

# Minoracy

Ohad Zehavi

When my son was born a few years ago, I was surprised to discover that he was actually *they*. This was not a biological discovery – there was most definitely only one child. Rather, it was a linguistic, or, more accurately, a cultural discovery. For while I was only getting to know him, to familiarize myself with his intensities and sensitivities, with the curves of his body and his facial expressions, with his gestures and his demands, I noticed that many people, from a variety of social circles – family, friends, child care experts – already knew him, or rather, them, and could not help telling me things about him... that is, them. “They like to be held like this”, “they have to get used to sleeping alone”, “They’re very attached to their mother”, “They’re testing limits”, “They’re so cute at this age”. At first I was bewildered, then I grew accustomed to it, then it reminded me of all sorts of other “theys”: “That’s how it is in their culture”, “They only know the language of force”, “They’re not nice”.<sup>1</sup> And then it dawned on me: my son was actually a member of a minority group.<sup>2</sup>

“Minority” is the first term associated with “minoracy”. But let us start with a definition.

**Minoracy: a provisional definition.** Minoracy is political action aimed at undermining the forces of oppression, resisting the powers of authority, escaping the inevitability of violence. Minorians seek to relieve themselves of the aggression they exert on others and to neutralize, as much as possible, the violence exercised on themselves and on others through society’s dominant norms. To this end, they turn themselves into a minority, marginalize themselves, and drift toward others that are weaker than themselves.

**Minoracy and Minority.** The political function of “minoracy”, a concept derived from the political philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, rests in the first place on its close affinity with the concept of “minority”.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, minoracy celebrates minorities. But how exactly does it relate to the notion of “minority”? And what kind of minority is at stake?

What is at stake is not a quantitative minority, that is, a small portion of the whole, but rather a dominated minority, that is, a minority in terms of power relations; minoracy, therefore, attends to the weak, to those with minor power. One can formally belong to such a minority if one is barred from participating in the political procedures that establish

---

Ohad Zehavi – PhD Candidate, the School of Philosophy, Tel Aviv University.  
English translation: Nick John and Natalie Melzer.

government, that is, if one does not have the right to vote. In this sense, the population of an occupied territory that has no influence over the identity of the lawmakers who establish the law to which it is subject is unquestionably a minority. So, too, are labor migrants, who are unconditionally subjugated to laws that enslave them. However, children are also a minority insofar as they take no part in the formal apparatus through which ruling power is allocated, and so are animals, governed by laws that are beyond their control. These groups are subject to laws they cannot influence or shape, even indirectly.

But a minority is not determined merely according to formal parameters; it is a substantive position. There may be more female than male citizens, and women may possess the right to vote and stand for election, and yet they wield less power than men because the norms and common standards of society are shaped in Man's image and correspond to his traits. This approach to minorities sees the political sphere as a field of power shaped by factors that are not exclusively formal. From this perspective, Palestinians and labor migrants are minorities in Israeli society, as are children and animals; but so are people who are considered "disabled", and indeed anyone else who deviates from the standard image of the archetypal member of society.

Minoracy also redefines the majority's attitude toward the minority. The minority referred to by minoracy is not part of the majoritarian model that underpins liberal democracy – the model of "majority rule". The political drive embodied in that model – the drive to form a majority or to become a majority, that is, to seize power – is a majorist drive that the minor movement strives to undermine. It does not do so by advocating "minority rights", for the very notion of minority rights is rooted in the logic of the majoritarian model and confines the minority to a violent dialectic of conflict and authoritative decision. Minoracy seeks a veritable way out of this conflictual model. It tries to instigate a pure movement that will slip away from the majoritarian decision-making institutions to minor regions that are not based on opposition and are fundamentally undecidable.

**Minoracy and Becoming.** Minoracy is dynamic rather than static. It is not a property or state of being but a coming into being, a becoming. In minoracy, one does not exist in a state of minority but rather "becomes-minoritarian".

The concept of "becoming" thus joins the concept of "minority", and together they endow the concept of "minoracy" with endoconsistency:<sup>4</sup> minoracy is "becoming-minoritarian". Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that every becoming is a "becoming-minoritarian".<sup>5</sup> One never has a minoritarian being, but rather becomes-minoritarian, becomes-minoritarian. Actual reality is always major, played out according to fixed, immobile patterns. Minoracy is a movement from the actual to the virtual, the potential. In the realm of potentialities, nothing is fixed or defined.

Major politics is based on defined and stable identities, and on a definite, enclosed social space. The range of possibilities this allows for is limited from the outset: it is only possible

to conquer various positions, to move from one position to another, and to reorganize the power relations within a finite, demarcated arena. Minor politics allows for identities themselves to be challenged, for definitions to be shattered, for power relations to be fundamentally undermined (by undermining the factors – identities, definitions – that enable the exercise of power in the first place). Minor politics does not take place within a limited site but rather at the site's very limits, at its margins, which extend infinitely. This sort of politics sees little point in battling within the arena but sees no way of escaping the arena altogether. Instead, it rushes to the fringes, toward the marginal, minor characters who populate them, and who repeatedly bring about becomings that unceasingly unravel and reweave the social fabric.

**Minoracy for Beginners: Becoming-Woman.** Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the first minority is always the female one: every becoming must begin with becoming-woman.<sup>6</sup> What, exactly, is “becoming-woman”? You do not become-woman by imitating a molar woman – a whole, consolidated woman – who is external to you, but rather by liberating the molecular woman within you – that is, woman-molecules, “feminine” forces and inclinations.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, the (molar) woman must herself become-woman, taking on the forces, the intensities, the molecular characteristics that shape, at the molar level, the accepted image of Woman. Thus, a man can also take on these forces, invoke them, and thereby enter a zone of proximity with Woman; that is, he can establish a zone of indiscernibility between man and woman that would liberate him – if only slightly – from the role Man is assigned, while also liberating the woman – if only slightly – from the role she is assigned.<sup>8</sup>

It is indispensable to conduct a molar, major politics that will allow women to win back their history and their subjectivity; but resting with this politics alone risks reinforcing and perpetuating the binary division into identities that enabled the repression of women in the first place. A molecular, minor politics shakes the very foundations of these identities, opening up a zone of diffusion and indiscernibility – a chaotic and ungoverned zone – that brings about a radical challenge to opposition and hierarchy. A minor movement is therefore not a movement from one stable point – masculine identity, for instance – to another stable point – feminine identity. A movement of this sort would be confined to the fixed points awaiting the line of trajectory, and, at most, would turn the molar man into a molar woman. A minor movement is a molecular movement of becoming: it passes at absolute speed *between* the points, running perpendicular to the molar line that connects them and carrying the two points away with it.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the immobile points, the points of “identity”, become dependent on the line – the line of a minorian becoming. They are swept away by the movement of becoming and tend to merge with it, just like in a mathematical function, until they enter a zone of proximity and, abutting one against the other, are rendered indiscernible. Hence this is neither a case of identity change nor a case of identification but rather a pure play of difference, which both precedes and undermines identities.

**Advanced Minoracy.** There is no advanced minoracy. Minoracy always starts afresh.

**Minoracy for Beginners 2: Becoming-Child.** Although Guattari and Deleuze maintain that every becoming starts with becoming-woman, perhaps one could legitimately suggest that it is actually children, and not women, who constitute the primary minority. In legal terms, children are regarded as “minors”, and in this sense the notion of the child bears a strong etymological affinity with the concept of “minoracy”. But the centrality of minors to any theory of minority is not merely a function of linguistics, but rather a matter of essence: minors – adolescents, children, even babies – manifest the human potential before it is calcified within the major model of the adult. Becoming-child is thus also a return: not a return in the chronological sense of going back in time but rather an intensive return – of the minor potential that bustles beneath the major reality in which we are trapped.

The child thus points to an important channel of minor politics. Because the adult is rooted within the major order, becoming-child can allow him to escape, if only for the briefest moment, the arbitrary yet organized power of the existing order. An adult’s becoming-child is a molecular becoming: it does not imply the adult’s remembering or reproducing the full-fledged and domesticated molar child that he was, but rather the adult’s forgetting himself for the sake of the babyish excitement that bubbles inside him, the childish tingling sensations skittering across his skin, the youthful follies that pass through his mind.<sup>10</sup> The adult who rides the wild, childish wave that heaves within him and carries him away detaches himself at once – if only for a second – from the major order in which he is rooted.

But becoming-child also enables one to come to the aid of the “real” children living among us by protecting them from the enormous power exerted upon them. Children are obviously prevented from participating in the formal game of sovereignty – they are not active, legitimate agents in the field of state citizenship – and therefore have no control over their destiny. In this sense, children should clearly be seen as a minority within the conventional political sphere. But a political philosophy that seeks to adopt the concept of minoracy as a theoretical and practical tool must attend to the status of the child within the broader concept of “politics”, as well as within other fields of discourse and power that participate in this politics. It could start, for instance, with philosophy itself, which tends to define its objects in the image of the (usually male) adult. The world that it describes, the world that it creates, is usually that of the adult, ignoring the reality of children (who do not yet doubt, who are not being-towards-death, and so on) and their particular encounter with the world. Philosophy thus forms a model of a person that does not take the large population of children into account, thereby rendering them a minority; that is, it diminishes their power and subordinates them to adults (which they may one day become).

Even psychology, which would appear to have the necessary tools to vocalize the world

of children, tends to make of them a distant object of research, thereby intensifying the subordination of minors. Psychoanalysis, for instance, is, in this respect, ruthless: it imposes pre-defined models on the child (Oedipus, castration, mourning, and so forth) and proceeds to read all his behaviors through them. Not only do such models prevent children from expressing their (minor) singularity, they also allow adults to assume more power in their relation to children (“So you want to kill me, do you?”, says the father; “So you want to sleep with me, do you?”, says the mother).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, psychological models project a major perspective, that of the adult, on the newly-born minor child (“You’re mourning your separation from me”, says the mother, who may herself be mourning her separation from the child; and the father, meanwhile, remains silent, distant, and solemn, as if he has no part in the intimacy and separation). The child, in other words, is born into therapy. The psychology of child development and a host of doctors, teachers, experts, and other authorities pounce on the child from the moment of his birth (and in fact earlier than that), calling him to order – a pre-determined order, the major one.

Deleuze and Guattari make an explicit connection between becoming-minoritarian – that is, between minoracy – and politics: “Becoming-minoritarian is a political affair and necessitates [...] an active micropolitics”.<sup>12</sup> What kind of minor politics can be derived from Deleuze and Guattari’s formulations? It is not always clear. Apparently, Deleuze and Guattari wish to undermine the very foundation of the dominant political paradigm, an act that, for them, entails shaking our thought radically free of the jargon it imposes and liberating action from the patterns of behavior it dictates. Thus it would appear that, for instance, the “micropolitics” that they propose indeed does not obey the dialectic and representative politics that takes place in fields of conflict and authoritative decision managed by representatives and advocates (the legislative, the judiciary, and so on). It is a politics that takes place within limited, more intimate spaces characterized by a high coefficient of performativity.<sup>13</sup> For instance, one could extract from Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion an implicit call to the adult to “perform” a child, that is, to express through his body and manners the “character” usually attributed to a child, thereby blurring the distinction between adults and children, which is in turn responsible for the subordination of the latter to the power of the former. An adult’s becoming-child can create an area of indiscernibility between adults and “real” children and thus invalidate the norms that are habitually imposed on the latter and that command their early identification as a distinct category. This is an attempt to dissolve the strict ontological distinction that enables policing and imposition of power. Rather than an impersonation of the character of an external child or a recollection of the child you once were, such a performance would be a molecular one, consisting of an active forgetting – forgetting that you are an adult, for the sake of the childish molecules constantly percolating within and passing through you.

We could further question the applicability and effectiveness of this kind of political practice. Do not such practices pale against the background of the dominant major politics, which wields such massive power? Perhaps. But they may also represent the only way to challenge the dominant political paradigm to the core. Still, it is worth wondering if there

is any way to extract practical political insights from Deleuze and Guattari's discussion, insights that would make sense and apply within the existing political field.

Deleuze and Guattari's minorian philosophy suggests another sense of "performativity" that can be activated politically. As the examples presented above make evident, one of the dominant practices that makes children an oppressed minority, preparing them to become obedient and submissive adults who will, in turn, reproduce the same oppression of minorities, is the use of speech acts – that is, of the practical effects of the spoken word. Deleuze and Guattari, who draw in this respect on the pragmatic school in linguistics, and in particular on philosophers of everyday language such as J.L. Austin,<sup>14</sup> refer to the notion of "*mots-d'ordre*", which are "slogans" but also, literally, "order-words". The kind of talk described above about "them" and what "they" need, love, or do does indeed act on "them", the children; it turns them into a distinct category that can be referred to and discussed, and it makes possible the shaping and regulation of their bodies and movements. The Oedipal thoughts fleeting through the minds of parents are usually also translated into words, intonations, instructions, and prohibitions, which in turn artificially produce the Oedipal trinity.

The child's body goes through an incessant series of practical disciplinary workshops. Indeed, it may be argued that the little girl embodies the ultimate minority, incorporating within a single body both the woman's minority and that of the child.<sup>15</sup> This minority position is the product of words: "Stop behaving like that; you're not a little girl any more; you're not a tomboy",<sup>16</sup> and other such speech acts. Thus, the girl's body is stolen from her (the boy's turn comes next), overcome by the transcendent model, the major order with which she must align herself. "The political domain has contaminated every statement", say Deleuze and Guattari,<sup>17</sup> and so minor politics is also a politics of language. This can be carried out through minor literature, which challenges the presuppositions of language, but also through everyday linguistic practices seeking to restrain the orders embedded in spoken language.

Minoracy, therefore, is a politics of little people (though a big person can also become-little; that is, become-minor).

**Minoracy for Beginners 3: Becoming-Animal.** Animal minority invokes another type of minoracy that oftentimes allows – if only for a brief moment – an escape from major, violent living conditions. Sometimes, there's no better way to escape than to wail like a jackal, to burrow like a mole, or to take flight like a fox. While you cannot become a molar dog, a barking animal, when you bark wholeheartedly you emit a molecular dog.<sup>18</sup> At that moment, you become-animal, that is, become-minorian.

Once again, one needs to detach oneself from a molar person's attitude toward a molar animal, which is by nature patronizing. Animal minoracy is a molecular minoracy,

requiring the subject to shed his molar skin for the sake of the currents and waves that surge within him. A bark, for instance, is not an imitation of a barking dog – it already exists in the vocal chords, welling up in speech; one can domesticate it, banishing it for the sake of proper articulation, or one can ride it as one rides a wave, cutting oneself off from the repressive order of language for the sake of an unpredictable becoming. This, perhaps, could be a way to give animals a political voice. Minor politics thus creates a zone of indiscernibility between human and animal, eliminating the gap that enables the former to control the latter.

Animal minority is especially important given the miserable status of actual animals, perhaps the most forlorn of all creatures in this industrial and gluttonous age. The crude and superfluous mass destruction of an inconceivable number of animals by the global food industry (as well as the leather and other industries) is only one of the atrocities that (major) culture perpetrates against animals. The abuse suffered by animals at the hands of the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries and for the sake of scientific research is barely tolerable from the point of view of a sensitive minority. It is imperative, therefore, to become-animal (especially a laboratory animal or an animal reared for meat).

Perhaps becoming-animal should start with the horse? Little Hans witnesses a horse collapsing and then falls into Freud's clumsy hands.<sup>19</sup> Freud, as usual, attributes all this to the mother and father, to the Oedipal trinity, instead of seeing the minorian becoming of Little Hans as he attends to the battered horse and becomes-horse.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Freud is impervious to the childish minority that Hans offers him, and consequently overlooks Hans' singularity, the molecular excitations that the collapsing horse awakens in him and that engender Hans' own minorian becoming (becoming-horse). And what should we make of Nietzsche's physical and emotional collapse at the feet of another beaten horse – is that not a grand minor gesture? Losing one's mind for a horse...

Those were fin de siècle situations. What animal could invoke a becoming-animal in current-day Israel? A stray cat, perhaps?

**Minority and Disability.** A society shaped according to the standard of the "reasonable man", the "average man", or the "normal man" excludes anyone that is not reasonable, average, or normal – it marginalizes them. Moreover, a society based on efficiency, such as a society run according to the logic of capitalism, constructs its buildings, engineers its streets, designs its education system, and allocates its resources in a way that is derived from the perceived needs and desires of a limited range of humanity, compromising the ability of people considered "deviant", "abnormal", or "eccentric" to enjoy those resources to the same extent as those who are closest to the core of the dominant model.

Minority is based on the view that everybody – or at least, the vast majority – is disabled. More precisely, minority does not see society as an entity comprised of a normal majority

and a disabled minority, but rather as an encounter between “eccentrics” (or, to put it differently: the majority is “nobody”, for it is an abstract model, whereas the minority is “everybody”, because everyone has minorian potential).<sup>21</sup> Minoracy must therefore adapt the social space to the great range of creatures that populate it: people in wheelchairs, fathers with buggies, the blind, the hard of hearing, people with learning difficulties, Arabic speakers, diabetics, the elderly, and so on and so forth. Minor politics is not a politics of the One (the dominant standard, the archetypal identity) or of the Multiple (the various identities that demand that their special needs be taken into account). Rather, it is a politics of multiplicity: it sees the social space as a site of encounter between singular and identity-less characters, whose rich repertoire of functions populates the social space in advance, rather than appearing only after the sphere has already been shaped in the image of an archetypal, dominant figure and according to considerations of efficiency.

Disabled minoracy can affect anyone, at any time and in any place, and does not necessarily occur premeditatedly. Thus, a person can suddenly become-disabled as he nimbly climbs the stairs that provide sole access to an exciting exhibition; he can become-blind while watching an inspiring film; or become-tongue-tied when interviewing someone for a desirable position. Indeed, the major order can vanish at once, with no forewarning, giving expression to oppressed voices that have not yet been named.

This, in fact, may be the ultimate minority: a minority that has yet to be defined, yet to be created. An argument of this kind would appear to push minor politics a step forward: from the minorities that a politics of identity is able to define, to minorities that only minor practices that dismantle the omnipresent major order are able to expose. This would seem to be the role attributed by Guattari and Deleuze to “minor literature”, which is meant “to express another possible community, to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility”,<sup>22</sup> that is, to create the “still-missing people”, “a people to come”.<sup>23</sup> Minor literature fabricates the means for constructing a future minority community whose features have not yet been identified; it invokes another consciousness and another sensibility, which overthrow the “natural order” and allow for deviant creatures, singular voices, to encounter one another.

However, concrete, actual minorities are knocking at our doors and separation walls. The restrictions imposed on them are unbearable and their problems are burning. They cannot afford to wait for the emergence of a future minority community that will enable all deviants of the world to unite. So how does one become-refugee and break through the boundaries that permit the persecution of actual refugees and threaten their lives? How does one become-Phillipino and liberate women labor migrants from a reality of exile, exploitation, and enslavement? How does one become-Palestinian and dismantle the walls, the roadblocks, and the daily grind? It would seem that the practical shortcomings of a minor politics stand out against the background of such urgent issues. Still, minor politics may point us in a possible direction, or at least toward a certain mental disposition. A minorian becoming allows one to undermine one’s very belonging to the “majority”, which stands opposite the “minority” that requires help. The way for a Jew to become-Palestinian, for instance, might be to become-a-little-less-Jewish, that is, to push himself or herself to

the margins of the collective in which his or her membership is taken for granted and toward the margins of another collective that is seemingly positioned opposite it. This may perhaps create a zone of indiscernibility between Jew and Palestinian from which stands to emerge a new brotherhood, a new kinship,<sup>24</sup> whose outlines would be fundamentally different from the oppressive Jewish-Israeli one. Minoracy urges us to make ourselves strangers in our own world so that the strangers in our world might enjoy a place of their own, in our vicinity. These are not abstract or universal concepts but rather concrete, local actions.

Becoming-minoritarian implies a self-exile to the very boundaries of discourse, the very boundaries of the territory, in order to dismantle both the notion of “boundary” and the boundary itself.<sup>25</sup>

**Minoracy and Marginality.** Sometimes one finds oneself trapped in a system with a high coefficient of violence – a patently brutal system. That is what happened to Franz Kafka's Joseph K., who found himself one morning accused of an unknown and unexplained crime.<sup>26</sup> K. could have chosen the major path (sometimes it seems that he did): to act within the system in order to clear his name and be acquitted. But K. is a minor character, who refuses to step through the gates of the Law and subject himself to it, instead remaining permanently in the margins. Why does he behave this way? Not only because his chances of acquittal are minuscule – it is a known fact, after all, that the vast majority of the accused are found guilty; and not only because the system is constructed so as to tend always to preserve the status quo, strengthening the strong and weakening the weak; but also because he knows that entering into the system would subject him to the social paradigm that it prescribes: conflict and adversariness on the one hand, and a hierarchy of authority and adjudication on the other; in other words: violence and yet more violence. K., however, is a minor figure, a marginal character, preferring to meander through the open spaces at the margins of the Law rather than binding his soul to the dense and suffocating metropolis of the Law. Only at the margins of the Law (margins that can exist at the hub of the Law, within its own avenues) can K. remain minor and resist the power of the Law in order to encounter other figures at close proximity, not through relations of distance, contradiction, and conflict. Only thus can he recognize the strange beauty of the accused.

K. is a refusenik by virtue of circumstance; but Herman Melville's Bartleby is a refusenik by choice.<sup>27</sup> He chooses to plunge into the Law precisely in order to drag it over to the margins. He points to another mode of minor action in relation to oppressive systems: disrupting them. Bartleby disrupts the mechanisms of power by refusing to copy legal documents, refusing to reproduce power and violence. In fact, he does not even explicitly refuse – he merely repeats the same answer over and again: “I would prefer not to”. Bartleby's linguistic formula, which is inseparable from his political tactics, is stronger than any refusal, which would make him oppositional and therefore draw him into the

legal paradigm, into a model of conflict and authoritative decision, into the major “versus” (Roe v. Doe, Bartleby v. the Law). “I would prefer not to”, Bartleby repeats, leading the Law to a point of undecidability, and thereby dismantling it from within. This is a very limited dismantling – Bartleby’s power is quite insignificant when compared to the awesome power of the Law. But minoracy’s pretensions are modest and it makes do with destabilizing the existing order for a single person – the attorney who hires Bartleby, for instance. In this sense, minoracy is a form of nonviolent protest. It is akin to a general proletarian strike, which, for Walter Benjamin,<sup>28</sup> constitutes a “pure means”, that is, a nonviolent means, for reversing the legal order; but it forgoes the aspiration for a general strike and a thoroughgoing revolution, and makes do with a personal, minor action.

Bartleby thus appears to demonstrate a way for a minority to politically resist the power exerted upon it. But it might be argued that the true hero of the story is not Bartleby but the attorney who hires his services and is faced with his odd refusal. The attorney is rooted in a world of speech acts, of order-words, a world of requests, instructions, and commands. Bartleby’s linguistic formula manifests, and neutralizes, the violence inherent in those speech acts. But it can only do so thanks to the attorney’s sensitivity in allowing Bartleby’s stubbornness to linger and resonate, and gradually relieving himself of his greater power. According to Deleuze, the politics that takes shape between Bartleby and the attorney undermines the paternal function of the father, the boss, the Law, which perpetuates hierarchy, and instead puts forward true brotherhood, fraternity, and kinship. Instead of the Law, which comes from on high and from a distance, Melville proposes the possibility of a genuine encounter between singular voices who wander the same plane. It seems, therefore, that the concrete political message of “Bartleby” does not concern the weak – what infant, after all, could act as Bartleby does? The lesson addresses itself to the powerful trying to become-minor, entreating them to hear the phrase “I would prefer not to” in the hesitant murmur of a child, the broken voice of a housewife, the stammer of a labor migrant.

**Becoming-Minor.** A minorian wishes to avoid violence – both the violence that she exerts on others and the violence exerted on her. Minoracy wishes to dismantle power, but it also tries to dismantle the concept of “power” and to distinguish the power of authority, dominance, and violence from the vital and intensive “force” that evokes encounters. Minoracy is a movement of molecular forces, *force mineure*, which strives to undermine the violence inherent in the major, molar relationships between people.

Deleuze and Guattari often describe their political philosophy in terms of its opposition to fascism. In the introduction to their book, *Anti-Oedipus*, Michel Foucault goes even further, defining the book as “an *introduction to the non-fascist life*”.<sup>29</sup> What is this fascism that Deleuze and Guattari’s (and also Foucault’s) political thought opposes? It is not fascism as a political system, but an all-permeating fascism, the fascism embedded in each and every one of us, which causes us to desire the power that dominates and exploits us

instead of empowering desire itself. It is the fascism that causes us to exert power over others, even in our most basic interactions with them, and even if our intentions are innocent or even good.

In this regard, Foucault's own notion of "governmentality"<sup>30</sup> may serve to elucidate the notion of minoracy. Governmentality is a mentality of government (government-mentality), the practices and mechanisms through which we govern others and also ourselves. Governmentality can be seen as a tendency to govern and be governed; minoracy, in this view, can be seen as a tendency to unfetter ourselves from government.

The notion of governmentality enables us to identify the various manifestations of this violent tendency by binding power with knowledge. We use the power of knowledge in our interactions with other people, and in almost every intersubjective situation we harness knowledge and exert power. The notion of minoracy can serve as a kind of antidote: instead of expanding at the expense of others it encourages us to make ourselves smaller, to belittle ourselves – not for the sake of negating ourselves but in order to exchange our molar selves for a molecular becoming that can sweep us away along with the people whom we interact with, drawing us together until we abut against each other; thus is initiated an intimate proximity – an immanent one, not mediated by transcendent knowledge.

Almost anyone can be a minority in certain contexts and a violent majority in others. Different discursive regimes and other contingent conditions may place us in a position of power in relation to others – a position that we are liable to exploit, if inadvertently, and thus act violently. This is the fascism in each and every one of us. This fascism, this dominating power, trickles down: everyone has power over some minority weaker than their own. This chain of power ultimately perpetuates the molar structure itself, in which different identities create coalitions and oppositions, come into conflict with and defeat one another. A minorian politics seeks to undermine the politics of power and empowerment: it seeks to unravel the power-driven chain and create, in its stead, a practice of minoracy.

Fascism – the violent attitude toward ourselves and others – is present in us all. But we all also have minorian potential. Minoracy is not a lofty ideal that only the uniquely virtuous are able to attain. It is embedded in us all, though usually lies dormant. It lingers in the air we breathe and through which we see and hear, the same air that can suddenly, with no forewarning and apparently with no dramatic justification, open us up to a minor moment – through the bleary eyes of a laborer, the laughter of a child, the choked tears of an electoral candidate, the stumbling of an elderly person crossing our path, the candor of a man who shares with us his troubles, a woman's outstretched begging hand, the forced smile of a cashier, a horse collapsing in front of our eyes. These minor moments usually pass in the blink of an eye and yield to the ongoing major moments. But minor politics, micropolitics, grasps on to these moments and tries to reinforce them in order to mitigate the violence that rules over the vast majority of instances.

Minor political thought thus tries to identify the existing mechanisms of power in society in order to defuse them, one small step at a time.

Minoracy does not promise wonders. **Minoracy is a minor concept.**

## Endnotes

1. The last of these pejorative expressions, all common in Israeli popular discourse, was coined by former Prime Minister Golda Meir in 1971 regarding the Israeli Black Panthers, a social movement that protested discrimination against Sephardic Jews in Israel [translators' note].
2. The Hebrew term "Ben Mi'utim", translated here as "a member of a minority group", means, literally, a child (or a son) of minorities, and was historically used to designate, euphemistically, members of any one of the non-Jew minorities in Israel, particularly Israeli Arabs [translators' note].
3. See, for instance, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 291.
4. Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson & Graham Burchell (London: Verso, 1994), p. 19.
5. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 291.
6. See, for instance, Félix Guattari, "Becoming-Woman", in *Soft Subversions*, translated by David L. Sweet and Chet Wiener (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), p. 41; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 277-279, 291; Goulimari celebrates the priority given to becoming-woman over every other becoming, arguing that it is a token of feminism's success in opening the way to the desire of becoming other, and of feminism's commitment to other minoritarian movements. See: Pelagia Goulimari, "A Minoritarian Feminism?: Things to do with Deleuze and Guattari", in *Deleuze and Guattari: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, Vol. 3, edited by Gary Genosko (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 1486.
7. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 275-276.
8. One aspect of this double liberation is emphasized in Azoulay and Ophir's "Short Dictionary of Citizenship" under the entry "Women": "Men must [...] understand that every time they occupy a place of dominance based on gender, they themselves are subject to a gender regime that tends to increase their material assets and impoverish their emotional world". See: Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, *Bad Days: Between Disaster and Utopia* (Tel-Aviv: Resling, 2002), pp. 36-37 (in Hebrew).
9. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 293.
10. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 294.
11. Cf. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem & Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 273.
12. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 292.
13. Judith Butler's theory, for instance, which focuses on the performative dimension of gender identity, a dimension that undermines the pretension to an essentialist identity, introduces a field of political action similar to that presented in Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of minority and becoming. See: Judith Butler,

*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

14. J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962).

15. See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 276-277, and cf. Catherine Driscoll, "The Little Girl", in *Deleuze and Guattari: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers*, pp. 1464-1479.

16. Deleuze and Guattari, *ibid.*, p. 276.

17. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, translated by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 17.

18. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 274-275.

19. Sigmund Freud, "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy", in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol. 10), translated by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), pp. 1-149.

20. Cf., for example, Gilles Deleuze, "What Children Say", in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, translated by Daniel W. Smith & Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 61ff; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 257ff.

21. Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, translated by Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press 1995), p. 173; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 105.

22. Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, p. 17.

23. Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, pp. 176, 218. Deleuze makes similar comments about "minor cinema", ascribing to it an even greater force. See: Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson (London: The Athelone Press 1989), pp. 215-224.

24. "Re'ut" in Hebrew, a word meaning deep friendship, popularized by an Israeli song written following the 1948 "War of Independence", celebrating the special kinship among army soldiers who stand together in battle against a common enemy [translators' note].

25. In Hebrew, "boundary" resonates with "disabled", the latter literally meaning "being bound" [translators' note].

26. Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, translated by Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: Schocken, 1995); see also Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*.

27. Herman Melville, "Bartleby", in *Billy Budd, Sailor: And Other Stories* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 57-99; see also Gilles Deleuze, "Bartleby; or, The Formula", in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, pp. 68-90.

28. Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence", in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 1*, edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, translated by Edmund Jephcott (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 244-246.

29. Michel Foucault, "Preface", in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. xiii.

30. Michel Foucault, "Governmentality", Ch. 4 in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 87-104.

