

Preface

If you open *A Thousand Plateaus* (*ATP*) at any page you'll find terms such as 'plateau', 'deterritorialization', 'rhizome', 'cartography', and so on. If you would then say to yourself that this is a 'geophilosophy', you'd be right, and in fact you'd be anticipating the term Deleuze and Guattari will apply to themselves ten years after they finished writing *ATP*. And if you were to further say to yourself that *ATP* provides an excellent opportunity for philosophers and geographers to collaborate, and in so doing to effect deep and deeply needed changes in both their disciplines, then you'd have anticipated our motivation in writing this book.

We wrote this book with (at least) two audiences in mind: geographers interested in a helpful guide to a new theoretical framework – or, more modestly, a new set of conceptual tools – and philosophers and others interested in the demonstration that Deleuze and Guattari have a rigorous, clear, precise, and useful engagement with scientific disciplines. Although the treatment of science in contemporary French philosophy and in the 'cultural studies' allegedly inspired by it was bitterly criticized in the 'Science Wars' of the mid- to late 1990s, there is good cause to take seriously the work of Deleuze and Guattari as providing a bona fide philosophical engagement with that loose collection of scientific endeavours known as 'complexity theory'.

Perhaps it's not too much, then, in our view, to say that Deleuze – once his work is fully understood – can be the Kant of our time. By this we mean not the author of mediocre and racist geographical works replete with the common prejudices of his age, but the great philosopher who provided the philosophical 'grounding' of classical modern science. Just as Kant's *Critiques* were in a sense the epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics for a world of

Euclidean space, Aristotelian time, and Newtonian physics, Deleuze provides the philosophical concepts that make sense of our world of fragmented space (the fractals of Mandelbrot, the 'patchworks' of Riemann), twisted time (the so-called anticipatory effects of systems that sense their approach to a threshold), and the non-linear effects of far-from-equilibrium thermodynamics. To provide such an ontology, Deleuze examines the self-ordering and emergent properties of material systems in widely differing registers – the physical, chemical, biological, neural, social, and anthropological – and sets forth the basic concepts that make sense of the world as it must be to provide the results elicited by complexity theory.

But Kant is not the only philosophical analogue expressing the importance of Deleuze and Guattari for the contemporary earth and environmental sciences. Descartes, the very inventor of that rigorously gridded or 'striated' space known as the Cartesian coordinate system, is a complementary choice. David Harvey points out that Kant and Descartes together (what he calls the 'Cartesian–Kantian' framework) have grounded almost all Western geographical endeavors of the last two centuries, whether or not their geophilosophical presuppositions are relevant to the questions under consideration. We see *ATP* as the key to a new materialist geophilosophical paradigm because it combines Kant's insistence on the importance of the earth sciences and Descartes' attempt to provide a new cartography and coordinate system.

The pluridimensional utility of *ATP* lies in its attempt to develop a new materialism in which a politically informed 'philosophy of difference' joins forces with complexity theory to rethink the earth. Now *ATP* is a book of strange and terrifying new questions: 'Who does the Earth think it is?', 'How do you make yourself a Body without Organs?', 'How does the war machine ward off the State?' and many others that are equally perplexing and even intimidating to the first-time reader. Despite its difficulty, we have found *ATP* to be not only comprehensible but also extremely useful and enlightening, and we have written the second part of this book in the form of a glossary to provide some guideposts that will help others work their way through it. Thus we do not present a unified interpretation of the meaning of *ATP*; rather, we try to render it useful to others.

We'd like to thank the following people for their support and helpful comments at many stages of our writing. Of course, as the saying goes, while they should get much of the credit for the parts that make sense, we'll take the blame for the obscurities that remain.

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Phil Adams and James Madden graciously and patiently provided help with technical scientific aspects, despite what must have been a sometimes exasperating scientific naïveté. Manuel DeLanda and Rich Doyle helped blend philosophy and science for us in many detailed interchanges, while Evan Thompson and Dan Smith generously provided manuscripts of forthcoming publications, which proved invaluable. Jon Cogburn gave detailed philosophical critiques of the work from a rigorous analytic perspective; it was very generous of him to reach across the ‘continental/analytic’ divide. Miles Richardson, Kent Mathewson, and Bill Davidson were excellent mentors to Bonta and warm and generous colleagues to Protevi. J. P. Jones III and Ed Casey have been strong supporters of the project all along. We’d also like to thank all the organizers of sessions at the 2001 SEDAAG (Southeastern Association of American Geographers) and 2003 AAG (Association of American Geographers) meetings for inviting us to present materials from the work in progress, as well as the panelists and audience members for their contributions to the ensuing discussions. Finally, we’d like to thank Jackie Jones, Ian Buchanan and the anonymous reviewers at EUP for their support and encouragement.