activation by the many strings firmly held in the hands of their puppeteers, but the implausible argument that domination [is] simply *transported* through them without translation... The puppeteer still holds many strings in her hands, but each of her fingers is itching to move in a way *the marionette* indicates. The more strings the marionettes are allowed to have, the more articulated they become.”¹⁴ In short, in the process of translation, causation is not unilateral from structure to agent, but is a complex, bidirectional interaction among actors where all actors involved respond to one another. In a manner closely connected to the theme of translation, Latour will often emphasize “transaction costs”. When analyzing a network it becomes necessary to explain how each node in the assemblage comes to be related, maintains its contacts, and proliferates throughout the network. This issue of distribution is especially crucial from the standpoint of social and political theory, for one of the central ways in which aggregates are produced is through the material circulation of messages. It thus becomes necessary to strategize ways to circulate messages, to form messages that act on the nervous system, and to devise an entire repertoire of rhetorical techniques.

Setting aside his alleged economic determinism of the superstructure by the base, this point can be nicely illustrated by reference to Marx. If there is a splendor to Marx, then this is above all because he was a profound thinker of immanence, accounting for the emergence of new values out of the assemblages and networks being forged in situations, and also discerning those points where transformation, where subjects of the political, are emerging. Marx was a thinker of deterritorializations and reterritorializations, codings and decodings, lines of flight, and translations unfolding through a complex network of technologies, forms of exchange, forms

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 215 - 216.

of production, geographical migrations, available resources, speech-acts, mythological traditions, and all the rest. Thus, for example, in *The Communist Manifesto*¹⁵, he relates the deterritorialization of the peasantry and its reterritorialization on the factory, decoding all sorts of traditional idyllic values, coding new values, forming new bodies and aggregates, and gradually leading to the emergence of class as a statistical molar aggregate within this new social space. He charts the *translation* of these bodies into this new setting, mapping the inter-relationship of technology and the human body, the effect of transforming labor into a commodity on interpersonal relations, the manner in which time comes to structure the body in new ways, but also the new passions that these assemblages generate among workers leading to all sorts of transformations in the workplace and potentially the overturning of a particular mode of production and social order itself. In short, where the politician or owner of the factory might have simply seen crime in the breaking of machines or the burning of factories, Marx discerns the formation of a new assemblage or a subject group in formation.

In this respect, Marx is a cartographer of the social, but the social here is a process in formation, a result, a product, that includes not only human bodies, but geographies, machines, movements, factories, cities, speech-acts, and many other things besides as *actors* within an unfolding network. Marx does not seek to provide a *model* of what society *should* be after the fashion of Plato in the *Republic* or Locke in the *Treatise on Government*, but instead follows the contours of the existing and unfolding network itself, seeking to discern its organization as an assemblage, what is emerging from it, and its virtual potentials.

4. From Critique to Cartography: Content and Expression

¹⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, New York: Signet Classics, 1998, pgs. 50 - 65.

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari propose that the aim of rhizomeanalysis is "...to translate everything into assemblages and to dismantle the assemblages."¹⁶ In this connection they contend that the act of mapping assemblages is far more effective politically than any critique.¹⁷ But what, precisely, are the assemblages to be mapped? And what, precisely, is the value of this mapping. Here my desire is not to outline Deleuze and Guattari's own political program. On the one hand, as Deleuze and Guattari themselves remark that, "...schizoanalysis *as such* has strictly no political program to propose."¹⁸ This follows as a logical consequence of their commitment to immanence and Deleuze's account of individuation, where politics must be seen as a response to a particular problem inhabiting an assemblage and not as an eternal and unchanging set of questions.

On the other hand, I believe that there is a great deal that is problematic in both Deleuze and Guattari's own concrete political suggestions, and the manner in which their work has been received in the politically oriented secondary literature. With respect to Deleuze and Guattari themselves, too many of their prescriptions revolve around art and literature. While their political reading of Kafka is indeed highly valuable, and while aesthetic production cannot be dismissed, such a focus risks turning attention away from other assemblages in the realm of technology, media, new modes of production, etc. In this regard, texts such as *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* should be read as instructive in how to approach a rhizomatic analysis of the social world, and not necessarily a prescribing a focus on art, literature, and the aesthetic as the sole domain of political engagement. Critical theory must break the stranglehold of the hegemony of the cultural as the primary object of analysis. With respect to how Deleuze and

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1986, pg. 47.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983, pg. 380.

Guattari have been received, there is a sense in which their work was published too early in the English speaking world. Translated primarily during the late eighties and early nineties, there has been a tendency for Deleuze and Guattari's "minor politics" to be assimilated to a quasi-libertarian identity politics in the secondary literature. This despite the fact that Deleuze and Guattari clearly argue that minority identities are *molar aggregates* in their own right, and that the minor is not a particular class or identity (how could it be given their deconstruction of identity?) but the dimension of becoming within an assemblage.¹⁹ In close relation to this, the substantial role that Marx plays in their thought has been almost entirely ignored. Fortunately thinkers such as Nicholas Thoburn²⁰, Eugene Holland²¹, and Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt²² have done a great deal to ameliorate this problem, but there has still been an excessive focus on cultural production or the plane of expression to the detriment of machinic assemblages. Manuel DeLanda has done excellent work mapping machinic assemblages, but has espoused a marked hostility to anything remotely Marxist in Deleuze and Guattari.

Rather than outlining Deleuze and Guattari's own political vision, I would instead like to mark some lines and concepts that I find particularly fruitful in expanding and deepening their work. At the beginning of this talk I mentioned that there has been a growing disquiet that capitalism is the unsurpassable limit of our historical moment. It seems as if there is no way in which capitalism might be overturned, nor does there appear to be any viable alternative to capitalism. But perhaps the question of how capitalism can be overturned is the wrong question. Capitalism is an abstraction that is everywhere and nowhere, and like any ghost is impossible to touch. In this respect, capitalism is like the transcendent Law in Kafka as analyzed by Deleuze

¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, pg. 18.

²⁰ Nicholas Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx, and Politics*, New York: Routledge, 2003.

²¹ Eugene Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: An Introduction to Schizoanalysis*, New York: Routledge, 1999.

²² Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

and Guattari, where the Law is an empty form, a secret, which operates without ever being able to be grasped. Kafka's strategy, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is not to fall prey to this illusion of transcendence, not to be captivated by this mystery, but to trace the *assemblage* of the law as collective and machinic assemblages of desire strictly immanent to the social field.²³ In this respect, it becomes possible to plot lines of flight but also sites of engagement. Similarly, Latour observes that,

Capitalism... may be an intractable entity endowed with a 'spirit', but a Wall Street trading room does connect the 'whole world' through the tiny but expeditious conduits of millions of bits of information per second, which, after having been digested by traders, are flashed back to the very same place by Reuters or Bloomberg trading screens that register all of the transactions and are then wired to the 'rest of the (connected) world' to determine someone's net worth...

...[C]apitalism has no plausible enemy since it is 'everywhere', but a given *trading room* in Wall Street has many competitors in Shanghai, Frankfurt, and London-- a computer breakdown, a sneaky movement by a competitor, an unexpected figure, a neglected variable in a pricing formula, a risky accounting procedure --that may shift the balance from an obscene profit to a dramatic loss.²⁴

What is required here is a superior empiricism, a practice of cartography, capable of tracing networks and assemblages, or ever shifting relations among actors. So long as we do map not the assemblages with which we are dealing it proves impossible to respond or strategize any sort of action. We end up chasing ghosts and then believe that change is impossible because it is impossible touch or locate a ghost.

In the "Postulates of Linguistics", Deleuze and Guattari present a novel theory of language that goes a long way towards shifting the territory of debate in contemporary Continental political theory. Distinguishing between collective assemblages of enunciation belonging to the plane of expression and machinic assemblages belonging to the plane of content, Deleuze and Guattari grant a relative autonomy to each of these planes, such that they both have

²³ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, pgs. 43 - 52.

²⁴ Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, pg. 178.

their own form and organization. Although I cannot develop their account in detail here, the key point not to be missed is that language no longer functions as the transcendental condition of all other beings. Rather, the "...*machinic assemblage*[s] [consist] of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another; [while] *collective assemblage*[s] of *enunciation*, [consist] of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies."²⁵ Here language no longer functions as a grid within which all objects are merely vehicles for the transmission of an existing code, but rather each plane has its own organization and interrelation with the other. Statements are here *acts attributed* to bodies, rather than signifiers determining a signified. For example, when a judge passes a death sentence or a pollster classifies bodies into groups such as "hockey moms", nothing is changed in the bodies belonging to the plane of content or the machine assemblage at the level of their actions and passions, but rather it does become possible to relate to these bodies in a new way.

Deleuze and Guattari's restriction of language to the plane of expression in collective assemblages of enunciation, coupled with their insistence on the autonomy of the plane of content defined by machinic assemblages, opens up a broad field of inquiry where the domain of Continental social and political theory need no longer be restricted to cultural interpretation and critique, but now becomes open to technological machines, geography, associations of bodies, visual and affective dimensions, modes of production, economy, exchange, and all the rest. In understanding language as an act attributed to bodies, it now becomes possible to undertake a cartography both of those collective assemblages that striate bodies, but also those where it might be possible to introduce change into the social field. In *Cinema II*, Deleuze makes much

²⁵ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pg. 88. It's worth noting that Deleuze and Guattari here make substantial progress over their account of assemblages in *Kafka*, where the plane of content remained vague and undefined and all action tended to be conceived primarily at the level of the plane of expression.

of Klee's declaration that the people are missing.²⁶ Although the task of the social and political theorist must necessarily be modest, allowing both the means of change and the ends of change to emerge from situations themselves, perhaps, through the cartography of assemblages and their networked interrelations, through the mapping of territories, deterritorializations, reterritorializations, codes, and decoding, the theorist can help to locate those sites where new people are emerging and assist in producing incorporeal transformations that might allow for the intensification of these processes. Perhaps the question isn't how a subject of the political is possible, but how it is possible to produce new collective assemblages.

²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1989, pgs. 217 - 222.