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FUTURE ART BASE
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$n-1$

[W]hat a vapid idea, the book as the image of the world. In truth, it is not enough to say, "Long live the multiple," difficult as it is to raise that cry. No typographical, lexical, or even syntactical cleverness is enough to make it heard. The multiple must be made, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available – always $n-1$ (the only way the one belongs to the multiple: always subtracted). Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted; write at $n-1$.

– Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

"A escultura não tem outro objetivo: o vento..."
Gilles Deleuze

CARTOGRAPHY OF EXHAUSTION NIHILISM INSIDE OUT

PETER PÁL PELBART

ILUMINURAS

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ISBN



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LIFE, BODY, POWER



HOW TO LIVE ALONE?

The populated solitude

In the early eighties, in a class about cinema, if I remember correctly, Deleuze was interrupted by a rather fraught student, perhaps one of Guattari's patients, or a former La Borde inmate, amidst such a heterogeneous audience, composed of philosophers, architects, painters, drug addicts, vagrants... He asked Deleuze why people were so alone, why there was such a lack of communication nowadays, and unraveled his sad story about how we are victims of abandonment and helplessness. And Deleuze, sensing that his class was being driven off track, replied politely, before proposing a small break: the problem is not that we are alone, but rather that we are not left alone enough. Indeed, Deleuze never tired of writing that we suffer from an excess of communication, that we are "riddled with pointless talk, insane quantities of words and images," so that the problem is no longer to make "people express themselves, but rather to provide small vacuoles of solitude and silence in which they might eventually find something to say." And to conjure the gentleness and the right to not have anything to say, such a condition is "so that one might form the rare, or even rarer, thing that might be worth saying."¹

But what is this solitude that Deleuze called for, one that he came to qualify as "absolute solitude" when referring to the creator, a condition that he finds in Nietzsche, Kafka, Melville, Godard, and so many others? It is the world's most populous solitude. "Populated not with dreams, phantasms or plans, but with encounters."² Because what matters is that at the bottom of that solitude we can meet people without even knowing them. Movements, ideas, events, entities. As he says: "We are deserts, but populated by tribes, flora and fauna. We pass our time in ordering these tribes, arranging them in other ways, getting rid of some and encouraging others to prosper. And all these clans, all these crowds, do not undermine the desert, which is our very own ascesis; on the contrary, they inhabit it, they pass through it, over it... The desert, experimentation on oneself is our only identity, our single chance for all the combinations which inhabit us."³ What fascination they exercised over him, these hybrid, solitary, desert types, and also men of groups and gangs, like Lawrence of Arabia. Deserts populated by

1 Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 129.

2 Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 6.

3 Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*, 11.

becomings, encounters, traversed by movements of deterritorialization and depersonalization... Even when they carried a name, this name designated first an event before a subject, more a collective assemblage than an individual, an intensity before a form. In short, the most singular point; an opening for the biggest multiplicity: rhizome. As Deleuze says, to leave the “black hole of our Ego” where we dwell with our feelings and passions, to undo one’s face, to become imperceptible, and to paint ourselves in the colors of the world⁴ (D. H. Lawrence)... The most absolute solitude, in favor of more radical depersonalization for a different conjugation with the flows of the world... To become a molecule, becoming-imperceptible, meddle in the course of things, and there proliferate, propagate everywhere... The becoming-viral of thought, whose other name is desire. “The epitome of wishful solitude and the epitome of the socius,” as Guattari wrote in his notes. Or as in Godard: being alone to be part of a criminal conspiracy, or a production studio, and turn into a gang; in any case, desertion, betrayal itself (of family, class, nation, the status of author), to take solitude as a means for encounter, in a creative line of flight.⁵

Thus, it is anything but solipsism. Solitude is the means by which one deserts the form of the Ego and its infamous commitments to a determined totality in favor of a different combination with the flows of the socius and of the cosmos in such a way that the solitary’s challenge, contrary to any autistic reclusion, is always to find or rediscover the most connections.⁶ To call for a people to come. To make another community possible. To establish a different interaction between the singular and the common.

Take the figure of Bartleby, the scrivener described by Melville, who replies to every order of his boss as such: “I would prefer not to.” The lawyer oscillates between fraternal compassion and indignation, between pity and repulsion, with this employee planted behind the screen, who barely speaks, barely eats, pale and thin like an irremovable lost soul. With such passivity, he empties of meaning and neutralizes the spring that previously turned the gears of the world, and makes everything run, in a deterritorialization of language, places, functions, habits, and slides everything along in an unbridled flight. From the depths of their solitude, these individuals not only reveal the refusal of a poisoned sociability, but are the calling for a kind of

4 Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*, 45-6.

5 Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*, 17.

6 Gilles Deleuze. *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, trans. D. W. Smith and M. A. Greco, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 52.

new solidarity; the plea for a community to come. Not the community based on hierarchy, paternalism, compassion, as his employer would like to offer, but the community of celibates, the society of brothers, a federation of men and goods. A community of anarchist individuals, which Deleuze often finds in American literature, as opposed to the inquisitorial utopia of the collective soul. And he asks: what remains of souls once they no longer cling to an identity, but also refuse to melt into a universal totality? What remains is precisely their “originality,” that is, a sound that each one *produces* when taking to the open road, when leading life without seeking salvation, when embarking upon an incarnate voyage, without any particular aim, and then encountering other travelers, recognizing them by their sound. Against the European morality of salvation and charity, a morality of life in which the soul is fulfilled only by taking the road, exposed to every contact, never trying to save other souls, turning away from those who produce an overly authoritarian or groaning sound, forming even fleeting and unresolved chords and accords. The community of the celibates is that of whichever man and his singularities that cross one another: neither individualism nor communalism.

Apparatus of life

In light of these remarks, let me mention a course given by Roland Barthes many years ago on the subject of *How to live together*, when he confessed that the title resulted from a kind of obsession, and his research on the subject, therefore, was the fruit of a fantasy that had long been haunting him. Interestingly, Barthes only states this fantasy of living together and discards collectivist utopias where everything is meticulously regulated and shared.⁷ The idea of a common life is immediately cleared of several hellish images of coexistence, from the Phalanstère to unpalatable company, from the family to the restaurant. It seems impossible to wrap up the fantasy of living together without its counterbalance, a guarantee of solitude, times of isolation, spaces of reclusion, mechanisms for escape and distancing. Barthes’ original fantasy appears clearly: a human agglomeration where everyone can, at the same time, live at their own rhythm. Even if Power⁸ tends to impose a homogenous

⁷ Roland Barthes, *Comment vivre-ensemble*, (Paris: Seuil, 2002).

⁸ Translator’s note. Due to the difficulty in translating the difference between Portuguese words *Poder* and *Potência*, or the French *Pouvoir* and *Puissance*, or Latin *Potestas* and *Potentia*, we have opted to follow Michael Hardt’s solution by making “the distinction nominally through capitalization, rendering *Pouvoir* [poder] as ‘Power’ and *Puissance* [potência] as ‘power.’” See “Translator’s Forward: The Anatomy of Power” in Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly. The Power of Spinoza’s Metaphysics and Politics*. trans. Michael Hardt, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), xii.

rhythm on the life of a collective, as in a monastery, prayer time, meal time, rest time, each would have the right to their own rhythm, a *ruthmos*, a temporal form that is flexible, mobile, and transient; opposed to the power of a single rhythm, the call for the idiorrhhythm. But, is not an idiorrhhythmic community an insane utopia? From *The Magic Mountain* to Robinson Crusoe, from the life of Spinoza⁹ to the latest trend, the question that comes back is this: how to create a structure of life that is not an apparatus of life? How to live together and escape tyrannical gregariousness? How to reject forms of living together that suffocate singularity? Maybe by inventing a game made of distances and differences. A “socialism of distances,” where what is shared is the asymmetry...

But another note creeps in at the end of the course, without which this panorama could not be complete: the experience of *dépaysement*, of expatriation, the voluntary exile. To drop everything, to escape, to leave, even if the nature of this movement is internal, spiritual, imperceptible, carried out with no ostentation or vanity. As if any collective were unthinkable without a line of flight. Perhaps the community itself, in the strong sense of the word – and history is full of examples – can only be born from a desertion, an exodus, however solitary, mystical, or psychotic it may seem.

I need to die a little

In a more clinical context, psychoanalyst Nathalie Zaltzman evokes the anarchist drive of the “uncompromising,” beings whose lives are punctuated by dramatic ruptures, and fight fiercely against “imprisoning organizations of life.” If these lives can give off an almost epic image, we must remember that these people are caught in a “solitude that can neither be shared nor alleviated,” they are devoid of what we habitually surround ourselves with in order to protect us from solitude and death. What matters above all is “to ascertain the extent to which they do not attach themselves to anyone or anything, to what extent they remain free to abandon everything, to spoil everything... to give everything. They are not worried about protecting the reasons that bind them to life; what keeps them busy is making sure they are free of any ties. For they do not go into exile from themselves, they expatriate themselves in every corner of their lives.”¹⁰ Such is attested by the anarchist geographer Elisée Reclus, who was repeatedly deported,

⁹ Spinoza rents a room in a boarding house and occasionally goes downstairs to talk with his hosts – a true hermit, says Barthes.

¹⁰ Nathalie Zaltzman, *A pulsão anarquista*, (São Paulo: Escuta, 1993).

exiled, imprisoned: “I’m tired of eating and drinking, sleeping in a bed, and walking around with full pockets. *I need to die a little from hunger, to sleep on the gravel...*” Here is, by tortuous paths, an urgency to show that one is alive, even at the price of constantly being exposed to death. The anarchist drive is that which fights the binding intention of Eros, which is annexation, ownership, annulment of alterity – gregariousness. The libertarian impetus, with its anti-social charge, has a demoniacal, or even terroristic, halo. But what is at stake, even here, is a resistance against the “unifying domain, deceptively idyllic, sweetening and leveling of ideological love,” an impulse to make the whole structure of Power, authority, connection, and their sacred fantasies fly through the air. To relieve yourself from the love that embraces and paralyzes everything, it is not Thanatos, but rather a vital struggle against death. I think that many of Dostoyevsky’s characters are of this type; they test out their leeway, mobility, vitality, even if they need to flirt with the demonic. Opposed to Dostoyevsky’s Grand Inquisitor, who guarantees the herd’s pacified happiness by paying for their docility, the Underground Man is unwillingness personified, the refusal of the promise of narcotic quietude, the frenetic rejection of all truth, divine or scientific, in favor of an impatient freedom. Clearly we know that the Grand Inquisitor has now acquired his biotechnocapitalistic and planetary version – what remains is knowing who the underground men of today are.

What is mine is my distance

Like Thomas Bernhard, the Brazilian writer Juliano Pessanha, in his beautiful trilogy, takes it upon himself to denounce the pact of universal hypocrisy that ensures such daily existence, and reveals the metaphysical cement that, at every instant, prevents us from *collapsing*.¹¹ However, paradoxically, in these books we see crumble one by one all the competent characters that guarantee the “business of the administrating life”, parents, educators, psychiatrists, socializers, men of culture – all of which sometimes play the part of life’s jailors. From the autobiography of the character Gombro (no doubt inspired by the writer Witold Gombrowicz), we have access to the survival strategies that a child invents in order to challenge all those who prostitute the word and make it the instrument of a generalized pretense. How to avoid the assassination that is proposed to us starting at the most tender age, how to get around the obliteration of one’s own face, how to escape the narrative

¹¹ Juliano Pessanha, *Sabedoria do nunca, Ignorância do sempre, Certeza do agora*, (São Paulo: Ateliê, 2002).

of oneself which has always already been outsourced by those who “care” for us or “love” us? The author offers a poetic answer. Only by returning on his own to suffocation and retaliations (“I spent most of my life screaming in tunnels, windows, and alleys”), putting down in writing his early perception of death and pain. Only then is the factual linearity of a life broken, and it can be punctured by the series of questions that have characterized it: “Is anyone there? Is there some true life on the planet? Why do the so-called family life and the so-called scholastic life and the so-called social life crush the possible child? Why is it that only the frauds survive, those who identify with the dead child?” In times of “total mobilization,” of “existential alcoholism,” there is a voice that introduces a word of hesitation, of waiting, and presentiment. It resonates with *Bartleby*, but also with Saint Paul’s question which Žižek has taken up. “Who is really alive nowadays?” From the lowest point of his breaking down, Gombro asks for other places to visit, where living-together and living alone are articulated in a different manner.

How many have not tried it, and in the most torturous ways. Since Barthes disclosed his personal fantasy of living together, namely, the monastery on Mount Athos, I will also allow myself to take one example, somewhat out of fashion, coming from the psychiatric field. Talking about enclosure, everyone has his own fantasy. Jean Oury, who directed the La Borde clinic with Felix Guattari, practically checked himself into the clinic along with his patients in an old, decadent castle. The question that bothered him for the rest of his life, although in a specific clinical context, is similar to that of Barthes in the monastic setting, and certainly not unlike the fate of the Gombros and Bartlebys, who we run into on every corner of this post-modern asylum of ours. How to sustain a collectivity and at the same time preserve the dimension of singularity for each and every one? How to create heterogeneous spaces, with their own tonalities, distinct atmospheres, allowing each to connect in his or her own way? How to maintain an availability that facilitates encounters, but does not impose them, an attention that allows for contact and preserves alterity? How to make room for chance, without programming it? How to sustain a “kindness” that allows for the emergence of a speaking that grows out of the affective desert? When describing La Borde, Marie Depussé referred to a community made up of smoothness, because it was softened from being rubbed with pain. Example: these people need a bit of dust that protects them from the violence of the day. Even when sweeping, it must be done slowly... “It’s while you revolve around their beds, collect their crumbs, touch their blankets, their bodies, when the smoothest



dialogues occur, the infinite conversation of those who fear the light with those who take upon themselves the misery of the night...¹² Not an aseptic utopia, perhaps because the psychotic is there, fortunately or unfortunately, to remind us that there is something in the empirical world that is falsely spinning (Oury). It is true that it all seems to belong to an almost Proustian past. But even Guattari never failed to acknowledge his debt to this experience of collective life in which he also delved deeply, and the effort he invested in checking the “mark of singularity for the smallest gestures and encounters.” He confesses that out of that he could “dream about what life could become in the urban conglomerates, in schools, in hospitals,” if the collective Assemblages were subjected to such a “baroque treatment.”

But currently we are far from following such a direction, even and especially, in a networked capitalism, which highly celebrates connections, and monitors them for different ends. Besides this, what is seen is that in parallel to the absolute connectivity a new anguish is intensified – that of the disconnection. Not only the anguish of being disconnected from digital networks, but also from the networks of life, access to which is increasingly mediated by commercial tolls, unaffordable for a large majority. Still, we should be able to distinguish this socially produced “negative solitude” from what Katz called “positive solitude,” namely, that which consists of resisting a despotic socialitarianism and challenging the tyranny of productive exchanges and social circulation.¹³ Sometimes in these disengagements, partial subjectivities are outlined; celibate machines that are resistant to a compulsory social reenlisting.

I will allow myself to mention the theater company that I have helped to coordinate for more than seventeen years in São Paulo, the Ueinz Theater Company, consisting mainly of mental health service users¹⁴. Some years ago, we were invited to the prestigious International Theater Festival in Curitiba. To our surprise, we stayed in a first class hotel. Installed on the spinning sofa in the lobby, one of our actors places his coffee on the table, opens a newspaper, lights a cigarette. He is thin, schizo, with white hair and deep blue eyes. I watch from afar and tell myself: that could be Artaud, or some Polish actor reading the reviews in the newspaper about his play. Then I look down and see these big twisted yellow toenails sticking out from a pair of beach sandals as if to say: “not even close”. Perhaps Deleuze and Guattari’s

12 Marie Depussé, *Dieu gît dans les détails*, (Paris: P.O.L., 1993).

13 Chaim Samuel Katz, *O coração distante: ensaio sobre a solidão positiva*. (Rio de Janeiro: Revan, 1996).

14 Further reading on the chapter “Inhuman polyphony in the theater of madness.”



beautiful saying fits here: territory is primarily the critical distance between two beings of the same species marking their distances. What is mine is primarily my distance, I possess nothing if not distances... The animal and monstrous horde, the indomitable toenail, a sign of inhumanity, that is one's distance, one's solitude, but also one's signature.

The Argentine playwright Eduardo Pavlovsky created a character that humorously shows this claim through another type of surrounding: Poroto (which means bean). His most constant concern is to figure out how to escape any situation that might arise. Where is he going to sit at a party so he can escape at any moment? What excuse will he come up with when he runs into someone on the street, such as Kafka, in his diaries, tells of how to get rid of a fat Jewish lawyer? How will he get out of such and such a commitment? And he comes to exclaim a sentence that is a punch in the stomach for many psychoanalysts: "enough with bonds, just contiguity of velocities."¹⁵ Would we not have here the outline of something peculiar to this universe of ours, so far from the time when no one would stop "defining the relationship?" A subjectivity that is more schizo, flowing, rhizomatic, having more to do with surroundings and resonances, or distances and encounters, than ties? Would it be possible to read from this perspective some contemporary attitudes, no longer dissident toward a disciplinary society and its rigid logic of belonging and affiliation, but rather toward a surveillance society, with its flexible mechanisms for monitoring and conjugating flows?

Resistance

In a small book entitled *The Coming Community*, Agamben evokes a resistance, unlike anything before, such as that of a class, a party, a union, a group, a minority, but rather that of a whatever singularity, of the whatever one, which precisely is not any one, because it is "amiable" in the singularity that belongs to it.¹⁶ For example: the anonymous man who stood up to a tank in Tiananmen Square, who is no longer defined by his belonging to a particular identity, whether of a political group or a social movement, or the Arab revolt, or the Brazilian protests, that sort of ubiquity and multitudinous resistance, without a party flag, not delegating to any leader or institutionalized movement, the leadership or the Power of representing, hence the strength of such anonymity. This is what the State cannot tolerate, the whatever singularity that refuses it without constituting a mirrored replica

¹⁵ Eduardo Pavlovsky, *Poroto*, (Buenos Aires: Ed. Búsqueda de Ayllú, 1996).

¹⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1993).

of the state itself, in the figure of a recognizable identitarian formation, like a party, an ideology, etc... *Whatever singularity*, which does not claim an identity, which fails to assert a social bond, which denies all belonging, but manifests its common being – is the condition, as Agamben reiterated several years ago, of all future politics.

Sometimes we think about the collective preserving the margin of escape that would compensate for its own oppression (being able to flee from it); sometimes the collective itself is thought of as a compensation for an all too solitary escape. The community would have a function of relief, a balm, almost as a protection against unbearable solitude, while at the same time, solitude as a protection against the unbearable weight of the collective. Perhaps what is most difficult is to think about escape and the collective together, the collective itself as a line of flight, the line of flight as a collective. In other terms, between living-together and living-alone there is no pacifying dialectic, but a complex game, without synthesis: the disjunctive collective¹⁷.

Encounter

Maybe it all depends, at heart, on a strange theory of the encounter, in which the relation precedes its terms. To encounter is to affect and be affected, infect and be infected, envelop and be enveloped. Even in the extreme of solitude, encountering is not to, extrinsically, collide with someone else, but to experiment the distance that separates us, and fly over this distance in a crazy back-and-forth: “I am Apis, I am an Egyptian. I am a red Indian. I am a Negro. I am a Chinaman. I am a Japanese. I am a foreigner, a stranger. I am a sea bird. I am a land bird. I am the tree of Tolstoy. I am the roots of Tolstoy,” says Nijinski. The heterogeneous contaminate and communicate, but each also envelops one or the other that is encountered, takes possession of their strength, but without destroying them. Thus, out of this distance that Deleuze has called “politeness,” Oury “kindness,” Barthes “delicacy,” Guattari “softness,” at the same time there is separation, back-and-forth, flying over, contamination, mutual enveloping, reciprocal becoming. It is an overall weird connection, because it disconnects where Powers want connections, and connects where they want disconnections. Like with the schizo. One could also call it sympathy: an action at a distance, the action of one force on another. Neither fusion, nor intersubjective dialectic, nor metaphysics of alterity, but rather enveloping composition, disjunctive synthesis, polyphonic

17 Fabiane Borges.. *Domínios do demasiado*. (São Paulo: Hucitec, 2010)

game. Hence Deleuze's question, of a Spinozist nature: "How can a being take another being into its world, but while preserving or respecting the other's own relations and world?"¹⁸ With this, Deleuze relaunches, in an inseparable and mixed-up manner, living-together and living-alone on a large scale, pointing to another sociability, and even to a community to come. A subjective ecology would need to sustain the disparity of worlds, forms of life, points of view, rhythms, gestures, intonations, sensations, and encourage its proliferation rather than seize it in a universal modulation, such that each singularity preserves, not its identity, but its power of affectation and envelopment in the immense game of the world. Without that, every being sinks into the black hole of its solitude, deprived of its connections and the sympathy that makes it live.

It would be necessary to depart from the precarious lives, anonymous deserters, people suicided by society, not only to thematize the meaning of these solitudes, but also that of the evanescent gestures that reinvent sympathy, and even a solidarity in the contemporary biopolitical context. Among a Gombro, a Poroto, a Bartleby, a Walser, or an actor in our schizoscenic theater company, I see, at times, the outline of what might be called an uncertain community, not unconnected with that which has obsessed the second half of the twentieth century, from Bataille to Agamben, namely: the community of those who do not have community, the community of the celibates, the inoperative community, the impossible community, the gaming community, the coming community, or even a socialism of distances. One thing is certain: facing the terrible community that has spread across the planet, made of reciprocal monitoring and frivolity, these beings (but will it just be them?) needed their solitude in order to give rise to their crazy bifurcation, and conquer the place of their sympathies.

18 Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley, (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988), 126.





THE BODY OF THE FORMLESS

Giorgio Agamben recalls that literature and thought also perform experiments, just like science. But while science seeks to prove the truth or falsity of a hypothesis, literature and thought have a different objective. They are experiments with no truth. Here are some examples. Avicenna proposes his experiment of the flying man, and in his imagination he dismembers a man's body, piece by piece, in order to prove that even though broken and suspended in the air, he can still say "I am." Rimbaud says: "I am other." Kleist evokes the perfect body of the marionette as a paradigm of the absolute. Heidegger substitutes the psychosomatic self with an empty and inessential being... According to Agamben, it is necessary to let oneself be carried away by such experiments. Through them we risk our convictions less than we do our modes of existence. In the domain of our subjective history, Agamben reminds us that such experiments are equivalent to what it was like for the primate when the hands were freed while standing erect, or for the reptile when forelimbs transformed thus allowing it to become a bird. It is always about the body, even, and principally when what's at stake is the body of writing¹.

Literary images

It is in this spirit that I would like to start from one or another literary image, and some variations around them. The first is that of the skinny body of Kafka's hunger artist, whose art interests nobody, abandoned in a cage near the stables, at the back of the circus. Kafka describes the pale man, staring into space with half-shut eyes, with extremely protruding ribs, bony arms, thin waist, emptied body, legs that, in order to keep himself on his feet, are squeezed against one another at the knee, scraping the ground – in short, a bundle of bones. Amidst the rotting hay, when the circus employees find him somewhat by accident and they ask him about his reasons for fasting, he raises his excessively heavy little head by his weak neck, and he replies by whispering to them, before dying: "Because I couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else." We find out, in the end, that the cage where he took his last breath is subsequently used to hold a noble bodied panther, "furnished with all that it needed," and gave the impression that it carried its own freedom in its jaws.

¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Bartleby ou la création*. (Circé: 1995), 59.

The second image is the body of Melville's *Bartleby*, the copyist. From the outset, a tireless worker seated behind the folding screen, but without showing the slightest enjoyment in making copies, when suddenly he begins to answer his boss' orders with "I would prefer not to." The narrator thus describes him: his face thin and gaunt, sucked in and calm, his gray eyes still and pale, at times dull and glazed. His haggard body, which eats ginger nuts, his pale silhouette, sometimes in shirt sleeves, strange and tattered homemade suit, a cavalier and cadaverous indifference. In short, debris from a shipwreck in the middle of the Atlantic. And the most intolerable in the attorney's eyes: passive resistance. Impossible to "frighten his immobility into compliance." Even in prison, there is *Bartleby*, alone on the most isolated patio, facing a high wall, or languishing, lying on his side, refusing to eat. Upon discovering that this man with no past had at one time worked with lost letters, the narrator compassionately refers to these lost men...

Body and gesture

We shall refuse the humanist interpretations, full of meaning or piety for these lost men with their immobile and inert bodies, emptied and squalid. We would have every reason, indeed, to associate them with an endless chain of defiled bodies, in the cruelty and indifference of the genocides that populated the iconography of the last century. But I insist, let us initially just stay with these strange postures, this "standing in front of the wall," this "lying" amidst the hay, this fallen little head but speaking in one's ear, this being seated behind the folding screen, these gestures devoid of traditional supports, as Walter Benjamin says in his essay on Kafka, but still preserving a certain leeway that the War would come to abort. A gesture is a means without an end; it is enough, as in dance. That is why, says Agamben, it opens the sphere of ethics, belonging to man. Further still when it happens starting from an inert or undone body, at the impossible conjunction between the dying and the embryonic, as is the case in the literary characters mentioned.

Let us consider the fragility of these bodies, nearly inhumane, in postures that touch upon death, and which nonetheless embody a strange obstinacy, an unwavering refusal. In this renunciation of the world we sense the sign of resistance. Thus it states something essential of the world itself. In these beings we are confronted with a deafness that is hearing, a blindness that is seeing, a numbness that is an exacerbated sensibility, an apathy that is pure pathos, a frailty that is indicative of a superior vitality. To describe the life of the writer, Deleuze uses a similar image: "[the writer] possesses an irresistible

and delicate health that stems from what he has seen and heard of things too big for him, too strong for him, suffocating things whose passage exhausts him, while nonetheless giving him the becomings that a dominant and substantial health would render impossible.”² What the writer refuses, just like the faster or the scrivener, is this dominant fat health, gorging, stuffing oneself full, the pregnancy of an all-too categorical world, the panther’s jaw.

Let us understand: the writer’s weakness and exhaustion are due to the fact that he has seen too much, heard too much, and been traversed too much by what he has seen and heard. He has been marred, it is too much for him and so he collapsed, but as for that, he can only be kept permeable if he remains in a condition of frailty, of imperfection. This deformity, this incompleteness, would even be a condition of literature, hence it is there where *life is found in the most embryonic state*, where form has not yet “taken” entirely, as Gombrowicz says. There is no way, therefore, to preserve this freedom of “beings yet to be born” so dear to so many authors, in an excessively muscular body, amidst an athletic self-sufficiency, overly excited, plugged in, obscene. Perhaps the characters we mentioned need their immobility, deflation, pallor, on the limits of the dead body in order to make way for different strengths that an “armored” body would not allow.

Is it necessary to produce a dead body so that different forces pass through the body? José Gil observed the process through which, in contemporary dance, the body takes over itself like a bundle of forces and disinvests its organs, disentangling itself from the “internalized sensory-motor models,” as Cunningham says. A body “that can be deserted, emptied, robbed of its soul,” to then be able to “be traversed by the most exuberant fluxes of life.” It is there, says Gil, that this body, which is already a body-without-organs, constitutes around itself an intensive domain, a virtual cloud, a type of affective atmosphere, with its own density, texture, viscosity, as if the body exhaled and liberated unconscious forces that circulate at the surface, projecting around itself a type of “white shadow.”³

Through entirely different existential and aesthetic means, we find again among some actors of the Ueinzz Theater Company, “carriers of psychological distress,” postures that are “lost,” inhumane, misshapen, solitary, with their impalpable presence and lead weight, in their own weirdness and sparkle, surrounded by their “white shadow,” or immersed in a “zone of offensive opacity,” according to the expression coined by a recent magazine,

2 Gilles Deleuze, *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, 3.

3 José Gil, *Metamorphoses of the Body*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 28.

in a different context. Is it not this that we see surrounding the postures of *Bartleby* or some of Kafka's characters? But why does it seem so difficult to embrace these postures bereft of meaning, intention, ends, surrounded by their white shadow, their zone of offensive opacity?

The body that can't take anymore

Perhaps owing to that which David Lapoujade, in Deleuze's wake, and especially Beckett's, defined in the most colloquial and lapidary manner possible: it deals with a body *qui n'en peut plus*, that cannot take any more. "We are like Beckett's characters, for whom it is already difficult to ride a bicycle, then, difficult to walk, then, difficult to simply drag oneself, and further still, to remain seated. Even in increasingly elementary situations, which require less and less effort, the body cannot take any more. Everything happens as if it could no longer move, no longer respond [...] the body is that which cannot take any more," by definition.⁴

However, the author asks, what is it that the body can no longer take? It cannot take any more of that which coerces, from the outside and from the inside. Coercion outside of the body from immemorial times was described by Nietzsche in the admirable pages of *The Genealogy of Morality*; it is the progressive "civilizing" training from the animal-man, by sword and fire, which resulted in the man-form that we now know. In Nietzsche's wake, Foucault described the shaping of the modern body, its taming through disciplinary technology, which, since the industrial revolution has optimized man's strengths – and from this we also have some echoes in Kafka. Well, more precisely, the body cannot take the *training* and the *discipline*. With this, it also cannot take more of the system of martyrdom and narcosis that Christianity, in the first place, and subsequently Medicine, which were developed to deal with pain: blame and the pathologization of suffering, desensitizing and negation of the body.

Therefore, we should retake the body in that which is most its own, its pain in the encounter with the outside, its condition of a body *affected* by the forces of the world. As Barbara Stiegler notes in a remarkable study on Nietzsche, for him every living subject is first an affected subject, a body that suffers from its affections, its encounters, the alterity that strikes it, the throng of stimuli and excitement, and it is up to it to select, avoid, choose,

⁴ David Lapoujade, "O corpo que não agüenta mais", in *Nietzsche e Deleuze, Que pode o corpo*, org. D. Lins, (Rio de Janeiro: Relume-Dumará, 2002), 82.

embrace...⁵ In order to continue to be affected, more and better, the affected subject needs to be attentive to the excitations that affect it and filter them, rejecting those that are too threatening. The ability of a living being to remain open to affections and alterity, to the stranger, also depends on its capacity to avoid the violence that would destroy it altogether.

Along this line, Deleuze also insists that a body never ceases to be subjected to encounters, with light, oxygen, food, sounds, and cutting words – a body is first an encounter with other bodies. But how could the body protect itself from serious wounds in order to embrace the more subtle ones, or as Nietzsche says in *Ecce Homo*, to use “self-defense” in order to preserve “open hands?” How does he have the force to be at the height of his weakness, instead of remaining in the weakness of just cultivating the force? That is how Lapoujade defines this paradox: “like being at the height of the protoplasm or the embryo, being at the height of one’s fatigue instead of overcoming it through a voluntary hardening...?”

Thus, the body is synonymous with a certain powerlessness, and it is from this powerlessness that it now extracts a superior power, freed from form, the act, the agent, even from “posture...”

The post-organic body

But perhaps the contemporary picture makes all of this much more complex, keeping in mind new decompositions of the material body. In the context of universal digitization, in which a new bioinformatics metaphor has assaulted our bodies, the old human body, so primitive in its organicity, already seems obsolete. Given the new techno-scientific array, where virtual utopia sees in the materiality of the body an uncomfortable viscosity, an obstacle to immaterial liberation, we are all somewhat handicapped. From this gnostical-informatics perspective, we long for the loss of carnal support, we yearn for a fluid and disembodied immateriality. Hi-tech neo-Cartesianism, incorporeal aspiration, resuscitated Platonism, the fact is that there is a techno-demiurgism that responds to a new sociopolitical, post-organic, and post-human utopia, as Paula Sibília says in a recent study...⁶ There is no reason to cry because a certain humanism has been surpassed, indeed, but that does not mean that a rising unrest can be avoided. Perhaps the most difficult part is knowing which relation exists between that which some

5 Barbara Stiegler, *Nietzsche et la biologie*, (Paris: PUF, 2001), 38.

6 Paula Sibília, *O homem pós-orgânico*, (Rio de Janeiro: Relume-Dumará, 2002).

call the post-organic body, that is, the digitized, virtualized, immaterialized body, reduced to a combination of finite and recombinable elements according to a limitless plasticity, and what others have called the conquest of a body-without-organs... Indeed both configure a surpassing of the human form and of humanism, which had served the human form as a support, but would one not be the opposite of the other, although being precisely in this so provocative proximity that Deleuze and Guattari's thought never tired of exploring in so many areas, so different in this from a certain critical tradition, be it Marxist or Frankfurtian, always more dichotomous? Somewhat like Nietzsche, where the scariest can bring with it the most promising. He, who referred to the vivisection operated upon ourselves, and to the risks and promises embedded therein.

How to differentiate Spinoza's perplexity, with the fact that we do not yet know what **the body can do**, from the technoscience challenge, which precisely continues to experiment with **what can be done with the body**? How to differentiate the body's necessary decomposition and disfiguration, as we have seen, so that the forces that traverse it invent new connections and liberate new powers, a tendency that characterized part of our culture over the last decades, in its diverse experiments, from dances to drugs and literature itself, how to not confuse this with the decomposition and disfiguration that biotechnological manipulation raises up and stimulates? Powers of the life which need a body-without-organs in order to experiment, on the one hand, Power over the life that needs a post-organic body to annex it to the capitalistic axiomatic.

Perhaps this opposition refers to two aspects present in Nietzsche, in the paradoxical form that was taken on at the end of his existence, according to Stiegler's analysis. "The subject that receives power does not walk away unharmed. Wounded, suffering from these wounds, after painfully experiencing such suffering, the question of the fortune of such wounds is put to the subject increasingly more clearly: should he mend them through vigorous therapeutic measures, or leave them to fortune, at the risk of infection? Here is the force of the aporia with which one confronts the living human, the only one who is aware of his wounds: all suffering should invoke acting, but acting that does not impede suffering; the pathologies of the living call for medicine, but medicine that respects pathologies as a condition of life." Thus, the body's statute appears inseparable from a frailty, a pain, even a certain "passivity," conditions for a vital affirmation of a different order. Despite the many inflections, it is as such for Nietzsche, for Artaud, for Beckett, for Deleuze, and in certain circumstances also for Kafka.

Kafka's body

In Kafka we initially have a particularity of him referring in abundance to his own body, be it in his diary or in his letters, and always in a negative manner. "I write this very decidedly out of despair over my body and over a future with this body" (1910); "It is certain that a major obstacle to my progress is my physical condition. Nothing can be accomplished with such a body. I shall have to get used to its perpetual balking" (21/Nov/1910); "At the junction with Bergstein I once more thought about the distant future. How would I live through it with this body picked up in a lumber room?" (24/Nov/1910).

Similarly, he speaks of the strengths he lacks to bring his literary work to fruition, or the outside forces which seem welcome, whether from listeners at a conference, or from Felice. However, in a precisely opposite direction he also mentions a bit of the strength that is left over and that he will save in refusing marriage or any other commitments. "All I possess are certain powers which, at a depth almost inaccessible under normal conditions, shape themselves into literature, powers to which, however, in my present professional as well as physical state, I dare not commit myself..." (Letter to F, 16/ Jun/1913) "The connection with F. will give my existence more strength to resist"; "It is easy to recognize a concentration in me of all my forces on writing. When it became clear in my organism that writing was the most productive direction for my being to take, everything rushed in that direction and left empty all those abilities which were directed toward the joys of sex, eating, drinking, philosophical reflection and above all music. This was necessary because the totality of my strengths was so slight that only together could they even halfway serve the purpose of my writing..."; "incapable of being known by whoever, incapable of supporting knowledge, at bottom full of infinite astonishment facing a happy society or facing their children (in the hotel, naturally, there is not much happiness, it wouldn't come to saying that I am the cause, in my quality of 'the man with too big a shadow,' but effectively my shadow is too big, and with new astonishment I find the strength to resist, the obstinacy of certain beings in wanting to live 'in spite of everything' in this shadow, precisely in it...); besides that, abandoned not only here, but in general, even in Prague, my 'home land,' and not abandoned of men, that would not be the worst, while I live I could be able to run after them, but abandoned by me in relation to the beings, by my strength, in relation to the beings." (27/Feb/22) In all of these quotations one observes what critic Luiz Costa Lima has noted: "Saddled with a weak, ungainly body,

a most inadequate tool to ensure his own future, Kafka tries to find powers that might animate him, dispel uncertainty, confusion, and apathy.”⁷

But amidst this strange energetic accounting, in which it is not yet known if what comes from the outside only wounds or also nourishes the weak body, one sentence stands out: “A push is not in fact necessary; just a withdrawal from the last applied force on me and I will get to a desperation that will tear me apart.” (11/Dec/1913) This is where the friction with the world seems as painful as necessary, almost a proof of existence, indicating an intrinsic relationship between resisting and existing in the chest of a weakened body.

Perhaps such a relationship, not only in Kafka, but also in the previously mentioned authors, allows for a glimpse in the body the centrality of a *strength to resist in the face of suffering*. In other words, defending itself from the most vulgar wounds, it opens itself to embracing the array of subtle affections. And concurrently, it becomes active out of its primary *suffering*, the elementary *sensibility*, the pains and wounds and the originating affectation. In other words, it becomes active out of this constitutive passivity, without denying it, making from it an event, as in *The Hunger Artist*. That this sometimes ends in death is almost a necessity. “The best things I have written have their basis in this capacity of mine to meet death with contentment. All these very fine and very convincing passages always deal with the fact that someone is dying, that it is hard for him to do, that it seems unjust to him, or at least harsh, and the reader is moved by this, or at least he should be. But for me, who believes that I shall be able to lie contentedly on my deathbed, such scenes are secretly a game; indeed, in the death enacted I rejoice in my own death”... (13/Dec/1914).

Beyond every possible reflection here on death as part of his own literary work, such like that which Blanchot demonstrated in an insurmountable manner, perhaps we have here the evidence of what Peter Sloterdijk has called a different ecology of pain and pleasure. When opposing the silencing of the body and of suffering proposed by Western metaphysics since its beginning, either in its philosophical, religious, or medical version, we see beginning with Nietzsche the emergence of a different economy of pain, that is, a different relationship with *physis* and with *pathos*, free of an aseptic utopia of a painless and immaterial future. Pain is reinserted into the “immanence of a life that no longer requires redemption,” in such a way that here one may achieve “the endurance of the unendurable.”⁸

7 Luiz Costa Lima, *Limites da voz: Kafka*, (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1993), ch. 2.

8 Peter Sloterdijk, *Thinker on Stage: Nietzsche's Materialism*, trans. Jamie Owen Daniel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 102.

The dying and the newborn

Perhaps a final note might fit before moving on to my meager conclusions. In an enigmatic article, Deleuze recalls what Nietzsche, Lawrence, Artaud and Kafka had in common: an aversion to the insatiable thirst for judging. To the system of infinite judgment they opposed a system of affects, each in his own way, where debt no longer is inscribed abstractly in an autonomous book that escapes our gaze, but they mark finite bodies in their collisions. No longer the endless delays, unpayable debt, apparent acquittal, ubiquitous judge, but rather combat among bodies. To the body of judgment, says Deleuze, with its organization, hierarchy, segments, differentiations, Kafka would oppose the “affective, intensive, anarchist body that consists solely of poles, zones, thresholds, and gradients.” With it, the hierarchies are undone and thrown into confusion, retaining “nothing but intensities that make up uncertain zones, that traverse these zones at full speed and confront the powers in them... on this anarchist body restored to itself,”⁹ even if it is that of a coleopteron. “The way to escape judgment is to make yourself a body without organs, to find your body without organs.” This is how, at least, Gregor escapes his father. However, more than that, he tries to “find an escape where his father didn’t know to find one, in order to flee the director, the business, and the bureaucrats.”¹⁰ Here, insist the authors, in this undone and intensive body that flees from the system of judgment or taming and that of discipline, as we have shown above, there is a strange non-organic, inhuman vitality.

Such a body is always in combat: “All gestures are defenses or even attacks, evasions, ripostes, anticipations of a blow one does not always see coming, or of an enemy one is not always able to identify: hence the importance of the body’s postures.”¹¹ But the goal of combat, different from war, does not consist of destroying the Other, but rather of escaping from or taking hold of the Other’s force. Even in the love letters, which are a “combat against the fiancée, whose disquieting carnivorous forces they seek to repel. But they are also a combat *between* the fiancée’s forces and the animal forces he joins with so as to better flee the force he fears falling prey to, or the vampiric forces he will use to suck the woman’s blood before she devours him. All these associations of forces constitute so many becomings – a becoming-animal, a becoming-vampire, perhaps even a becoming-woman – that can only be obtained

9 Gilles Deleuze, *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, 131.

10 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 13.

11 Gilles Deleuze, *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, 132.

through combat.” In short, combat as a “powerful, nonorganic vitality that supplements force with force, and enriches whatever it takes hold of.”

We could close this enigmatic mention of Deleuze here, but we would not have sufficiently reached the strangeness of this essay if we do not complete it with the double reference to that which best embodies such a nonorganic vitality. In *Immanence: A Life*, there is the example – that of Dickens. The rogue, Riderhood, is about to die from almost drowning, and at this moment he shows a “spark of life inside of him” that seems to be capable of severing the rogue that he is into light; a spark with which all those around him sympathize, as much as they hate him – here is *a life*, a pure event, in suspension, impersonal, singular, neutral, beyond good and evil, a “sort of beatitude,” says Deleuze.¹² The other example is at the extreme opposite of existence: newborns, who, “through all their sufferings and weaknesses, are infused with an immanent life that is pure power and even bliss.” Also, the baby, like the dying, is traversed by *a life*. That is how Deleuze defines it in his essay “To Have Done with Judgment”: “this obstinate, stubborn, and indomitable will to live that differs from all organic life. With a young child, one already has an organic, personal relationship, but not with a baby, who concentrates in its smallness the same energy that shatters paving stones (Lawrence’s baby tortoise).¹³ With a baby, one has nothing but an affective, athletic, impersonal, vital relationship. The will to power certainly appears in an infinitely more exact manner in a baby than in a man of war. For the baby is combat, and the *small* is an irreducible locus of forces, the most revealing test of forces.” Hence the reference to minor-becoming in Kafka.

A surprising essay that goes from the system of judgment to newborns in a dizzying sequence of somersaults, scrutinizing the other side of the body and of the individuated life, as if Deleuze were looking for, not only in Kafka, Lawrence, Artaud, Nietzsche, but throughout his own work, that vital threshold, from which all distributed lots, by gods or men, falsely spin and skid, lose their meaningfulness, no longer “take” in the body, allowing for the most unusual redistributions of affect. This threshold between life and death, between man and animal, between madness and sanity, where being born and perishing mutually reverberate, question the divisions bequeathed by our tradition – and between them one of the most difficult to be thought.

¹² Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, trans. Anne Boyman, (New York: Urzone, 2001), 29.

¹³ Gilles Deleuze, *Essays: Critical and Clinical*, 133.

Life without form, form of life

Hence we return to Agamben. He recalls that the Greeks referred to life with two different words. *Zoè* referred to life as a fact, the fact of life; natural, biological, “bare life.” *Bios* designated qualified life, a form-of-life, a mode of life of an individual or group. Let us jump all the author’s precious mediations regarding the relationship between bare life and sovereign power, in order to simply say the following: the contemporary context reduces the forms-of-life to bare life, from what is done with the Al-Qaeda prisoners at Guantánamo, or with the resistance in Palestine, or with detainees in Brazilian prisons, even what is perpetrated in biotechnological experiments, passing through the anesthetic excitation en masse to that which we are subjected daily, reduced so we are like meek cybernetic cattle, cyberzombies, as Gilles Châtelet noted in *To Live and Think Like Pigs*. Facing the biopolitical reduction of the forms-of-life to bare life, it opens an array of challenges. One of them could be formulated in the following manner: how to extract from bare life forms-of-life when the very form is undone, and how to do it without re-invoking ready-made forms, which are the instrument of the reduction to bare life? It deals with, in short, rethinking the body of the formless, in its diverse dimensions. If the characters that I mentioned, together with their squalid bodies, their inert gesturing, their white, or too large shadow, their offensive opacity, their originating passivity, amidst the “neutral” space of literature in which they arose, if all that makes some sense, it is because from the interior of what could seem like bare life to what were reduced by the Powers, be they sovereign, disciplinary or biopolitical, in these characters *a life* is expressed, singular, impersonal, neutral, that does not belong to a subject and is situated beyond good and evil. “A sort of beatitude,” says Deleuze, perhaps because they lack nothing, because they enjoy themselves, in their full power – absolutely immanent life.

In any case, we could risk the hypothesis that in these “angelic” characters, as Benjamin would say, it still speaks the requirement of a form-of-life, but a form-of-life without form, and precisely, without thirst for form, without thirst for truth, without thirst for judging or being judged. These are some literary experiments “without truth,” as we said in the beginning, that call into question our modes of existence, and that perhaps are equal to, in the subjective domain, what it was like for the primate the freeing of the hand in the upright posture.

* * *

Extrapolating from the literary domain, this is perhaps the paradox that is proposed to us in the present times, in many fields, from art to politics, from the clinic to thought, in its effort to regain the forces of the body and the body of the formless, besides the crystallized forms that intend to mold it or represent it, beyond the traditional supports that seem to give them meaning, contrary to the current logic of domination. In the terms we suggested above, from Agamben to Deleuze, this would mean the following: in the same domain in which today biopolitical power focuses on, that is, life reduced to bare life, it deals with regaining *a life*, both in its beatitude and in its embedded capacity for making its forms vary.





BARE LIFE, BEASTLY LIFE, A LIFE

I would like to begin with the most extreme – the *muselmann* – and do so by returning briefly to Giorgio Agamben’s description of those who, in concentration camps, received this terminal designation¹. The *muselmann* was the vagrant corpse, a bundle of physical functions in their final gasps². Curved upon himself, this vile being, without will, had an opaque gaze, an indifferent expression, a pale grey skin that was both thin and as hard as peeled paper, a slow respiration, a very low pitched speech, undertaken at great cost... The *muselmann* was the detained one who had given up, indifferent to everything that surrounded him, too exhausted to understand that which awaited him shortly: death. This non-human life had been emptied to such excess that it could no longer suffer³. But why *muselmann*, if what was at stake were mainly Jews? Because the *muselmann* handed his life over to destiny, in line with the banal, prejudiced and certainly unjust image of a supposed Islamic fatalism: the Muslim as the one who submits without reserve to divine will. In any case, when life is reduced to the contour of a mere silhouette, as the Nazis would themselves say in referring to prisoners as *Figuren* (figures, mannequins), what appears is the perversion of a power which does not eliminate the body, but maintains it in the intermediary zone between life and death, between the human and the inhuman: the survivor. Contemporary bioPower, Agamben concludes while twisting Foucault’s conception, reduces life to a biological afterlife; it *produces survivors*. From Guantanamo to Africa, this is confirmed every day. The incumbency of contemporary bioPower is no longer to produce death, as in the regime of sovereignty, or to make live as in the regime of bioPower, but *to produce survivors*, and, with them, the *afterlife*.⁴ For the moment, let us stick to this odd postulate. BioPower makes survivors, produces the state of a biological afterlife, reduces man to a residual, non-human dimension, with the *muselmann* in the camp on the one hand and the neo-dead of intensive therapy rooms on the other, incarnate in two opposed yet complementary extremes. The afterlife is a human life reduced to its biological minimum, to its ultimate bareness, to a life without form, to the mere fact of life, to what Agamben

1 Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, (New York: Urzone, 2002).

2 Jean Améry, *At the Mind’s Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor of Auschwitz and Its Realities*, trans. Sidney and Stella P. Rosenfeld. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).

3 Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man*, trans. Stuart Woolf, (New York: Orion Press, 1959).

4 Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 156.

calls *bare life*. But those who see bare life merely in the extreme figure of the concentration camp *muselmann*, or the refugees in Rwanda, are misled without understanding what is most terrifying: that in a certain way *we are all in this terminal condition*. Even Bruno Bettelheim, a survivor of Dachau, in describing the camp's chieftain, qualifies him as a type of "*muselmann*," "well fed and well dressed." The executioner is equally a living corpse, inhabiting that intermediary zone between the human and the inhuman, the biological machine deprived of sensibility and nervous excitation. The condition of survivor is a generalized effect of contemporary bioPower, not being restricted to totalitarian regimes, and fully including Western democracies, the society of consumption, of mass hedonism, of medicalized existence, that is, of the biological approach to life in an all encompassing scale, even in a context of luxury and biotechnological sophistication.

The self is the body

Let us take as an example the over-investment in the body which characterizes our contemporaneity. For a few decades, the focus on the subject has been shifted from psychic intimacy to the body itself. Today, the self is the body. Subjectivity has been reduced to the body, to its appearance, its image, its performance, its health, its longevity. The predominance of the bodily dimension in the constitution of identity allows for talk of a bio-identity. We no longer face a body made docile by disciplinary institutions, a body striated by the panoptical machine, the body of the factory, the army, the school. Today everyone voluntarily submits him or herself to an ascesis following the scientific and aesthetic precept in gyms or in cosmetic surgery clinics.⁵ This is also what Francisco Ortega, following Foucault, calls bio-ascesis. On the one hand, we find the adequation of the body to the norms of show business, along the celebrity-type format. Given the infinite possibilities to transform the body genetically, chemically, and electronically, the obsession for physical perfection, and the compulsion of the self to arouse the other's desire, even at the cost of one's own well-being, ultimately substitute the promised erotic satisfaction with a self-imposed mortification⁶. The fact is that we voluntarily embrace the tyranny of a perfect body in favor of a sensorial enjoyment whose immediacy makes the suffering undergone even more surprising. Bioascesis is a care of the self, but different from the

5 Denise Bernuzzi de Sant' Anna, *Políticas do corpo*, (São Paulo: Estação Liberdade, 1995), and *Corpos de passagem*, (São Paulo: Estação Liberdade, 2001).

6 Jurandir Freire Costa, *O vestígio e a aura: corpo e consumismo na moral do espetáculo*, (Rio de Janeiro: Garamond, 2004).

ancients, whose care was directed at the good life, something which Foucault also called an aesthetics of existence, our care aims at the body itself, its longevity, health, beauty, good shape, scientific and aesthetic happiness, or what Deleuze would call fat dominant health. We shall not hesitate in calling it, even under the modulating conditions of contemporary coercion, a fascist body – in face of such an unattainable model a large part of the population is thrown into a condition of sub-human inferiority. Moreover, in the domain of biosociality the body becomes an information packet, a genetic reservoir, a statistical dividual (I belong to the group of the hypertensive, of HIV-AIDS, etc.), which only strengthens the risks of eugenics. That any weekly magazine with its health, beauty, sex, and nutrition slogans are adopted happily as scientific precepts, and therefore, as imperatives, only illustrates this context. We are, in any case, surrounded by the register of a biologized life... While identified to the mere body, to the excitable and manipulable body, from show business to the moldable body, we are reduced to the domain of bare life. We continue in the sphere of the afterlife, of the mass production of “survivors” in the broad sense of the term.

Survivalism

Allow me to broaden the notion of survivor. In his analysis of September 11, Slavoj Žižek contested the use of the adjective coward to describe the terrorists. After all, they weren't afraid of death, contrary to the westerners who not only praise life but want to preserve and prolong it at all costs. We are slaves of survival, even in a Hegelian sense, we don't risk our lives. Our culture aims above all at this: survivalism, no matter the cost. We are Nietzsche's Last Men, who don't want to perish, and prolong their agony “immersed in the stupidity of daily pleasures” – *Homo Sucker*. Žižek's question is also Saint Paul's: “Who is really alive today? [...] What if we are ‘really alive’ only if we commit ourselves with an excessive intensity which puts us beyond ‘[bare] life’? What if, when we focus on mere survival, even if it is qualified as ‘having a good time’, what we ultimately lose is life itself? What if the Palestinian suicide bomber on the point of blowing him- or herself (and others) up is, in an emphatic sense, ‘more alive’ [...]? What if a hysteric is truly alive in his or her permanent excessive questioning of his or her existence, while an obsessional is the very model of choosing a ‘life in death’ [...] to prevent [some] ‘thing’ from happening?”⁷ Obviously, at stake here is not any incitement of

⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* (New York: Verso, 2002), 88-89.

terrorism, but a caustic criticism to what Žižek calls the “post-metaphysical” survivalist posture of the Last Men, and the anemic spectacle of life dragging itself as a shadow of itself, where an aseptic, painless existence is prolonged to the fullest in a biopolitical context. Even pleasures are controlled and artificial: coffee without caffeine, beer without alcohol, sex without sex, war without casualties, politics without politics – a virtualized reality. For Žižek, death and life do not designate objective facts, but subjective existential positions, and in this sense, he plays with the provocative idea that there would be more life on the side of those who, without concessions, and in a explosion of enjoyment, reintroduced the dimension of absolute negativity into our daily lives with 9/11 than on the side of the Last Men, which include all those who drag their shadows of life as living dead; post-modern zombies. It is against the backdrop of this desolation that the terrorist act inscribes itself, giving the appearance that vitality has migrated to the side of those who, in a lust for death, managed to defy our cadaverous survivalism. Baudrillard also calls attention to the contrast between systems as our own, which are “disenchanted,” “without intensity,” and include “protected existences” and “captive lives,” and cultures of “high intensity,” even in their sacrificial aspects. What we detest in ourselves, Baudrillard reminds us, is that which Dostoyevsky’s Great Inquisitor promises domesticated masses, an excess of reality, of comfort, of accomplishment, the kingdom of God on earth. All of which Nietzsche, moreover, would judge, in the historical process of *décadence* he analyzed insistently, as a gregarious abasement of humanity. In any case, the present context in the West for Žižek is fertile for the evocation of the Last Man’s passive nihilism, or even to detect among us the fulfillment of the capitalistic and biopolitical belief in the Great Inquisitor, where bread, servitude and tepid happiness would free us from disquiet and revolt.

We can say that in the post-political spectacle, and with the respective abduction of social vitality, we are all reduced to biological survivalism at the mercy of biopolitical management, worshipping low-intensity forms of life, submitted to a tepid hypnosis, even when the sensorial anesthesia is cross-dressed as hyper-excitation. As Gilles Châtelet put it in *To Live and Think Like Pigs*, we face the existence of cyberzombies, grazing indolently between services and commodities. It is *bestly*⁸ life as a global abasement of existence, a depreciation of life, its reduction to bare life, to an afterlife, the final stage of contemporary nihilism.

8 Translator’s note. *Bestly* here is translated from the Portuguese word *besta*, which besides referring to beast or animal, also implies a certain amount of stupidity.

Giorgio Agamben retrieved the Roman notion of *Homo Sacer* to indicate those who were excluded from the sphere of human rights, but also from the divine, banished from political community and exposed to a relation of exception by the sovereign power, and also put to death, which did not constitute a crime.⁹ If this notion allows us to not only think the logic of the concentration camp, now a present political paradigm, but also the zones in which this state of exception has become commonplace, in a deeper sense, representative democracies themselves, with their political space having been abducted and emptied, with politics restricted to administrative policies, we would all be *Homo Sacer*, reduced to biological survivalism, to bare life, at the mercy of biopolitical management and its strategic contrivances. When life is reduced to beastly life on a planetary scale, when nihilism becomes itself so visible in our own laxity, in the consuming hypnosis of *Homo Sucker* or in a fat dominant health, it is worth asking first, what could still shake us off this state of lethargy, and second, whether catastrophe is not installed in our everyday (“the most sinister of guests”) rather than in the sudden irruption of the spectacular event of a terrorist attack against the Empire’s capital.

Bloom: this is the name the magazine *Tiqqun* gave, in today’s nihilism, to formless life of the common man.¹⁰ Inspired by one of Joyce’s characters, it would be a human type that appeared recently on the planet, and which designates the pale, thin existence of the common, anonymous man, although perhaps a man agitated with the illusion that his existence may overshadow his boredom, solitude, separation, incompleteness, contingency – his nothingness. Bloom designates this affective tonality which characterizes our age of nihilistic decomposition, the moment in which it rises to the surface, because it is accomplished in a pure state, the metaphysical fact of our strangeness and inoperativeness, beyond the social problems of misery, precariousness, unemployment, etc. Bloom is the figure that represents the death of the subject and its world, where everything fluctuates in indifference devoid of qualities, where no one recognizes themselves in the triviality of a world of infinitely exchangeable and replaceable commodities. It matters little how the contents of life, which we visit in our existential tourism, alternate. Bloom is already incapable of joy as well as suffering, in an illiteracy to emotions of which he only collects diffracted echoes.

⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

¹⁰ Tiqqun, *Théorie du Bloom*, (Paris: La Fabrique, 2000), and *Tiqqun*, 2001.

The body that can't take anymore

If we accept David Lapoujade's captivating definition of the body: "The body is that which can't take anymore."¹¹ We could say that, in a broader sense, what the body can't take anymore is a survivalist mortification, be it in the state of exception or in everyday banality. The "muselmann," the "cyberzombie," the "show business body," "fat dominant health," the Homo Sucker and "Bloom", however extreme their differences appear, resonate in the anesthetic and narcotic effect, configuring, in the context of a terminal nihilism, the impermeability of an "armored body."¹²

In face of this, it would be necessary to retrieve that which is most proper to the body, its pain in the encounter with exteriority, its condition of a body affected by the forces of the world and its capacity to be affected by them: its affectability. At stake here is the introduction of another relation with life, with life "before" it has received a form, or as it frees itself from these forms, or even, with a dimension of life below or beyond the form which it tends to acquire. This is what Deleuze called *a life*. *A life* is not at all abstract, it is the most elementary, life in its immanence and positivity, stripped of all that wants to represent or contain it. The entire problematic of the body-without-organs is preeminently a variation around this biopolitical theme, life undoing itself from what imprisons it, from the organism, the organs, the inscription of diverse powers upon the body. *A life* is entirely contrary to bare, dead, mummified, shelled life. If life has to free itself from social, historical, political moorings, isn't it to regain something of its denuded, dispossessed animality? No one better than Artaud saw this. Kuniichi Uno, Artaud's, Deleuze's and Guattari's Japanese translator, put it like this: "But he [Artaud] never lost the intense sense of life and of the body as a genesis, or auto-genesis, as an intense force, impermeable, a mobility without limits which doesn't let itself be determined even by the terms *bios* or *zoè*. Life for Artaud is indeterminate, in all senses, while society is made up of infamy, bootlegging, commerce, which do not cease to satiate life and, above all else, the body."¹³

It would be enough to meditate on Artaud's enigmatic phrase: "I am innately genital, and if we examine closely what that means, it means that

11 David Lapoujade, "O corpo que não agüenta mais," in *Nietzsche e Deleuze, Que pode o corpo*, org. D. Lins, (Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará, 2002), 82.

12 Juliano Pessanha, *A Certeza do Agora*.

13 Kuniichi Uno, "Artaud's Slipper according to Hijikata", in *Leituras da morte*, org. Christine Greiner (São Paulo: Annablume, 2007); Also refer to, from the same author, *The Genesis of an Unknown Body*, (São Paulo/Helsinki: n-1publications, 2012).

I have never made the most of myself. There are some fools who think of themselves as beings, as innately being. I am he who, in order to be, must whip his innateness.” Uno says that someone innately genital is someone who tries to be born through himself, who creates a second birth, beyond given biological nature. We could say, with Artaud, that we are innate but that we have not yet been born, in the strong sense of the term. Let us listen to what Beckett heard Jung say about one of his patients: the fact is that she has never been born. Transporting this sentence to his work, Beckett creates an “I” who has never been born, and it is precisely this “I” who writes about the other “I” who has already been born. This refusal of biological birth does not mean a refusal to live, but a claim to always be born, incessantly. The innately genital is the story of a body which questions its body as something which has been born, with its functions and all its organs as representatives of orders, institutions, visible or invisible technologies, all of which aim at managing the body. It is a body which has the courage to challenge that sociopolitical complex which Artaud called the Judgment of God, and which we call bioPower, a power which falls upon our body... This refusal of birth in favor of a self-birth does not mean either the desire to dominate one’s own beginning, but, as Uno says, to recreate the body which has in it the power to begin. The life of this body, he insists, as long as it, on the one hand, discovers in the body the power of genesis, and on the other, liberates itself from the determination which weighs upon it – means war on biopolitics... Perhaps this is one of the few points where we agree with Badiou, as he affirms that for Deleuze the name of being is life itself, but not life understood as a gift or treasure, or as an afterlife, but instead as a neuter which rejects all categories. As he puts it: “All life is bare. All life is becoming bare, the abandoning of garments, of codes and organs; not that we are headed to a nihilist black hole, on the contrary, all this is in order to sustain the point where actualization and virtualization interchange, in order to become creators.”¹⁴ But is Badiou right in designating this life as bare? The life to which he refers cannot be, as Uno had already noted, *zoè*, the name given by the Greeks to designate the fact of life, as a mere biological or animal fact, or as a life reduced to biological bareness by the state of exception’s juridical order, or even, as the technoscientific manipulation of nihilist movement brought about by capital. A *life*, as Deleuze conceives it, is life as

14 ...Alain Badiou, “De la Vie comme nom de l’Être,” in *Rue Descartes*, n. 20, (Paris: PUF, 1998), 32.

virtuality, difference, invention of forms, impersonal power, beatitude. *Bare life*, on the contrary, as Agamben has already made evident, is life reduced to its state of mere actuality, indifference, deformity, powerlessness, biological banality. And this not to speak of *beastly life*, as the entropic exacerbation and dissemination of bare life at its nihilist limit. If these lives are so opposed, and at the same time so overlapping, it is because in the biopolitical context it is life itself which is at stake, life itself as a battlefield. In any case, as Foucault said, it is at the point, in life, where Power concentrates with greatest force that from now resistance will be anchored, but this on the condition that the signals are changed... In other words, at times it is in the extreme of *bare life* that *a life* is found.

If, from Nietzsche and Artaud to present-day youth, with their experimentations and research, a diagnosis of beastly life has been generated, precisely where the body retrieves its affectability and even its power to begin, is it not because in them beastly life has become intolerable? Maybe there is something in the extortion of life that should be brought to its end so that this life may arise all together differently... Something must be exhausted, as Deleuze sensed in *The Exhausted*, so that a different game may be conceivable...





NIHILISM, DISASTER, COMMUNITY



CROSSING NIHILISM

Nihilism in Nietzsche is equivocal. On the one hand, it is a symptom of decadence and aversion to existence, on the other, and at the same time, it is an expression of increased force, a condition for a new beginning, perhaps even a promise. This ambivalence in dealing with cultural phenomena is characteristic of the Nietzschean approach, but here it seems to reach a point of tension where many wagers of his philosophy converge. Part of the interest that continues to awaken the harbinger of *transvaluation* is due to such a contemporary feature of his thought, in which decline and ascent, collapse and emergence, end and beginning all coexist in an irresolute tension. Some can object that this conjunction is not Nietzsche's invention, and is instead rooted in the German philosophical tradition and its renewed promises of a new beginning, characterizing Modernity itself and its consciousness of time.¹ That seems possible. In any case, I would like to show that the paradoxical logic dominating Nietzsche's approach to nihilism pulls his thought as a whole in a very unique direction.

The fact is that the reader of Nietzsche feels baffled when confronted with his analyses regarding nihilism. At times one gets the impression that he is about to diagnose a nihilism which he condemns, at other times one can be sure that, on the contrary, Nietzsche himself is a nihilist, and that according to him it is necessary to bring this movement to its end. Such duplicity in reading is not due to a mere zigzagging by Nietzsche himself, or simply a change in perspective that is so peculiar to him, which fits entirely into his philosophical logic; nor should it be attributed to any intrinsic incoherence. Ambiguity is constitutive of the concept, and only reflects the fact that this thematization, and Nietzsche's very philosophical trajectory as a whole, is conceived as a *crossing through nihilism*. Thus, I would like to insist upon two main aspects: on the one hand, nihilism's historical and philosophical necessity that Nietzsche detects, and on the other, the way by which he feels himself to be a participant of this movement that behooves him to diagnose, hasten, combat, and surpass, all at the same time.

Now, we know that the full consciousness of this second aspect appeared to Nietzsche with a certain tardiness in his work. In 1887, he writes: "It is only late that one musters the courage for what one really *knows*. That I have hitherto been a thorough-going nihilist, I have admitted to myself only

¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.

recently.”² Thus my choosing to privilege, in this brief commentary, some writings from this time period, above all those from autumn of 1887 to the beginning of 1888. Even though these fragments were not originally intended for publication, it is known that Nietzsche saw in them an initial outline of the planned and aborted work *The Will to Power*. He thus numbered them 1 to 372, and even sketched out a table of contents.³ The variety of topics extends from Socrates to Stendhal, from Buddhism to Offenbach, from the lascivious melancholy of Moorish dance to Christian castrati. The ensemble is irregular, both in style and in content, alternating sketches of ideas, commentaries on authors, reading quotations, finished aphorisms, some of which were reused in subsequent works, such as *The Wagner Case*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *The Anti-Christ*. However, the preface that outlines the entire work leaves no doubt as to the gravity of these fragments. “I describe what is coming [...]: *the advent of nihilism*.” (362)⁴ In fact, that is where we find some of Nietzsche’s crucial passages regarding the theme, in its already mature, yet ever unfinished formulation. However, in order to acquire their full meaning, it is important to consider what Nietzsche sees as the function of theory. “Every doctrine is superfluous unless everything lies ready for it, all the accumulated forces, the dynamite. A revaluation of values is achieved only when there is a tension of new needs, of new needers who suffer under the old valuation without becoming aware.” (56)⁵

The death of God

My point of departure will be a small phrase extracted from *The Anti-Christ*. “When the center of gravity of life is placed, *not* in life itself, but in ‘the beyond’ – in *nothingness* – then one has taken away its center of gravity altogether.”⁶ Here exposed is the logic that bundles a good part of Nietzsche’s thought with regard to nihilism. Nihilism begins with a displacement from life’s center of gravity towards a different sphere which is not itself – the rest is consequence. To say it in a more direct manner: nihilism consists of a metaphysical depreciation of life, starting from the

2 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, [25], ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage, 1968), 18.

3 Whenever one of these fragments are cited, they will be indicated between parentheses by the number attributed to them by Nietzsche.

4 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche’s Notebook of 1887-1888*, 11[119], Trans. Daniel Fidel Ferrer, (US Archives online, 2012).

5 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 9[77], trans. Kate Sturge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 152.

6 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ*, [43] in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39.

values considered superior to life itself, with which life becomes reduced to a value of nothing, before these same values had appeared, according to a process of devaluation, in that which they were from the outset – “nothing.” Here we have several moments on top of one another. And indeed, with the term nihilism Nietzsche embraces a very long philosophic-historical arch, in which he reads the ascension of moral values, the way in which these values came to have their worth in the course of our Socratic-Christian culture, assuring it with a finality and a meaning but at the same time denigrating existence, and the process by which they fell into disbelief, letting us see that the truth of such values were of a fictitious nature from the start. If we think about it radically, Nietzsche means that Western history was built upon nihilist fundamentals, and that the nihilism of such fundamentals could not fail to come to the surface sooner or later, in the course of history, thus questioning the construction as a whole and the very idea of fundament.

We can already postulate that the term “nihilism,” as described with such a wide scope, roughly covers the history of philosophy and the entirety of Western Culture, in its two successive and contradictory movements. The first movement corresponds to the metaphysical shift taken place in Antiquity, beginning with Plato, and prolonged into Christianity, and the second, inverse movement corresponds to the loss of this metaphysical axis, most of all in Modernity. The further he advances in his work, the further Nietzsche addresses the second moment of this sequence, leaving the impression that the term nihilism relates mainly to this period, at least it is the most concurrent meaning of his time, in consonance with his circulation among the Russians, especially Turgenev and Dostoyevsky, who Nietzsche ardently frequented.

How does Nietzsche describe this nihilism of Modernity? “Since Copernicus, man seems to have been on a downward path – now he seems to be rolling faster and faster away from the center – where to? Into nothingness? Into the ‘piercing sensation of his nothingness?’”⁷ However, perhaps the work in which such perplexity finds its most finished and dramatic formulation is the well-known fragment dated from 1882, in which the lunatic looks for God with a lantern in the full morning light, to then announce that God is dead: “What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are we moving to? Away from all suns?”

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, [25], trans. Carol Diethe, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 115.

Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down? Aren't we straying as though through an infinite nothing? Isn't empty space breathing at us?"⁸

As is known, this is Nietzsche's first explicit formulation of the death of God. The novelty of this formula is not in announcing that the Christian God has died, but in showing that the supra-sensible world in general, which gave man's existence a meaning and reason, has fallen into disbelief. Since this belief has lost its efficacy, as well as its anchoring function, man no longer knows what to grab onto, and nothing seems to drive him or motivate him anymore. We go from an extreme experience of belief, in which we orbited around a center, a sun, a light, a truth, to the extreme opposite, disbelief, where we wander aimlessly in the dark. No longer remaining are the coordinates of high and low, the sacred and the profane, the center and the periphery in such a way that in this flattened topography, without beacons or references, we wander adrift. Nietzsche is not pleased in describing this vertigo, because what is essential is detecting the reasons for such a loss. For if what lacks is a goal and a reason, and this feeling of "everything is in vain" tends to grow, and the fear that goes along with it, it's not just because "the highest values devalue themselves," (2) but, above all, after metaphysical evaluation and its moral permeation went into collapse, any kind of value now seems impossible. Nihilism, he says categorically, is a "sequela of the moralist interpretation of the world."⁹ A good part of Nietzsche's work is dedicated to the analysis of this moralist interpretation of the world which lasted for millennia, which filled it with finality and meaning, and its growing unraveling. And Nietzsche says: "The time comes when we are sure to must pay for two thousand years Christians to have been long: we lose the focus, let the live us – we have a long time know not where, yet one. We plunge headlong into the opposite value evaluation, with an equal volume of energy with which we have been Christians..."¹⁰

Thus, upon announcing the downfall of the supra-sensitive world of the metaphysical tradition, whereby the figure of God is nothing more than a historico-religious concretion, Nietzsche takes the trouble to point out its modern substitutes, which in vain fill a similar function, offering themselves as centers of gravity and attempting to establish objectives and

8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, [125], trans. Josefine Nauckhoff, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 120.

9 Friedrich Nietzsche, Posthumous fragment, Spring 1887, 7 [43].

10 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche's Notebook of 1887-1888*, 11[148].

ensure meanings with equivalent authority which was previously attributed to the supra-human sphere. Whether it be Consciousness, Reason, History, the Collective, and at times reflecting the mirage of the Moral Imperative, of Progress, of Happiness, or of Civilization, from a strictly genealogical point of view, as we shall see, there is no discontinuity among these modern figures and the metaphysical tradition that they intend to contest. Even Science, insists Nietzsche, when opposed to divine truth, presupposes a faith in the truth, and an overall metaphysical belief that truth is divine. Therefore, even the most unconditional atheism, which prohibits “the lie of believing in God,” still preserves its assumption, faith in the truth, which is nothing more than one of the final forms and necessary consequences of this story of truth and the exigency for veracity inherited from its predecessors and the moral necessity upon which it sits. The most extreme nihilism, and soon we will have to situate this modality in relation to what was mentioned above, concludes Nietzsche, consists of recognizing that the essence of truth is to be an appreciation of value – this value, whose utility for life was demonstrated by experience, could already no longer be necessary, could even be harmful, could no longer have such value... Perhaps this is the only point upon which we can follow Heidegger without hesitating: in rereading the history of metaphysics as a history of values, converting the truth, the finality, being itself in value, Nietzsche had already single-handedly carried out the most iconoclastic and nihilistic gesture, and with it bringing about a transvaluation that he had only thought of announcing.¹¹

Values

Without going into the details of this long history of truth that Nietzsche reconstructs, linking Platonism, Christianity, and Scientificism, it would be adequate to explain, from a genealogical point of view, to what do they respond, according to him, these historically produced values, the substitution of some for others, their progressive devaluation... Nietzsche’s method states that given a determined value, never again will one ask about intrinsic truth, validity, legitimacy, but rather about its conditions of production. It’s not about asking “What is?” justice, but what do those who defend it

11 Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume IV: Nihilism* trans. F. A. Capuzzi. (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 70. “Properly thought, the transvaluation carried out by Nietzsche does not consist in the fact that he posits new values in the place of the highest values hitherto, but that he conceives of ‘Being,’ ‘purpose,’ and ‘truth’ as values and *only* as values. Nietzsche’s ‘transvaluation’ is at bottom the rethinking of all determinations of the being on the basis of values.”



want? Who needs such or whichever conviction, credence, value, in order to conserve himself, in order to impose his kind, in order to spread his dominion? For a value is just a symptom of a kind of life, of a formation of dominion... With this, Nietzsche shows the set of perspectives before they were transformed into beliefs, convictions, ideals. It's the historical sense that he doesn't tire of demanding from philosophers. Thus, truth, virtue, beauty, progress, every one of these values should be conceived as a perspective produced in the time before it became universal, a point of view that is much more victorious when it insists on hiding the fact of being a point of view. A value, by definition, always results from an evaluation, that's why the expression "estimation of value," or "appreciation of value" is capable of defetishizing the idea of value in itself and returning it to the operation of evaluation which is in the origin of value. After all, man is the evaluator animal par excellence, the being that measures, that fixes prices, that imagines equivalencies, that establishes hierarchies, that privileges such and such element in comparison with some other, attributing to it a superior weight, or making from it a measurement.

But an evaluation is not just a point of view regarding the world, it expresses psycho-physiological requirements, it is inseparable from the body which generated it, from the instinctive hierarchy thus present, from the interpretative processes of the organism itself, that is, its modes of appropriation, metabolizing, domination, and incorporation of an exteriority. An evaluation sprouts from a manner of being that it expresses and claims. Given a value, what mode of existence, what style of life does it imply? asks Nietzsche. Heavy, light, low, high, slave, noble? A value always has a genealogy upon which depend the nobility and lowness from that which it invites us to believe, feel, and think, as Deleuze clarifies.¹²

A value is an instrument through which a type of life imposes itself, conserves itself, or attempts to be expanded. Nietzsche expressed it in the following terms: "The viewpoint of 'value' is the viewpoint of conditions of preservation and enhancement in regard to complex structures that have relatively lasting life within becoming" (331)¹³ Thus we can add, explicating Nietzsche's last direction with regard to this subject: values are conditions for exercising the will to power, they are placed by the will to power itself,

12 Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, (London: Continuum, 1983), 73: "What a will wants, depending on its quality, is to affirm its difference [...] Only qualities are ever willed: the heavy, the light[...] What a will wants is not an object but a type, the type of the one that speaks, of the one that thinks, that acts, that does not act, that reacts, etc."

13 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 11[73], 212.



and also discarded by it when they no longer serve to its requirements, be they of conservation or expansion. The consequence for any project of transvaluation of values is that only there where the will to power is recognized as a source of values, the institution of new values can be exercised originally, that is, from that which indeed is its source. But such reversion – and this is the paradox to which Nietzsche refers so often – is only possible when the depreciation of values is carried to its end, because only such a concluded process is capable of showing the value of prevailing values up to now (value of nothing) and the negativity from which they result. Consequently, only in the tracks of this declining movement can one unravel the exigency for reversion. In other terms, the counter-movement claimed by Nietzsche is only thinkable from nihilism, that from which it spawns, and that which he intends to overcome, carried to its end. As sketched out in the preface: “For one should make no mistake about the meaning of the title that this gospel of the future wants to bear. ‘*The Will to Power: Attempt at a Transvaluation of All Values*’ – in this formulation a countermovement finds expression, regarding both principle and task; a movement that in some future will take the place of this perfect nihilism – but presupposes it, logically and psychologically, and certainly can come only after and out of it.

“For why has the advent of nihilism become *necessary*? Because the values we have had hitherto thus draw their final consequence; because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals – because we must experience nihilism before we can find out what value these ‘values’ really had. We will require, sometime, *new values*.”¹⁴

Disbelief

Before a reversal can be possible and thinkable, many oscillations and zigzags are foreseeable and even inevitable. Beginning with the fact that the destruction of a dominant interpretation seems to impede, for a time at least, any other interpretation, making space for the realm of everything is vain, for a Buddhist characteristic, for the aspiring for nothing.¹⁵ “Here there is snow, here life is silenced; the last crows heard here are called ‘what for?’, ‘in vain’, ‘*nada*’ – here nothing flourishes or grows any more, except, perhaps, for St. Petersburg metapolitics and Tolstoy’s ‘compassion’.”¹⁶ It’s the most paralyzing thought, says Nietzsche. It is born with those who have

¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, Preface, 3–4.

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, Cambridge, 2003, 2 [127], 83.

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, III, 26 Cambridge, 1994, 123.

lost, facing the exhaustion of Christian morality, its place and its guaranteed value in the metaphysical order, and they are unable to conform to its absence. If disbelief seems to indicate a vital exhaustion, Nietzsche also sees an opportunity there, and even an exigency for being at the height of this disbelief, in order to sustain it, and carry it to its ultimate consequences. But it's as if there lacked a "superior species," as Nietzsche says sometimes, that were capable of forever giving up belief in the truth, this exquisite expression of the impotence of the will, in order to be able to finally undertake creative acts. (46)¹⁷ Only a tired species, in order to live, is one that needs belief, truth, instances of authority that legitimate it and sanction it, instead of being itself legislative, establishing, creative. Only a tired man, when he doesn't find support in these beliefs or instances, becomes nihilist in a way that Nietzsche calls passive, in other words, that person who becomes paralyzed when realizing that the world as it is should *not* be, and the world as it should be doesn't exist, and therefore it doesn't make sense to act, suffer, want, feel, in short – everything is in vain. This is the nihilist pathos that Nietzsche attempts to dissect and combat, but also, in following its inconsequence, figures out what can make it turn upside down. For Nietzsche's very particular stance consists of stating that recognizing a world without meaning has nothing of the condemnable, and only it leads to a paralysis of wanting, a depleted will, since a superabundant life, on the contrary, supports and even necessitates this emptying in order to vent its interpretative strength, that which doesn't look for sense in things, for it imposes it on them. At bottom, belief and will are in an inversely proportional relationship: "Faith is always most desired and most urgently needed where will is lacking; for will, as the affect of command, is the decisive mark of sovereignty and strength. That is, the less someone knows how to command, the more urgently does he desire someone who commands, who commands severely – a god, prince, the social order, doctor, father confessor, dogma, or party conscience."¹⁸ In this need for belief and veneration, Nietzsche detects a sickening of the will, the source of religions and fanaticisms. In contradistinction to the believer, Nietzsche calls for a spirit that "takes leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, practiced as it is in maintaining itself on light ropes and possibilities and dancing even beside abysses."

Now we can define this transition from veneration to command as being the passing from "you should" to "I want." Through this metamorphosis of

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, [585], 318.

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, [347], 205-206.

the spirit from camel into lion, what is being dramatized is the act through which the will frees itself not only of its submission, but of its inclination to veneration, to the abnegation and to the negation of itself. Such a transition, moreover, is not given, it is a crossing, and has its price and its very own vertigo. It's called nihilism.¹⁹ The transition from "you should" to "I want" cannot, therefore, skip over this intermediate, problematic state, in which disbelief still cannot find the will that sustains it, or the growing will still hasn't found a path that is clear enough for being able to want what behooves it, though it has already gotten rid of its venerations... This is the ambiguity in modernity's nihilism, in which coexist both the decline of morality and the ascent of a will that still doesn't know what it came for... It can even be a period of lucidity, as Nietzsche says, in which it is understood that there is an antagonism between the old and the new, it is also understood that *all the old ideals* are hostile to life, resulting from *decadence* and culminating in it, but without it still having the strength for the new. It's the moment of the greatest promise and biggest danger. Because precisely "now when the *greatest strength of will would be necessary, it is weakest and least confident.*" (33)²⁰

Double meaning

We can now evoke the double meaning of nihilism that the writings from this period allow us to glimpse, or the double movement embedded in the very notion of nihilism. On the one hand, nihilism is a symptom of growing weakness, on the other, rising strength. At times it is an expression of a decrease in creative force, where the deception facing an absence of meaning or general direction leads to the feeling that everything is in vain (47)²¹, at other times a signal of a rise in the force of creating, of wanting, to such a point that no longer necessary are conventional interpretations, which gave a worldly meaning to existence. You can't think about nihilism in the way that Nietzsche elaborated it without such duplicity, without this equivocal, ambivalent character, at the intersection of antagonistic directions, a downward and upward movement of life. "Biologically, modern man represents a contradiction of values; he sits between two chairs, he says Yes and No in the same breath."²²

19 Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, trans. Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965).

20 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, [20], 17.

21 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, [580], 312.

22 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, op. cit., 262.

When the Nietzsche reader asks him/herself, within these contradictory writings, whether ultimately nihilism for Nietzsche is something desirable or nefarious *per se*, and how does he situate himself in relation to what it is that he diagnoses, one must keep the preparatory fragment from the preface in mind: “I describe what is coming: the advent of nihilism [...] I praise, I don’t here reproach *the fact that* it is coming [...] knowing if man will recover, if he will dominate this crisis, it is a question that depends on his force: it is *possible*.” (362)²³ And in the more elaborated version of the preface, we see Nietzsche himself confessing to be the first perfect nihilist of Europe, having lived nihilism in his soul to its end – and having already overcome it – he already has it behind him, below him, outside of him...²⁴ Therefore, Nietzsche’s position is not extrinsic to the theme, and the perfection seems to refer to the fact of having plunged into nihilism and having traversed it in all of its states, “as a spirit of daring and experiment that has already lost its way in every labyrinth of the future,” until coming out from the other side – and that for its “augural” nature looks back and says what is to come. Nietzsche is at the same time the patient that lived through the sickness until its end, and in his astute self-observation was able to sustain it and intensify it up to its exhaustion and its “homeopathic” cure, as a matter of saying, and therefore he already can, as a doctor, diagnose it in his contemporaries and even prevent its necessity and possible unfoldings, though the outcome is always undetermined.

In less personal terms, as said above, nihilism appears to Nietzsche as an historical necessity to the extent that it results from those values whose supremacy finds itself being questioned, carrying the internal logic of such values to its end, to the extent that these values are turned against themselves, in a dynamic of self-suppression. “All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming: thus the law of life will have it, the law of the necessity of “self-overcoming” in the nature of life – the lawgiver himself eventually receives the call: “*patere legem, quam ipse tulisti*.” [Submit to the law you yourself proposed.]²⁵ For example, “the sense of truthfulness, highly developed by Christianity, is disgusted at the falseness and mendacity of the whole Christian interpretation of world and history.”²⁶ The excess of valuation of truth is turned against the belief in illusions taken

23 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche’s Notebook of 1887-1888*, 11 [411].

24 *Ibid.*

25 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, 161.

26 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 2[127], 83.

for truths, resulting in a suspicion in relation to all and whichever taking-for-true, that is, being turned against every value, and therefore against the very possibility of evaluation and valuation...

Types of nihilism

However, how is this framework of nihilism presented in Nietzsche, with all these oscillations of the concept with regard to its extension and coloring? We should start from a form prior to nihilism, a certain pessimism of Schopenhauer's inspiration present among the Greeks as referred to in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and which subsequently Nietzsche would call theoretical and practical nihilism, or first nihilism. It deals with an inherent suffering of life, and when faced with it the Helene would run the risk of aspiring to a Buddhist negation of existence, in case he didn't precisely interpose an artistic, divine, or Apollonian shield, apt to seduce all creatures to live life and guard them from metaphysical disgust. But nihilism properly stated, as developed by Nietzsche in the last period of his work, owes nothing to Schopenhauer – except as a symptomatic example of one of the most finished types of nihilism.

It would be necessary, then, to begin going through *negative nihilism*, the most encompassing, so as to practically refer to the history of metaphysics as a whole, with its theoretical, moral, and rational appreciations of value, and its simultaneous disregard for the sensorial world. It's the kingdom of the spirit of vengeance and of depreciation, which turns against life. More than a metaphysical structure, it deals with a psychological structure, in the sense that Nietzsche understands it, as morphology of the will to power: the will to power reduced to its power of negating.

Modernity, however, facing such a process of devaluation of supreme values, proposes successive substitutes (the Moral Imperative, Progress, Happiness, Culture), without the place from which they emanate undergoing any alteration, although having lost its power of caution. It is under this sign that modern man lives, God's assassin, but wrapped in the dead God's shadow.²⁷ What could result from this, if not deception? "We see that we cannot reach the sphere in which we have placed our values; but this does not by any means confer any value on that other sphere in which we live: on the contrary, we are *weary* because we have lost the main stimulus. 'In vain so far!'"²⁸

²⁷ Roberto Machado, *Zarathustra, tragédia nietzschiana*, (Rio de Janeiro: J. Zahar, 1997).

²⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, [8], 11.



It's *passive nihilism*, from the great weariness, in which it predominates the sensation of that 'everything is the same, nothing is worth the effort.'²⁹ It's the nausea for this repetitive existence without meaning, symbolized by the horrifying image of the pastor with a black snake hanging from his mouth, in *Zarathustra*. It's the end of moral optimism, the awareness that with the world without God and without purpose there is nothing more to expect. It's also the stage in which the unity of culture is dissolved, according to the logic of *décadence*, and the different elements that constitute it enter into war, intensifying the expedients which are compensatory, tranquilizing, curing, inebriating, hedonist, comforting, as well as their moral, religious, political, and aesthetic cross-dressings.³⁰ It concerns a "*pathological* transient state."

The three figures of nihilism mentioned above could thus be translated, in terms of the position of values: superior values, substitutive values, nothing of values. Negative nihilism, reactive nihilism, passive nihilism – however the case, always an incomplete nihilism. The most interesting in this progression is the terminal point, the most afflicting stage, the most pathological, most paradoxical – right there where a conversion is possible.

The paradox of passive nihilism lies in the fact that the same symptoms could signify opposite directions. Even the extreme pessimism of the modern world could be the indication of a growth in force, and of a transition to new conditions of existence that our conservative moral feeling judges negatively, because it is not able to understand what new conditions it accompanies... (155)³¹ From this point of view, nihilist sentiment could be the sign of a broadened power of the spirit, which needs new values, since previous ones are incapable of expressing the current state of force.

In the conversion from passive to active nihilism, one perceives that prevailing goals up to then (convictions, articles of faith) are not at the height of present force, and is impelled to destroy them actively. "Nihilism is not just a contemplation of the 'In vain!', and not just the belief that everything deserves to perish: one puts one's hand to it, one makes it perish..." (366)³² But Nietzsche distinguishes two types of destruction: "The desire

29 With some variations, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: II, "The Soothsayer"; III, "On the Three Evils," part 2, and "On Old and New Tablets," parts 13 and 16; IV, "The Cry of Distress."

30 *Décadence* is a central and recurrent idea from this period, which recalls a process of disaggregation proper to life, even from a physiological point of view, which puts an end on the formations of dominion, once having exhausted its possibilities and completed its cycle. See Oswaldo Giacóia Jr., *Labirintos da Alma*, Ed. Unicamp, Campinas, 1997; Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, "Décadence artística enquanto *décadence* fisiológica", in "Cadernos Nietzsche" n. 6, 1999; and mainly, Paul Bourget, *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993.

31 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 10[22], 180.

32 *Ibid.*, 11[123], 225.



for destruction, for change and for becoming can be the expression of an overflowing energy pregnant with the future [...], but it can also be the hatred of the ill-constituted, deprived, and underprivileged one who destroys and must destroy because what exists, indeed all existence, all being, outrages and provokes him.”³³ The destruction of morality, religion, and metaphysics, and of the forces that propagate them³⁴, advocated by Nietzsche for active nihilism, cannot come from a hatred of failure, from the poison of the resented, from the reactive impulse of a negativist aspiration, but should be the necessary consequence of an affirmative will. Nietzsche is very clear about the statute of its destruction. “But we who are different, we immoralists [...] We do not negate easily, we stake our honor on being affirmative.”³⁵ When praising criticism, Nietzsche reveals the logic embedded therein: “When we criticize [...] it is, at least very often, proof that there are living, active forces within us shedding skin. We negate and have to negate because something in us wants to live and affirm itself, something we might not yet know or see!”³⁶ Or as he says in a preparatory fragment for *Zarathustra*: “Creators are the most hated: indeed, they are the most radical destroyers.”³⁷ Or: “The creator should always be a destroyer.”³⁸ Or: “I speak of a great synthesis of the creator, of the lover, and of the destroyer.” At the limit, it is the preponderance of Yes: “I want to be, someday, just someone who says Yes!” We could use this assessment as a criterion for a differential diagnostic of nihilisms...

Being so, it is just at this extreme point of destruction and affirmation that complete nihilism can intervene, suppressing the very place of values in order to place them in a different way. Finished nihilism, “classic,” perfect, from which Nietzsche seems to make himself the mouthpiece, requires the establishment of values starting from a different matter situated in life itself, the will to power, and of a different element, affirmativeness.

We can already, before we direct ourselves to some conclusive notes, try to synthesize some general features gathered from the consulted writings

33 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, [370], 234-6.

34 Leon Kossovitch, *Signos e Poderes em Nietzsche*, São Paulo, Ática, 2004, p. 127: “The virulence of active nihilism is in its destructive Power. Not to think it takes values into account: the opposite is true, to annihilate the forces that propagate it. By saying that ‘it must begin by hanging the moralists,’ Nietzsche accuses them not only of vile values, but, beyond these, the preservation, through these values, of the forces that ought to commit suicide.”

35 Friedrich Nietzsche, “Morality as Anti-Nature,” in *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, op. cit., 175.

36 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, [307], 174-5.

37 Friedrich Nietzsche, Posthumous fragment, Summer-Autumn 1882, 3[1].

38 Friedrich Nietzsche, Posthumous fragment, November, 1882 – February, 1883, 5[1].

and some interpretations. Nihilism can express itself as philosophy, as religion, as morality, as aesthetics, as a social movement, as political convulsion, as revolutionary violence.³⁹ Nihilism traverses all these phenomena like a diffuse awareness that supreme values in Western culture are devalued, and they, thereby, reveal its value of nothing, and the nothing appears like the truth of such values. With Nietzsche, it's as if this movement ascends to philosophical self-comprehension.

There is a vacuum of meaning, which is lived as a “psychological” experience, and where devaluation reaches a level of representation. But in an extensive paragraph about nihilism as a psychological state, Nietzsche desubstantializes this “nothing,” reminding us, in part, of Bergson's arguments to that respect. For the nothing appears as a result of an expectation of finding a finality, a totality, a truth in the flow of the world, and the consequent deception due to these categories of reason which don't find equivalence in reality. We again find what Nietzsche never ceases to rework, since his writing *On Truth and Lies*: the failure of anthropomorphic projection transformed into metaphysical postulate. As he says: “all the values by means of which up to now we first tried to make the world estimable to us and with which, once they proved inapplicable, we then devaluated it – all these values are, calculated psychologically, the results of particular perspectives of usefulness for the preservation and enhancement of human formations of rule, and only falsely projected into the essence of things. It's still the hyperbolic naivety of man, positing himself as the meaning of things and the measure of their value.” (351)⁴⁰

Counter-movement

It would be necessary now, briefly, to situate the way through which Nietzsche understands counterpoising himself to these anthropomorphic mechanisms of projection and nihilist negation. When first reading it seems that the philosopher of transvaluation directs himself towards a re-appropriation, recalling Hegel's heroes. “All the beauty and sublimity we've lent to real and imagined things I want to demand back, as the property and product of man: as his most splendid vindication. Man as poet, as thinker, as God, as love, as power – oh, the kingly prodigality with which he has given gifts to things, only to impoverish himself and himself feel miserable! That has been man's greatest selflessness so far, that he admired and worshipped

39 Oswaldo Giacóia Jr., *Os Labritintos da Alma*, op. cit., I closely follow the first part of this book in this paragraph.

40 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 11[99], 219.

and knew how to conceal from himself the fact that it was he who created what he admired.” (341)⁴¹ But a more attentive reading of some fragments reveals that a twilight of idols is not enough for overcoming nihilism, as in suppressing the supra-sensible sphere, and the humanist re-appropriation; different from Feuerbach, what becomes necessary is the deconstruction of man himself who in this sphere projected his needs and categories, with his debility and inclination to reverence. It is not enough, therefore, to put man in place of God or return divine attributes to man, or even a creation of values, without dismantling man himself in his slavish, resentful, guilty, reactive configuration. In other terms, axiology cannot be rooted in anthropology, whose relation to theology is its unconfessed origin. The nihilist who destroys the world without destroying himself prolongs anthropocentrism, decadence, and the metaphysics that he thinks he is opposing. In short, voluntary suicide would be the consequent finish of nihilism, its more extreme gesture. The death of God implies the death of man, but as Deleuze says, both still await the forces that can give them the most elevated meaning.

Force

So that this last direction of Nietzsche’s thought acquires its full meaning, it is necessary to situate it in relation to an array of criteria that reappear in several writings from this period, but they are already present throughout a great part of his work. It’s about notions like great style, great health, superabundance, elevation, plenitude, activity, rise in force, intensification of power, pathos of distance, always in comparison with the supposed “improvement” of man, his domestication, mediocrization, debasement, gregariousness. The criteria that Nietzsche claims allow for assessing and even classifying a value, a culture, a philosophy, a life, or even a modality of detected nihilism. Let’s take the well-known Prologue to *The Gay Science*: “In some, it is their weaknesses that philosophize; in others, their riches and strengths. [...] in all philosophizing hitherto was not at all ‘truth’ but rather something else – let us say health, future, growth, power, life...”⁴² And further on he insists upon asking, in each case, if it is “hunger or superabundance that have become creative here?”⁴³ In the fragments from the later period, Nietzsche returns countless times to outline his criterion: “I assess a man by the quantum of power and abundance of his will: not by its enfeeblement and extinction;

41 Ibid, 11[87], 215.

42 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Preface, 4-5.

43 Ibid, [370], 235.

I regard a philosophy which teaches denial of the will as a teaching of defamiation and slander;” (234)⁴⁴ in a fragment about hierarchy: “one must have a **Criterion**: I distinguish the *grand style*; I distinguish *activity* and reactivity; I distinguish the excessive, the squandering from the *suffering* who are passionate (– the idealists)” (228)⁴⁵ “a rich and self-assured nature [...] doesn’t give a damn about whether it will achieve bliss – it has no such interest in happiness in any form whatsoever, it is force, deed, desire...” (242)⁴⁶ “View-points for my values: whether out of plenitude or hunger [...] whether one observes or intervenes [...] or looks away, moves aside [...] whether animated, stimulated ‘spontaneously’ out of the build-up of force or merely reactively.” (254)⁴⁷ More clearly still: “What is good? – All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, the power increases, even in humans. [...] / What is happiness? The feeling that power increases – that resistance is overcome. / Not contentment, but more power, not peace at all, but war; not virtue, but efficiency (virtue in the Renaissance style, virtù, virtue moraline)”⁴⁸ “the goal is not the increase of consciousness but the enhancement of power.” (332)⁴⁹ Even when he speaks of suffering, it is still the same criterion: “But there are two types of sufferers: first, those who suffer from a superabundance of life – they want a Dionysian art as well as a tragic outlook and insight into life – then, those who suffer from an impoverishment of life and demand quiet, stillness, calm seas or else intoxication, paroxysm, stupor from art and philosophy.”⁵⁰ In order for this observation to be fully comprehensible, it would be necessary to take a long detour through the Greeks, to whom Nietzsche increasingly recognizes his debt, and that in fact seems to clear up this series entirely. Because the criteria listed above, in one way or another, are already present in what Nietzsche calls Hellenic instinct: the excess of force, the agonistic dimension, reckless immoralism, the will to power, in short, the “will to life,” *eternal* life. But contrary to Christian eternity, the eternal return of life translates here, beyond death and change, with all the suffering coming from it, a triumphant yes to life connected to the eternal pleasure of creation, to the eternal “martyrdom of the parturient.” In short, Dionysus. Tragedy as an

44 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, [382], 206.

45 Ibid. [881], footnote, 471.

46 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 10[127], 196.

47 Ibid., 10[145], 199-200. The active/reactive pair shows up often in Nietzsche, and Deleuze made this a capital criteria in his redescription of Nietzsche’s Philosophy.

48 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche’s Notebook of 1887-1888*, 11[414], vol. 13.

49 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 11[74], 213.

50 Friedrich Nietzsche, “We Antipodes” in *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, op. cit., 271-272.



antidote, as refusal of pessimism, as counter-instance, and tragic thought as an overcoming of all pessimism. “Saying yes to life, even in its strangest and harshest problems; the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility [...] over and above all horror and pity, so that you yourself may be the eternal joy in becoming – the joy that includes even the eternal joy in negating.” Nietzsche recognizes having touched, at this last extreme of his thought, the point of which he had started with *The Birth of Tragedy*, his “first transvaluation of all values.”⁵¹

In any case, when re-encountering his debt to the Greeks at the same time as his own work seems to reach its most daring extremity, Nietzsche does not move regressively or melancholically, he just throws another dart at the future. As he confessed in the *Second Untimely Meditation*, and in my understanding we here have formulated the exemplary logic of his undertaking as a whole, what purpose could a familiarity with Greek antiquity have, if not that of working against his time, hence about his time, and, as he expects, “in favor of a time to come.”⁵²

The time to come

Some words, therefore, regarding this “time to come.” Contemporary nihilism, as Zarathustra points out, presents two possibilities of future, negative and positive, symbolized respectively by the last man and by the over-man. The last man is he who, when substituting God, remains in reactivity, in the absence of meaning and value, of eagerness and creation, and prefers, according to Deleuze’s commentary, a nothing of will to a will to nothing – that’s why he gives himself over to passive extinction. The over-man, on the contrary, sees in this collapse of meaning and value a possibility, an opening, a stimulus. If Deleuze had reason to conceive the over-man as a new way of feeling, thinking, evaluating, as a new form of life, and even another type of subjectivity, contrary to Heidegger, to whom he is the realization of the metaphysics of subjectivity and its continuity in techno-science, in a reading whose political logic Jean-Pierre Faye painfully elucidated for us,⁵³ it is

51 Friedrich Nietzsche, “What I Owe the Ancients,” in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, op. cit., 228-229.

52 Friedrich Nietzsche, Foreword to “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” in *Untimely Meditations*, trans. Reginald John Hollingdale, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 59-60.

53 Jean-Pierre Faye, *Le vrai Nietzsche* (Paris: Hermann, 1998), 49. Faye raises the hypothesis that, upon being accused by Kriek, then rector of the University of Frankfurt and high-ranking official of the SS, of “metaphysical nihilism,” Heidegger would have shielded himself in Nietzsche in order to later sacrifice him, accusing him of that which was attributed to him: “The dear Heidegger, who contributed to the rehabilitation of Nietzsche in popular opinion, buries him in philosophical thought by placing him where the Nazis wanted to place Heidegger himself.” Cf. additionally, the acid text “Le transformat, le littoral”, *Concepts*, n. 7, Mons, Belgique, Ed. Sils Maria, 2004.



because, as we have already said, for Nietzsche the death of God necessarily signifies the death of man, thought under the mode of an ethical challenge, and not under the mode of an empirical or metaphysical event.

The death of man is a frequent theme in contemporary philosophy, which evoked no less misunderstandings than the theme of the death of God in Nietzsche, especially in the ambiguity that we would here make evident, and the pathos that at times should allow to also transpire its laughable dimension. At any rate, in both cases, not always does one perceive if we watch the melancholic exhaustion of a promise, or the opening of a possibility whose design is entirely unknown to us. It is probable that the contemporary condition, including the mistaken deviation through the post-modern, or even the ambiguous condition of biopolitics, is characterized precisely by the schizophrenic conjunction between these two affective tonalities, corresponding to disparate movements, though simultaneous, in which we don't already know if we are on the verge of dying or being born, of lamenting or celebrating. Of this, Nietzsche had a very strong awareness, and expressed it in the first line of his autobiography. "The good fortune of my existence, its uniqueness perhaps, lies in its fatality: I am, to express it in the form of a riddle, already dead as my father, while as my mother I am still living and becoming old. This dual descent, as it were, both from the highest and the lowest rung on the ladder of life, at the same time a *decadent* and a *beginning* – this, if anything, explains that neutrality, that freedom from all partiality in relation to the total problem of life, that perhaps distinguishes me. I have a subtler sense of smell for the signs of ascent and decline than any other human being before me; I am the teacher *par excellence* for this – I know both, I am both."⁵⁴

It would be the case to ask if the lucidity that Nietzsche demonstrated regarding the amphibious condition of his trajectory is not a characteristic of contemporary thought itself or even of philosophy as such. Would it be too much to risk the hypothesis that philosophy today carries this double attribution, that of detecting what is on the verge of perishing and, at the same time, what is on the verge of being born, reinventing in each case the relation between them? There are sufficient indications, in Nietzsche at least, to corroborate a hypothesis as such. On the one hand, and from very early, Nietzsche made a caustic inventory from that which in our culture is declining, exsanguine, or dying, claiming that such a process of disintegration

⁵⁴Friedrich Nietzsche, "Why I am so Wise," in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, op. cit., 222.

comes to an end, according to a conception of justice that finds in Goethe's maxim his notable expression: "For all that is born *deserves* to perish." Was it not that which his work carried out with uncommon causticity, and that from the beginning, when it defended that man "cannot live if he does not have the strength to break and dissolve a part of his past, and if he doesn't from time to time make use of this strength?"

But whoever sees in Nietzsche just a merciless and barbarous destroyer does not perceive that such demolition is always at the service of a primary affirmativity, from the desire of a founding time, whose foreshadows he does not cease to detect here and there, at times in resonance with a supposedly exemplary antiquity, in any case a founding time whose necessity he increasingly invokes: "Every great growth indeed brings with it a tremendous crumbling and falling into ruin: suffering, the symptoms of decline, belong to the periods of great advances; every fruitful and powerful movement of mankind has also produced alongside it a nihilistic movement; it would perhaps be the sign of a decisive and most essential growth, of the transition into new conditions of existence, that the most extreme form of pessimism, real nihilism, would be born. This I have understood."⁵⁵

The most difficult, in his work, is to think the conjunction between these two movements, which would be necessary to travel along as if on a Moebius strip, no doubt, causing to see its reciprocal co-extensiveness, but at the same time preserving dissymmetry, heterogeneity, and disparity of regimes between the two sides. For if on the one hand there is a type of historical necessity in the advent of nihilism, since nihilism is not an accident of history, but its internal logic, history as the history of an error, "of the longest error," and of a negation of the world that only now comes to an end and reveals the bacillus of revenge that moved it since the beginning, on the other hand Nietzsche defends a *counter-movement*, which cannot be thought of independently from that nihilism which he surpasses, because this counter-movement presupposes it and thence proceeds, as Nietzsche says in the preparatory writings to the preface, even so, from that point it doesn't receive a necessary direction and unfolding – since his is uncertain, for it is without truth, without teleology, without determinism, without dialectics.

However, contrary to what it could seem like, the world evacuated of a supposed or awaited finality, we don't end up at axiological indifferenciation. Philosophy with a hammer that Nietzsche writes about takes the "anything

55 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, 10[22], 180.

goes” or the “everything is the equivalent” (and what is more “contemporary” than that?) like major symptoms of the great nihilist danger. The whole challenge thus consists of not making of nihilism a nihilistic reading...

In short, as in the case of the eternal return, nihilism also can be read with a double meaning: as the most despicable form of thought, but also the most divine. It depends, ultimately, on who announces it, or to take up Nietzsche’s terms, it depends on the accumulated force, on the explosive material, on the new necessities and the new unsatisfied who claim it.





DELEUZE, NIHILISM, CAPITALISM

“Nietzsche presents the aim of his philosophy as the freeing of thought from nihilism and its various forms.”¹ Let’s ask ourselves if this wouldn’t be one of the meanings of Gilles Deleuze’s philosophical endeavor. It remains to be known what inflections he attributes to nihilism, in his interpretation which privileges negativity as a principle, and resentment as a greater expression. In fact, in refusing the dialectic and combating reactivity, Deleuze’s critical extension is revealed, as well as his Nietzschean point of support: tragic thought, which affirms the innocence of becoming, of the past and of the future, of will, of chance. “The dicethrow is tragic. All the rest is nihilism, Christian and dialectic pathos, caricature of the tragic, comedy of bad conscience.”² Just another game, another way of playing, can reject the “little bacillus” of vengeance...

We can now return to this scenario and stress some points. For Nihilism Deleuze understands, in strict fidelity to Nietzsche, “the enterprise of denying life and depreciating existence.”³ Since Socrates, life “crushed *by the weight* of the negative, is unworthy of being desired for itself, experienced in itself.”⁴ Whether submitted to values superior to it, whether impregnated with reactive values that substitute them, whether deprived of values, “it is expressed in values superior to life, but also in the reactive values which take their place and again in the world without values of the last man,”⁵ life always has the element of depreciation or of negation, it is trapped by a will to deny. Negation “has dominated our thought, our ways of feeling and evaluating, up to the present day,” but “it is constitutive of man. And with man the whole world sinks and sickens, the whole world is depreciated, everything known slides towards its own nothingness.”⁶ If negation is Deleuze’s ultimate philosophical target, his most recurrent adversary, it is because this is the element that most nuclearly reveals the core of nihilism. Nihilism, more than the empire of nothing, is the realm of negation, negation directed against life in its entirety, with all the groans that go along with it, from anguish to lack, from the cult of death to the apology of renouncement, from finitude to castration – this is what is meant by combating, from its

1 Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 35.

2 Ibid, 36.

3 Ibid, 34.

4 Ibid, 14.

5 Ibid, 171.

6 Ibid, 176-7.

speculative figures to its historical concretions. Deleuze follows the adventures of nihilism, negative, reactive, passive, in order to highlight what in them remains unaltered: the type of life: “it is always the same type of life which benefits from the depreciation of the whole of life in the first place, the type of life which took advantage of the will to nothingness in order to obtain its victory, the type of life which triumphed in the temples of God, in the shadow of higher values. Then, secondly, the type of life which puts itself in God’s place, which turns against the *principle* of its own triumph and no longer recognizes values other than its own. Finally, the exhausted life which prefers to not will, to fade away passively, rather than being animated by a will which goes beyond it. This still is and always remains the same type of life; life depreciated, reduced to its reactive form. Values can change, be renewed or even disappear. What does not change *and does not disappear is the nihilistic perspective* which governs this history from beginning to end and from which all these values (as well as their absence) arise. This is why Nietzsche can think that nihilism is not an event in history but the motor of the history of man as universal history.”⁷

Let’s stop for a second on this notion that is so precious to Deleuze, the notion of life. It cannot be taken abstractly, for it is inseparable from the nature of the force that qualifies it, active or reactive, and of the quality of the will to power that is in its origin, affirmative or negative. Thus, quite summarily, and depending on this combination of the quality of force and of the will to power, we have an active or reactive life, amorous or vengeful, aggressive or resentful, creating or believing, evaluating or interpreting, legislative or adaptive, forgetful or memorial, innocent or guilty, sick or healthy, happy or suffering, light or heavy, high or low. We know with what care it is necessary to handle these pairs, the complex cost by which health is conquered, a lightness, innocence. If all of this still sounds excessively anthropomorphic, it is necessary to insist, to what point within animality itself, that man and his science refuse, this plastic and metamorphosis force appears, a force of variation and of differentiation, in short – of difference.⁸ Science prioritizes quantity, equalizing quantities, compensation of inequalities, in other words, undifferentiation, adiaphoria. “The attempt to deny differences is a part of the more general enterprise of denying life, depreciating existence and promising it a death (“heat” or otherwise) where the universe sinks into the undifferentiated.” It is because science, “by

7 Ibid, 151-2.

8 Ibid, 55-56. “Only active force asserts itself, it affirms its difference and makes its difference an object of enjoyment and affirmation.”

inclination, understands phenomena in terms of reactive forces and interprets them from this standpoint.”⁹

Thus, if nihilism is equivalent to the predominance of negation, and the negation of life, and the negation of inequalities, we can therefore add Deleuze’s conceptual inflection with regard to Nietzsche, in a somewhat abrupt formulation: nihilism is defined, in its ultimate instance, by the negation... of difference. From Plato to Hegel and Heidegger, that is what is always at stake, in relatively all of Deleuze’s philosophical evaluation of the philosophers whom he rejects: the debasement of difference, its strangling, its emptying or its inversion. From the point of view of the figures that command thought and western subjectivity, whether in regard to Being, Good, the Idea, God, the Self, the Signifier, Oedipus, the State, or Capital, we are always dealing with modalities of debasing or negating difference, with greater or lesser doses of transcendence, vengeance, leveling, emptiness. Against the demon of nihilism and its disregard throughout the world, Zarathustra manifests his disregard for disregard, his negation of negation. As Deleuze says: “We can see what Nietzsche is driving at and what he is opposed to. He is opposed to every form of thought which trusts in the power of the negative. He is opposed to all thought which moves in the element of the negative, which makes use of negation as a motor, a power and a quality.”¹⁰ Nietzsche would have substituted the work of the negative with the joy of difference (“and who tells us that there is more thought in work than in joy?”). A transvaluation is only possible if the element from which it derives the value of values comes to be, instead of negation, affirmation. Only as such will there be appreciation instead of depreciation, activity instead of reactivity. “As long as we remain in the element of the negative it is no use changing values or even suppressing them, it is no use killing God: the place and the predicate remain [...]”¹¹ Transmutation is the point in which the negative is converted into a “warlike play of difference, affirmation and the joy of destruction.”¹² Transmutation corresponds to the point in which incomplete nihilism is converted into complete nihilism, in which nihilism turns against itself, the will to nothingness, already disconnected from reactive man and from the reactive forces that previously he promoted, turning around against himself, inspiring man with a new taste, that of destroying himself actively. Active destruction has nothing to do with the

9 Ibid, 45.

10 Ibid, 179.

11 Ibid, 171.

12 Ibid, 191.



passive extinction of the last man, but with the man who wants to perish. It is the will to nothingness in the service of a power to affirm, the conversion from the negative into the active, such that “negation has broken everything which still held it back, it has defeated itself, it has become power of affirming, a power which is already superhuman.”¹³ Change in the quality of the will to power, conversion of the element of the will to power. “Negation is no longer the form under which life conserves all that is reactive in itself, but is, on the contrary, the act by which it sacrifices all its reactive forms.”¹⁴

Capitalism and counternihilism

Like in Nietzsche, as in Deleuze the combat against nihilism cannot take place if not beginning from the nihilism that it intends to surpass, turning it around against itself, in a type of suicide of the negating will. In other terms: the counter-movement does not mean to halt, to brake, to block the escalate of nihilism – but precisely to intensify it, to exhaust it, to bring it to its end, to make it so it is completed and turn it around against itself. Counternihilism is, radically thought, nihilism brought to its suiciding limit... Counternihilism corresponds to nihilism turned active, complete, finished. Not that which is dragged by a decadence, but that which is propelled by an active destruction, in which the active forces are taken in an active-becoming and the will to nothingness is thrown against itself, freeing up other forces.

So that all of that does not sound abstract, and assuming the risks of this deviation, let’s think of the leveling that capitalism promotes out of the generalized deterritorialization that is part of it, as exposed in *Anti-Oedipus*: “perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and a practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to ‘accelerate the process,’ as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven’t seen anything yet.”¹⁵ Capitalism, much as it is equivalent to the decodification

13 Ibid, 175.

14 Ibid, 176.

15 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (New York: Viking Press, 1977), 239-240. Or, when commenting on Foucault about the era in which madness would cease to exist, for “it would receive the support of all the other flows, including science and art – because the exterior limit designated by madness would be overcome by means of other flows escaping control on all sides, and carrying us along,” and they add: “It should therefore be said that one can never go far enough in the direction of deterritorialization: you haven’t seen anything yet – an irreversible process. And when we consider what there is of a profoundly artificial nature in the perverted reterritorializations, but also in the psychotic reterritorializations of the hospital, or even the familial neurotic reterritorializations, we cry out, ‘More perversion! More artifice!’ – to a point where the earth becomes so artificial that the movement of deterritorialization creates of necessity and by itself a new earth.” 321



of flows, “It axiomatizes with one hand what it decodes with the other.”¹⁶ It seeks to bind “the schizophrenic charges and energies into a world axiomatic that always opposes the revolutionary potential of decoded flows with new interior limits. And it is impossible in such a regime to distinguish, even in two phases, between decoding and the axiomatization that comes to replace the vanished codes. The flows are decoded *and* axiomatized by capitalism at the same time.”¹⁷ In such a way that the challenge, even in the so-called harshest conflict of classes, consists of discriminating the decoded flows “that enter into a class axiomatic on the full body of capital, and on the other hand, the decoded flows that free themselves from this axiomatic just as they free themselves from the despotic signifier, that break through this wall, and this wall of a wall, and begin flowing on the full body without organs.”¹⁸ As Jean-François Lyotard said: “Capitalism approaches this schizophrenic limit, through the multiplication of metamorphic principles, through the annulment of the codes that regulate the flow. As we approach this limit, it places us on the other side [...] desire effectively destroys the limit field, and its action is not to transgress the limit, but to pulverize the very field on the libidinal surface [...] Destroying can only result from an even more liquid liquidation, from an even bigger *clinamen* and from a smaller free fall, from more dance and from less piety. What we need: that variations of intensity become more unforeseeable, stronger: that in ‘social life’ the highs and lows of desiring production can be inscribed without objective, without justification, without origin as in the strong times of ‘affective’ or ‘creative’ life; ceasing the resentment and bad conscience (*always equal to themselves, always depressed*) of the identities of functions engendered by the service of paranoid machines, by technology, and by the bureaucracies of Kapital.”¹⁹ In referring to the power of disorganizing which comes from force, in its piercing energy, Lyotard adds: “Now, this is virtuality of an alterity that is ready to multiply itself in the breast of the capitalistic ‘organism’ and from the value device, that is ready to *critique* without touching upon it, ready to *forget* the law of exchange, of lathing it and making from it an antiquated and crude illusion, a disaffected device. Who will be able to calculate the time that the new device is going to take in order to destroy with its unknown, transparent organs, the surface of our bodies and that of the social body, liberating them

16 Ibid, 246.

17 Ibid, Ibidem.

18 Ibid, 255.

19 Jean-François Lyotard, “Capitalismo Energúmeno,” in M. M. Carrilho (org.), *Capitalismo e Esquizofrenia*, Dossier Anti-Édipo, trans. José A. Furtado, Lisboa, Assirio & Alvim, 1976, 129.

from the bustle of interests and from the preoccupation of saving, spending and counting? It's a different figure that is raised, the libido removes itself from the capitalist device, desire makes itself available in a different way, according to a different figure, formless, ramified in a thousand propositions and attempts throughout the world, bastard, disguised with the rags of this and that, with the words of Marx, and with the words of Jesus and Mohammed, and with the words of Nietzsche and Mao, [...] and with the practices of the happening and demusicalized songs and with the practices of the sit-in and the sit-out, and of the 'trip' and light-shows, and with the liberation practices of pederasts and lesbians and 'lunatics' and delinquents, and with the practices of gratuity unilaterally decided What is capitalism capable of against this disaffection which grows in its interior (under the form, among others, of disaffected 'youth'), against this thing that is the new libidinal device, and of which *Anti-Oedipus* is the enormous production-in-scription in language?"²⁰

We know that capitalism is very capable against this and much more than what was believed at the time, but perhaps, much less – in any case, nowadays such an evaluation would demand a thorough "update."²¹ For example, Christian Marazzi writes: "It was thought that capitalism, destroying all the *belongers*, would have created the conditions for beatitude: nomadism of the rootless individual, absolute, resulting from 'deterritorialization' inherent to the development of the world economy. And, instead of this, precisely where globalization culminates, capitalist 'deterritorialization,' everything returns: the family, the national State, religious fundamentalisms. Everything returns, but, as the philosopher teaches, in a perverse, reactionary, conservative manner. Precisely when the 'vacuum of meaning' is approached from the threshold of an era in which people seem to be able to speak amongst themselves in a manner of free communicative access, here is where the idea of ethnicity returns, the myth of the origin and of belonging. Possible freedom from 'transparent society' is reverted into its opposite."²² And thus nihilism is referred back to capitalism itself: "The vacuum of meaning, understood as absence of a 'symbolic order,' is certainly the crowning of the historical development of capitalism, of its vocation to everything, in order to decode

20 Ibid, 128.

21 It is, for example, what has been attempted according to several inflections by Julián Ferreyra in *Ontologie du capitalisme chez Gilles Deleuze*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2010, Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc in *Politique et État chez Deleuze et Guattari: Essai sur le matérialisme historico-machinique*, Paris, Puf, 2013, Virtanen Akseli in *Critique of the Biopolitical Economy*, to soon be released by n-1 publications.

22 Christian Marazzi, *Capital and Affects: the politics of the language economy*, (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2011).

everything. Nothing before the economy was globalized resetting old rituals and ceremonies like today, emptying nation-States of their efficacy, disgregating the traditional family. Also, ethnicities disappear, 'immersed' as they are in the immaterial productive processes, in which colors and perfumes of actors can be reproduced artificially."²³

Subjective subjection and machinic servitude

Maurizio Lazzarato, in his way, has insisted on a double movement formulated by Guattari in the domain of relations between capitalistic deterritorialization and the forms of subjective subjugation.²⁴ On the one hand, we have subjection through attribution or reiteration of roles, functions, places (sex, profession, nationality, race), semiotic traps through which we "recognize" ourselves as subjects, with the equivalent illusion of autonomy and self-dominion – it deals with a more known process of subjectification. On the other hand, we are taken in a machinic servitude, in the precise direction that, as "dividuals," and no longer as individuals, we are "treated" mechanically (as statistic, as a bank of data, be it genetic, informational, consumer, or interest category), and also "affected" mechanically, in other words, no longer "influenced" by ideological or political content, signification or meaning, and indeed affected by a-signifying signs (algorithms, equations, graphics) that are directed not to consciousness or to the will, but are imposed as modes of semiotization in a pre-subjective plane. If in the first case the subject/object dichotomy is strengthened, in the second it is already difficult to even sustain the man/machine difference. In any case, subjective subjection and machinic servitude, subjectivation and desubjectivation complement one another and even form a continuous circuit. The force of capitalism, however, is much more in this machinic dimension, a-signifying, that does not even pass for representation nor for consciousness – that's why Guattari always defended the efficacy of retaliations in the modes of semiotization, in a-significant ruptures, in a-subjective deterritorializations. It's not about, thus, demonizing this machinic configuration, but rather equally taking on such a context out of the new possibilities that it opens, including in the direction that he called "machinic animism." Different from technophobia that is inferred from other theoretical or political perspectives, the machinic conception is immediately installed in the hybridism of the realms, in which one wouldn't be able to think human subjectivity isolated from the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Maurizio Lazzarato, *Signs, machines, subjectivities*, to be published by n-1 edições.

rhizome in which it emerges, in a properly ecosophic conception (environmental, social, mental). Critical discourse should not base itself on a universalist humanism, under the penalty of passing beside what contemporary assemblages constitute.

Of course in recent decades we have witnessed a yet even more disturbing inflection. In his analysis of financialization, Lazzarato regains the nature most proper to capital (M-M', instead of M-C-M'). Independent of the qualified flows that he conjugates and subjugates (work, information, sex), financial capital is an abstract machine entirely indifferent to production, to employment or to wealth, since what matters to it, by definition even, solely and exclusively is the accumulation by accumulation, in an infinite movement, provided that it reiterates social and political asymmetries. If in the Fordist period of the Welfare State, the forms of unionization offered a codified and compensatory subjectivity to the deterritorialization undertaken by capital, and however compatible with its infinitization, everything changes when predominating financialization precisely decodes these instances that previously served it and with which it is composed.

But Lazzarato insists: as much as capitalism yearns to function blindly, “automatically,” as if it were an autonomous technical machine, it is indissociable from a “social machine” composed by relationships of domination and exploitation of all sorts, and by the innumerable subjectivations that incessantly redesign their game. For example, the new subjective figure of the indebted man, thrown open based on the crisis of the derivatives, transversally cuts the social struggles and can give rise to other modalities of subjectivation and combat, for example in favor of the annulment of *all* debts, touching deep on one of the most indiscussable capitalistic axioms – here is a “subjective conversion” that would make us leave the “morality of debt” in favor of a second innocence, in a Nietzschean inspiration – transvaluation of values.²⁵

In a more distinct angle, Isabelle Stengers and Philippe Pignarre defined capitalism as a sorcery system without sorcerers, or without sorcerers who think of themselves as such, precisely in a world that disqualifies sorcery, and consequently, the need to protect itself against it.²⁶ Now, if Marx’ categories sought to “disenchant” that which seemed to be enchanted, namely, merchandise, tracking the genesis of the fetish that involves it, according to Stengers and Pignarre the Marxian bet continues to be valid, though some

25 Maurizio Lazzarato, *La fabrique de l’homme endetté: essai sur la condition néolibérale*, (Paris, Ed. Amsterdam, 2011). To be published by n-1 publications.

26 Isabelle Stengers and Philippe Pignarre, *La sorcellerie capitaliste*, (Paris: La Découverte, 2005-7), 59.

of its terms have been altered. Sorcery technologies in contemporary capitalism have increased much, whether through bioinformatic devices of capturing souls and bodies, of integral mobilization of vital energy, of self-accountability, of the regime of “control of engagement,” and this list is very extensive. But this doesn’t take place blindly, for it goes through millions of “little hands” that guarantee its efficacy, with different degrees of adhesion, maintaining “conjugated” an infinity of connections, laws, regulations, definitions, ways of thinking. Facing this, the lines of fracture can be read also as counter-sorceries, artificial unbewitchings that mobilize not “the truth,” nor “science,” in contradistinction to sorcery (as in Marx’ time it still seemed plausible, given the status attributed to “conscience”), but something that could be called counter-performativity, given the machinic and a-signifying functioning of capitalism. In Guattari’s wake, Franco Berardi had already called attention to the “neuromagmatic” dimension of the new psychic landscape which no longer has as a support, nor as an antidote, the conscious or scientific rationality.”²⁷ Thus the singular modalities of deviation. When invoking the example of ethnopsychiatrist Tobie Nathan, Stengers and Pignarre refer to the estrangement that provoked his treatment method for immigrants in Paris, allowing to enter the consultation room the “entities” with which the patients live, gods, ancestors, dead people, spirits, and “negotiate” with them, helping the patients, occasionally, creating supports, instead of ignoring all of this “superstition,” based on a supposed scientific neutrality that precisely would leave them at the mercy of the “beings” that surround them. Thus, instead of “undoing” the sorcery in name of a “scientificity” whose neutrality is our modern fiction, it deals with creating collective devices of “protection” which, in articulating voices, actions, intensities, create a “common means” apt to increase the collective “empowerment” in an entirely opposite direction to the meaning that this term has acquired in management, the end result being businesses.

In any case, it is important to insist on the fact that in the very movement of capitalistic deterritorialization, conjugated to the axiomatics that capitalism multiplies, the “monster” can change its nature. However much capitalism and biopolitics seem to monopolize the totality of space, time, life, bodies, and souls, of virtuality itself, in the same impulse of its extensive and intensive expansion escape the most unusual lines. In this sense, Beatriz Preciado’s work is exemplar. In denouncing the pharmacopornographic

²⁷ Franco Berardi, *Neuromagma*, (Roma: Castelvecchi, 1995).

regime (biomolecular and semiotic-technical at the same time), she shows how throughout the 20th century the psyche, the libido, the conscience, even heterosexuality or homosexuality “were being transformed into tangible realities, into chemical substances, into marketable molecules, into bodies, into human biotypes, into manageable goods of exchange by the pharmaceutical multinationals.”²⁸ Science’s success would be in transforming depression into Prozac, masculinity into testosterone, erection into Viagra, etc. Facing this molecularization of biopower, even recognizing the value of the Italians’ theorizing, she considers that their descriptions stop at waist level. Hence the question: “But what if they were in reality the insatiable bodies of the multitude, their dicks and clitorises, their anuses, their hormones, their neurosexual synapses, what if desire, excitation, sexuality, seduction and pleasure of the multitude were the motors of creation of value in the contemporary economy, what if cooperation were a ‘masturbatory cooperation’ and not simply a cooperation of brains?”²⁹ Or, more radically, the question expands: “We dare the hypothesis: the true raw materials of the current productive process are excitation, erection, ejaculation, pleasure and the feeling of self-complacency and omnipotent control. The true motor of current capitalism is the pharmacopornographic control of subjectivity, whose products would be serotonin, testosterone, anti-acids, cortisone, antibiotics, estradiol, alcohol and tobacco, morphine, insulin, cocaine, sildenafil citrate (Viagra) and all that complex virtual-material that can help in the production of mental and psychosomatic states of excitation, relaxation and discharge, of total omnipotence of control. Here, even money becomes a significant psychotropic abstract. The addicted and sexual body, sex and all of its semiotic-technical derivatives are today the principal resource of post-Fordist capitalism.”³⁰

It would be hard to find a more provocative description of biopolitical nihilism and contemporary capitalism. Not by chance, rigorously faithful to the Moebius logic that we highlight in other moments of this book, the author at the same time calls attention to the “material” that is thus being vampirized – orgasmic force. This *potentia gaudendi*, power of global excitation of every living molecule, that Spinozantly tends toward expansion, while event, relationship, practice, becoming, hardly can be reduced to

28 Beatriz Preciado, *Texto yonqui*, (Madrid: Espasa, 2008), 32. To be published in English as: *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, (New York: CUNY, 2013).

29 Ibid, 34.

30 Ibid, 37.

private object, given its expansive and common nature. Now, if bioPower monopolizes something, it is not life, but rather the techno-living body, “techno-eros,” adds Preciado. What is at stake in this confrontation is orgasmic force – which precisely cannot be thought as inert or passive material, except in its pharmacopornographic reduction, where it is entirely expropriated as “bare life.”

It is obvious that Preciado’s description bites into the flesh of the present, and runs through the latitude of the biobody coming and going with what she calls ejaculating profit, of which would be, for now, entire masses excluded from the planet, for good and bad. In any case, beyond the living description of a context that our shame finds it hard to name, Preciado deserves credit for offering her own body as a laboratory in which to experiment, voluntarily, the driftings of sensibility and erotism out of a protocol of voluntary intoxication at the base of the testosterone gel. She clarifies that her book *Testo Junkie* can be read as a bioterrorism manual of gender on the molecular scale, or a point in a cartography of the extinction of genders, or simply as an exercise of disassembling and reassembling a subjectivity. In any case, there is an effort to go as far as possible in capitalistic deterritorialization and how to experiment those points in which its axiomatic blocks it, or where it is reterritorialized on taboo-codes. Hence, she is able to discern how inside the force of manipulation of new modalities of pharmacoporno-bioPower, as well as possible reversions.

We can now return to the theme of nihilism in a more generic key. If Vattimo could write that the consumption of nihilism rests upon the hegemony of the value of exchange,³¹ of the general equivalent, of the generalized indifferenciation, it is because before him Marx had postulated that in capitalism there are no longer values, but only “value.” However, we shouldn’t dissolve such an analysis into an epochal history of being, ignoring its extremely material dimension which Preciado has shown with such acuity. Just as when Deleuze and Guattari insist that production increasingly approaches antiproduction (it is the power of “self-destruction” of capitalism – growing production of scarcity, of debt, of catastrophe, but also of “bullshit”)³² this process should also not be read as “destinal.” In all of these cases, it is the nature of the assemblage that should be made evident. And the assemblage is, for these authors, always an assemblage of desire, as *A Thousand Plateaus* shows.

31 Gianni Vattimo, *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-modern Culture*, trans. John R. Snyder, (Baltimore: Polity Press, 1991).

32 Maurizio Lazzarato, *idem*.

That is one of the challenges which, in its way, Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc confronts, in designating *Capitalism and Schizophrenia's* method as “historical-machinic materialism,” stressing the relevance of the “unconscious” dimension in all of this sequence. In the original reading that he proposes, the fascism of the between-wars would have impelled Deleuze and Guattari to rethink a “conjuncture marked by a manipulation of the unconscious on mass scale, by which political space itself is destroyed.” As such, political struggle should take place equally in this “analytic” space, in this “different scene of the unconscious” where impasses and crises are inscribed that traverse their agents. That such symptoms, theorized as “desiring machines” and then as “becomings, unintegrable into a political, strategic, or even ethico-social rationality [...] can however return brutally on the order of relationship to the body and to language, to art, and to sexuality, to space and to history, forming other features of self-heterogeneity from the subjects of political intervention, here is what is called the construction of an analytic space *sui generis*.”³³

We can now say, out of the uneven elements listed in this short zigzag through such different authors: in the demonical flow that drags everything, the demon can suffer a transmutation, and the process of being able to create “a new earth.”³⁴ “Not a promised and a pre-existing land, but a world created in the process of its tendency, its coming undone, its deterritorialization [...] where the flows cross the threshold of deterritorialization and produce the new land [...] An active point of escape where the revolutionary machine, the artistic machine, the scientific machine, and the (schizo) analytic machine become parts and pieces of one another.”³⁵ As the authors of *Anti-Oedipus* say, “the negative or destructive task of schizoanalysis is in no way separable from its positive tasks,” and at the end of the book it is reiterated: “We have seen how the negative task of schizoanalysis must be violent, brutal: defamiliarizing, de-oedipalizing, decastrating; undoing theater, dream, and fantasy; decoding, deterritorializing – a terrible curettage, a malevolent activity. But everything happens at the same time. For at the same time the process is liberated – the process of desiring-production, following its molecular lines of escape [...] Completing the process and not arresting it, not making it turn about in the void, not assigning it a goal. We'll never go too

33 Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc, *Politique et État chez Deleuze et Guattari: Essai sur le matérialisme historico-machinique*, op. cit., 237.

34 *Anti-Oedipus*, 321.

35 *Ibid*, 322.

far with the deterritorialization, the decoding of flows.” It is however in the light of Zarathustra that such a conclusion acquires an affirmative meaning: “In truth, the earth will one day become a place of healing.”³⁶

For those who can see in this ending a dithyrambic tone, without historical or scientific basis, the authors anticipate the objection. “Those who have read us this far will perhaps find many reasons for reproaching us: for believing too much in the pure potentialities of art and even of science; for denying or minimizing the role of classes and class struggle; for militating in favor of an irrationalism of desire; for identifying the revolutionary with the schizo.”³⁷ We are not here taking up the set of responses, what matters to us is just briefly evoking one of them – with regard to the supposed irrationality of desire and its role of an eventual inflection in the logic of capitalism. Desire, Deleuze and Guattari remind us, is the “irrational of every form of rationality,” because it implies a “rupture with causality,” it “breaks with causes and aims” and brings the *socius* to “reveal its other side.” Its only cause is a “rupture with causality,” and “even though one can and must assign the objective factors, such as the weakest links, within causal series that made such a rupture possible, only what is of the order of desire and its irruption accounts for the reality this rupture assumes at a given moment, in a given place.”³⁸ A position taken up in an even more categorical way in the following formulation: “The actualization of a revolutionary potentiality is explained less by the preconscious state of causality in which it is nonetheless included, than by the efficacy of a libidinal break at a precise moment, a schiz whose sole cause is desire – which is to say the rupture with causality that forces a rewriting of history on a level with the real, and produces this strangely polyvocal moment when everything is possible. Of course the schiz has been prepared by a subterranean labor of causes, aims, and interests working together; of course this order of causes runs the risk of closing and cementing the breach in the name of the new *socius* and its interests. Of course one can always say after the fact that history has never ceased being governed by the same laws of aggregates and large numbers. The fact remains that the schiz came into existence only by means of a desire without aim or cause that charted it and sided with it. While the

36 Ibid, 381-382, with the pertinent clarification of by the Brazilian translator of *Anti-Oedipus*, Luiz Orlandi, regarding the origin of Nietzsche’s phrase. In this perspective, deterritorialization cannot be identified in worshipping an overcoming governed by a will to will, nor its technoscientific translation – its ontological reach is different, as Julián Ferreyra has shown recently in *L’ontologie du capitalisme chez Gilles Deleuze*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2010.

37 Ibid, 378-9.

38 Ibid, 377.

schiz is possible without the order of causes, it becomes real only by means of something of another order: Desire, the desert-desire, the revolutionary investment of desire.”³⁹

It’s true that the landscape of *A Thousand Plateaus* is distinct: ten years after the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, the sparks of 1968 having settled down, in a neo-liberal context, new problems emerged and theoretical sobriety was imposed. And however, there it persists, still and always, the force of the untimely, be it in the minor-becomings, in the many war machines, in the events that cannot be reduced to the history from which they deviate, in the nomadology which confronts the State-form, in the body-without-organs, and in the assemblages of desire that make them jump through the airs of the *socius*’ rifling. The modalities in which the “bacillus of vengeance” engenders its antidotes are multiplied at the same proportion in which the biopolitical forms that it takes on are diversified.

³⁹ Ibid, 378.





THE COMMUNITY OF THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE A COMMUNITY

A trivial affirmation is insistently evoked by several contemporary thinkers, among them Toni Negri, Giorgio Agamben, Paolo Virno, Jean-Luc Nancy, or even Maurice Blanchot. Namely, that we live in a crisis of the “common.” The forms that previously seemed to guarantee men a common surrounding, and assured social ties with some consistency, lost their significance and have collapsed for good, from the so-called public sphere, to the consecrated ways of associating: communitarian, national, ideological, partisan, syndicalist. We wander amidst specters of the common: the media, political theater, consecrated economic consensus, but equally the ethnical or religious relapses, the civilizing invocation grounded in panic, a militarization of existence to defend “life” that is supposedly “common,” or more precisely, to defend a so-called “common” way-of-life. However, we know well that this “life” or this “form-of-life” is not really “common,” that when we partake in these consensuses, these wars, these panics, these political circuses, these expired ways of assembly, or even this language that speaks in our name, we are victims or accomplices of a kidnapping.

If there is in fact, today, a kidnapping of the common under consenting, unitary, spectacularized, totalized, transcendentalized forms, we need to recognize that, at the same time and paradoxically, such figurations of the “common” start to finally appear for what they are: pure specter. In a different context, Deleuze recalls that above all, after World War II, clichés started to appear for what they are: mere clichés, clichés of relation, clichés of love, clichés of the people, clichés of politics or revolution, clichés of that which connects us to the world – and as such, emptied of their meaningfulness, when they are revealed as clichés, that is, ready-made images, pre-fabricated, recognizable schemes, mere tracings of the empirical, only then can thought free itself from them in order to find that which is “real,” effective, with aesthetic and political consequences to subsequently be determined.

Today, as much the perception of a kidnapping of the common as the revelation of the spectral character of this transcendentalized common comes about in very specific conditions. That is, precisely at a moment when the common, and not its image, becomes central, given the new current productive and biopolitical context. In other words: unlike some decades ago, in which the common was defined but also lived as the abstract public space, which joined individualities and was placed over them, whether as public

space or as politics, today the common is the productive space par excellence. The contemporary context brought out, in an unforeseen manner, since it occurs at its own economic and biopolitical core, the prevalence of the “common.” So-called immaterial work, post-Fordist production, cognitive capitalism, all of these are coextensive of the emergency of the common: they all require the faculties which are connected to what is most common to us, that is, language, and its correlating bundle, intelligence, knowledge, cognition, memory, imagination, and, consequently, common inventiveness. But also subjective requirements attached to language, such as the capacity to communicate, to interact, to associate, to cooperate, to share memory, to forge new connections and make networks proliferate. In this context of a network, or connectionist capitalism, which some call rhizomatic, at least ideally, that which is common is put to work in common. It couldn't be any different: after all, what would a private language be? What meaning would exclusively self-referred knowledge have? Putting in common that which is common, placing in circulation that which is already everyone's patrimony, making proliferate that which is in everyone and is everywhere, whether it be language, life, or inventiveness. But this dynamic, thus described, only partially corresponds to what in fact happens, since it goes along with the appropriation, expropriation, privatization and vampirization of the common undertaken by the many corporations, mafias, states, institutions, with goals that Capitalism cannot conceal, even in its most rhizomatic versions.

Widened sensoriality

If language, that which since Heraclitus was considered to be the most common good, today has become the core of very production, one must add that the contemporary common is wider than mere language. Given the context of widened sensoriality of the uninterrupted circulation of flows, of collective synergy, of affective plurality and of the resulting collective subjectivity, today the common passes through the social *bios*, through the assemblages that are vital, material and immaterial, biophysical and semi-otic, which today constitute the core of economic production but also the production of common life. That is, it is the multitude's power of life, in its mix of collective intelligence, of the circulation of affects, of the production of bonds, of the capacity for invention of new desires and new beliefs, of new associations and new forms of cooperation, as Maurizio Lazzarato says in

Tarde's wake.¹ In fact, that is increasingly the primordial source of wealth for that very capitalism, which is the reason why this common is the aim of capitalistic captures and kidnappings, but paradoxically it is also precisely this common that extrapolates them, fleeing in every direction and out of every pore.

Being as such, we might be tempted to redefine the common out of this exact context. Paraphrasing Paolo Virno, it would be the case of postulating the common more as a premise than as a promise, more as a shared reservoir made of multiplicity and singularity, more as an already real virtuality than as a lost or future ideal unity. We could say that the common is a reservoir of singularities in continual variation, an anorganic matter, a body-without-organs, an unlimited (*apeiron*) apt to the most diverse individuations.

As is seen, when the common is conceived as a virtual bottom, as pre-individual social vitality, as pure non-totalizable heterogeneity, it has nothing to do with the media, political, imperial figures that try to hypostatize it, represent it, or expropriate it. Therefore, today's resistance is going through an exodus in relation to these instances that transcendentalize the common, and above all through the immanent experimentation of the compositions and recompositions that comprise it.

Ethics and ethology

Perhaps the book in which Deleuze has best traversed these two directions, that of refusing transcendentalized instances and that of experimenting this immanent common, together with Guattari, would be *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Against Oedipus or the State-form, against the plane of transcendent organization, their unity and their captures, the authors simply invoke the plane of consistency, the plane of composition, the plane of immanence. In a plane of composition, one deals with variable connections, relations of speed and slowness, anonymous and impalpable matter dissolving forms and people, stratum and subjects, liberating movements, extracting particles and affects. It's a plane of proliferation, of populating, and contagion. In a plane of composition, what's at stake is the consistency with which it gathers heterogeneous, disparate elements. As said in the practically unintelligible conclusion of *A Thousand Plateaus*, what is inscribed on a plane of composition are the events, the incorporeal transformations, the nomad essences, intense variations, becomings, smooth spaces – it's

¹ Maurizio Lazzarato, *Puissance de L'invention*, Paris, Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2002.

always a body without organs. Call it what you like, Body-Without-Organs, Mecanosphere, Plane of Consistency, Plane of Immanence, the Spinozist lineage here is very clear, and entirely embraced.

In a short text by Deleuze about Spinoza, from 1978, this connection or single Nature is conceived as a *common plane of immanence*, where all bodies, all souls, all individuals are to be found. When explaining this plane, Deleuze insists on a paradox: it is already completely given, and yet must be constructed, in order to live in a Spinozist way.

Behold the argument. What is a body, or an individual, or a living being, if not a composition of speeds and slownesses on a plane of immanence? Now, to each body thus defined corresponds a power to affect and be affected, such that we can define an individual, be it animal or man, by the affects it is capable of. Deleuze insists on the following: no one knows beforehand of what affects he is capable, we still don't know what a body or a soul can do, it's a question of experimentation, but also of prudence. This is Deleuze's ethological interpretation: Ethics would be a study of compositions, of the composition between relations, of the composition between powers. The question is knowing if relations can compose themselves in order to form a new, more "extended" relation, or if powers can be composed as such in order to constitute a more "intense" power. It then deals with, says Deleuze, "sociabilities and communities. How do individuals enter into composition with one another in order to form a higher individual, ad infinitum? How can a being take another being into its world, but while preserving or respecting the other's own relations and world?"²

The question, the most ardent of all, could be translated like this: In what way do you go from the common to the community, in light of this theory of compositions and the double optics that it implies? And, to what extent does this community respond to both the common and the singularities that inflect it?

Nostalgias of the community

Before taking a stab at some of Deleuze's indications regarding this subject, I propose a deviation in order to situate the question of the community in a broader context. Jean-Luc Nancy, in *The Inoperative Community*, recalls that according to Western theoretical tradition, where society exists, community has been lost. Whoever says society is saying loss or degradation of a communitarian intimacy, in such a way that the community is

² Ibid.



that which society has destroyed. That's how the solitary figure must have been born, the one who on the inside of society wants to be a citizen of a free and sovereign community, precisely the community that society has ruined. Rousseau, for instance, would be the first thinker of community, who had the "consciousness of a (perhaps irreparable) rupture in this community."³ He was followed by the Romantics, by Hegel... "Until this day," says Nancy, "history has been thought on the basis of a lost community – one to be regained or reconstituted."⁴ The lost, or broken, community can be exemplified in several ways, such as the natural family, the Athenian city, the Roman Republic, the first Christian community, corporations, communes, or brotherhoods... Always referring to a lost age in which community was woven of tight, harmonious bonds and sustained a representation of its own unity, whether through institutions, rituals, or symbols. "Distinct from society... community is not only intimate communication between its members, but also its organic communion with its own essence."⁵ It is constituted by a sharing of an identity, according to the model of the family and of love.

Nancy concludes that we should be suspicious of such a retrospective consciousness of the lost community and its identity, as well as a prospective ideal that such nostalgia produces, since it has accompanied the West from its outset. At every moment in its history, it has given itself over to the nostalgia of a lost, disappeared, archaic community, deploring the loss of a familiarity, fraternity, and conviviality. What's curious is that the true consciousness of the loss of community is Christian: the community pined by Rousseau, Schlegel, Hegel, Bakunin, Marx, Wagner, or Mallarmé is understood as communion, at the heart of the mystical body of Christ. The community would be the modern myth of humanity's partaking of divine life. The desire for community could be a belated invention that tried to respond to the harsh reality of the modern experience, from which divinity was infinitely withdrawing (as shown by Hölderlin). The death of God would be a way to refer to the death of community, and would carry that implicit promise of a possible resurrection, in a common immanence between humanity and God. All Christian, modern, and humanist consciousness of the loss of community goes in this direction.

3 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 9.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.



Community has not taken place

To which Nancy simply responds: *Community has not taken place*. Neither for the Ache-Guayaki Indians, nor for the Hegelian spirit of a people, nor for Christianity. “No *Gesellschaft* (society) has come along to help the State, industry, and capital dissolve a prior *Gemeinschaft* (community).” It would be more accurate to say that “society,” understood at the dissociating association of forces, needs, and signs, has taken the place of something for which we have no name, nor concept, and which maintains much more extensive communication than that of the social bond (with the gods, the cosmos, animals, the dead, the unknown), and at the same time a much more defined segmentation, with harsher effects (solitude, helplessness, rejection, etc.). “Society was not built on the ruins of a *community* [...] community, far from being what society has crushed or lost, is *what happens to us* – question, waiting, event, imperative – *in the wake of society*. [...] Nothing, therefore, has been lost, and for this reason nothing is lost. We alone are lost, we upon whom the ‘social bond’ (relations, communication), our own invention, now descends heavily”⁶

Namely, the lost community is nothing more than a phantasm. Or, what this “community” supposedly has lost, that communion, unity, co-pertinence, such a loss is precisely constitutive of community. In other terms, and in a more paradoxical approach, community can only be thought as negation of fusion, of homogeneity, of identity with itself. The necessary conditions for community are heterogeneity, plurality and distance. Hence the categorical condemnation of the desire for communal fusion, since it always implies death or suicide, of which Nazism would be an extreme example. The desire for unitary fusion presupposes unitary purity, and the resulting exclusions can always be carried further and further, until culminating in collective suicide. Moreover, for a certain time, the very term community, which the Nazis sought to steal with their praise of the “community of the people,” unleashed a reflex of hostility on the German left. Several years were needed so that the term could be disconnected from Nazism and reconnected with the word communism.⁷ In any case, this national immolation, by means of, or in name of community, made death become reabsorbed by community, with which death became full of meaning, values, ends, history. It is the reabsorbed negativity (the death of each and every one reabsorbed in

⁶ Ibid, 11.

⁷ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Confronted Community*, trans. Amanda MacDonald, *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (2003), 23–36.

the life of the Infinite.) But the work of death, insists Nancy, cannot establish a community. Quite the contrary: it is solely the impossibility of creating a work from death that could establish one.

Another vision of community is counterpoised to fusing desire, or that which creates a work from death, and it runs in the opposite direction of all nostalgia, of all communal metaphysics. According to Nancy, such a figure of community has yet to emerge. The idea is not to shape a communitarian essence, but rather to think the insistent and unusual demand for community, beyond the totalitarianisms which are insinuated everywhere and the techno-economic projects that have substituted communitarian-communist-humanist projects. In this way, the demand for community would still be unknown to us; such is a task, even with childish concerns, at times confusing, regarding communal or convivial ideologies. Why should this demand for community be unknown to us? Because community, contrary to the fusing dream, is made of interruption, fragmentation, suspense, of singular beings and their encounters. Therefore, the very idea of social bond that is insinuated in the reflection on community is crafty, because it precisely omits this *between*. Community as the sharing of a separation given by singularity.

We now come to a curious idea. If community is the opposite of society, it is not because it is the space of an intimacy that society has destroyed, but almost the opposite, because it is the space of distance which society, in its inclination for totalization, never stops evoking. In other words, as Blanchot says in *The Unavowable Community*, community is not about a relationship between the Same and the Same, but a relationship in which the Other intervenes, and he is always irreducible, in dissymmetry. He *introduces* the dissymmetry. On the one hand, then, the infinite of alterity incarnated by the Other devastates the integrity of the subject, making its centered and isolated identity collapse, opening it to an irrevocable exteriority, in a constitutive incompleteness. On the other hand, this dissymmetry impedes everyone from being reabsorbed into a totality that would constitute a widened individuality, which customarily happens when, for example, monks give up everything in order to join a community, but once they give it up they become possessors of everything, as in the Kibbutz, or in real or utopian forms of communism. On the other hand, there is this which we would hardly dare call community, because it is not a community of equals, and would first be an absence of community, in the sense that it is an absence of reciprocity, fusion, unity, communion, and possession. This negative community, as Georges Bataille called it, the community of those who do not have a community, assumes

the impossibility of coinciding with itself. For it is founded, as he would say, on the absolute of the separation which needs to affirm itself in order to break down until it becomes a relation, a paradoxical, senseless relation. A senselessness that is in such a refusal that perhaps Bartleby, the Melville character, dramatizes in the most extreme manner: the refusal to do work. That is where the community serves for... nothing. And there, perhaps, is where it starts to become sovereign.

Community and sovereignty

What is the sovereign, strictly speaking? It is that which exists in a sovereign manner, independent of any utility, of any usefulness, of any necessity, of any finality.⁸ The sovereign serves for nothing, and his ends are not driven by a productive logic. Literally, the sovereign is one who lives from the extorted surplus, and whose existence opens up without limit, apart from his own death. The sovereign is the opposite of the slave, the servile, the subjected, whether it be regarding necessity, work, production, accumulation, limits, or death. The sovereign can freely make use of time and the world, and the world's resources. The sovereign's present is not subordinated to the future, and the instant shines autonomously. He or she who lives sovereignly, if we are to radically consider it, lives and dies in the same way as animals, or a god. It's from the order of play, not work. Sexuality, for example, is useful, thus servile, while eroticism is useless, and in this sense, sovereign. This implies a gratuitous expenditure. In the same way as laughter, parties, tears, outbursts, everything that has a surplus. Bataille, in his *Essay on Sovereignty*, affirms that this surplus is in some way miraculous, and even divine. Bataille comes to agree with the Gospel, according to which man does not only need bread, he is hungry for miracles. Because the desire for sovereignty, according to Bataille, is in all of us, even in the worker, who with his cup of beer participates to some degree, at least for a moment, in this gratuitous and miraculous element, in this useless, and therefore glorious, expenditure. This can happen with anyone, to the same extent, facing beauty, mournful sadness, the sacred, or even violence. For Bataille, what is most difficult to understand is that these sovereignties, which interrupt the sequential continuity of time, have no object nor objective, they come to Nothing, they are Nothing (*Rien*, not *Néant*).

Well, it is clear that the world we live in, says Bataille, is that of utility,

⁸ Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, Vol. III, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Urzone, 1991).

accumulation, sequential duration, subordinated operation, useful work, in contradistinction to this dose of chance, arbitrariness, useless splendor, grace or disgrace, that no longer outwardly appears in consecrated ritual forms, as in other times, but rather in diffuse and subjective moments and states, of non-servility, miraculous gratuity, expenditure or just of dissipation. What is at stake in this sovereignty is a loss of self, behind which voices a refusal of servitude. Playing with words, we could say: Involuntary Non-Servitude. It is something of this order that is at stake in the notion of sovereignty as it was thought in Bataille, a conception that Habermas considers an inheritance from Nietzsche and precursor to Foucault.⁹

May of '68 and the desire for community

We should return now to the topic of community, having as a backdrop this non-conventional idea, because it would oppose our productivist and communicational tradition, as much of sovereignty as of community. Perhaps we could accompany the beautiful commentary made by Maurice Blanchot regarding May of '68, soon following his observations on Bataille's work on the impossible community, the absent community, the negative community, the community of those who do not have a community.

After a description of the atmosphere of May 1968, which includes the explosive communication, the effervescence, the freedom of speech, the pleasure of being together, a certain innocence, the absence of project, Blanchot refers to the refusal of taking power to which something could be delegated – it is as if it were a declaration of powerlessness. Like a presence that, in order to not limit itself, accepts doing nothing, accepts being there, and is then absent, is dispersed. In describing the uncommon character of this “people” who refuse to endure, to persevere, who ignore the structures that could give them stability, in this mixture of presence and absence, he writes: “That is what makes them formidable for the holders of power that does not acknowledge them: not letting themselves be grasped, being as much the dissolution of the social fact as the stubborn obstinacy to reinvent the latter in a sovereignty the law cannot circumscribe, as it challenges it...”¹⁰ It is this powerless power, asocial society, association that is always ready to dissociate, “always imminent dispersal of a presence momentarily occupying the

⁹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987).

¹⁰ Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. Pierre Joris (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988), 33.

whole space and nevertheless without a place (utopia), a kind of messianism announcing nothing but its autonomy and its *unworking* [désœuvrement],” the sneaky loosening of the social bond, but at the same time the inclination to that which is shown as much impossible as inevitable – community.

Blanchot, on this point, differentiates the traditional community, that of land, blood, race, from the elective community. He cites Bataille: “If this world were not endlessly crisscrossed by the convulsive movements of beings in search of each other [...], it would appear like an object of derision offered to those it gives birth to.”¹¹ But what is this convulsive movement of beings in search of one another? Would it be love, as in saying the community of lovers? Or desire, as Negri points out when he says: “The desire for community is the spirit and soul of constituent power – the desire for a community that is as thoroughly real as it is absent, the trajectory and motor of a movement whose essential determination is the demand of being, repeated, pressing on an absence.”¹² Or is it a movement that cannot bear any name, neither love nor desire, but that attracts the beings in order to throw them towards each other, according to their body or according to their heart and thought, by tearing them from ordinary society?¹³ There is something unavowable in this strangeness, unable to be common, it is nevertheless what establishes a community, always provisional and always already deserted. Something between working and unworking...

* * *

In this zigzagging journey, we have been through the community of the celibate, the community of those who do not have a community, the negative community, the unworking community, the impossible community, the gaming community, the coming community, the community of whatever singularity – several names for a figure of community that is non-fusional, non-unitary, non-totalizable, and non-filial. It remains to be known if this community can be thought, as Negri suggests, as an ontology of the common. The response is insinuated in the first part of this chapter: in Deleuze’s terms, inspired by Spinoza, and above all in his work with Guattari, and in the current conditions of a universal machinism, the question is that of the already given plane of immanence, and at the same time, the one always

11 Ibid, 47.

12 Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies*, trans. Maurizia Boscagli, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 23.

13 Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, 47.

to be built. On the opposite side of the kidnapping of the common, the expropriation of the common, the transcendentalization of the common, it's about thinking the common as immanent. That is, on the one hand, it is already given, for instance the biopolitical common, and on the other hand it is to be built, according to the new figures of community that the common thus conceived could engender.

Perhaps it has become clear, also, that this reflection on the common and community is likewise, indirectly, an effort to comprehend the logic of the multitude. The challenge is to avoid an excessively molar, heroic, or voluntaristic conception of the multitude. Maybe, at some moments, a book that is admirable in so many aspects like *Empire*, fall for this temptation, when localizing the resistance of the multitude in names like Beijing, Los Angeles, Nablus, Paris, or Seoul. In fact, these names have to do with struggles that have made and still make noise, in a traditional sense, struggles that everyone recognizes as struggles, sometimes victories that everyone recognizes as victories, and we have every reason to gloat over them. A young philosopher asked himself some years ago if there were not however, even in the multitude, more obscure resistances, more hesitating, voiceless, many other types of resistance whose surroundings we still do not know. *A Thousand Plateaus*, for example, he recalls, would have contributed not so much to remember struggles that we already recognized as struggles, but in order for new struggles to appear, new political problems, a challenge that Negri tries to confront, in several passages of his most recent books.

This small itinerary can serve to discover community where community was not to be seen, and not necessarily to recognize community where everyone sees community. It's about detecting new emerging desires of community, new forms of associating and dissociating that are arising, in the most auspicious and desperate contexts.



EXHAUSTION, MADNESS, OUTSIDE



EXHAUSTION AND CREATION

Pathosophy is the name the German neurologist Viktor von Weizsäcker gave to his general clinical practice, which he also refers to as medical anthropology.¹ To cut this description short – it concerns a knowledge of suffering rather than a science of illness. *Pathos* points less to a painful passivity and more to “that which is experienced.” As with the ancient Greeks, a question such as “what happens to you” accents the active dimension of that which happens to us. This is about an experience which is carried out by someone inasmuch as it is followed by him or her. The pathic being, after all, is the being which is able to feel – be it pain or pleasure. To use philosophical terms: it is about a power of being affected, of changing states, of passing across. Since, what good is all this if it does not allow us to speak of illness as an event rather than a deficit, as an inauguration that changes our state? If illness is a form of life, both active and passive at the same time, it calls for an entire rethinking of the living being as pathic, regardless of any objectifying nosography. To live is to suffer, to experiment, with all the singular modulations this implies: wanting, having the power to, having to, etc. But there is a point in the life of an individual where that pathic dimension is accentuated and raised to an exclusive power²: it is the moment of crisis. Paradoxically, right where all possibilities open up, even if the present appears to be completely blocked to the sick person. It is crisis that reveals to us the forces which have been at play – and redistributes them, by answering the question: are things going in the direction of life or of death? Crisis is not the result of a series; rather it is a beginning that creates its own time and space, without obeying the coordinates of a world called objective or ontic. Hence the opposition between the pathic and the ontic, which was so important to von Weizsäcker, and which would force the knowledge of suffering to move, away from the medical gaze towards the domain of subjectivity, centering on the mutation of experience and the new possibilities this opens up.³ If crisis inhabits such a privileged place, it is because crisis is the means of “putting one’s life into form anew, in a different way, and globally,” departing from a rupture with the continuity or identity of the subject. Illness thus appears as a work of reconstruction, a new way of relating to life. The very definition

1 Viktor von Weizsäcker, *Pathosophie*, trans. Joris de Bisschop, Marc Ledoux and others, (Grenoble: Millon, 2011).

2 Jacques Schotte, “Une pensée du clinique: L’oeuvre de Viktor von Weizsäcker,” notes from the lectures given at the Faculté de psychologie et des sciences de l’éducation at the Université catholique de Louvain, directed by Ph. Lakeuche and reviews by the author; mimeographed.

3 Viktor von Weizsäcker, *Pathosophie*, trans. Joris de Bisschop, Marc Ledoux and others, (Grenoble: Millon, 2011).

of subjectivity that von Weizsäcker proposed fits this principle: subjectivity is conceived as a “relation to what is on the ground.” Illness is the moment when this ground erupts. Or to put it differently: at critical moments, when causal chains are interrupted and the continuity of world and self is broken, it is the ground that cracks and erupts – we reach the bottom, perishing.

It is impossible to automatically transpose all these considerations onto the domain of so-called mental illness, since this would mean ignoring the heterogeneity between the physiological and psychological domains – yet we can still trace the eruption of this ground right there. François Tosquelles, a Catalan psychiatrist who with much acuity noted the similarity between concentration camps and psychiatric hospitals of the Second World War era, wrote a book with a title that is hard to outdo in its suggestiveness concerning such subjective upheavals: *The Lived Experience of the End of the World in Madness*. The living-through of catastrophe appears like an existential commotion, with its procession of troubling images: earthquake, end of the world, death, and resurrection by way of a spiritual life, etc. But there is a task that always imposes itself, despite the destruction that is in progress: that of creativity. “In paraphrenia or in delirium of a paranoid structure, the sick person often manages to edify a new world, he or she becomes like the Prajapati of whom Jung speaks: the egg engendering itself, the egg of the world within which he himself hatches himself.”⁴... Thus with every sick person – beyond the process wherein the personality dissolves – there is an effort, a “vital need,” a drive to arrive at a “new form of life, of unitary wholeness.” The genius of Freud already opened such a path: “The paranoiac rejects the universe [...] through his work of delirium. What we take for a morbid production, the formation of delirium, is really an attempt at healing, a reconstruction.” Tosquelles nevertheless insists that lived experience of the end of the world is not exclusive to schizophrenia, and that this matrix of catastrophe/creation fulfills a broader function even if it shows most dramatically with the mad person. Like Goldstein, for whom the catastrophic reaction is not the end of a chain, but rather the condition for a new beginning: “That is why we should not conceive *Erlebnis* of the end of the world as an *image* that reflects *supposedly real phenomena* of a psyche that is about to destroy itself. On the contrary: this lived event is the pure and simple manifestation of the continuity and even surplus of human efforts.” Hence Tosquelles’ conclusion, which is uncommon for a psychiatrist: “Madness is

⁴ François Tosquelles, *Le vécu de la fin du monde dans la folie*, (Toulouse: Ed. De L’Areppi, 1986), p. 75.

a creation, not a passivity.”⁵ At the clinical level, the existential catastrophe which finds its most precise expression in the phantasm of the end of the world implies the task of saving one’s existence, affirming one’s originality, or simply being reborn, creating one’s life. Guattari offered an expanded account of madness, but also beyond madness, in another context: “It’s in passing through this chaotic “earthing,” this perilous oscillation, that something else becomes possible, that ontological bifurcations and the emergence of coefficients of processual creativity can occur.”⁶

Exhaustion

A term that acutely, albeit enigmatically, defines the hesitant and unnecessary passage from catastrophe to creation, as well as the substitutability of the “nothing is possible” and the “everything is possible” in this context, might be exhaustion. It may be necessary here to recall the difference Deleuze points out between tiredness and exhaustion. Tiredness is part of the dialectic of work and productivity: one rests in order to return to activity. Tiredness comes when we realize the possibles that inhabit us, choosing and obeying certain objectives more than others, realizing certain projects, following clear preferences. Exhaustion, on the other hand, is another matter entirely. Let us follow Deleuze’s lead. The exhausted is he who, having exhausted his purpose, is himself exhausted, such that this dissolution of the subject corresponds to the abolition of the world. Where tiredness perceives its activity as temporarily compromised and is prepared to resume it, exhaustion, on the other hand, is pure inactivity, pure testimonial. Its typical posture is not the man lying down but of the insomniac, sitting up, his head between his hands, the amnesiac witness (*Nacht und Träume*, the sublime film for television.)⁷ Using a Beckettian gestuality, the tongue is the first to disappear – (“Beckett could endure words less and less”⁸) – the last being language, for after all language is the realm of the possible. The tongue identifies goals, preferences, choices: this or that, this way or that way, now or later, exiting or entering. It is necessary to wear out, to exhaust this mechanical spring of sense. The exhausted may even combine or recombine the variables, mull them over to the point of exhaustion, and the disjointed

5 Ibid, 108.

6 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 82.

7 Samuel Beckett, *Nacht und Träume* (1982). Television play broadcast in Germany. See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWtIatoBK4M>>

8 Gilles Deleuze, *Lèpuisé*, Paris: Minuit (1992), p. 103

terms may subsist, but they no longer serve any purpose. Total permutability, even when it obeys an extreme rigor, is inseparable from the evacuation of interest – it is “for nothing” and it is the death of the Ego.

In Beckett, the attempt is made to exhaust words, to incite their dissolution into atoms, to deplete them entirely. Afterwards, it is time to remit them to the voices that enunciate them, to the waves or flows that distribute the “corpuscles of language.” Next come the Others that emit them, evoking possible worlds. After that comes the space that incarnates potentialities, as in *Quad*.⁹ Only after these spheres have been exhaustively explored, and therefore “accomplished” or “performed” (*accomplies*)¹⁰ – that is to say, emptied out at the limit of silence and the void, do we arrive at the point at which it is discovered that “nothing more, not even history, has been possible for a long time now,” that we are all part of a strange, dead language. The exhausted is that which has the power to “produce a void or create holes, to loosen the tourniquet of words, to mop up the transpiration of the voices, to extricate oneself from memory and reason.” Only then can there arise “the small, illogical image, amnesiac, nearly aphasic, now sustaining itself in the void, now trembling out in the open.”¹¹ And so, when nothing else remains, there arises the “pure image,” an intensity that drives words away and dissolves stories and recollections, storing a fantastic amount of potential energy that it unleashes when it dissipates.” Deleuze adds: “What counts in the image is not its impoverished content but rather the mad energy it captures, ready to explode, for which reason images never last long.” Images are confused with detonation, combustion, the dissipation of their condensed energy [...] The image [...] captures all that makes it possible to explode. The works of Beckett would therefore be viewed as “an exploration of pure intensities, in which it is necessary to create holes in language, given that words lack this “punctuation of dehiscence,” this “disconnection” that arises from a “wave from the depths that is proper to art.”¹²

Images

This is a theme that Deleuze had already dealt with in *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Literature, as it “splits” words, liberates Visions and Auditions that

9 Samuel Beckett, *Quad [Quadrat 1+2]* (1981). Television play broadcast in Germany. See: <http://www.ubu.com/film/beckett_quad.html>

10 Gilles Deleuze, *L'Épousé*, (Paris: Minuit, 1992), p. 103.

11 Gilles Deleuze, *L'Épousé*, (Paris: Minuit, 1992), p. 72.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

exist *outside* language but that can only emerge through language. The Sea, in Melville, The Desert, in Lawrence. In *The Exhausted*, Deleuze discovers in Beckett a Language I (the language of names), a Language II (the language of voices) and a Language III (the language of images). The latter has nothing to do with things, words, or voices, but with immanent limits, hiatuses, holes and tears through which the pure image conforms to “the indefinite as the celestial state.” An image, then, dislocated from words, voice, stories, memories, and space, breaks up “the combination of words and the flow of voices,” and forces words to become images, movements, songs, or poems.” Thus, the image defies the language that imprisons and suffocates us, a language full of calculation, memories, stories, significances, intentions, habits. Words in themselves, given their adherences, are incapable of this “disconnection,” unless it is they themselves who are forced aside and turned upside down, exhibiting their outsides, as in the bloody Beckettian struggle against the “old style” that, with the help of Beethoven, Schubert, Rembrandt or van Velde, brings to light the *visible in itself* or the *audible in itself*, which are tangential to the invisible and inaudible. In Deleuze, and in his aesthetics as a whole, there exists a challenge to achieve this “external determination of the undefined as pure intensity.” This does not entail, however, abandoning words, since it deals precisely with the effort to force them aside, in a dislocated transmutation.

In another context, in discussing the redundancy between “order words” and the images transmitted by the circuits of information, David Lapoujade reminds us that it is not a matter of opposing the slogans, whether by silence or screaming or music, but rather of “passing through the other face of the slogan, the exterior that is its nonlinguistic material, but which never ceases to work through the slogan and by extension, the entirety of language. [...] This other face constitutes the intensive aspect of language, the aspect through which language is ceaselessly operated on by continual variations, almost musical in nature, chromatic variations that do not tend to silence, music, or outcry, but which serve as a tensor.¹³ Hence the challenge of untying the relation of reciprocal correspondence between language and the visible, of separating seeing and speaking, as Blanchot would suggest. (“To see is not to speak”). It is not to place oneself outside language, for “language has no exterior,” and there is nothing outside of it, but to pass through the outside of language in an operation that consists in turning it upside down. Let us

13 David Lapoujade, “Deleuze: política e informação,” *Cadernos de Subjetividade*, op. cit., p. 165.

insist on this point: not “inverting” it – which would imply positing a closed system that could be made to collapse, but “turning it upside down” in all its parts. The political background for such a differentiation is found in what is called assemblage. Every assemblage tends to contain its own outside, and this “irreducible” outside is constantly reborn, as part of the system: “It has to do, above all, with noting that which, from within, bears witness to this outside; it has to do with establishing a diagnostic, a survey of the forces to which this outside bears witness.”¹⁴

Refusal and intensity

We can now amplify the spectrum of these notes. Exhaustion may be understood in the primary sense that Deleuze gave it: the exhaustion of the possible, in which the exhausted exhausts himself as a reservoir of possibles and has exhausted the possibles of language, as well as the potentialities of space and the very possibility of action. This exhausted figure appears passive, but we cannot fail to acknowledge the range of Beckett’s project, which resonates with characters dealt with in the literary studies of Deleuze, such as Bartleby, or Billy Budd, in Melville; Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot*¹⁵; the Hunger Artist in Kafka, and so on. In all these cases a certain stubbornness is manifest, together with an inexpressible refusal of the world and its dialectic: a vital, unavoidable affirmativity, an “obstinate Spinozism” whose political implications have yet to be explored, in a key much different than that proposed by Theodor Adorno, for example, in his lovely commentary on *Endgame*.¹⁶ In this text, Adorno undoes the false relationship of Beckett with existentialism, a common misunderstanding during the late 1950s. As Adorno says, in Beckett, the absurd does not preserve the individual, his identity, his freedom, his sense, such that “the situation loses its ontologico-existential components.” Thus, the dissociation of the unity of consciousness does not reveal “the human condition” in its purportedly universal essence, but reveals instead its historical contingency, which the post-war period reduced to the obstinate survival of the biological body. “The *dramatis personae* seem to be dreaming of their own death, in a ‘refuge’ in which ‘it is time for this to end.’ The end of the world is viewed as certain, as though it were self-evident. [...] In Beckett, the characters behave in a primitive

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 166.

¹⁵ Philippe Mengue makes use of this figure in *Faire l’idiot: la politique de Deleuze*, (Paris: Germina, 2013).

¹⁶ Theodor Adorno, “Intento de entender fin de partida”, *Notas sobre Literatura, Obra completa*, 11. (Akal, Básica de Bolsillo, 2003). Written in 1958.

fashion corresponding to their circumstances after the catastrophe, which has mutilated them in such a way that they can not respond in any other way: They are flies struggling after being hit by the fly swatter.”¹⁷ Adorno sees Beckett as a “realist,” whose universe, reduced to the “sordid and useless,” is a copy and photonegative of the managed world.

This is certainly quite different from the reading that Deleuze provides, taking into consideration the impersonal, insomniac, phantasmic dimension of Beckettian characters and texts, without any judgment of value. The “diluted self” is not a victim, but he passes through our time like an operator that disarticulates it schizophrenically. Note the numerous references to this operation of dissolution in *Anti-Oedipus*, through the use of disjunctive synthesis: “The schizophrenic is dead or alive, not at the same time, but one or the other in terms of a distance that he overflies, that he glides over. He is the son or the father, not one or the other, but one in the extremity of the other like the two extremities of a stick in a space that cannot be decomposed. This is the significance of the disjunctions in which Beckett inscribes his characters and the events that spring from them [...] They are “trans-living-dead,” “trans-father-son.” [...] The contradictions do not cancel one another out. On the contrary, like a sack of spores, it releases them along with various other singularities that it improperly contains. [...] Molloy and Moran do not refer to persons, but to singularities that arrive from every direction, agents of evanescent production. This is the free disjunction: the differential positions subsist and even acquire a freely determined value, but all are occupied by a subject without a face and “trans-positional.”¹⁸ Or, more radically, these singularities yearn to penetrate the “cosmic and spiritual agitation” like a singular atom. There is no lamenting the condition of a subject shattered in this way. There is rather a rare joy, as if through him a new adventure has opened. In *The Exhausted*, Deleuze refers to the “fantastic dissolution of the I.” The influence of Blanchot is explicit: “What Blanchot said about Musil applies perfectly to Beckett: the heightened degree of exactitude and the most extreme degree of dissolution; the indefinite exchange of mathematical formulae and the search for the formless or the unformulated. These are the meanings of exhaustion, and both together are necessary to the abolition of the real. Many authors are too polished. They content themselves with declaring the work complete and with it, the death of the

17 Theodor Adorno, *Teoria Estética*. (São Paulo: Livraria Martins Fontes, 1988), p. 44.

18 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane. (London and New York: Continuum, 2004). Written in 1972.

Ego. And yet we remain in the realm of the abstract so long as “how things are” is not shown, or how an “inventory” is made, including its errors, and how the Ego decomposes, including the stink and the agony of it.”¹⁹ Joyce is probably the object of this reticent evaluation, and the contrast between Joyce and Beckett may find their equivalent in the pair Carroll-Artaud, as it is presented in *Logic of Sense* (“We would not trade all of Carroll for a single page of Antonin Artaud”). In any event, in invoking the exhausted, we are no longer dealing with the contrast between surface and depth, or with the play of meaning and the lived body, on one hand, or with infra-significance, on the other, but rather with something that Blanchot observed with great acuity in the course of Beckett’s career: Narrative increasingly gives way to struggle, and figures give way to remains, such that “neutral” speech allows the impersonal, the incessant, the interminable, the nameless, the unnameable, to rise to the surface, an “empty speech that for better or worse recovers the porous and agonizing self” of one condemned to “exhaust the infinite.”²⁰ In the same Blanchotian vein, Deleuze reassumes the singular status of the night, following Beckett: The night does not consist in the interval between two days, a mere interruption separating two daytimes. For this reason, it imposes a state that is other than the waking state (of the day) or the sleeping state (which covers it). Only insomnia is up to this task: We see here what Blanchot seeks to reclaim, a dream of insomnia, “which is a matter of exhaustion,” Deleuze adds²¹. For it is in insomnia, in dissolution, in the shapeless, by means of the porous subject, where the surface of words open out upon their outside, shaking off their senses, that a “determination of the undefined” is attained.

Political chords

It is useful to refer here to the interpretation of François Zourabichvili, who brought to light the political dimension of this text. “The Exhausted,” he recalls, was written not long after the fall of the Berlin Wall.²² In a certain sense, an entire mode of thinking the possible in the political domain fell with the Wall. The *a priori* possibilities – the utopias, the ideologies, the projects for another world – were swept away. It is well known how the left deplored this development, how the right rejoiced in it, and to what extent

19 Gilles Deleuze, *Lépusé*, (Paris: Ed. Minuit, 1992), p. 62.

20 Maurice Blanchot, *Le livre à venir*, op. cit., p. 313.

21 Gilles Deleuze, *Lépusé*. (Paris: Ed. Minuit, 1992.)

22 François Zourabichvili, “Deleuze e o possível (sobre o involuntarismo na política)”, in É. Alliez (org.), *Gilles Deleuze: uma vida filosófica*. (São Paulo: Ed. 34, 2000.)

a certain post-modernist strain subsequently surfed a skepticism that it wore as a badge of virtue. In Deleuze, however, there is not a drop of pity or lamentation in the description of the character of the Exhausted. It is as if the exhaustion of the possible (previously determined) were a precondition for reaching some other mode of the possible (the not yet determined) – in other words, not the eventual realization of a preordained possible but the necessary creation of a possible against a background of impossibility. The possible is no longer confined to the realm of the imagination, or the dream, or some ideality, but becomes coextensive with reality by virtue of its own productivity. The possible expands in the direction of a field – the field of the possibles. How is a field of possibles opened? Are moments of insurrection and revolution not precisely those that allow us to glimpse the distant gleam of a field of possibles? In this way, the relationship between what happens and what is possible is inverted. It is no longer the possible that gives way to the actual, but the actual which creates a possible – much as the crisis was not the result of a process but the event based on which the process was unleashed. “The event creates a new existence, produces a new subjectivity (new relationships with the body, time, sexuality, environment, culture, work...).”²³ Such moments, whether individual or collective (such as May 1968) correspond to a subjective and collective mutation, in the sense that what was once routine now becomes intolerable, just as the unimaginable becomes thinkable, desirable, visible. This is when the figure of the Seer, on which Deleuze focuses especially in his work on cinema, arises – a concept that Zourabichvili praises. The Seer perceives in a given situation something that surpasses it, that overflows it, and that has nothing to do with fantasy. The Seer takes reality as its object in a dimension that extrapolates its empirical surroundings, in order to capture its virtualities, which are entirely real but not as yet unfolded. What the Seer sees, as in the case of Beckett and his insomniac, is the pure image, in its brilliance and its extinction, its rise and its fall, in its consummation. The Seer perceives intensity, potential, virtuality. It is not the future it sees, nor the dream, nor the idea, nor the perfect project, but rather forces that are on their way to redesigning the real.

Deleuze’s text is traversed by this alternative: to realize a possible previously given or to effect a possible that remains undefined, that is, to actualize what is virtual, to affirm a new sensibility. He who realizes a possible may just as well not realize it, in which case it remains in a state of mere

23 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Mai 68 n’a pas eu lieu,” in *Deux régimes de fous*, org. David Lapoujade. (Paris: Minuit, 1968).



possibility. In Deleuze, however, there is the postulation of a necessity. What bores or paralyzes us, Zourabichvili recalls, is precisely the fact that today anything is possible, in the sense that the alternatives are given, presented to us as though they were a multiple choice question, but also in the sense in that everything appears consigned to the state of possibility. From this point of view, “everything is possible” is equivalent to “nothing is possible.” The author insists: whenever we orbit a mere possibility, we are in the realm of a pseudo-experience that distracts us from effectivity and necessity.²⁴ For this reason, an attempt is made to drag the possible into the realm of actualization wherever it emerges.²⁵ The conclusion is clear: We create by exhausting the possible. It is necessary to learn to “breathe without oxygen” in order to profit from an “an energy more elementary and an air more rarefied (Sky-Necessity)”²⁶ – this is Deleuze’s perversion.

Untying the connections

We can now return to the question from a broader point of view. Exhaustion is not mere tiredness, nor a renunciation of the body and mind but rather, more radically, it is the fruit of a disbelief, an operation of disconnection. It consists of unleashing, relative to the alternatives that surround us, the possibilities that are presented to us, and the clichés that mediate and dampen our relation with the world and make it tolerable, though unreal, and for this reason intolerable and unworthy of belief.

Exhaustion undoes that which “binds” us to the world, that “imprisons” us in it and others, that “captures” us with its words and images, that “comforts” us with an allusion of entirety (of I, of We, of meaning, of freedom, of the future) in which we have long ceased to believe, even as we have remained attached to them. There is, no doubt, in this act of separation, a certain cruelty, which is in no way absent from the works of Beckett, but this cruelty carries within itself a certain pity of another kind.²⁷ Only through such a negation of adherence, such an unfastening, such an emptying, together with the impossibility that is established in this way, which Deleuze calls “rarefaction” (much as he called for “vacuoles” of silence in order to

24 There is, for this reason, an abyssal distance from Agamben’s thinking on the subject, with its reflections on “the power of the no” – with political implications yet to be defined.

25 François Zourabichvili, op. cit., p. 354.

26 Gilles Deleuze, *Lógica do Sentido*, trad. Luiz Salinas Fortes. (São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1974), p. 329.

27 It is similar to the warrior-god Indra: “Witness to another justice, capable at times of an incomprehensible cruelty but at others an unknown mercy (inasmuch as it cuts the ties...).” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “1227: Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine.” *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), pp. 351-423.



be able, at least, to have something to say) does the necessity of something else arise, something which with excessive pomp, we call “the creation of the possible.” We should not merely abandon this formula to the publicity experts, however; we should also avoid overloading it with an excessively imperative or capricious incumbency, replete with “will.” Perhaps we should preserve, as Beckett does, the trembling dimension which, amid the most calculated precision, in his visual poetry, point to that “indefinite state” to which beings are elevated and whose correlative, even in the most concrete contexts, is the vagueness of becomings, at the point at which they achieve their deterritorialization effect. If Zourabichvili is correct in detecting “political chords” in *The Exhausted*, this is because Deleuze himself never ceased to extract such chords from the authors he analyzed, from Melville to Kafka, from Lawrence to Ghérasim Luca. In the clinic, in art or in politics, there is a circuit that runs from the extenuation of the possible to the impossible, and from there to the creation of the possible, without linearity, circularity or determinism. It consists of a complex and reversible game between “nothing is possible” and “everything is possible.”



WANDER LINES

Fernand Deligny extracted from his decades-long living with autists an extremely sharp reflection on an anonymous mode of existence, a-subjective, unsubjected and refractory to all symbolic domestication. He searched for a language without a subject, or an existence without language altogether, reliant on the body, on gesture. He took it upon himself, extremely so, a meditation on what is a world before language or subject; not in a chronological sense, but in the sense of an existence ruled by something other than that which language supposes, carries and implies: the will and the objective, the relenting and the meaning. The man-we-are would descend more so from spiders instead of monkeys. The primeval gestuality that consists of weaving a network, or casting it on a hand that does not belong to whom it seems to; it is of a gratuity that does not inscribe itself in the dialectics of communication or finality. From such comes what Deligny calls *to act*, in counterposition to *to do*. To do is a fruit of the will driven by a finality, such as to make work, to make sense, to communicate, while to act, in the very particular sense that he attributes it, is the uninterested gesture, the non-representational movement, that consists eventually in weaving, tracing, painting, even writing, in a world where the balance of the rock and the noise of the water are no less relevant than the murmurs of men. In this world, language “still isn’t,” that which allows us to speak for others, to think in their stead, to allow them to be or to disappear, to decide their fate. So comes the necessity to speak against words, “the disgust for that which makes us think and talk,” as Ponge says. To suspend the privilege of the pondered project, to put oneself in the position of not wanting, in order to give place to the interval, to the irruption. As Deligny says: to extravagate, “desubjectivation.” Nothing further away than an omitted passivity, since it is necessary to “clear the terrain” all the time, to rid it of all that cuts the world into subject/object, living/inanimate, human/animal, conscious/unconscious. Only then will it be possible to set down the lines of wanderlust, to establish places. The spider, for one, cares not only about the incessant weaving, without purpose (Deligny doubts that the purpose of the web is to trap the fly), but the arachnean web itself, that is, the network. Instead of the being of reason, the being of the network (*non pas être de raison, être de réseau*). From the scandalous phrase: “To respect the autistic being is not to respect the being he would be

while another; it is to make what is necessary to weave the web”¹. Therefore, there is nothing worse than to isolate it from the network, to focus it as a person, who would be lacking the language.

The network, on the other hand, is more than a social accident, it is a vital necessity, an escapade, an interval, desertion, dissidence, guerrilla, common. As Deligny says; every man in any place or time is a being of the network, not meaning an universality of the collective, or even of the community, in the sense of a closed circuit. The common ground that Deligny created with the autists, a network, a dissidence, a shelter, but also an outside, an exteriority, far from any self-referred communitarianism. Any network is faced outwards, to its exterior. Neither socialization, nor inclusion or cure, but distance from that which suffocates, placing and evasion. Every time “the space becomes concentrating, the formation of a network creates a kind of exterior that allows the human being to survive.”² However, in order to allow this human being to live, one must become unattached to the Unitarian image that impregnates it, centered on the subject. Here is a reverse anthropology, that which might be capable of reading our saturation of sense and of intentions, of subjectivity and of words, of humanistic arrogance, from a dimension that would be called innate or human by Deligny (which he extracts from the autists), inhuman by Guattari (which he extracts from the schizos), and *a life* by Deleuze...

We should not be remiss of the scandal that constitutes the theorization of Deligny, above all in the 60’s, with a strong presence from psychoanalysis, from structuralism, in a decade in which the statute of language held absolute prevalence. Refusing to speak of unconscious to speak of a-conscious, designating provocatively a so-called innate dimension, “specific” – in the sense in which it would be part of the patrimony of the human species, which can be found, therefore, in the autist, more so than in the men-we-are, already domesticated by language, signs, sense, finality, revenue, productivity – it is truly admirable.

Attempt

What matters in the end, to Deligny, and to the autist that accompanies him and is accompanied by him, this being that panics when something moves from its place, are the reference, animate or inanimate, a

1 Fernand Deligny, *L’Arachnéen et autres textes*, (Paris, L’Arachnéen, 2008), p. 95, to be released by n-1 publications. The translations proposed in this book are provisional. The definitive version will be released soon as *The Arachnean and Other Texts* by Fernand Deligny, translated by Drew S. Burk, Univocal, 2013.

2 Idem, p. 14.

certain rock, a certain twine, a certain fount... therefore, it is from these points from which one can weave a web, a spider's web, or the markers that awaken an extreme attachment, where the object and its space are one and the same, and from which one can extend threads, invisible to us, but which we should be able to imagine, or suppose, in any case to respect, because it is with these invisible threads that a web is made, a network where life is possible, and whose destruction can unleash a disaster, even if and above all when someone crosses the threads with his professional shoes. What do they connect, these threads? Let us say, markers, but as perceived by them, the autists, and from a subtle work, to our knowledge, the capacity to "detect the references (repères)," an operation that is performed among the wandering, among the *paths of wander lines* or the *customary paths*. To detect these points or these references is like a vital procedure of the species. Therefore, to err, to detect, to weave the threads between themselves. These threads laying between the references are to the autists, as Deligny says, as their soul, which they do not wish to lose, just as we don't want to lose consciousness, even when we ourselves are lost. To act, then, in this strict sense that Deligny sets it, is also to avoid the rupture of these threads, or to make sure they are properly tensioned. From such comes the work of weaving, with them, what Deligny calls an attempt – it is not a project, not an institution, not a program, not a doctrine, not an utopia – but an attempt, says he, fragile and persistent as a mushroom in the vegetable kingdom. An attempt to escape from ideologies, moral imperatives, norms. An attempt may only survive if not fixated on an objective, even when it is inevitably called to perform it. Since there are the threads, the network, this way of protecting them, and at the same time, countless evasion tactics, to evade all that is requested, all that includes, what forces, what ties down, to evade all that which implies in an intersubjective interaction, what he calls a *semblabiliser*, "to similarize," this incessant identification through which we are constituted, this "apery," even more so when it is "amorous" in excess, that is, imprisoning as only love can be. Therefore, no "reciprocation," but something else entirely, as he says, "the customarize, customary," the allowing. To customarize implies in the most down-to-earth; to bake bread, chop wood, do the dishes, eat, get dressed, that which existence demands, and that, however, is something distinct from the mere habit, since it is through this collective repetition in which each instant can be the occasion for a deviation, an irruption, an initiative. It is not, as such, about a mechanical repetition, although there is a component of repetition in the customarization, but about allowing, to use

a more philosophical lexicon, which from repetition a minimal difference is extracted, that minimal deviation where an event occurs, the inadvertency.

Still a word on attempt, before amplifying this panorama's spectrum, still forcefully vague. What is this attempt? It is not unlike a raft. Pieces of wood connected among themselves, with the spaces between them so that when the waves crash upon them, they will remain afloat. It is only so, with this rudimentary structure, that those aboard the raft may float and maintain themselves. As such, "when the questions are brought down, we do not tighten the rows, we do not bring the logs together – to constitute a fixed platform. On the contrary; we keep nothing except that which from the project connects us." Such is the primordial importance of the bonds and the way they are connected, and of the equidistance of the logs. "It is necessary that the bonds be sufficiently loose, but they must not undo themselves."³ I would say, while abusing the formula, that it is necessary that the bond be sufficiently loose so that it may not undo itself. The raft, as Deligny carries on, is not a barricade. However: "With what's left of the barricades, one could build rafts..."

Self seeing, this seeing

The autistic is defined by the vacancy of language, and to the eyes of some this is what they are missing, for reasons that the diverse types of psychoanalysis or psychiatry explain in their own way – none of this interests Deligny, surprisingly. To him, the whole issue is like preventing language from killing – simply by saying "this boy," an identity is produced, which is not to speak of our nosographic framework... And the question that follows is: how to allow the individual to exist without imposing the Him, the Subject, the Self, to see one Self, this whole series that we imputed on him, even if under the privative mode? Deligny, however, is convinced that he does not see himself, as the Him is not present... From where this passage, that in French has been formulated as such: non pas *Se voir*, mais *ce voir*. Not *Self seeing*, but *this seeing*, a neutral or undefined sight, that does not precisely imply a subjective center. It is the individual in rupture of the subject. We are always driven to signalize, to emit signs, and with that we build an Inside of communication, of signals or of language, and we include the autists in this Inside space of ours, from which they forcibly feel excluded. Deligny, on the other hand, maintains that they are not Inside this circuit, and it is not up to us to include them. They are exposed, exposed to the Outside, detecting at times that which escapes from Us, that which we do not *see* since we *speak*,

3 F. Deligny, *Oeuvres*, ed. Sandra Alvarez Toledo, Paris, L'Arachnéen, 2007, p. 1128.

and that they *see* since they do not *speak*. Therefore, against the signs, are the references. Against the sophisticated device that is language, the “spotting apparatus,” as complex and subtle as the other, but with its own logic, that consists in detecting marks or references as a “primordial infinitive.” Some will say that there is a whole prejudice by Deligny on language, as carrier of meaning, finality, project, means (Beckett held great poetic conscience on this matter), allowing language to be conceived from this silence, as an eventual *to come*, and inhabit another regime, devoid of finality. Just as how art is for nothing and politics makes plans, it would be the art of putting oneself in the level of “for nothing,” of the undermost event (to us) that contrasts with what one would expect of a totalitarian anxiety. What is always at stake for Deligny is not the Whole, but the rest. The Power wants the Whole, exasperates itself, accounts the whole of being and of having of yes and no, all while Deligny thinks through avoidance, from where the a-conscious gushes out and these distinctions have no importance.

Spinoza

By attributing a greater relevance to acting, as opposed to doing, Deligny prolongs the Spinozan gesture of the valorization of nature, to the detriment of the spirit and its faculties, such as conscience, will, finality, intentionality. “Nothing is as hard as letting nature guide,” wrote Deligny. When conscience is left to a secondary position, that which she kept hidden comes to light; the active innate, nature in the infinitive, the naturating nature, whose way of being is being on multiple connections with exteriority, including in the innate activity of making webs...

The eclipse of conscience allows to come to light that which conscience itself would overshadow. “The conscience of being of the being that is conscious of being eclipses that which is at stake in being, just as the conscience of being and of being alive eclipse that which may be at stake in living – in the infinitive.” The same logic could be applied to wanting, which equally eclipses that constellation that brings about the acting. In a certain sense, these observations can be traced back to the famed phrase: “No one has, in fact, up to the present, determined what the body can do, that is, experience has not yet taught anyone what the body, considered only as corporeal by the laws of Nature, can do and what the body can’t do, unless it is determined by the soul. For no one has yet come to know the structure of the body so accurately that he could explain all its functions – not to mention the things that are frequently observed in animals which far surpass human

sagacity, nor the many things that sleepwalkers do in their sleep which they would not dare do while awake. This shows well enough that the body itself, by the laws of its own nature alone, can many things that cause astonishment to its own soul.” To the sleepwalker, then, is attributed an effective potency, even though he has no conscience of his actions. It seems even that the supplement of soul or of consciousness at times represents an overload and a weight that could inhibit action.

Furthermore, Spinoza adds: “But, some might say, it is impossible to remove solely from the laws of Nature, considered only as corporeal, the causes of buildings, of paintings and other things of this kind that are realized only through human art, and that the human body, were it not determined and conducted by the soul, would not be in a state [apt] to construct a temple? I have already shown that it is not known what the body can do, nor what can be deduced by the consideration of its nature alone, and that, many times over, experience forces us to recognize it, as only Nature’s laws can make what has never been deemed possible, without the direction of the soul; it is the actions of sleepwalkers, during their sleep, that they themselves, in a watchful state, are frightened of.”⁴ According to Séverac, such is the Spinozism of Deligny – more fundamental than the conscious and talking spirit, there would be a physical automatism, a corporeal activity that has no need for thought, for projects, or finalities, to produce its effects. And so he says: “[...] at the very edge, it would seem Nature holds, among its mysteries, a profound unit and works under the mechanical mode, be it about a spider’s web or from the wandering lines of ‘autistic’ children”. It is characteristic of nature to naturate, in an infinitive that Deligny would wholly embrace. He defines himself as a writer in the infinitive, an infinitive that says the radical primacy, anthropological and ontological, of acting, of an acting in the infinitive, without finality, without a target. It is this machine of acting that discovers this side of the spirit, taken as conscience and will: a mechanical mode of being, an automatism instead of the spirit, as concludes Séverac.

This is where he proposes a second meaning to this “acting instead of the spirit.” To the best of our knowledge, it is not about the mere disappearance of the spirit, but the fact that *this act* without finality, without intention, without conscience, would be the *true resting place of the spirit*. It is not right to postulate a body without spirit, but to state that even sleepwalking, cut off from the intervention of will or consciousness, it is *in its acting* that its spirit rests. That would be the meaning of the “spiritual automaton.” In

4 P. Séverac, “Fernand Deligny: l’agir au lieu de l’esprit”, *Intellectica*, n. 57, 2012/1.

the case of Deligny's autists, it is in the lines of wandering that their psychic device is located, so to speak, or their spirit, although a non-significant spirit, but instead a "mechanical" one. The lines of wandering are the locations of the spirit taken as a psychic detecting device. This would be the machine of acting and tracing, of detecting, the "immutable" nature, the living nature, the innate of its spiritual and mechanical acting, adds Séverac.

Paths

What are, then, the lines of wandering? They are the lines drawn over leaves of transparent paper by the team of adults that accompanies the autistic children, based on the paths over the course of a day, a journey. Overall, under the transparent leaf there is another one, like a physical map of the way completed. As such, it is about tracing paths, of the autist children, of adults, in different colors or modes: the autists' path often in Indian ink, with all its subtle turns, twists, escapades, recurrences. In coal, finger, or in other colors, the path according to the customary, made by the adults that accompany them, and from which the children dodge frequently. Deleuze and Guattari would say: a hard line for the customary path, a flexible line for the erratic path, and an escape line for the deviations, the escapades – all of that, *roughly*. But in the end, why trace such lines, why make such maps? The map substitutes the speech... It is a way of avoiding the excess of comprehension that would make unbearable the autist's existence, and also relieve the adult of this challenge, above all to that one man, for example, that comes from a truck factory and "doesn't know" what is autism – he is not a "specialist," and it is what saves himself and the autist. Instead of wanting to comprehend, and eventually attach meaning to, and to interpret, he must trace and chart to follow the course of things, just as one would follow a river, and not fixate on the so-called intentions, always projected. To follow the gestures, goats, adults, autists, in movement, but passing along the references, allows that which Deligny would call initiatives... Not to interpellate, but to allow. It has since been necessary to create a space for this, for the *rest*, that is, that which is refractory to comprehension, to this domain that a sign does not cover. When people came to visit him, Deligny would say: "Come see events from my window." But he would add: "If everyone sees things from their own window, it may be that the autist has no window. But he traces. It's about following that tracing."⁵

⁵ Fernand Deligny, *L'Arachnéen et autres textes*, op. cit., p 131.



Ten years had passed since the beginning of this experiment in which 60 children participated as they came for one, two months, sometimes more, brought by the families, mostly during their institutions' vacation time, sometimes sent by Maud Mannoni, or Françoise Dolto, not counting the ones that lived there. Deligny regales on what mattered there, and spoke of this practice of tracing, over transparent leaves, the paths of some, the lines of wandering, and of looking upon them, and to compliment the fact that they had accumulated such, one could hardly tell to whom they belonged, which meant it no longer mattered, and in these jumbled forgotten piles, it was possible to see the superposition of the "remains" and the refractory's reiteration to all that is comprehended. Instead of the comprehensive embrace, or the monitor's entrepreneurship, the mothering, or of any traces of familiarity that may infantilize, but instead, respect, but of what? Of the *chevêtres*, the binding joists, the points where the lines meet in space and time, and that at times share a common place in several maps...

The autistic that Deligny adopts in 1967 and with whom he lives for years, re-named Janmari, would bow before water, almost in a reverence, and spend a great deal of time listening and contemplating, his body in complete vibration, in utmost joy. The water, as Deligny puts it, is not an object to him, as he himself isn't a subject. The water, without any utility, any use, any finality, has nothing to do with the thirst of an animal, as the attraction to water comes before the thirst, and it is inexhaustible. Such is a bond that should not be brought back to the discursive.⁶

To perorate, to detect

As on one side we have *to perorate*, which is common to us all, and on the other, *to detect*, this vision which is essential in children which are deprived of peroration. They do not look, they watch. They watch without looking, they see.⁷ *Ce voir*, and not *Se voir*, in such a way that between our viewpoint

6 Fernand Deligny, *Oeuvres*, Ibid, p. 804.

7 In a recent book, Erin Manning takes poems and texts typed by autists in order to get closer to their universe, perception, sensibility, articulations, thoughts. From this, she extracts the most fascinating scenery from that which, while looking like a diminished affectability, was in fact an amplified sensibility, where there are no human privileges, but a relevance of all the elements and its connections, without discriminations: "Everything is alive." Where the keen attention to colors, sounds, textures, and its relations, without a hierarchy between the organic and the inorganic, resulting in what the author calls an "ecology of the practices," very distant from the "empty fortress" or the "shutdown" that was usually imputed upon them. By extracting conclusions from such, including ethical ones (autism is a modality of becoming, not a state), she goes in the direction that we have indicated below, on the relation of all of this with *a* life, in Deleuze. By approaching Deligny's insistency with language, before following with admiration some of his contributions and his lines of wandering, she asks herself, however, based on the analysis of the "autietype," if here wouldn't be another way to conceive language. In *Always More Than One*, (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2013).



and the autist's point of seeing, there is a fissure. And in the area where there is mutual living, a clearing in an ample terrain, uneven and full of rocks and stones, much like in the Cévennes, this fissure exists without inhibiting a common ground. On the maps there is also the split between the *Self seeing* and *this seeing*, especially through the lines that are drawn differently, and it is not about filling it with what Deligny calls an ethnic memory, linguistic, conscious or unconscious, replacing a specific memory, an a-conscious memory.⁸ The image of the *bonhomme*, the little man, should not be superposed onto the path – the danger being that the path might be “humanized.” In fact, in the beginning, one would not transcribe in the maps what one would “do,” although with time small signs, or words, such as “tidy up, load, peel, wash” have been added, and with the multiplication of these words, an overload of chores had been created, as opposed to what had been since the beginning, the acting instead of doing, the acting that *opens up for initiative*, for the *inadvertent gestures* that have no finality. Much like in the movie, *Le moindre geste*, with Yves, an autist that when brought to Deligny, could barely even walk down a flight of stairs, so restrict in his movement and gestures, thrust into the open spaces of the Cévennes in the movie, and where, with the movie, to everyone's surprise, finds the right circumstances to widen his gestures, which multiply, vary, amplifying his possibilities. This would have been the intention of Josée Manenti, Deligny's cameraman: not to make a movie, but to favor the amplification of Yves's movements in an open space.

World without another

In an autobiographic text titled *Le croire et le Craindre*, Deligny quotes an extract from Guattari's *Molecular Revolution*: “The exit away from destructive narcissism, for a subject, does not go through his real repression or his ghostly castration: it appeals, on the contrary, to a supplement of power and a neutralization of the powers that alienate him. It is, therefore, essentially a power takeover over the real which is in question, and never pure manifestations of the imaginary or the symbolic. Fernand Deligny, does not repress or interprets: he contributes so that the impaired children with whom he lives could *experiment* other objects, other relationships, and build another world.”⁹ Deligny's comments on the matter are enjoyable: here is the text of a declared “partisan.” Yes, Guattari is a militant that sees in Deligny a Fidel

8 *Cartes et lignes d'erre/Maps and wander lines*, Traces du réseau by Fernand Deligny, 1969-1979, Paris, L'Arachnéen, 2013, extremely attentive edition entrusted to Sandra Alvarez de Toledo, containing over 200 of these maps.

9 Félix Guattari, *La révolution moléculaire*, (Paris, Ed. Recherches, 1977), p. 287-288.

Castro and in Janmari, his favorite autist, a Che Guevara: “And I see ourselves in the Élysée [Palace], Janmari (he who gets enthralled by the rushing of water) would go around, with all the faucets of cold and hot water, an eminent adherent of the liberty of this primordial element, and all that it would take is that the piping of the bathtubs and sinks be slightly clogged, Niagaras everywhere. Such would be, certainly, the immediate project of his first rush (Guattari’s). And I would say: ‘what to do?’/ Where do you see that *doing* (the revolution) and *acting* (an initiative) are not of the same world? / When Guattari speaks of ‘building another world,’ I say that this ‘*other world*’ exists that it is, properly speaking, that of the a-conscious, where the (human) nature re-appears, that which Guattari would not want to hear. This word from which he defends himself as if it were a devil.”¹⁰

It is pleasurable, this discord of tonalities between Deligny digging his Kafkaesque burrow, much like the subtraction of a world, in order to bring to light a hidden world, and the militant tone of Guattari in this text, advocating another world. But Deligny insists that it is not enough to “neutralize the powers,” it is necessary to “dodge the trap of the ‘subject.’” This is where the discord between Deligny and Guattari is; it is not enough to defend oneself against power in the name of the subject if subject and power are coextensive, perhaps like Foucault would say that it is not proper to fight against the State when leaning on the idea of an individual if the individual himself is part of the machine created by the State. Of course, Deligny doesn’t do justice to the complexity of the term “subject” in Guattari, but let us leave this aspect behind, for now. The fact is that it is rare for Deligny to quote Guattari or Deleuze. When that happens, it is always with a certain reservation.

Such is the case of the essay on *Friday or the Other Island*, the appendix of *Logic of Sense*. As it is well-known, Deleuze insists on the difference between the romance of Michel Tournier with this title and the original of Daniel Defoe about Robinson Crusoe. In Tournier’s book, it is not, for Robinson, about humanizing the island according to the parameters of civilization, work, production, asexual economical reproduction, morals, religion, but the opposite, it is about dehumanizing the island through the meeting of the libido and the free elements, “the discovery of a cosmic energy or of a great elementary Health,” that may only emerge on the island in such a way that it becomes aerial and solar.¹¹ It is a perversion, to the point where it introduces desire in another system, and with it makes it elapse. But the axis

¹⁰ Fernand Deligny, *Oeuvres*, p. 1176.

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Lógica do Sentido*, trans. Luiz Salinas Fortes, (São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1974), p. 313.

of the reading of Deleuze resides in what he designates the “Other-Structure.” The Other-Structure is not simply the other; it is a perceptive structure that guarantees a benevolence of the world, of things and its possibilities, amicable transitions and smooth proximity, and as such it makes things incline towards others, it makes the unknown known, it guides my desire to an object. In the interior of this structure, each other is a possible world, in the sense that goes back to a world that it both expresses and envelops, and that it falls upon me to, eventually, decipher, unfold (Albertine, in Proust, is a world that must be deciphered, a Chinese carries a world that is not necessarily China itself, etc.). Meanwhile, in a deserted island one would notice the disappearance of this Other-Structure, and even when Friday arrives or a ship shows up, they would already no longer carry their normal function that the Other-Structure had set for them, since something had flown through the air. In this world without Other, without the Other-Structure, it is another combat that emerges, “the brutal opposition between the sun and the earth, of an unsustainable light and a dark abyss,” and we are left with a world that is “raw and black, without potential or virtualities,” the pure elements jump in an implacable manner and slaps us all. The intersubjective dialectic that Sartre still preserved (to look, to be looked upon, to be the subject and the object) disappears, and the possibilities are no longer established by others, as curiously and paradoxically “the others are who would imprison the elements at the boundaries of bodies and, farther still, at the limits of the earth.” As such, it is the earth, it is the elements, it is the libido liberated from the pressure that the Other-Structure would impose, that takes itself to floating. It is a re-discovering of the surface. On the reading that Deleuze does on Tournier’s romance there is the question: what happens when the Other-Structure simply goes out the window, and the elements are rid of this coercion, how do they bristle up? It is a kind of experiment, Romanesque, theoretic, philosophical, with all the effects this might have on different circuits. When Deligny asks himself, following these texts of Deleuze that he quotes: “Who is this that lives without other? Why it is none other than Janmari!”¹² The autistic is that who is liberated from the Other-Structure. The disagreement with Deleuze is punctual, it resides in the role of sexuality. If to Deleuze it is sexuality that surfaces, Deligny considers that it preserves a rest of finality that is unavoidable. He needs something else, he can’t stand all these fans that are so fashionable at the time, the language, the sexuality, the libido; these are to him like ideologies, or ideological idols, as he puts it in

12 Ibid, p. 1198.

a letter to Isaac Joseph, a sociologist that has collaborated for years in his enterprise. On the complaint by René Schérer that Deligny advocates a kind of libidinous asepsis with the children, and that asks: “where is the affection?” “where is the body?” with this inflexion, as if there was there a sublimation, a prudery of the adult trampling his desires, as if sexuality had gone back to being an evil, Isaac Joseph replies that they are not a prude community, but it is necessary to deconstruct the supposed sexual significance in its entirety, and if there is no touch, it is because another body is there present, a common body, not dual, not maternal, not conjugal.

The Us and the Sole

It is the issue of the Us that Deligny brings up. As such, what then is important is not Other, or the other, but Us. And for what exists Us? For nothing. “And it is then that I see ‘the fantastic principle capable of derailing the world from the rigorous economic order accentuated by origin,’ in this ‘for nothing’ that does not subtract from the intensity of emotion; all that is left is to need that this ‘for nothing’ does not evoke in any way any sexuality.”¹³ The Us is of the order of the a-conscious that leads to nothing. When Deligny notices that to Deleuze my desire always passes through this other (“I do not wish for anything that is not seen, thought of, possessed by a possible other. Such is the foundation of my desire.”), or through this Other-Structure, he adds that it is quite possible that such is, when dealing with myself, but that one which is devoid of “I,” of the other is also deprived of all desire. Could it be that this means that he is dead? Why, he, He, was never born. This does not stop him from vibrating with the fact that he never was. From where, then, comes to Janmari the acting, if not from desire? The desire to defend himself from the avatars that threaten his customary. To Deligny, to fear is a kind of primordial, that is beyond joy or pleasure, or even enthusiasm, but that can be conjugated as exultant – a whole new “geography of affects.” To fear implies avoidance – ex: the gesture of several autistic children, as if protecting themselves with both hands from a slap, one which they probably never suffered, just as the Gauls feared that the sky would fall upon their heads, a sky that, as far as we know, has never fallen before, as Deligny jokingly adds. Conjugation between fear and experience, without bringing forth the self, or the pleasure that comes with the Master. Not being a subject escapes from the subjectification

¹³ Ibid, p. 1119.

towards the end, towards the target, towards finality.¹⁴ It is a whole theme in Deligny, this supposed complicity between the unity of the subject and the unity of power, the unique soul and the tyrant. The Eskimo, dispersed in small autonomous groups bereft, and not without a reason, of a supreme chief, have managed their little souls perfectly well. If the problem is the Sole, how may we deprive ourselves of it? We can prevent the abuses of this function, in which Janmari, the autistic, can help us, under the condition of not mistaking, as Jesus did in the supreme moment, the one and the common. “Should I write a comm’one, I shall have no resource left but to ruminate a counter’one.” (in French: comm’un, contr’un) It is a struggle against the monarch, Deligny says, but the monarch that will continue to reign although each and every one will continue to intend to become a monarch themselves.¹⁵ Although it may be “difficult to avoid that dismembering some the tyrant will not reinforce himself, multiplying itself to infinity.” One can notice to what point Deligny shares, without enunciating or even knowing it, a larger preoccupation of the thinking of a whole generation that has persistently fought the unity of the subject and of power, widening the relation between them to other adventures that characterized a good part of the thought of the last few decades, much like how some chapters of this book itself tend to show.

At any rate, the Comm’one, be it the Counter’one, has nothing of fusional about it, nothing of communitarian, although it has something to do with a communism that Deligny never forsook, and if he provocatively belonged to the communist party until the end of his days, in his practice he always avoided the threat of a totality. In a lucid comment, Isaac Joseph wrote to him a long letter of sorts, where he recognizes Deligny’s refusal of the totalitarian existential choices, like the therapeutic communities where the subject is implied in its entirety. It is about inventing a new movement, to sway between initiative and disturbance, in these “disciplines of attempt,” to exist outside the devices, the avoidance as a major principle, and the association of this perspective with the following text by Deleuze does not escape Isaac Joseph: “Far from presupposing a subject, desire cannot be attained except at the point where someone is deprived of the power of saying ‘I.’ Far from directing itself towards an object, desire can only be reached at the point where someone no longer searches or grasps an object any more than he grasps himself as subject. The objection is then made that such a desire

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 1203.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 1209.

is totally indeterminate, and that it is even more imbued with lack. But who has you believe that by losing the co-ordinates of object and subject you lack something? Who is pushing you into believing that indefinite articles and pronouns (a, one), third persons (he, she) and verbs in the infinitive are in the least indeterminate?”¹⁶ Where is it seen that the conception of sexuality or of desire such as it is in Deleuze does not necessarily fit the finalism that Deligny attributed it, and it is indeed more compatible with it than it seemed. Furthermore, the usage of the term “desire,” here, would hardly collide with Deligny’s more general perspective, although he himself would avoid it. And the primacy of the infinitive that topples the risks of the idea of evolution, or progress, or even the temporal diachrony, that leads us to another type of time, closer, surely, to what the Greeks called Aion – and which is not distant from what is found in Deligny’s texts.

For nothing

When Deligny describes, in his book *L’Arachnéen*, his conception of a network extracted from the spider’s web, he says: “The accidents of existence have made it so that I’ve lived in a network more so than in any other way... The network is a mode of being. The network awaits me around every corner. This one has lasted for 15 years so far. These days I ask myself if this project is not a pretext, with the web itself being the real project.”¹⁷ He wonders if it is possible to say that the spider has the weaving of its web as a project. “It is much the same as saying the web has the project of being woven... As for retracing the course of creation, for my part, I stop at the spider while a good number of others go no farther back than their grandfather.” Against the insistence of some to read the human being under the sign of the structures of kinship, Deligny has the sluggishness of wanting to read it under the light of the “structure of the network,” so to speak, and he discovers it in its entirety, ever since his childhood, in the adjacency of forbidden spaces, or interdicted, or vacant. In any case, the paths make up a network, and this web has no objective other than apprehending the occasions that chance offers. As such, it is not about finding what already exists, or even what one seeks, but creating through this wandering that which is found – it is a fishing that creates the fish, so to speak. It is net fishing, there where there is nothing. To wander is an infinitive that must remain in order to preserve, as Deligny says, its extreme wealth, and it can only be done so as long as the space remains vacant.

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*, p. 89-90.

¹⁷ Fernand Deligny, *L’Arachnéen*, op. cit., p. 11.

The arachnean

The merit of the arachnean, according to Deligny, consists in being beyond craving, beyond conscious or unconscious, closer to innate, to something of the order of an era, of an epoch, not a geological one, but a humane-in-humane one, a humane-inhumane extract that would have eclipsed itself with the sediments that makes us the men-we-are. If the spider's analogy has its limits, it is so because the web is the work of a single spider, while the network is the work of many, and in the case of humans, for example, it dispenses with a construction foreman, an author who would have the design previously in his head. When there is a clear design previously envisioned, as if present in the author's mind, it is then that the dimension of "acting," of "wandering," disappears in favor of the "doing," as such already completed, which makes it so that the character of the network disappears. As such: "The network is devoid of all *for*, and all *excess of for* lights it aflame as soon as overload of the project is placed upon it."¹⁸ As such, the project may be the death of the network when it takes it upon itself to be the reason of the network. The network is without reason. But hardly ever would the-man-we-are admit that he is not the master. Something in the nature of disasters make it so that beings grow closer to each other and consider themselves indispensable, and nourish for each other a peculiar sympathy. Deligny recalls how a network was formed during the war, how they hid in a grotto, and how the network immediately dissolved itself upon news of the armistice reached it. As such, from war to asylum, the logic was the same: the network became the way of being for Deligny; of surviving, of over-living. A way of living not properly of dissident, but refractory, as he said, and refractory not only to war, but to the very man capable of it. As if there one should look for what he calls human, human being, that ourselves would call human-in-humane, as it contradicts all that we understand as human; conscience, will, desire, unconsciousness, etc. It is in this spirit and context that Deligny constituted the network with the autists, and the question that returns from time to time to the author's quill, that is far from being a philosopher, is: what does the human being mean? And the answer that comes to him, even less philosophical, is: nothing. Human is the name of a species, it being that which has disappeared so that man, such as he is, could appear. There is a compliment to this characteristic of the spider or the beaver of being "delivered unto the innate that animates them," without having to "make as," that is, to imitate, "as fathermother." The network is much like a vital necessity.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 20.

Four or five inert, lonely teenagers are suddenly re-invigorated – the effect of the network. Even if the common “project” was to kill an old lady in the house they used to work a few years prior. But is what re-invigorates them the idea of killing the old lady? Or before that the mode of being that, amidst the asylum’s boredom, makes for the occurrence itself? It would be necessary to re-read Dostoyevsky’s *Demons* under the light of this strange theory of the network.

To be and to want

The spider, when beginning her web, must extend the first thread, and her resource is a kind of small sail, a silken parachute that with a breeze would extend the first thread as soon as it sticks to some point – this ingeniousness leaves us stunned. Could it be that something like this inspired Philippe Petit, that French acrobat and the team that supported him in that feat of walking between the twin towers? But it is necessary to have something upon which the spider’s parachute can stick to, as in the case of the towers was necessary the arrow tip to make the cable reach the top of the opposite building. Why, a spider on a glass plate is emptiness itself, as she cannot complete her arachnean operation – and as such, even if the arachnean completes itself, it is no indifferent where it is done so – an appropriate means to extend her thread is required. As for the project, it is an alibi, pretext, occasion, like a parachute, which can then be as swallowed, without abolishing the network, much like the spider can swallow her web, and with it keeps the web within herself, a web that will now persist. Such is how killing the old lady is like the parachute of the spider cast to extend the first thread. It is the circumstance, which can be replaced by another, and in Deligny’s case, who worked with juvenile delinquents, this is of the utmost importance.

In any case, it is obvious that there is some distance between the arachnean and the being conscious of being, riddled with sex, language and desire. But it is precisely the privilege of the considered project and of the supposed desire that Deligny refutes, in favor of those that live in extravagance, that is, that leave the trenches of the considered project. Perhaps, Nietzscheanly speaking, it is possible that this “obstinacy of the man-we-are in not wanting to know and recognize but the existence and the value of the considered project makes us extravagant.”¹⁹ It is the theme of the hypertrophy of reason, that is in Nietzsche as a critic directed towards the beginnings of our Socratic culture, although in its philosophy the theme of desire and engendered final-

19 Ibid, p. 29.

ities gains another inflexion. At any rate, the difficulty in Deligny is to avoid the swallowing of the network by the considered project, even knowing that the network will carry some project, eventually. It is in the considered project's nature to swallow the network. The innate being against the wanting of the considered project: the being against the wanting. The being from whom the wanting detaches and that it denies, leaving it behind, ignoring it as it flies away, launching itself into time... in such a way that the being looks immutable in its form, away from time, it that plots and acts, without interest or finality. To act is without finality, to act is purely to act, and if one wants to attach it to the ritual, where it regains meaning and wanting, it has then already lost all that which characterizes it, although it often reminds it. Since Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud, and with each one in their own way, the wanting has always enjoyed a primacy, even if it is called craving, or desire... and here, in the opposite of it all, we have an antischopenhauerian, antiphenomenological, antifreudian, antinietzschean theorization, but in counterpoint, completely devoid of any Buddhism, quietism or asceticism.

Desire appears to Deligny as a recent epiphenomenon, of self-propulsion, whose fuel is language and that therefore, in those in whom it is vacant, something else happens. From such comes the asceticism in relation to desire. The desire creates a violence, as one desires in another's place. As Deligny says: "In '67 we were surrounded, therefore we had a position, we would ask ourselves what could these children want. All it took for the mystery to disappear was for us to abandon our position – it came from us."²⁰ As Bertrand Ogilvie puts it well, there is a suspension of interpellation – a practical antihumanism that dismisses man, and allows for the search for an inhumane human, a way of being "desubjectified, so to speak."

Deligny uses the image of the guerrilla.²¹ It was necessary, as it was said at the time, to implant oneself, maintain oneself, to progress, disappear and avoid the obstacles. The guerrilla, in '67, was a kind of almost universal ethnicity, with the difference that "we did not risk, he said, death or torture, but the disappearance that which would go against the rules and the regulations in effect" (...) "we were in search of a way of being that would allow them (the autists) to exist even if it would modify our own way of being..." they were not interested in the conceptions of man, be they as they were, but in a practice that would quickly exclude the interpretations that referred to a code. "We did not take the children's manner of being as encoded messages directed at us."

²⁰ Ibid, p. 47.

²¹ Ibid, p. 60.

From there comes the attention to something else; not to the supposed intentions, or to desire or lack of it, but towards tracing, and the tracing of the autistic, which holds nothing of representation, but instead is the trace of a gesture.²² There is an almost circular tracing, but not always, not completely. When they had their pencils taken and instead dipped their fingers in coal, and when brushing against the paper, something would form, much to the surprise of everyone. However, although it might seem spontaneous, which is defined by the dictionary as “performed by a sudden impulse,” it is exactly there that subject and object are lost, leaving only this hand-thing and shadow-stain on the paper. It occurs to the autistic to circle this stain, and to sign, instead of Yvez, Yes; assent... the wander lines are the tracing of the paths without an apparent project, and there is a resemblance between these paths and what the hand of each of these children trace – as if they were the same style. As such, even if there is a lot in common between the wander line and the tracing of each one, as if there were one author behind them, although the authorship is precisely what is in question here, since it is not about the person as the first cause of something, or its origin, definition by which every one considers themselves a god. Why, a trace, it is a hand that does it, but deep beneath it is a whole body that traces, and it’s as if it was aspired by an infinity, although this infinity that aspires it, limited as we are by language, can only be translated as infinitive. A Deleuze reader will not find strange this relation between the infinity and the infinitive, although the law of language, to him, does not abolish in any way this movement of the infinit(y)(ive).

Deligny refers to the turtle traced by the aborigine in a tree’s bark, then abandoned – the essential there is the tracing, the movements of the hand that come and go, not being this “his” hand, just as the web is not this one spider’s... and our emotion comes from the fact that this drawing is common; a sense common to us, human, since the human has for common the hand in motion. Common, communism. When conscience is eclipsed it is worth looking, as if a lunar eclipse, and what is seen, even if it is not visible, are the traces of the arachnean. “The vestiges of the arachnean web appear first, run-through and ruined by the passing of these meteorites that are insects and rocks. And the human being then shows up with what remains of the slightly aflame arachnean crossed by this kind of blind meteorite that is con-

22 For example, the splendid *Journal de Janmari*, Ed. Sandra Alvarez Toledo, Paris, Ed. L’Arachnéen, 2013.

science.”²³ And furthermore: “The only access conscience might have of the arachnean is that of crossing. Like a bolide that takes for good sense²⁴ its trajectory, which of good sense has nothing.”²⁵

When commenting everything that goes on in an institution, Isaac Joseph notes: “These initiatives, these emergencies of the common are in no way clandestine in the secret of the asylum’s space. One may apprehend them at the surface of ordinary circumstances like escapades that are produced in avoidance and at the expense of power, moments of fortuitous dissidence, that, however, have nothing to do with humanist fusions and confusions, as they are not the work of a subject. And it is true that should we follow the threads that connect an act of revolt or dissidence to another, we will not forcibly find a class, a group or a subject, but somewhat discreet, somewhat violent shuddering, trances that are not necessarily oriented by a finishing, attempts that do not always result in a project, escape lines that are more than political lines, violent solidarities and yet, partial and provisory. Should we not see this we would be exposed to endlessly reiterating our frenetic search for a subject of history that would be at the same time pure as revolt and solid as revolution. But should we mourn for this imaginary fellow – and it is somehow the same, history’s and this person’s, this supposed fellow can accomplish all – should we mourn for his liberation and his omnipotence, we could then say that the time of the common neither advances nor retreats, which is perpetual and not a movement. But which? As you said it: is this about the other time or the next?” I can find in these collocations an extemporary appeal whose reach heavily extrapolates to the autists, the clinic, and it concerns the larger urgencies of thought and of the present – it really is surprising to find in these texts from the 60’s the issue of the common put in such a shrewd way, long before this theme even became a political motto in Negri, Virno, etc. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, cartography clearly appears as a component of experimentation anchored in the real. Therefore, the cartography represents nothing, but it creates and crosses lines, differentiates them, multiplies connections, produces events, unblocks impasses, creates openings, re-examines itself, etc. “One may draw it on a wall, conceive it as work of art, construct it as political action or as a meditation,” and Deligny’s maps possess all these traits or facets, they are a meditation, they are works

23 Fernand Deligny, *L’Arachnéen*, op. cit., p. 81.

24 Translator’s note. *Sentido* in Portuguese, translated here as sense, conveys both the meaning of direction and of meaning.

25 Ibid, p. 82.



of art, they can be hung, they are political interventions, they are called by Deligny himself a POPULAR INITIATIVE,²⁶ that is, it is the people that are responsible for finding breaches against asylum internments, and not the specialists, with this gamble ideally disseminating and becoming a revolutionary practice. It is curious how amid the *for nothing* appear these political fragments. Therefore, in this kind of cartographic performance, one does not trace in the name of any competence, but inversely, one of its objectives would be to do away with all the competencies that would threaten to launch upon these maps the seal of competence which would reproduce, above all, the points of impasse, of redundancy. Such is all that is interesting, that is not Known, exactly, no matter how rigorously one traces, it is not a Knowledge About, as that which escapes is followed, as it escapes, from such emerging the designation of escape line, even if for Deligny this line still belongs entirely to the terrain, to the living area, in such a way that it neither escapes nor undoes the territory.

Pre-human, post-human

It would be proper now to show more extensively the use made by Deleuze and Guattari of Deligny's contributions. Here is one of the texts from *A Thousand Plateaus* that mentions Deligny: "A line of drift intersects a customary line, and at that point the child does something not quite belonging to either one: he or she finds something he or she lost – what happened? – or jumps and claps his or her hands, a slight and rapid movement – and that gesture in turn emits several lines."²⁷ In short, there is a line of flight, which is already complex since it has singularities; and there a customary or molar line with segments; and between the two (?), there is a molecular line with quanta that cause it to tip to one side or the other."²⁸

The major rule, or better yet, the interdiction that follows, is one of the keys to a cartographic "method" and to a definition of schizoanalysis: "As Deligny says, it should be borne in mind that these lines mean nothing. It is an affair of cartography. They compose us, as they compose our map. They transform themselves and may even cross over into one another. Rhizome.

26 Cf. the excellent paper by John Rajchman, associating Deligny's work and the Chinese artist's Xu Bing, around these poetics beyond discipline: "Extra-disciplinary in São Paulo, *Extra-disciplining spaces and de-disciplining moments (in and out of the 30th Bienal de São Paulo)*, in OEI # 60-61, 2013, ed. Jonas Magnusson and Cecilia Grönberg, Stockholm, Sweden.

27 Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd ed., trans. Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968).

28 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Three Novellas, or 'What Happened?'" in *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) p. 203.



It is certain that they have nothing to do with language; it is, on the contrary, language that must follow them, it is writing that must take sustenance from them, *between* its own lines. It is certain that they have nothing to do with a signifier, the determination of a subject by the signifier; instead, the signifier arises at the most rigidified level of one of the lines, and the subject is spawned at the lowest level. It is certain that they have nothing to do with a structure, which is never occupied by anything more than points and positions, by arborescences, and which always forms a closed system, precisely in order to prevent escape. Deligny invokes a common Body upon which these lines are inscribed as so many segments, thresholds, or quanta, territorialities, deterritorializations, or reterritorializations. The lines are inscribed on a Body without Organs, upon which everything is drawn and flees, which is itself an abstract line with neither imaginary figures nor symbolic functions: the real of the BwO. *This body is the only practical object of schizoanalysis*: What is your body without organs? What are your lines? What map are you in the process of making or rearranging? What abstract line will you draw, and at what price, for yourself and for others? What is your line of flight? What is your BwO, merged with that line? Are you cracking up? Are you going to crack up? Are you deterritorializing? Which lines are you severing, and which are you extending or resuming? Schizoanalysis does not pertain to elements or aggregates, nor to subjects, relations, or structures. It pertains only to *lineaments* running through groups as well as individuals. Schizoanalysis, as the analysis of desire, is immediately practical and political, whether it is a question of an individual, group, or society.”²⁹

The long quote above allows us to pinpoint schematically the appropriations and inflexions to which the authors submitted Deligny:³⁰ (1) the common Body has been resumed as Body-without-organs; (2) the differentiation between lines (customary/of drift) have been renamed (molar/molecular/escape); (3) the lineaments are understood as lines of desire; (4) the network is revisited as a rhizome. We do know, however, that body-without-organs, escape line, rhizome, desire, unconscious, such is a terminology that Deligny does not endorse, since his problem is another. To put it excessively abruptly, Deligny’s problem is not one of the assemblage of desire, but of the innate, of the pre-linguistic, of the a-conscious, of what he calls

29 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Three Novellas, or ‘What Happened?’” in *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) p.203.

30 We took some precious observations from Anne Querrien in “Um radeau passer leau,” in Deligny, *Oeuvres*, op. cit., p. 1225.

humane, and that Deleuze and Guattari would call inhumane. Conversely, one could say that the reticence in relation to language, to the significant, to interpretation, to structure, persist entirely, despite the different conceptions they have on the statute of language.

In any case, we could likely risk the following hypothesis: while Deligny is about hitting a pre-human dimension, to Deleuze and Guattari it is about reaching a post-human dimension... Between the pre-human and the post-human there isn't just a difference of orientation, so to speak, vectorial, temporal, but also of tonality. On the one side, in Deligny, a depuration, accompanied by a causticity, of a sarcasm with all that is artifice, mundane and historical aggregation; on the other side, in Deleuze-Guattari, a voluptuousness with combinatories and hybridisms. However, it is as if the two tips touched each other, like in Nietzsche, where the beyond-man does not lack in echoing something of the Dionysian already present in the Greeks, putting in check the foundations of the Socratic, Christian and scientific civilization. Respecting the extreme singularity of Deligny's project, we would say that there operates something that Deleuze would designate as involution – that is, a process of depuration on becoming. As he defined it: “In becoming, there is no past nor future – not even present, there is no history. In becoming it is, rather, a matter of involuting; it is neither regression nor progression. To become is to become more and more restrained, more and more simple, more and more deserted and for that very reason populated. This is what's difficult to explain: to what extent one should involute. It is obviously the opposite of evolution, but it is also the opposite of regression, returning to a childhood or to a primitive world. To involute is to have an increasingly simple, economical, restrained step. It is also true for clothes: elegance as the opposite of the overdressed where too much is put on, where something more is always added which will spoil everything (English elegance against Italian overdressedness). It is also true for cooking: against evolutive cooking, which always adds something more, against regressive cooking which returns to primary elements, there is involutive cooking, which is perhaps that of the anorexic. Why is there such an elegance in certain anorexics? It is also true of life, even of the most animal kind: if the animals invented their forms and their functions, this was not always by evolving, by developing themselves, nor by regressing as in the case of pre-maturation, but by losing, by abandoning, by reducing, by simplifying, even if this means creating new elements and new relations of this simplification. Experimentation is involutive, the opposite of the overdose. It is also true of

writing; to reach this sobriety, this simplicity which is neither the end nor the beginning of something. To involute is to be 'between,' in the middle, adjacent. Beckett's characters are in perpetual involution [...]"³¹ The point is to detach oneself from the superfluous or superimposed layers in order to reach the simpler trace, the perfection of a Japanese line, of a deprived fashion, of a pure gesture, of a style in its sobriety, a mere life. Not that this doesn't exist in Deleuze, on the contrary, this we may find there all the time, like in his last text on immanence, among so many others, but measured by an exuberant constructivism, in the devious alliance with Guattari, where other tones are also emitted...

As such, it is necessary to say that the primacy of the lines, of the bonds, of the trajectories, of the infinitive, of initiatives, the importance of the medium, so valorized by Deligny, find in Deleuze and Guattari total resonance, even if other names are used instead – in place of bond, the knot (of the rhizome), in place of initiative, becoming, or event, in place of being-of-network, biopsychic assemblage, semiotic, in place of medium, territory, etc. The challenge in thinking in terms of lines, movements, flows, lineaments, territories and deterritorialization, does not prohibit the thinking of existential territories that are constituted or unmade, in the most diverse scales, and that Deligny keeps in a plane that is his, pragmatically, in a touching way. At any rate, in both experiments, or in both topologies, the subject is eclipsed, even if in a more categoric or assertive manner in Deligny, while to Deleuze and Guattari, it is less about denying it, refuting it or even evacuating it, than it is about following its genesis and its collapse, its origination and the processes that make it decrepit, adjacent to the lines, the lineaments, the crossings. With it being taken as a fluctuant derivative, where the privilege of the schizo and the relativization of the parental figures that, as says *Critical and Clinical*, are above all door openers and closers, in relation to a means, which is what is important. From there comes a de-centering in relation to any familiarity, which doesn't stop it from imposing itself in the most diverse ways, as if "capturing" the lines that make up the rhizome.

From these coordinates and some others, Deleuze can conclude, in *Dialogues*, that the matter at hand is a geoanalysis, an "analysis of lines which take his path far from psychoanalysis, and which relates not only to autistic children, but to all children, to all adults (watch someone walking down the street and see what little inventions he introduces into it, if he is

31 Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

not too caught up in his rigid segmentarity, what little inventions he puts there), and not only their walk, but their gestures, their affects, their language, their style.”³²

But well, a geoanalysis, which is a schizoanalysis, which is a cartography, which is an analysis of lines, of displacements, of gestures, of affects, of style, of language (which Deligny leaves aside, much like the autistic), in fact opposes a historicization, much like a geophilosophy opposes a history of philosophy – the accent is not in the historical time, in the diachronic, or even in the many superimposed times, but in a spatiality, in the “threads” extended between the elements of a land, but also in the threads that run the length of this land, be it the thread of water, be it the wood’s filaments, be it the trajectory of animals. The territory, in this perspective, is not the “native,” for neither one, but still there may be a difference in emphasis, since the deterritorialization is prioritized in *A Thousand Plateaus*, while Deligny insists on the patient construction of a place, a territory, in such a way that wandering itself is a repetition, a sedimentation, but also a recognition, the constitution of a common so that there may appear the inadvertent, the initiative.

Deligny versus the contemporary drift

Doina Petrescu was right when she notices that the contemporary situating of the GPS, doubled by that which situates, he who situates, the society of control, mutual vigilance, is entirely distinct from Deligny’s *ce situer*, this way of letting *this* situate, the unlocatable as necessarily there.³³ It is not solely about the movements in this *ce situer*, but about the gestures, movements, perceptions, intensities. In *this situate*, what is captured is not traced, but one does trace what escapes, that which does not let itself be captured, that runs away from sight. What does not concern us (*ce qui ne nous regarde pas*)... As Deligny, to look what does not look at us, or better yet, to look at what is not of our concern (*regarder ce qui ne nous regarde pas*)... Therefore there is there a clandestine dimension that is preserved and whose evacuation would not be proper, it is the most important thing to be preserved, without making of this any sort of mystery or fetishism, but to take it properly as a way of escaping that which in us-humans-we-are is intolerable, whence the phrase: “This line of drift, it is about allowing it, about giving it the means to emerge. What they will pick up in this latent margin,

32 Gilles Deleuze, *Dialogues*, op. cit., p. 128.

33 Doina Petrescu, “The Indeterminate Mapping of the Common,” http://www.field-journal.org/uploads/file/2007_Volume_1/d%20petrescu.pdf



the moment the preestablished occurs, does not concern them; and if we wish to see up close with our words and our comments, we risk nullifying it by preoccupation of nomenclature. And so, for what do these maps still sign this enterprise by the margin? For nothing, beyond realizing if these lines of drift remain, if they are allowed to burn, or if the uses, habits [...] of being of these knots would no longer allow it.”³⁴

Doina Petrescu has also noticed Deligny’s difference in regards to the situationists, that equally wanted to associate the psyche to the place, the space, through the psychogeographic practice but that were, according to her, interested in the ephemeral, in chance, in the aestheticization of the rushed passage, where they sought, among the ordinary, the unique, the exceptional, while Deligny insists on the creation of everyday life, of the common.³⁵ The maps of the immutable have nothing to do with the situationist practice, more so because the wandering is not a drift, the territory of the network is not a striation to be subverted like the modern city, but a place to be created. As Deligny says about his attempt, it is not a sensorial and esthetic experience, nor a game, pleasure, or a transcription of a sensation: one traces so that something completely different from sense emerges, and this distinct something that flowers is exactly from the order of the “immutable,” of the human-inhumane, of the specific, of the a-conscious, etc. In a leap towards our more candescent present times, the author notes that the technoscientific megastructure possibilitates, through military satellites, the GPS, and through it we can all see ourselves, but cannot see the community of those that trace, the relation between view points and points of seeing, a common is not created, unlike with Deligny’s maps. Even global time is not a common time, individual paths are never clandestine, this contemporary localization creates its own ideology of the “know where you are,” that, as Holmes says, is part of a humanist ideology “that promotes (and exposes) in the Empire’s scale the aesthetic of the drift, generalizing cartography as an individual instrument, isolated and abstract, giving the illusion, at the same time, of communication and reference.” To Deligny, in order to find the marks, in a common space, as has already been mentioned, *Self seeing* it is not necessary, but instead, *this seeing*, the sight without reflection. The maps and the contemporary lines seek to optimize and control urban and social performance, to make the fluxes more effective and more direct, to the point

34 Fernand Deligny, *Oeuvres*, op. cit., p 996

35 Doina Petrescu, “The Indeterminate Mapping of the Common,” op. cit., and also “Tracer là ce qui nous échappe”, in *Multitudes* n 24, (Paris, Ed. Amsterdam, Spring of 2006).



where Deligny would trace an impossible common, peppered with deviations, gestures, temporalities, with Us, with strange attractors...

There is, to Deligny, not a hunger strike, but in closure, the strike of finality, of the objective (therapeutic, pedagogic, occupational, political), from there the provocative ritornello: what is this all for? For nothing – that is, to preserve the Rest of Everything, knowing that the Everything has since always been a truculence, and the totality, violence.

Life

We know that bare life, to Agamben, is not a natural life, or even an original one, but the life taken as an object of manipulation in a state of exception, there where the concentration camp is the biopolitical paradigm. Why, Deligny's "attempt" could be read today in the antipodes of such direction. Indeed, he is closer to what Deleuze calls a life, such as it has been seen in previous chapters. A life is not bare life, but life taken as impersonal, in a singular variation, in certain wandering. It is known that Foucault considered, in his text on Canguilhem, life as a mistake (*erreur*). As such, in this line we can talk on erratic life, erratic line. We do not know if geoanalysis, intensive cartography, or even schizoanalytic cartography would be enough to follow these erratic lines of life that Deligny defended with such obstinacy in his incessant escape towards the desert, in this escapade, in this collective exile to where he had always conducted his "autist people" or to where he had been conducted to by them, ever farther away from the institutions, the pedagogies, the ideologies, the words of order, the language, the city, this nomadism that Guattari does not conform to being restricted to the autists, to the region of the Cévennes where the poet-autist established himself, to this universe deprived of language. Guattari insisted on operating all these odd instruments that Deligny or Deleuze or even himself invented in the most candescent heart of our machinic, semiotic, psychopolitical, biopolitical, capitalist present. The folklore says that the idea of rhizome was inspired in part in Deligny's practice. It is quite likely. In this well-intentioned migration, however, Deligny's notions and intuitions, so sharp and solitary, have been hauled by the goblin duo to the *Ecumene*, to the *Noosphere*, and still hope to reconquer their erratic clandestinity.



Deligny and Guattari – a correspondence

“Vaste est ma prochaine demeure, le seul ennui,
c’est qu’il n’y a pas de toit. Ni toi, ni moi”
Deligny

It is known that Guattari took the arrival of Deligny at La Borde, in 1966, with enthusiasm. Some time later, when Deligny manifested his desire to leave the clinic, Guattari offered him his country home that he had acquired in Gourgas, the Cévennes region, in the Monoblet commune. It is what a letter by Deligny registers, several years later, before their rupture: “When, of Gourgas, you have spoken of to me in ‘66, who knows which one of us was more happy.”³⁶ Gourgas had been conceived by Guattari as a place of meeting and crossing to all types of researchers, artists, militants, experimenters, outcasts, activists from the antipsychiatric movement, La Borde residents, etc. Deligny had difficulty living with the collective “Guattarian” turbulence, incompatible, according to him, with the silences and the distance that he reclaimed for his autists: “There are experiments of all stocks. It would not be wise to mix them. Just as there are non-violent ones, this – attempt – is presented as being entirely non-provocative, out of fashion in a certain way. It is this out of fashion way that allows for its persistency.” Deligny complains about the loud gluttony, closer to “manifestation” than to a “project.” None of this has stopped Guattari from frequently insisting on Deligny’s writing and in the publication of his texts, an invitation to which he would respond affirmatively, sharing his project, but still sharing his distances, differences, his reticence, be they of style or theoretical.

It is what can be seen in a beautiful drawing made by Deligny in a letter to Guattari, akin to maps. Guattari is indicated with a customary line (as such, a bit thicker and with a more discreet undulation, a “hard line,” according to the Deleuze-Guattarian categorization); Deligny appears as a “flexible line,” thinner, more curvaceous.

Despite all the curves and detours, in two points the lines come very close together, and in only one point do they touch – however, these three points are surrounded by small red circles, not unlike those made by Janmari, with

³⁶ The letters of this correspondence between Deligny and Guattari are available at the Institut Memoire de L’Édition Contemporaine (IMEC), in Abbaye d’Ardennes, France. There are 57 letters of Deligny’s letters, and only one reply from Guattari (the others are not in the file), which is, in fact, the last one, after which he ceased corresponding with Deligny.



a miniscule opening. It is a drawing full of movement, more akin to a dance between two insects, or between two trajectories, or to go back to the essentials, between two lines: a “ground” line, and an “aerial” line – both, however, surrounded by three rings of a shouting red that pop out.

It is what appears in Deligny’s letter: the recurring question on the meeting points between both of them. “We are comrades, if we understand this term in the sense used by K. Lorenz, but then what, between us, is irreducible?” And farther ahead: “What I wanted to tell you, is that I was taken aback that we (didn’t have, take) to/on such point the same fight.” There is the conscience of having a common front, a battle in which they are “on the same side,” even if they have distinct preferences – to put it in a simpler manner, schizos on one side, autists on the other, like Deligny defines them: “Having refused to be good guys, it is required that they then be bad – guys – whence my tranquil sympathy towards them, who had forgotten to be, guys, or almost.” And the proposition of the dialogue: “If one day the heart indicates as such, to talk through letter, even if to clarify that ‘Deligny is fond of the mentally impaired...’ Let us say that he prefers them, even if it is to the psychoanalysts – but they are precisely impaired because they are taken by/in language.” Or even still: “In regards to strategy [...] both of us belong to our time, and our impulses of sympathy do not go on their own toward the same kind of individuals, and this ‘kind’ is determined by the ways of being and speaking, a certain language, after all. Furthermore, while you feed movements, I obstinately make (little) tableaux. But I believe that a little bit of everything is necessary to torment/unmake the world, the You (*On*) of the world; each with their own task, here, there.” From such comes this kind of asymmetry and complementariness, reticence and attraction.

But unpleasant as they are, the differences, Deligny does indeed read Guattari, and Deleuze, as previously shown.

“If it is true that I deserve to quarrel with you and Deleuze, with what shall I do it? With the mold of psychoanalysis, from where my distancing from words like desire, enjoyment, etc., stains the water of the sea. With that said, I read Guattari or Deleuze. I seem to be in accord on the essential, on common lines. And I am referring to the stains only.

The a-conscious is not mentioned; it is not an effect of language. What from that flowered to manifest, within limits, is evoked by ‘hard’ words.



Every word may become hard, should into it be incorporated something from the refractory (what is human appropriately speaking escapes language and does not incessantly approach it, against currents and tides more or less polluted. A language is clear not when it says, but when it can be seen through by its transparency). Curiously, this ‘hardness’ evokes the translucent. Think about the diamond. Nothing is harder, or clearer.”³⁷

Nothing else could better express the abyss that separated them now. Reserved, lonely, suspicious of any loud agitation, Deligny is on the very opposite end of Guattari’s style, who lunges himself in the movements of the world, embracing the vitality of the groups and their collective initiatives. In the face of this difference, this complicity that has lasted for over a decade is even more mysterious. The fact is, Guattari did not forcibly align himself with people alike him – on the contrary, his biography is full of associations with people that are absolutely distinct from him, beginning with Oury, or Deleuze, but also with “lone wolves,” and Deligny is no exception, with whom he always nurtured an honest admiration, offered him since the beginning spaces for housing, writing, filming, stimulating him with his project and enjoying his contributions.

After all these years, it is now possible to think of this connection without amalgamations or ideologies. The militant-philosopher could not be indifferent towards the autist-poet-autist, whose work a schizoanalysis could not be remised to take in as a modality of intervention of the bravest and most innovative variety, that resonate entirely with everything that the thought of Deleuze and Guattari maintained since the beginning on the statute of becomings. Of paths, of lines and networks, even of an open-sky unconscious

37 We have respected here the distance between the paragraphs, where their distribution is relevant – there are even at times great, beautiful question marks that take up half the page.





INHUMAN POLYPHONY IN THE THEATER OF MADNESS

We are the Ueinz Theater Company, established in São Paulo, Brazil seventeen years ago. Lunatics, therapists, performers, maids, philosophers, “normopaths” – once on stage no one can tell the difference. It’s a sort of Galleon of Fools, adrift inside – and outside – the artistic circuit. We rehearse every week, we have produced five theater pieces, we’ve given over 300 performances, we travel a lot throughout Brazil, and also abroad, and this is part of our magnificent repertoire. But this concreteness does not guarantee anything. Sometimes we spend months in the stagnation of insipid weekly rehearsals. Sometimes we ask ourselves if we have actually ever performed, or will go back to performing. Some actors disappear, sponsorships dwindle, scripts are forgotten, and the very company itself seems like some intangible virtuality. And then, all of a sudden, a date for a performance appears, some theater becomes available, a patron or sponsor shows up, and there is just the glimpse of a season, with an invitation to perform in the Cariri or in Finland. The costume designer spruces up the dusty rags, actors who had disappeared months ago reappear, sometimes even running away from internment... But even when it all “happens,” it is on that fine limit that separates building from collapsing. We move alongside Blanchot’s acute intuition that the basis of a work is unworking (*desoeuvrement*). And we follow Foucault’s hypothesis that with the historical decline of madness’ aura and its subsequent transformation into a mental illness, madness reappears as unreason. That is, as redress, the absence of work, as “absolute rupture of the work.” I would place the trajectory of our performances on that moving limit, between madness and unreason, like a steep experiment over the abyss, where chance, ruination, passivity, and neutral speak: the outside.

First example: we were going to perform “Daedalus” at a major Brazilian Theater Festival. The cast was about to go on stage. Each actor was getting prepared to utter in Greek the combative clash that begins this piece; one “cannot make head nor tail of it” – according to the complimentary review of one critic from the São Paulo press. I wait, tense; In my head I run over the words we are supposed to shout at each other in menacing tones and frenetic rush. I am scanning the audience when I notice that our narrator is standing a few meters away from the microphone – he appears to be disorientated. I go up to him, and he tells me that he has lost his script. I slip my hand into his trousers’ pocket, where I find the complete bundle of papers. The actor stares at the papers, which I hold up to his face. He seems not to recognize

them. He puts on and takes off his glasses. And he murmurs that this time he will not take part in the play – that this was the night of his death. We exchange a few words and a few minutes later I am relieved to see him back at the microphone. But his voice, which was normally tremulous and stirring, was now slurred and washed out. In the middle of a scene in which he plays Charon, he suddenly walks right across the stage and heads for the theater exit. I find him sitting in the street, deathly still, murmuring the demand for an ambulance – his time had come. I kneel down beside him and he tells me: “I’m going to the swamp.” The situation lightened up after that and we negotiate: he would accept a cheeseburger from McDonald’s instead of the ambulance. I hear the final applause coming from inside the theater, and the public starts to exit through the small door that leads to the street, where both he and I are. What they see as they exit is Hades, king of the underworld (my character), kneeling at the feet of the living-dead Charon. And for this we receive the respect of each member of the audience who passes by us, because, for them, this intimate scene of collapse seems to be part of the performance. The whole thing by a razor’s edge. It is by a razor’s edge that we perform, it is by a razor’s edge that we don’t die. Work, unworking, absence of work.

Let’s go back a few years. It is the Company’s very first rehearsal, at the *A Casa Day Clinic*, where our group began, before it became autonomous. In a theatrical exercise on the different methods of communication between human beings, all the members of the group were asked in turn which other languages they spoke, apart from Portuguese. One patient, who never speaks and who only produces a sort of nasal sound, like some discordant mantra, replied immediately, with a clarity and assurance quite uncommon for him: German! Everyone is surprised, as no one knew that he spoke German. And what word do you know in German? Ueinzz. And what does Ueinzz mean in German? Ueinzz. Everyone laughed – this is the language that signifies for itself, that folds within itself, an esoteric, mysterious, glossolalic language. Inspired by material collected from the laboratories, the directors at the time, Renato Cohen and Sérgio Penna, brought their proposed script to the company: a group of nomads, lost in the desert, goes out in search of a shining tower, and on their way they come across obstacles, entities, and storms. When they come across an oracle, he must indicate to them, in his sibylline tongue, the most adequate course for the pilgrims to take. The actor is promptly chosen to play the part of the oracle: the one who speaks German. When asked where the tower of Babel is, he must reply: Ueinzz.

The patient quickly gets into the role, and everything goes well together: the black hair and mustache, the small, solid body of a Turkish Buddha, his mannerisms, both aloof and schizoid, his gaze, both vague and scrutinizing, of someone who is constantly in conversation with the invisible. It is true that he is capricious, for when they ask him: Oh Great Oracle of Delphi, where is the Tower of Babel? he sometimes replies with a silence, sometimes with a grunt, and at other times he says Germany or Bauru [in the state of São Paulo] until they ask him more specifically: Oh Great Oracle, what is the magic word in German, and then, without fail, comes the Ueinzz that everyone has been waiting for. The most inaudible of patients, the one who urinates in his trousers and vomits in the director's plate, is charged with the crucial responsibility of telling the nomadic people the way out of Darkness and Chaos. After being uttered, the sound of his answer must proliferate through the loud-speakers scattered about the theater in concentric circles, amplifying in dizzying echoes Ueinzz, Ueinzz, Ueinzz! The inhuman voice we could not hear finds in the scenic and ritual space a magical and poetic effectiveness. When the play was given that sound as its name, we had difficulty in imagining how it should be spelled. The invitation went with "weeinz," the folder had "ueinzz," the poster played with transcribing the word in a wide variety of possibilities, of Babel-like proportions. Today we are the Ueinzz Theater Company. We were born out of an a-significant rupture, as Guattari would say.


Our third play was inspired by Batman and Ítalo Calvino. It was called Gotham-SP (São Paulo), an invisible or mythological city, taken from comic strips, movie screens, and the most persistent deliriums of one of our actors. Every night in Gotham-SP, from his tower, the mayor yells indiscriminately at tycoons, prostitutes, and psychiatrists. He promises worlds and wealth, control and anarchy, bread and cloning. The emperor Kublai Khan, nearly deaf and nearly blind, is the receiver of lost voices. A single resident repeats in her cubicle: "It's cold here." A passenger requests the company of a taxi-driver on a rainy night and recites fragments from Nietzsche or Pessoa. The decadent diva searches for that impossible note, Ophelia comes out of a water barrel seeking her beloved, the angels try to understand where they have just landed, Joshua, revived, demands a new order in the world. Singular speeches that clash in inhuman polyphony, sonorous, visual, scenic, metaphysical. Dissonant voices and sounds that no emperor or mayor manages to orchestrate, much less suppress. Each of those beings who appear on stage carry their icy or torrid world on their fragile bodies... One thing is certain: from the bottom of their pallid

isolation, these beings seek or invoke another community of bodies and souls. A community of those who have no community (Bataille), a community to come (Blanchot), an inoperative community (Nancy), a community of celibates (Deleuze), the community that comes (Agamben).



I would now like to propose a theoretical leap which in my opinion brings all these episodes together. What is at stake in this theatrical, paratheatrical, or performative device is the singular, unreasonable subjectivity of the actors and nothing else. That is, what is being staged or acted out are manners of perceiving, feeling, dressing, positioning oneself, moving, speaking, thinking, asking questions, offering or removing oneself from the gaze of the other as well as from the others' enjoyment. It is also a way of representing without representing, associating whilst disassociating, of living and dying, of being on stage and feeling at home at the same time, in that precarious presence, at the same time concrete and intangible which makes everything extremely serious, and at the same time "neither here nor there", as defined by the composer Livio Tragtenberg – leaving in the middle of a performance, crossing the stage, bag in hand, because your part has now come to an end; one moment, letting go of everything, because your time has come and soon you are going to die, the next entering and getting involved in every scene like a sweeper in a game of football¹; then conversing with your line-feeder who should be hidden, and revealing his presence, then turning into a toad... Or then grunting or croaking, or like Kafka's nomads in *The Great Wall of China*, speaking like magpies, or just saying Ueinzz...

I can't stop thinking that it is this life on stage, "life by a razor's edge," that constitutes the peculiarities of this experience. Some in the audience are under the impression that they themselves are the living-dead and that real life is on the other side of the stage. In fact, in a context marked by the control of life (bioPower), the modes of vital resistance proliferate in the most unusual of ways. One of them consists literally of putting *life* on stage, not bare, brutal life, which, as Agamben says, is reduced by bioPower to the state of survival, but life in the state of variation: "minor" modes of living, which inhabit our major modes, and which, on stage or off, gain scenic or performative visibility, even when one is on the edge of death or collapse, on the edge of stuttering or grunting, of collective hallucination or limit-experiences. Within the restricted parameters which I referred to, here is a device – among others – for a hesitant and always indecisive, inconclusive, and without promises, experimentation for changing *Power over life* into *power of life*.

1 Soccer (association football).



Permit me to put this in a broader, more contemporary, biopolitical context: On the one hand, life was assaulted by Power, that is to say Power penetrated all spheres of existence, fully mobilized them, and put them to work. From genes, the body, affects, psychism, but even intelligence, imagination, creativity, all has been violated, invaded, colonized, if it was not directly expropriated by the Powers. The various mechanisms through which they are exercised are anonymous, scattered, flexible, and rhizomatic. Power itself has become “post-modern,” undulating, uncentered, net-like, molecular. With that, it has a more direct effect over our ways of perceiving, feeling, loving, thinking, even of creating. If before, we still imagined that we had spaces that were protected from the direct interference of the powers (the body, the unconscious, subjectivity), and we had the illusion of preserving in these areas some independence, today our life appears entirely subsumed within those mechanisms of modulating existence. Thus even sex, language, communication, oniric life, even faith, none of these still preserve any exteriority in relation to the mechanisms of control and monitoring. To summarize it in a sentence: power is not exercised from outside, nor from above, but more as if it were from within, steering our social vitality from head to toe. We are no longer struggling with a transcendent or even repressive power; it concerns more an inherent, productive power. This biopower does not seek to arrest life, but to take control of it, to intensify it, to make the most of it. Therein lies our extreme difficulty in resisting: we hardly even know where power is, or where we are, what power dictates to us, what we want from it; it is we ourselves who take on the task of administrating our own control. Power never got so far or so deep into the kernel of subjectivity and of life itself as in this contemporary biopower.



But when it appears that “everything has been dominated,” as the lyrics of a Brazilian funk song say, at the end of the line there is a suggestion of a u-turn: that which appeared to be subdued, controlled, and dominated, that is, “life,” reveals in the process of expropriation its indomitable power, no matter how erratic that may be. That which appeared to be entirely subsumed by capital, or reduced to mere passivity – “life,” “intelligence,” “affection,” “sociability” – appears now like an inexhaustible reservoir of meaning, a source of forms of existence, an embryo of directions that extrapolate the command structures, the calculations of the established powers, formatted subjectivity.

It would be the case to tread these two major routes, bioPower and biopower, like in a Moebius strip. Thus, if today capital and the governmentality that corresponds to it enters life on a scale never seen before, and saps its

creative strength, the opposite is also true: life itself hits back, revived. And if the ways of seeing, feeling, thinking, perceiving, dwelling, dressing, of situating oneself, no matter how singular these may be, become an object of interest and capital investment and molecular monitoring, they also become a source of value that can, by themselves, become a vector for valorization or self-valorization or even of deviation. For example, when a group of prisoners composes and records their own music, what they show and sell is not only their music, nor their harsh life stories, but their style, their perceptions, their disgust, their caustic sarcasm, their way of dressing, of “living” in prison, of gesticulating, of protesting – their life, in short. Their only capital being their life, in their extreme state of survival and resistance, that’s what they capitalize, self-valorize and what produces value. Taken from this point of view, if it is clear that capital increasingly appropriates subjectivity and forms of life, subjectivity is itself biopolitical capital, which virtually everyone increasingly has the use of, whether they are those so-called marginals, so called lunatics, prisoners, or indigenous peoples, but also anyone and everyone with a singular lifestyle that belongs to them or which is given to them to invent – with the political consequences yet to be determined.

It’s clear that bioPower and the new mechanisms of governmentality make individual and collective life an object of domination, of calculation, of manipulation, of intervention, if not of fetishization or aestheticization – and that there is a corresponding capitalization in this process. But it is necessary to add, at least in the case of so-called “minorities,” that life resists such control mechanisms, and reinvents its coordinates of enunciation and self-enunciation.

In the case of madness – and perhaps that is the meaning of “unreason-subject-of-itself,” as evoked once by Foucault – this happens in two simultaneous movements. On one hand, madness de-subjectifies itself according to unexpected lines of forces, undoing familiar, professional, social, national, and religious identities – blurring borders, dismantling limits. On the other, it tries singular, plural, collective and inhuman ways of subjectivation. In this paradoxical movement, madness escapes the double straight jacket that imprisoned it, cutting through the limits which the subjectifying objectification would have imposed. If madness, as we know from Foucault, was expelled from the social collective, locked away and silenced in the 17th century, and then, with the advent of psychiatric medicine in the 19th century, it became mental illness, and consequently the object of moral, later medical, and finally psychological treatment, a schizoid flow never ceased to

cut through the limits which scientific rationality reserved to it. That flow slides through the entire social body, schizophrenizing the surroundings and disseminating itself through the most varied domains, even through collective, political, and poetic practices, according to the sharp intuition of Deleuze and Guattari.

Therefore, it would be necessary to insert our experience in that fluctuating lineage which goes from the history of madness to the schizoid flow, and which runs into the realm of the performing arts.² This is how it was intuited, since the beginning of our trajectory, by Renato Cohen, a well known theorist and proponent of performance art in Brazil. Commenting on his experiences with our company, whose activities he occasionally defined as a *work in progress*, Cohen wrote: “The actors of the Company have a rare ally on their side who destroys representation in its most artificial sense: time. The time of the uncommon actor is mediated by all his dialogues; it is traversed by subtexts which become the actual text itself. In dialogues, the reply does not come immediately, nor is it rational; rather it goes through other mental circuits. There is a delay, a scenic slowing down, that puts the whole audience in production. The actor, in an intuitive manner, moves between Stanislavskian identification and Brechtian distancing. And he becomes excited by the applause of the audience; he performs his dramatic “bullfight” by measuring forces with the audience and with his own inner shadows.” This is not the fictional time of representation, but the time of the actor or performer, who enters and exits his character, thus allowing other dimensions of his acting to be seen: “It is in that narrow passage from representation to a less deliberate acting, with its space for improvisation and spontaneity, that live art treads, along with the terms ‘happening’ and ‘performance.’ It is also that tenuous limit where life and art approach one another. As one breaks away from representation, from fiction, a space opens up for the unpredictable, and therefore for the living, since life is synonymous with the unpredictable and with risk,”³ says Cohen, inadvertently getting close to Foucault’s last formulation, in a text on Canguilhem, where he defined life as an error. In the group’s experimentation, several movements confirm this insight. “Actors who abandon their positions in order to attend the others’ scenes, and then resume the dramatic sequence again. Actors who give lengthy monologues,

2 Here John Rajchman’s formula on the extra-disciplinary spaces and de-disciplining moments is also useful.

3 Renato Cohen, *Performance como linguagem* (Performance as Language). (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2002), 58. I follow Ana Goldenstein Carvalhaes, an actress in the company who studied its process in light of Cohen’s perspective, in “Performance and Madness: accompaniment to the creative process of the Ueinzz Theater Group”, and later in *Persona Performática* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2012)

and who also abandon them without finishing their sentences. Such strident distribution of errors, of discoveries, of script reinvention, is built in front of the audience. The performance then becomes a ritual, where everyone witnesses the impossible going on, the curved bodies dancing, the inaudible voices that gain amplified strength thanks to the electronics installed for the performance⁴. The microphones are visible, since the “sound that remains in the sub-conscious is the sound of the media – the sound of television, of radio, of electronic music, of the computer.” Others, even without a microphone, do not impose their voice and are barely even heard, whether because they do not possess the vocal technique or because they have difficulties in speaking or due to problems with their diction. Speech loses a little of its weight with all the different elements that make up the scene, thus giving space for other speeches (corporal, for example)⁵, in a disjunction between “bodies without voices and voices without a body”⁶. Of course there are resonances here with the works of Bob Wilson, as the various elements on stage acquire the same weight, with no hierarchy, as they do also with Cunningham, by the way. Each one with a life of its own: the music, the dance, the speaking, the light, without any one being subordinate to the other; but all juxtaposed, even if together they form a fantastic whole with pictorial scenes and emotions that are derived more from the unconscious, than from intelligence.⁷ Paraphrasing Jacob Guinsburg, the heterogeneous elements that make up that “de-totalized” *Gesamtkunstwerk* are submitted one by one to a process of “neutralization,” which silences the utilitarian character of these same elements and modifies them into new material – ready to be reintegrated into the whole in a less conventional way.⁸ More than creating a formal and organized poetic structure, this is about transcribing gestures and words that are spoken and thought in contemporaneous contexts, thus using a type of unconscious reservoir of our culture. The fact that an incoherent text is produced is not in itself a problem, because there is no narrative development here, as all the activity on stage is maintained in a state of permanent “absolute present” by the continuous stimulation of the performer’s energy.⁹ All that energy, together with the free manipulation of the scenic codes,

4 Renato Cohen, release, *Gotham SP*.

5 Ana Goldenstein, op. cit.

6 Flora Sussekind, “A imaginação Monológica,” *Revista USP*, July, 1992. Renato Cohen *Work in Progress na cena contemporânea*, (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1998).

7 Jacó Guinsburg, *Os processos criativos de Bob Wilson* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1996).

8 Ibid.

9 Jacó Guinsburg, *Da cena em cena*, (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1986), 23.



reinvents the art-life relationship in a tension boundary – in contrast with the symbolic time of the theater. “Visual landscapes, textualities, performers and luminescences in a scene of intensities in which several creative procedures circulate without the classical hierarchies of text-actor-narrative.”¹⁰ By recovering the ambivalence between reason and unreason, says Cohen, the field of drives, of unconscious irruptions, of sinister places, of transverse narratives are legitimized in atmospheres of abstract intensity, critical attacks, mental landscapes, derivative processes, resonant indices and abrasions.

A plan of evasion

In a slightly different key than the theatrical scene, it's worth mentioning a partnership that inflected the Company's course and in a certain way put it in suspension. It's about a project with Alejandra Riera, which is not presented under any definitive statute, be it that of an artist, a film-maker or a writer. Born in Buenos Aires and settled in Paris, although a nomad, she calls herself “statute-less,” despite documenting in texts and images “how to deal with others and with the stories that comes through us.” Since 1995 she has been dedicating herself to stockpiling an imaginary archive. It was what she called *Maquettes-sans-qualité* (*Mockups-without-quality*).¹¹

In this unprecedented form of archive, photographs, subtitles, writings, accounts, filmed documents are all mixed together like a “book in movement,” with no regular format. They are like the outline, “the plan of evasion,” and for all those that participated in her adventure, it's about a place “where you can narrate, think about the world and ourselves,” where one can deal with “unresolved issues.” Light or precarious, the mockup can be made or unmade, and has no intention for posterity. It can adapt itself to the present, and it's the present that's important. Each one of the mockups-without-quality opens up a place in which many voices make themselves be heard, where multiple complicities are interwoven and question the status of the work, of author, and of the artist. “More than proper names, they are places that are

¹⁰ Renato Cohen, *Work in Progress na cena contemporânea*, 24.

¹¹ Between the accomplices that populate her maquettes, she mentions the pseudonym “a woman-photographer.”: “A photographer then could have also been a nurse or a sweeper and her looks on this world (or also this *café waiter* on whom it was written that at the same time he is and is not that which is fit to him to represent and whose voice would probably have been heard if, in the face of the philosopher, he would cease to represent). “Photographer-nurse-sweeper” mentioned not as socio-professional categories, but as an overcoming of such. What remains to be done is always in a state of becoming and puts in check any assumptions. *A woman-photographer* is several at the same time and in this plurality the gestures rest, the acts performed alongside any other women or men. Also there rest the senses opened by the *anarchitecture* of the mockups-without-quality.” *Maquetas-sin-cualidad*, Autonomous production, Barcelona, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 2005, p. 13, to be published by n-1publications.



needed in order to liberate the word, to share responsibilities, shames, hopes, resistances.”¹² That is how the mockups-without-qualities became true “refuge-spaces,” where a work in progress unfolds, always collectively.

The publication of one of the moments from this project begins with the words of a shepherd from the French region of Lozère: “Certainly we will better understand the true nature of current desolation (‘in what type of world we live’) if we exclusively return to our own senses, instead of to systems of interpretation, all of them misguided, and bring nothing other than solace: the false illusion of mastery, at least intellectual. Tying oneself as such to sensory perception, without limiting oneself to it, is, in any case, the obligatory route for whoever wants to reconstruct his or her intelligence in practices, without the filter of representations: it’s the beginning, forcibly individual, of all excarceration, of awakening your atrophied sensibility at the bottom of yourself. At first it’s painful, like all detoxification, and simply shows the personal damage upon which everyone’s apparent adaptation rests.”¹³

Indeed, there is no way to mortgage perception to competent discourse. Thus, the place of the author in this anonymous, unsigned book, where citations also do not refer to their authors, where we are deprived of the authority that their celebrity could confer to what they say. “Abandon the author as evidence to rescue it as a problem.” Therefore, this way of erasing the mark of names, this operation of outwitting is not a game of hide-and-seek, but a way of highlighting that which they say or make seen, erasing themselves, in a certain way, so that their names don’t blur the questions. Furthermore, the risk of, through them, transforming the unknown into the known, forces it to an inverse operation. “If one could see the ‘author as someone who runs the risk of transforming the already known – or supposedly such – in something unknown, that for whom all the known necessarily entrenches a part of the unknown;’ ‘if the author is whoever accepts becoming the other who the everyone carries inside of themselves, precisely whose manifestations are impeded by society’s efforts,’ in this case, this ‘author,’ ‘throughout his/her work, would discover in him/herself another, different than what he/she had believed to be.’”¹⁴

And Riera adds, in her unique modesty: “When the hostility in which we live impedes us, for a number of reasons, from carrying out our projects

12 Idem

13 Ibid, 9.

14 Ibid, 13.

and indefinitely delays our plenitude, it is probable that we can only live by opening very small interstices here and there...”

It's possible to inscribe part of Riera's work in Jacques Rancière's description of some strategies of “artists who propose to modify the benchmarks of what is visible and utterable, of making see what was not seen, of making us see differently that which was seen very comfortably, of placing in relation that which it was not, with the objective of producing ruptures in the sensitive fabric of perceptions and in the dynamic of affects. This is the labor of fiction. Fiction is not the creation of an imaginary world opposed to the real world. It is the labor that works with dissents, that modifies the modes of sensorial presentation and the forms of enunciation when modifying the frames, the scales or the rhythms, building new relationships between appearance and reality, the singular and the common, the visible and its signification. This labor changes the coordinates of the representable; it changes our perception of sensorial events, our way of referring to them as subjects, the way by which our world is populated by events and figures.”¹⁵

Of course, says Rancière, no reality, outside of fiction, exists as such since all reality is already the configuration of what is given to us as reality, space constructed in which are connected the visible, the utterable, and the feasible. In this sense, both fiction and political action scrape on this reality, “they fracture it and multiply it in a controversial manner.”¹⁶ Thus, the challenge would be in building spatial-temporal *devices*, “different communities of words and things, of forms and significations.” And he concludes, regarding the function of art, if this expression still fits: “The images of art do not provide weapons for battles. They contribute to designing new configurations of the visible, of the utterable, and of the thinkable, and thus, a new landscape of the possible.”¹⁷ For now we can accept these formulations, leaving aside, provisionally, all of Rancière's controversy with Deleuze, derived, nonetheless, from an unconfessable proximity.


Politics of perception

In 2005, Alejandra Riera came to São Paulo and got to know the Ueinz Theater Company's work. Shortly after she arrived, she proposed to the group a partnership involving a project she calls *Enquête sur le/notre dehors*,


¹⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé*, (Paris: La fabrique, 2008), p. 72. This chapter is not found in the English translation *The Emancipated Spectator*, but rather a revised version was published in *Dissensus*. Due to the differences in wording, the translator opted to translate from the original French.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.


¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.



along the lines of her previous research. Out of that, it activated with the actors from the company a *device* for very precise, though open, inquiry and recording. It consisted of a group outing every day for several days to some place in the city suggested by the actors, where the group would approach someone of their choice – pedestrian, street vendor, student, police officer, anonymous, homeless person – and directly fire at them any questions that came to mind. In an unusual situation where the interviewee ignores everything about the interviewer – but sometimes perceives a certain strangeness – the rules of a journalistic interview are reversed and everything starts to go wrong, without anyone managing to detect the reason for the derailing. Places start skidding, the personal, professional or institutional masks which everyone dearly holds onto fall to the ground, allowing a glimpse of the unusual dimensions of the disturbing “normality” which surrounds us every day, as the artist used to say. With a displaced camera that puts into question the anchoring point of discourse, a hiatus is created between image and speech, and thus a suspension in the automatism of comprehension.



Let us take one minuscule example. We were in front of the Legislative Assembly in São Paulo and talking with a peanut seller. One of our actors asks him what the magic of that place is. The street vendor does not understand, and asks if the interviewer wants to know how much he earns. “No, I wanted to know what is your happiness here?” “I don’t understand”, says the peanut seller. The actor, a little agitated by his interlocutor’s deafness, asks him point blank: “I want to know what is your desire, what is the meaning of your life.” Then everything stops, there is a suspension in the dialogue, a silence, and we see the man sinking into a dimension that was totally other, far from any journalistic context. And he replied, quietly, with a certain difficulty: “suffering...” This is the basis without a basis of the entire conversation, the disaster which already occurred, the exhaustion which cannot be spoken of; it is the bitter isolation of a man cornered in front of a monumental building which represents an unshakeable, but nonetheless empty power; it is all that which only appears by means of a sudden interruption, triggered by a sort of vital irritation. An interruption provoked by the one who is supposed to be drowned in his own abyss – the crazy actor. And here everything shifts, and the spectator suddenly wonders what side life is on, and if that question still has any meaning, since it is nothing but a whole context of misery which emerges from this unusual dialogue. What causes an eruption is the psycho-social instability upon which everything else rests; and also, for fleeting moments, the germs of something else. In making the



situation schizophrenic, for a time there is the impression that everything may become derailed: functions, places, obeisance, discourses, representations. Everything may fall, including the device itself. Even if we meet what was there from the start – suffering, resignation, impotence – we witness disconnections that make a so-called normality flee, along with its linked automatic reactions; and also the evocation of other possible bonds with the world. As Riera says, this is not social reporting, nor a survey with humanist ends, but the recording of an experiment. It has no make-up, no claims to denounce a situation, and no inclination towards aesthetics. At the end, we do not really have a proper documentary, or a film, but an unusual object, a trace of an event which when seen may trigger other events – as was the case when some fragments were shown in the La Borde clinic, where Guattari once lived, in the presence of dozens of patients and psychiatrists, including the founder of the clinic, Jean Oury. In the enormous central hall of this decaying castle, one late Friday afternoon in September 2008, the people were waiting for the “Brazilian film” made by a theater group, according to the rumor that was going around. But there will be no “Brazilian film,” nor any “documentary,” nor any “film,” nor any “theatrical piece.” Absence of work. How to explain this without disappointing such high expectations? The weekly meeting ends, the hundred people seated in the auditorium turn towards the screen already stretched, the windows are closed in order to allow for the showing of the “Brazilian film,” and Alejandra Riera compliments those present and straightaway points out that she does not intend to show any film. She explains that that is only an experiment, that it is very difficult to talk about this... and instead of giving a talk on the project, on her intentions and its logic, as one would expect, she confesses that she has experienced great difficulty working lately... that in the end she could not manage it any more... to work or to build... imagine the effect of this talk on people who long ago had abandoned the circuit of “work,” “projects” and “results.” She then adds that lately all she could manage was to take things apart. She does not even stop from taking apart the tools with which she once worked, such as the computer... And she takes from her handbag two plastic bags with fragments of the disassembled keyboard: one of them contains the alphabet keys, the other the functions (Delete, Ctrl, Alt, etc.). She then passes around the transparent plastic bags containing the pile of pieces so that they can be circulated among those present. The spectacular expectation of a film gives way to an extraordinary complicity with an artist who does not call herself an artist, who does not bring her work, who confesses that she is

not able to work, who shows the remains of her computer, pieces that have been dismantled, evoking a project whose impossibility is immediately made known, leaving only the impasse, the fiasco, the paralysis, the exhaustion that is common to us all, whether we are lunatics or philosophers, artists or psychiatrists... Only once the link between “art” and “audience” is short-circuited, once the glamor or entertainment or culture or work or object which could be expected from that “presentation” of images is undone, and the central protagonist who leaves the stage is “de-individualized”: only in this way can something else occur – an event as the effect of a suspension. A projection of fragments can even take place, or a controversial discussion, at times accusatory or visceral, that drags into the night, into the twilight of the auditorium which no one has taken the trouble to light up and which ends with the hilarious question from a patient: “Do you all have a project?” As if reconnecting to Alejandra’s initial speech, in which she confessed about her difficulty in working, in constructing a project, in doing work, it evokes Blanchot’s intuition on the common ground existing between art and un-working, or Foucault’s idea about the relationship between madness and the rupture of work. Perhaps this is where we can find a performative exhaustion of the project or of the work, so that inaudible voices and improbable events can emerge.

Regarding the projected images, they are far from what you would expect. As Deleuze says: “Civilization of the image? In fact, it is a civilization of the cliché [...] There is no knowing how far a real image may lead: the importance of becoming visionary or seer. A change of conscience or of heart is not enough. [...] Sometimes, it is necessary to make holes to introduce voids and white spaces, to rarefy the image. [...] Not enough, for victory, to parody the cliché, to make holes in it and empty it. [...] It is necessary to combine the optical-sound image with the enormous forces that are not those of a simply intellectual consciousness, nor of the social one, but of a profound, vital intuition.”¹⁸

It’s true that the projection of the fragment with a street prophet (called by Riera: *De la Modernité*) evoked an irate explosion from one of the residents at La Borde. “Why are you showing us this, what right do you have to intensify the mystical delirium of a paranoid person on the street? This is not a film, it’s a provocation, an insult!” An inaugural, necessary explanation, which perhaps a more sane public wouldn’t dare to recriminate in a so harsh,

18 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, (London: Continuum, 1989), 20-21.

so beautiful, so exotic, so unbearable scene. Indeed, there is pain everywhere, and the film is not about exploring it, exotically, but also not to cover it up. Not avoiding the insanity there is on the streets, nor the loose word that rarely finds a place to land. The actors gave themselves the liberty to grab fragments of what runs loosely around them and that no one notices, or can't stand to see, or is forbidden to notice – and yet makes noise. It's about a buzzing that cannot read the threshold of affectability, given the sensory and media shield that cushions the harshness and the friction. Indeed, in the filmed fragments one notices and recognizes “types,” somewhat like caricatures, but precisely, when they appear, they end up being divested from their parameters and uniforms in an involuntary corrosion. As is the case with Kafka's father in *Letter to His Father*, according to Deleuze and Guattari, in the chapter “An Exaggerated Oedipus”: the father is inflated to such a point, he becomes so fat, he grows disproportionately, and explodes, leaving something else to be seen, a whole other movement underneath, molecular, which before was hidden. That's what happens in the inquiry: the recognizable identity of the interviewees or the interviewers crumbles throughout the conversation. As critic Jean-Pierre Rehm has observed, in an article about Riera's work:

“Those who seek the movement of expertise or of research will be disappointed. Or the odious gallery of portraits and their simple exhaustivity. For it is the logic of roles that one finds reversed here. The interlocutors express themselves in the mixed space of conversation, to take the title of one of the film's chapters. And if none of them is here freed from their eventual recognition (when this is helped by the uniform, commercial counter, or in the reinforced signs of psychological disorder), no one is found, however, stuck, mortgaged to an identity that would behoove one to exemplify, according to the sinister logic of the documentary that takes its time in the particular in order to better submerge in the typology. For no one knows exactly who asks the questions, who responds to them, nor, above all, with which precise aim. It's the experience of an insufficiency of this type of transmission that is, primarily, transmitted,”¹⁹ he concludes, Benjaminianly.

It's because there is, precisely, an effect of suspension in the very exhibition of the fragments or of the experience, or what Rehm called a “defensive logic.” Even in the titles of Riera's works, as he lists them: “*Maquettes-sans-qualité*,” “*unresolved problem*,” “*work in progress*,” “*work on strike*,” “*fragments*,” “*partial views*,” “*unrealizable film*” are some among countless

19 Jean-Pierre Rehm, “Enquête sur le/notre dehors de Alejandra Riera na Documenta 12,” in *Vacarme* n. 41, Paris, Autumn, 2007.

descriptions, hence prescriptive, given according to a rule of one *by fault* (*par défaut*). “It would be mistaken, however, to read here the topos, or even the pathos, let’s call it Beckettian or Blanchotian, of an essential misery of art. Even if the motive of the “scandal” of art, as Bataille said, of its placement in crisis, or even worse, of its condemnation, remains an inherited debt of the avant-garde, we shouldn’t deceive ourselves. Negation, attenuation, exhibition of the deviation or the retreat are arms bristled in a jealous way. This depreciating logic, submitted to the power of pretermission, represents more than a strategy dictated by the circumstances; the very *form* of one’s work. Or yet, the mark of one’s so very unique *formalism*. Exposition, catalog, projection, Alejandra Riera is dedicated to dressing them up in scare quotes, to placing very effectively a battery of obstacles to their apprehension. What does she organize as such: a mode of the resistance itself to the work itself. Not fragility, nor deficit, here, despite the overrulings, is a fortress whose edification was calculated by the fatigue of its siege.”²⁰


In this strategy of reserve and retreat, of obstinate opacity, it’s not about a mystification of the unspeakable or elitist hermeticism. As Rehm continues to say, “this trap does not signal any kind of paralysis, it doesn’t make a motor out of powerlessness, nor the helpless conclusion of the work. It underscores, on the contrary, the inordinacy of ambition. For, contrary to the retreat, stingily lyrical in vogue, of which we know how much politics offers alibis or allegedly objective protections, here it is an epic regime that is aimed for. Epic, we admit, in part wrecked. Further, frenzied. That is: traversed by a lyricism that doesn’t find its place inside if not *by excess*. Without a doubt it is because of this reason that her work often takes on the aspect of an epidemic unfolding in space, propagation without borders pointing without rest to a utopia of an ‘outside.’”²¹

(Dis)occupation

The collective occupation of one floor of the cultural center Sesc Paulista, in 2009, suggested by Ricardo Muniz Fernandes, intensified this coexistence between interruption and event, excess and the outside, opacity and the endeavor to “make visible.” The group performed their play inspired by Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* – called *Finnegans Ueinzz* – interspersed with the presence of several guests, among them psychiatrist Jean Oury, philosopher David Lapoujade, sociologist and critic Laymert Garcia dos Santos, author and critic

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.



Celso Favaretto, psychoanalyst and cinematographer Miriam Chnaiderman, as well as the projection of several films about the La Borde clinic, interviews with Guattari, Tosquelles, a short film of a dance by Min Tanaka in front of the residents at La Borde, by François Pain, etc. Parallely, Alejandra Riera proposed a *place of studies (lieu[x]d'études)* where actors, building security guards, cleaners were invited to situations of common reflection, with the intention that each one leaves aside his/her place of origin, and questions competencies, places of enunciation, instruments of perception that are available to be heard and seen. A dismantled computer on a table, the body without organs of technique, a surgery in which one reinvents the body, inspired in Artaud, an anagram by Maya Deren drawn on the floor... In this context, Godardian scenes were proposed, for example the reading of a very dense theoretical paper by the actors or cleaners, while they moved machines of perception and recording, shifting recognized competencies, and stirring the distribution among those who speak and those who work, those who represent and those who are represented, those who go crazy and those who theorize about the unconscious. This occupation lasted twelve days and created a time-space of large density and movement, with migrations of meaning and non-meaning in several directions, roaming the most heterogeneous registries: psychoanalytic, philosophical, or aesthetic discourse, theatrical play, conversations, filming, questioning the objective of the occupation, of the possibilities open to it, of the aesthetic and political intentions implied in the proposition and others which came up throughout the twelve days. "Do you think we were about to constitute an independent state?" Asks one of the actors, while the group took down one of the bleachers that the institution considered to be irremovable.

Evidently, very important questions remained unanswered, in the wake of such an experience. For example, regarding the coefficients of freedom conquered at the micro level, and their disproportion in relation to the mechanisms of domination in the macropolitical sphere, which precisely operate through the molecular dimension, by the capture of desire's microprocesses. As Lazzarato says, the artistic act becomes resistance as soon as there is transversality between the molecular action of rupture and composition in a specific domain and the external domains, with every problem of scale, of translation, of skipping out in affective logic. However urgent it may be to think this relation, it remains entirely undetermined. As Guattari exclaims in a different context: "Who knows if the revolution that awaits us will not have its principles enunciation stated by Lautréamont, Kafka or Joyce?" We

would add: also of something enunciated by the common man, the singular whatever, the anonymous devices, with their power of interruption or of invention, however minuscule it may be, in the conditions of contemporary contagion. Yet it is necessary to adduce: these conditions become increasingly dim and dimming. The Argentinian collective *Situaciones* speaks of cloning, when referring to this context where signs circulate encapsulated, sterile, like specters separated from the forces that engender them. It's as if the word had renounced to produce embodied meanings, linking their luck to the destiny of the general equivalent, money.²² As Deleuze noted it: "Maybe speech and communication have been corrupted. They're thoroughly permeated by money – and not by accident but by their very nature. We've got to hijack speech. Creating has always been something different from communicating. The key thing may be to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control."²³ The diagnostic is entirely current, so much so that not only the power of speech that vanishes in this *separate* state, but the connection of the word to the body, of meaning to desire, ability of the organism itself to perform when facing this saturation that placed it in parentheses. "We've quite lost the world, it's been taken from us," Deleuze said, in order to subsequently evoke the necessity of returning to believe in the world: "If you believe in the world you engender new space-times, however small their surface or volume."²⁴ Believing in the world is believing in the possibilities of the world, it is being in conditions to connect your strength with the strengths of the world, it is being able to believe in that which is seen and heard. Sympathizing with the becoming of the world and the becoming of the others in this world, and the becoming other of the others in this world.

Performative wedding

Part of our troupe traveled in 2005 at the invitation of the Théâtre du Radeau to spend a week with the actors from that company in La Fonderie, in the middle of France, in a project of "reciprocal affectation." Director François Tanguy and his group met us at a level of empathy, body-to-body, with hardly imaginable shamanic communication, in spite of the undeniable language barrier. He went around with a wooden pole that had teeth on one end, an object that we would use to scratch our backs, which was

22 Colectivo Situaciones, *Conversaciones en el impasse: dilemas políticos del presente*, (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2009).

23 Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 175.


24 *Ibid*, 176.

gifted to him by our common friend Laymert Garcia dos Santos, who had received it from a Xingu chief. For the indigenous people, this instrument serves to scarify the interlocutor's back during a conversation, and leaves a mark of the encounter on the person's body. Tanguy used this same principle with our actors.


Over the days, we ate together listening to him read aloud *The Man Suicided by Society*, next to an elderly anthropologist, once personal friend and publisher of Artaud, Alain Gheerbrant, who after the writer's death needed to look for new "unknown languages," as he said, and ended up in the Amazon where he met the Yanomami. In this atmosphere of intersecting artists and writers coming from such diverse places, such as the essayist and translator of Carmelo Bene, Jean-Paul Manganaro, a young exceptional singer, a Brazilian connoisseur of indigenous plumage, Walter Gomes, one of our actors asks Tanguy if we were invited because we were fallen angels. On the last day, before our presentation, François placed an enormous wing made of rags on this actor's back, which he wore during the presentation. In this interim the most unusual thing happened. On our second day in France, this actor proposed marriage to Laurence, one of the actresses from the French company. Extremely talented and sensitive, when she understood the tenor of the proposal performatively, she embraced it immediately. After the theatrical presentation of our final day, in a fairy-like ambiance, a wedding took place, she with her flashy bride's dress, he with a lavish cape of green velvet, and on his head was placed a gigantic deer mask, lacy and transparent. The guests wore exotic wigs, and that's how the wedding of the fallen angel and the seasoned actress took place; celebrated by François Tanguy. With a festive reception on that night, something was shifted between reality and fiction, art and life, unreason and the everyday. Afterward, the bride and groom went their separate ways. The next day, bidding farewell, the actress thanked the former groom for the celebration, and with humor suggested that he was the only person in the world capable of giving her such an experience.

You don't need solidarity, you need a cell phone


On a trip to Finland, in 2009, at the invitation to the International Baltic Circle Festival, after so much detachment from our theatrical format, as described above, I feared a return to the logic of the politically correct spectacle, to the representation of a group of outcasts, to the insipid glamor of festivals. Well, at the airport in São Paulo, from the outset, one of our actresses, in a state of great agitation, after having passed through immigration control,



with great commotion threw her bag to the floor and started speaking to her belongings in English. I understood immediately that I was mistaken; we would travel without any glory or serenity, but rather in a state of absolute tension and uncertainty, not towards international acclaim, but rather towards our own unknown. This young lady managed to get through every barrier of the airplane's crew so as to go sit next to the pilot and contemplate from the sky, and with such happiness, an island next to Africa that we had just flown over, and throughout the journey and stay, with irritation and joy, she denounced the micro-fascism that surrounds us at every corner, at all ends of the planet, she lent us her gaze, she impregnated our perception, she disseminated her sensibility and inflected ours, detecting the intolerable that has become our everyday banality, from the magazines in airports to the details of urban discipline – in an act of poetic guerrilla warfare that recalls Godard's character who threatens to blow up his backpack (of books) in a cinema in Jerusalem, in *Notre musique*.



On the ferry that took us to our lodgings on the island of Suomenlinna, in Helsinki, in an emergency we had to turn to a stranger to ask to borrow a cell phone. In response to our request, outlandish in his eyes, he submitted us to a police-like interrogation about the reasons for our stay on the island where he had lived for years, so as to eventually refuse the use of his cell phone, rubbing his black leather gloves together with contempt. I couldn't contain myself and retorted that some day he would need solidarity and would remember this moment – to which he responded: you don't need solidarity, what you folks need is a cell phone. One could not better sum up an era. We found out later that he is the director of a Finnish national museum, brother of a known artist, in short, a small fascist of the local aristocracy... Getting off of the ferry he wanted to beat me up for my impertinence, but I grabbed onto an actor whose size would even intimidate a fascist.



Perhaps this group is at times like Kafka's nomads. Despite the emperor's efforts to avoid the invasion of the nomads coming from the North, there are reports that they are already camped in the main square of the capital, out in the open, speaking their strange language, eating horse meat, with their bulging eyes and their strange laws... It's not them who are always moving, but in their way of being there and having brought the outside with them makes it so that something around them moves or flees... Now, all of this is not given, neither for Kafka nor for us, be it in our presence, or in our travels, be it in our presentations, be it in our articulations... it is important to weave it every day, this plane of consistency, stitch by stitch, as the *Situaciones*

group says so well, it is a work of great delicacy, a kind of craft-work, which retreats when faced with thundering expectations, but which resumes effectiveness when tackling micro-mutations, in concrete surroundings which are necessary to sustain and to incessantly broaden. But such a wager can only sustain itself if it finds allies in unconscionables that protest, to take up a beautiful formula from the 1960s. It is a movement that only breathes if it refuses the standard recognition, made of social inclusion or of glamorous incorporation, but also constantly overflows from its base group framework and looks for its resonances with other collective affects that nourish it or prolong it. It is important, thus, to go beyond the aesthetic *device*, theatrical in this case, necessary, no doubt, since it opens to a wind from outside that sweeps away clichés of madness or of art or simply of relations, raising different vectors, still unknown. It is important to dig to get to this exceedance, even if it is submitted to the reigning opacification and redundancy, even if one still doesn't find the expressiveness or narrativity that befits the vitality that is one's own. It's in any case the only point of departure, in our scale, for a type of counter-performativity, against the grain of what Negri has called Capital performativity and its global incidence.

The shipwreck

In 2011, the Finnish collective *mollecular.org* invited us along with the group *presque ruines* from France to conjointly make a film and put together a play inspired by Kafka's book *Amerika, or the Man Who Disappeared*. The extravagant aspect of this proposition, hailing from the bold mind of Virtanen Akseli consisted of carrying out this endeavor on a transatlantic voyage, during the two-week crossing between Lisbon and Santos, in a remote evocation of Ship of Fools, but also as in a possible "rediscovery" of Brazil. When Akseli asked us if we could confirm the reservation of the ship for the 25th of November, he added humorously: does the project seem sufficiently impossible to be desirable? Indeed, some years before he had made a trip between Finland and China, through the Trans-Siberian railway, with 40 people from different collectives, in a daring artistic/politic Project called *Capturing the moving mind*. This innovative experiment and the texts published by him were an inspiring precedent.²⁵ In our case, the film's project was inspired by a small paper by Félix Guattari entitled *Project for a film by Kafka*,

²⁵ The beautiful article of Virtanen Akseli and Jussi Vähämäki *Structure of Change*, and the dialogue between Virtanen Akseli and Bracha Ettinger, *Art, Memory, Resistance*, in *Framework*, Issue 4 December 2005, *The Finnish Art Review*, 2006.

where he tries to imagine what a film made *by* Kafka would be like.²⁶ Having flown into Lisbon, we embarked on the 25th of November, 2011, the three collectives from different parts of the globe, on *The Splendour of the Seas*. Here is, quite summarily, the context of this micro-political experiment.

In order to understand it, however, it's necessary to minimally describe what a cruise consists of – something that I had ignored entirely before we threw ourselves into this adventure. About two thousand people confined to the pseudo-luxury of a floating hotel ten stories high, velvet hallways, enormous chandeliers hanging everywhere, gilded handrails, panoramic elevators, swimming pools in the open air surrounded by gigantic television screens, huge saunas, bars, casinos, and restaurants everywhere, music and shows, slot machines and dance halls, theme parties next to the pool, dinner with the captain, commemoration when crossing the Equator with glowing champagne glasses. The hallucinating overdose of entertainment stimuli, gastronomic stuffing, an imperative for pleasure, produces an absolute saturation of the physical, mental, and psychological space of the passengers. A true semiotic bombardment from which no one can escape anywhere, not even in the cabin where the loudspeaker announces the next bingo competition or the internal television irradiates the news from the ship itself. The floating entertainment machine, however, has nothing extraordinary – it condenses our daily life, propelled contemporary capitalism. If it wouldn't offend historical victims, I would say that it is a type of concentration camp in reverse, post-modern, organized thoroughly according to the logic of consumption, of the spectacle, of the interminable intensification of pleasure, of the imperative for enjoyment, of the “your smile is my smile,” that one of our actors translated as “your card is my card.” Of course, all of this works thanks to an army of 700 underpaid employees who live in the basement and circulate smiling at the disposal of the clientele 24 hours a day, and whose habitation is blocked from passenger visitations.

Personally, I lived our embarking on the ship as an individual and collective shipwreck. Of course we were stunned by everything, the dimensions, the enormousness, the abundance, the solicitude, and the actors were increasingly shocked at being treated with such solicitude – if someone asked for ten desserts, the waiter brought ten desserts – after all, the final objective is to satisfy the client, however absurd their caprices seemed to be. This


26 This work by Félix Guattari was published by Stéphane Nadaud as *Les 65 rêves de Franz Kafka*, Paris, Nouvelles Editions Lignes, 2006 – and its translations into Portuguese and English were put out by n-1 publications, São Paulo, 2011, as *Máquina Kafka/Kafkamachine*.

type of inclusion through consumption, with its grotesque side, however, just highlighted the contrast at stake. There couldn't be anything more discrepant than our group, with its unique fragility, on the one hand, and the ostentatious and glaring luxury present everywhere. Two poles, two worlds, in an asymmetric confrontation, in an inevitable friction, in which we set out as losers and scorched. We had no chance of "winning," we barely knew if we would be able to "survive." It recalls the beautiful observation by Didi-Huberman about the fight between the fireflies, that need the dark in order to appear, and the light of the projectors that entirely sweep away the social space, concealing the glow of the fireflies. It's the triumphant fascist industry of political exposition, as Pasolini said.²⁷


Of course, we also had a project – we weren't mere tourist passengers. If on the one hand the unfavorable context for our project generated a doubled effort of those invested in the objective, it happened like an irritation with this taskness, with an anxiousness to do, to finish, to fill in the anticipated direction. On my part, I was overcome not by a laziness, but by a type of refusal, though passive, *Bartleby*-esque, of the type "I would prefer not to" make a film, make a play, make a work, make something nice, to finish... An anarchist desire, or rather, the desire to dive into a different dynamic, non-productive, a desire for unproduction, where quitting, unwillingness, withdrawal, the plunge, the surf, heading out to sea, all became interlaced in an intensive logic, of interpenetrated sensations, much more than constructive and displayable articulation. It's hard to describe to what extent the set of tiny gestures, miniscule movements, humorous or hilarious deviations seemed more effective in the parodic contrast to what from the outset some experienced as confinement, with its dose of violence and coercion.

Little by little we noticed that everything that we had foreseen went wrong, or worked poorly, or barely worked, or simply revealed its laughable or absurd dimension, where we re-encountered the disturbing, inevitable, and necessary question: but what the hell are we doing here anywhere? What an idea to put ourselves in such a maze of coercion and strangulation, in the midst of two thousand tourists, which one of our actors named "contemplastic world!" And now, from this situation of saturation, how does one leave, if there is no exit, surrounded by a sea that is definitely lived as decoration, and doesn't remotely evoke an exterior, an outside? It's important to say it: everything on the ship is made for you to turn your back to the ocean. It's


27 Georges Didi-Huberman, *op. cit.*, 32.



the absolute inside, of pleasure, of consumption, impermeable to any exteriority, the hypnosis of the casino, of the giant screen above the outside pool that displays precisely what is next to it: the ocean. It's incontestable that, at a certain moment, even inside of this protective bubble in which we had taken refuge, in a room on the fourth floor, in order to resist the athletic or flaccid normopathy that surrounded us, there was something that dissolved in us, among us. Everything slid, roles, functions, references, objectives, meanings, reasons. A kind of viscous collapse, which derailed the "what," the "what for," the "how," the "where," the "when," even though we occupied an enclosed space, following our own routine, rehearsal in the morning, filming in the afternoon, conversations at night. Despite this agreed-upon plan, some of us went through an involuntary chaotization, a subtle catastrophe, with its terrors, angst, nausea, claustrophobia, the "nothing is possible" that would make outbursts, the "it could have been so much better..." from this type of collective de-subjectivation, this vacuity, where everything seemed to go to pieces, or drown, including the foreseen and programmed projects... Chaosmosis.



While the ship worked perfectly, we were shipwrecked. It was necessary to part from this complex and confusing material, from this body-without-organs that was being proclaimed, and to follow the lines that from it arose. If the functions seemed disturbed, the actors, with their presence, affectivity, body relation, contaminated the surroundings and created a magnetic field that surprised and attracted the other collectives, who had trouble decoding the nature of this connection to which they couldn't resist, which held onto different things, much smaller or larger than the completion of a project.



And did it really make sense to oppose such an invasive surrounding with a theatrical play, even one inspired by Kafka (what better author than he to expose such claustrophobia, such an army of workers, such a maze of meaning)? Was it really the case to make a film that rivaled the cinema-becoming of this "contemplastic" world? In this context of extreme capture, an option would be, in fact, "to compete." Placing oneself in a situation of rivaling, of "defeating" this background bombardment, to try to do "more" than it, or be "better." Another option was to constitute, by withdrawing and shrinking, a space where flows circulated differently. It's always about ways for circulating desire, flows, drainage, overflows, leaks, escapes. Singularities could appear as long as they were not linked to places, functions, roles, accomplishments, though along different lines, susceptible to appear and be "exposed," perhaps even in the photographic sense, as long as a different

surface were offered, detached from the organizational framework, thus, supported in small deviations, interruptions, even the growl of a peevish actor.

Of course, countless situations of collective joy alternated with moments like these, in a very dizzying oscillation of what was offered by the ship at high sea. It was necessary to learn to “navigate,” in its most diverse meanings. When Deligny defines his attempts with autists as like a raft, he explains to what point it is important that, as in this rudimentary structure, the logs are connected in such a way as allowing them a certain flexibility, so that amidst the torment they let water pass through them and don’t break under the impact with the water. As he says: “When the issues abate, we don’t straighten out the lines – we don’t tighten the logs... on the contrary. We just maintain from the project that which connects us. You perceive the importance of the knots and the way they are tied, and the distance that the logs can have between them. It’s important that the knot be loose enough so that it doesn’t let go.”²⁸ Perhaps, the question is this – how to accompany this flow that was constituted there, amidst the nuisances that unsettled the articulation of signs, of signifiers, of functions, undoing the “functioning,” leading to an “unproduction,” a “slipping,” that actually constitutes a different collective corporeity? Simone Mina, our costume and set designer, with her sewing machine, clothes hanging on lines, threads and ribbons, came up with a “corner” in our rehearsal refuge, a cozy and rich space, where one and all could try out fabrics, come up with their own costumes or characters, sew, or just lie down sheltered by hanging clothes, like a protective cabana.

Atmosphere

It’s all a question of atmosphere. But what’s hardest is sustaining an atmosphere, is not heroically holding on to a framework, but rather a state of, simultaneously, lightness, presence, alertness, humor, openness... In a different context, Jean Oury discussed with Danielle Sivadon about what could be called a “constellation”: the open, fantasy graft, a delimitation, the feet, (going and coming, walking), humor, emerging, the possibility of inscribing oneself...²⁹ now, for Oury, or for Deligny in his way, these are something like the conditions for something to happen precisely because nothing needs to happen – when, on the contrary, it’s exactly when something needs to happen that the most impalpable events run the risk of being aborted.

28 Fernand Deligny, *Oeuvres*, ed. Sandra Alvarez de Toledo, (Paris: L’Arachnéen, 2007), 1128.

29 Jean Oury and Danielle Sivadon – *Constellations*, a conversation promoted, recorded and transcribed by Olivier Apprill, published in Portuguese in *Cadernos de Subjetividade*, São Paulo, PUC-SP, 2012.

It's where you see what's important. But what is it exactly that is important? What is seen? What is produced? What happens in the cracks? What is in a state of almost-being? What escapes? What lives in a state of exhaustion? What is composed together? What is it that, inside of this, lives together, alone, in the between, and questions, in a skewed manner, the thing that the factory-ship requires? What community is this, that doesn't need to show any work, which doesn't necessarily base itself on the work it creates?

At a certain moment, Erika Inforsato, one of the coordinators, wanted to read for the group some passages from her doctoral thesis in which she explained, among other things, what it meant for her to travel with this group. Written long beforehand, but resounding perfectly with the situation, since it made explicit the risks that accompanied us on the trips, even death. Indeed, it was an omnipresent risk on the ship – with the low railing on the decks and the individual cabin terraces with even lower railings. At any instant someone could, abruptly or in anger, jump over the side and disappear. And one of the unwritten “rules” that we bring with us on our trips, obviously, is this: it is forbidden to disappear, even if Kafka's book which inspired us was *Amerika, or the one who disappeared!!!* In one of the most beautiful passages from her thesis, entitled, *Unworking: Clinical and Political Constellations of the Common*,³⁰ she exposed, in the context of her work, the Blanchotian idea of *unworking*, or inoperativeness, which designated, with great precision, something that many were going through at that moment: a type of resistance to “create a work,” precisely amidst the filthy production offered by the ship. Thus, a set of impossibilities which opened, however, for a common event. Running the risk of concluding that nothing happened, nothing, and there is no work, but that in this absence of work something could happen in the nature of the common. “Community for the art of not creating work,” says Erika Inforsato. Sustaining the unsustainable, an encounter with the gravity of life, above all facing populations in processes of disaffiliation and vulnerability, says the author, require a readiness, a distance that doesn't break the affect, this ascesis, she adds, of never presuming what someone else's life is like, or never investing in obligatory bonds, freeing oneself of the *telos*, resisting spectacular, overly visible, or prescriptive interventions: resisting not by reinventing the wheel, but by making it spin in a different direction, even if it comes to a point of crushing the encounter. At times it is necessary to leave the situation, observes the author, stop wanting to save and be saved, give

30 Erika Alvarez Inforsato, *Desobramento: constelações clínicas e políticas do comum/Unwork (Desoeuvrement): clinical and political constellations of the common* (São Paulo/Helsinki: n-1 publications, soon to be published).

up on the charade so that something may be possible. Sustaining the suspension, adrift instead of in opposition, infiltration instead of intervention, leaving the field open, instead of betting on the constructions.

The ambiguity of the notion of “absence of work,” inspired by Blanchot, is known by every reader of the *History of Madness*. On the one hand, Foucault shows that in the relationship between art and madness, work collapses and is abolished. On the other hand, this work of madness is triumphant, according to him, to the extent that it forces the world to measure itself up to its inordinacy. In this sense, instead of measuring ourselves based on the size and scale of the ship, we could evaluate this surrounding based on this “inordinacy” that was ours. In fact, throughout the voyage we had lost several things – meanings, hierarchies, projects, certainties, securities. Perhaps they are the best moments, these, to be able to “think.” Not thinking an “object,” but asking oneself: why make a group, why sustain a group like this, what is this Ueinz. A group that experiments something on the order of the unlivable, perhaps of the useless. But through which one attempts to breathe something, especially in unbreathable surroundings.

When debarking onto solid ground, for a long time everywhere I looked I saw, with an indescribable sickness, *The Splendour of the Seas*. The ship caricaturely explicated something of the contemporary world, as well as the distance to which they are thrown, these fragile, precarious, unique existences, and the means by which they can sew among themselves invisible threads that give support to an existential territory where they insist upon living, not just surviving. After all, what is the crossing of an Atlantic Ocean next to this other challenge, a chaosmotic crossing?

In a radiophonic conference aired in 1967, Foucault referred to the ship, the one from the 19th century most of all, as a “floating space, a place without a place, living on its own, closed about itself, free in its own way, but fatally at the hands of the sea’s infinite” and that, from port to port, it goes to the colonies to seek in them what they hold most precious. One can understand, therefore, since the 16th century, the ship has been our largest “economic instrument and our biggest reserve of imagination. The ship is the heterotopias par excellence. Civilizations without ships are like children whose parents did not had a great berth upon which to play; their dreams then dry up, the espionage replaces in them the adventure, and the heinousness of the police, the beauty of the corsairs.”³¹ Certainly, today’s ship, mere prolonging of the

31 Michel Foucault, *Le corps utopique - Les Hétérotopies*, Paris, Lignes, 2009, p. 36, to be published in portuguese by n-1 publications (upcoming).

world, has ceased to be what Foucault described. Perhaps it is needed, in light of this, to look back to the image of the raft as Deligny exposed it.

Years after this conference, Foucault referred to the infamous men and their insignificant, inglorious lives, men who by a game of chance were illuminated for a brief moment in the floodlights of power which they came face to face with, and whose words then appeared to have been traversed by an unexpected intensity. Perhaps we no longer find those resplendent, although inessential, lives; those poems-lives, “particles endowed with more energy the smaller and more difficult to detect they are.” Diluted between the multiple mechanisms of anonymous and arbitrary power, the words do not enjoy that theatrical resplendence and fleeting vibration which Foucault savored in the archives – it is banality which takes center stage. But from within, signs of singularity appear to confirm the desire for something else. As Deleuze used to say, even before the term biopolitical was coined, we are all in search of a “vitality.” Singular, collective, anonymous, plural, suspensive, intensive, unworking – within an undefined boundary, each time reinvented, between exhaustion and a fleeting vision.

THE UEINZZ THEATER COMPANY

Ueinzz is a scenic territory for whoever feels the world staggering. As in Kafka, from seasickness on land it creates material for poetic and political transmutation. In the ensemble, there are masters in the art of soothsaying, with notorious knowledge in improvisation and neologisms; specialists in maritime encyclopedias, frustrated trapeze artists, dream hunters, interpretive actresses. There are also inventors of the pigeon-slang, musical unknowns, beer masters. It lives by a razor's edge experimenting on aesthetic practices and transatlantic collaborations. The community of those without community, for a community to come.

The Voyage previously mentioned was possible due to the generous collaboration of a vast network of the company's friends, whose list can be found on: **ueinzz.org**

The group currently consists of the following people: Adélia Faustino, Alexandre Bernardes, Amélia Monteiro de Melo, Ana Goldenstein Carvalhaes, Ana Carmen del Collado, Artur Amador, Eduardo Lettiere, Erika Alvarez Inforsato, Fabrício de Lima Pedroni, José Petronio Fantasia, Leonardo Lui Cavalcanti, Luis Guilherme Ribeiro Cunha, Luiz Augusto Collazzi Loureiro, Maria Yoshiko Nagahashi, Oness Antonio Cervelin, Paula Patricia Francisquetti, Pedro França, Peter Pál Pelbart, Simone Mina, Valéria Felipe Manzalli.



THE DETERRITORIALIZED UNCONSCIOUS¹

As it is known the expression “Refoundation of the Unconscious on Deterritorialization” is in *Cartographies Schizoanalytiques*. It has the advantage of condensing, if not the larger theoretical project, at least an incontrovertible guiding thread of Guattari’s thought throughout his life, whether in his individual work, whether in his partnership with Deleuze, or even in his diverse practices, as much in the clinical field as his political militancy or other intersections. I take this thread, therefore, not as a legacy to be revered, but as a problematic line to be unfolded, prolonged, put in variation. It’s part of this Guattari-Effect that our encounter puts in evidence, and in the dislocations in which it implies. I can’t help but mention a supplementary circumstance without which this communication would lose its meaning. More than two decades ago, parallel to my academic activities in the University in São Paulo as a professor of Philosophy, I started a clinical activity in a Psychiatric Day-Hospital. The first time that I put my feet in that institution, by chance, was in the company of Guattari himself, whose institutional supervision I had the incumbency of translating. In any case, since then my daily contact with so-called psychotic patients began, which inflected my personal and professional life, and it nourished, inevitably, my philosophical research. I cannot deny Guattari’s theorizations regarding schizophrenia, the machinic unconscious, transversality in the institution, his experience in La Borde, the way he smuggled fragments of his practice into the philosophic and micropolitical dominion inspired me enormously over all of these years. One of the fruits of this proximity was the constitution of a theatrical troupe with so-called psychiatric patients. But this experience soon extrapolated the walls of the institution and poured into the theatrical circuit of the city, intriguing critics and irrigating art collectives. In a few years, already disconnected from the hospital circuit, we showed our work throughout Brazil, in France and in Finland. One of the montages we did was based on *Finnegans Wake*. As soon as we decided to set up *Finnegan’s*, I was impelled to read Joyce frenetically, including a few critics of his work. In passing, I could not ignore the ambiguous place Joyce occupies in the Deleuze-Guattari trajectory. There appears a certain reticence as to Joyce’s desire for a total work of art, despite the fragmentary nature of his writing. The contrast with Beckett is obvious: in a similar personal

¹ This text has been presented in the encounter titled *The Guattari Effect*, organized by Éric Alliez, in the ambit of the Center for Research in Modern European Philosophy, in Middlesex, 2008.

situation (foreign, Irish, unearthed) Beckett does the inverse of Joyce: a minor literature, made of stuttering, subtraction, without totalizing pretensions, almost without “work.”

Curiously, as Dosse says, when he died, Guattari had on his bedside table two books: *Les Chiens D’Éros*, by D. H. Lawrence, and *Ulysses*, by Joyce, in English. In the same biography, Marie Depussé gives us a strange testimony about Guattari’s literary ambitions: “He wasn’t a true writer and I think he suffered for it. He had the desire to create. I believe he was too obsessed with Joyce.” Guattari’s last book carries in the title the distorted mark of Joyce, *Chaosmosis*. Fate decided to intersect my reading of Guattari with that of Joyce, and I doubt that this coincidence has helped me understand one or the other. *Cartographies Schizoanalytiques* and *Finnegans Wake* – truly an anomalous junction. In their genre, style and purpose, it would be difficult to imagine two writings more distant from each other. A text by Beckett regarding his friend in exile, however, allowed me to situate myself in the distance that separates both and make each of these very extravagant and diverging projects resonate. Beckett says, addressing himself to the critics of *Work in Progress*: “And if you don’t understand it, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is because you are too decadent to receive it [...] You complain that this stuff is not written in English. It is not written at all. It is not to be read – or rather it is not only to be read. It is to be looked at and listened to. His writing is not *about* something; *it is that something itself*... When the sense is sleep, the words go to sleep. When the sense is dancing, the words dance [...] The language is drunk. The very words are tilted and effervescent... Mr. Joyce has desophisticated language. And it is worthwhile remarking that no language is so sophisticated as English. It is abstracted to death. Take the word ‘doubt’: it gives us hardly any sensuous suggestion of hesitancy, of the necessity for choice, of static irresolution. Whereas the German ‘Zweifel’ does, and, in less degree, the Italian ‘dubitare.’ Mr. Joyce recognizes how inadequate ‘doubt’ is to express a state of extreme uncertainty, and replaces it with ‘in twosome twominds’ [...] This writing that you find so obscure is a quintessential extraction of language and painting and gesture, with all the inevitable clarity of the old inarticulation. Here is the savage economy of hieroglyphics. Here, words are not the polite contortions of 20th century printer’s ink. They are alive. [...] This inner elemental vitality and corruption of expression imparts a furious restlessness to the form, which is admirably suited do the purgatorial aspect of the work. There is an endless verbal germination, maturation, putrefaction [...] In what sense, then, is Mr. Joyce’s work purgatorial? In the



absolute absence of the Absolute. Hell is the static lifelessness of unrelieved viciousness. Paradise the static lifelessness of unrelieved immaculation. Purgatory a flood of movement and vitality...”²

Joyce, Lacan, Guattari

Might there be a relation between Guattari’s passion for Joyce and his reading of Lacan? In the 1975-6 Seminar XXIII, Lacan asks: “Why is Joyce unreadable? [...] Maybe because he doesn’t invoke in us any sympathy.”³ But in noticing that he is in fact read, even without an understanding of what is read, Lacan suggests that maybe it relates to the readers feeling that what is present is “the enjoyment of the one who wrote it.” The essential is the relation to language as enjoyment. The pure game with language, the *pun*, even when it fails, proves in any case, Lacan says, that Joyce is exonerated (*desabonné*) of the unconscious. In it, language “is the only thing of his text we can hold on to,” even if it leaves us bewildered. “Where it speaks, it enjoys, and it knows nothing.”⁴ But the sinthome which Joyce would carry, according to Lacan, differs from the classical symptom (message directed at the other). Given the weakening of the paternal metaphor, he would be nothing other than a prosthesis which offers him a replaced ego upon which he “makes his name.” The necessary relation with the Name-of-the-Father is noticeable. The sinthome is equivalent, in fact, with the Oedipal complex. Differently from the symptom, which one can let go of with cure, the sinthome is that which cannot be abandoned in its prosthetic function of maintaining conjugated the three spheres of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary. It can glaze the aspect of art for certain artists, of mathematics for the mathematicians, of God for believers, of psychoanalyst itself for certain analysts, of the loved one for the lover. In sum, it would be a part of the “structure.”

Now, nothing of this is present, not even from afar, in Guattari, and right from his first texts he joyfully gets rid of the very notion of Name-of-the-Father. When he invokes Joyce, it is in an entirely different sense, one which goes against all structuring or unifying functions. In *Psychanalyse et Transversalité*, for instance, Joyce is summoned as a machinic opening: “the unconscious is nothing else than the real to come, the transfinite field of potentialities hidden by an open chain of signifiers that await to be opened

2 Samuel Beckett, in *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress*, Paris, Shakespeare and Co, 1929.

3 Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire XXIII, Le Sinthome*, Paris, Seuil, 2005, p. 151.

4 Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre XX, Encore*, Paris, Seuil, p. 95 : *Là où ça parle, ça jouit, et ça sait rien.*



and articulated by a real agency of enunciation and effectuation. [...] It is the same as saying that the cuts to this chain, including the more ‘intimate,’ and why not too, of the intended ‘private life,’ could be revealed as decisive nodes of historic causality. Who knows if the revolution that awaits us will not have its principles of enunciation bent by Lautréamont, Kafka or Joyce?”⁵ Lacan’s theorization of *sinthome* as a function of prosthesis or of the “individual’s” psychic destiny and Guattari’s poetico-political opening, prefiguration of the collective assemblage of enunciation, couldn’t be any more different.

To continue this unwise comparison, it isn’t at all certain that Guattari experimented the same enjoyment that Joyce did in his writing, even if Guattari’s word games express at times a great freedom, intermediated with fragments of “jargon” and hardenings which testify before anything else to a true suffering in writing. “Writing so that I won’t die. Or so that I die otherwise... Deleuze is concerned that I’m not producing anymore... I’m home, kind of fucking around... It’s the first time I write Deleuze here instead of Gilles. No more Fanny. Epiphany. A cavity of lack. Gilles writing a big article... He works a lot. We’re really not of the same dimension. I’m a sort of inveterate autodidact, a do-it-yourself guy, a sort of Jules Verne – *Voyage to the Center of the Earth*. In my own way I don’t stop... But you can’t tell. It’s the work of never-ending reverie. Lots of ambitious plans. Everything in my head, nothing in the pocket. Epiphany... I will keep giving these texts to Fanny and, at the end of the chain, Gilles. I can tell they don’t mean anything to him. The ideas, sure. But the trace, the continuous-discontinuous text flow that guarantees my continuance, obviously he doesn’t see it like that. Or he does, but he’s not interested. He always has the *oeuvre* in mind.”⁶ The reader finds himself faced with a true *malaise*: “Have to be accountable. Yield to arguments. What I feel like is just fucking around. Publish this diary for example. Say stupid shit. Barf out the fucking-around-o-maniacal schizo flow. Barter whatever for whoever wants to read it... write right onto the real. But not just the professional readers’ real, ‘*Quinzaine* polemical’ style. The close, hostile real. People around. Fuck shit up. The stakes greater than the *oeuvre* or they don’t attain it... Writing to Gilles is good when it enters into the finality of the common project. But for me, what matters, really, is not that. The energy source is in the whatever, the mess.”⁷ His appeal to a right to derail finds added to it an almost Kafkian formulation: “I still have

5 Félix Guattari, *Psicanálise y Transversalidad*, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, p. 235 (translated from the Argentinian edition).

6 Félix Guattari, *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*, NY, Semiotext, 2006, ed. by S. Nadaud, p. 399.

7 Idem, p. 400.



no control over this other world of systematic academic work, secret programming over dozens of years. I lack too much. Too much lag has accumulated... I need to stop running behind the image of Gilles and the polish, the perfection that he brought to the most unlikely book... Dare to be an asshole. It's so hard, being strapped onto Gilles! Be stupid in my own way."⁸

Psychosis and chaosmosis

Let us skip then directly to the heart of this book whose title was inspired by Joyce, *Chaosmosis*' greatest wager is to reconcile chaos and complexity on a same plane of immanence. Guattari refuses a simple and static idea of chaos: "those in particular which attempt to illustrate it in terms of mixtures, holes, caverns, dusts, even as fractal objects."⁹ He insists mainly on the following points: 1) chaos "chaotizes," 2) it is "virtual," 3) it carries with it "hypercomplexity." An infinite velocity, bypassing discursive logics, and "engendering disorder as much as complex virtual compositions."¹⁰ "In sum, chaos is to be conceived as virtual matter, inexhaustible reservoir of infinite determination [...] which implies that in returning to chaos it is always possible to find in it matter to complicate the state of things."¹¹ In a surprising parenthesis in *Chaosmosis*, he adds: "It is to Freud's credit that he showed the way in the *Traumdeutung*."¹² Guattari's *Chaosmosis*, however, does not coincide with the primary process. Differently from Freud, he privileges access to chaosmosis, what he calls a "chaotic umbilical zone," which passes primarily through psychosis and its pathic apprehension rather than neurosis, dreams or their interpretation. The chaosmic dimension, prior to discursivity, which the psychotic incarnates, literally "leaps at your neck," as Guattari puts it. What characterizes it is a singular combination of homogenesis and heterogenesis, of frozen repetition and incessant deterritorialization, where we pass from the "feeling of catastrophe about the end of the world" to the "overwhelming feeling of imminent redemption of every possibility," as we have seen before.¹³ The existential ecstasy alternates between vacuity and complexity. This coexistence exceeds the figure of the mentally ill, with both poles finally rejoining everywhere, under diverse modalities. "We are confronted by it (chaosmosis) in group life, in economic relations, machinism

8 Idem, p. 404.

9 Félix Guattari, *Cartographies Schizoanalytiques*, Paris, Galilée, 1989, p. 133.

10 Idem, p. 133-4.

11 Idem, p. 134.

12 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 80.

13 Idem, p. 81. Cf. the chapter "Exhaustion and Creation".



(for example, informatics) and even in the incorporeal Universes of art or religion.”¹⁴ To the schizoanalyst lies the task of diving into the homogenetic immanence and liberating heterogenetic coefficients there where they are to be found, beyond any oral performance, the family and the idealized figure of the analyst.

We would have then to suppose, according to the context, two kinds of homogenesis converging within the primary heterogenesis of the depths. That of the neurotic, with his everyday “distraction and avoidance” of the chaosmosis, and that of the pathic-pathological, the loss of colors, flavors, tones, where we also find emerge an “alterification relieved of the mimetic barriers of the self.”¹⁵ Guattari’s formula is twofold: on the one hand, as with Nietzsche, we “have to move quickly, we mustn’t linger on something that might bog us down: madness, pain, death, drugs, the vertigo of body without organs, extreme passion.”¹⁶ On the other hand, we must fight the reactive approach to chaosmosis, which secretes “an imaginary of eternity, particularly through the mass media, which misses its essential dimension of finitude: the facticity of being-there, without qualities, without past, without future, in absolute dereliction and yet still a virtual nucleus of complexity without bounds.”¹⁷ Everywhere it falls on us to detect the chaosmotic “congealings”, which Guattari calls “Z or Zen points of Chaosmosis.”¹⁸

If psychosis starkly reveals an essential source of being-in-the-world¹⁹, it is followed by a nuanced warning. “It is not therefore Being in general which irrupts in the chaosmotic experience of psychosis, or in the pathic relationship one can enter into with it, but a signed and dated event,” with its ontological homogenesis, the sentiment of catastrophe, of the end of the world, its peculiar texture, after which nothing will be as before, except for the “alarming oscillation between a proliferating complexity of sense and total vacuity, a hopeless dereliction of existential chaosmosis.”²⁰ If Guattari compares this ontological petrification, so notable in psychosis, with a freeze-frame, he adds the following: it reveals its basic (or bass) position in the polyphony of chaosmotic components. It is not, therefore, a degree zero of subjectivation, but an “extreme degree of intensification. It is in passing

14 Idem, p. 85.

15 Idem, p. 84.

16 Idem, p. 84.

17 Idem, p. 84.

18 Idem, p. 84.

19 Idem, p. 77.

20 Idem, p. 81.

through this chaotic “earthing,” this perilous oscillation, that something else becomes possible, that ontological bifurcations and the emergence of coefficients of processual creativity can occur.”²¹ One could object that the congealing to which pathology attests is contrary to the processuality that Guattari defends, and the statute of schizophrenia in his work carries this paradox from the beginning. But the terms in which the question is put clarifies the anchoring point of Guattari’s approach. The fact that the sick psychotic patient at times is incapable of a heterogenetic reestablishment does not contradict the richness of the ontological experimentation with which he, in spite of himself, is confronted. He isn’t the postmodern hero or normative model, and the chaosmotic ecstasies aren’t the privilege of psychopathology; in the psychotic there appear with less mediation simultaneous strident combinations of speeds and slownesses, births and wreckings of worlds. As he recalls it: “A world is only constituted on the condition of being inhabited by an umbilical point – deconstructive, detotalizing and deterritorializing – from which a subjective positionality embodies itself [...] At the same time, this vacuole of decompression is an autopoietic node on which existential Territories and Incorporeal Universes of reference constantly reaffirm and entangle themselves, demanding and developing consistency.”²² The fact is that the collapse of sense, in general, promotes a-significant discursivities, causing ontological mutations. “So chaosmosis does not oscillate mechanically between zero and infinity, being and nothingness, order and disorder: it rebounds and irrupts on states of things, bodies and the autopoietic nuclei it uses as a support for deterritorialization [...] Here we are dealing with an infinity of virtual entities infinitely rich in possibles, infinitely enrichable through creative processes [...] Infinite speeds are loaded with finite speeds, with a conversion of the virtual into the possible, of the reversible into the irreversible, of the deferred into difference.”²³ Final formula, a Nietzschean one, calls upon the “incorporeal eternal return of infinitude.”²⁴

Modulations of existence

The entire question rests on how the “becoming consistent” of these autopoietic foci come into effect, how these “choices of finitude” occur, in which manner the inscription in a “memory of being” is given, and how to

21 *Idem*, p. 82.

22 *Idem*, p. 80.

23 *Idem*, p. 112-3.

24 *Idem*, p. 113.

produce such an intensive ordering, what we could subsequently call proto-subjectivation or subjectivation *tout court*. This second fold, of active and creative autopoietic ordering which unleashes from the passivity inherent in the first chaotomic fold, constitutes Guattari's fundamental interest.²⁵ "To produce new infinities from a submersion in sensible finitude, infinities not only charged with virtuality but with potentialities actualizable in given situations, circumventing or dissociating oneself from the Universals itemized by traditional arts, philosophy and psychoanalysis: intensive and processual becomings, a new love for the unknown."²⁶ The event is simultaneously actualization and intensive deterritorialization, "instantaneous and eternal, although already crystallized in spatial coordinates, temporal causalities, and energetic intervals." But there is an "existentifying" clause, which is reiterated innumerable times. The proto-subjective or even subjective finitization, supported on a prominent component of the infinite chaotomic and deterritorialized velocity doesn't abolish the infinitization and the deterritorialization that it promotes, a little like a throw of the dice wouldn't abolish chance. In that to and which his writing doesn't cease to traverse, and by means of instances which put complexity into discourse, Guattari is especially interested in manners of auto-referencing that coincide with the very process of subjectivation.

Hence, a self-founding subjectivity, consisting of itself, and processing its own coordinates. Referring to the neurologist Viktor von Weizsäcker, Guattari alludes to the idea of a subjectivity in relation to the depths (*Grundverhältnis*) – which proposes that the living (*vivants*), following different modulations, have an originary relation with life as depth. As Schotte explains: "As paradoxical as it may appear, the living phenomena cannot be represented through the natural forms of space and time. To take the example of causality, the living is an undergoing and a self-moving, it presents itself as being its own cause. The objectivity of the clinician consists, then, in substituting the ontic for the pathic. While physics presupposes that a conscious I be put face to face with a known object, biology [...] [assumes] that the living finds itself in a determination whose depth cannot itself become an object. The living, in its 'relation with the depth' (*Grundverhältnis*) discloses the ground: a non-objectifiable 'zoè' [...] In its critical moments, life goes to 'the depths,' it resurges from within the depths. The decision [which corresponds to the crisis] is 'Grundlegung,' attestation

25 Idem, p. 112-3.

26 Idem, p. 117.



and positioning of deepenings through the originary moment of a ‘relation with the depth,’ the obscure ground, indefinite life.”²⁷

As Maldiney says: the *depth* is the indeterminable, Anaximander’s *apeiron* from which emerges all finitude as its own abyss.²⁸ This is perhaps what Guattari, in the counter current of Heidegger’s lineage and even of phenomenology, will call Chaosis. The consistency and subjective inflection thereby arising, in their turn, shall depend more on the categories which von Weizsäcker called pathic, more on the modalities of “existentializing” than ontic determinations. What interests a patient, for example, is not what he is in the eyes of the doctor (ontic category), but what he is capable of, what he wants, what he should become, what he does or doesn’t desire and so on. Such verbs modulate the pathic subject, and as Schotte – to whom Guattari refers in his *Cartographies Schizoanalytiques* – puts it in any human or clinical situation, what is at stake is always the will, action, power, sieves that fix, provisionally, the flux of becoming, modulating it. In this way, the pathic dimension is less of the order of suffering than that of the experimenting, neither passive nor active, close to Blanchot’s “neuter” or Deleuze’s ‘impersonal,’ an a-subjectivity.

At stake is the abandoning of the all or nothing logic: “Here, existence is won, lost, intensified, traverses qualitative thresholds due to its adherence to this or that incorporeal Universe of endo-reference.” In a philosophical amplification, he affirms: “an open range of existential intensities substitutes the brutal caesurae of Being/Non-being” since “Being is modulation of consistency, rhythm of montage and demontage. Its cohesion, if not its coherence, reveals neither an internal principal of eternity, nor an extrinsic causalist framing which would maintain together beings in the same world, but refers to the conjunction of processualities of consistency themselves intrinsically engaged in generalized connections of existential transversality.”²⁹

Psychoanalysis and post-psychoanalysis

The ethical wager is to multiply the “existential shifters” to infinity, joining creative mutant Universes. The ontological pragmatic corresponds to this function of existentialization, detecting intensive indices, diagrammatic operators in any point or domain whatever, without any ambition to

27 Jacques Schotte, *Une pensée du clinique. L'oeuvre de Viktor von Weizsäcker*, Université Catholique de Louvain, Faculté de psychologie et des sciences de l'éducation, May 1985. Notes by Ph. Lekeuche and reviewed by the author.

28 Henri Maldiney, *Penser l'homme et la folie*, Grenoble, Millon, 1991.

29 Félix Guattari, *Cartographies Schizoanalytiques*, op. cit., p. 138.



universalize them, so that what is demanded are not instruments of interpretation but cartographic tools. Even the little “a” of Lacan, with its admirable deterritorializing character, or the partial objects of Melanie Klein, can be considered as “crystals of singularization,” “points of bifurcation outside of dominant coordinates, from which mutant universes of reference might emerge.”³⁰ However, it is not fitting to make of them universals of desire in a cartography that is itself mutant. If we approach Guattari in this manner, little by little the psychoanalytic notions that he invokes, in an entirely redesigned landscape, will indicate more clearly to where his schizoanalytic project points. He defends a post-mediatic age, indicating with this not so much the surpassing of media but rather its miniaturization, its personalization, multicentering, decentralization, fractalization, proliferation, its propagation as well as the diversification of its modalities of enunciation, the molecularization and dissemination of its apparatus, in sum, the generalized appropriation of its enunciative potential. This implies and at the same time results in a sociotechnical, semiotic and above all subjective reinvention. In the same way, we could say that his schizoanalytic elaboration points to a post-psychoanalytic age whose theoretical and cartographic operators he intends, without any universalizing ambition, to establish. The first pages of *Cartographies Schizoanalytiques* are very clear regarding the status of this theorization. No monotheism, no scientificity, but a liberty to take or abandon whatever is wanted from this open collection that he does not stop completing, remaking, amassing, redesigning, in order to rearrange cartographic criteria in face of the urgencies of the present, the evoked situations, always singular, whether clinical, institutional or scientific. As we read in his eighth rule for analysis of the machinic unconscious: “Every idea of principle must be taken as suspect.”³¹ The theoretical elaboration is even more necessary and more audacious to the extent that a schizoanalytic assemblage admits its precarious nature. Or, as it was already stated in the preparatory texts for *Anti-Oedipus*: “Theory is, or needs to be, instrumentalist, functionalist... Break with the theory-oeuvre, and arrive at: ‘to each his own theory.’ Collective assemblages of enunciation *produce* their own theories by articulating themselves on planes of consistency... Theory is artifice. Its foundation is what, historically, is most deterritorialized, it works with machinic indices,”³² this movement being, by definition, unending. It

30 Idem, p. 52.

31 Félix Guattari, *O Inconsciente maquínico*, Campinas, Papirus, 1988, p. 191 (*L'inconscient machinique – essais de schizo-analyse*).

32 Félix Guattari, *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*, op. cit., 366.

is as if Guattari suspected an end to oeuvres and canonical redundancies, academics included, that could weaken what for him was in play, in this vanishing, maddening, derailing construction. So then, the ethics that guide the project are clear: to make “flourish the pragmatic of incorporeal events that will recompose the world.”

All the effort goes in the direction of rethinking that which has by convention been called the Unconscious, this time *as a function* of the assemblages. What Freud may, in the end, have accomplished, is a mutation of the Assemblage of Enunciation. In this sense, the very problematization of the unconscious should be refounded in the direction of a partial subjectivity, pre-personal, polyphonic, collective and machinic – under the sign of a logic of non-discursive intensities on the one hand, and the pathic incorporation-agglomeration of these vectors of partial subjectivity within de-territorializations on the other, all of which are to be adequately mapped. “Everything ... leads me to think that it would be preferable that it [psychoanalysis] multiply and differentiate, as far as possible, the expressive components that it introduces. And that its own Assemblages of Enunciation were not necessarily placed adjacently to the divan, in such a way as to exclude a dialectic of seeing. Analysis has all to gain in amplifying its means of intervention; it can work with speech, but equally with a modular mass (as with Gisela Pankow) or with video, cinema, theater, the institutional structures, familial interaction, etc. – everything, then, which would allow the sharpening of the facets of a-signification of the ritornellos analysis finds, where it is more apt to unleash its catalyzing functions crystallizing new Universes of reference [...] and explore its pragmatic virtualities.”³³

We do not think that this task of amplification, initially attributed to transversality, and then to institutional analysis, and finally, schizoanalysis, has suffered decisive inflections throughout Guattari’s trajectory, ever since its first, still stammering formulations, but also in the midst of terminological or even conceptual changes. In a chapter of his *Machinic Unconscious*, Guattari shoots at close range: “First, what is, exactly, this unconscious? A magic occult world on some not known fold of the brain? A mini cinema, specialized in infantile porn or the projection of fixed archetypical planes?” And he answers: “I see the unconscious rather as something which would spill a little everywhere around us, also in the gestures, everyday objects, in TV, in the atmosphere of the time, and even, and perhaps principally, in the big problems of the moment. An unconscious, then, working as much

33 Félix Guattari, *Cartographies Schizoanalytiques*, op. cit., p. 266-67.

in the interior of individuals, their manner of understanding the world, live their bodies, their territory, their sex, as in the interior of a couple, a family, a school, neighborhood, factories, stadiums, universities... In other words, not an unconscious of the specialists of the unconscious, not an unconscious crystallized in the past, petrified in an institutionalized discourse, but, on the contrary, one turned towards the future, an unconscious whose intrigue wouldn't be anything other than the possible, the possible which is at the surface, at the surface of the *socius*, the surface of the cosmos.”³⁴

In relation to these processes, the challenge is “to assist them semiotically and mechanically.”³⁵ Hence, no order-words, only words of passage. Everything is passage, from one consistency to another, from a complex of possibilities to another, from one assemblage to another.³⁶ Well, in the end, we should not speak of reality. Social, mental objects, the intrapsychic entities should be translated in the terms of an assemblage. An assemblage, contrary to a structure, always depends on the heterogeneous components that contribute to its specific consistency. “An assemblage is inconsistent when it is deprived of its quanta of possible, when the particle-signs abandon it to emigrate to other assemblages, when the abstract machinisms that specify it become sclerotic, degenerate in abstraction, encysted in stratifications and structures, when, after all, it is degraded, over a resonating black hole or falls under a threat of a pure and simple disintegration (catastrophe of consistence). It acquires, on the contrary, consistency, when a deterritorialized machinic metabolism opens to new connections, differentiates and complexifies.”

Status of the infinite

When Guattari defines the unconscious as being productive and not representational, when he remits it to Assemblages of Enunciation, or when – mostly at the end of his life – he thinks it in terms of Chaosmosis, it is clear that he carries out an increasing radicalization in the relation of the unconscious with the Outside, an incessant effort to proliferate, molecularize and infinitize it which redesigns the unconscious entirely.

It isn't useless to recall the passage in *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* on chaos and the brain: “We require just a little order to protect us from chaos. Nothing is more distressing than a thought that escapes itself, than ideas

34 Félix Guattari, *O Inconsciente maquínico*, op. cit., p. 10-11.

35 Félix Guattari, *O Inconsciente maquínico*, op. cit., p. 179.

36 Idem, p. 183.

that fly off, that disappear hardly formed, already eroded by forgetfulness or precipitated into others that we no longer master. These are infinite *variabilities*, the appearing and disappearing of which coincide. They are infinite speeds that blend into the immobility of the colorless and silent nothingness they traverse, without nature or thought... We constantly lose our ideas. That is why we want to hang on to fixed opinions so much. We ask only that our ideas are linked together according to a minimum of constant rules. All that the association of ideas has ever meant is providing us with these protective rules – resemblance, contiguity, causality – which enable us to put some order into ideas, preventing our “fantasy” (delirium, madness) from crossing the universe in an instant, producing winged horses and dragons breathing fire.”³⁷ For Guattari, thinking in light of schizophrenia intensifies the relations between form and its dissolution, unlivable velocity and its interruption, heterogenesis and homogenesis. The pathic relation with the mentally ill, that is, the complex and immediate body-to-body relation with the intensive and infinite movements, put at risk a plurality of temporalities, fragments, disjunctive syntheses, transversal schizo connections, collapses, paralyzes, slips and destructions of sense... That a delimited and precise frame such as the one proposed by Freud should have difficulty coping with such a proliferation isn’t surprising.

From there, I can understand perfectly the final observation of an article published by Monique David-Ménard on *Rue Descartes* magazine, on the subject of transference, counterposing the contributions of Deleuze-Guattari to those of Foucault. By exposing accurately the notion of Deleuzian assemblage, she writes: “But there is a difficulty in simultaneously postulating the positive and precise character of the assemblages and how they are ‘sucked in’ by the infinite. The infinite is not infinitesimal in Deleuze, but also the almost exhaustion of a figure, a character, when it connects itself to another thing through a relation of intensity.”³⁸ And she asks: “How to think jointly the consistency of an event and its affinity to chaos, defined as the circulation in infinite speed and in all directions, of the microelements of matter? The chaotic being exactly the indetermination of apparitions and vanishings, when the particles composing a body circulate at such a speed that no factual connexion can either form or enunciate itself. It is this third meaning of the infinite, an affinity with chaos, that makes the thought of transformations a metaphysics, seeing as how every individual, body and

37 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is philosophy?* NY, Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 201

38 Monique David-Ménard, *Rue Descartes*, n. 59, Collège International de Philosophie, Paris, PUF, 2008, pp. 44-5.

expression defined, is considered by the way he ‘surfs’ the chaos. If the term ‘metaphysics’ is no longer appropriate for a philosophy that can conjure transformations without submerging itself into categories, one might speak of, however, as Foucault himself did, a metaphysics of an ‘extra-being:’ all the transformations intertwine in rhizome on the plane of immanence whose characteristics the philosopher enunciates.”³⁹ By valorizing the contribution of Deleuze’s questionings on psychoanalysis, which had already been done in aces in his book titled *Deleuze et la psychanalyse*, especially regarding the statute of repetition, of negativity, of transformations and of assemblages, in clinic and philosophy, in the article mentioned, she points out: “Nothing awakens psychoanalysis as much as the questions raised by Deleuze. But it’s not certain that the concept of imperceptible-becomings, the thought of unqualified affects versus that of destiny of drive, helps comprehend the limit of transfer. For that we have the need of Foucault and the devices [...] To speak of the ‘Unconscious’ has no meaning outside of the discreet elements and connections that manage, borrowing contingent details of the space or figure of the analyst, to there draw themselves.”⁴⁰ I believe that the author’s effort is entirely pertinent in the psychoanalytic field and in the healthy intersection that this field proposed to philosophy and in the healthy provocation that the philosophies, Deleuze’s among them, proposed to psychoanalytic practice and theorization. And yet, what we have been describing with Guattari moves directly opposite to the author’s conclusion, which in turn does not discredit her observations, on the contrary – it only indicates the point of view that presides the focus of Guattari, of overflowing the “discreet and connected elements” that draw themselves based on the contingent details of space and on the “analyst’s figure.” If I may privilege Guattari’s texts in the present context, it was to indicate how his thought, since the beginning, and already from the point-sign and its own potency, including his transversality and his “transcursivity,” as he would point out in this first period of his reflection, or the machine and its indefinite opening to an infinite exteriority, such as how he expelled ulteriorly, either from the statute of the group or institutional phantasm overflowing the individual, extrapolates the classic clinical “device,” so inaugurated by Freud. Furthermore, when Guattari introduces the theme of chaos, even before the “systematization” jointly proposed in *What is Philosophy?*, even though in order to define chaos, chaosmos or chaosmosis, he brings back characteristics previously

39 Idem, p. 5.

40 Idem, p. 55.



attributed to the body-without-organs in *The Anti-Oedipus* or *A Thousand Plateaus*, it must be stated that the assemblages, in their contingency and consistency, inevitably imply the infinite, despite how polysemic this term's acceptance is. "Polyvalent doctrine of the infinite,"⁴¹ as David-Ménard says: as an infinite speed, as the verb's infinitive in the event, its impersonality, or even as the Leibnizian infinitesimal.⁴² None of this means an incompatibility, and even less so the disqualification of the relevance of this fertile discussion that the author, among many, face with superior courage. We must recognize that there is, in this program that Guattari sustains with a peculiar stubbornness, and his delicious facet Jules Verne, and his militancy, and his effort of placing in the same plane, as formulated by Deleuze, the philosophical concepts, the scientific functions, the lived experiences, the creations of art, a necessary "surf" about the infinite, or the infinitization, or the slide in the infinitive.

It's not about an ontology of the infinite, nor of a dialectic between the finite and the infinite. I tend to think, strangely, that part of this ambition comes from his experience with psychosis and from a political gamble. To launch a formula that is equivalent in worth to the categoric formulae: on one side, a post-psychoanalytic direction of his thought, on the other, a post-nihilistic stance.⁴³ In any case, thinking in light of schizophrenia compels to install a multiplicity that puts in check the dichotomies inside and out, the interior and exterior, corporeal and incorporeal, individual and social, psychism and history, internal space and geography, human and inhuman, anthropological and ethological, the sphere of man and of the machine (the several machines, both technical and social), the form and its dissolution, the unlivable speed and its interruption. That a delimited and precise frame, such as the one proposed since Freud, would have difficulty in containing such blurriness and proliferation is not surprising, and the very experience of La Borde, ever since its birth, already constitutes an experiment towards that amplification, to which Guattari referred to since his first writings of

41 Monique David-Ménard, *Deleuze et la psychanalyse*, Paris, Puf, 2005, p. 109.

42 Idem, p. 118. And David-Ménard's question: "The true question to be put forward to Deleuze, the one I do in any case, is to know [...] whether if in order to know the contingency of the assemblages that sustain themselves, it is necessary to conceive the infinite [...] We have difficulty in comprehending why, in the field of analysis, would we speak of the infinite to characterize that which threatens to undo poorly-constructed assemblages of desire. The symptoms that make life unbearable have a finite configuration, and the transferences that allow, in the favorable cases, to engage those analyzed in other transformations have, them as well, a finite configuration. It's even in fact to this limit of transference that the destructivity of desires can be repeated, extracted from chaos, so to speak, and transformed into a new assemblage whose key does not predate the cure" (idem, p. 126).

43 I realize, however, the opposite of that stance, formulated with such grace by João Perci Schiavon: schizoanalysis is still psychoanalysis, just as quantum physics is still physics, in *Pragmatismo pulsional*, n-1 Edições, to be published.



Psychanalyse et transversalité, relating his clinic with the sociohistorical exteriority (note the example of the patient similar to Kafka, and the use of the tape recorder or of writing). The reiterated reclaiming of the opening to alterity does not make reference, such as in the phenomenological conceptions on intersubjectivity, to an alterity of another subject, but to the more complete alterity, one of the situation itself – in some instances, to this the name of “transversality” was given. However, the situation is precarious and mutant. Hence the theme of the recognition of finitude, of death, of the without-meaning, in the midst of a group or institution, all the refusal of eternization, that a institutional, group, social-phantasmic structure could spawn, and that that which later will be called *Assemblage*, should include. “There will come the day in which one studies with the same seriousness, the same rigor, the definitions of God, of president Schreber or of Antonin Artaud, like those of Descartes or Malebranche? Philosophical investigation would have to concern itself, then, not only with a constant conceptual ordering, but also, equally, with elaborating, about the ‘terrain,’ the establishing conditions and permanence of a logic of the without-meaning in conformation with its irruption in all dominions.”⁴⁴

Let us return to the problem of writing

A reader already familiarized with the books and the independent texts of Guattari, by glancing at the sketches of *The Anti-Oedipus*, recently published by Nadeau, is taken at first by a paradoxical impression. On the one hand, the squirting, the associative velocity, the uncaring of showing off articulations, the freedom of the leap, the heterodoxical language, the colloquial examples of the most elementary quotidian, the insulting, alternated with the denser constructions, neologisms, the still so remarkable presence of Lacan, the fundamental formulae, all this matter that drips everywhere, and that will make up for the conceptual center of *The Anti-Oedipus*; at the same time, in face of this logbook, this reluctance to “do the work,” the reader gets surprised and admires how Deleuze took a chance and took it upon himself to do this task, connecting himself with the general direction of Guattarian constructivist and cartographic explosivity, even if the logic of this machination has not been completely unraveled. We would have to return, here, to Deleuze’s observation written for the occasion of Guattari’s death, where he recommends the reading of his texts: “Félix’s work is waiting to be discovered. That is one

⁴⁴ Félix Guattari, *Psicoanálisis y transversalidad*, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

of the best ways to keep Félix alive.”⁴⁵ Now, Guattari’s autonomous books are not directly comparable to the notes to *The Anti-Oedipus*, and the effort of his friends, notably Danielle Sivadon, to assist him to give them some contour proves it decisively. But we hold the rare impression that falls to each of Guattari’s readers to do something similar, at least mentally, to what Deleuze did: take in his machinations, extend them, connect them with different domains, make them work. Give them the freedom to evolve on their own, reaching out to them with matter for such, in lieu of reducing them to polemic formulae, even though they do not lack formulae of their own, even less so polemic *enjeux*, in the most diverse of fields.

Translated mostly by Andrew Goffey

45 Gilles Deleuze, “Pour Félix”, in *Deux Régimes de Fous*, Paris, Minuit, 2003, p. 357-8.



THE THOUGHT OF THE OUTSIDE, THE OUTSIDE OF THOUGHT¹

We should evoke the name of Maurice Blanchot in order to remind us of the barely audible voice which uniquely marked the thought of an entire generation – which includes Deleuze, Foucault and Derrida. Blanchot has been Josephine the singer of the postwar French philosophy. In Kafka's story, even though the nation of rats greatly admires the voice of the singer, which they need in order to come together, they do not understand what makes it so special or whether it really is special. In fact, her song resembles a gentle hissing or even silence. It is possible, in the last analysis, that her glory is the result of this gracious and undecipherable mystery: perhaps, she has never sung anything at all, but, in her own way, in her "insufficiency" (*rien de rendement*) she has nevertheless delivered people from "the chains of everyday existence."

This existence is always paradoxical in Kafka, as Blanchot makes it clear: "we do not know if we are excluded from it (which is why we search vainly in it for something solid to hold onto) or whether we are forever imprisoned in it (and so we turn desperately outside)."² There is an invisible and always displaced boundary between life and death, between exiting and entering, and between an ardent desire for community or the distancing of ourselves from it in solitude. Kafka has often described this solitude as an exile: "Now I am already a citizen in this other world which compares with the usual world just as the desert compares to the cultivated land."³ But, says Blanchot, the meaning of this banishment that we would be wrong to characterize as flight is this: this other world inhabited by the author from Prague is not just any old "beyond," not even another world, but rather the other of all worlds. For the artist or the poet, perhaps there are no two worlds, not even a single world, but only the outside in its eternal flow.

Wandering, desert, exile, the outside. How can we conquer the loss of ourselves and go to the heart of the anonymous dispersion, indefinite, albeit never negligent? How can we enter into a space without place, in a time without begetting, in "the proximity of that which flees unity," in an "experience of that which is without harmony and without accord?" At any rate, we are at the opposite end of a metaphors of proximity, of shelter, of security,

¹ Translated by Constantin V. Boundas and Susan Dyrkton.

² Maurice Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995)

³ Franz Kafka, *Journal*, quoted by Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. and with an introduction by Ann Smock (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1982) 68.

and of harmony – the kind that Heidegger established for an entire generation. Underlining this contrast with Heidegger, Françoise Collin has found the right words: in Blanchot’s case, poetic language “directs us not towards what gathers together but rather towards what disperses, not towards what connects but rather towards what disjoins, not towards work but rather towards the absence of work [...] so that the central point towards which we seem to be pulled as we write is nothing but the absence of center, the lack of origin.”⁴ Not Being, but the Other, the Outside, the Neutral. This passion for/of the Outside which runs through the febrile writing of Kafka, also runs through the impalpable work of Blanchot and resonates in Foucault’s obsession with the themes of boundaries and limits, of alterity and exteriority, or in Deleuze and Guattari, in their relation to the outside and to the entire nomadic machinery which derives from it.

The passion for/of the outside

Deleuze used to say that, as a rule, two thinkers meet on a blind spot. Deleuze and Foucault did in fact cross each other’s path on this eccentric point *par excellence*, which is the thought of the outside. I will try to show how this passion for/of the outside traversed their philosophy as a frenzied wind, inflecting the relations between thought and its borders, whether we call these borders outside, unreason, madness, or schizo-flux. For that purpose we must be situated between philosophy and madness, reason and unreason, thought and the outside of thought. Allow me to briefly justify the choice of this theme of madness and unreason, as the millennium sets in. I think that the interface between philosophy and madness in Foucault and Deleuze could help us rethink today’s status of exteriority in a moment in which exteriority is the object of a frightful overturning; the most immediate consequence of which is the suffocating impression that the field of the possible has been exhausted. I explain: for a long time, the promise of an absolute outside has been linked to the domain of madness, to the domain of literature, or to that of the revolution. This has changed completely. As far as I can see, the contemporary claustrophobia – whose consequences of political and psychic strangulation are not, I suppose, Brazil’s prerogative – is nothing but an index, among many others, of a situation in front of which we feel entirely disarmed; that is, an index of a thought without outside in a world without exteriority. Before getting into the details of this hypothesis

⁴ Françoise Collin, *Maurice Blanchot et la question de l'écriture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971).



that I intend to develop, I should perhaps indicate the parallel questions that motivate my intervention. Indeed, what is left today of this passion for/ of the outside that our authors have explored and given us? From the point of view of this inspiration or even in spite of it, how can we rethink the very concept of the outside? What about the exteriority of madness? How do we evaluate whether or not the outsides, such as we have them today, are still capable of grounding our resistances to the intolerable, or to incite the creation of new possibles?

Foucault and Blanchot

Let us return to the seminal study of Michel Foucault on madness, from which these questions arise. Let us remember, first of all, Blanchot's brief, yet sober, and penetrating commentary on this issue: the existence of madness, he said, responds to the historical demand to fence in the outside.⁵ This is an enigmatic formula, the meaning of which appears only in the light of the secret dialogue linking Blanchot and Foucault, through the distance that an excessive admiration imposed. In an interview, following the publication of his book in 1961, Foucault spoke of the influences that inspired him: "above all else," he said right off, placing Maurice Blanchot ahead of all the others, "this is what motivated and guided me as a certain form of the presence of madness in literature."⁶ How can we understand this alleged "influence" of Blanchot on the *History of Madness*? Rather than taking up his novels, we must perhaps look to the seductive readings that Blanchot proposed of the works of Hölderlin, Sade, Lautréamont, Nietzsche, Artaud – in short, we must look to the entire lineage evoked in the last pages of Foucault's own book. Indeed, ever since his first critical essays, and in his very own way, Blanchot worked on issues that many of his contemporaries have taken up after him: the necessary proximity between speech and silence, writing and death, work and erosion, literature and demolition, language and the anonymous, poetic experience and the breakdown of the author. According to *Le Livre à venir*, "what is first is not the plenitude of being, it is the crack and the fissure, the erosion and the tear, intermittence and the gnawing privation."⁷ In literature, Blanchot discovers the rarified space from which every subject is absent. What speaks in the writer is that "he is no longer himself,

5 Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1992) 196–201.

6 Michel Foucault, *Dits et Écrits 1954–1988*, vol. 1, 1954–1969, ed. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 168.

7 Maurice Blanchot, *Le Livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959) 49–50.



he is already no one”: not the universal, but the anonymous, the neutral, the outside. When one is releasing herself to that which is incessant and interminable in language, “the day is only but the loss of a dwelling place. It is intimacy with the outside, which has no location and affords no rest.”⁸ He who inhabits this literary space “belong(s) to dispersal [...] where the exterior is the intrusion that stifles [...] where the only space is its vertiginous separation.”⁹ This is the work as an experience which ruins all experiences and places itself underneath the work, “a region [...] where nothing is made of being, and in which nothing is accomplished. It is the depth of being’s unworking (désœuvrement).”¹⁰ It is an uncanny experience that dispossesses the subject of self and world, of being and presence, of consciousness and truth, of unity and totality – experience of limits, experience-limit, as Bataille would have said.

This whole thematic spread is present in the original preface to the *History of Madness*.¹¹ In it, Foucault makes references to an ordinary language, “very crude,” in which reason and unreason still speak of each other, through “imperfect words, without fixed syntax, stammering a bit.” Through these means, the limits of a culture are put to question against all triumphant dialectics. Below history, one finds the absence of history, a murmur of the deep, the void, the vain, nothingness, residue, ripples. Below the work, one finds the absence of work, below sense, nonsense. Below reason, one finds unreason. In sum, a tragic experience is concealed by the birth of madness as a social fact, object of exclusion, confinement and intervention. What can possibly be done for unreason, in its irreducible alterity, in its “tragic structure” to investigate the birth itself of psychiatric rationality that reduced it to silence as it turned it into madness?

At any rate, we should keep in mind the first two words of the original title of the 1961 edition which was later suppressed – *Madness and Unreason: The History of Madness in the Classical Age*. Leaving aside the lyrical misunderstandings to which they gave rise, this binomial continues to intrigue us. Blanchot made this point when he asked whether, in the space which opens up between madness and unreason, literature and art could gather their own experiences limit and, thus, “prepare beyond culture, a relation

8 Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* 31.

9 Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* 31.

10 Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* 46.

11 Michel Foucault, “Préface” in *Folie et déraison. Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961) I–IX; reprinted in *Dits et Écrits* vol. 1, 159–67.



with that which rejects culture: speech of the border, the outside of speech.”¹² Foucault responded to this, according to the dialogue that my imagination reconstructs and imposes, with the example of Blanchot. He explained that, in Blanchot, the erosion of time speaks louder than its links. Louder also speaks the non-dialectical forgetting, which opens up the anticipation of the radically new, the sliding towards a naked exteriority – language as an endless whisper that deposes the subjective source of enunciation as much as it deposes the truth of the statement, letting the anonymous emerge, free from every center and fatherland, capable of echoing the death of God and the death of man alike. In the place where “it [ça] speaks, man no longer exists.” Against the humanist dialectics that, from alienation to reconciliation, promises man the authentic man, Blanchot expresses the outline of another original choice emerging in our culture. At any rate, if language is not “truth or time, eternity or man, but rather the form of the outside always coming undone,”¹³ then we can understand why Foucault is able, echoing Kafka, to advance his splendid formula that writing is not of this world – it is its “antimatter.”¹⁴

Literature and madness

We are already in the position to put forward a more general hypothesis. If Foucault *believes* so strongly in literature, perhaps it is because at this moment of his trajectory he believes in its *exteriority*. And if the language of madness interests him, it is because what is at issue in the language of madness is again its exteriority. From this point of view, writing and madness would be on the same plane, taking into account their noncirculatory character, the uselessness of their function, and the self-referential aspect which characterizes them.¹⁵ But we should take into account their subversive and transgressive dimension, “the absolutely anarchic speech, the speech without institution, the deeply marginal speech that traverses and erodes all other discourses.”¹⁶ Literature and madness, therefore, would belong to what Blanchot called the part of fire,” namely, that which culture

12 Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation* 290.

13 Michel Foucault, “The Thought of the Outside” in *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: Essential Works of Foucault* vol. 1, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997) 168.

14 Michel Foucault, “A Swimmer Between Two Words: Interview With C. Bonnefoy” in *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth* 172.

15 Michel Foucault, “Madness Only Exists In Society” in *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews 1961–1984*. Michel Foucault, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989) 7–9.

16 Michel Foucault, “La Folie et la société” in Michel Foucault and Moriaki Watanabe, *Tetsugaku no Butai* (Tokyo: Asahi-Shupansha, 1978); reprinted in *Michel Foucault, Dits et Écrits* vol. 3, 1976–1979 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 490.





destines for destruction and reduces to cinders, that with which it cannot live, and that with which it makes an eternal conflagration.

And yet, in the very moment that Foucault makes explicit this site of literature, he asks himself whether the times that “writing was enough to express a protest against modern society” have not already gone by.¹⁷ In catching up with the space of social circulation and consumption, perhaps writing has been, as they used to say at that time, recuperated by the system, in fact vanquished by the bourgeoisie and the capitalist society. It is no longer in “the outside,” it is no longer maintaining that exteriority. Hence the question: in order to cross to the other side, in order to set oneself on fire and be consumed by it, in order to enter a space irreducible to ours and in a space that would be no part of society, shouldn’t we do something other than literature? If we discover today that we must exit literature and abandon it to its “meager historical destiny” Foucault said, it is Blanchot, always he, who taught us. He who has been the most impregnated with literature, but always on a key of exteriority, the anti-Hegel of literature, he who did show that works stay always external to us and we to them, obliges us to quit it at the very moment that literature deserts the outside in order to become this inside where we communicate and recognize one another very comfortably.

The same logic would apply to madness whose dimension of exteriority would also be on the path of disappearance. Very early in his trajectory, as early as 1964, Foucault prophesied the imminent effacement of madness in favor of mental illness.¹⁸ If madness was for man this enigmatic exteriority that he excluded, but in which he also recognized himself, and which reflected everything that he found abominable, but was also integral to his most intimate constitution, his Other but at the same time his Same, now that the future is approaching, madness will be incorporated in the human as its ownmost originary. This is a process to which we gave, perhaps ironically, the name “humanization” of madness. With the help of this diabolical dialectics, we would have achieved the unthinkable: to snatch up our own exterior.

Let us dare raise the burning question: has not Foucault, through the case of “literature” and “madness” outlined a more general diagnostic of the status of exteriority in our culture? And, if this is the case, is this diagnostic of any use to us today? Michael Hardt and Toni Negri have shown¹⁹ that

17 Michel Foucault, “Folie, littérature, société” in *Dits et Écrits* vol. 2, 1970–1975 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994) 115.

18 Michel Foucault, “La Folie, l’absence d’oeuvre” in *La Table Ronde (Situation de la Psychiatrie)* no. 196 (May 1964): 11–21; reprinted in *Dits et Écrits* vol. 1, 412–20.

19 Michael Hardt, “La Société mondiale de contrôle” in *Gilles Deleuze. Une Vie Philosophique*, ed. Eric Alliez (Paris: Synthélabo, 1998) 359–75; Michael Hardt and Toni Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2000.



the world's integrated capitalism has assumed the form of the Empire; in order to do this, it had to abolish all exteriority, devouring its most distant frontiers, encompassing not only the totality of the planet, but also the enclaves which were until recently inviolate – like the Unconscious or Nature, as Jameson would have added. Is it possible then that Foucault's diagnosis, no less cruel than precocious, together with its imperial planetary realization, has the capacity to shed light on our contemporary claustrophobia? We are now inhabiting a world without outside, a capitalism without outside, a thought without outside – in view of which our fascination with the alleged exteriority of madness, predominant only a few decades ago, sounds completely obsolete today. Foucault himself caustically criticizes all those “lyric anti-psychiatric discourses” and especially the illusions that madness or delinquency or crime speak to us from the vantage point of an absolute exteriority. “Nothing is more interior to our society (says he), nothing is more within the effects of its power, than the affliction of a crazy person or the violence of a criminal.” In other words, we are always on the inside. The margin is a myth. The word from beyond is a dream that we keep renewing. The “crazies” are in an outside space of creativity or monstrosity. And nonetheless, they are caught in the network, they are shaped and function within the mechanisms of power.²⁰

Now, this radical reversal of perspective in Foucault should not surprise us, if we consider his work on prisons, and the new problematization of power that his genealogical inflection has elicited. In this sense, it is understandable that he writes “madness is no less the effect of power than non-madness.”²¹ It is, “according to an indefinite spiral, a tactical response to the tactic that invests it,” and we should not even “overvalue the asylum and its infamous walls,” since it must be understood “from the outside,”²² as a pawn in a broader positive strategy that gave birth to an entire psychology of the psyche.

Let us stop here and suspend the burning question – if we are always inside, what is left of the outside? I will no longer follow the detours of this theme throughout the work of Foucault, especially in his third theoretical period. Instead, I will only focus on one, all-too-illuminating example: when, in 1980, he evokes the experience-limit by means of which the subject tears itself from itself, and is led to its own annihilation and dissolution (a theme which was dear in the 1960s), the question is no longer for him the

20 Michel Foucault, “The Social Extension of the Norm” in *Foucault Live* 198.

21 Michel Foucault, “Sorcery and Madness” in *Foucault Live* 201.

22 Michel Foucault, “L'Asile illimité,” *Le Nouvel Observateur* no. 646 (28 March–3 April, 1977): 66–67; reprinted in *Dits et Écrits* vol. 3, 273.

experimentation with an outside of culture, but rather a personal and theoretical experiment by means of which it would be possible *to think otherwise*. If literature and madness no longer send us over to an absolute outside, since all is inside, the experience-limit keeps its own value to the extent that it is an operation on one's own self. Not a lived experience, but the unlivable for the sake of which we must produce ourselves. No more a transgression of a frontier or a prohibition, even if Bataille's name is invoked once more, but a demolition and refabrication of the self. This way, the outside earns an altogether surprising subjective immanence. Perhaps we should wait for the reading of Deleuze in order to better elucidate the immanent status of this exteriority, which sprung up again in a subject within a world already without outside.

Deleuze and the outside

With Deleuze, we must say it from the beginning, everything takes place in a different way right from the start, whether it is a question of madness or of the outside. For him, madness has never been an object of study as such. And yet it frequently reappears in the vicinity of thought, as if this vicinity was intrinsic to it, as if the act of thinking reaches necessarily this volcanic region where that which madness reveals in a crude and very Oedipalized way is being realized. What is being realized is the dissolution of the subject, of the object, of the Self, the world and God, in favor of a generalized nomadization where the psychosocial figure of the schizophrenic is not but a caricatural interruption, crystallized and institutionalized. In fact, nomadism and the relation to the outside are not exclusive attributes of the schizo, but they belong to thought as such. More and more Deleuze insists on this: to think comes always from the outside, is directed towards the outside, belongs to the outside, is an absolute relation to the outside.²³ As Zourabichvili remarks, thought is not an innate faculty; it is always the effect of an encounter and an encounter is always an encounter with the outside, despite the fact that this outside is not the reality of the external world, in its empirical configuration, but rather the heterogeneous forces affecting thought, those that force her to think, those that force thought towards that which she does not yet think, urging her to think otherwise.²⁴ He adds that the forces of the outside are not such because they come from the outside, from the exterior, but rather because they put thought in a state

²³ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Séan Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota P, 1988).

²⁴ François Zourabichvili, *Deleuze, une philosophie de l'événement* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994) 45.

of exteriority, throwing her into a formless field where the heterogeneous points of view, corresponding to the heterogeneity of the forces at play, enter into a relation with one another. We can easily see that, although he inherited it from Blanchot, and accepted the extended sense that Foucault attributed to it, Deleuze gave the outside a characterization which is much more clearly Nietzschean: much less in relation to the being of language as in Foucault, and much less in relation to literature as in Blanchot, the strategic dimension of the outside carried for him a great interest – hence the absolute privilege of force, the “discovery” of which nevertheless Deleuze generously attributed to Foucault. The consequences of this perspective are many: (1) the task of thought is to liberate the forces that come from the outside; (2) the outside is always openness unto a future; (3) the thought of the outside is a thought of resistance (to a state of affairs); and (4) the force of the outside is Life.²⁵ The major challenge has therefore been launched from the very beginning: to seize life as a power of the outside.

Subjectivity and madness

Now we must call forth a second movement of the sequence: how this outside, when folded, becomes subjectivity. How is an inside created which includes in itself this very outside, with its decelerated particles (“these slow beings that we are”), where we become masters of our speeds, and relatively masters of our molecules and of their singularities? According to Deleuze, “as long as the outside is folded, an inside is coextensive with it,” as memory, as life, as duration.²⁶ We carry with us an absolute memory of the outside. This is the outside-in-us; an unlimited reservoir that nourishes our field of possibles, to which Simondon gave the Greek name of *apeiron* – the Unlimited.²⁷ Subjectivity is this fold of the outside, the folding of nomad forces, the pocket of the *apeiron*.

If we now look at the strange diagram that Deleuze outlined à propos of Foucault, we find between the subjective fold and the outside, a kind of floating line, and above it a half-blocked bottleneck that filters and slows down the forces of the outside at the same time that it serves them as a road of passage. Hence the question: how can we unblock this passage to the maximum degree possible in order for the Other, the outside, and that which is the farthest to become most intimate to the thinker? Jacques

25 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* 89, 90, 95.

26 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* 108.

27 Gilbert Simondon, *L'Individu et sa g n se physico-biologique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964) and *L'Individuation psychique et collectif* (Paris: Aubier, 1989).



Derrida made use of a suggestive metaphor in this context – thought as a tympan, as a stretched screen ready to balance the pressures between the inside and the outside. To tympanize philosophy would then mean to make this membrane more oblique so that, as we increase its surface of vibration and its permeability to the outside, philosophy can leave behind its autism.²⁸ Plot otherwise the line of the outside in order to think otherwise. Inflect this relation to the outside in order to remodel subjectivity and at the same time open up thought (these two aspects always go together).

But behold, this extreme point to which every thought of the outside aspires, is also the point where we become exposed to the risk of discovering that the subjective fold opens wide, being led astray into madness or being dissolved in death. Hence the proximity of thought and madness – thought as openness to the outside, madness as prison in the outside, and its collapse in an absolute inside. This is what happens when the tympan is broken, when all borders between the outside and the inside, between surface and depth, are abolished. *The Logic of Sense*, as it compares Artaud and Lewis Carroll, is a variation on this theme: what happens when the surface is torn, when the line of the outside crumbles into a groundless depth and the subject is imprisoned in it? Deleuze underlines the imperious desire which tempts every thinker: to will the event, not only upon the incorporeal surface of sense, but in the mixture of bodies, in a kind of “schizophrenic depth.” This is the major – almost the demented – temptation: to embrace the becoming-mad of the stuff of the world. Deleuze is then correct in asking whether it is possible to think without becoming insane. How can one aspire to the outside, without being swallowed in? How do we separate the ambition of thought from the risk which is intrinsic in it? Aren’t they necessarily neighbors – thought and the collapse of the thinker, the thought of the outside and the closure of it within an absolute inside?²⁹ The boundary between the one and the other is so very thin, as Nietzsche and Artaud attest. It is only by a thread that the one with the most open relation to the outside is not swept up in it as an “exceptional interiority,” according to the beautiful expression of Blanchot.

A few decades ago, Foucault raised the question: what is it that condemns to madness those who have once experienced unreason? Or, in our own terms: how is the relation to the outside possible without its collapse in an absolute inside? If, in some moments of its history, our society was able to confine to

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, “Tympan” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982).

²⁹ All these themes have been developed in a book published in Brazilian: Peter Pál Pelbart, *Da clausura do fora ao fora da clausura: Loucura e Desrazão* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1989, 2009).



madness the access to the outside (forcing poets and artists, if not to become mad, at least to imitate madness), in other times and elsewhere different spaces of “the outside” were capable of opening up (shamanistic, prophetic, mystical, and political spaces). Nowadays, madness is no longer this privileged voice, as Foucault saw it early on, when he underlined how madness (having crushed unreason) was in the process of being extinguished in favor of mental illness. Nevertheless, from a certain time onwards Foucault no longer asks where exteriority would have migrated after it deserted the space of the asylum and of literature. Perhaps, as we argued, because he considered it abolished. But was it really abolished for him?

The immanent outside

In Deleuze, on the other hand, a more explicitly immanent conception renders the outside less dependent upon the sites of exteriority which are very visible and localized, even if all sorts of minorities are present in *The Anti-Oedipus* (and how noisily!). But Deleuze insists many times: it is not a question of a cult of minorities, but rather of the becoming-minority of all and each one. In this sense, the question is not to idealize the schizophrenics, but to call for a generalized “schizophrenization.” In other words, there is no praise of madness, but of the process with respect to which the psychosocial fact of madness is a sad fixation. The unfortunate thing with madness is that it was called upon to witness all alone deterritorialization as a universal process, caving in therefore under the weight of this untenable assignment. Hence the order to liberate in every flow the schizoid movement, so that this characterization could no longer qualify one particular residue only as a flow of madness. Deleuze and Guattari repeat Foucault’s prophecy about the imminent disappearance of madness qua outside, but turn it completely upside down, giving it an almost jubilant sense! The progressive abolition of the binary frontiers between madness and nonmadness is no longer read as a loss of exteriority, but rather as a gain of exteriority. The outside is no longer snatched up but liberated from its closure in confined or privileged spaces. If it is no longer confined, it is because, at last, it is able to extend everywhere. Alterity is not beyond the frontier, and not necessarily in the defeated margins. It is a virtuality of the lines that make us up and of the becomings which result from them.



In this sense, this geography without borders, let’s say, this fall of the Berlin Wall does not necessarily represent the victory of a so-called totality – Deleuze and Guattari have taught us how to laugh at that. This is what

Deleuze was saying à propos of an alleged planetary and unidimensional thought in 1964: there is a point in which this nihilism turns back against itself, with the strangest of results: it makes forces elementary to themselves in the brute play of their dimensions. The outside, taken for abolished, keeps reappearing *as agnostic*. This is what we see clearly in Foucault, at a certain moment, and it matters little whether the term “outside” disappears from his vocabulary, whereas it subsists in Deleuze: the fact is that a basic conception becomes more and more common between the two of them the moment that it looked as if it were branching off definitively. Deleuze himself expressed this much later: Foucault would have been the one to discover the element that comes from the outside – the force. In other words, Foucault, with his work on power, would have given to the outside its strategic immanence.

I would like to insist on a last encounter between these two thinkers, which is as little evident as the previous one. To the extent that Deleuze conceives exteriority as groundless ground from within which subjectivity itself emerges, it is obvious that he cannot think of it as abolished; on the contrary, he discovers it in the very heart of subjectivity as fold, absolute memory of the outside, contraction of the outside, duration and life. It is not, therefore, surprising that he encountered it, as the most intimate texture of the process of subjectification, precisely during his writing on the later Foucault, when one thinks to be very far away from the thematics of the outside already given up during the genealogical period along with the domains of madness and literature. Deleuze rediscovers the “passion for/of the outside” in the later Foucault, when he recognizes the outside to be immanent in subjectivity and in the process of subjectification (the account of which was made by Foucault) or when he conceives the “to think otherwise” as an invitation to otherwise fold the forces of the outside. To think otherwise: to be invited to fold otherwise the forces of the outside. The invitation to the outside or the passion for/of the outside finds here its strategic and political function, when it triggers a subjective mutation, that is, a redistribution of affects, of what attracts and what repels, according to the beautiful analysis that Zourabichvili made of it.³⁰

I will add one last word about the displacement of the boundaries between the desirable and the intolerable. Our two authors thought seriously about madness and a possible dialogue with it. If Foucault did it by taking it as a complex historical object, the genesis of which he read as the reverse and the

30 François Zourabichvili, “Deleuze et le possible (de l’involontarisme en politique)” in *Gilles Deleuze, une vie philosophique* 335–57.



non-necessary condition of our thought, Deleuze, in turn, in close relation with Guattari, gave in to the temptation of this vicinity in the creation of his own concepts. Perhaps, the rhizome is the most extreme expression of it. We could, in fact, think of it as an X-raying of the thought of the outside, in its most intimate logic, that is, when it is the most turned to the outside. We find in it the opening of a desert, the forgetting mobility, the errant connectivity, the multidirectional proliferation, the absence of center, of subject, of object – a topology and a chronology which are hallucinatory enough. In short, we find not the map of another world, but rather the other possible cartography of all worlds – that which precisely makes this world to be another, delivering us from “the chains of everydayness,” as Kafka had wanted it.



IV

TIME, EXPERIENCE, DESUBJECTIVATION




IMAGES OF TIME IN DELEUZE

Deleuze's major theses on time reappear in a dramatized manner in his books on cinema, where they conquer an aesthetic operationality that illuminates them as a whole. Take the most enigmatic idea that organizes these books, the emancipation of time. *Time is out of joint*, exclaims Hamlet. Time is off its hinges! What does it mean for time to have left its axes, returned to itself, as pure time? Deleuze alludes to a time freed from the tyranny of the present that previously it bent, and available, henceforth, to the most eccentric adventures. Bruno Schulz says, in another context, that time is a disordered element kept in check solely thanks to an incessant cultivation, a care, a control, a correction of its excesses. "Free of this vigilance, it immediately begins to do tricks, run wild, play irresponsible practical jokes, and indulge in crazy clowning."¹ Schulz recalls that we carry a supernumerary load that does not fit on the train of events nor on the two-track time that supports it. For this precious contraband that he calls Event, there are those lateral tracks of time, blind detours, where they are "suspended in the air, errant, homeless," in a multilinear streak, no "before" nor "after," neither "simultaneously," nor "consequently," the most remote murmur and the furthest future, all communicating at a virginal beginning. Thus, in the continuous time of linked presents (Chronos) the time of the Event (Aeon) is constantly insinuated, in its non-dialectical, impersonal, impassible, incorporeal logic: "the pure *reserve*," pure virtuality that never stops supervening.

To this, Deleuze stresses a cinematographic procedure that consists of unlinking the peaks of present from their very actuality, subordinating this present to a flow that crosses it and overflows, in which precisely there is no more past, present, future, all rolled up into a "simultaneous, inexplicable" event. In the Event, the peaks of de-actualized present coexist, or yet one single event is distributed in distinct worlds according to different times, in such a way that what for one is past, for another is present, for a third is future—but it is the same event (*Last Year at Marienbad*). Sidereal time, or a system of relativity, says Deleuze, because it includes a pluralist cosmology, in which one single event is distributed as incompatible versions in a plurality of worlds. Not a god that chooses the best of possible worlds, but a Process that passes through all of them, 'simultaneously' affirming them. It is a system of variation: given an event, not hitting it against a present that

1 Bruno Schulz, *Sanatorium under the Sign of the Hourglass*, trans. Celina Wieniewska, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), 283.



actualizes it, but making it vary in diverse presents that belong to distinct worlds, although in a certain, more generic sense, they belong to a single shattered world. Or, given a present, not exhausting it within itself, but rather finding the event in it through which it communicates with other presents in other worlds, swimming upstream in the common event in which all are implicated: the Virtual Tangle.

Suppose there is a gigantic ontological Memory, made up of sheets or deposits of the past, types of strata, that communicate amongst themselves in order to be funneled and exert pressure on a peak of present. Some of Resnais' characters, for instance, go from one stratum to another, stroll between levels, traverse ages of the world, transversalize Time, or they constantly re-create the distances and proximities between the diverse singular points of their lives. Sticking to a comfortable image, time as a handkerchief: each time we blow our nose, we slip it into our pocket, crumple it in a distinct way, so that two points of the handkerchief that were previously distant and did not touch (like two distant moments of life according to a timeline) have now become contiguous, or they even coincide, or contrarily, two points that were next to each other have now irremediably been separated. As if time were a big mass of clay, every time it is molded the distances between the marked points within it are rearranged. This is a curious topology in which we witness an incessant transformation, a modulation that reinvents and causes the relationships between the many sheets and their scintillating points to vary, each rearrangement creating something new, plastic memory, always remade, always to come. Moldable mass of time, or better, able to be modulated, and about which Deleuze comes to exclaim, like some kind of Christopher Columbus: Land, muddy vital means! When cinema is embroiled in this order of virtual coexistence it invents its paradoxical, hypnotic, hallucinatory, indecisive sheets. Along this Bergsonian line, the memory stops being a faculty inside of man, it is man that inhabits the inside of a vast Memory, World-Memory, gigantic inverted cone, virtual multiplicity of which we are a determined degree of distension or contraction. Even the philosopher and the pig, as in a metempsychosis, take up the same cone, the same life at distinct levels, jokes Deleuze.

Time comes to be conceived no longer as a line, but rather as a tangle, not like a river, but like land, not flow, but mass, not succession, rather coexistence, not a circle, but a whirl, not order—infinite variation. Instead of referring to a consciousness of time, it seems befitting to bring it closer to hallucination.

Time and Madness

Always speaking of time, Deleuze evokes a profligacy: time which is de-centered, aberrant, wild, paradoxical, floating, or even sunk. It does not seem abusive to consider that time's going mad, as Deleuze works with it, communicates directly with the temporality of so-called "clinical" madness. Meanwhile, a good part of the literature on psychoses is entirely unarmed when facing the multiple temporal figures that proliferate before one's very eyes in the clinic, and that "psychological" theories find it difficult to embrace, keeping in mind a temporal normalcy of which they are habitually prisoners. It is quite rare to think about the temporality of psychosis in any other way besides under a privative mode. Even a phenomenological or existential approach to psychoses, from Minkowski to Maldiney, in Binswanger or Jaspers, despite the undeniable descriptive interest that is presented, in these approaches confirmed multiplicity ends up being referred to a modality of time presupposed as an ideal, prioritizing, for example, certain structures of being-in-the-world, transcendence, anticipation, the project, out of an originating present, etc. But also within strictly psychoanalytic literature, with rare exceptions, the non-unity of the psychotic temporal experience is subsumed to its failed futuration in the form of timeless representations, in such a way that there is a chaotic immanence that is refused in name of a significant elsewhere precisely not assumable by the psychotic. Ultimately, entirely an apology for historicizing, whose fulcrum is the I historian, as Piera Aulagnier would say. Thus, somehow temporality ends up being identified with historicizing. With everything that this perspective can present as interesting, or useful, and even necessary in the clinic, it has the inconvenience of hindering the reception of becomings in psychosis. Deleuze and Guattari's reflection, in opposing becomings to history, could help to rethink this temporal heterogeneity of psychosis that so defies the time of reason, even psychoanalytical reason.

Deleuze says it clearly: History is a temporal marker of Power.² People dream about starting or restarting from scratch, and also fear where they will arrive, or fall. We always seek the origin or outcome of a lifetime, as a cartographic addiction, but we scorn the middle, which is an anti-memory. That's when it hits the highest speed, where the most different times communicate and cross one another, where there is the movement, becoming, whirl, as Deleuze says literally.³ And the question to be answered is simple: what

² Gilles Deleuze, *Superpositions*, with Carmelo Bene, (Paris: Minuit, 1980), 103.

³ *Ibid.*, 95-6.

temporal figure do we create in order to think such a turbulent medium, such a virtual multiplicity? Anyway, what should not fail to intrigue us is the fact that certain phenomena of psychic disturbance expose, more than any other, pure virtuality *as* virtuality, precisely detached from any centered or oriented actualization. The temporal incongruencies that appear in determined subjective configurations, and that have also marked cinema since its inception, strike, as is seen, on the very philosophical matter.

The Philosopher and the Schizophrenic

But what would it serve to converge Deleuze's times and the temporality of madness? Not, in fact, to suggest that Deleuze be in possession of a theory of time that the psychological domain has had trouble elaborating—a pretension that would come to contradict the same idea that Deleuze has made of the relationship between philosophy and non-philosophy, since philosophy's role is not to legislate over other domains, nor these domains to apply philosophical concepts, insofar as each discipline constructs its instruments "with its own means."

It would be necessary to start at Deleuze's relationship with schizophrenia, or better, the intrinsic relationship that entertains him *and the schizophrenic that inhabits him*, this schizophrenic, "who lives intensely within the thinker and forces him to think,"⁴ initiating an "event that is too intense," of a distinct nature, however, from "a lived condition that is too hard to bear" that strikes the clinical schizophrenic-entity, the psychosocial type. What temporal disturbances does this produce, that is, *the schizophrenic on the inside of the philosopher*? Or rather, which times engender this conceptual character in him? What thought of time is he impelled to forge, starting from there, and what "maddened" images of time is he tempted to liberate? And, lastly, how does he see his philosophy being harassed, from end to end, by these images?

To say it in the most simple way: several images of time collected above from a problematic of madness, although they contrast with the gathered images of time in Deleuze such as those that we briefly referred to, can go into free play with them, made of distance and proximity, contrasts and interferences, overlays, transvariations, remissions, abductions, and skills. The power for investigation that is inferred in this discordant accord, as much in the relation to the *times of philosophy* with its own rationalities, as to the *times of madness* with its unreasoning, should not be underestimated.

4 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 70.

Time and Thought

Cinema would have served Deleuze so as to reveal some of these conducts of time, giving off images that are diverse, evolutionary, circular, spiral, declining, broken, saving, fleeting, illocalized, multi-vectorial. Time as bifurcation, discrepancy, gushing, oscillation, split, modulation, etc. It's plausible to assume that the interest that Deleuze dedicated to them comes from a more radical determination than he lets us glimpse, in stressing the ambition of cinema to penetrate, apprehend, and reproduce thought itself. Thought and time would thus be, immediately, in a relation of indissoluble co-belonging. Indeed, what is inferred from Deleuze's writings on time is that the very thought could not remain foreign to the project of freeing itself of a certain idea of time that formatted it, or from the axis that bends it. In this sense, Hamlet's enigmatic exclamation about time that leaves its axes is coupled with the exigency of a thought off its axes, that is, of a thought that has finally stopped spinning around the Same.

As well as criticizing the sameness of a so-called dogmatic image of thought, Deleuze fustigates a hegemonic image of time. In asserting a thought without image, so that other images may come towards thought, Deleuze also calls for time with no image to liberate more or other images of time. The so-called dogmatic image of thought is well known: it is explored from *Nietzsche and Philosophy* to *What is Philosophy?* But what would it be, this image of hegemonic time refused by Deleuze? To go quickly, we say: it is time as a Circle. This is not exactly circular time, but the circle as a profound structure, in which time is reconciled with itself, in which beginning and end rhyme, as Hölderlin says. What characterizes the circle is its monocentering around the Present, its chained and oriented Movement, as well as its underlying totalization. The circle with its center, a metaphor of the Same. And even if the Present is situated in a remote and nostalgic past, or an eschatological future, neither for that reason does it discontinue functioning as an axis that bends time, around which it spins, redesigning the circle which we thought we had just escaped. It is there, ultimately, again and again, the time of Re-presentation.

To time as a Circle, Deleuze opposes time as Rhizome. No longer rediscovered Identity, but open Multiplicity. The logic of multiplicity was exposed and worked on, among other texts, in the description of the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus*. A rhizome can be entered from any side, every point connects with any other, it is made of movable directions, not beginning nor end, but just a means, through which it grows and overflows, without

referring to a unity or derivation from one, neither subject nor object. What does time become, therefore, when it comes to be thought of as pure multiplicity or operating within a pure multiplicity? The rhizome has no temporal sense or direction (the direction of the arrow of time, good sense, the sense of common sense, ranging from less differentiated to more differentiated), nor does it rediscover a prior totality that it would be in charge of, abolishing itself, making it explicit in the concept. It possesses no sense or direction and is unrelated to any teleology.

But is this Deleuze's last word with regard to time? For this virtual multiplicity is as if it were plowed and stirred at every point, along its entire length, no longer by a circle, which he refuses, but by what might be called - and the expression is already in Plato's *Timaeus* - a Circle of the Other. A circle whose center is the Other, this other that can never be the center precisely because it is always other: de-centered circle. It is the figure that best suits Deleuze's original reading of Nietzsche: in the repetition there returns only the non-Same, the Unequal, the Other—Being of Becoming, Eternal Return of Difference.

You can call this Other the Future (the regal repetition is that of the future, says *Difference and Repetition*). But if there is in Deleuze, as in Heidegger, a privilege of the future, it is not deductible from a problematic of Finitude, but rather from the Work, which rejects its supports, Habit, Memory, Agent. The future is not, for man, an anticipation of his own end, his own death, the extreme possibility of his being; nothing presents it as a being-for-death, since it is not from the ipseity that it can be thought, but from a proto-ontic flow. If in Deleuze's elaboration of this future the Open is an important benchmark, it then refers to the Outside, more than to Being. Let's say that the Open for Deleuze is closer to Blanchot than it is to Heidegger. It is under the sign of an Exteriority, then, that thought can gain a determination of future.

Time of Creation

As already mentioned, Deleuze's criticism of a so-called dogmatic image of thought is made on behalf of a thought without image. Now, this means that thought, without a prior Model of how to think (for example: thinking is to seek the truth), opens up for other adventures (for example: thinking is to create). Everything changes from one to another. Deleuze says that there are two different planes of immanence, classic and modern, that of the will to truth, on the one hand, and that of creation, on the other. And each is

inseparable from a certain concept of time that fills it. Should we not suppose that a philosophy of difference, like that of Deleuze, has given itself the task of filling this modern plane of immanence with a concept of time belonging to thought defined as creation, and no longer as the will to truth?⁵

The theorization of Deleuzian time, despite its many obscurities, would be to then think of a time consentaneous to the force of the new. If there is a profound fidelity to the Bergsonian project, it can only be carried out successfully when, with Nietzsche, time is elevated to its ultimate power, making it return to... difference. Only the selective eternal return, affecting the new, equaling the Unequal itself, only Time as Difference can inaugurate with the Future, discontinuous and disruptive, a relation of excess, such as the Work or the Overman, for which Zarathustra is not mature enough and yet he announces it. The future as the unconditioned that the instant affirms—is what Nietzsche would have called Untimely and whose importance Deleuze never stops emphasizing.

If Michel Serres is correct in attributing to philosophy the function of “inventing the conditions for invention,” we must add that, in the context which concerns us, this would mean reinventing the conditions for the invention of other times which are not those already consecrated by history. It deals with, ultimately, undoing the solidarity between Time and History, with all the ethical, political, and strategic implications of such an ambition. In thinking the substantive multiplicities and processes operating within it, driving out the most unusual temporalities, in the arc that goes from the Untimely to the Event, will Deleuze not have given voice to those who, as he says in a Benjaminian echo, “History does not take into account?” It is not, evidently, only the oppressed or minorities, though it always deals with them as well, but the becoming-minority of each and every one: not exactly the people, but the “missing people,” the people to come.

5 Essa tese foi desenvolvida de forma sistemática em Peter Pál Pelbart, *O tempo não-reconciliado: Imagens do Tempo em Deleuze*, São Paulo, Iluminuras, 1998/2010.



EXPERIENCE AND ABANDON OF THE SELF

In an interview from 1980, Foucault says that his books are for him *experiences* in the full sense of the word, since from them he himself came out transformed. An experience, therefore, could be defined based on this criterion: it regards a transformation of the subject. A book conceived as an experience is something that transforms the person who writes it and whatever the writer thinks, before even transforming whatever it addresses. Foucault confesses that the authors who most marked him were not great builders of systems, which upon completion their machinery could be applied to the most distinct domains, as if holding onto a truth, or progressively complementing it, but those others who actually allowed him to escape from that university education, that is, those for whom writing was an experience of self-transformation, such as Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot. This trio not only returns so often in the articles and books from his first phase, but they also appear in the interviews up to the end of his life, regarding which we cannot fail to see some sort of ritornello. Now, what was so essential that these authors gave Foucault, despite being marginal in what is usually understood as the history of philosophy? Precisely a conception of experience conceived as a metamorphosis, a transformation, in relation to things, with others, with oneself, with the truth. It was what happened in the study of great objects undertaken by Foucault, such as madness, delinquency, sexuality—every book written with regard to such resulted in a profound transformation in the relationship that the author, the reader, anyway, Foucault's time itself found forced to have something to do with these domains—whether in the contestation of psychiatric knowledge or the very definition of madness, of the enclosure of the madman or of the delinquent, of the investment of sexuality as the revelation of an unavoidable subjective truth. As is seen, Foucault's contribution to these diverse areas did not consist of reaffirming a progress of knowledge, an accumulation in constituted knowledge, but in the problematization of the truths produced by knowledge and powers, in their reciprocal overlapping, as well as in effects from there resulting, among others, the production of subjects thus implicated: the subject of madness, the subject of a sexuality, the sick subject, the delinquent subject,. But let us return to the notion of experience in his writings and interviews in which he defines through which his work necessarily passes. How does the notion of experience evoked by Foucault differ from the experience of the phenomenologist? If the experience of the phenomenologist, he says, consists of putting a reflexive eye on

any object of the lived, on everyday life in its transitory form, in order to extract significations from it, the experience to which Foucault refers, contrary to the phenomenologist, deals not with reaching an object of the lived, but a point of life that is closest to the unlivable. Not the lived life, but the unlivable of life. Not the possible experience, but the impossible experience. Not the trivial experience, but the one in which life reaches the maximum of intensity, doing away with itself. In short, not the everyday experience, but the limit-experience. Phenomenology tries to apprehend the meaning of the everyday experience to re-encounter, through it, the founding subject of this experience and of these meanings, in its transcendental function. The experience as Foucault understands it, along the lines of the above-mentioned authors, on the contrary, it does not refer to a founding subject, but debunks the subject and its foundation, yanks it from itself, opens it to its dissolution. In short, the limit-experience is an undertaking of desubjectivation. Hence, that which will have been decisive for Foucault in his readings of Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot: the experience that goes to its limit, experimentation which in its course separates from the subject, leaves it behind, and abolishes it. This is also what allows Foucault to say that his books, however erudite they may have been, were always conceived as direct experiences aiming at yanking him out of himself, impeding him from continuing to be himself. Clearly we have here a necessary perversion of the very concept of experience, since it generally is precisely remitted to a subject that lives it, passively or actively. But Foucault's question goes against the grain of this supposition: "Can't there be experiences in the course of which the subject is no longer posited, in its constitutive relations, as what makes it identical with itself? Might there not be experiences in which the subject might be able to dissociate from itself, sever the relation with itself, lose its identity?"¹ Thus, by way of these terms like dissociation, dissolution, dilution, loss of identity, Foucault contests the very status of the subject, be it the psychological subject, the subject of knowledge, or the transcendental subject.

The (im)personal existence

In a very prosaic sense, Foucault adds, at a different moment, that each of his books was born out of a "personal experience," a "direct experience." In the case of madness, here is his observation: "I have a complex, personal

¹ Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," with D. Trombadori, in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3: Power*, ed. James D. Faubion, (New York: New Press, 2001), 248.

relationship with madness and with the psychiatric institution.” The reader may ask what he is referring to exactly, but one need only take a quick look at any of his biographies or even at the biographical notes published in *Dits et Écrits*, and unsuspecting of any kind of sensationalist ambition, it is immediately cleared up. It deals with the crises that Foucault went through at the École Normale, fits of rage, attempts at suicide, even a visit to a psychiatrist, brought by his father. Furthermore, his interest in the topic was incessant, as his academic trajectory attests. Look at his parallel training in psychology, his internship in the psychiatric hospital, his translation of *Dream and Existence* and his personal frequenting of Binswanger because of the translation, not to mention all of his academic positions in which he was responsible for the psychology chair or psychopathology, or even his interest in psychoanalysis, his ambivalent relationship with Lacan, etc. If his personal experience, in this trivial sense, was decisive, this doesn’t even remotely mean that he had transposed personal experiences to the plane of writing in an autobiographical form—no self-complacency or narcissism—moreover, in no writing by him is there any biographical reference of this order. Here we have a small paradox, which we could formulate as such: how a book is born from a personal experience, but results precisely in the abolition of the same author who lived it, as the postulate pointed out above, according to which there are experiences, and experiences of thought or writing, which precisely question the author on his identity, even on his coherence? The whole challenge is in conciliating the fact that a book starts from a personal experience, but it doesn’t constitute the account of this experience, since the book is in itself an experience in a sense more radical, that is, a transformation of the self, and not the reproduction of the lived experience “such as it occurred” and that would be in the origin of this writing, nor its direct transposition. Now, this dimension is inseparable from the fact, obviously, that a book is made for others, and thus, ultimately, a collective scope, concerning a collective practice, to a way of thinking that extrapolates the individual subject, and addresses itself to an experience of those that read or utilize it. That is, ultimately, what Foucault calls a book-experience, by opposition a truth-book, or demonstration-book. As he says: “An experience is something that one has completely alone but can fully have only to the extent that it escapes pure subjectivity and that others can also—I won’t say repeat it exactly, but at least encounter it—and go through it themselves.”²²

² Ibid, 245

The book-experience

It's what can be shown with the destiny of *The History of Madness*—the frequent use made by anti-psychiatrists is due less to the fact of having been a book written “against” psychiatrists than by the transformation that it meant in the historical, theoretical, institutional, ethical, even juridical relation, with respect to madness, to madmen, to the psychiatric institution, to the truth of psychiatric discourse. It is “a book that functions as an experience, a book that functions as an experience, for its writer and reader alike, much more than as the establishment of a historical truth. For one to be able to have that experience through the book what it says does need to be true in terms of academic, historically verifiable truth.”³ And in fact, Foucault works with historical material that essentially does not differ from that used by more classic historians, with demonstrations, proof, allusions to writings, references, relations between ideas and facts, schemes of intelligibility, types of explanation—in short, he says, nothing original. Nevertheless, the essential is precisely in the “experience” that is befitting to do, based on this material, “an experience of our modernity in such a way that we might come out of it transformed. Which means that at the end of a book we would establish new relationships with the subject at issue: the I who wrote the book and those who have read it would have a different relationship with madness, with its contemporary status, and its history in the modern world.”⁴

The essential, therefore, is not found in the series of true or historically verifiable findings found in a book, but rather the experience that such a book allows to be made. Now, this experience, as any experience, is neither truthful nor false. “An experience is always a fiction: it's something that one fabricates oneself, that doesn't exist before and will exist afterward.”⁵ Hence one of the possible meanings *in jest* of never having written anything else besides fiction. It's not about lies, fabulations, or untruths, but rather the fabrication of an “experience,” which, on the other hand, is the polar opposite of any return to a “lived,” “authentic,” “true,” or “real.” This is what a book is. It is precisely a production, a creation, a singularity, an event, with its effects of reality. Foucault came to define himself as a pyrotechnic, that is, someone who fabricates explosives. The intention of his books, he says, is to bring down walls. And when he refers to the *History of Madness*, he says in 1975: “I envisaged this book as a kind of truly material wind, and I

3 Ibid, 243

4 Ibid, 242.

5 Ibid, 243.

continue to dream about it that way, a kind of wind that bursts the doors and windows. My dream is for it to be an explosive as effective as a bomb, and beautiful like fireworks.”⁶ We cannot deny that it worked on both registers.

The fabrication of experience

If this could be easily admitted for the experience of writing a book, which is, after all, a production, a creation, a construction, an invented event, how can one place in this fabricating key that which set off the book? How to understand that first “experience” from which the author departs like a *fabrication*? Our intuition would say the contrary; the lived conceived like the original, authentic, natural, the book as copy, imitation, fabrication. However, Foucault gets rid of this difference, when subtracting from the lived its original character. But how, it does not regard the personal circumstances of life, vicissitudes of a particular story, and furthermore, lived, original? How to imagine that this is fabricated? But precisely, this which is personal, to be well considered, is not at all natural, much less exclusively personal, since the suicide attempts of a young homosexual inside an institution of excellence where this sexual orientation, in the 1950s, with the conservative hegemony of the Communist Party, was still seen as a personal aberration, an anomaly or an infirmity, in any case as a deviation of conduct, it is less something of “natural” or “personal,” it is a fruit of historical, social, medical, psychological, psychiatric, institutional, discursive fabrication. Moreover, the personal is thus the result of a fabrication which is entirely historical. The form of this experience of “madness,” in a restricted sense of the word, can only be comprehended if it is not reduced to its private aspect, but returned to its historicity, which is precisely what the book-experience takes upon itself to elucidate, call into question, turn over, explode. The experience, in this case, however much lived and authentic it may seem, cannot be naturalized, it must be historicized, returned to the network of knowledge and power, to say it in a simplified manner, which elucidate it, and that, to formulate it in an even more paradoxical manner, tell the “truth” of this experience. Of course every problem, within this kind of posture, is that of the status of truth inside this fabrication, this experience, and of the status of truth embedded in the book that prolongs this experience. If a book, or even a book conceived as an experience, submits itself to a previously supposed truth and upon being revealed, everything would be easily resolved. However,

6 Michel Foucault “*Les confessions de Michel Foucault*,” Interview with Roger Pol-Droit, *Le Point*, 1 July 2004.

says Foucault, a book-experience has a difficult relationship with “the truth,” since this truth, implicated in a book-experience which does not depend on truth, but firstly tends to destroy it, it is itself problematic.⁷ Furthermore, if the book makes use of veridical documents, it is to, through them, not only accomplish a confirmation of truth, but also and above all an experience “that permits a change, a transformation of the relationship we have with ourselves and with the world where, up to then, we had seen ourselves as being without problems—in short, a transformation of the relationship we have with our knowledge.”⁸ We could, or should, thus, read the *History of Madness* in this light, as a book-experience, which subverts our relationship with the truth that until then seems to impose itself. Now, we insist, it is not the account of a personal experience, it is not a novel, it cannot be frugal with a certain regime of veridiction, scientific, academic, historical, under the penalty of losing all effect and effectiveness in the field of prevailing knowledge and power, yet if undertaken it is more with the intention of destroying truths that rule over this domain than of submitting to them. That is why Foucault’s work cannot be bundled into an epistemological tradition which sees progress in the study of science, or the progress of a rationality, and it can be assumed that the *History of Madness* was written precisely in the countercurrent of this tradition, showing, in the case of a less, let’s say, “hard” science, like psychiatry, to what point the rationality that it flaunted was problematic. It is a method that operates from within, digging inside a regime of the circulation of knowledge, inside a regime of enunciation, revealing a gearing that problematizes the very thing that seemed to constitute the object of analysis and, why not say it, also the subject of such an analysis. Is that not what we confirm in the *History of Madness*? With the support of abundant documentation, and an entire economy of historical demonstration, the object Madness is seen as if pulverized, returned to its heteroclitic “construction,” dispossessed of its naturalness and necessity, not of its reality, but of its inevitability, conceivable therefore not as a given, or a possible, but as an “impossible,” constructed with elements derived from the most heterogeneous registers, juridical, policing, institutional, legible also through literary or iconographic material. The concern consists of restoring the genesis of a social perception produced at a determined historical moment, and accompanying the effects of segregation, expulsion, con-

7 Ibid, 84.

8 Ibid, 244

finement, in the distance relative to the speeches and medical knowledge existing at that very time. Therefore, not only is the object explained by the conditions of its emergence, those being discursive, institutional, and archaeological, but also the subject of such “competent” discourse which emerged subsequently, the subject of knowledge, the subject that has little by little been constructed but also delegated to be occupied with madness, delegated to act upon such madness, occasionally freeing this madness from its chains, of treating it, disciplining it, silencing it, or making it talk. Thus, in this withdrawal, it is an entire gearing that continues to be revealed as having originated such object and such subject (of knowledge and of intervention), that in its presumably natural coupling continues to be “unscrewed.” It is what can thus be called a critical history of thought, in which the status of a subject and of an object should not be taken as given, but on the contrary, should be remitted to their historical constitution, to the modes of subjectivation and objectification and their reciprocal relationship, according to certain rules and games of truth. Refusing, therefore, not only any such anthropological universal, man, the madman, the delinquent, the subject of a sexuality, but equally refusing the exigency to make the analysis withdraw to the constituent, presupposed subject and final conditions of the entire analysis. And Foucault clarifies: “refusing the philosophical recourse to a constituent subject does not amount to acting as if the subject did not exist, making an abstraction of it on behalf of a pure objectivity. This refusal has the aim of eliciting the processes that are peculiar to an experience in which the subject and the object “are formed and transformed” in relation to and in terms of one another. The discourses of mental illness, delinquency, or sexuality say what the subject is only in a certain, quite particular game of truth; but these games are not imposed on the subject from the outside according to a necessary causality or structural determination. They open up a field of experience in which the subject and the object are both constituted only under certain simultaneous conditions, but in which they are constantly modified in relation to each other, and so they modify this field of experience itself.”⁹When referring to his project of a history of sexuality, he insists: “It is a matter of analyzing “sexuality” as a historically singular mode of experience in which the subject is objectified for himself and for others through certain specific procedures of ‘government’.”¹⁰

9 Michel Foucault, “‘Foucault’ by Maurice Florence,” in *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: New Press, 1998), 462.

10 Ibid, 463

Dislodgments

As is seen in these later formulations, for here we are already in his writings of the 1980s, again we still have the theme of experience, but now much more reformulated. As if, when thinking the modalities of experience, the forms of experience, the fields of experience, increasingly Foucault needed to join them to the processes of subjectivation and objectification, and their reciprocal relationship, within unique games of truth, having as a challenge a perpetual re-problematizing, without presupposing that it remain unaltered. “What blocks thought is admitting implicitly or explicitly a form of problematizing, and searching for a solution that could substitute that which is accepted. Now, if the work of thought has a meaning – different from that which consists of reforming institutions and codes – it is to retake at the root the way by which humans problematize their behavior (their sexual activity, their punitive practices, their attitude towards madness, etc.) The work of thought does not consist of denouncing the bad that secretly inhabits everything that exists, but rather portending the danger that threatens everything habitual, of becoming problematic everything that is solid.”¹¹ And one of the most difficult challenges in this task of incessant problematizing that increasingly occupies Foucault, consists of getting rid of the humanist idea of a subject taken as origin or destiny. As he notes: “there are more secrets, more possible freedoms, and more inventions in our future than we can imagine in humanism.”¹² When remarking on Marx’ idea that man produces man, he clarifies that this can’t be understood as if it were up to man to rediscover his fundamental essence, a mistake which is present in all of humanism centered on the idea of repression and alienation, rationality and exploitation, branding the image of an ultimately liberated man. In his essay on Blanchot’s writing, already in 1966, Foucault conceived language as incessant murmur, which destituted the subjective source of enunciation as well as the truth of the enunciated, emphasizing the emergence of an anonymous, free from any center or homeland, capable of echoing the death of God and of man. “Where ‘it speaks,’ man no longer exists.” Much later, Foucault reiterates this position: it’s not about rediscovering man, even through a so-called process of liberation, but “to produce something that doesn’t exist yet,

11 Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, “A propos de la généalogie de l’éthique: un aperçu du travail en cours,” in *Michel Foucault. Un parcours philosophique*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 325-326. Quotation taken from the French due to inconsistencies with the English version of this interview.

12 Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar With Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther, Guttman, Hutton, (Amherst: University of Mass. Press, 1988), 14.

without being able to know what it will be.”¹³ Furthermore: this production of man by man is at the same time “the destruction of what we are as well as the creation of a completely different thing, a total innovation.” Or still, more concretely: “Could it be that the subject, identical to itself, with its own historicity, its genesis, continuities, effects of its infancy prolonged to the end of its life, etc., would not be the product of a certain type of Power that is exercised over us in old juridical forms and recent political forms?”¹⁴

As can be noted by this small recurrence, however zig-zagging it may be, the meaning of the word experience undergoes some important inflections. It’s as if it acquired, throughout Foucault’s theoretical career, new variables that were not previously explicit or had not even been initially thought, such as processes of subjectivation and objectification, games of truth, problematizing, government proceedings, not to mention his own genealogical focus, or the ethical framework, such as how they were being explained. But what most surprises whoever is willing to confront the logic of this development will find that this note present at the beginning of Foucault’s career, about the limit-experience, which seemed like a literary or lyrical babbling belonging to the 1960s, afterwards dug up by more serious studies in the subsequent period, reappears at the end of his career, but with an entirely different meaning. In an interview with Rabinow in 1983, the year before his death, he compares the last move of his career to the first moment of his oeuvre in the following terms: “To study forms of experience in this way—in their history—is an idea that originated with an earlier project, in which I made use of the methods of existential analysis in the field of psychiatry and in the domain of “mental illness.” For two reasons, not unrelated to each other, this project left me unsatisfied: its theoretical weakness in elaborating the notion of experience, and its ambiguous link with a psychiatric practice which it simultaneously ignored and took for granted. One could deal with the first problem by referring to a general theory of the human being, and treat the second altogether differently by turning, as is so often done, to the “economic and social context”; one could choose, by doing so, to accept the resulting dilemma of a philosophical anthropology and a social history. But I wondered whether, rather than playing on this alternative, it would not be possible to consider the very historicity of forms of

13 Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault,” interview with D. Trombadori, in *Power*, op. cit., 275.

14 Roger-Pol Droit, *Michel Foucault, Entretiens*, (Paris: Editions Odile Jacob, 2004).

experience.”¹⁵ Let us dwell on this elaboration for a moment. From the outset, thus, he confesses that he had the idea of studying the question of experience. At first, it meant studying experience within the psychiatric field. In other words, he gave himself the task of studying the experience of madness, or mental illness, or psychiatry. And it is true, if you take the introduction to Binswanger’s book, *Le rêve et l’existence*, and there he has a pungent portrait of this moment. In this commentary, he closely follows the experience of the dream and that of madness, with all of the phenomenological somersaults, in a completely pre-Foucauldian description, as a way of saying, where the experience of madness is taken as a given lived-experience, autonomous, closed upon itself, without this lived-experience, this experience ever being related to psychiatric practice, from which it is inseparable, or to any reference to knowledge, much less to prevailing powers – therefore, it deals with a naturalized experience, not historicized, in which the very notion of experience is not elaborated, or problematized. It’s what made him dissatisfied, as the writing says. He invokes two ways of resolving this difficulty. Be it returning the experience to a “theory of the human being,” on the one hand, or be it invoking the “economic or social determinations” that marked this experience. Notice the alternative. Or he invokes an underlying universality, “the human being” (phenomenology, in any case, an anthropology), or an exteriority of determination, “economic conditions” (Marxism). In any case, in this schism, the two paths remain separate. What is preserved is an anthropology, a humanism, a universality, or on the other hand, it is sociologized. It is philosophical anthropology on the one hand, and social history on the other. Now, philosophical anthropology is that which Foucault’s first book, the one on Kant,¹⁶ calls into question, foreshadowing *The Order of Things*. And the sociology of Marxist coinage is that which he rejects, even though he has drunk from this spring, since, at bottom it leaves the idea of man intact, insofar as it presupposes it entirely. When asked about how this double influence, from Phenomenology and Marxism, operated in his career like an obstacle, he responds that people from his generation, as students, fed off of these two forms of analysis: one that referred back to the constituent subject, and the other that refers back to the economic in last instance, to the ideology and to the set of superstructures.

15 Michel Foucault, “Preface to the History of Sexuality, Vol II.” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 334.

16 Michel Foucault, *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology*, (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2008).

It's where he refers to his exit from this impasse. Instead of returning to the constituent subject, let's set up the historic plot again. "But this historical contextualization needed to be something more than the simple relativization of the phenomenological subject. I don't believe the problem can be solved by historicizing the subject as posited by the phenomenologists, fabricating a subject that evolves through the course of history. One has to dispense with the constituent subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis that can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework. And this is what I would call genealogy, that is, a form of history that can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, and so on, without having to make reference to a subject that is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history."¹⁷


Experimentation

In some lateral writings, Foucault goes even further, under the pretext of allowing himself to express, not exactly "what he thinks" but rather "what would be possible to think." For example, when responding to a question about the function of theory as a tool box, as an instrument, even in struggle, more than as a system, in the interview entitled "Power and Strategies," and when saying that he wrote in response to written questions, but as if in a first outpouring, without revising, not due to a faith in the virtues of spontaneity, but so as to allow for problematic character and let it be voluntarily uncertain, he adds this exquisite comment: "What I have said here is not 'what I think,' but often rather what I wonder whether one couldn't think."¹⁸ Perhaps what we have here is something that could pertain to much of *Dits et Écrits*. Could these writings be an expression of what Foucault thinks, or an experiment of that which could be thought, in other words, at the threshold between the thinkable and the unthinkable? Not, therefore, an expression of a self, nor even the formulation of a consolidated perspective, but an experiment, like Nietzsche, who so often changed perspective in order to experiment, let's say, what is thought capable of, so as to paraphrase a well-known author who asked himself what is the body capable of?



When describing his years of education, Foucault insists: "Nietzsche, Blanchot, and Bataille were the authors who enabled me to free myself from

¹⁷ Foucault, "Truth and power," in *Power*, op. cit., 118.

¹⁸ Michel Foucault, "Power and strategies" *Power/Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon, (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 145.



the dominant influences in my university training in the early fifties—Hegel and phenomenology. Doing philosophy in those days, and today as well in fact, mainly amounted to doing the history of philosophy—and the history of philosophy delimited, on the one hand, by Hegel’s theory of systems and, on the other, by the philosophy of the subject, went on in the form of phenomenology and existentialism. Essentially, it was Hegel who was the prevailing influence. For France, this had been in a sense a recent discovery, following the work of Jean Wahl and the teaching of Jean Hyppolite. It was a Hegelianism permeated with phenomenology and existentialism, centered on the theme of the unhappy consciousness. And it was really the best thing the French university could offer as the broadest possible mode of understanding the contemporary world, which had barely emerged from the tragedy of World War II and the great upheavals that had preceded it—the Russian revolution, Nazism, and so on. While Hegelianism was presented as the way to achieve a rational understanding of the tragic as it was experienced by the generation immediately preceding ours, and still threatening for our own, it was Sartre, with his philosophy of the subject, who was in fashion outside the university. Establishing a meeting point between the academic philosophical tradition and phenomenology, Maurice Merleau-Ponty extended existential discourse into specific domains, exploring the question of the world’s intelligibility, for example, the intelligibility of reality. My own choices ripened within that intellectual panorama: on the other hand, I chose not to be a historian of philosophy like my professors and, on the other, I decided to look for something completely different from existentialism. I found it in my reading of Bataille and Blanchot and, through them, of Nietzsche. What did they represent for me? First, an invitation to call into question the category of the subject, its supremacy, its foundational function. Second, the conviction that such an operation would be meaningless if it remained limited to speculation. Calling the subject in question meant that one would have to experience something leading to its actual destruction, its decomposition, its explosion, its conversion into something else. [...] The experience of the war had shown us the urgent need of a society radically different from the one in which we were living, this society that had permitted Nazism, that had lain down in front of it, and that had gone over en masse to de Gaulle. A large sector of French youth had a reaction of total disgust toward all that. We wanted a world and a society that were not only different [...] we wanted to be completely other in a completely different world. Moreover, the Hegelianism offered to us at the university, with its model of history’s



unbroken intelligibility [...]and] phenomenology and existentialism, which maintained the primacy of the subject and its fundamental value [...]were] not enough to satisfy us. Whereas the Nietzschean theme of discontinuity, on the other hand, the theme of an overman who would be completely different from man, and, in Bataille, the theme of limit-experiences through which the subject escapes from itself, had an essential value for us. As far as I was concerned, they afforded a kind of way out between Hegelianism and the philosophical identity of the subject.”¹⁹

Genesis of the subject

It is worth noting the shift that occurred from the 1960s. From an ontology of language it went to a critical ontology of the present, in which the dissociation of the subject was less owing to a literary adventure (where language appears, man disappears, as he said at the time) than referred back to a whole set of forces, apt to reinvent the relationship between subject and experience. He says as follows: “In a philosophy like that of Sartre, the subject gives meaning to the world. That point was not called back in question. The subject dispenses significations. The question was: can it be said that the subject is the only possible form of existence?”²⁰ As if at this time Foucault asked himself, echoing a question that had been put to him since the beginning of his career, but in a different way, would it be possible to dissociate the notion of experience from the notion of subject.

And the fact is that even research on knowledge, which took up ten years of his work throughout the 1960s, was not disconnected from this theme. It’s as if he reads it, at the end of his career, when establishing a difference between *connaissance* and *savoir*. While *connaissance* is a work that allows multiplication of cognizable objects, developing their intelligibility, comprehending their rationality, but preserving the fixity of the subject that investigates, *savoir* is a process through which the subject itself undergoes a modification through that which it knows, or from the work that it carries out in knowing. Thus, *savoir* both modifies the subject *and* constructs the object at the same time. It is in this sense that the entire archaeological sequence is not only a study about knowledge [*savoirs*], but about the emergence of certain objects, such as madness, or death, life, language, and simultaneously the emergence of certain subjects, subject of reason, of life, of language, of production, etc. It is not merely the study of a dominion, but of an experience

¹⁹ Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault,” interview with D. Trombadori, in *Power*, op. cit., 246-248

²⁰ Ibid, 248.

through which men are constituted as subjects, when engaging in the study of these very objects. It's a whole genesis of the subject that one may only see sketched out here, to be elaborated upon later, more closely, when referring to a set of forces, to anonymous strategies, to the field of power, to the forms of power, with the production of individuals, linked to their identity, as well as to the forms of subjection, which are, at the same time, modalities of subjectivation.

And all of this, at a third moment, will acquire a different layout, when it is precisely in question, no longer the relationship between a subject and an object, nor between subject and Power, but between the subject and itself, insofar as ethical agent – it is a whole new continent that opens here, in this genealogy of the subject as subject of ethical actions.

In order to provide a small idea of this last development, we could take the final lecture series that Foucault gave before his death, published under the title of *The Courage of Truth*. Here he focuses on *parrhēsia* as his theme, the saying-the-truth, the speaking-frank. It's not about, in this course, asking oneself what is truth for the Greeks, or what makes it possible, or what does true knowledge consist of. It's not a study on the possible formal conditions for truth, nor is it a study of epistemology. Rather, it is about thinking what implications does the saying-the-truth have for that which speaks, what transformations are brought about in the relationship with oneself and with others, therefore, what ethical mutations can be detected in this practice of the saying-the-truth, or the speaking-frank. What is at stake here, is a certain form of veridiction, thus, which does not only constitute a discursive act, but implies a care of the self and a care of others, therefore, and implies a mode of existence, in a manner of conducting oneself, in a form of life. It's what Foucault calls an *Ethopoietic* dimension. Here we see, not so much an intersecting between the dimension of knowledge, of power, of the subject, but in a somewhat shifted way, between an order of veridiction, techniques of governmentality, and practices of the self. Foucault says, in his course, that it is what he always wanted to do... Of course, we should be suspicious of this retrospective reading, always made to serve his present research. But we cannot fail to see here an important shift in relation to his previous research, that he himself recognizes, when noting how, when becoming interested in the relationship between subject and truth, in his first studies, his question was: from which practices and discourses did he try to say the truth about the mad subject, about the delinquent subject? This is the case for *The History of Madness* and *Discipline and Punish*. Or, "On the basis of what discursive



practices was the speaking, laboring, and living subject constituted as a possible object of knowledge (savoir)?”²¹ (Here we recognize *The Order of Things*.) Up to there, Foucault discerns a moment of his career. Afterwards, he says, he no longer sought discourse in which one could say the truth about the subject, but “the discourse of truth which the subject is likely and able to speak about himself, which may be, for example, avowal, confession, or examination of conscience.”²² That is the *History of Sexuality*. And from there, this theme that would bring him to a historical analysis of the practices of the saying-the-truth about oneself, in this long sequence in which it is inserted into the theme of care for the self, of the practices of the self, of the culture of the self. It’s the problem of the ethical constitution, or even ethical differentiation, in any case, of the constitution of ethical subjects.

Care of the soul or care of life

Foucault contrasts two of Plato’s writings, *Alcibiades* and *Laches*, even though in both there appears to be this need for a frank speaking, for a saying-the-truth, for a courage to do it. In *Alcibiades*, since it is necessary to know how to care for the self, one asks “what is it really that in the self that needs to be cared for, what is the object of the care? Well, it’s the soul. And what in the soul? The divine element that in it allows one to see the truth.” There is therefore the care of the self, the soul, divine truth, and thus a whole direction that should end up at a metaphysics of the soul, or an ontology of the self (I). In *Laches*, indeed, it is necessary to care, care for the youth, teach them to take care of themselves, but what is necessary to take care of, and what is necessary to teach them to care for? What is the object of such care? Now, it’s not the soul, but life, not *psyche*, but *bios*, in other words, a way of living. Thus the two directions in philosophy, philosophy as a *metaphysics of the soul*, as an *ontology of the self*, or philosophy as the elaboration of a certain form and *modality of life*, *life itself as ethical material*.²³ In this contrast there is something like a bifurcation, and what is at stake in the second modality is the *form that is given to life*. The emergence of life as object means that it is necessary to exercise an operation upon it, putting it to the test, submitting it to a screening process, to a transformation, etc.. Instead of, moreover, contemplation of the soul, the stylistics of existence emerges, the visible figure that humans should give to their lives, with all the risk and the courage that

21 Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, trans. Graham Burchell, (New York: Palgrave), 3.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid, 126-127.



it implies. It is not in search of the *being of the soul*, but a *style of existence*. Foucault insists on how throughout his career philosophy would have left this second way on the edge, privileging the first, as if care of the self that has life for its object, and the elaboration of a beautiful life, through a saying-the-truth, had been relegated to a second plane in favor of metaphysics of the soul. Foucault's daring, not to mention his causticity, allows him to say: "if it is true that the question of Being has indeed been what Western philosophy has forgotten, and that this forgetting is what made metaphysics possible, it may be also that the question of the philosophical life has continued to be, I won't say forgotten, but neglected; it has constantly appeared as surplus in relation to philosophy, to a philosophical practice indexed to the scientific model. The question of the philosophical life has constantly appeared like a shadow of philosophical practice, and increasingly pointless."²⁴

Up to here we were sailing in somewhat calm waters, whether in the old world, or in the philosophical world. Where everything gets complicated is when Foucault takes the example of cynicism to show how all of this becomes exacerbated. In order to make it the true life, according to the precepts that the cynics profess, in a type of jocose transvaluation of all values, life should be a different life, a radically different life, in total rupture with every code, law, institution, habit, including those belonging to philosophers. The true life is a different life, and should also, in its public, aggressive, even scandalous manifestation, transform the world, call for a different world. It is thus not the question of another world, according to the Socratic model, but that of a different world. The saying-the-truth, the care of the self, the care of others, the different life, the different world. There is, hence, a necessary inversion whose logic Foucault exhaustively scrutinizes, showing to what point within this supposed true life an alterity is insinuated, one that throws it back to towards the world itself.

In the second to last class of his course, he defines the bifurcation at stake like this: "Metaphysical experience of the world, historic-critical experience of life: these are two fundamental cores in the genesis of European or Western philosophical experience."²⁵ Foucault never fails to stress that such *experience* occurs in this historic articulation between a regime of veridiction (*Savoirs*), a form of governmentality (Powers), a practice of the self (Subjectivation). If philosophy is a form of *experience*, supposing that

²⁴ Ibid, 236.

²⁵ Ibid, 315.

the historical forms of experience produce different modalities of subjectivation, in relation to itself or in modification of itself, it's up to philosophy to "produce," as a way of saying, the subjectivation or desubjectivation that corresponds to it. It can be asked, thus, if in Foucault a transformation of the self is not equivalent, at times, to an abandon of the self, or, in other terms, if certain modalities of subjectivation detected or evoked by him would not imply different degrees of desubjectivation.



SUBJECTIVATION AND DESUBJECTIVATION

At the beginning of the 1980s, Jacques Derrida took a work trip to communist Czechoslovakia, and after a journey of work-related meetings, he was arrested at the airport under the accusation of carrying cocaine. Of course, it was a procedure of political systematic intimidation, at an especially harsh moment of the regime. Liberated from jail thanks to direct intervention by Mitterand, in the first class after his return, in his course at the École Normale, on the Rue d'Ulm, he told of what he had spoken about with his Czech interlocutors, in general philosophers and intellectuals. They stated that in political resistance to the regime, deconstruction didn't help. They had difficulty dealing with deconstruction of the subject, at a moment in which what they needed, as opposition, was precisely to strengthen the subject squashed by repression. Now, we can imagine the enormous philosophical detour that Derrida had to take in order to explain that resistance and deconstruction were not only compatible, but were also even coinciding, in a more radical sense, since they questioned not only political representation, but also the subject that established it. It is improbable that he convinced his interlocutors, seeing as the problem continues to thrive, at a moment, for example, in which something like the political subject of the resistance is sought after. It's true, perhaps some intellectuals have given up on looking for the political subject, to speak of subjectivity, and perhaps they have even given up on speaking of subjectivity, in order to evoke processes of subjectivation.

Let us take, in contrast, an interview published in the *Vacarme* magazine twenty years later, where the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben is asked why, in his analyses, he privileges the plane of power so much, overlooking the subjects of the resistance. What is the reason for this insistence on concepts like *homo sacer*, bare life, the concentration camp as a biopolitical paradigm, the state of exception, to the detriment of the resistance, reappropriations, to the gestures of reprisal, which would have more pragmatic relevance? Had Agamben forgotten about "our" biopolitics (those who resist), in favor of "theirs" (those in power)? In privileging major biopolitics, had he not sacrificed minor biopolitics? He answers that this difference, which used to be clear, has become foggy. Distinct domains, even antithetical, that in other moments could be lived as dichotomies, such as *biós* and *zoè*, form-of-life and bare life, political body and biological body, public and private, have today become so mixed up, that it's not about claiming one of the poles

against the other, as if it were possible to retreat behind an already overtaken border. The distinction between them is already not working. That is why, contrary to what you are charging me with, he insists, it is necessary to part from this indistinction of spheres: “It’s from this uncertain terrain, an opaque zone of indifferentiation, that we should today reencounter the path of a different politics, of a different body, of a different speech. I wouldn’t know of any other pretext under which I would renounce this indistinction between public and private, biological body and political body, *zoè* and *bios*. It is there where I should reencounter my space – there, or in no other place. Only a politics that parts from this consciousness could interest me.”¹ Therefore, if the actors of concrete struggles, those that make the experience of the state of exception, such as the undocumented, AIDS carriers, drug addicts, the unemployed who call for a universal salary, all appear very little in Agamben’s writings, and when they do appear, it is more in the form of objects than the form of subjects, it is because he sees a larger problem here, precisely that of the subject. Agamben is unable to look at them as given subjects, but rather inside a process of both subjectivation and desubjectivation at the same time. On the one hand, he recalls, the modern State is a machine of decodification, which shuffles and dissolves classic identities. But, at the same time, it is a machine that juridically recodes dissolved identities. Therefore, while it desubjectivizes, it resubjectivizes. Without citing Deleuze and Guattari, he seems to be very close to a very recurrent idea in *Anti-Oedipus* – in other words, while capitalism deterritorializes, the State, but also the family, psychoanalysis, the media, all reterritorialize. But let us stick to Agamben, before opening this plethora of directions. “Today, it seems to me that the political terrain is a type of battle field where two processes are carried out: both destruction of everything that was traditional identity – I say it without any nostalgia, evidently – and immediate resubjectivation by the State. And not only by the State, but also by the subjects themselves. It’s what you evoked in your question,” he says to the interviewer, “the decisive conflict takes place henceforth, for each one of the protagonists, including the new subjects of which you speak, in the terrain of what I call *zoé*, biological life. And, indeed, there is no other terrain: it’s not about, I believe, returning to the classic political opposition that clearly separates private and public, political body and private body, etc. But this terrain is also that which exposes us to bioPower’s processes of subjection. There is thus an ambiguity,

¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Interview with Giorgio Agamben* by Stany Grelet e Mathieu Potte-Bonneville, *Vacarme* 10, Paris, 2000,

a risk. It is what Foucault showed. The risk is re-identifying, investing into this situation with a new identity, producing a new subject, perhaps, but subjected to the State, and redirecting from early on, in spite of oneself, this infinite process of subjectivation and subjection that is precisely what defines bioPower.”²

It’s a strong, categorical, seductive interview. As he does so often, Agamben helps us enter a problem with a key that seems to open all doors, but suddenly we see that we are locked in. Maybe because he is a thinker of the impasse, while Deleuze, to stick to a single example, takes the great lesson from Kafka’s animals – what matters is not freedom, but rather finding an exit. Indeed, if we consider that conflict takes place in the field of life laid out as *zoè*, we have to agree with the consequence that Agamben indicates. Further taking into account the temporal extension he attributes to bioPower, making it re-assemble the Roman juridical figure of *homo sacer*, killable life, though not sacrificeable, without such a death constituting a crime. A juridical region, hence, in which the law is suspended – bare life. Extrapolating from the historical picture hung up by Foucault, as his scope, the shadow of bioPower has been extended upon us since Roman antiquity. Thus, all of us today would be still and ever more submitted to this condition of bare life inside of a state of exception. Hence the growing difficulty in thinking a resistance that doesn’t exactly start from this bare life, life reduced to its state of mere actuality, biological banality, be it that of the prisoners in Guantanamo, users of mental health services, those without documents, on the one hand, or from the optimized performance, genetic manipulation, on the other – all of which in a slightly abusive manner, perhaps, today is called biopolitics.

But what if we disagree on this point of departure, considering that it seems to stick to the perspective of Power? And if we pull ourselves away from this ontological primacy attributed to Power, and from the risk of a metaphysical essentialization, with its messianic counterpart? If we stopped seeing everything from the light of Power, we wouldn’t also attain, as Didi-Huberman has suggested, the minimal images which used to seem blurry, or their flashes of counter-Power?³ And if we dare to affirm that it’s not in the field of *zoè* that this resistance takes place, it’s not in the zone of bare life, understood as life reduced to its state of actuality, of indifference, of deformity, of powerlessness, of biological banality, but that the resistance takes place from what Deleuze called *a life*, that is, from the life conceived

² Ibid.

³ G. Didi-Huberman, *Survivance des lucioles*, 77.

as virtuality, difference, invention of forms, impersonal power, the contemporary cartography that consequently appears is different. Not catastrophist, but also not jubilatory – as if it were necessary to extricate oneself to a single time, on the one hand, the claustrophobic demonization, so as not to say paranoid, of an omni-present Power, omniscient, omni-invasive, always joined by, in passing, a salvationist temptation,⁴ but also it would be necessary to nuance the euphoria coming from the cult of inexhaustible power, maniacal or anxiolytic vitalism. It is important to refuse these two courses in order to attain a different plane. One could relaunch a tactful experimentation, hesitating, departing from vital matter that we could call desire, with all its multiple runoffs and infiltrations, if this word were relieved of all of the virility that bioPower has marked it with, just like “dominant fat health” which has seized.

If we accept taking this step, if we accept making this change of plane, the issue of desubjectivation and resubjectivation changes shape, and stops being seen from just the point of view of Power itself. That is why Deleuze-Guattari never demonized capitalistic deterritorialization, or the desubjectivations coming from it, though they never ceased to criticize the Oedipal, signifying reterritorializations, the identitarian and compensatory resubjectivations. It’s as if, from the outset, for the schizo figure, for instance, who became a conceptual character, desubjectivation and resubjectivation were not a problem, were not his/her problem. Something else matters, lines of perception, blocks of intensity, paths of experimentation. On a broader scale, the issue is that collective assemblages of enunciation, creative lines of flight, the minor-becoming of each and every one, but also that of dead times, of exhaustion, of anti-production, of the body-without-organs – none of which redirects to the subject, nor derives from it – on the contrary, they are positive processes of singularization, adjacent to those that occasionally produce collective subjectivations, temporary individuations, incorporeal universes, existential territories, even autopoetic self-references. They don’t depend on, nor reflect that to which they are opposed, or that from which they flee, the State, Oedipus, the Signifier, Capital, the general equivalent. Therefore, from Deleuze and Guattari’s point of view it is a false problem, this telescoping between a desubjectivation and a subjected resubjectivation, since in the middle, in the emptiness or in this remnant that Agamben sees

4 As Jacques Derrida says, it deals with demystifying the apocalyptic tone, which is always done on behalf of a clearer, more luminous, and truer vision – “revelation”: *D’un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie*, (Paris: Galilée, 1983).

and where he deposits his hope or his messianism, Deleuze and Guattari see something different from the beginning – not a remnant nor an emptiness, but a type of excess – and I would be very prudent with this word, so as to not take it as a saturated plenitude, but rather as a complex virtuality...

But let's return to Agamben's commentary. Addressing the "care of the self," Foucault would have at the same time defended the right to "release oneself." A care of the self equivalent to a detachment of the self is a paradox that Nietzsche has already taken to the extreme. Thus Agamben's question, in Foucault's trail: what would a practice of the self be that didn't correspond to a process of subjectivation, but found its only "identity" in a detachment of the self? "Is it necessary, as a way of saying, to sustain oneself at the same time in this double movement, desubjectivation and subjectivation. Evidently, it is a difficult terrain to sustain. It truly deals with identifying this zone, this *no man's land* that would be between a process of subjectivation and a contrary process of desubjectivation, between an identity and a non-identity." Both in the example of the Aids carriers and the prisoners from Auschwitz, we would be facing a "subjectivity that would be the subject of its own desubjectivation." What would have interested the author at the end of the book entitled *Remnants of Auschwitz* is precisely the remnants, what remains between a subjectivation and a desubjectivation, a word and a muteness, this non-substantial space, this interval – it is as if we had here touched upon a new structure of subjectivity, not so much a principle, but a practice, that should worry about not relapsing into a re-subjectivation that would be at the same time a subjection – the big risk. To be a subject, thus, at most to the extent of a strategic or tactical necessity, a useful principle in all domains where a practice of the self touches a zone of non-knowledge or desubjectivation, where a subject watches his own collapse or skims his own desubjectivation. It's what a minor biopolitics would consist of, concludes Agamben.

None of this is disinteresting. As we said, Deleuze formulated a similar problem in the late 1960s, when he called for the domain of the impersonal, of the event, of pre-individual singularities as the only "subjective" line possible, not to say a-subjective, without there being any drama here, nor justifying before any egological or political tribunal, since upon this lay a new dimension of politics itself, he deserted the traditional frameworks of historical subjectivity. For example, a becoming, what is it? Desubjectivation, certainly, insofar as it drags given individuals out of their constituted identity, besides dismantling boundaries between human and non-human spheres, animal,

vegetable, mineral, mythical, divine. But from these imperceptible becomings are born larval subjects, multiple selves, different subjectivations.. So, when Deleuze says, years later, that there is only one universal in politics, the becoming-minor of each and every one is a call for a simultaneous desubjection and occasional subjectivations, an approach already quite distant from identity, subjection, subjugation, not to mention the subject, or the subject of history, according to a dialectic of recognition and identity. As the introduction to *Difference and Repetition* says, in 1968: “a Cogito for a dissolved self. We believe in a world in which individuations are impersonal, and singularities are pre-individual: the splendor of the pronoun ‘one.’”⁵ Coherence of the impersonal Event or of crowned anarchy. Desubjection as a political-strategic, or agonistic procedure.

Life capable of conducts

Let’s go back to Foucault. We can’t ignore that the moment at which the theme of the care of the self appears in his work, in parallel emerges the thematization of governmentality, of liberalism, of the transformation of the individual into an entrepreneur of the self. Not by chance, it is in this context that Power is thought like action upon action, conduct upon conduct, in which the government is defined as “a set of actions upon possible actions” (“Subject and Power”). Power has as a tradeoff, or as a condition of possibility, the freedom of subjects. The government conceived as “structuring the field of eventual action of others” supposes a subject that corresponds to it, or is correlated to it, or resists it. And indeed there is a turn around, above all from *The government of the living*, towards a problematic of the subject. For it becomes clear that the condition for the government to function is the construction of a relationship to the self, and it is just from that relationship that obedience is possible. The relationship to itself is the means by which the government can operate. But contrary to similar practices from antiquity described by Foucault, as in stoicism, where the technique of the self sought a dominion of the self, Christianity aims for humility, obedience, mortification, detachment, in short, a destruction of the form of the self. There is a contrast between the dominion of the stoic self and the destruction of the Christian self, just like there is a distance between this destruction of the ego’s vanity in Christianity and modern hermeneutics, which aims for the identity of the subject. In any case, this knot between life, the self, and Power does

5 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), xxi.

not characterize just primitive Christianity, but also the modern western State, to the extent that it has integrated procedures of pastoral Power. Thus, it is about a form of Power that cannot prescind knowing “what happens in people’s heads, nor allow to exploit their souls, forcing them to reveal their most intimate secrets.” In other words, says Foucault, “it is a form of Power that transforms individuals into subjects” and favors “everything that connects the individual to him or herself and thus guarantees submission to others.” When the figure of the subject appears in Foucault’s later work, it’s not like a deviation from the biopolitical analysis, but is the culmination of the analysis of bioPower, this Power over life that passes through the subject, since it’s this the way through which Power monopolized life.

If before the subject was thought as effect from the procedures of subjection, like the reverse of a process of subjection, as in a disciplinary society, this thesis is no longer sufficient, for it does not precisely explain “how” this mechanism creates subjects. Muriel Combes makes the instigating hypothesis that it is precisely to explain *how subjecting operates* that later on Foucault resorts to the techniques of the self, which, associated to the techniques of domination, would allow to undertake “the genealogy of the subject in western civilization,” instead of skating on a “philosophy of the subject.”⁶ These techniques of the self are defined as those that “permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves.”⁷

If the techniques of the self seem to still obey the soul/body division, Combes notes that this division is not operational, when thought deeper, as in the examples given by Foucault, since there are reversibilities. In any case, it’s just out of these techniques of the self that one can understand how a Power, even disciplinary, produces subjects, naming that which the disciplines invest in, the body, desire, thoughts. Thus, for Combes, at bottom, there is neither soul nor body, despite the divisions operated at every moment of history, but rather *subjective conducts*. If the techniques of domination aren’t enough to account for the genealogy of the western subject, it is because this link was missing, the techniques of the self, the way subjects are constituted, for it is this level, after all, that allows us to think the relationship between power and life, even and above all in the context of bioPower. To

6 Michel Foucault, “*Sexuality and solitude*” in *Ethics: subjectivity and truth*, ed. P. Rabinow, (New York: New Press, 1997), 175–184. *apud* Muriel Combes, *La vie inseparée: vie et sujet au temps de la biopolitique*, (Paris: Dittmar, 2011).
7 *Ibid*, 177.

say it in a different manner: if in the analysis of the disciplines one could still consider the psychological subject as a type of effect of material incidence of Power upon bodies, the analysis of bioPower requires, in its relationship with life, the techniques of the self, the relationship of the self, mediation of the subject. It's because – and here I follow closely Muriel Combes – life, precisely, is no longer just the body, a life is not just biological, even if it isn't about say that it is also soul or spirit or subjective. Life upon which the techniques of the self are focused is above all a *life capable of conducts*, a life susceptible to adopting diverse directions.⁸ Life capable of conducts, here is a curious definition to think the object that bioPower focuses on: “When I was studying asylums, prisons, and so on, I perhaps insisted too much on the techniques of domination. What we call “discipline” is something really important in this kind of institution; but it is only one aspect of the art of governing people in our societies.”⁹ Therefore, the techniques of the self are not techniques of domination, properly, nor do they proceed by subjection. They are in the passage between a modality of subjection for a modality of self-control, in the context of governmentality.¹⁰

Subjectivation appears thus as a modality of exercising Power over life, to the extent that it summons a work upon itself, this self understood not properly as a substantive instance, personalogical or universal, situated behind the subject, or an immutable nucleus, but like a relational potentiality, a zone of the constitution of subjectivity. The government being a Power that is exercised over “individual or collective subjects that have in front of themselves a field of possibility where several conducts, several reactions, and diverse modes of behavior can take place,” as Combes says, Power's consistency zone should be conceived more on the side of the subject considered as field of possibility, field of action for a multitude of conducts to invent than the side of “bare life.” If Agamben had bothered to bring to the surface the difference between bare life and form of life, bare life should be conceived as a limit, a critical point, for a Power that is exercised as action over action “for

8 Combes, *La vie inseparée*, 52.

9 Foucault, “*Sexuality and solitude*” in *Ethics*, 177.

10 Nada disso nos dispensa de considerar esse conjunto teórico à luz das injunções do capitalismo contemporâneo, tal como fez Lazzarato ao postular uma governmentalidade “autoritária” num contexto em que se conjugam o exercício soberano/disciplinar no interior de umma sociedade de “segurança”, na qual a axiomática capitalística, em época de crise, deve ser reasegurada por um capitalismo de Estado já distante do neoliberalismo puro que Foucault analisou em seus últimos cursos, e para o qual havia justamente forjado a noção de governmentalidade. Cf. Lazzarato, *O governo do homem endividado*, a sair pela n-1 edições.

life over that which a bioPower focuses is an informed life, a life capable of many conducts, and for this reason, always capable to insubmission.”¹¹

From this we can extract diverse consequences. If we don't depart from bare life, in order to think bioPower, but rather from life capable of conducts, a different horizon opens up. Even in the concentration camp, but also in the most brutal contexts of our contemporaneity, or in the most delicate, like in those populations to which were referred in the interview with Agamben, or in Deligny's autistic persons, or in the psychotics of our day-hospitals, it's not ever about bare and raw biological life, or vegetative life, but of gestures, manners, modes, variations, resistances, as minuscule and unapparent as they may seem.

11 Combes, *La vie inseparée*, 52.



AFTERWORD




Various lines have been conjugated along this book. The relations between power and desubjectivation, ways of existence and erratic lines, crises and creation, life and exhaustion, among others. None of this can be thought of, today, without avoiding the contemporary biopolitical context and, more radically, the problematic of nihilism.

One may be surprised that such an “European” problem, not to say “Russian,” as nihilism, would worry us today in the “tropics,” if such geo-philosophy still preserves any meaning in such a globalized context. What is the interest in addressing this theme to such a hazy or depressing point – is it not just a fad from the 19th century, which is already resolved? Now, what Nietzsche called “the most sinister of guests” doesn’t seem minimally prone to dispense its hosts, though having taken inaudible forms, and at times unrecognizable ones, which every day ask for new descriptions, complements, precisions. Thus, the almost redundant addendum that we dare include here, to the explanatory subtitle, to call contemporary nihilism *biopolitical* – it is our way of “updating it.” In fact, over the last years these two lines of research that have interested me, biopolitics and nihilism, have not stopped attracting one another, interweaving, reverberating, and referring to each other reciprocally. It was necessary, therefore, to investigate this association further.


The urgency of this task is due to increasing pusillanimity, in which a *biopolitical abasement and monitoring of life* obtund the *variability of perspectives, of modes of existence and resistance* that this context could provoke. There is a biopolitical strangling that asks for gaps, as small as they might be, in order to reactivate our political imagination, be it theoretical, affective, bodily, territorial, existential. Some of them were discussed in previous books¹, but time has shown that they would reclaim a conceptual amplification and new deviations.

It’s obvious that today precise forms of control, monitoring, expropriation, and intensification of “life,” individual and collective, mental and corporal, bio-psychological and biophysical, sexual and behavioral, are everywhere, which at times gave to Nietzsche’s interpretation aggravated inflections and an unprecedented concreteness: for example, the negation of life operated as “production” of life, the negation of health brandished as “production” of health, the narcissistic reterritorialization or self-entrepreneurship comprehended as care of the self, to stick to restricted examples.


1 *A vertigem por um fio: Políticas da subjetividade contemporânea*, São Paulo, Iluminuras, 2000, or *Vida Capital: Ensaio de biopolítica*, São Paulo, Iluminuras, 2003.



As if the change from repressive logic to the productive one embedded in the exercise of power, in the way Foucault pointed out, had opened widely. But this process has its opposite. If in its stern sense, nihilism refers to the historical-philosophical decline of a metaphysical matrix of denial of life, Nietzsche claims that the same symptoms can be traced back to the “vital energies that are growing and cracking a shell.” What are such vital energies in our biopolitical context? And how to map them? The active destruction of ruling values and, above all, of the means of production of values, today, cannot make the economy of the biopolitical analysis. As biopolitics, as Foucault defined it, is management and control of the life of populations in a broad sense, compatible with what Deleuze called “control society,” having as its lower limit the biologizing abasement of existence (bare life). Conversely, however, power and multitudinous expansivity (affective, subjective, collective) affirms itself as biopower. With such, it implies in the dissolution of certain forms of dominion – for example, the growing prevalence of the immaterial work, in replacement of the Fordist model, leads to a recomposition of class and new lines of conflict.



Both nihilism and biopolitics obey a logic of the Moebius strip, in a reversibility that is intrinsic to them – under certain conditions, they reveal their opposites. As if in both cases it were necessary to go to the limit of the process to turn it onto its back, or, better put, to reveal the force of the other side (outside) that from the beginning was there, virtually, exerting pressure. If the logic of both is assimilated to such a point, it won't be just by a structural homology. It is because biopolitics does not fail to be a socio-historical, psycho-political, affective-subjective concretion of nihilism itself, understood as an escalation of the denial of life, that, however, carries, in its reverse, an affirmative element.



It was necessary to sustain the points where both Moebius strips, as a way of saying, cross one another and communicate. That implies assuming the equivocal and non-deterministic character in both cases, without letting it be engulfed either by somber and sinister colors that some interpretations of nihilism favor, or, on the contrary, by the effusively utopian tone that some interpretations of biopolitics instigate. Such a tension just expresses the fact that one faces a complex, multiple fields of forces, traversed by concrete struggles on various scales, with all the reversibilities thus implicated.

For it is necessary to recognize the dangers of every approach that touches an abusive totalization, in which one imagines a closed System, of which would befit some kind of “leaving” – with all the powerlessness and

paralysis that this idea implicates. Or a History in relation to that which one imagines an “overcoming,” which would postpone to a beyond time this great “turn around.” As David Lapoujade rightly noted, a system is never closed in Deleuze and Guattari, it flees by way of all its ends, and the whole time the system itself tries to contain, “repel, subdue this heterogeneity that undermines it from within.” In this sense, “it is not about overcoming or reverting whatever it is, but of *turning it over* [...] walking on the other side, [...] the outside.”²

Precisely in this scope it was necessary to resort to figures such as *disaster*, *exhaustion*, *chaosmosis*, capable of revealing the points of a-foundation where there appear, paradoxically, and at the same time, the counter-movements (*to nihilism* and *of nihilism*, *to biopolitics* and *of biopolitics*). Impossible, thus, to speak of nihilism today without plunging into this complex and composed stew, where there appears, without any such psychologism, a bodily, material, affective, aesthetic, psychopolitical, micropolitical, biopolitical dimension, which through certain derangements or collapses reveals the heteroclitic components that ask for other assemblages, out of a different “element” – a different *Yes*. It is these inflexion points that insinuate, at times imperceptibly, the counterblows that are eagerly awaited, but also in a spectacular fashion, public explosions that denounce the means of production of sense and value that have decayed. To formulate it more precisely, we would say that it is not about producing an amalgamation of nihilism and biopolitics, but about experimenting the biopolitical dimension of nihilism, and the nihilistic dimension of biopolitics, and the reverse of both. Only then can that which is depleted and that which is insinuated be revealed, through an outside force.

What to do, thus, in order to address the theme of “nihilism” refusing its substantiation or reification, assuming its infinite elusiveness? There is no response, but rather local tactics. One of the challenges, in any case, consists of refusing at each step a “nihilistic” reading of nihilism – with which we distance ourselves from the many available approaches, however consecrated they may be, which refer to the “history of Being,” or to an anthropocentric dialectic based on notions of alienation, reappropriation, authenticity. Both the auratic and the humanist solutions “solve” what escapes us, the lines of drift having been preferable to us – even when it does not “solve” anything. When recognizing the modesty of Deleuze’s philosophical endeavor facing

² David Lapoujade, “Deleuze: política e informação,” in *Cadernos de subjetividade* n 10, São Paulo, (2010).

the question “what do you propose?”, Lapoujade sustains with acuity that we still haven’t grieved for “philosophy as State apparatus.”³

As such, our suspicion remains regarding the excessively totalizing readings, be it in the historical arc that returns to antiquity, be it in the extensive range that encompasses all planetary space, sometimes resulting in a tonality of *a priori* aversion to contemporary complexity – which is already, let’s say in passing, part of the symptom to be thought. As Deleuze says in a reference to Kostas Axelos’ analysis, that tried to conjugate Heidegger, Marx, and Heraclitus in order to think the “planetary” era: precisely when everything seems flat, when the earth has become smooth, and all the powers are determined by the code of technique, after all, it is in this apparently unidimensional state that nihilism has “the most bizarre effect: it returns the elementary forces to themselves in the raw play of all its dimensions, *liberating the unthought nihil in a counter-power which is multidimensional play*. Of the most unfortunate souls, it will no longer be said that they are alienated or tortured by the powers, but rather that they are shaken by the forces.”⁴ It’s this irreverence facing a grave tone, solemn and lapidary that permits relaunching the game (“it plays, without players”), avoiding the nihilistic captures – in short, freeing the thought of nihilism from the risk of turning into the nihilism of thought. Such a capacity of turning from the other side, of shaking the dusty consensus, of finding the counter-powers, the counter-attacks, the new stratagems, and also the new disorders that the supposed totalized order hid, already brings a different affective tonality whose effect should not be underestimated. At times, more than the distinction between the true or the false, what matters is a different one, between the heavy and the light, the deep and the aerial, insists Deleuze, in the trail of Nietzsche. Referring to a song by Charles Koechlin, for example, that renounces classical affirmations and romantic raptures, Deleuze notes at what point it becomes particularly apt to say “a particular disarray, a particular disequilibrium, even a particular indifference,” and, besides that, “a strange joy almost like happiness.”⁵

It’s not a different direction that adopts a book published recently by Georges Didi-Huberman, unquiet with the predominance of an apocalyptic tone that precisely impedes letting see that which survives, in a strange paradox where the discourse of denouncement, as lucid and “luminous” as

3 David Lapoujade, “Deleuze: política e informação.”

4 Gilles Deleuze, “Fissure and Local Fires,” in *Desert Islands*, org. David Lapoujade, (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 160.

5 *Ibid*, 158.

it may be, helps to precisely obfuscate the existences that survive, with its discrete luminosity. Didi-Huberman states with reason: “One thing is to call the machine totalitarian, another is to attribute to it so quickly a definitive victory and without partitions. Is the world really at such a totally enslaved point as they dreamed it – projected it, programmed it, and want to impose upon us – our current ‘perfidious counselors?’ Postulating it is precisely giving credit to that which its machine wants us to make to believe. It’s seeing nothing but the night or the obfuscating light of the projectors. It’s acting like losers: it’s being convinced that the machine accomplished its job without remnants or resistance. It’s not seeing if not the *whole*. It’s furthermore not seeing space – were it interstitial, intermittent, nomad, improbably situated – from the openings, the possibles, the flashes, the *despite everything*.” Or still, taking up his beautiful image of the fireflies and the threshold of their visibility, he adds: “In order to know about the fireflies, it is necessary to see them in the present of their survival: it is necessary to see them dance in the heart of night, even though this night were swept up by some ferocious projectors [...] Thus as there is a minor literature – as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari showed with regard to Kafka – there would be a *minor light* with the same philosophical characteristics.”⁶

Everything indicates that there is really a problem of “light” in thought. How not to submit to the “searchlight” of reason? Bergson said that light is in the world, not in the spirit that contemplates... It is possible that a regime of obscene luminosity, like what currently predominates, has unprecedented effects of obfuscation of the “bioluminescences” – white nihilism! Hence our more reserved mention of micropolitical experiments (of the order of “fireflies”) that make for confuting testimonies, such as the chapters on Deligny’s wander lines or the Ueinz theatrical group, where “minor” modes of existence are approached and, to speak as Souriau, their “establishment” is thought.⁷

We can now return to the question that doesn’t want to keep quiet. After all, from what are we so exhausted nowadays? It’s necessary to imagine a cartography of exhaustion, as if it were a type of molecular symptomatology, as Nietzsche did with nihilism, though from a mostly historic-philosophical perspective, but also “psychological.” Now, following Deleuze’s trail,

6 Georges Didi-Huberman, *Survivance des lucioles*, 44.

7 Étienne Souriau, *Les différents modes d’existence*, Paris, PUF, 2009, presented by Bruno Latour e Isabel Stengers, who clarify: “To Souriau, all beings must be established, both the soul and the body, the work of art and the scientific existent, electron or virus.”



shouldn't we rethink exhaustion, nowadays, according to Beckettian categories? Perhaps that allows us to face with less jolts the states of suspension, of bankruptcy, of Musil-esque mist, even of dissipation, be it individual or collective, and glimpse at the stirring up of words and consumption of images, vital stratagems, indissociable from the forces and humor that they express.

On my part, for whom all these authors, thoughts, winds and events constitute incessant sources of inspiration, I'm left with the impression that they are also the clue, though fleeting, of a shift in progress. By whom? Of what? In which direction? We don't know. It is a collective cartography, unfinished, moving, from the inside out of nihilism – “cartographies of exhaustion” should be understood also in the genitive: exhaustion itself is the cartographer, as a way of saying. It's not about, therefore, knowing “who speaks,” nor “from what place one speaks,” perhaps not even “of what” is spoken, but like Guattari suggested, “what speaks through us?” The interview with him a few days prior to his death, traversed by the idea of chaomosis and of the worlds of virtuality that come thence, published here for the first time in English, brings a living testimony to this.



The bilingual reader will have noted that there is not a strict correspondence between the writings here published in Portuguese and in English. Minor editorial circumstances justify such a-symmetry: some writings that appear here in English were already published in Brazil, and it wasn't fitting to publish them here again. Others, useful for a Brazilian audience, perhaps are less so for Anglophone readers. However, it is one single book, though assembled differently in each language. As if in each language some writings or themes had prospered more, and others disappeared: some planted roots, others were aborted. A long time ago we discovered, with joy, that some books are monstrosities rebellious to the balance that we would like to give them.⁸



⁸ The irregular character in style of this book is due to the varied context of the production of its texts. This variation should not hide the trajectory at bottom, systematic research developed over the last several years, with the assistance of the CNPq, an agency that supports research in Brazil.







ADDENDUM



INTERVIEW WITH FÉLIX GUATTARI¹ THE DRIVE, PSYCHOSIS AND THE FOUR LITTLE FUNCTIVES

Felix, you affirm that your perspective seeks to make the human and social sciences circulate between a scientific paradigm and a more aesthetic paradigm. Can you say how this point of view enables your work to be understood?

FG: I would say that what seems to weigh down the work of elaboration in psychoanalysis, what makes it heavy, difficult, is this will that psychoanalysts have of posing as men of science, of positing psychoanalysis as a science. That seems absurd to me in many ways. One wishes to grasp the incorporeal objects that mental objects are, with their dimension of ipseity, of alterity, of creativity, and in their relationship to the world; now, since the Renaissance, these objects have precisely been eliminated in a systematic manner by the development of science; there is, as it happens, a basic contradiction. If one wishes to grasp what is rich in the history of the psychoanalytic movement, one must grasp precisely what is creative, inventive, novelesque, fantastic, mad, in Freud's oeuvre in particular. What refers us to the aesthetic paradigm is this dimension of creativity.

I'm not in the process of saying that I identify the object of psychoanalysis with the art object. My goal is not at all to aestheticise psychoanalysis: what I want to do is to grasp this dimension that is closest to creativity in the aesthetic paradigm, closest to the deployment of narrative lines, formal constructions, that enable a subjectivity that is not yet there, but which is nonetheless already there in a movement of becoming, to be mapped. That is the sense in which I am talking of the transference from the scientific paradigm to an aesthetic paradigm in psychoanalysis.

¹ Transcription of a video interview with Félix Guattari carried out by Rogério da Costa and Josaida Gondar on 12 August, 1992 in his house in Paris, few days before his death. This interview was requested by Suely Rolnik specifically for the Symposium "Drive and its Concepts," organized by Arthur Hyppólito de Moura and promoted by the Núcleo de Estudos da Subjetividade, at the Graduate Studies Program in Clinical Psychology at the Pontifical Catholic University in São Paulo. It was published in *Chimères*, n.20, autumn, 1993, Paris and in: *As Pulsões*, Arthur Hyppólito de Moura (org.), São Paulo, Ed. Escuta, 1995 (coleção Linhas de Fuga, directed by Suely Rolnik). Translated from the French by Andrew Goffey.


Yet, don't you often use notions that come from science? Don't you equally furnish a passage with science, even for an ethico-aesthetic paradigm, by using notions such as "chaos" or "strange attractors"?

FG: That comes from the fact that we are in a world that has developed to the extreme in the registers of science and of technology. It would be entirely arbitrary to want only to retain references in the order of romantic literature or the drama from the era of Sophocles or Aeschylus. Our existential myth is impregnated by science. So, it is not a matter of saying "Me, science, I don't want to know anything about it; I don't want to know anything about technologies." On the contrary, I'm steeped in it, it is part of my family romance today. This romance is much closer to informatics, to telematics, all the developments of cosmology and biology than the family romance of Goethe's era, the myth of nature and the suffering of young Werther.


What about the specific notion of the drive?

FG: One must have a basis on which to start, something established, that is, the extraordinary revolution carried out by Freud, which consisted in separating the life of the drives from instinctual life in man. Not that Freud denied the existence of instincts: he continues to assume this notion, but he forges that of the "drive". A drive doesn't just have to do with a biological source, a pressure² of libidinal energy. Freud links together the four dimensions of the drive: the source, the pressure, the aim and the object. And this object is a mental, phantasmatic or cultural object, even when it has to do with the parts of the body, the maternal breast, the buttocks, or, for Lacan, the gaze, seeing (all of which under the binary logic of the phallus). For my part, it is this dimension of the object that interests me, much more than [that of] a representation linked to the mechanist conception proper to the 19th century, which gives a sort of biological infrastructure to the drive. What I am interested in is not linking the drive to a massive existence, given once and for all in relation to effects of nothingness, but in seeing how there is a construction of existence, the logic of existence, a machinics of existence, a heterogenesis of existential components. That is what linking the drive to existence is for me.


² Translator's note: Guattari uses the term "poussée" here, which I have taken as the French translation of Freud's term "Drang", traditionally translated into English as "pressure".



Now, if one wishes to understand existence, there is no interest in basis starting out from energy metaphors like that of the Freudian libido, or from dynamics like that of repression, nor from all this representation of objects that are already discursive, already caught up in spatiotemporal relations. The drive must be sought prior to these relations of discursivity. This is what leads me to propose four ontological functives. Two of them, flows and machines, are of the order of the manifest Freudian drive. Machines, one might say, are the representational part of the drive in Freud, except that for me, they are not just representational, but constitute a specific machinics. The two other functives are not discursive, are not in time, not in space, and so belong neither to energetics nor to dynamics: they are incorporeal universes and existential territories. I say that it is here, from the point of view of the composition of these four ontological functives, that one encounters the drive, that one encounters a component in which the primal phantasies of Freudianism can be found, but on a very different ontological substrate, one that is entirely different, completely separated from biological anchoring.



Let's take up the example of the four primal phantasies of Freudianism again, the four drive matrices that are the phantasy of a return to the mother's breast, the phantasy of seduction, the phantasy of the primal scene and the phantasy of castration, and let's see how I reposition them from my heterogenetic point of view. Regarding the fusion with the mother's breast, I would not say that it is a matter of a phantasy, it is the very movement of chaosmosis, at one and the same time both dissolution into the world at a level at which neither subject nor object exists, and appropriation of an existential dimension. Except it is not a matter of a purely negative, chaotic existential dimension. It is a "chaosmic" dimension, in the sense that it develops with a certain ontological texture. As for the phantasy of seduction, it is a relation of flows, a relation of identification in which there is an object but not really a subject, where there is an object-subject, an objectality. But it is an objectality that repeats itself to itself, which is caught in a mirror relation, a relation of pure repetition. The first image, that if the primal phantasy of fusion with the maternal breast could be represented by spots that join together in an indistinct fashion, whereas with the seduction relation, it would be the repetition of a bar, the repetition of a mark, without it being possible to create anything at all that might escape from this flow characteristic. Now, if one considers the phantasy of the primitive scene, I would



say that it is a representation machine that always occupies the third pole, that it is an instance of communication, of exchange, that links together two heterogeneous poles. Finally, regarding phantasy of castration, the phantasy that, with Oedipal triangulation, I challenge the most, it is something that doesn't just indicate the positionality of three terms, but the autopoiesis, positionality in an existential territory. Thus, to go quickly, one might find the four primal phantasies of psychoanalysis captured in the polarity of my schema with four terms, captured between flows, machinic phyla, incorporeal universes and existential territories.

There is a consensus amongst the psychoanalysts about distinguishing instinct and drive. It is language that makes the difference. In man one would find the drive and not the instinct, precisely because we have language. As you don't make use of the nature-culture opposition, how do you see the question of the difference between instinct and drive?

FG: Animals have a whole series of semiotic components that are not of the order of language but which are nevertheless extremely elaborate signaletic and symbolic systems, including at a social level, at the level of perception, at the level of representation, at the level of aesthetic creation itself (because there is an aesthetics of the animal world). It is thus entirely arbitrary to say that there is on the one hand the massive world of the instinct, a world of pure linear causality, and on the other, the world of the drive, in relation with elaborated language. If you consider the four formations of Stern's "self," that I take up again in *Chaosmosis* you will see that before the verbal self, there is the emergent self, the core self and the interpersonal self, which are not of the order of language, and which imply an extraordinary semiotic richness of communication through the eyes, gestures, postures, blood circulation, moods, etc. There is [*with the baby*] a whole ethological exuberance that employs semiotic components that are extremely rich, much richer, when all is said and done, than those of adults, because language only files down, muddles this richness, the semiotic acuity of this preverbal communication. This is what most psychoanalysts of children have not perceived, they see the latter as sort of species that are lost in the world, whereas they in fact have an extraordinarily rich perception at their disposal.



One thus understands the importance that these semiotic components have in psychoanalysis, in particular if one wants to work with psychotics. In effect, psychotics have access to a mode of communication, which I won't call "preverbal" because the verbal is always present all the same, but in which one must rediscover the specificity of these components. And here, one is not able to make the distinction between drive and instinct, because they are braided, woven with extremely rich but heterogeneous semiotic components.

Where does the drive come from? What makes the drive if it isn't language?

FG: I answered this earlier. For me, the drive is the life drive. I construct my world out of machinic, incorporeal, dimensions, existential territorialization within an economy of flows. It is a relationship to existence; it is a construction of existence. I situate it in a constructivist ontology.

So there's no place for keeping the distinction between drive and instinct?

FG: No there isn't! There is a relation of immanence between the drive, the unconscious, existence and ontological categories. Talking about machines rather than drives, of flows rather than the libido, of a desire for abolition rather than the death drive is to make an ethical choice. It's not just a question of vocabulary.

We come back to the first question, about the aesthetic paradigm. It is, in effect, an ethical choice. If, to articulate subjectivity with the drive, you start out from a causality of a scientific kind, you lost all the dimensions of creativity, all coefficients of freedom, all crossroads, all possible bifurcations, and thus the entire character of permanent richness, of auto-appropriation of the analytic process, for example. If, on the contrary, you start out from heterogeneous functives, from a permanent constructivism of the drive, you then take responsibility for engaging in the construction of one world rather than another, you take in hand, for example, the contextual dimensions, the social dimensions, the economic dimensions, the mediatic dimensions, rather than sticking to a categorization of psychological universals such as



the castration complex or Oedipal triangulation. You are thus exposed to an ethical responsibility at every moment of the interpretation. You do not have a scientific guarantee, you are permanently confronted with an ontological engagement.

You say that a current reading of Freud makes the death drive visible as a creative drive, as a stage in the destruction of order. Instead of distinguishing between a level of order in which to localize a corpus of representations, and the chaotic disorder of the drives, you prefer to work in chaos and complexity.

FG: There is a fundamentalist thinking in Freud. When he carries out his exploration of hysterical chaosmosis, of psychotic chaosmosis, he is caught up in a vertigo in which he is afraid that reality might disappear and that one might fall into a world of drives in which the primary process dissolves in a sort of abolition. My idea is that chaos harbors complexity and that a relation of immanence must be established between chaos and complexity. At infinite speed, chaos is the bearer of more complex schemas. Whether in the dream, in the schizo process, in no matter what situation of asignifying disorientation, throughout the test of desire, throughout all human ordeals, that of weaning, that of entry into the world of oral language, that of entry into the world of written language, of entry into the world of puberty, on each occasion a chaomic test is produced, a plunging into chaosmosis, because each time one enters into a different constellation of universes. But at the heart of this chaosmosis, lines of possibility are secreted, worlds of virtuality are created, points of articulation between desire and reality. The articulation of chaomic movement must not be reified in a death drive that would be opposed to a life drive, or in a relation of opposition between reality and desire. For me, a permanent coming and going allows what these points of articulation between desire and reality, between chaos and complexity are to be understood.

Points of articulation, but, I believe more and more, a taking [on of] consistency. Because that movement precisely implies that one can have universes in relation to which existential territories can take [on] consistency.

FG: There are effectively thresholds of consistency that are born starting from the moment at which the constellations of universes find their articulation in the discursive register, in the machinic register, to the extent that apparatuses, social practices, exchange practices, relations of connection between the most varied of flows, are put in place. It is in this articulation between machines and ontological universes that this problem of consistency is posed.

You spoke the other day about jazz as an example of an incorporeal machine, an atemporal ecosystem, an entity. In a way that in my opinion was absolutely original you rearticulate the notion of an object-art as being that of an “object-subject of desire.” What do you mean by that? Can you explain to us how jazz can be considered an “object-subject of desire?”

FG: Jazz is born out of the plunging into the chaosmic catastrophe of the enslavement of black populations in the North and South American continents. Through black subjectivity there was a conjunction of rhythms, melodic lines of the most residual of refrains of the imaginary of deported African ethnic groups with the religious imaginary of Christianity, with a new type of instrumentation, a new type of socialization within slavery. There were also intersubjective encounters with white folk musics that were found there. Thus a sort of recomposition of subjective existential territories was produced, within which the subjectivity of resistance on the part of the Blacks was affirmed. Besides opening up lines of potentiality to the whole history of music, and not just American music: I recall that Debussy, Ravel, the greatest Western musicians were heavily influenced by the rhythms and tunes of jazz music. With jazz, we have an example of a chaosmic plunging into almost total dereliction, the enslavement of Blacks, which enriched the leaders of the most elaborated of musics.

Agreed with regard to jazz. But when you talk about the object-art as an object-subject, as a strange attractor, you are expressing something very different from what I am saying about the object-art in relation to which my drive functions traditionally.

FG: Let's take a more recent example for the subjectivity of adolescents in the West, who are much closer to rock music than to jazz. One notices that within a domestic family economy, in conjunction with identifications with the father, the mother, with the milieu of conflict, anything you want, suddenly objects spring up, the refrains of rock music, which are also persona, faciality traits, which, sometimes, are musical practices, which, sometimes have a relationship to television and take on a decisive importance. They allow the child, the adolescent, to get out, to create social relations with people of their generation. They play [out] as object-subject, as objectality-subjectality. They provide considerable leverage. They can happen to result in delinquency, drugs, but that is not the question. They correspond to a subjective mutation, they are the equivalent in our societies of what initiation rituals are in primitive societies. With the complex object rock music, one enters into a new system of age groups.

Could you speak to us a bit more about Daniel Stern? We have noticed the importance that you accord to his work, to his way of conceiving different levels of subjectification that precede the verbal phase.

FG: What is most amazing in Freud is his discovery of the primary process. He saw that behind the chaos of the dream, there are lines of construction, overdetermination, association, composition, a whole consistency of subjective existence that plays out at the very heart of the primary process. One then finds constructions organized around the self, the superego, a whole topic which moves in the direction of a chaotic id than of an extremely structured unconscious. Now, it seems to me that Stern shows us something extraordinary, without putting it in the way I do, as his vision is scientific, in the sense that he bases himself on infant ethology. Stern shows that, even before the verbal self, the baby about whom it is said that it lives in symbiosis with its mother, that it is totally dependent on the world, that it is completely lost, that it is in a relation of total dereliction, controls the relationships adults have between themselves and with itself. The relationship that it has with adults is one of remote control, it is not an alienated subject of them. It is in a relationship of co-determination with the subjectivity of adults, that at the same time it has a perception of extraordinary richness of everything that happens around it, a relationship to the gaze, to light, to the environment. The baby has a neurological perceptual machinery of an extreme

richness. It is as if Stern generalized the field of the primary process discovered by Freud in the dream and show all the efficacy of this field in the order of other machines, those of social relations, of perceptual relations, of semiotic relations. This move of Stern's seems to me very significant for a recomposition of psychoanalysis in the direction [*voie*] of heterogenesis. He gets us out of psychoanalytic structuralism as we have known it. Daniel Stern is someone who is extraordinarily modest. He brings all these elements with confidence, with security. He doesn't make all the deductions that are possible from it. That concerns him. It behoves those who use his discoveries to do so. Maybe he will develop a theoretical work to draw all the consequences from it. I don't know.



A RIGHT TO SILENCE: ON GUATTARI'S DEATH

In an informal conversation with Félix Guattari, just before a series of lectures in São Paulo, someone politely suggested he try to nuance his hermeticism in his public talks; for example, avoiding the excess of neologisms that could make it hard to understand. He was told that he ran the risk, because of the Sibylline character of his speech, of being confused with one of the many local sectarian groups. Guattari was serene in his response. He said that inventing concepts was an adventure, and that the concepts he had been manufacturing (which he called *mes petits machins*, my little thingamajigs) were his personal adventure, not some kind of *marketing*, or communication strategy. He added that such a sovereign career is so very solitary, with few friends. Sometimes there was an echo, other times none. What would life be worth, he then asked, suddenly, if we didn't have the right to invent words? And moreover, he added, when speaking in public there is much more than words, there are tones, intensity, expressions, gestures, affects, a lot of things that can't be understood, not even through meaning.

In the video interview we have just seen¹, particularly striking is this entire plane, the atmosphere, the rhythm, the expressions, the tone, the twitching, the profusion. Such a video solicits from the viewer a distinct attention, a pathic apprehension, if one wants to grasp what is beyond the words and meaning, in this different, extra-discursive plane. Guattari's musical gesticulation runs on this level, like someone who grabs invisible bunches out of the air and then recomposes them in a provocative dispersion. Or a tiny feature in the expression of his face, insinuating petrification, after a laxity, his mouth twitching with those French lips as if to say "we ignore so many things, death, so many others, who knows," and then suddenly his whole body straightens up to orchestrate, in just one breath, a new visibility, an unprecedented arabesque in the air. Or his slow rhythm when speaking of jazz, or even smudging blots on a non-existent surface when referring to chaosmosis, or the alternating abundance of balancing in order to describe the extraordinarily complex perception of babies.

And we don't really know why, but suddenly everything seems smoother and more complex, the world becomes a discernible mixture of multiple tones, colors, rhythms, intensities, reverberations, cadences, qualities, events... That which was One becomes many, that which was subsumed within a unique Plane becomes a fold, that which seemed hierarchical

¹ The video refers to the interview of Félix Guattari transcribed in the previous chapter – see note 1.

becomes branched, a pulverization, amalgamations, new dimensions, proliferations... Not the miracle of the multiplication of fish, but rather species, worlds, beings – ontological multiplication.

All that on the one hand. On the other, Guattari starts throwing massive concepts in our faces, the way a mason throws mortar on brick, with the rustic precision of a builder. And then we get tripped up with the functors, Machinic Phylum, Flows, Incorporeal Universes, Existential Territories, etc., and we wonder if what we see and what we hear come from the same person, if the joy of the Guattari-signs corresponds or not to the dryness of the Guattari-concepts.

How to reconcile that first plane of pathic apprehension, in which the world seems to become richer, more charming, more polyphonic, and this other plane that we see in amazement, coming towards us, a landslide of heavy conceptual machinery?

It is difficult to not think of an originary inadequacy, in Guattari, between what he embodies and inspires in others, on the one hand, and the turbulent and indigestible theoretical language for certain unprepared or sensitive stomachs, as is the case with some of his friends and many other admirers. I believe that while this discrepancy is not thought through, all misunderstandings are possible. Hence, they would suddenly settle in this interstice, rather than pretend to ignore it or try to buffer it. I recall the frankness of Maria Rita Kehl saying to him: “I like what you say, I don’t like how you say it – it’s harsh,” and he answered: “Ah, if only I could have been a poet.” Trying to read, see, and hear from this interstice, this “between,” that is the small challenge that deserves to be taken seriously, rather than just accepting the hypothesis, not unlikely, moreover, that he said interesting things in inelegant ways.

Settling into this discrepancy, this inadequacy between the pathic plane and the cognitive one, in order to try to extract a lesson. Starting with the assessment that we always come away disturbed from this disjunction, a little schizophrenicized. Perhaps because we’re too accustomed to assuming that between the image and the caption there is a correspondence, an adequacy, a redundancy, or an over-determination: the image illustrates the caption, or the caption explains the image. No wonder Deleuze praises these detachments between sound and image in Syberberg, where it seems that every one of these instances ends up gaining independence, autonomy, and evolves in its own direction, accentuating the disjunction and fracturing our aesthetic experience.

This disjunction, which perhaps some experienced during the video, and people often felt when seeing Guattari in person, is equally a relevant indication of one of the essential axes of his theoretical project and his pragmatic trajectory. The theoretical junction that forced Guattari to invent an original exit, which resulted in his “personal adventure,” and which, of course, is not only personal, could be summed up in a few words, and quite roughly in the following way. How to get away from a generalized structuralism without falling into an energetic naturalism, whose ingenuity this same structuralism had helped to reveal and denounce? How to escape the despotism of the Signifier without returning to materialist innocence? How to reject the idea of a determining instance, be it material or discursive, in order to avoid every resulting reductive harm, be it political, historical, as well as subjective? How to think this “between,” which is in the interstice between the material and discursive orders, without harnessing it to a founding instance? How to think these mental objects, these incorporeal objects, without harnessing them either to a signifying chain, or to scientific coordinates from the natural world, since these two ways somehow would overdetermine the specificity and autonomy of that incorporeal level? After all, if subjected to the space-time-energy coordinates postulated by science, taken as an infrastructural substrate, this incorporeal domain is overshadowed. On the other hand, submitted to symbolic transcendence, it is derealized, turned into remains, shadow, or impossible. Along this line, then how to get rid of the idea of an infrastructure and a superstructure? How to extricate oneself from a Platonism, or, which comes out the same, a reverse Platonism?

Refusing the prevalence of one instance or another entails the rejection of a series of dichotomies: infrastructure and superstructure, Nature and Culture, production and desire, history and structure, etc.

One might observe that there is a lot at stake: the refusal of a certain Lacanism, and by extension, a certain structuralism, a certain Marxism, a certain Reichianism, etc. But beyond these refusals, which Guattari understood as political deadlocks, what matters is the exit that he invented for this *enjeu*, one’s own, original exit, under whose effect some of us still move, both in our theoretical games and our practical afflictions.

I believe the first step taken by Guattari to unlock these dilemmas was to launch the idea of machine, replacing the notion of structure. I do not want to go into the definition of this extravagant operator, it suffices to state that the machinic (which is the opposite of the mechanic) is procedural, productive, producer of singularities, irreversibilities, and temporal. In this sense

it is from end to end opposed to the idea of structure, interchangeability, homology, equilibrium, reversibility, a-historicity, etc. But what matters is the fact that this machinic conception, not in the least “naturalistic,” since it makes the Universe a giant factory, extending engendering production to all levels, served as the basis for a new way of apprehending the non-discursive domain. The non-discursive, by ceasing to be a formless material waiting for a significant structuring, acquired an infinite power. The result was a material and immaterial world with no center, with no determining instance, with no despotic transcendencies or reassuring equilibriums. Philosophical diabolism.

One might argue: indeed, it does abolish the determining instances. However, it forges four generic poles which are four new instances: the material and semiotic Flows, the Abstract Machines, the Incorporeal Universes of Value and Existential Territories. It would be enough to respond only at the anecdotal level. Guattari asks himself: why four? And he answers: two is dichotomy, three leads to a closed dialectic, and only a fourth element represents an opening to the infinite.

Philosophical diabolism has two faces: it consists of extending the idea of production, essential in the machine, to all levels, including those of desire, the unconscious, existence as a whole; yet on the other hand, it also broadens the notion of production: production is not only the production of material and immaterial things within a field of possibilities, but also the production of new possibilities, that is, the production of productions, bifurcations, creative imbalances, engenderments from singularities, ultimately reaching the idea of self-engenderments from singularities, self-positioning, autopoiesis. Through autopoiesis something unfolds, acquiring consistency, autonomy, its own movement, forming a universe out of its components, existentializing itself, and even, at the limit, weaving its own subjectivity. Like these object-subjects and subjectivities of which Guattari speaks in his interview, they sound like a conceptual aberration. It is production taken to its demiurgic radicality.

Thus, when Guattari says that drive is actually a machinic of existence, a construction of existence, heterogenesis of the components of existence, we realize that it is far from a strictly psychoanalytic territory in the classical sense (it's the least that can be said), and which drifted to a kind of politics of existence, ontological praxis. There is much talk of analyst ethics, ethics in politics, in conduct, but Guattari is talking about an ethics with regard to being. Not in the Heideggerian manner, in which the being-there would

become the shepherd of Being. There is no BEING, as a general ontological equivalent, but rather there are beings, and in that sense, there is nothing sacred in ontological Ethics; on the contrary, it is diabolical. It deals with intensifying the multiplication of instances, the constitution of universes, processes of singularization, differentiations, creation of possibilities. On a more practical plane, it means opting for the cartographies that enrich, diversify, and multiply the modes of subjectivity, the ways of existing, of being in the world, of fabricating worlds. The great enemy is always the homogenizing flattening caused by Capital, which makes everything equivalent or indifferent, or the flattening caused by the Signifier, which subsumes the totality of reality under its filter, with all its intensities, dimensions, variety, or the flattening originating from the idea of Being, or Reason, or Energy, or Information, or Communication, and so on and so forth. This operation that Guattari proposes consists of the destruction of all capital letters, that is, all reterritorializing despotisms from the Universal. Guattarian Ethics is to oppose to it an ontological constructivism, an ontological engagement, on all planes, whether in the case of apprehension of ethological levels in the baby, according to Stern's example, the existentializing function of *rock music* for young people, the pathic apprehension in psychosis, which includes the most diverse semiotic components, whether from the incorporation of science, or the media, as elements of the familiar modern novel, etc. In order to do this we must accept that the psyche is the result of multiple, heterogeneous components. It entails, says Guattari, the register of speech, but also non-verbal means of communication, relations with architectonic space, ethological behavior, economic statutes, aesthetic and ethical aspirations, etc. All of this implies not taking subjectivity as a given, configured by universal structures of the psyche, but supposing differentiated engenderments of subjectivations. Thus, the unconscious for Guattari is not structural, but rather procedural, it cannot be exclusively directed to the past, but it should also be as such for the future. These are some consequences of this radical productivism.

Furthermore, this entire problematic which runs through Guattari's final books, regarding these thresholds of consistency from which something new comes into existence, comes to be. This theme of passing into being at times has a strangely visceral tone. It is as if Guattari were exclaiming, as Deleuze cites Kierkegaard, "A little bit of possible, lest I suffocate!" Condensed in this exclamation, I believe there to be an entire ethics, aesthetics, politics, ontology, even a tragic dimension. So here is a short list of some of the

unprecedented things that Guattari found, mentioned, or researched, according to final writings (all of the terms listed are Guattari's, with my emphasis): a *strangeness of being* attempted by the Polish playwright Witkiewicz, and which escaped his hands; the *roughness of being*, rare nowadays; an *existential nomadism* that was as intense as that of the Natives of pre-Columbian America, instead of the false nomadism of our modern trips, where we are always in the same place; the ruptures of symmetry by the Japanese architect Tadao Ando, who reinvents such new intensities of *mystery*; the call to produce *new infinities* from a plunge into the sensitive finitude; a new *love for the unknown*; a re-enchantment of the expressive modalities of subjectivation; foci of *eternity* nested between the instants; *magic*, *mystery*, and *demoniacal*, which will no longer emanate from the same totemic aura, and so on and so forth. There are also some strong suggestions: go over the *chaosmic scale*, umbilical point, to turn to giving, finally, the infinite to a world that threatened to suffocate; engendering the conditions for creation and development of unusual formations of subjectivity, *never seen, never felt*.

Note some of the terms mentioned: strangeness and harshness of being, mystery, infinite, unknown, re-enchantment, eternity, demoniacal, magic. In such profusion clamped to chance like this, there is more than a random and extravagant evocation of a supposed "animistic" conception of the world; there is a whole program. The program of a complex ontological creationism, for which Guattari never stopped inventing new unusual weapons and tools. Sure, some of them are strange words that when first seeing them, only function as engines of a conceptual movement, but whose precise meaning becomes clear after some time. For example, what does a fractal ontology become? Or attractors of possibility? Or even these chaosmic scales? And then there are the strangest ideas, like for instance, this one about intensive entities, which has nothing to do with the discursivity of a signifying chain or energy-space-time coordinates. It follows that these intensive entities, which are at the crossroads of very heterogeneous elements, require, so as to be apprehended, a different logic, a logic of non-discursive intensities. Therefore, they solicit a pathic apprehension, which is the one that apprehends something like the "mood" of a party, the "atmosphere" of a demonstration, or a psyche, or a work of art. These intensive entities, says Guattari, are autopoietic, transversal foci, etc.



The agglomeration in this dense rhythm as part of Guattari's neologisms ironically goes against the request mentioned above, that he nuance his hermeticism. However, these neologisms should be seen not as repulsive

deviations from a heretic psychoanalyst, but rather as multiple unfoldings of the “diabolism” we mentioned. Naturally psychoanalysts feel uncomfortable with this profusion of operators, which expel them from a known theoretical territory. The interviewer asks what is drive, he speaks of heterogenesis, she asks about representational order and driving disorder, he responds with chaosmosis, she asks about language, he replies with ethology in childhood and in psychosis. He even begins by talking about seduction and turns it into object-subject, the primitive scene transforms into the representation machine, and ultimately, castration culminates in autopoiesis. If I intensify this list, it’s not to shock nor to complicate, but to emphasize that all of this could be clearer if we inscribe the general movement onto this broader, more radical ontological project, and that necessarily spills out of psychoanalysis, though traversing and implicating it, from end to end, since, according to Guattari himself, mental and incorporeal objects, essential components of subjectivation, were invented (or discovered) by psychoanalysis.

So as to come to an end, two circumstantial observations. In writing about Guattari, Deleuze speaks of the two Guattaris, a Pierre and a Félix (he was called Pierre-Félix). According to Deleuze, one was “like a catatonic head, a blind and hardened body perfused by death as soon as he takes off his glasses”; the other “a dazzling spark, full of multiple lives the moment he looks, acts, laughs, thinks or attacks.”² They are the two schizophrenic powers of an anti-Self. Petrification and brightness.



The second is a personal anecdote. In 1990, passing through France, I went to visit the La Borde clinic with Guattari. We left Paris by car. He asked me to drive, and while I was driving, he slept, like that, without his glasses, petrified, as Deleuze describes it. On the following day he was no different, even awake, even eating on the extremely long and monkish table at his house in La Borde, even sprawled on the sofa in front of the television, even offering a chair to his neighbor and friend Jean Oury. Petrified. I had never seen him like that; even during his many trips to Brazil. Somewhat afflicted, I decided to go for a stroll with my partner. Guattari wanted to accompany us. We walked in silence, at dusk, we could hear our steps, distant noises, night approaching, a neighbor greeting, all very bucolic, until we came upon a pigsty. There we stayed, with the pigs, in silence. So I tried to converse with the pigs, using my limited knowledge of oinking. Slowly, the dialogue became more animated, and Guattari began to participate in the conversation,

2 Gilles Deleuze, “Three Group-Related Problems,” in *Desert Islands*, 193.



laughing a lot, grunting too. I think that, during this stay of a day and a half at La Borde, it was the only conversation that we had – we grunted, in the pigsty, with a collective of pigs, in a true becoming-animal. The next day I left, intrigued. I told myself that a thinker has the right to be catatonic, to go dead, to grunt every once in a while, if it please him or her. To tell the truth, since that day, I never stopped envying this catatonic state and at times, inadvertently, I see myself like that to the distress of those around me. At the time, I remember having had the fantasy that, when Guattari died, I would write an essay called “A Right to Silence.” It’s sad that this moment arrived so soon and that this silence, today, is irreversible.

But recently rereading some of his writings, I understood that his silence at La Borde was not only a petrification, but also an immersion in a kind of chaosmosis, this mixture of chaos and complexity, of dissolution, where what is to come must be engendered. Perhaps the silence that Guattari leaves behind with his death should also be taken as a type of chaosmic scale. Perhaps we could, from him, from this silence, from this death, from this chaosmic scale that we are on with the shock of his death, do this that he advocated and carried out so often, and which he called, so beautifully, the power of eternal return to the nascent state.





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Every chapter that was already presented or published has been reworked for the present publication, undergoing, at times, important alterations, such as fusions, unfoldings, re-arrangements. Chapters not mentioned here have never been published.

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INTERVIEW WITH FÉLIX GUATTARI: THE DRIVE, PSYCHOSIS AND THE FOUR LITTLE FUNCTIVES.

Transcription of a video interview with Félix Guattari carried out by Rogério da Costa and Josaida Gondar on 12 August, 1992 in his house in Paris, few days before his death. This interview was requested by Suely Rolnik specifically for the Symposium “Drive and its Concepts,” organized by Arthur Hyppólito de Moura and promoted by the Núcleo de Estudos da Subjetividade, at the Graduate Studies Program in Clinical Psychology at the Pontifical Catholic University in São Paulo. It was published in *Chimères*, n. 20, Paris, Autumn, 1993 and in: *As Pulsões*, Arthur Hyppólito de Moura (org.), São Paulo, Ed. Escuta, 1995 (coleção Linhas de Fuga, directed by Suely Rolnik).

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