This Deleuzian Century
Faux Titre

ETUDES DE LANGUE ET LITTÉRATURE FRANÇAISES

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This book is dedicated to the work of Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), stressing its unconditional love for thinking, for life (zoë) and for the earth, thus revealing a series of new political urgencies that position Deleuzian thinking right at the heart of the here and now.
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Deleuze’s Philosophy and the Art of Life
Or: What does Pussy Riot Know?

Rosi Braidotti and Rick Dolphijn

To Think the Radical Alternative

In a review of Gilles Deleuze’s *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, published in 1970, Michel Foucault famously stated that ‘perhaps, one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian’. Saying this, Foucault was not anticipating a ‘Deleuzian school in philosophy’ that would dominate the era, neither did he express a desire to consider the twentieth century as ‘Deleuzian’ in its essence, as if this particular episteme was, or was to be, ‘united’ with Deleuze’s thinking. No doubt, Foucault was struck by the power of Deleuze’s ideas that were radically different from the History of Philosophy that both dominated and organized academia in those days. This was a wholly other way of thinking and no doubt Foucault sensed its immense potential. He must have felt that this potential had to realize itself one way or another, *bleeding* into all facets of life, as Foucault was certainly not the type of scholar that made these kind of statements lightly. The question to be posed at the start of this book is then: how might a ‘Deleuzian century’ be taking place? The question that leads immediately from this being: why is this (still) urgent almost half a century after the publication of Foucault’s review?

Let us start by summarizing Foucault’s initial reading of Deleuze’s two books as a doubled critique of what we can call ‘dualism’. First, with *Difference and Repetition*, Foucault saw how Deleuze freed ‘difference’ from
Hegelianism\(^1\), from the dialectics that considers all change to be relative, all critique to be responsive. With a thorough rereading of those philosophers misunderstood by the History of Philosophy (in this case Spinoza and even more so Nietzsche) Deleuze asked us to think both difference and repetition \textit{in itself}. Difference is then not subject to ‘identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgment and resemblance in perception’ (DR, 262). Moving away from this fourfold principle of reason, which remains faithful to the principle of representation, Deleuze offers us a difference that is \textit{not} a secondary principle (as in ‘consequential to something’). Repetition, in a similar vein, is not the repetition of something, ‘but precisely the resemblance and the identity do not pre-exist the return of that which returns’ (DR, 300). Coming close to Nietzsche’s ‘eternal return’, Deleuze’s repetition does not start with negation, but with creation, with the actualization and realization of a \textit{virtual} past, as Bergson would have it. Second, with \textit{Logic of Sense}, Foucault saw how Deleuze offered us a philosophy of the event and of the phantasm (entangled in it) saving us from ‘vulgar realism (or ‘positivism’) on the one hand and ‘Idealism’ (or ‘the transcendental position’) on the other. Reversing Platonism, \textit{Logic of Sense} with its mad mix of Lewis Carroll, Stoic philosophy, avant-garde French literature (Klossowski, Tournier, and traces of Artaud) and the psychoanalysis of Melanie Klein, emphasizes ‘pure becomings’ that manifest themselves in the events as they string into the lives as we live them. Refusing to start from the entities and the identities that appropriate the earth, that organize and classify our lives, \textit{Logic of Sense} offers us a wholly other earth that instead starts from how all sorts of elements \textit{come to matter in the event}.

The radical attack on institutionalized philosophy instigated with \textit{Difference and Repetition} and \textit{Logic of Sense} converges in every way with the student riots that took place in May 1968 in Paris and in the months that followed. Occupying its streets, its squares, its institutions, May 1968 by all means \textit{situates} the double critique that Foucault notices in these two books by Deleuze and that actually make up the dimensionalities and the directionals of all of Deleuze’s writing until his unfortunate death in 1995. May 1968 gave form to new institutions, to a new university structure, to a new political program, a new philosophy: Deleuze was in many ways a child

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\(^1\) The work of G.W. Hegel, together with that of Husserl and Heidegger, dominated French academia in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s. Especially Jean Hyppolite, Deleuze’s supervisor, had been very influential in spreading Hegelianism in early twentieth century France.
of ’68. For although he had published important and highly respected work before this event (it is said that he was being nominated for a position at the Collège de France, a most prestigious academic post in France), it was with May 1968 that things started to matter.

In three ways the year 1968 marks the birth of Deleuze as a philosopher. First, it was the year in which he met Félix Guattari with whom he would write his most influential work. Second, it was the year in which Paris 8 was founded, the new experimental institute, where Deleuze was given the time to develop his philosophy (he was connected to Paris 8 until his retirement in 1987). But it was also the year in which the lung disease that would mark him for the rest of his life, and that in the end would kill him in 1995 (in an unexpected way… as ever), was diagnosed. *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense* were in many ways written with the revolutions of May 1968. *Anti-Oedipus*, the philosophical best-seller that the philosopher Deleuze wrote together with the militant Guattari, was its (un)wanted offspring. *Anti-Oedipus* continued the two trails set out in Deleuze’s two previous books, combining this with the political urgency that necessarily followed 1968. Summarizing the period before he met Guattari, Deleuze concluded: ‘[…] I was working solely with concepts, rather timidly in fact’ (N, 13). With *Anti-Oedipus* the ‘working with concepts’ turned into ‘creating concepts’, distilling them from the events of 1968 which would inspire them both for the rest of their lives. Starting from pure desire, from free flowing desiring-machines (as they make up the event), 1968, in short, taught both Deleuze and Guattari to critique all dualisms: all hierarchies (think of the Freudian Father), all despotic regimes (think of the Catholic priest), and all other powers that somehow disturb and distort the desires. The militant, humorous and just joyful tone that marks this book showed many that a new type of thinking, previously unheard of, had come into existence. It said goodbye to Hegelianism\(^2\), it was a serious critique of Jacques Lacan and the hegemony of psychoanalysis, and played a crucial role in popularizing the ‘minor tradition in thought’ that Deleuze had been working on himself in the years before (with important rewritings of notably Spinoza, Bergson and Nietzsche). Yet while so many, also outside of philosophy, were so inspired by this book, it also courted fierce resistance, especially from those in power. Lacan, though very fond of *Logic of Sense*, was obviously not amused. But also those in

\(^2\) In the year 1968 also the two most prominent Hegelians in France, Jean Hyppolite and Alexandre Kojève, passed away, both in their early 60’s.
power at the *Collège de France* lost interest in Deleuze once he started to write ‘pornography’ in their view.

Michel Foucault immediately saw the immense potential of *Anti-Oedipus* and wrote its preface in which he famously stated: ‘one might say that *Anti-Oedipus* is an *Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life*’ (*AO*, xiii, italics in original). This statement immediately connected the book to the events of 1968, stressing the deeply political nature of the work. *Anti-Oedipus*, he stresses, is *not* the new theoretical reference (‘it is not a flashy Hegel’ (*AO*, xii)). Foucault summarizes the intensity of the book as an ‘*Ars erotica, ars theoretica, ars politica*’ (*AO*, xii, italics in original); it connects desire to reality and the capitalist machinery; it maps in what way desires turn into thoughts and discourse; it produces a micropolitics that traverses every possible event, warding off the tiniest fascist forces – as Foucault would call them – that time and again classify and organize life. And very importantly: it does so through art. Foucault claims that *Anti-Oedipus* can best be read as an ‘art’: an art of living, an aesthetic of the self (as Foucault called it in his last publications) that, in traversing the classifications and the hierarchies that organize us, anticipates ‘another life’.

It is this commitment to art that is essential for the radical political manifesto *Anti-Oedipus* turned out to be. Combining the critiques on dualism of before, *Anti-Oedipus* radically turns to the arts, not only as a major form of inspiration (philosophical inspiration perhaps), but as a fundamental creative force necessary to fight all forms of fascism possibly encountered. For although Deleuze, even at the end of his life, still considered himself a pure metaphysician, he couldn’t have denied that any, and all radical thought ‘[…] requires all of the resources of art, and art of the highest kind’ (*TP*, 187). This was announced already in *Logic of Sense*, but it was mostly with *Anti-Oedipus* that the power of art, its per/formative potentiality and the necessity to revolt that are so central to this book, turned into the driving force of his work. In his last publication, *Immanence: a life …*, where he starts with the most outspoken metaphysical problem, namely: ‘What is a transcendental field?’. Deleuze immediately includes this into his non-dualist philosophy by stating that the transcendental field is defined by immanence which is defined by life.\(^3\) From this it follows that: ‘The immanent event is actualized by the state of things and of the lived that make it happen.’ (31). This is the

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Deleuzian Century at its best: celebrating the forces of creation (making things happen), it practices an activism through art, through an art of living.

The Deleuzian Century has happened many times, not only in the twentieth century but also in times long since gone. The events in May 1968, with their revolutionary creativity, allowed this to be realized more than ever before. And over the past twenty years, in which the power of Deleuze’s thinking has had an unprecedented impact upon both scholarship and on the arts, it has happened many times again. The bad news however, is that fascism, in all of its ugly appearances, has gained enormous power at the second decennium of this twenty-first century, revealing itself to us in the many financial, economical, ecological, technological crisis in which we find ourselves today. Deleuze already anticipated the realization of this new era with his highly influential Postscript on Control Societies (published in Negotiations) in which he for instance warned us, long before the coming of the internet, of the free floating forms of control that have by now become the signature of advanced capitalism and that both classify and organize life on an unprecedented scale and always in pursuit of more profit. We find ourselves in troubled times as new forms of control seem to invade our existence at an ever-increasing pace. Of course this is all the more reason to put Deleuze’s scholarship to work, to feel its resonances with contemporary issues, with the creative events that also happen today. Therefore in this book we do not interpret Deleuze’s writings, we do not just work with his concepts as if to pay homage to his philosophy. Rather, we feel how his thoughts resonate in the issues with which we are confronted today. We have to keep asking ourselves: how do we create a non-fascist life, how do we liberate our desires from today’s capitalist machinery? Or to return to Foucault again: ‘How can and must desire deploy its forces within the political domain and grow more intense in the process overturning the established order?’ (Foucault in: (AO, xii)). These are the lines of flight, or the nomadic becomings, with which this book is concerned.

The Bio-Genetic Structure of Advanced Capitalism

The various contributions in this book analyze the political and economic reality of today, that, not even half a century after May 1968; a reality that has completely changed. Capitalism is still a monster, it is still only interested in the increase of profit, but its strategies and its tactics have undergone a complete metamorphosis, following its omnipresence and limitless
complexity that has increasingly accelerated over the past decades. The scary part is that this has resulted (among others) in increasingly opaque appearances (again, think of all the crisis that haunt us today), which tells us that we have no idea what its next move will be. And to make it even worse; we have just stopped thinking about it. For isn’t the over-celebrated and much lamented ‘end of ideologies’ one of the strongest ideological formations of our times? The post-ideology climate translates into a one-way political message, namely that all social programs of radical overthrowing capitalist societies have exhausted their historical function, especially Marxism, communism, socialism and feminism. Hence people can now relax and carry on with the task of minding their own business. A hasty and fallacious historical dismissal of social reformism and critical radicalism results in the reassertion of the banality of self-interest. This political apathy is constitutive of neo-conservative liberalism in our era and in public discourse it gets compensated by over-emphasis on moral issues. This produces an escalating notion of the range of issues individuals are expected to take moral responsibility for. Muehlebach calls this social model: ‘the moral neoliberal’.5

Global neoliberal culture triumphantly asserts the end of ideology defined as the desire for social justice and attempts to fulfil the conservative fantasy of an immutable ‘human nature’, which allegedly coincides with the ethos of advanced capitalism.6 This same culture, however, systematically frustrates the very conservative dreams it so perversely arouses. Contemporary society is in fact fascinated to the point of obsession by all that is ‘new’ and is in love with ‘multiple choice’ market options. It pursues quantitative changes with obsessive faith in their beneficial side-effects. Globalized and technologically mediated cultures accomplish a magician’s trick: they combine the euphoric celebration of new technologies, new economy, new life-styles, new generations of both human and technological gadgets, new wars and new weapons with the complete social rejection of radical change and equitable transformation. In a totally schizophrenic double pull the consumerist and socially enhanced faith in the new is supposed not only to fit in with, but also

actively to induce the rejection of in-depth changes, which are dismissed as pertaining to an old ‘ideology’. The potentially innovative, de-territorializing impact of the new technologies for instance is hampered and turned down by the re-assertion of the gravitational pull of old and established consumerist values. It is not surprising therefore that the ideologically-driven discourse about the end of ideology has made life difficult for critique, notably since the landmark dates of 1989 and 9/11. The moral neoliberal has subjected both artists and critical theorists to a regime in which any kind of critique is considered suspicious and in which abstraction (figurative, theoretical) has turned ‘useless’. The so-called ‘value of culture’ in our time, is zero. IfAi WeiWei is considered to be the most successful artist of our time, it is not because of the subversive nature of his art, but because of his market value.

This political economy can be best summed up in terms of capitalism as schizophrenia. In their final cooperation, What is philosophy?, written just after the 1989 ‘collapse of communism’, Deleuze and Guattari analysed this double pull in contemporary cultures as a conflict between, on the one hand, the rising demands for subjective singularities, or transversal assemblages and, on the other hand, the conservative re-territorialization of desires for the purpose of commercial profit. This is reflected in the schizoid paradox of the compulsive consumerism of mass culture, where all the emphasis falls on the quest for ‘personalized’ or ‘itemized’, custom-made specifications and commodities. This combination of the archaic and the hyper-modern achieves a disastrous dual effect; it re-asserts individualism as the unquestionably desirable standard, while it reduces it to brand names and to logos. It also pushes commercial profit-making to the innermost boundaries of subjectivity itself, making ‘I shop therefore I am’ the leading refrain of our times or, as Rem Koolhaas captured the motto of our age: ‘¥€$’.

One of the problematic aspects of this historical condition is the deficit in the scale of representation which accompanies the structural transformations of subjectivity in the social, cultural and political spheres of globalized cultures. Accounting adequately for changes is a challenge that shakes up long-established habits of thought. A habit of thought is an engrained reflex, an institutionalized response, a gesture that has become familiar by force of repetition without difference. Most persistent among these mental habits is individualism, another one consists of dealing with differences dialectically.

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and negatively, that is in oppositional and pejorative terms. Hence Deleuze’s leading question that he gave to us already in *Difference and Repetition*: how can one free difference from the negative charge which it seems to have built into it? Like a historical process of sedimentation, or a progressive accumulation of toxins, the concept of difference has been poisoned and has become the equivalent of inferiority: to be different-from means to be worth less-than. How can difference be cleansed of this negative charge? Is the positivity of difference, ‘difference in itself’, thinkable with this capitalist monster breathing in our face? What are the conditions that may facilitate the thinkability of positive difference?

In this century the work of Deleuze (and Guattari) is a strong conceptual and political antidote to the tongue-tying, energy-sapping, brain-deadening effects of this internally contradictory and relentlessly rapacious historical context. Resonating Foucault’s mapping of *Anti-Oedipus* as an ‘*Ars erotica, ars theoretica, ars politica*’ as we discussed in the first part of this introduction, we are now desperately in need of mapping these three dimensionalities in the era of our concern. We need to draw cartographies of twenty-first century life that allow us to dismantle ourselves. We need to find ways to occupy capitalism by regaining the long lost desires that have been tormented by the taxonomies of today. The paragraphs to follow this introduction will situate the three arts that matter-realize Non-Fascist Life in the world today: the analytic dimension, the relational dimension and finally the normative dimension. Likewise, the different contributions in the rest of the book call upon this Deleuzian Century to take place.

**The Analytic Dimension**

A Deleuzian analysis of the immanent event empowers us to analyze the perverse political economy of advanced capitalism. The defining features are as follows:

Firstly: the simultaneity of internally contradictory social effects mentioned above. Advanced capitalism is a differential engine in that it promotes the quantitative proliferation of multiple options in consumer goods. It is a spinning machine that actively produces differences for the sake of commodification. It is a multiplier of deterritorialized differences, which are packaged and marketed according to a consumeristic political economy of proliferation and consumption of quantitatively different options. These ‘differences’ have been however turned into marketable, consumable and
often disposable ‘others’. As Eugene Holland points out there is an entropic and self-destructive element to advanced capitalism in that it exposes and endangers the very sources of its wealth and power previous systems kept hidden or protected. Advanced capitalism operates on contemporary decoded or deterritorialized flows of change and reterritorializes or stratifies them for the sake of profit.

Secondly, time is out of joint translates into a perverse temporality: advanced capitalism is an unsustainable ‘future eater’, driven by all-consuming entropic energy. Devoid of the capacity for critical self-reflexion and genuine creativity, global capital merely promotes the recycling of spent hopes, re-packaged in the rhetorical frame of the ‘new’ and wrapped up in persistent anxiety about the future. In a schizophrenic double pull of euphoria and paranoia which confirms Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis (AO, TP), the consumerist and socially enhanced faith in the ‘new’ clashes with the reterritorialization of desires through the gravitational pull of established values bent on short-term profit.

Thirdly, advanced capitalism functions through tightly controlled mobility, or a ‘striated’ social space subjected to constant surveillance. It functions as the great nomad, the organizer of the mobility of commoditized products. A generalized practice of ‘free circulation’ pertains almost exclusively to the domain of goods and commodities, data and capital. People do not circulate nearly as freely. Real-life mobility through migration, for instance, or diasporic movements, is checked by relations of class, ethnicity, gender and age, to name but a few crucial variables that run the protocols of computer-based ‘objective analysis’ as they defend the borders of our Nation States. The global system of the post-industrial world produces scattered and poly-centered profit-oriented power relations. It is therefore crucial to expose the perverse nomadism of a logic of economic exploitation that equates capitalist flows and flux with profit-minded circulation of commodities and to provide accurate political cartographies of qualitatively different lines of nomadic flows.

Fourthly, given that the political economy of global capitalism consists in multiplying and distributing differences for the sake of profit, it produces

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ever-shifting waves of genderization, sexualization, racialization and naturalization of multiple ‘others’. It has thus effectively disrupted the traditional dialectical fairytale about the relationship between the empirical referents of Otherness – women, natives and animal or earths others – and the processes of discursive formation of genderization, racialization and naturalization. Deleuze and Guattari, already in the 1980’s, showed us that there is no ‘other’ when it comes to these relations. Discussing ‘European racism’ as they called it, they concluded: ‘Racism operates by the determination of degrees of deviance in relation to the White-Man face […] From the view of racism, there is no exterior, there are no people on the outside’ (TP, 178). The degrees of deviance have always been central to the orders of global capitalism, and now, more than ever, it has organized the lives of the ninety-nine percent into a zigzagging pattern of dissonant nomadic subjects.

Fifth, comes the technologically mediated structure of schizoid ‘advanced’ capitalism. It is built on the convergence between different and previously differentiated branches of technology, notably biotechnologies and information technologies. The opportunistic political economy of biogenetic capitalism turns Life/zoe – that is to say human and non-human intelligent matter – into a commodity for trade and profit. In substance, advanced capitalism both invests and profits from the scientific and economic control and the commodification of all that lives. This context produces a paradoxical and rather opportunistic form of post-anthropocentrism on the part of market forces which happily trade on Life itself.12 What the neoliberal market forces are after and what they financially invest in, is the informational power of living matter itself. The capitalization of living matter produces a new political economy, one that Melinda Cooper calls ‘Life as surplus’.13 It introduces discursive and material political techniques of population control of a very different order from the administration of demographics, which preoccupied Foucault’s work on bio-political governmentality. Today, we are undertaking ‘risk analyses’ not only of entire social and national systems, but also of whole sections of the population in

the world risk society.\textsuperscript{14} Data banks of bio-genetic, neural and mediatic information about individuals are the true capital today.\textsuperscript{15}

Clough provides an impressive list of the concrete techniques employed by ‘cognitive capitalism’\textsuperscript{16} to test and monitor the capacities of affective or ‘bio-mediated’ bodies: DNA testing, brain fingerprinting, neural imaging, body-heat detection and iris or hand recognition. These are the free floating forms of control no longer limited to the sites of confinement that marked the nineteenth and early twentieth century surveillance techniques, these are the biopolitical dark iClouds that do not just hang over our heads as the metaphor wants us to believe.\textsuperscript{17} All these are also immediately operationalized as surveillance techniques both in civil society and in the War on Terror. What Deleuze and Guattari teach us is that the ‘virtual’ character of technologically mediated power relations today is not ethereal but materially grounded and hence embodied and embedded. Both Deleuze’s speculations on the ‘control societies’ he saw emerging, and Guattari’s writings on the post-media age and on Integrated World Capitalism which were all written towards end of the 1980’s and the beginning of the 1990’s already told us that there is no such thing as cyberspace.

Last but not least: the axiomatic character of advanced capitalism. An axiomatic system as Toscano pointed out,\textsuperscript{18} refuses to provide definitions of the terms it works with, but prefers to order certain domains into existence with the addition of subtraction of certain norms or commands. Axioms operate by emptying flows of their specific meaning in their coded context and thus by decoding them. No freedom is possible within capitalism because the axiom of money and profit knows no limit. Axioms simply need not be explained and its terms of relation need not be defined, their objects being treated as purely functional – see the emphasis on the ‘new’ and the ‘next generation’ of gadgets. Being fundamentally meaningless, the decoded flows of capitalism are purely operational modes of regulation. They can get attached to any type of social organization – slave plantations as well as factories – and to different state structures – socialism as well as liberal

\textsuperscript{17} See Marianne van den Boomen, 2014. \textit{Transcoding the Digital}. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
democracies. As such, the axioms of capitalism are extremely adaptable, capable of great internal variation and structured around a perverse sort of opportunism. Such flexibility and multiple realizability constitute a formidable apparatus of domination or capture.

An *Ars erotica*, as Foucault saw this at work in *Anti-Oedipus*, never intends to critique advanced capitalism negatively. In the analyses a search for a new health has to appear. Antonin Artaud was right when he started his diagnosis of contemporary life by stating; ‘Man is ill because he is badly constructed’. Releasing ourselves from nineteenth century humanism, any art of living immediately traverses its classifications. Not establishing a ‘difference from’ anything but rather acknowledging difference in itself affirmatively practices a becoming-woman, a becoming animal, and a becoming imperceptible. Any *Ars erotica* analyses the healthy body it hopes to be.

**The Relational Dimension**

Any materialist analysis of the current situation, next to practicing an *ars erotica*, unfolds an *ars theoretica*, which is the relational dimension according to which we situate our events of concern. The starting point is the turn to Spinozist monisim and the rejection of the legacy of Hegelian-Marxist dialectics of consciousness and otherness. This school of critical theory banks on negativity and in a perverse way even requires it, because it builds on the assumption that the critical position consists in analyzing negative social and discursive conditions in order to better overthrow them. In other words it is the same conditions that construct the negative moment – for instance the experience of oppression, marginality, injury or trauma – and also the possibility of overturning them. The same analytic premises provide both the damage and the possibility of positive resistance, counter-action or transcendence. What triggers and at the same time is engendered by this process of both analysis and resistance is called ‘oppositional consciousness’.

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This process has become canonized as the equation of critical political subjectivity with negativity, oppositional, or ‘unhappy’ consciousness. As an alternative, Deleuze and Guattari want to suggest a non-Hegelian, monistic and vital-materialist analysis that foregrounds the relational, negotiation-bound and affirmative elements of this process. The point is that the political is defined by a relational affirmative ethics that aims to cultivate and produce the condition of its own expression: it is a praxis based on a positive definition of the subject and process-driven, relational ‘di-vidual’. A subject’s ethical core is clearly not his/her moral intentionality, as much as the effects of power (as repressive – potestas – and positive – potentia) his/her actions are likely to have upon the world. It is a process of engendering empowering modes of becoming (DR; Braidotti, 2006).

Here is the punch-line of contemporary vital-materialist politics: given that the ethical good is equated with radical relationality aiming at affirmative empowerment, the ethical ideal is to increase one’s ability to enter into modes of relation with multiple others. Oppositional consciousness is replaced by affirmative praxis; political subjectivity is a process or assemblage that actualizes this ethical propensity. This position is postsecular in the sense that it actively works towards the creation of affirmative alternatives by working through the negative instances, including their representations. The propensity for affirmation is a key feature of neo-spinozist nomadic subjects.

This view of subjectivity does not condition the emergence of the subject on negation but on creative affirmation; not on loss but on vital generative forces. The rejection of the dialectical scheme implies also a shift of temporal gears. It means that the conditions for political and ethical agency are not dependent on the current state of the terrain: they are not oppositional and thus not tied to the present by negation. Instead they are projected across time as affirmative praxis, geared to creating empowering relations aimed at possible futures. Ethical relations create possible worlds by mobilizing resources that have been left untapped in the present, including our desires and imagination. They are the driving forces that concretize in actual, material relations and can thus constitute a network, web or rhizome of interconnection with others.

Such a vision, moreover, does not restrict the ethical instance within the limits of human otherness, but also opens it up to inter-relations with non-

human, post-human and inhuman forces. The eco-philosophical dimension is essential to the postsecular turn in that it values one’s reliance on the multiple ecologies that sustain us in a nature-culture continuum and within which subjects must cultivate affirmative ethical relations. Critical theory is rather about strategies of actualization of affirmation as an ethical practice, that consists of multiple micro-political practices of daily activism or interventions in and on the world we inhabit for ourselves and for future generations.

The essence of the argument is that there is no logical necessity to link political subjectivity to oppositional consciousness and reduce critique to negativity. Critical theory can be just as critical and more persuasive theoretically, if it embraces philosophical monism and vital politics and disengages the process of consciousness-raising from the logic of negativity, connecting it instead to creative affirmation. The corollary of this shift is twofold: firstly, it proves that political subjectivity or agency need not be aimed solely at the production of radical counter-subjectivities. It rather involves discontinuous and heterogeneous negotiations with dominant norms and technologies of the self. Secondly, it argues that political subjectivity rests on an ethics of otherness that values reciprocity as mutual specification or creation. It does not pursue the recognition of sameness, but rather the quest for creative alternatives and sustainable futures.

We need to organize communities that reflect and enhance this vision of the subject. This is a community that acknowledges difference as the principle of non-One-ness as its founding myth of origin. Anti-Oedipal, post-humanist, vitalist, non-unitary and yet accountable. Not bound together by the guilt of shared violence, or irreparable loss, or unpayable ontological debts – but rather by the compassionate acknowledgment of our common need to negotiate thresholds on sustainability with and alongside the relentless and monstrous energy of a ‘Life’ that does not respond to our names. A political economy of non-compensation needs to be installed, that is to say a fundamental principle of non-profit. This rejects the liberal vision of the subject, which inscribes the political economy of capitalism at the heart of subjectivity in terms of losses, savings, recognition and production.

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Moreover, it moves further than the psychoanalytic insight about the trappings of the surplus value of jouissance. Acknowledging instead the importance of proximity and relation, it turns the margins of unspeakableness, the traumatized nature of our being-in-the-world and our shared fragility into the praxis of co-construction of affirmative social practices. It is a form of amor fati, a way of living up to the intensities of life, so as to be worthy of all that happens to us – to live out our shared capacity to affect and to be affected.

Prophetic or visionary minds are thinkers of the future. The future as an active object of desire propels us forth and we can draw from it the strength and motivation to be active in the here and now of the present. The present is always the future present: it will have made a positive difference in the world. Only the yearning for sustainable futures can construct a liveable present. The anticipation of endurance, of making it to a possible ‘tomorrow’ transposes energies from the future back into the present. This is a non-entropic model of energy-flow and hence of transferral of desire as creative becoming. This is not a leap of faith, but an active transposition, a transformation at the in-depth level, a praxis that enacts a change of critical culture, also at the ethical level. As Deleuze put it: we need both a future and a people.

The Normative Dimension

i) Politics vs. the political

In keeping with their reading of advance capitalism as a supple and dynamic system, Deleuze and Guattari diversify their notion and practice of politics. Politics for them consists not so much in ‘LA politique’ (politics as usual, i.e. institutional or Majoritarian politics) as in ‘LE politique’ (the political movement in its diffuse, nomadic and rhizomic forms of becoming). This distinction between politics and the political is of crucial importance. In a sober tone, Deleuze and Guattari set the desire for transformations or becomings at the centre of the agenda, by emphasizing the axes of time and the form of affectivity they sustain. Politics is postulated on Chronos – the necessarily linear time of institutional deployment of norms and protocols. It is a reactive and majority-bound enterprise that is often made of flat repetitions and

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predictable reversals that may alter the balance but leave basically untouched the structure of power.

The political, on the other hand, is postulated on the axis of Aion – the time of becoming and of affirmative critical practice. It is minoritarian and it aims at the counter-actualization of alternative states of affairs in relation to the present. Based on the principle that we do not know what a body can do, the becoming-political ultimately aims at transformations in the very structures of subjectivity. It is about engendering and sustaining processes of ‘becoming-minoritarian’. This specific sensibility combines both a strong historical memory with consciousness and the desire for resistance. It rejects the sanctimonious, dogmatic tone of dominant ideologies, Left or Right of the political spectrum, in favour of the production of joyful acts of transformation. The spontaneous and creative aspects of this practice combine with a profound form of asceticism that is to say with an ethics of non-profit to build upon micro-political instances of activism, avoiding over-arching generalizations. This humble yet experimental approach to changing our collective modes of relation to the environment, social and other, our cultural norms and values, our social imaginary, our bodies, ourselves, is the most pragmatic manifestation of the politics of radical immanence.

The idea of the political produces increased subtlety in the analysis of and resistance to power. This breaks with a Marxist tradition of taking some doses of revolutionary violence for granted and expresses renewed theoretical interest in processes and social practices of otherness, marginality and exclusion. The negative charge attributed to difference marks both world-historical events such as European colonialism and fascism and also discursive events internal to the history of philosophy itself. This radically immanent materialist politics is no longer orthodox Marxist, but rather focussed on embodiment and lived experience. It takes seriously affects, sexuality, pacifism, human rights, environmental issues and sustainable futures.

The philosophical critique of political subjectivity rests on vital materialism and the embodied and embedded nature of the subject; that is to say on a monistic political ontology. This translates into intimacy with, and trust in the world, which can be mistaken for naïve fatalism, but is exactly the opposite: an active involvement in the politics of everyday life, where ‘life’ is not taken for granted, but is approached as an ethical-political praxis. The corollary of being part of a natureculture continuum of the world is a focus on the productive relationality of subjects, as opposed to the dialectics of
Sameness and Difference. The equation of difference with pejoration, as a term that indexes exclusion from the entitlements to subjectivity, is built into the tradition which defines the Subject as coinciding with/being the same as consciousness, rationality and self-regulating ethical behaviour. This results in making entire sections of living beings into marginal and disposable bodies: these are the sexualized, racialized and naturalized others (Braidotti, 2006). Deleuze and Guattari oppose to this an ethics of mutual specification between a ‘self’ that is always already a transversal assemblage of multiple interactions – and human and non-human ‘others’.

Politics, in other words, is about counter-actualizations of alternatives: creative, oppositional and sustainable alternatives to the schizoid de/re-territorializations of advanced capitalism understood along the lines we sketched above, in its brutal materiality and murderous violence. It is not because it is ‘advanced’ that capitalist power must be understood as sophisticated. It is actually a primitive system, disingenuously simple. This is why some conservatives take pride in defining capitalism as instinctive and in-built into the human selfish genes\textsuperscript{25} and their evolutionary capital. Contrary to such flattering and self-congratulatory accounts, Deleuze and Guattari strip the political analysis of such rhetorical posturing and reveal the raw forces that sustain the instance de-territorializations of a fast-spinning system that is advancing on the road to nowhere.

In the preface to \textit{Anti-Oedipus}, Foucault insightfully suggested that Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of power is an in-depth but also sweeping indictment of the ‘naturalization’ of capitalism as embedded in something they call ‘human nature’. Catherine Malabou recently added to this argument the ‘neurological proof’ that capitalism has, for a long period of time now, given form to our brain in such a way that it by now has become practically impossible for us to think beyond the capitalist premises. The answers to her quest are however given in \textit{Anti-Oedipus}: Here already, Deleuze and Guattari target for criticism our singular and collective fascination with despotic power, also known as micro-fascism. \textit{Anti-Oedipus} and its sequel, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, together make up the \textit{Capitalism as Schizophrenia} project that reads, as a whole, as a 1000 page introduction to non-fascist life that chases away the intoxication with the image of power embodied in a Majoritarian subject who is strong, virile, masculine, white, heterosexual, speaking a standard language – an image which the term ‘phallogocentrism’

does not even begin to approximate. Philosophy thus defined is the conceptual detox cure to help us rid ourselves of the hold that such an image exercises on our minds, our psyche, our bowels and the inner recesses of our embodied and embedded existence.

**ii) Minorities and becoming-minoritarian**

There is a positive and creative tension between the identitarian claims of political movements that are grounded in the historical experience of oppression and the empirical transcendental aspirations of nomadic theory to postulate a new collective transversal bond through multiple processes of becoming.

In identifying the points of exit from the phallocentric modes of thought towards a new, intensive image of philosophy, nomadic theory stresses the need for new images for these subject-positions. This results in the elaboration of a set of post-metaphysical figurations of the subject. Figurations such as rhizomes, becomings, lines of escape, flows, relays and bodies without organs release and express active states of being, that break through the conventional schemes of theoretical representation. Alternative figurations of the subject are figural modes of expression that displace the vision of consciousness away from the dominant premises. Deleuze's central figuration is a general becoming-minority, or becoming-nomad, or becoming-molecular. The minority marks a crossing or a trajectory; nothing happens at the center, for Deleuze, but at the periphery there roam youthful gangs of the new nomads.

In so far as Man, the male, is the main referent for thinking subjectivity, the standard-bearer of the Norm, the Law, the Logos, Woman is dualistically, i.e. oppositionally positioned as his ‘other’. The consequence is that there is no possible becoming-minority of man and that the becoming-woman is a privileged position for the minority-consciousness of all. Man as the privileged referent of subjectivity, the standard-bearer of the norm/law/logos re-presents the majority, i.e. the dead heart of the system. The consequences are on the one hand that masculinity is antithetical to the process of becoming and it can only be the site of deconstruction or critique. On the other hand, the becoming-woman is a fundamental step in the process of becoming, for both and for all sexes.

Deleuze (with and without Guattari) states that all the lines of deteritorialization go necessarily through the stage of ‘becoming-woman’, which is the key, the pre-condition and the necessary starting-point for the
whole process. The reference to ‘woman’ in the process of ‘becoming-woman’, however, does not refer to empirical females, but rather to topological positions, degrees and levels of intensity, affective states. The becoming woman is the marker for a general process of transformation: it affirms positive forces and levels of nomadic, rhizomatic consciousness.

Deleuze’s work displays a great empathy with the feminist assumption that we have to start from the critique of phallocentrism. In so far as woman is positioned dualistically – as the other – in this system, she is annexed to the phallus, albeit by negation. In this sense and in this sense only, can it be said that sexual difference is the primary axis of differentiation and therefore must be given priority. On the other hand nomadic theory aims at the tendency to dilute metaphysical difference into a multiple and undifferentiated becoming. Which prompts the question: what feminist politics follow from nomadic theory’s emphasis on sexuality without genders?

In so far as the male/female dichotomy has moreover become the prototype of Western individualism, the process of decolonizing the subject from this dualistic grip requires as its starting point the dissolution of all sexed identities based on this gendered opposition. In this framework, sexual polarizations and gender-dichotomy are rejected as the prototype of the dualistic reduction of difference to a sub-category of Being. This does not alter the fact, however, that for nomadic theory sexuality is never reducible to, or contained (let alone constructed) within, the gender system. Deleuze's ultimate aim with respect to sexual difference is to move towards its final overturning. The nomadic or intensive horizon is a sexuality ‘beyond gender’ in the sense of being dispersed, not binary, multiple, not dualistic, interconnected, not dialectical and in a constant flux, not fixed. This idea is expressed in figurations like: ‘polysexuality’, the ‘molecular woman’ and the ‘bodies without organs’ to which Deleuze’s de-phallic style actively contributes.

A nomadic becoming-woman starts from the recognition of the dissymmetry between the sexes and the emphasis on female specificity as the starting point for the process of re-defining subjectivity. It does not, however, stop there – it moves towards a broadening of the traditional feminist political agenda to include, on top of issue of women's social rights, also a larger spectrum of options. These range from global political issues of social justice to cultural concerns, related to writing and creativity, to issues which at first sight seem to have nothing to do with women specifically. That is precisely the point: the co-existence of feminine specificity with larger, less sex-
specific concerns. Nomadic feminism is about tracing a zigzagging path between them.

Becoming-minority is a task also for the minorities, who all too often tend to be caught in the paralyzing gaze of the master – hating him/her and envying him/her at the same time. It is about activating different counter-memories and actualizing multiple ecologies of belonging. Becoming nomadic means one learns to re-invent oneself and one desires the self as a process of transformation. It’s about the desire for change, for flows and shifts of multiple desires. Nomadic theory rests on a non-unitary yet politically engaged and ethically accountable vision of the nomadic subject. Nomadic thought stresses the need for a change of conceptual schemes altogether, an overcoming of the Dialectic of Majority/Minority or Master/Slave as the Hegelians propose. Both the majority and the minorities need to untie the knots of envy (negative desire) and domination (dialectics) that binds them together so tightly. In this process, they will necessarily follow a-symmetrical lines of becoming, given that their starting positions are so different. For the majority, there is no possible becoming – other than in the undoing of its central position altogether.

For the real-life minorities, however, the pattern is different: women, blacks, youth, post-colonial subjects, migrants, exiles and the homeless may first need to go through a phase of ‘identity politics’ – of claiming a fixed location. This is both inevitable and necessary because: you cannot give up something you have never had, nor can you dispose nomadically of a subject position that you have never controlled to begin with. In line with how Deleuze never worked with ‘the Other’ as a philosophical concept but preferred the ‘wholly other’ (LoS), or better even ‘difference in itself’ (DR), we think consequently that the process of becoming-nomad (- minority, - woman) is internally differentiated and it depends largely on where one starts off from. The politics of location, of the event, is crucial. In other words, heterogeneity is injected into both poles of the dialectical opposition, which gets undone accordingly. The ‘Molar’ line – that of Being, identity, fixity and potestas, and the ‘Molecular’ line – that of becoming, nomadic subjectivity and potencia – are absolutely not the same. They are two dissymmetrical ‘others’. Within phallogocentrism they have been captured in a dualistic mold. They are differentiated by structural inequalities that impose Sameness in a set of hierarchical relations. Deleuze defines the Molar/Majority as the

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standard and the Molecular/Minority as the other in the sense of 'the other of the same'. The central challenge for nomadic philosophy however is how to undo this dualistic mode and redistribute the power-relations of the two terms. More important than either of them, therefore, is the Line of Flight or of becoming. This is always and only a becoming-minoritarian as in woman/child/animal/imperceptible.

The differences in the starting positions are important in that they mark different qualitative levels of relation. Thus, if one starts from the Majority position (the Same) there is only one possible path: through the Minority (the Other) – hence the imperative to become woman as: the first move in the deterritorialization of the dominant subject (also known as the feminization of Man). For those who start from the position of empirical minorities, on the other hand, more options are open. If the pull towards assimilation or integration into the Majority is strong for the minorities (hence the phenomenon of phallic women), so is the appeal of the lines of escape towards minoritarian becomings. In other words, you can have a becoming-woman that produces Angela Merkel and one that produces Lady Gaga: neither of whom is 'feminine' in any conventional sense of the term and yet they are as different from each other as the workhorse is from the racehorse.27

What matters here is to keep open the process of becoming-minoritarian and not to stop at the dialectical role-reversal that usually sees the former slaves in the position of new masters or the former mistresses in the position of dominatrix. The point is to go beyond the logic of reversibility. This is especially important for those social subjects: women, blacks, post-colonial and other ‘others’, who are the carriers of the hopes of the Minorities. But also the non-human or other-than human becomings should be allowed to become minoritarian, to find their own form of life irrespective of phallogocentric and antropocentric rule. This is why contemporary bio-art is such a spectacular new field of interest. Here we do not only the encounter the humanoid companion species of Patricia Piccinini but also the zebra fish embryos injected with algae, as Adam Zaretski invents them, and the robotic forms of life that artists like Nathalie Jeremijenko and Tove Kjellmark gave

rise to. The process of becoming nomadic is not merely anti-essentialist, but a-subjective, beyond received notions of individuality. It is a trans-personal mode, ultimately collective. You can never be a nomad, you can only go on trying to become nomadic.

Sylvia Plath, in the post-World War Two gloom that preceded the feminist revolution, spelled it out like a mantra: ‘every woman loves a fascist […] daddy you bastard I am through.’ The pathetic-despotic face of white femininity is that which nomadic feminism has de-territorialized and activated towards becoming-minors of all kinds, all genders, ages, races and species. That’s the becoming-political: the masked faces of Pussy Riot, who are both over exposed celebrities and anonymous militants carrying on what must feel at times like a lost battle. A struggle not only against that despotic image of power but also for viable alternatives. A struggle you fight at your own risk and peril, without guarantees of success, relentless, subterranean, fundamentally invisible, even when it is televised and webcast, the political is the anti-fascist drive to freedom. It seems as if Michel Foucault, in his preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, which we discussed at the start of this introduction, has given them their motto when he stated: ‘Do not think that one has to be sad in order to be militant, even though the thing one is fighting is abominable’ (AO, p.xiii). For isn’t this struggle they are fighting one of pure joy? Don’t they practice ‘being anti-oedipal’ *as a life style*? And in doing so, aren’t they nomadic as in imperceptible to the ‘degrees of deviance’ by means of which Vladimir Putin has organized his territory? Occupying the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow was only in an indirect way aimed at the Freudian Fathers and the Catholic Priests in control. It was first of all an affirmative event, done out of love, in which a very short and sudden outburst of raw energy revealed the impotence of power forever. Deeply non-fascist in a Deleuzian and Guattarian mode, their art expresses the aspiration to freedom as constitutive of the human subject. It is also deeply radical in holding current societies accountable for their limitations, contradictions and hypocrisies. It is all work-in-progress: ‘advanced’ organizations need to become-non-fascist as well. It all begins with the isolation of a figure, in the framing of spatial and temporal scales so as to enable us to begin to understand which plateau of power we happen to be dealing with, right now. Becoming-non-fascist, that is to say: becoming a people that was missing;

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bring about a time that will have been sustainable. Never forgetting the future; eyes wide shut, that blurred, anti-fascist vision of a people to come.

References


Fashioning the Fold: Multiple Becomings

Anneke Smelik

Abstract
Nowhere is the constantly vibrating dynamic of the fold more visible and palpable than in the pleats, creases, draperies, furrows, bows and ribbons of fashion. Whilst in art history, the fold is connected to the expression of e-motion (pathos), in fashion the fold is engaged in a game of concealing and revealing the body in-motion (eros). The fluid, flowing, flexible folds of high fashion reveal a constantly closing in or opening up of the body to the world. Whereas the flexible fold of early twentieth century designs (Mariano Fortuny, Madeleine Vionnet and Madame Grès) can be understood as positioning the body differently in time through movement, the stiff fold of sculptured forms expressed through high-tech fabrics deterritorialize the body, for instance in the designs of Japanese designers (Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto) and the Dutch baroque fashion of Viktor & Rolf. For Deleuze, the fold, or the process of folding, is a process of becoming. In so far as matter can fold, it is capable of becoming. In fashioning the fold, experimental fashion designers create conditions to transform normative images of human bodies and actualize multiple becomings. This article argues that the relational notion of the fold can help us understand how avant-garde fashion opens up new kinds of subjectivity.
Fashion never is, but always becomes.
Georg Simmel

The folds in the soul resemble the pleats of matter.
Gilles Deleuze

A Most Baroque Fold

Fashion, today, is all about creative performances, affective experiences and liquid identities. This raises the question of whether fashion can be understood in terms of representation and signification, which are the dominant terms within semiotic and sociological approaches in Fashion Studies today. This article advances the argument that fashion theory needs to be developed along new lines in order to address changes in contemporary fashion design. Rather than focus on image, sign or meaning, I will explore a different theoretical framework within cultural studies of fashion, by proposing to work with Gilles Deleuze’s concept of the fold. For Deleuze the fold is a dynamic and creative force that opens the subject up to a process of infinite becoming. He uses the concept of the fold to undermine the idea that subjectivity consists of an opposition between interiority and exteriority. The fold can then be understood as an account of producing one’s subjectivity by all kinds of foldings, such as the folding of the world into one’s self. The fold functions as an interface between the inside and the outside, depth and surface, being and appearing, and as such demolishes binary oppositions. Deleuze claims that the fold is a concept to think of subjectivity as a process of becoming. Deleuze’s concept of the Baroque fold has inspired me to unravel the folds of modern fashion.


Nowhere is the constantly vibrating dynamic and creative force of the fold more visible and palpable than in the pleats, creases, draperies, furrows, bows and ribbons of fashion. I hope to show that re-reading fashion through the notion of the fold, allows for a move beyond a humanist exercise that limits fashion to representational meaning or to the confines of the human body. As avant-garde fashion often probes the limits of signification or of what a body can do, the notion of the fold helps to see how experimental designs set the body in-motion, liberating it from the dominant modes of identity and subjectivity in the consumerist world of fast fashion. In doing so, I will assess how the fold enables us to better understand the fluidity of the world of fashion: its materiality, affectivity and performativity. In order to appreciate how the fold works in fashion and how it relates to Deleuze’s reading of the Baroque, I first explore early designs of the fold by fashion designers Mariano Fortuny, Madeleine Vionnet and Madame Grès in the first half of the twentieth century. I will then move on to relate the deleuzian concept of the fold to the avant-garde fashion of Japanese designers Issey Miyake, Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto, and the Dutch baroque fashion designs of Viktor & Rolf.

Mariano Fortuny was among the first to develop a special, patented, technology to create hundreds of pleats in silk – about 450 pleats in a strip of cloth of one meter. The pleats change colour in accordance with movement and the reflections of light. The fluid, flowing, flexible materials of silk in his famous ‘Delphos’ gown (dating from 1907) both hugged and liberated the body. The dress was considered highly sensual because it revealed the natural curves of the female body, releasing it from its tortuous corset. At the time it was known as ‘the lingerie dress’ as it made an obvious reference to underwear from ancient times and introduced a modern and body-conscious form, ‘flowing effortlessly over the contours of female forms’, which suggested at the time an almost indecent exposure of the female body. Initially it was therefore only worn as a gown at home. Adornment with glass beads, dazzling colours, and rich prints, made the dresses more lavish and the dress soon became an all-time favourite. The intense colours added to the luxury and sensuality of the popular dress, which was especially

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embraced by dancers and actresses like Elenora Duse, Isadora Duncan, and Dorothy and Lillian Gish. The sensuous appeal of the dress, which opened up like a harmonica or a fan by the movements of the body, was also picked up in literature; Marcel Proust referred to Fortuny and the dress many times in his À la recherche du temps perdu.

The Delphos dress was advocated by artist and reform movements such as The Aesthetic Movement and the Artistic Dress Movement, because it created a modern silhouette that did not require the restrictive corset (De Osma, 1994, p.88). In its very simplicity, based on the Greek chiton, the dress was quite different from the voluminous fashion that preceded it, or the neo-baroque that we recognize in the sculptural folds of the Goddess dress by Madeleine Vionnet at the same time. Fortuny’s designs are considered ‘timeless and modern in the truest sense of the word’ (Watson, 2004, p.230). In my view, the modern appeal lies in the way that the pleated gowns dressed but also undressed the body, thus producing a body that could move freely rather than just covering it up. As such, Fortuny’s designs questioned fashion as a moral practice of dressing; what psychoanalyst John Flügel has called the negative impulse of modesty. For Flügel, modesty is an inhibitory impulse directed against the sexual display of the naked body. The body-hugging pleats of the Fortuny’s designs change or at least play upon the social prohibition that the body be covered for the sake of modesty. The dresses open up the all too obvious link between fashion and decency, allowing for a greater freedom of the body to move and for a greater ambivalence in the play of showing off the contours of the body while still covering the flesh.

Madeleine Vionnet was equally famous for her dresses, which, like Fortuny’s, referred to Greek drapery. Through particular application of the bias cut she tried ‘to achieve maximum fluidity, enhancing movement and

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8 Many sources on Internet refer to Marcel Proust in this respect. One of the best entries on Fortuny is Judith Davidsen, jdavidsen.wordpress.com, May 2, 2013. She claims Proust refers to Fortuny or his dresses sixteen times in À la recherche du temps perdu. Source:< http://jdavidsen.wordpress.com/tag/delphos-gown/> Retrieved 30-10-2013.
flexibility’ and to ‘rethink the relationship between fabric and flesh’ (Arnold, 2010, p.712). In the 1930s another couturier, Madame Grès, also created a hallmark for her ‘Grecian’ gowns. In Vionnet’s and Grès’ draped dresses we can recognize the ‘dialectic of cloth and body [that] is the secret of Greek art’, which Anne Hollander explains as the perfect balance of ‘natural observation and skillful abstraction’ (Hollander, 1988, p.9) never privileging either the body or the drapery. Vionnet’s designs created ‘a seamless construct […] where body and clothing become one – the woman’s body is not concealed or revealed by the cloth but is both at the same time’. Yet, whilst for Gen Doy, Vionnet’s draped dresses are an example of a classicist mingling of body and cloth in a modern rendition, there are certain – famous – photographs that suggest to me a more dramatic use of draped fabric that is fluttering and billowing in the wind. A picture of ‘Model in Goddess dress by Vionnet’ shows the typical posing of a model while the wind is blowing from a machine, simulating the impression of granting movement to the clothes, in a position that reminds us of Greek or Roman reliefs with dancing nymphs or goddesses. The image is reminiscent of the Running Niobid of Greek times (early third century B.C.). For Hollander this sculpture is an example of Greek idealism, because the body is still visible under the draped cloth, and hence is an amalgam of body and drapery (Hollander, 1988, p.9). In the fashion picture, too, the dress conceals the body as we see no naked flesh, but also reveals it by hugging its contours. While the dress may point to Greek drapery, the folds of the dress and scarf in this particular picture are not that far removed from the high baroque sculptures of Bernini, especially his famous ecstasy of the holy Teresa d’Avila. Equally, the dramatic designs of Madame Grès were almost sculpted, ‘often consisting of puffed, molded, and three-dimensionally

13 Photographer George Hoyningen-Huene, c. 1931. Black and white photograph ‘Model in Goddess dress by Vionnet.’
14 The page also contains a picture of the Niobid.
shaped elements that billowed and fell away from the body’. Such sensuous fashion designs, then, make a use of the fold that allows the wearer to constantly open up to the world.

In fashion the fold is engaged in a game of concealing and revealing the body in-motion; it is a play of eros. In art history, however, the fold is traditionally connected to the expression of e-motion; it is a play of pathos. Already in 1436 Alberti described in his short treatise *On Painting* how the folds of drapery, gowns and dresses indicate not only movement and the display of mastery over the materiality of paint, wood or marble, but also that the folds, pleats and drapes create a sphere of agitation, drama, sensation and the expression of pure emotion. Alberti also notices the erotic effects of the clinging cloth to the body in the wind, ‘showing the nude under the draperies’. The play of pathos is most prominently put forward in the quintessence of Baroque art: Bernini’s sculptures. His sculpted draperies were typical of the Baroque and indeed helped shaping the Baroque, creating an illusion of violent movement. Where in the Renaissance the body under the cloth is often more important than the folds of the dress, here the body is no longer visible under the ‘vibrating cataracts of drapery’, as Rudolf Wittkower put it. The folds have a life of their own, quite independent of the human figure that they cover. As Anne Hollander wryly remarks: ‘It had become a potential manifestation more similar to unusual turbulence in the heavens than to household linen […]’ (Hollander, 1988, p.42). A significant number of previous art historians have puritanically opposed the sensual delights and violent emotions of cloth in art of the high Baroque. And indeed, looking at Bernini’s Saint Teresa, Vionnet’s Goddess dress, or Madame Grès’ Grecian evening dress, there is not only a sensual delight in the pleats and creases of the cloth, but the abundant, rising and falling folds seem to flow with deep intensity. Of course, in the sculpture Teresa’s body is

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19 For example: John Ruskin fiercely condemned ‘bad drapery’ for not conforming to prevailing standards of what is natural or ideal; see Hollander, p. 75.
hidden under a mass of drapery, whereas the dresses a few centuries later reveal as much as they conceal the body of the female model. My point here is that we see the beginning of a new form of fashion in modern times, where the folds of the cloth seem to take on a life and intensity of their own.

In the case of Bernini’s sculpture, the drapery is an adequate embodiment of the essence of Teresa’s experience: her religious visions. In this overt play of pathos there are also erotic overtones in the expression of her face and the carefully arranged chaos of her nun’s habit. This more hidden eroticism is quite different from the sensuality of Fortuny’s Delphos dress, Vionnet’s Goddess dress, or Madame Grès’ Grecian evening dress that are suggestive of the curves of the female body underneath the clothing. Lacan famously took Bernini’s sculpture of Teresa as an example of female pleasure: ‘You only have to go and look at Bernini’s statue in Rome to understand immediately that she’s coming, there is no doubt about it.’

‘Elle jouit’, says Lacan, claiming that this instance of the mystic’s jouissance is typical of a female pleasure that knows not where it comes from and — significantly within Lacanian psychoanalysis — that cannot speak (Lacan, 1985, p.147). Whereas Lacan locates Teresa’s pleasure in the expression of her swooning face, Deleuze takes an altogether different take on the statue. He emphasizes Teresa’s, no less intense, spiritual experience: ‘[…] it is Bernini who endows [the folds of clothing] with sublime form in sculpture, when marble seizes and bears to infinity folds that cannot be explained by the body, but by a spiritual adventure that can set the body ablaze’ (TF, 121-122).

Interestingly, Deleuze looks at the folds of the clothing (and not at Teresa’s face) to come up with a different reading of Bernini’s art work in the context of the Baroque. For Deleuze the Baroque is a world where ‘everything folds, unfolds, refolds’. The typical mannerism of the Baroque can be identified not only in painting or sculpture, but also in its own style of dress:

The fold can be recognized first of all in the textile model of the kind implied by garments: fabric or clothing has to free its own folds from its usual subordination

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to the finite body it covers. If there is an inherently Baroque costume, it is broad, in descending waves, billowing and flaring, surrounding the body with its independent folds, ever-multiplying, never betraying those of the body beneath: a system like rhingrave-canons – ample breeches bedecked with ribbons – but also vested doublets, flowing cloaks, enormous flaps, overflowing shirts, everything that forms the great Baroque contribution to clothing of the seventeenth century. (TF, 121)

Taking my lead from Deleuze’s book on *The Fold*, I want to claim that in fashion the fold is engaged in a game of concealing and revealing the body in-motion; thus moving in-between pathos and eros. While the folds of fabric may reveal the body far better than nudity (TF, 122), as Deleuze writes, it is certainly also the case that the folds of fashion express new ways of affect and intensity:

The folds of clothing acquire an autonomy and a fullness that are not simply decorative effects. They convey the intensity of a spiritual force exerted on the body, either to turn it upside down or to stand or raise it up over and again, but in every event to turn it inside out and to mold its inner surfaces. (TF, 122)

Deleuze thus suggests that clothing surrounds the body and that consequently the fold is autonomous and no longer submitted to the human body that it covers. There is thus a double movement of liberation: the fold is freed from the body, just as the body is freed from the restrictions of material clothing. As I will argue later in this article, it is this gap that allows the subject – the person who wears the clothes – to open up to a process of becoming.

In using the concept of Deleuze’s fold, I move away from the representational interpretations of drapery in art history or in fashion studies. The concept of representation is not the most useful to explain the logistics of a kind of movement – folding, unfolding, refolding – that defies the hierarchies of its aesthetics as well as a traditional view of subjectivity. Rather than following the classical interpretation of drapery in art history or fashion theory as expressing emotion, I want to argue in the second half of this article that much of contemporary avant-garde fashion creates a constantly opening up of the body – its affects and virtual becoming – to the world. Throughout his book on *The Fold*, Deleuze relates the fold to modalities of subjectivity; in the words of Simon O’Sullivan: ‘[…] from the fold of our material selves, our bodies, to the folding of time, or simply memory. Indeed, subjectivity might be understood as precisely a topology of
these different kinds of folds’ (O’Sullivan, p.103). In discussing avant-garde, ‘high’, fashion, I deliberately look for designs that experiment with form and matter and call for a different relation to the human body. In the next part of this article I will explore how avant-garde fashion can ‘free its own folds from its usual subordination to the finite body it covers’ (TF, 121), stipulating the production of new kinds of subjectivity.

Unfolding – Defolding – Enfolding – Refolding

Fortuny, Vionnet and Grès shared a fascination for Asian wrapping techniques, taking note ‘of Eastern cultures’ aversion to the cutting of textiles’ (Mears, p.378). In contemporary fashion, the technique of folding textile is indeed first and foremost explored by Japanese designers. In the 1970s, Issey Miyake and Kenzo Tadaka challenged Western traditions of tailoring by using techniques of layering, wrapping, and folding. Miyake developed his concept of A Piece-of-Cloth, (A-POC); the flat piece of cloth design based on the Japanese concept of putting together garments out of a single piece of cloth that covers the body without machine-sewn seams. As Giuliana Bruno puts it: ‘It is the very simplicity of the fold that entails its remarkable complexity’. But Miyake is best known for his intricately pleated garments that are created by carefully folding a length of cloth, twisting it tightly, and treating it with heat, not unlike Fortuny did with his Delphos dress. However, Miyake first cuts and assembles a garment, which he then folds, irons, sews, and places in a press ‘from which it emerge[s] with permanent pleats’.

By the use of the characteristics of polyester this technology combines shape and function organically, giving birth to a new type of clothing that Bradley Quinn typifies as ‘techno fashion’ (Quinn, 2002). The vividly coloured, highly innovative designs are so successful that a commercial diffusion line, ‘Pleats Please’, has been devised since 1993. Folding garments is achieved by old and new methods, which are both used by the Japanese designer Yohji Yamamoto. Old methods include using asymmetry or twisting and rolling cloth, while new methods involve the

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experimentation with innovative fabrics, for example by inserting wires or weaving plastic tubes into synthetic fabrics. Junya Watanabe, protégé of Rei Kawakubo, also experimented with complex pattern-cutting of hi-tech fabrics, superlight, water-resistant microfibers and synthetic polyesters, into origami folds and honeycomb weaves (Quinn, p.160).25

Deconstructing sartorial conventions, Japanese designers like Miyake and Kenzo, later joined by Rei Kawakubo (of Comme des Garçons) and Yamamoto, shocked the audience in Paris with their post-nuclear chic in the early 1980s. Their conceptual designs do not only advance fashion technology or demand a new understanding of fashion aesthetics, but also require a different relation to the body. The Japanese designers created an innovative aesthetic that has often been labelled as ‘deconstructionist’ (e.g. Quinn, p.141), yet a reading through Deleuze’s notion of the fold may advance an affirmative understanding of such designs beyond a negative aesthetics of deconstruction. In my view, the asymmetrical and multi-layered wrappings and foldings point to a deleuzean state of flux where everything flows. Matter is a texture (TF, 47), writes Deleuze, a fabric (TF, 49), and all matter ‘generally always tends to unfold its pleats at great length’ (TF, 123). Looking at any of the Japanese designs one can see how the fold is dynamic, with a dispersion of a central line, opening up to a multiplicity of lines, notches, gaps, holes and fissures. These kinds of garments are fluid and constantly in flux; it is almost as if we see here the ‘vibrating cataracts of drapery’ (Wittkower, p.56) in its modern or postmodern attire. Deleuze’s ‘rhapsody of folds and foldings’ (Conley, p.172), unravels the two sides of a single surface: an inside and an outside. For instance, in his later work at the end of the 1990s Yamamoto was inspired by the crinoline to experiment with space. Rather than playing with the hooped skirts as surface decoration, they turned into secret pockets carrying different accessories for different occasions, connecting the ‘hidden intimacies of the fashioned body’ (Quinn, p.149) to the folds of the skirt. According to Caroline Evans, Yamamoto thus

imagined new uses for historical costume. The ingenuity of the uses of the inside and outside of the folds in fashion, lies in connecting the body in new ways to the space that surrounds it. At the same time Yamamoto achieves a different relation to historical time by folding historical references into one another; ‘my dream is to draw time’, says Yamamoto in Wim Wender’s documentary on him. Indeed, Ulrich Lehmann argues (with Walter Benjamin) that fashion as a modern phenomenon is well equipped for folding together past and present. Reading the Japanese designs through the deleuzian notion of the fold helps to see the openness that is inherent in them; it makes us aware of the sense that a fold always already contains other folds, potential flows, and a different approach to time and space.

The folds of Japanese fashion designs create surprising folding-ins and folding-outs. The fold doubles the outside as much as it doubles the inside; inside-out becomes outside-in and the other way around. What is in? What is out? What is in-between? The folds clearly do not present a total or frontal view, but create intervals of small differences in curvature, diminishing any ‘clear demarcations between the inside and outside of a garment’. Garments fold in both inward and outward directions, or as Deleuze puts it, the fold moves between the outside and the inside, expanding on either side: ‘the fold is divided into folds, which are tucked inside and which spill onto the outside’ (TF, 35). There is thus always an exteriority on the outside, and an interiority on the inside, which can swap places in the folds of fashion. It is in this eternal process of moving in-between inside and outside that the fold expresses its unlimited freedom. The fold is a way of thinking space and time as the same thing, or rather as a relation, folded upon one another. By understanding space as a fold, there is no longer an absolute inside or outside: the infinite fold has ‘[…] an exterior always on the outside, an interior always

on the inside’, writes Deleuze (TF, 35). This allows for a deterritorialization of space.\footnote{See G. Bruno (2010) for an interesting interweaving of space in cinema, architecture and fashion.}

Let me further unwrap the spatial elements of the fold in the work of Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons, who shocked the Parisian fashion world with her so-called Hiroshima chic of the 1980s, turning clothes inside out, strewn with small holes, shredding sweaters and patch-working them together, with rough stitching or careless seaming.\footnote{Claire Wilcox, 2010. ‘Entry on Comme des Garçons.’ In: Valerie Steele (ed.), The Berg Companion to Fashion. Oxford: Berg, pp. 162-5.} I concentrate here on her famous dresses from the Spring-Summer collection of 1997, entitled ‘Body Becomes Dress, Dress Becomes Body’, alternatively named the ‘Lumps’, ‘Lumps and Bumps’ or ‘Quasimodo’ collection, and a favoured collector’s item for museums (Quinn, p.143; Evans, p.269). The dresses – like other designs of Kawakubo in the 1990s – are made of hi-tech synthetics such as stretch nylon-urethane fabric, stretch polyester or polyurethane mix fabrics, which are padded with cushions in strange places. The outfits have pads sewn inside, creating irregular folds and mounds on the surface of the clothes, along the shoulder, down the back, or across the hip, expressing ‘the dissonance between the body and the form of the outfit’ (Fukai, p.645). The garments monstrously deform the body and re-contour the body shape, shaking up standardized concepts that people have of their own bodies. The stiff pleats of Miyake or the padding with cushions by Kawakubo offer a different kind of folding than we have seen with the fluid folds of Fortuny, Vionnet or Grès. Where the flexible fold can be understood as positioning the body differently in time through movement, the stiff fold of sculptured forms through high-tech fabrics and padded cushions can be said to radically deterritorialize the body by turning inside out and outside in. These garments were designed to be, in Kawakubo’s own words, ‘Not what has been seen before, not what has been repeated; instead, new discoveries that look towards the future, that are liberated and lively’ (Fukai, p.648).

In this as well as in other collections of the 1990s, Kawakubo tried to liberate the clothes from their enslavement to the body (Fukai, p.648). Similar radical attempts of discovering new shapes can be found in the pleated dresses by Miyake, the crinoline designs of Yamamoto, or the techno-couture of Watanabe. What happens in these designs is a replacement of the Western dialectic of concealing and revealing the body that we saw...
before in the dresses of Fortuny, Vionnet and Grès, which are all playing on well-known conventions of erotics. From the Japanese designs emerges a different sensuality, in the words of Barbara Vinken, ‘a sensuality of changing silhouettes, layered in the depths of the fabric’ (Vinken, p.103). The Japanese designers deterritorialize the human – mostly the female – body into strange and alien shapes. In doing so, they seem to almost literally embody Deleuze’s remark that ‘fabric or clothing has to free its own folds from its usual subordination to the finite body it covers.’ (TF, 121) These designs come across as futuristic, morphing new silhouettes, inviting the wearer to inhabit the freedom of co-creating the body into new shapes. The deterritorialization of the human body through the manifold, multi-layered, and asymmetrical drapes, pleats, and folds, invites a reflection on new ways of embodiment and even new ways of subjectivity. The designs of Miyake, Yamamoto, Kawakubo and Watanabe have been understood in fashion studies as deconstructionist because they no longer merely reproduce the finite body, but it is much more important, and affirmative, to understand their designs as an unfolding of new opportunities of becoming. In the context of my discussion of the Japanese designers, it is interesting that Deleuze himself refers to the Oriental line as ‘the full and the void in a reciprocal becoming’ (TF, 36). In the final part of this article I will further expand on the notion of the fold of fashion as becoming.

Viktor & Rolf: spiralling up with bows and ribbons

When Deleuze argues that the fold expresses an infinite process of moving in-between an exteriority and an interiority, it should not be understood as a divisive process, but rather as a continuous movement of folding, unfolding, defolding, enfolding, and refolding. An understanding of the fold in garments as a continuous, and hence, unfinished, process, implies a different concept of the body. The fold allows for an opening up of the body in new ways. It points to a continuous becoming for the subject who is wearing the designs, or at least, it points to the possibility of such a becoming. I propose to discuss the issue of becoming through the baroque fashion designs of the Dutch duo Viktor & Rolf.  

33 Of course, Viktor & Rolf are by no means the only baroque designers; other baroque designers are punk designers like Jean-Paul Gaultier and Vivienne Westwood; theatrical designers like Alexander McQueen, John Galliano, and Gareth Pugh; or more conceptual and technological designers like Hussein Chalayan and Iris
Known for ‘their exaggerated silhouettes and noteworthy runway performances’, Viktor & Rolf’s haute couture designs often centre on provocation and the carnivalesque. Take for example the potentially deterritorializing function of the collection ‘Atomic Bomb’ (Fall/Winter 1998-99), which photographers Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin helped cast and style. Viktor & Rolf stuffed the garments with large balloons or padding, resembling the mushroom cloud shape of a nuclear bomb. They showed the colourful clothes twice, once with the balloons or paddings, and once without them, the ‘anticlimax’ as they dubbed the designs, now hanging loosely in large folds around the body and festively enhanced with garlands. The designs thus integrated the elements of festivity and war, indicating the confusion whether people would ‘either be partying or become victims of weapons of mass destruction’ in the approaching millennium. Clearly, the collection echoes Kawakubo’s ‘Dress Becomes Body’ collection as it is similarly characterised by the deformation of the body’s shape. As I have argued elsewhere, the collection is an exploration of the potential function of clothes to deterritorialize the familiar form of the body, and especially of the idealized body shape circulating in contemporary consumer culture. Deforming the body through padding is a recurrent element in Viktor & Rolf designs, which is important in understanding how ‘the process [of becoming] also has the power to deterritorialize bodies from certain dominant modes of stratification’. This kind of fashion pushes the limits of what a body can do and what it can become. Deterritorialization is a logistical precondition for a process of becoming, which unsettles the familiar territory of demarcated

van Herpen. I take the example of Viktor & Rolf here because they are the most famous contemporary Dutch designers.

wholes or fixed frameworks of the world of fashion (MP, 508-509). I suggest understanding the fold as such a movement of deterritorialization by which one leaves the familiar terrain of idealized body shapes, unified wholes or fixed structures.

For Deleuze, the fold, or the process of folding, is a practice of becoming. In so far as matter can fold, it is capable of becoming, because it involves a process of opening out to the world, or conversely, of folding the world into the self (TF, 37) (see also O’Sullivan, pp.102-4). Let me turn to another collection by Viktor & Rolf; the ‘Flowerbomb’ collection (Spring/Summer 2005), to further explore this. Again, the fashion show works on the principle of showing the clothes twice. In the extravagant show of the ‘Flowerbomb’ collection, the models are first donned with black motor helmets and show clothes entirely in black. After the spectacular launch of Viktor & Rolf’s first perfume, also called Flowerbomb, the models return with their faces made up in pink and dressed in the same designs but now in exuberant colours. The dresses are constructed out of giant bows and ribbons, which have since become another trademark of Viktor & Rolf. Bows, knots, ribbons, frills, ruffles and all such trimmings are variations on the fold. Interestingly, watching the models walk down the catwalk one can see the bows and ribbons bob up and down, flowing and billowing around the body. As Ulrich Lehmann writes, ‘the drapes, pleats, and folds move with man, but they are not an actual part of his body’ (Lehmann, Tigersprung, p.212). In my view, it is that gap between body and folds that allows for opening up a freedom of movement. Compare how Deleuze writes that the fold is ‘movement, then, [that] cannot be stopped’ (TF, 12). He is adamant that the matter of the body is in constant flux, which works by ‘communication and propagation of movement’ (TF, 97).

The multi-layered garments thus become pure movement, from which the body can free itself. The very movement of Viktor & Rolf’s billowing designs show how the body is involved in a continuous process of ‘folding, unfolding and refolding’ (TF, 137). Importantly, then, Viktor & Rolf’s avant-garde fashion shows that ‘all bodies are traversed by this capacity of becoming’ as Stephen Seely puts it (Seely, p.262).

The motion of the clothes gives an idea of the body as incorporeal, a body of passions, affect and intensity. Giuliana Bruno has pointed to the quality of motion as emotion in clothes: ‘Home of the fold, fashion resides with the

39 Another example of bows worked into a dress is the wedding gown that Viktor & Rolf designed for Dutch Royal Princess Mabel van Oranje-Nassau (2004).
reversible continuity that, rather than separating, provides a breathing membrane – a skin – to the world. Sensorially speaking, clothes come alive in (e)motion’ (Bruno, 2010, p.225). Take for example Viktor & Rolf’s collection ‘Bedtime Story’ (Fall/Winter 2006-07), where the garments are enwrapped in or as duvets and cushions: satin pillows with broderie anglaise become gargantuan collars; bed sheets become sumptuous gowns; duvets become quilted coats; and ruffled sheets become cascading gowns of folds. The bedroom theme creates warmth and intimacy, where the many folds of the sculptural clothes present opportunities for the body of the subject to become in the world. This kind of ‘affective fashion’ as Seely calls it, reveals the transformative power of avant-garde fashion; in its exaggeration and excess Viktor & Rolf’s designs defy the commodification of the female body. For instance, for the collection ‘Upside Down’ (Spring/Summer 2006) Viktor & Rolf have created everything upside down: the dresses made of giant bows, can be worn both bottom up or bottom down, and they were presented on the catwalk first one way and then the other. Here, as in many of the other designs by Viktor & Rolf – the exaggerated ruffles of ‘Blacklight’ (S/S 1999),40 the blown-up pleats of ‘One Woman Show’ (F/W 2003), the extreme layering of nine dresses on top of each other in ‘Russian Doll’ (F/W 1999), the giant letters on the collars of ‘No’ (F/W 2008), the violins in the collars of ‘Harlequin’ (S/S 2008), and the gigantic skirts and collars of the gowns in ‘Shirt Symphony’ (S/S 2011) – contain variations of the fold that are reminiscent of the Baroque, which, in the words of Deleuze: ‘[…] radiates everywhere, at all times, in the thousand folds of garments that tend to become one with their respective wearers, to exceed their attitudes, to overcome their bodily contradictions, and to make their heads look like those of swimmers bobbing in the waves’ (TF, 121).

If the fold is a concept to think of subjectivity as a process of becoming, and functions as an interface between the inside and the outside, depth and surface, being and appearing, then we can understand Viktor & Rolf’s experimental designs as an invitation to engage the wearer in the creative process of becoming, by transforming the body, and perhaps reinventing the self. In creating fold after fold, crease after wrinkle, bow after ribbon, Viktor & Rolf’s designs open up to an understanding of the body as an infinite play of becoming.

40 I abbreviate Spring/Summer as S/S, and Fall/Winter as F/W, as is customary in fashion studies.
They themselves refer to the importance of transformation in their work in an interview with the Dutch *Vogue* on the occasion of their twentieth anniversary in November 2013, when the magazine launched a special anniversary issue for them including a separate supplement with overview of their work and a long interview. In the interview Rolf says: ‘We are fascinated by transformations. The promise of transformation – that is something magical. That something can change beyond recognition, but still come from the same source. It is the power of imagination.’\(^1\) Imagination is an important term here, because high fashion is a peculiar phenomenon that I want to describe as ‘in-between’. In the examples that I have discussed in this article, I have primarily looked at avant-garde fashion designs worn by models on the catwalk or in artistic photo shoots. The question then is where the creative process of becoming can be located in this kind of fashion that is closer to art than to commercial commodity. I want to suggest that the process of becoming can move beyond the model on the catwalk or in the picture, onto the viewer or consumer, in that she imagines wearing the designs. Fashion functions in-between, because the potential consumer moves in-between looking at a design and imagining wearing it. Through that moment of identification the viewer becomes the model who is wearing the avant-garde design. While consumers may never wear actual designs with lumps on the back, a pillow on the head, bows billowing in the air, or ruffles and pleats that surround the body, they can, however, imagine the endless potentialities of the fold. They may see how such dress design potentially frees the body from the territorialized understanding of its matter; liberating the materiality of the body into something continuously changing, mobile, and fluid. Or, to put it differently, fashion designers create conditions to actualize multiple becomings.

In this article I have read avant-garde high fashion through and alongside the deleuzian notion of the fold, thus moving beyond a representational meaning of garments and also moving beyond the familiar contours of the human body. As avant-garde fashion often probes the limits of what a body can do or what it can become, the notion of the fold helps to see how such experimental clothes set the body in-motion, perhaps even liberating it from the world by transforming normative images of human bodies. In the conceptual dresses by the Japanese designers or by Viktor & Rolf we can understand the fold, as Tom Conley put it, as ‘[…] the expression of a

\(^1\) Dutch *Vogue*, November 2013. Supplement ‘special anniversary issue’, p. 48. Interview by Daniël van der Meer, my translation.
continuous and vital force of being and of becoming’ (Conley, p.180). As we have seen, the fold is dynamic, constantly vibrating. As a curvature of space and a non-hierarchical framing of time, the fold is just light, colour, depth, surface, shape. The folds and pleats of the Japanese designers and Viktor & Rolf’s bows and ribbons are in the words of Deleuze ‘at once continuous, mobile, and fluttering’ (TF, 124). The deterritorializing line of those folds indicates an expansive movement, a line of flight, which opens the subject up to a spiralling process of creative becoming. The fold of fashion then is a dynamic process of becoming multiple, of searching for a new place of the human being in the world. Fashioning the fold can help to envisage a process of becoming, where the subject never tires of ‘folding, unfolding, refolding’—in the very last words of Deleuze’s book on The Fold (TF, 137).

References


Sensibility is Ground Zero: 
On Inclusive Disjunction and 
Politics of Defatalization

Andrej Radman

Abstract
This chapter endeavours to rebut a longstanding philosophical and psychoanalytic tradition of inscribing the subject as primarily grounded in thought or language. As such, the fetishist self-identical subject is deluded into being the epicentre of various experiences and understandings, separate from the constellation of intensities that it undergoes. Yet, as the feminist philosopher Claire Colebrook explains: ‘Once we try to think the origin of all that is, the very ground of being, then we arrive properly not at the origin of sensibility, but sensibility as origin.’ Sensibility is ‘ground zero’. A special agility of mind is required once we find ourselves on the meta-stable ground where things are not logically necessary but merely contingently obligatory. The claim is not that anything goes, for that would constitute a regression to Postmodernism. Architecture as a discipline does not represent culture but is a mechanism of culture. It is flush with matter. The architect’s ethos rests on the premise that what is there could have been otherwise and that there is no simple correlation between urban and social form. The ecological attitude entails no preference for either the tendency of the components to couple together or their intrinsic independent behaviour. Rather, the processes of territorialization and deterritorialization, striation and smoothing, are to be taken as reciprocally constitutive.
Transcendental Empiricism

Even materialism has to come to terms with the real-yet-incorporeal. Gilles Deleuze’s answer is ‘transcendental empiricism’, which on the face of it might appear to be an oxymoron. However, there is nothing inconsistent about thinking immanence this way, for it is transcendental in its refusal of any ‘image of thought’, and it is empirical in its openness to affective encounters.¹ The key is not to model the transcendental after the empirical as Kant did.² Instead of elevating the empirical to the transcendental, Deleuze describes the real structure of the latter without reference to the former. The emerging and the emerged pertain to two modes of one reality (monism). Everything starts from the sensible but is subsequently extended into the intelligible. Put otherwise, the intelligible is the occlusion of the sensible and not the other way around. Moreover, sensations mobilize the differential forces that make thinking possible. This is what Deleuze means by ‘pedagogy of the senses’.

The convergence of matter and thought is diagrammed in The Fold: Leibniz and The Baroque (TF, 1988) as two floors of a baroque house connected by ‘draperies’. The vertical upper floor is described as a ‘closed private room decorated with “a drapery diversified by folds”.’ The lower horizontal floor contains ‘Common rooms, with “several small openings:” the five senses.’ (TF, 5) It is indicative that there is no structural homology between the two floors. The form of expression and the form of content do not share a form. There is no meta-form. What connects the two is a process of progressive different/ciation. The architecture theorist Hélène Frichot offers the following interpretation of the allegory:

We can observe in the upstairs apartment of Deleuze’s Baroque house, the folds of soul, and below, on the ground floor, the pleats of matter. Upstairs the voluminous space of the house is entirely dark, it has no windows to the outside […]. Downstairs there are windows, a door, and a […] set of steps […]. This is the realm of the five senses. […] The event, restless inhabitant of this house, is

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¹ ‘[T]he image of thought concerns the problem of presupposition in philosophy - that is, the presupposition of an image that serves as a fundamental ground for what is called thinking to appear.’ See: Gregg Lambert, 2012. In Search of a New Image of Thought: Gilles Deleuze and Philosophical Expressionism. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 1.
that which neither the material nor the immaterial, neither ground nor upper apartment, can entirely account for.\(^3\)

As it turns out, Deleuze’s philosophical adversary is not Plato, but the great systemiser Aristotle who ‘subsumes particulars under’ the appropriate ‘generality’ on the basis of resemblance or representation.\(^4\) By contrast, Deleuze finds less resemblance between a race-horse and a work-horse than between a race-horse and a race-car (S, 124). Universality never explains anything, it begs an explanation. In the ‘flat ontology’, genera are as contingent as the particular species. There is no logical relationship between the ‘individual singular’ and the ‘universal singular’ that engenders it. The Aristotelian syllogism, whose prestige has not been dented in the slightest over the past two millennia, is still indispensable for discrete (binary) logic. So is Euclidian mathematics for metric (striated) space, as well as Newtonian physics for isotropic (absolute) space. But when it comes to the logic of continuity (smoothness) it is Leibniz who provides the much needed conceptual tools. More recently, Deleuze recognized the creative potential of science in general, and differential calculus in particular, to deal with becoming. This three-hundred-year-old mathematical convention allows for the treatment of relations independently of their terms. Differential relations as linked rates of change shift the emphasis from signification to significance, or to the distribution of singularities structuring the manifold.

As the philosopher of technology Bernard Stiegler repeatedly advocates, we ought to stop privileging episteme over tekhne. The same plea applies to the discipline of architecture, which continues to privilege ‘archi’ over ‘tecture’. It is most unfortunate that the self-appointed guardians of disciplinary boundaries are working hard to keep the two realms separate. It is equally damaging to privilege linguistic theories on account of their academic prestige given the limitations of the representational approach. Humanities are simply bankrupt in dealing with the real, that is, with dynamic far-from-equilibrium systems.\(^5\) They cannot but commit the fallacy

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\(^4\) Deleuze’s hostility towards the greatest of systemisers, Hegel, is well known.

\(^5\) Classical thermodynamics is fixated on equilibrium with a teleological single optimum. By contrast, metastability of the far-from-equilibrium systems presupposes a pseudo-equilibrium (over time). For a superb textbook on dynamic systems theories
of conflating the process with the product, a practice known as ‘tracing.’ according to the speculative realist ray brassier, deleuze’s alternative is to conceive of being itself as neither/nor. this is how he spells out the deleuzian concept of inclusive disjunction of actual equivocity and virtual univocity:

the inclusive disjunction is characterized by a unilateral asymmetry: the actual distinguishes itself from the virtual without the virtual distinguishing itself from the actual in return. [...] being must always be said both as virtual and actual; as deterritorialization and as reterritorialization; as smooth space and as striated space; as anorganic life and as strata; as nomadic distribution and as sedentary hierarchy.”

instead of relying on the ‘agency of mapping’, thinking needs to go in the opposite direction (counter-effectuation), towards the virtual and ‘mapping of agency’ (line of flight). despite the temporary ‘decision’ (effectuation), inclusive disjunction never excludes a potential. the crucial question is: ‘how can we unhook ourselves from the points of subjectification that secure us, nail us down to the dominant reality?’ (TP, 160) pace Fukuyama-inspired libertarian fantasies, ‘the end of history’ is announced prematurely. what is required as an antidote is the politics of defatalization. we have to remain wary of any determinism. famously, nietzsche was critical of darwin’s all-too-adaptive paradigm. after all, it is thanks to the ‘elbow-room’ between the level of genes and the level of organism (epistrata) on the one hand, and the ‘elbow-room’ between the organism and the cosmos (parastrata) on the other,


6 In stark contrast to the creative practice of cartography or mapping (immanent evaluation).


that the new is produced (TP, 322). That is why we will never conclusively know what a body can do and why we are ‘destined’ to perpetual experimenting. And this is to be done neither by submission nor by willing, but by ‘meeting the Universe halfway.’ In the words of the non-standard architect François Roche, ‘The stuttering between Resilience (recognizing vitalism as a force of life) and Resistance (‘creating is resisting’) seems, in a schizophrenic logic, a plausible hypothesis […].’

Vital Asymmetry

Back to sensibility as the ‘ground zero’. The father of pragmatism Charles Sanders Peirce proposes the following thought experiment. Imagine a pitch-black cave with no gravity where one relies exclusively upon one’s own proprioception (joint sense), smell (olfactory) and temperature sensing (skin), the three orders of differentiation. Note that these senses only operate locally through an interval of change with no reference to extrinsic space. In other words, each of them is initially self-referenced. As one navigates the Peircean cave, one starts to distinguish between zones in the gradient field and their thresholds (there are no clear-cut boundaries). What this means is that the movement starts to make the connection. Eventually one is able to identify invariants as the three heterogeneous series – proprioceptive,
olfactory and thermal – start to relate. We gradually witness the ‘concrescence’ of extensive and therefore surveyable space which is born out of topological intensive space of sensation. ‘Smooth’ space has turned into ‘striated’. A surveyable space has emerged as a composition from an overlap of vague qualitative voluminousness, singular points, and pure unextended interval. In the words of Peirce:

The evolution of forms begins, or at any rate, has for an early stage of it, a vague potentiality; and that either is or is followed by a continuum of forms having a multitude of dimensions too great for the individual dimensions to be distinct. It must be by a contraction of the vagueness of that potentiality of everything in general but of nothing in particular that the world of forms comes about. (1992, p.258)

The speculative pragmatist Brian Massumi stresses that the striated Euclidian geometry in no way contradicts the smooth topological one. They are enfolded, as are a territory and an earth. The nesting of geometries according to their level of ‘generality’ has been revealed by the mathematician Felix Klein after whom the famous two-dimensional manifold is named. We shall deal with the order of ‘resilience’ to transformation qua his ‘Erlangen Programme’ in more detail below. The mutual dependence or reciprocal determination of the smooth and the striated is often overlooked by eager proponents of the Topological Turn in architecture who loathe the non-non-Euclidian geometries.

World is self-generating from potential. According to Massumi, the primitives of the system are ‘lived abstractions’ that have a nature of the qualitative continuum, and not bits of information (informationist fallacy). What is truly remarkable is that the order of movement and space is reversed. Points in space do not pre-exist their connection. The logic of sensation leads to the logic of relation. Movement does not happen in space. Rather, space is a derivative of movement: ‘[I]t is the movement of mapping that makes its own territory and territory is made entirely out of sensation; out of experience, out of qualities and differential experience: literal world of sensation.’

15 Klein Bottle is a 3D version of the Möbius strip.
PLATO       PIERCE

IMMOBILISATION (chained down)      Starts from pure MOVEMENT
Forced DISTANCING                  PROXIMITY
World MEDIATED (thinkable)         ENCOUNT (events)
Pre-existing DISCRETE forms        Vague qualitative CONTINUUM
Space geom. PRESTRUCTURED          Form, position, structure EMERGE
COGNITIVE                         PARTICIPATIVE
MORALISTIC                        INVENTIVE
ENSLAVERY                          FREEDOM (chance, spontaneity)
TRANSCENDENT                       IMMANENT
DOUBT                               NO DOUBT

Table i Two Cave Parables (B. Massumi, 2000)

The logic of coexistence (relation) is radically different from the logic of separation (discreteness). Massumi emphasises the stark contrast between Peirce’s cave and the most famous cave parable, that of Plato. [Table i] Curiously enough, in Plato’s version the beholders are immobilized by chains and therefore compelled to rely on their vision alone, wondering whether (mediated) appearances might be but illusions. In the Peircean version there is no room for doubt since everything results from one’s unmediated interaction (contemplative vs. participative space). In the short essay ‘Factory’, the media philosopher Vilém Flusser makes a similar assertion: ‘[…] homo faber becomes sapiens sapiens because he has realised that manufacturing means the same thing as learning – i.e. acquiring, producing and passing on information.’\(^\text{17}\) No wonder that the sine qua non of most optical illusions is the stillness of the beholder. By contrast, seeing is an activity.\(^\text{18}\) No sensation is truly passive.

Furthermore, positing discreteness as a derivative of the continuum is even more fundamental in the eternal issue of which takes ontological primacy: permanence or change (being or becoming), usually associated with the two opposed Presocratics, namely, Parmenides and Heraclitus. We ought to move beyond the simple opposition between the two, which seems to imply a kind of symmetry between the striated and the smooth (actual and


virtual). The issue is often wrongly presented as a matter of ‘perspective’,
disregarding a crucial difference between extracting permanence from change
and, conversely, inducing movement to stasis. The cofounder of Objectile,
architect Bernard Cache, explains the conundrum by reference to the ancient
Greek practice of optical correction whereby the artist/architect often
deliberately ‘distorted’ the artefact in order that it may appear ‘correct’.
Although Plato recognized the validity of such corrections, he objected to the
result. In his eyes, to compensate for the foreshortening of the statue that is
placed atop a column one would need to alter the proportions of the ‘original’
and produce an (inferior) simulacrum. According to Cache, this is because,
in comparison with the mathematics of his time, Plato lacked the means to
cogitate Ideas that, due to projective deformation, remain invariant:

In order to see something other than corruption in [optically corrected artefact], it
would have been necessary for Plato to have projective invariants available to
him, and in particular the relationship of relationships, that second-degree logos
Spanish mathematicians rightly call razón doble, which expresses the number of
that which is conserved in projective deformations.

Cache offers a short genealogy of invariants: isometric, homothetic,
projective and topological. Simply put, the respective invariants map
various degrees of permanence despite the change. The question is what kind
of relationship gets preserved or remains unaffected by the transformation.
The most primitive invariant is the relationship of identity, an isometric
relationship of sameness. It is followed by the second variable invariant that
articulates Greek rationality, the homothetic relationship. Two figures are
homothetic if they are related by an expansion or geometric contraction. Prior

19 Erwin Panofsky, 1970. Meaning in the Visual Arts. Harmondsworth: Penguin, p. 100. ‘[I]n contrast to [the Egyptian sculptor], the Greek artist could not immediately apply the canon to his block, but must, from case to case, consult with the ‘visual percept’ that takes into account the organic flexibility of the body to be represented, the diversity of foreshortenings that present themselves to the artist’s eye, and possibly, even the particular circumstances under which the finished work may be seen.’


to the invention of the numerical bi-ratio, Desargues and consequently Pascal created the first geometrical *projective* invariants, namely, alignment and intersection. Finally in 1736, Euler produces the first *topological* invariants that are preserved through surface deformations of any kind insofar as their continuity is maintained. The most frequently used example is the topological sameness between the doughnut and the mug, both with a single hole irrespective of its position or size. Euler’s famous formula, which establishes the invariability of the sum of vertices (v) and faces (f), reduced by the number of edges (e) for any polyhedron, constitutes the first topological invariant.  

This opened up an area of investigation which is far from exhausted and without which there would certainly be no concept of the Body without Organs (BwO) as we know it (LS; MP). 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSFORMATION GROUP</th>
<th>INVARAINCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(translation, reflection, rotation)</td>
<td>(preserving)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOPOLOGICAL</td>
<td>SEQUENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECTIVE</td>
<td>STRAIGHT LINE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFFINE</td>
<td>PARALLELITY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUCLIDIAN (similarity)</td>
<td>ANGLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EUCLIDIAN (movement)</td>
<td>SIZE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table ii **Klein’s Erlangen Programme:**
Different geometries as subgroups, classified by invariants under transformations, with topological geometry included.

In 1872 Felix Klein grasped this movement of geometric reason which progresses by inventing increasingly sophisticated invariants as a means of manipulating ever greater variations.  

Thanks to him we can now define the whole of geometry as the study of invariants of a particular transformation

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22 The formula is: $v-e+f=2$; e.g. Cube: $8-12+6=2$.

23 Gilles Deleuze introduced the notion of the ‘Body without Organs’ (BwO) in *The Logic of Sense* (LS); but it was not until his collaborative work with Félix Guattari - particularly *Anti-Oedipus* (AO) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (TP) - that the BwO comes to prominence.

24 Klein published an influential research program and a manifesto under the title of *Vergleichende Betrachtungen über neuere geometrische Forschungen.*
As we have seen, an invariant is exactly what it sounds like, a magnitude that does not change under the action of the transformation group, or a set that gets mapped onto itself by the same group.\(^{26}\) Klein went on to classify all geometries known to him and realized that they formed a ‘hierarchy’ in which, as we progress from Euclidean geometry in the direction of topology, fewer and fewer properties remain invariant and groups include more and more transformations. Conversely, as we regress, the geometric spaces become increasingly less bland or more detailed or striated. [Table ii] The Erlangen Programme, named after the homonymous city in Germany, allowed us to see that all geometry could be treated in the same way, and that geometries, which at first glance looked disparate, were in fact expressions of the same underlying principles. Without succumbing to either unities and totalities, or nominalism, the above sequence of symmetry-breaking fits the Deleuzian One=All formula of multiplicities. The nesting of geometries is thus quintessential for the project of transcendental empiricism as a process ontology, which is at cross-purposes both with the transcendental idealism and naïve empiricism (positivism). ‘The essential thing, from the point of view of empiricism, is the noun multiplicity, which designates a set of lines or dimensions which are irreducible to one another’, as Deleuze explains. ‘Every “thing” is made up in this way.’ (D, xii)\(^{27}\) The new materialist philosopher Manuel DeLanda offers the following genealogy of what is perhaps the most important Deluzian concept:

Although the creators of these classifications saw in them a purely logical construction [...] Deleuze views them as morphogenetic, as if metric spaces were literally born from non-metric ones through a loss of symmetry [...] While in cardinal series judgments of exact numerical identity of two series can be made, in ordinal series only rigorous judgments of greater or lesser differences can be made. Deleuze, whose ambition was always to create the first philosophical system based exclusively on positive differences, made a great deal out of this link. (The concept of ‘positive difference’ must be contrasted with the idea of


\(^{26}\) For some concrete examples of invariants, we can list the structural ones such as gravity and horizon; or transformational invariants such as seasons, diurnal cycle, etc.

\(^{27}\) It says: ‘Multiplicities are made up of becoming without history, of individuation without subject. It is a being-multiple, instead of a being-one, a being-whole or being as subject.’
difference as mere lack of similarity, an idea which introduces difference in a negative way, as an absence or deficit of resemblance.)  

Topologizing

Where does all this leave us in terms of architecture? To adopt a topological approach to architecture and urbanism, we suggest, is to think in terms of capacities (to affect and be affected), rather than mere (intrinsic) properties. As the anthropologist and cyberneticist Gregory Bateson maintained, capacity is always relational: ‘It makes no sense whatsoever to try to understand the anatomy of half a chicken.’ Sadly, architectural thinking has always had a preference for proportional invariants. But a preference for simplicity, as Cache concludes, has less to do with the elimination of redundant features (legitimate use of simplicity arguments known as the Occam’s razor) and more with familiarity.

The architecture theorist Jeffrey Kipnis concurs. As has been shown, if we trace the evolution of geometry from the descriptive via analytic and projective to topology, we get a different notion of mathematical ‘sameness.’ Sameness is Kipnis’ synonym for invariance. At the opposite end of the spectrum from the familiar sameness of Euclidian geometry there lies the topological sameness in dynamic terms. Kipnis cannot resist an all-too-homological analogy: ‘Descriptive geometry, like [the PoMo architect] Krier, sought to establish categories and to construct membership and equivalence tests in order to control difference.’ While projective geometry gives rise to a dynamic rather than categorical theory of the same, with topology we can finally arrive at the following conclusion, as Kipnis indeed does, ‘Look at the faces and figures around you: all variations, no original theme.’ The architects who allegedly operate under this regime of different sameness are the usual suspects: Greg Lynn, Karl Chu, FOA, Asymptote, and so on. What we get from Kipnis’ analysis is a graphic depiction of what the champion of

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critical architecture Michael K. Hays refers to as ‘smoothing of architecture’.\textsuperscript{31} It brings to mind the canonical hand-drawn sketch by the British maverick architect Cedric Price captioned \textit{The City as an Egg}, featuring boiled, fried and scrambled eggs depicting cities of Antiquity, nineteenth century and modern times, respectively.\textsuperscript{32} Kipnis is careful to draw the line between the ‘good’ smooth, and the ‘bad’ semiotic-process, architects. The champion of the latter is Peter Eisenman who ‘must posit an initial primitive [which is] then transformed in steps so that the result stands like an indexical record of the transformation, that is, as a text; in other words, the train wreck is always read from the train’ (Kipnis, 2003, p.59). Conversely, the ‘non-standard architects’ avoid both formal typologies as well as train wrecks to ‘launch variation without origin.’ Kipnis concludes how, despite a common misunderstanding, this approach draws deeper impetus from the dynamic premises of mathematical topology than from the aesthetics of shapes. But therein lies the rub. By disengaging the aesthetic from the mathematical, Kipnis effectively sides with those who relegate it to an autonomous ‘realm’ whose criteria of value are supposedly non-rational, amoral, and apolitical matters of beauty and style.\textsuperscript{33} What we want to suggest instead is that \textit{topologizing needs to be extended to the aesthetic}. The space of experience or \textit{spatium}, which is antecedent to the experience of space, \textit{is} topological.

The continuous variation is first and foremost an effect of movement. And it is not buildings that move; rather a variation operates in the relation that precedes both the object and the subject. On this point Deleuze cites Spinoza: ‘variation of my force of existing, or […] \textit{vis existendi}, […] or \textit{potentia agendi}, the power of acting, and these variations are perpetual.’\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} It also brings to mind Kevin Lynch’s three ‘normative’ models: the City of Faith, the City as a Machine, and the Organic City from his \textit{Good City Form}. See: Kevin Lynch, 1984. \textit{Good City Form}. Cambridge, MA: MIT. See also: Antony Vidler, 2006. ‘The b-b-b-Body: Block, Blob, Blur.’ In: \textit{The Body in Architecture}. Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, pp. 131-137.
\textsuperscript{33} Jane Bennett, 1996. ‘How is it, then, that we still remain barbarians?: Foucault, Schiller, and the Aestheticization of Ethics.’ In: \textit{Political Theory}. Vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 653-672 (p. 658).
\textsuperscript{34} Gilles Deleuze, January 4, 1978. \textit{Cours Vincennes: ‘Deleuze/Spinoza’}. 
For Spinoza there is a continuous variation, as Deleuze explains, and this is what it means to exist. In this light, the Greek *entasis* for example – the application of a convex curve to a surface for aesthetic purposes – is not an optical but rather *affective* ‘correction’. The same could be said of Michelangelo’s Campidoglio whose trapezoidal shape ‘draws the city closer’ to the square, as it were. This would be inconceivable to their Egyptian and medieval predecessors, albeit for different reasons. In the words of Erwin Panofsky:

The Egyptian theory of proportions, identifying the ‘technical’ with the ‘objective’ dimensions, had been able to combine the characteristics of anthropometry with those of a system of construction; the Greek theory of proportions, abolishing this identity, had been forced to renounce the ambition to determine the ‘technical’ dimensions; the medieval system renounced the ambition to determine the ‘objective’ ones. (1970, p.102)

Panofsky thus characterizes the Egyptian method as *constructional*, the classical as *anthropometric* and the medieval as *schematic*. We would like to suggest that the leeway between the ‘technical’ and ‘objective’ goes beyond mere anthropometrics and points to a *dynamic* relationship. The leeway between the optical (phenomenal) and affective (virtual) seems also to have lost its currency today, with some notable exceptions. The widely accepted

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35 A slight convexity or swelling, as in the shaft of a column, intended to compensate for the illusion of concavity resulting from straight sides. Latin, from Greek, *tension*, from *enteinein*, to stretch tight.

36 The existing design of Piazza del Campidoglio and the surrounding palazzi was created by Michelangelo Buonarroti in 1536 - 1546.

37 Colin St. John Wilson, 1995. ‘Classical Theory and the Aesthetic Fallacy.’ In: *The Other Tradition of Modern Architecture*. London: Academy Editions, p. 39. ‘The most crucial [issue] is the lamentable separation of the roles of ‘art’ and ‘function’ as if they were in opposition to each other, whereas the very essence of Classical thought insisted on their fusion.’

38 Manuel DeLanda, 1992. ‘Nonorganic Life.’ In: Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (eds.), *Zone 6: Incorporealities*. New York, Urzone, p. 154. ‘[I]f a simple liquid solution can harden into crystal or glass, ice or snowflake depending upon the multiplicities of nonlinearities shaping the solidification process, human societies – which have a larger range of attractor types – have far more leeway in how they develop stable configurations [...] there is much to be learned from analyzing in detail
change of terminology from the Greek mereological ‘proportion’ to the modern autonomous ‘fraction’ is telling. Nonetheless, the dynamic of the assemblage conceived as *multiplicity* cannot exclude the relation of sensory appreciation (for that would be akin to the anatomy of half a chicken).  

How could it? If it did, we would operate under a veiled modernist (subject/object) framework, despite (or because of) all the rhetoric. The ‘plane of composition’ is not to be conflated with the ‘plane of reference’, or – *cum grano salis* – production (object) is not to be conflated with its reception (effect). It is even conceivable that the ‘absolute’ topologizing would shed a different light on what appears to be the most rigid of geometries (phenomenologically).

Let us propose an alternative ‘smoothing cascade’ which depends on the degree to which the construction as a Part contributes to the Whole: (1) construction is ignored as irrelevant, (2) construction is not emphasized, (3) building is the construction, (4) construction is the building, (5) construction is central and to be expressed as a style.  

We shall tentatively presume that the gradual increase in the degree of performative contribution to the Whole is inevitably achieved at the expense of some other criteria. To put it naïvely, the less the criteria stem from the quasi-objective consideration (construction) the more they become quasi-subjective (aesthetic), with a caveat that such clear-cut oppositions are purely methodological and not ontological.

We begin with irrelevant construction (1). They are buildings designed as graphic or sculptural compositions, which often reveal little of the actual construction. In such architecture the construction itself need not emphasize the expression and the designer is more concerned with the image than with tectonics. The prime aesthetic figure of this approach is (the latter-day) Frank Gehry. In *What is Philosophy*, Deleuze and Guattari define an aesthetic figure as sensory becoming or otherness caught in a matter of expression. Architecture, in this sense, does not actualise the virtual event but incorporates it: ‘it gives it a body, a life, a universe’ (WP, 63-177).

39 ‘It is not at all a matter of bringing things together under one and the same concept, but rather of relating each concept to the variables that determine its mutations.’ See: (N, 31).

40 The ‘construction spectrum’ based on the lecture by P.M.C. Scheers at TU Delft, 2002. ‘Structure, Supporting Structure and Dimensioning.’
The second embodiment is the one where the construction is not emphasized (2). The construction, which is undeniably the supporting structure of any building, may not always be visible. However, thanks to the spatial arrangement it is possible to sense the presence of the construction without being directly confronted by it. The construction can also be less pronounced when it is part of architecture rather than proclaiming itself as a construction. An anonymous family house will suffice as an example of a construction that is not emphasised, a default position of sorts.

When the building is small in scale and built of ‘natural’ materials, the actual construction need not draw attention to itself. In this case other material qualities dominate: the method of assembly, size and dimension, function of space, illumination, details, colours, etc. This applies to the building that is the construction (3). An aesthetic figure of this ‘category’ is (early) Zaha Hadid.

The Industrial Revolution helped to discover and develop new materials. Some designers choose to emphasize new frequently large-scale materials in such a way that the construction is not only dominant but is also the essential aspect of the building. Not only does the construction make the building possible, it is the building itself (4). Functionalism in general, and High-Tech in particular, are two twentieth-century styles that emphasize the construction in this way. The aesthetic figures being the two British Sirs: Richard Rogers and Norman Foster.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century there emerged a style that drew inspiration from nature and emphasized the inseparability of material from structure. Architects who favour this style examine natural dynamic systems, material behaviour and their application in architecture and engineering. The style came to be known as Biomimetic Architecture (5). Its aesthetic figure is Greg Lynn. Its most prominent predecessor, however, remains the Catalan Antoni Gaudí. As for the latest, mainly digitally-

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‘Animation is a term that differs from […] motion. While motion implies movement and action, animation implies the evolution of a form and its shaping forces; it suggests animalism, growth, actuation, vitality and virtuality [where] the term virtual here refers to an abstract scheme that has the possibility of becoming actualized, often in a variety of possible configurations.’

42 Gaudí was calculating the exact curves of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona by hanging small sandbags from chains. In his studies, the floor plan of the church was attached to the ceiling of his studio. By suspending chains from that floor plan and
driven, addition to the construction spectrum, we subscribe to Peter Sloterdijk’s view on its (as yet) unfulfilled promise:

Of course biomorphism in architecture is a remarkable thing. But it’s mainly an expression of the fact that modern mathematics has caught up with organic forms. So we should avoid drawing false conclusions from this phenomenon. [...] From the perspective of a coming politics of nature, architectural biomorphism should be interpreted as a symbol of the fact that technique has attained the necessary savoir-faire to declare its responsibility over organic forms.43

It bears noting that, according to the prominent advocate of biomorphism Neil Leach, we are entering a new phase as the application of parametric (associative) tools is shifting up the scale to the level of the urban.44 In any case, the spacing of this construction spectrum (1-5) is meant to challenge Hays’ excessively phenomenological ‘smoothing of architecture’, referred to above as the fallacy of isomorphism, given that the polar opposites of (1) and (5) happen to bear the greatest (formal) resemblance. In other words, the logic behind such a classification is still one of typologization rather than topologization. It suffers from what Michel Foucault identified as phenomenalization.45 Cuvier’s legacy seems to have evaporated.

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CONSTRUCTING

Construction Irrelevant (1)

Construction Not Emphasised (2)

Building = Construction (3)

Construction = Building (4)

Construction = Style (5)

STRUCTURING

(a) Form Active

(b) Vector Active

(c) Section Active

(d) Surface Active

Table iii  Construction Spectrum and Structure State Space

On the level of structure, it is possible to lay a ‘fitness landscape’ with four ‘basins of attraction’ or four typical mechanisms. They can be referred to as species which deal with acting forces in terms of their redirection: (a) form active structure systems, (b) vector active structure systems, (c) section active structure systems and (d) surface active structure systems. Form active structures, such as the dome, are systems in single stress condition bearing compressive (or tensile) forces. Vector active structures mark systems in coactive stress condition: compressive and tensile forces. The most representative example of this species is the truss. Section active systems tame sectional forces (beams) through bending stress condition. Finally, surface active structures are systems in surface stress condition. The representative of the species is the tent with its membrane forces.

It is perfectly conceivable that each of the structures (a)-(d) can be incarnated in any of the constructions (1)-(5). [Table iii] There are simply no grounds for judging any of the above as superior, if not aesthetically or in terms of their affective power. Once again we turn to the basic Spinozian definition of affect, which is an ‘ability to affect or be affected’. In the words of Massumi:

Right off the bat, this cuts transversally across a persistent division, probably the most persistent division. Because the ability to affect and the ability to be affected are two facets of the same event. One face is turned towards what you might be tempted to isolate as an object, the other towards what you might isolate as a subject. Here, they are two sides of the same coin. […] No need to detour through

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well-rehearsed questions of philosophical foundations in order to cobble together a unity. You start in the middle, as Deleuze always taught, with the dynamic unity of an event.\textsuperscript{47}

This tectonic digression is meant to illustrate the potency of the concept of inclusive disjunction. Our plea for topologizing as genuine smoothing has no other purpose but to adequately conceptualize the event. \textit{It is not about what happened, but about what is going on in what happens.} Foucault lists three major attempts at conceptualization of the untimely in the recent past: neopositivism, phenomenology and philosophy of history (TR, 241).\textsuperscript{48} Needless to say, they all failed miserably:

Neopositivism failed to grasp the distinctive level of the event; because of its logical error, the confusion of an event with a state of things […] Phenomenology, on the other hand, reoriented the event with respect to meaning […] from this evolves a logic of signification, a grammar of the first person, and a metaphysics of consciousness. As for the philosophy of history, it encloses the event in a cyclical pattern of time. Its error is grammatical; it treats the present as framed by the past and future. […] Thus, three philosophies that fail to grasp the event.

Foucault continues by laying down the respective fallacies:

The first, on the pretext that nothing can be said about those things which lie ‘outside’ the world, rejects the pure surface of the event and attempts to enclose it forcibly […] The second, on the pretext that signification only exists for consciousness, places the event outside and beforehand, or inside and after […] The third, on the pretext that events can only exist in time\textsuperscript{49} (1970).

It needs to be noted that Deleuze and Guattari do not recognize abstraction in the ‘cascading’ of invariants in the sense of the principle of parsimony or finding the common denominator. In this they resist the ‘geometric’


\textsuperscript{48} ‘The Thinking has an essential relation to history, but it is no more historical than it is eternal. It is closer to what Nietzsche calls the Untimely: to think the past against the present – which would be nothing more than a common place, pure nostalgia, some kind of return, if he did not immediately add: ‘in favor, I hope, of a time to come’.’ [emphases in the original].

abstraction of the art historian Wilhelm Worringer, only to embrace ‘A line of variable direction that describes no contour and delimits no form’ (TP, 499). The nesting – with different orders of abstraction (relationship of relationship) – offers the basis for the (post-human) leap of imagination. It is a way to perceive the relation exterior to its terms, or the realm of the virtual. Unlike a transcendent heaven inhabited by pure beings without becoming (unchanging essences or laws with permanent identities), the virtual could be said to be populated exclusively by pure becomings without being. This, of course, is an asymptotic (unattainable) condition. In other words, once we arrive at this ultimate level of pure relationality through counter-actualization, we are not just rid of the contingent actuality (trains and train wrecks), but can begin to ponder the alternative processes of individuation, in terms of pre-actualization. Counter-actualization, in fact, always complements pre-actualization, as DeLanda explains. While the former extracts multiplicities from actually occurring events, the latter takes these and allows them to progressively unfold and differentiate (again, without fully actualizing them). ‘The operation of pre-actualization would give multiplicities not only a certain autonomy from the intensive processes acting on their real causes, it would also endow these impassive and sterile effects with whatever morphogenetic power they enjoy.’

Most importantly, in view of our declared anti-essentialist, anti-foundationist and defatalizing position, granting consistency to virtual multiplicities (as well-posed problems) endows them in turn with a degree of autonomy from their particular solutions. In stark contrast to positivist sciences, the focus is on the singularities (invariants of invariants) rather than the forces themselves. But to abandon the conventional axiomatic approach in favour of the problematic, one needs to dare to leave the familiar behind. After all, laws are not necessary. They are facts, and facts are contingent because they can change without an apparent reason. Fortunately, there are ways of extracting information from a complex topological shape in order to display it in a comprehensible way, courtesy of the French mathematician Henri Poincaré. DeLanda explains how the ‘Poincaré section’ works,

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51 Deleuze credits Hume (ES) with discovering the exteriority of relations.
52 The antidote to the pure becoming is in the actual body.
[A]n actual system may be ‘sampled’ or ‘sliced through’ to obtain its full quasi-causal component, the entire set of attractors defining each flow pattern and the bifurcations which mediate between patterns. In other words, a Deleuzian section would not consist in a mere reduction of the original dimensionality, but in an elimination of every detail of the actual event except its topological invariants: the distribution of its singularities, as well as the full dimensionality of its state space. (DeLanda 2002, p.131, cf. TP, 251)

Consider the rabbit-fox (prey-predator) mutual dependence. It cannot be grasped by isolating too narrow a sample (in terms of the temporal/spatial scale), for that would be merely accidental and, as such, over-determining. ‘Zooming-out’ to the all-encompassing level would result in the opposite: under-determination, which would miss the specificity of the assemblage. By contrast, the Poincaré section reveals the long-term tendency of the coupling or a way of determining a problem without reference to potential solutions. The ‘truth’ is neither a matter of legality as in Kant, nor intersubjectivity as in Husserl, nor a matter of interpretation as with hermeneutics. In contrast to the immanent patterns of becoming, all of the above is hylomorphic as it imports the guiding principle from the outside. The alternative is to become isomorphic, with the quasi-causal operator, which ensures the irreducibility of problems to their solutions. It is only in this way that one can identify specific tendencies and capacities, or what Deleuze calls singularities and affects. The effort to open up multiple paths of differentiation – ‘lines of flight’ – prevents one from succumbing to the covertly teleological argument of the liberal agenda where all that is required is to fine-tune the status quo.54

Molecular Revolution

The question of metaphysics has always been that of the ground. According to the architecture theorist Mark Wigley, its history is that of a succession of different names for the ground – logos, ratio, arche, etc. Each of them ‘designates ‘being’, understood as ‘supporting presence’ for whatever stands

54 The prominent advocate of such an approach is Fukuyama, who argues that the progression of human history as a struggle between ideologies is largely at an end, with the world settling on liberal democracy after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. See: Francis Fukuyama, The End of History and the Last Man (New York: Free, 1992).
like an edifice.’ Consequently, before the enquiry even begins, the subject is always already determined as enduring above and beyond its transitory predicates. As such, it is prevented from affirming the movement of affection. As we have tried to argue, the cure is to bracket ‘natural perception’ in which every single body, quality or action appears as already constituted. In the words of Deleuze: ‘To make the body a power which is not reducible to the organism, to make thought a power which is not reducible to consciousness’ (D, 62). To embrace such a constructivist stance is to embark on the project of defatalization. The proposal is not to be taken lightly in the era of privatizing profits and socializing losses.

Another name for this intensive thinking, which keeps both fatalism and instrumental rationality at bay, is ecology. It rejects the law of parsimony (Occam’s razor) in favour of the logic of included middle. As we have seen, this logic of continuity must not be collapsed with the logic of discreteness. This remains a latent danger and a symptom of the hylomorphic attitude defined as the imposition of form upon supposedly inert matter. The warning issued almost a century ago by the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky is as timely as ever: ‘There is […] the danger that mathematical expression will lag behind emotional experience and limit it. Formulas are like glue, or like a ‘fly paper’ to which the careless fall prey.’ Before we list the virtues of non-linear thinking as the watershed of the politics of defatalization, let us briefly enumerate the five cardinal fallacies of linear thinking:

57 Slavoj Žižek, 2012. ‘Remarks on Occupy Wall Street.’ In *Log.* No. 25, pp. 118-120 (pp. 118). ‘Look at the movies that we see all the time. It’s easy to imagine the end of the world. An asteroid destroying all life and so on. But you cannot imagine the end of capitalism.’ (From the transcript of a talk delivered to Occupy Street protestors in New York’s Liberty Plaza on October 9, 2011.)
1. CLOSURE: Once established, systems are not open to outside influences or sources of energy or information.

2. DETERMINISM: The laws of linear systems function universally and cannot be broken. Effects are proportionate to, and can be accurately predicted from, their causes.

3. REVERSIBILITY: The laws governing linear systems apply in both temporal directions, so that time appears to be inconsequential to them.

4. EQUILIBRIUM: Forces and counterforces, as well as actions and reactions, tend to balance each other out.

5. REDUCTIONISM: The whole is the sum of its parts. Since the parts are not changed by their place in the whole, the whole can be reduced to the parts that comprise it.

To supersede the engrained culture of law with its imperative to control and predict is to make way for creative thinking which does not take contingency as the mere opposite of necessity. In the words of the godfather of Speculative Realism Robin Mackay, ‘[t]he thought of contingency stands as a kind of ultimate consummation of the puncturing of human conceit [...]. It is the bitterest pill to swallow, a distillate of everything indigestible that thinking has served up to us.’

The task of transcendental empiricism is to carry out the ambitious project of desubstantialization of the subject for the process (subjectification). It was the radical empiricist William James who already taught us that crying causes sadness and not the other way around. Similarly, flight is not the result of fright. We are afraid precisely because we

recent economic downturn surprising can only be the consequence of precisely this sort of linear thinking.

Robin Mackay, 2011. ‘Introduction: Three Figures of Contingency.’ In: The Medium of Contingency. Falmouth, Urbanomic, p. 3. ‘Freud remarked that modern man had undergone three deep ‘narcissistic wounds’. Copernicus had demonstrated that the Earth is not the centre of the universe; Darwin, that the human being is a product of natural selection, emerging through the same blind material processes as every other creature; Finally, psychoanalysis was to undermine our impression that we are master of our own consciousness and destiny, for unconscious processes beyond our perception and control steer our relation to the world and to ourselves.’
are fleeing. In the same vein, the process ontologist Alfred North Whitehead proposed that the sub-ject ought to have been the super-ject all along. A derivative status for the subject shifts the conceptual coordinates entirely from the a priori (axiomatic) means-to-ends logic to the (empirical) attunement to structural coupling (milieu). The linearity of problem solving becomes almost trivial in comparison to what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘dramatization’. Put simply, the solution’s worth is measured by the pertinence of the problem. In his Difference and Repetition, Deleuze posited that Problems-Ideas were extra-propositional and sub-representative. These are the virtues of non-linear thinking:

1. OPENESS: Systems cannot but be open to outside influences or sources of energy or information. The point debunks essentialism, which privileges intrinsic properties over and above the exteriority of relations.

2. SINGULARITY: There are no universal laws for they too evolve. Effects are not always proportionate to, and cannot be accurately predicted from, their causes. The general lesson of the logic of relation – eco-logic as opposed to ego-logic – is that the stable regularities we observe in actuality do not have specific causes that

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62 Whitehead’s replacement of the subject by the ‘superject’ resonates with Hume’s theory of subjectification. In opposition to the psychologisms that start from an entity of ‘myself’, Hume sees the subject as ‘coagulation’ in the field of sensation. See: (TR, 349). ‘Hume marked a decisive moment in the philosophy of the subject because he referred to acts that went beyond the given (what happens when I say ‘always’ or ‘necessary’?).’ Cf. Alfred North Whitehead (edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne). Process and Reality: an Essay in Cosmology. New York: Free Press, pp. 29. ‘It is fundamental to the metaphysical doctrine of the philosophy of organism, that the notion of an actual entity as the unchanging subject of change is completely abandoned. An actual entity is at once the subject of experiencing and the superject of its experiences.’
63 ‘Deleuze proposes to consider structure as a concrete universal, such that actual things can be viewed as local solutions that explicate the ideal and asignifying connections implicated in the former’s virtual constitution. This is why the ‘accompaniment’ in thought of these processes of realization or individuation is what defines Deleuze’s practice as a ‘method of dramatization’.’ See: Alberto Toscano, 2006. The Theatre of Production: Philosophy and Individuation between Kant and Deleuze. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 169.
can be demarcated and isolated. They can only be understood as a dynamic cascade of many processes operating over time (topologization).

3. IRREVERSIBILITY: Time is real. By real we mean irreversible and having real effects or consequences. Each thing perfectly expresses not only the state of one of the universe’s neighbourhoods during a specific time interval, but also its own particular historical trajectory within it.  

4. ASYMMETRY: The finite (extensive and engendered) conceals the intensive engendering processes of becoming. The proverbial homeostatic fixation is responsible for the normalizing and thus normative tendency. Moreover, the structuralist fantasy of a variably deformable object in a complex vector field as the main principle of design needs to be challenged. By contrast, only force can be related to another force. Action on action, and not action on object is the formula.

5. IRREDUCTIONISM: Event and novelty cannot be subsumed under some general order because they are emergent properties. Hence, the whole is not of the parts, but alongside them and in addition to them. Sciences have the tendency to reduce downward to the constitutive elements (atoms, quarks, strings), whereas humanities have the tendency to reduce upward (ideology, politics, culture). Both micro and macro reductionism are pernicious.  

To recapitulate, in the linear system there is a correlation between ‘input’ and ‘output’. The greater the force, the greater the change. By contrast, non-linear systems have no such simple correlation (1:1). A small cause can produce a great effect, or no effect, or variable effect, etc. In the words of Guattari: ‘While the logic of discursive sets endeavours to completely delimit its objects, the logic of intensities, or eco-logic is concerned only with the

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65 Graham Harman, a proponent of the ‘Object Oriented Ontology’ (a version of Speculative Realism), has recently raised the problem of what he calls ‘overmining’ and ‘undermining’ objects. In the former case, objects are seen as passive vehicles for signification, whereas in the latter, they are subdued by the supposedly more fundamental level. See: Graham Harman, ‘On the Undermining of Objects: Grant, Bruno and Radical Philosophy.’ In: Levi Bryant, Nick Smiçek and Graham Harman (eds.),  *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*. Melbourne: re.press, pp. 21-40. It was Bruno Latour who coined the term irreductionism in his book *The Pasteurization of France*. 
movement and intensity of evolutive processes’ (TE, 44, 52). Process, which Guattari counterposes to system and structure, seeks to grasp existence in the very act of its constitution, definition, and deterritorialization.

The ethico-political lesson of the logic of relation is that everything is contingently obligatory or ontotopological, and not logically necessary or ontotheological. A life form never pre-exists an event. The exteriority of relations is not a principle, Deleuze underlines, ‘[…] it is a vital protest against principles’ (D, 55). Resetting ourselves in a metaphysical perspective, as the author of After Finitude Meillassoux suggests, permits us to reconstruct our existence beyond faith alone or the sole opportunism of interest. Therein lies a possibility of pursuing a genuine politics of defatalization.

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<td>Closure</td>
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Table iv Features of Linear and Nonlinear Thinking

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66 ‘Unlike Hegelian and Marxist dialectics, eco-logic no longer imposes a ‘resolution’ of opposites.’
67 Ontotopology means that experience is not an event ‘in’ the mind, separate from the environment. Rather, the mind emerges from the interaction with the environment. Ontotheology is attributed to Heidegger’s view that all Western metaphysical systems make foundational claims, or as Morton puts it, ‘Onto-theology proclaims that some things are more real than others.’ See: Timothy Morton, 2011. ‘Objects as Temporary Autonomous Zones.’ In: Continent. Vol.1, No. 3, pp. 149-155 (p. 154).
68 ‘Indeed if one sees in it something which runs through life, but which is repugnant to thought, then thought must be forced to think it, one must make relations the hallucination point of thought.’
We have seen that the attribute ‘non-linear’ is as meaningful as its counterpart in the term non-elephant zoology.\(^\text{70}\) In other words, linearity is very rare, except in a (flawed) theory that is more often than not obsessed with mastery.\(^\text{71}\) Whereas the generic entails subsumption of an occurrence under an \textit{a priori} rule (form of judgement), the genetic always seeks the rule anew (ethico-aesthetics).\(^\text{72}\) [Table iv] As Einstein put it: ‘So far as the theories […] are about reality, they are not certain; so far as they are certain, they are not about reality.’\(^\text{73}\) Not only do we need to adopt non-linearity as a major principle, we also to develop cartographies of power that do not take shortcuts through complexities.\(^\text{74}\) The lack of exactitude compensated by the rigour of their \textit{modus operandi} places those in charge of cultural production at the forefront of the ‘molecular revolution’.\(^\text{75}\) ‘Molecular’, as in always already \textit{collective} or social; and ‘revolution’, as in (inclusive) \textit{disjunction} or the machinism of singularization.\(^\text{76}\)


\(^{71}\) ‘Even if thought had not arrived at this urgency out of internal necessity, the economic situation, the technological situation, the political situation, the ecological situation, and so on, in an increasingly interconnected, shrinking world, cannot but bring forcibly to our attention the corrosion of the illusions of autonomy, sovereignty, control and planning, and make more urgent the call for the new modes of thought that are needed once we attempt to think events outside any pre-determined matrix of possibility or probability; and once we accept that we ourselves, our culture and our common sense, are the products of a contingent history.’ See: (Mackay 2011) Cf. Elie Ayache, 2010. \textit{Blank Swan: End of Probability}. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

\(^{72}\) ‘[T]he abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained; and the aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (\textit{creativity}).’

\(^{73}\) Ontological indeterminacy, radical openness and infinity of possibilities are at the core of mattering. See the interview with the feminist theorist Karen Barad, Adam Kleinman, 2013. ‘Intra-Actions.’ \textit{In Mousse}, No. 34, pp.76-81.


less about the conscious will, the decision, the rational, the calculation, [...]. As long as we deal with the domain of cognition, we’ll never know at what point a body’s pleasures or powers [affects] become diminished or mobilised.'
Andrej Radman


Lynch, Kevin, 1984. *Good City Form*. Cambridge, MA: MIT. See also:


<http://www.urban-age.net/introduction/investigation/housingAndNeighborhoods/> [accessed April 1, 2013]
Abstract
At the end of his life, Gilles Deleuze famously mentioned that his last book was to be called ‘Grandeur de Marx’. While it is unlikely that he ever started to actually write such a book, its title reminds us of an outspoken political text of Deleuze entitled ‘The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat’. The aim of this contribution is to explore and define this concept of grandeur. After some initial remarks on ‘Deleuze’s aristocratic posture’ and its supposedly problematic relation to actual politics, my strategy will be to develop two paradoxes, the paradox of health’s intrinsic relation to illness and the paradox of glory’s intrinsic relation to shame, and then relate both paradoxes to the ethical imperative of Stoicism that grandeur lies in becoming worthy of the event. I conclude with some brief reflections on what could be the grandeur of Marx.
At the end of his life, in a conversation with Didier Eribon, Gilles Deleuze famously mentioned that his last book was to be called ‘Grandeur de Marx’.\(^1\) So far, this remark has led to much speculation on the virtual presence of Marx in Deleuze’s published writings. However, Deleuze was not someone to fool himself. Let us remember, for example, that although he cooperated with the recording of his *Abecedary* on the condition that it would only be broadcast after his passing, it was already shown on Arte between November 1994 and spring 1995. While the death of Guattari and the rise of the *nouveaux philosophes* might have made him want to counterpose Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx* and Foucault’s distancing from Marx with a more affirmative, perhaps even militant repotentialization of Marx, it is unlikely that he ever started to actually write such a book. This is not to argue that a systematic discussion of the possible relations between Deleuze and Marx is not important. The focus on the proper name of Marx is a truly Deleuzian approach in itself as it involves the individuation of an extremely powerful field of thinking and acting. However, it is not necessarily the most effective way to explore what Deleuze might have meant with Marx’s ‘grandeur’. While Deleuze’s interest in Marx cannot be separated from the latter’s revolutionary conception of sociability (DR, 186), for instance, Nicholas Thoburn in his book on Deleuze and Marx reserves the quality of grandeur exclusively for what he calls the ‘major composition’ of social relations – the liberal form of sociality that enables bourgeois concerns ‘to soar into a self-actualizing grandeur’ since the social exists primarily as a facilitator of the molar individual form.\(^2\) This raises the question what a non-self-actualizing, non-bourgeois grandeur would be like. What is this ancient aristocratic quality of splendour and magnificence, even magnanimity that Deleuze finds in Marx? And where can we find contemporary instantiations of it?

Interestingly, there exists an outspoken political text of Deleuze entitled ‘The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat’. Published in *Revue d’Etudes Palestinennes* in 1984 and included in *Deux regime des fous*, it is strangely absent from the English translation *Two Regimes of Madness*, which includes 61 instead of the original 62 chapters. In this short essay written in response to the massacres in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in 1982 during the Lebanese civil war, Deleuze writes: ‘By leading the terrorist war

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in Lebanon, Israel believed it could suppress the PLO and deprive it of the support of the Palestinian people, already deprived of their land. And perhaps it is succeeding, since in surrounded Tripoli there is nothing more than the physical presence of Arafat among his own, all in a sort of solitary grandeur. Without going into the historical setting and geopolitical context of this quote any more than necessary, the aim in what follows is to explore and define this concept of grandeur.

After some initial remarks on ‘Deleuze’s aristocratic posture’ and its supposedly problematic relation to political action, my strategy will be to develop two paradoxes, the paradox of health’s intrinsic relation to illness and the paradox of glory’s intrinsic relation to shame, and then relate both paradoxes to the ethical imperative of Stoicism that grandeur lies in becoming worthy of the event. I conclude with some brief reflections on what might be the grandeur of Marx.

**Last Man: A Problem of Belief**

In Deleuze’s work, the concept of grandeur is inseparable from notions such as nobility or dignity. They are more of an ethical than of a political nature, referring less to a political program than to the becoming of ‘a life’. Following Nietzsche, Deleuze defines the philosopher as physician of culture and as genealogist. By wielding the ‘differential element’ as his hammer, the philosopher’s critical and clinical task is to diagnose and evaluate our present becomings as noble or base, glorious or shameful, worthy or unworthy (WP, 74). His ‘delicate but rigorous art’ (NP, 5) of differentiating between high and low ancestry and posterity is to keep the two becomings apart ‘for all eternity’, as Nietzsche says. But doesn’t this philosopher’s instinct for rank, this hierarchization of our affective becomings, imply the typically anti-egalitarian and anti-universalist discourse that so many Marxists reject in

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Nietzschean ethics? Isn’t it precisely the cause of scandal, too, for those well-known critics who find Deleuze an aristocratic or elitist, even snobistic thinker, an interesting metaphysician whose politics are awkward and naïve when confronted with the capitalist management of what Deleuze himself already abhorred as ‘respectable, reconcilable or federative differences’ (DR, 52). Or is grandeur precisely what is lacking in the face of today’s compelling populism and mediocrity, ‘a period of reaction’ or ‘sterile phase’ with ‘a whole system of ‘acculturation’ and anticreativity specific to the developed nations’ taking shape (N, 27)?

Let us begin with what grandeur is not. In his diagnosis of the base descent of postmodern culture, Deleuze takes up Nietzsche’s diagnosis of Last Man as the outcome of the long history of nihilism that is finally on the brink of exhausting itself. Accordingly, there is an apocalyptic aspect intrinsic to contemporary consumer societies. Last Man is a survivor or a zombie, who no longer has any confidence or trust in himself or in the world and lives in a strange suspense. ‘It may be that believing in this world, in this life, becomes our most difficult task, or the task of a mode of existence still to be discovered on our plane of immanence today. […] (We have so many reasons not to believe in the human world; we have lost the world, worse than a fiancée or a god […]’ (WP, 75).

In our times, the problem of how to believe in the world is different from the nineteenth century, when philosophy was in much closer socio-political correspondence with the world. Whereas Hegel and Marx could speak directly in the name of world history and partake in legitimate struggles for emancipation, Nietzsche teaches us that what seems to be emancipatory may well be just one more convulsion of an age-old ressentiment that is all but worth saving. ‘The entire West has lost those instincts out of which institutions grow, out of which the future grows. […] One lives for today, one lives very fast – one lives very irresponsibly: it is precisely this which one calls “freedom”.’ Thus with Nietzsche a philosophical ‘weariness’ and ‘mistrust’ (WP, 107) of the world sets in, which has only intensified in the

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course of the twentieth century, for example in the form of what Primo Levi
calls the ‘shame of being human’, which Deleuze & Guattari interpret as the
shame about the continuous compromises we make with the demands of the
age we live in. ‘We do not feel ourselves outside of time but continue to
undergo shameful compromises with it’ (WP, 108).

This shame indicates that the time for sincere indignation over injustice or
wrongs is over. Those who cultivate indignation seem more and more like
the representatives of a rotten system, a system lacking all dignity,
sustainability or credibility. As Deleuze and Guattari argue in Anti-Oedipus,
capitalism does not need faith in order to function. It certainly produces a
kind of piety, but this piety is found not in religion but in ‘stupidity’ (AO,
235). Capitalism constantly produces stupidity: it generates lack in
abundance and produces ignorance in a wealth of knowledge, such that we
are always ready to submit ourselves to servile compromises with the state,
with the market, or with public opinion. But saying that the time for
indignation is over, perhaps also means that it is time to reclaim our dignity
in a more affirmative way. To feel shame before stupidity (both in general
and one’s own) must then become a precondition for thought. How to
distinguish noble and base when the eye of the genealogist is at the brink of
exhaustion? For philosophy, but also for art, grandeur lies in the generation
of reasons for believing in a world to come. It is to speculate on ‘a new earth
and people that do not yet exist’ (WP, 108). Resisting all utopian or
programmatic thinking – the calculatory perspective of which always betrays
its base or servile origin and can only lead to an even more unworthy future –
the task of philosophy is to invent concepts that serve to energize the
historical present’s passing with the charge of futurity. At stake in the
hierarchy between noble and base becomings is therefore our concept of the
future as either the pure richness of the event or the bad infinity of an
unanswered complaint. ‘Philosophy's sole aim is to become worthy of the
event’ (WP, 160). As such speculation is opposed to the reason of Last Man,

[https://www.adbusters.org/magazine/97/lesson-insurrection.html] [accessed August
13, 2013]

11 As Brian Massumi describes the politics of speculative philosophy: ‘Its politics is
pragmatic, not programmatic. Rather than directing, it donates. It gives a gift of
potential for use in other people’s lives and projects.’ (Brian Massumi, 2010. ‘What
Concepts Do. Preface to the Chinese Translation of A Thousand Plateaus.’ In:
Deleuze Studies. No. 4, pp. 1-15 (p. 3))
whose (financial and otherwise) speculations reduce all future potential to self-preservation and self-enrichment in the present.\textsuperscript{12} Or as Deleuze writes in his \textit{Cinema}-books: ‘We do not even believe in the events which happen to us, love, death, as if they only half concerned us’ (C2, 171).

\textbf{Relativizing Deleuze’s Anti-Populism}

It is precisely this speculative stance that forms the core of Deleuze’s ‘aristocratism’. It boils down to the formative power of thought in relation to the history of a people and their land, in other words, to politics. It is no doubt because of this distinction between speculative reason and political action that many critics have found an opposition between the early, apolitical and elitist Deleuze and the later, politically committed thinker involved in contemporary Marxist debates. And even among faithful Deleuzians there is no consensus about how we pass from the aristocratic stance of philosophy to the everyday reality of populism and capitalist realism.

Paul Patton, for example, has provided a well-known social-democratic interpretation of Deleuze’s politics by bringing it into contact with the work of John Rawls, but at the cost of leaving its aristocratic overtones unaccounted for.\textsuperscript{13} This is problematic, given Deleuze’s later outspoken dismissal of ‘the meanness and vulgarity of existence that haunts democracies’ (WP, 107-8), or of the base passions and opinions of ‘[t]he man of capitalism [who] is […] Ulysses, the cunning plebeian, some average man or other living in big towns’, partaking in ‘the new societies of brothers or comrades that once again takes up the Greek dream and reconstitutes “democratic dignity”’ (WP, 98-9). Worse still, Deleuze explicitly writes that philosophy and art, as two modes of thought or creativity, are aristocratic as opposed to democratic in a modern sense. Although antique philosophy

\textsuperscript{12} For Deleuze, the most fundamental task of speculative philosophy is not to critique our various fideisms in the name of reason or truth, as Quentin Meillassoux holds, but to inquire into the conditions under which our belief in the world can be justified when it has become secular and post-humanist. (WP, 53) (See: Sjoerd van Tuinen, 2013. ‘Difference and Speculation: Heidegger, Meillassoux and Deleuze on Sufficient Reason.’ In: \textit{Deleuze and Metaphysics}. (edited by Alain Beaulieu, Edward Kazarian and Julia Sushytska), Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.)

\textsuperscript{13} Paul Patton, 2005. ‘Deleuze and Democracy.’ In: \textit{Contemporary Political Theory}. No. 4, pp. 400–413.
needed democracy to come into its essence, it cannot be reduced to it. On the contrary, it is essentially something else: ‘Art and philosophy converge at this point: the constitution of an earth and a people that are lacking as the correlate of creation. It is not populist writers but the most aristocratic who lay claim to this future. This people and earth will not be found in our democracies’ (WP, 108).

At the same time, however, this anti-democratic stance is indeed rather surprising for a self-declared Spinozist. Although Spinoza excluded reactive affects such as hope, fear, and jealousy from the life and liberty of the sage and hence from authentic philosophical ethos, Philippe Mengue has emphasized that in the realm of politics, they are unavoidable. Here counts not the liberty of him who lives under the sole authority of Reason, but the freedom of those living in security. It is true that security provides only the negative conditions for a life of reason, such that ‘the philosopher finds the most favorable conditions in the democratic state and in liberal circles’ (S, 4). Nonetheless, Mengue rightly points out that Spinoza’s praise of democracy in the Theological-Political Treatise and his radical critique of the shame, contempt, and satirical snigger as the ‘professional’ affects of philosophers – in the first paragraphs of the Political Treatise and the third part of the Ethics – seem to be at odds with Deleuze’s distinction between thought and politics in the colloquial sense: the creation of new modes of living and thinking being in essence an aristocratic enterprise, whereas politics in the colloquial sense is considered as rooting in inferior practices of debate, communication and marketing.

Still, for Mengue Deleuze’s thought is not entirely at odds with politics or even with democratic practice. Whereas Deleuze contrasts absolute thought and its plane of pure immanence to the pollution of doxa (Spinoza’s first kind of knowledge, ultimately reducible for Deleuze to the basic model of ‘I like cheese’ versus ‘I don’t like cheese’ (WP, 145-6)), he proposes the concept of a non-philosophical, doxic plane of ‘immanence’: ‘The doxic plane of immanence constitutes the kind of becoming, thanks to which existing

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14 Perhaps one could also argue that Deleuze’s aristocratic stance approximates what Spinoza calls knowledgable democratic rule. As the memorial stone above his door in Rijnsburg says: Ach! waren alle Menschen wijs, En wilden daarbij wel! De Aard waar haar en Paradijs, Nu isse meest een Hel.

democracies remain democratic, that is, able to problematize themselves and to be philosophically fecund’ (Mengue, p.183). This doxic plane of immanence encompasses the irreducible plurality of the types of ‘blocs of passions (bloc passionel)’, beliefs, rational representations, forms of expertise, and opinions that form the interiority of liberal democracies, their very living material as composed of actual affections and perceptions. After all, it is here that we can speak of a people and earth to come: ‘The people must be individuated, not according to the persons within it, but according to the affects it experiences simultaneously and successively’ (TP, 341).

We find a similar relativization of Deleuze’s apparently rather purist conception of thought practice in the work of Isabelle Stengers, who has ceaselessly emphasized its sedentary component. If we always think par le milieu, this is another way of saying that there is no ethos of the thinker without the oikos he inhabits. Just as the soul – as incorporeal presence – requires a body as the existential territory by which it is obliged, the psychosocial situation ‘matters’ to thought and is inseparable from the deterritorializing movement of the concept. It is true that, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, between Heidegger and Nazism, there is no functional dependence and neither does the philosopher bear a particular responsibility to any abject reterritorializations of his concepts (WP, 108-9). Yet even the most experimental relation to the future, the most utopian becoming of the concept is meaningless without the ‘abominable sufferings’ (WP, 110) through which a new people and a new earth are historically constituted. In the famous words of Deleuze and Guattari, it is a matter of responsibility – not so much a responsibility for actual sufferings, but rather before them, i.e. for how we relate to their becomings

Stengers elaborates this argument by taking up the pragmatic constraint on the power of reason that was first formulated by Leibniz, who famously declared that the various ways of thinking should always respect ‘established sentiments’. This was not meant, as Deleuze interprets what he calls a ‘vulgarized Leibnizianism’ (DR, 11), in the ‘abominable’ and ‘shameful’ sense of the will not to clash with anyone, that is, to establish consensus in the service of Power and compromise scientific achievements and progress (LS, 116). Rather, it is the demand of regaining some kind of belief in a world where nihilism and cynicism block all future potential. In Stengers’s words: ‘The problem designated by the Leibnizian constraint ties together truth and becoming, and assigns to the statement of what one believes to be true the responsibility not to hinder becoming: not to collide with established
sentiments, so as to try to open them to what their established identity led them to refuse, combat, misunderstand.'16 We must not collide with established sentiments, because it is on the plane of doxa that the political becoming of concepts is determined. For this reason, Stengers argues that Leibniz is a minor key philosopher while Spinoza is still too much a major key philosopher in the tradition of Western rationality.17 Whereas Spinoza’s optimistic conception of the power of truth and rationality is easily claimed by populist and belligerent enlighteners from both the Left and the Right in order to demonstrate their unwillingness compromise themselves, Leibniz was much more pessimistic and diplomatic. He upheld not so much the relativism of truth and the rule of opinion, however, but rather the more tempered ‘truth of the relative’ (TF, 20), or what Stengers calls the ‘humor of truth (humeur de la vérité, a variation on amour de la vérité).’18 Just think of the complaint of Leibniz’s contemporaries, the Hannoverian people of faith who called him Herr Glaubenix, since they discovered that Leibniz saved their convictions but at the cost of depriving them of their power to contradict other convictions. In fact, Leibniz did not lack faith in the world. Rather, thought’s absolute speed had to be slowed down in order for it to have real consequences in the world and at the same time to warrant against its potentially destructive consequences. ‘Ecological grandeur is associated with the suspension of certainty’ (C2, 393), writes Deleuze. In other words, the crisis of existing reasons marks a moment of resistance and potential grandeur, while ‘baseness’ precisely functions as an accelerator of reason, adding yet another reason not to believe in anything and rather do away with hesitation.19 Thus, besides the privacy of the thinker who risks to remain stuck in his own ‘good sense’, the public sensitivity of the concept is

indispensable. It is here that ethics and morality, thought and politics converge.

Translated back into the materialism of a more Spinozist or Nietzschean vein, established sentiments matter as the passive material on which the active force of thought imposes its ‘future form’ (WP, 108). ‘Concepts are inseparable from affects, i.e. from the powerful effects they exert on our lives, and percepts, i.e. the new ways of seeing or perceiving they evoke in us’ (TR, 238). The passions of the multitude – clichés, opinions, agitations – make up our attachment to the world. They constitute history, i.e. the material of becoming. If philosophy’s concern, as a speculative practice, in principle lies only with becoming, then history is ‘only the set of almost negative conditions that make possible the experimentation of something that escapes history’ (WP, 111). ‘Almost’, since in fact there is no becoming and no event outside material preconditions. Rather, if philosophy exists only ‘through the outside and on the outside’ (TP, 10), its aim is to lure our present affections and perceptions towards new becomings and visions. When it connects the absolute deterritorialization expressed in the concept with the forces of relative deterritorialization already at work in a field of importance, philosophy ‘becomes political and takes the criticism of its own time to its highest point’ (WP, 99) tracing an abstract line, ‘the contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come’ (WP, 32-3). The grandeur of philosophy and art is found not in its opposition to practice (the classical opposition of speculative and practical reason is a false problem), but at the point where the ethical stance of philosophy (the concept) or the aesthetical point of view of art (the percept) become politically relevant. For Deleuze, grandeur implies resistance to the present. Creation marks a break with, but is not opposed to, the mere communication of opinions, democratic debate and discussion: ‘We do not lack communication. On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation. We lack resistance to the present’ (WP, 108).

Paradoxes of Grandeur I: Health and Illness

Another key to Deleuze’s concept of grandeur can be found in his concept of the grand vivant. In the entry ‘Illness’ of his Abecedary, Deleuze says: ‘To think is to have one’s ears tuned into life […] It is despicable to be a bon vivant. But those who are grand vivant are altogether different! To see life is
to be traversed by life – in all its power and beauty.20 Deleuze cannot think of anything more abject in the world than what people call a ‘bon vivant.’ He gives the example of someone who relates to his illness by saying ‘I still want to live, and so once I’m cured, I’ll start living’. In other words, a ‘bon vivant’ is someone who is interested in a representation of what he judges to be the good life, instead of actually living it. By contrast, for Deleuze illness is not an enemy of life, a feeling or foreshadowing of death, but rather a feeling of, and passion for, life itself.

Certain weak illnesses or a fragile state of health are capable of tuning us into life. There can be no vision of life, no thought or creation, if we aren’t already in a domain that exceeds our strength to some extent, that is, if we don’t ‘crack a little’, like Van Gogh or Fitzgerald. This does not imply that we valorize suffering as an aim in itself, but it does imply that we affirm a perpetual relation to it. Of course illness is bad, as it is a diminution of our capacity to affect and to be affected. Yet the question is how to find joy in it, that is, how to effectuate our diminished capacity, how to ‘fulfill’ it or ‘fill’ it ‘up’ (remplir) with joyful becomings, as with a spark of life. Hence it is the very paradox of health that it is inseparable from a supreme passivity that forces us to overcome ourselves and to be overcome by it in order to live, in other words, to merge with the pure act or becoming-active.21 In Ecce Homo, Nietzsche describes this self-overcoming as a practice of ‘inverting perspectives’, of ‘looking from the perspective of the sick towards healthier concepts and values, and conversely looking down from the fullness and self-assuredness of rich life into the décadence instinct’.22 It is precisely this ability of shifting perspective, this positive schizophrenia or ‘inner intersubjectivity’ as Deleuze calls it that constitutes Nietzsche’s ‘Great Health’: ‘There is no reciprocity between the two points of view, the two evaluations. Thus, movement from health to sickness, from sickness to health, if only as an idea, this very mobility is the sign of superior health’.23 There is grandeur in health, in other words, to the degree in which the static

opposition of sick and healthy dissolves in a pure becoming-healthy. It is what Nietzsche called a *Genesung*: a becoming-healthier, but also a genesis, in other words, a positive distance to every status quo and all submission.

The health of a thinker or *grand vivant* lies in the becoming-active of the reactive forces that have constituted us, the transmutation of our inherited sentiments such as *ressentiment* and bad conscience. Now of course, this health may well be mortal, it may be ‘too much’ for us, an overwhelming violence that carries the subject into an a-subjective, singular and impersonal becoming-other as the final phase of passivity. But this violence is nonetheless creative rather than merely destructive. The creative life has an intrinsic relation to illness and even death. It is not a moribund life, but one that continually pulls away from death, repeating its difference, like the detail or the differential that changes everything. As Deleuze says in *Dialogues*, ‘[i]t may be that the writer has a delicate health, a weak constitution. He is none the less the opposite of the neurotic: a sort of great Alive [*grand Vivant*] (in the manner of Spinoza, Nietzsche or Lawrence) in so far as he is only too weak for the life which runs in him or for the affects which pass in him’ (D, 50).

At stake in art or philosophy, then, is an ambiguous life that exceeds any living person, a terrible, cruel, but no less glorious, anorganic life, which Deleuze, following Nietzsche and Bergson, calls ‘charm’, ‘style’ or the state of ‘absolute power’. This life is the discrete but grand life of the

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24 Zourabichvili differentiates between passive death and active will-to-death or what Deleuze and Guattari call the ‘passion of abolition’ (TP, 229: ‘The death included in every event, whether favourable or unfavourable, is at times the reactive force that wills death and separates me from what I can do, and at times the dazzling vitality of an active force that captivates me and simultaneously sweeps me away, raising me to a becoming-active by imposing on me the final phase of passivity. […] Again, the unbearable has two alternating values in Deleuze’s texts: sometimes it designates the morbid powers of *ressentiment* that jeopardize vitality, while at other times it characterizes the ordeal of vitality. But the one form derives from the other: the ‘too much for me’ affects an exhausted or insufficiently plastic force, determining a hard line rather than consent (C2, 141-2). The ego then wills life to be too much for it, hence the genesis of *ressentiment*, the will to affirm what limits, encloses, circumscribes and protects life, the valorization of suffering and death (but to speak of a dangerous health does not imply that we valorize suffering: we affirm only a perpetual relation to it).’ (François Zourabichvili, 1996. ‘Six Notes on the Percept.’ In *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, (Edited by Paul Patton), Oxford/Cambridge MA: Blackwell. pp. 188-216, (p. 205).
schizophrenic, who lives on the edge of total disintegration. Schizo’s are ‘affective athletes’ (Deleuze cites Artaud) constituted through the production of a disjunctive synthesis between incompossible points of view. They are not found in the clinical isolation of the madhouse, but in art and literature, where they are going for a walk. The schizo is the ‘structuralist hero’ (DI, 191) of modernist literature, i.e. someone who grasps himself as a neutral but all the more dramatic event, regardless of personal interest, not merely by standing on the stage of the world but also by being and incarnating this very stage (LS, 178). As his life is an unliveable life, a life that overflows the unity of the person and his organism from all sides, it needs to be rendered consistent in a new artificial body in order for it to attain grandeur. Herein lies Deleuze’s expressionist constructivism: the grandeur of a life must be conserved and renewed in itself, in its becomings, by constructing it in the body of expression – from literary syntax to sound to paint or stone – from which it remains inseparable and by which it is constantly transformed. Art and literature are the assemblages of affects and percepts into blocs capable of standing alone. Art ‘attains its own grandeur, its own genius’ (AO, 368-71) as a bloc of sensations composed of an indiscernible mixture of vitality and death. This is the essence of a percept: the anonymous image of a self turned inside out, the self as a giant, an exaggeration of life, an affective athlete constantly stretching his plane of consistency, a living landscape.

**Paradoxes of Grandeur II: Shame and Glory**

Besides illness and death, grandeur also has a paradoxical and intrinsic relation to shame. Deleuze proposes his concept of shame, and of our responsibility before it, by drawing on Levi: ‘Not, he [Levi] says, that we’re all responsible for Nazism, as some would have us believe, but that we’ve all been tainted by it: even the survivors of the camps had to make compromises with it, if only to survive. There’s the shame of there being men who became Nazis; the shame of being unable, not seeing how, to stop it; the shame of having compromised with it; there’s the whole of what Primo Levi calls this ‘gray area.’ And we can feel shame at being human in utterly trivial situations, too: in the face of too great a vulgarization of thinking, in the face of TV entertainment, of a ministerial speech, of ‘jolly people (bon vivants)’ gossiping. This is one of the most powerful incentives toward philosophy, and it’s what makes all philosophy political’ (N, 172; CC, 1). Shame is thus not only the passive shame diagnosed by Wilhelm Reich, the shame that puts
up fences that express the forces of conformity rather than a flight of creation. As Nietzsche had already demonstrated so well, reactive forces triumph over active ones by seducing them to become reactive through the shame for what they are capable of. By rendering a force reactive, separating it from what it can do, it is turned against itself in a process of internalization, from which guilt is born (NP, 128, 131, 142). However, as Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate in their book on Kafka, shame is not to be equated with guilt (K, 30-3). Shame consists in having seen one’s own forces humiliated, in having seen oneself as a patient or a slave. It appears when power blocks the tips of assemblages of desire. When Foucault describes how sexuality is reduced to sex, for example, assemblages are broken apart and either keep on existing as fantasies or they become shameful things (TR, 126). Interpreting this shame in terms of guilt would be shameful in itself, as it implies the confusion of victim and executioner. Instead, in Levi there is a kind of glory that occurs only in relation to shame, the glorious becoming-active of the shame of having survived in the place of those who have not. Again, grandeur does not equate with glory, but rather with the paradoxical becoming of the composite of glory and shame. Just as health lies in becoming-healthier in the face of sickness, there lies glory in the becoming-active of the shame that has constituted us.

Interestingly, it is by way of this composite of glory and shame that Deleuze also defends philosophy. Even if, from its beginnings, philosophy has found itself shamefully compromised by the mask of the priest that it has had to put on in order to be born and grow with any chance of survival within its social environment (NP, 5), it remains no less ‘useful for harming stupidity, for turning stupidity into something shameful’ (NP, 106). This means that even today, when philosophy has a hard time distinguishing itself from the vulgar demands of public opinion and debates, the advertisement of the concept, and ‘the whole domain of imbecilic interrogation’ (L’Abécédaire, R), this does not preclude it from attaining its own kind of grandeur. On the contrary, to see the difference between health and illness or glory and shame is precisely what takes a philosophical eye, i.e. a genealogical eye capable of distinguishing active and reactive becomings. Whether we are talking about shame before the Holocaust or before ‘insignificant conditions, before the meanness and vulgarity of existence that haunts democracies, before the propagation of these modes of existence and of thought-for-the-market, and before the values, ideals, and opinions of our time’ (WP, 108), it is precisely out of these shameful conditions and
constituted existences that the genealogist has to squeeze new possibilities of life. In this sense, Deleuze defends the grandeur of philosophy, at least in its ‘highest degree’ (NP, 5), against Adorno and perhaps also against his colleague Lyotard. While Heidegger had delivered philosophy over to its most shameful compromise, this does not mean we have to fully identify with this inheritance: ‘Of course, there is no reason to believe that we can no longer think after Auschwitz, or that we are all responsible for Nazism in an unwholesome culpability that, moreover, would only affect the victims. As Primo Levi said, they will not make us confuse the victims with the executioners’ (WP, 106; L’Abécédaire, R).

Finally, it is this concept of shame that also returns in Deleuze’s essay on ‘The Grandeur of Yasser Arafat’. Deleuze emphasizes that ‘Arafat needed only one word to describe the broken promises, the violated agreements […]: shame, shame.’ For what had happened? Whilst Israeli forces surrounded the refugee camps, Arafat had consented to the departure of combatants on condition that the security of their families be absolutely guaranteed by the United States and even by Israel. However, a militia group belonging to the Kaeteb party was enabled by Israeli forces (under responsibility of Ariel Sharon) to enter the camp and murder its inhabitants during the night, causing between seven hundred and three thousand five hundred victims (the exact number is still disputed today). Deleuze situates this event within a longer history in which the Israelis have ‘deliberately, knowingly destroyed’, ‘all the occasions on which a solution or element of solution was possible’, ‘denying not only the Palestinian right but also the Palestinian fact’: ‘With “colder means” than genocide, one ends up with the same result.’

It is in the face of this shameful history of broken promises and reversed alliances, this exhaustion of the possibilities of a people and its territory, when Arafat and the PLO headquarters headed for Tunisia while other members of the leadership settled in Syria and Palestinian fighters found themselves scattered throughout the Middle East, that the Palestinians were forced to ‘fabulate’ (N, 174) a new earth and a new people: ‘Was there ever a Palestinian people? Israel says no. Of course there was, but that’s not the point. The thing is, that once the Palestinians have been thrown out of their territory, then to the extent that they resist they enter the process of constituting a people’ (N, 126). For Deleuze the grandeur of Arafat lies in him being a ‘monument’ for their struggle, the very embodiment of the future

26 Idem, pp. 30-3.
Palestinian people. ‘How the Palestinian people learned to resist and are resisting; how a people of ancient lineage became an armed nation; how they gave themselves a body which does not simply represent them but embodied them, outside their territory and without a state, all these events demanded a greater historical character, one who, we might say from a Western point of view, could have stepped out of Shakespeare, and that was Arafat.’ Arafat was capable of affirming his shame as the potent motive for the violent but glorious occupation of a new ‘space-time’ (N, 172) drawn from the intolerable, thus turning the latter into a vital and necessary passion (N, 103). His ‘grand politics’ was therefore an art of the impossible and the untimely, a politics for everyone and none, and thence, indeed, a cry for a people to come (N, 153).

Analogous to the paradox of health, glory is the opposite of shame, but shame is still capable of giving us a point of view on glory and from there a grand point of view on shame. In his essay on T.E. Lawrence’s Seven Pillars of Wisdom (1919), ‘The Shame and the Glory’, Deleuze again discovers such a grand perspective in the description of Lawrence’s involvement as a strategic advisor on behalf of the Arab Bureau of the British Foreign Office in the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire from 1916 to 1918. While Lawrence made essential contributions to the uprising, shame, as Deleuze sums it up, is nonetheless a persistent theme of the book: the shame of betraying the Arabs as an Englishman, but also the shame of sharing their misery, the shame of being the victim of a radical asymmetry of power, the shame of being a leader and of having to command, and finally the shame of being dependent on his animal body – not the shame of the body, way should add with Deleuze (and Stengers), but before the body’s becoming (CC, 123). Yet at the same time, the grandeur of his character lies in having conceived of an affirmative relation to this shame, a relation of struggle which made him ‘the first great theoretician of guerilla warfare’ (CC, 121) and which brought ‘a strange freedom’ into the hallucinatory haze of the desert, ‘where glory and shame enter into an almost spiritual combat’ (CC, 125). Deleuze draws a parallel between the colonialist’s shame of Lawrence and the shame of Jean Genet about having been unable to support the Palestinian cause, even though he was in Beirut when the Sabra and Shatila massacres took place. Both have somehow managed to leap beyond shame by transmuting

27 Idem, p. 31.
their innate shame into a grand percept of glory. Like shame, glory is a public and dramatic affect; it needs to be seen, thus rendering politics inseparable from the fabulatory power of art: ‘Mingled with shame, his [Lawrence’s] pride lies in seeing the Arabs so noble, so beautiful, so charming […] As the Arabs join the Revolt, they are molded more and more on the projected images that individualize them, and make giants of them’ 29 (CC, 120).

Now it seems that this grandeur of vision in Lawrence and Genet is very much the same grandeur that Deleuze also discovers in Arafat. It is the grandeur of a becoming-glorious of shame; by becoming imperceptible, they move out of shame towards glory. Thus the grandeur of becoming is not at all narcissistic or megalomaniac, as the psychoanalytical and Christian tradition want it in their representations of false pride (vanity); on the contrary, for a glory that renounces shame while continuing to struggle with it, is a glory that is always ‘too much’ for the shameful pettiness of the ego (CC, 118). As François Zourabichvili puts it: ‘a glory always to come and yet already there, there insofar as it is to come or as becoming, and which never stops tolling the bell for my nasty and persistent little glories’ (Zourabichvili, 1996, p.207). Deleuze sees Arafat as a man without qualities who goes unperceived by virtue of knowing how to become-everyone and everything. 30 He becomes both singular and universal: one for all and all for one. Thus Arafat is a kind of minoritarian aristocrat who molecularizes the desert and in this way

29 ‘He is ashamed of the Arabs, for the Arabs, before the Arabs. Yet Lawrence bears the shame within himself, for all time, from birth, as a profound component of his Character. And it is through this profound shame that the Arabs set about playing the glorious role of an expiation, a voluntary purification; Lawrence himself helps them transform their paltry undertakings into a war of resistance and liberation, even if the latter must fail through betrayal (the failure in turn doubles the splendor or purity).’ (CC, 125)

30 Again what Deleuze says of Lawrence is also present in his interpretation and evaluation of the becomings of Arafat: ‘At the most profound level of subjectivity, there is not an ego but rather a singular composition, an idiosyncrasy, a secret cipher marking the unique chance that these entities had been retained and willed, that this combination had been thrown and not another. […] Character is the Beast: mind, will, desire, a desert-desire that brings together heterogeneous entities. … Of all the entities, none appears with greater insistence than Shame and Glory, Shame and Pride.’ (CC, 120) In the words of Massumi: grandeur is always a matter of ‘disjunctive self-inclusion’: a belonging to itself that is simultaneously an extendibility to everything else with which it might be connected (‘all for one, and all in-itself’) (Massumi 2002: pp. 17-8).
embodies the ‘hallucinatory being’ of the Palestinian people, such ‘[t]he Israelis never could chase them away, never completely erase them, cover them in the oblivion of the night’ (TR, 334). By having no longer anything to hide, he conquers a certain invincibility.\footnote{‘There we no longer have any secrets, we no longer have anything to hide. It is we who have become a secret, it is we who are hidden, even though we do all openly, in broad daylight. This is the opposite of the romanticism of the ‘damned’. We have painted ourselves in the colors of the world.’ (D, 46)} Cast into a private desert of which the world knows nothing, he abstracts from it a new and all the more powerful hypnotic percept (CC, 117). This is what Deleuze calls ‘the physical presence of Arafat among his own, all in a sort of solitary grandeur’: a speculative presence which is less that of a character than of a theme or an event, in other words, the phantasm of his indiscernibility from the impersonal plane of a molecular earth and people to come. Arafat’s glory does not depend on recognition from others. It is an anonymous, but no less glorious and political presence. In a word, his grandeur is the universal freedom of the structuralist hero who exposes himself to the infinite movement of the event. It is the visible presence of the future itself as it fills up the present with potentials whose outcomes cannot be seen.

**Dignity and Ressentiment**

After health and glory, this dramatic concept of grandeur brings us to the final aspect of grandeur, which Deleuze borrows from Stoicism but interprets in a profoundly Nietzschean fashion: worthiness or dignity. As is well-known, in *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze opposes dignity to *ressentiment*: ‘Either ethics makes no sense at all, or this is what it means and has nothing else to say: not to be unworthy of what happens to us. To grasp whatever happens as unjust and unwarranted (it is always someone else’s fault) is, on the contrary, what renders our sores repugnant – veritable *ressentiment*, *ressentiment* of the event’ (LS, 149). What is remarkable about this passage is first of all that, other than with health and illness or glory and shame, Deleuze allows no paradoxical zone of indiscernibility between dignity and *ressentiment*. It is true that *ressentiment*, too, is part of our inherited sentiments and that there is dignity in the self-overcoming transmutation of these sentiments. In this sense, there is again this ‘gray area’ between them, which explains why it is uninteresting and irrelevant to blame someone for
having *ressentiment* even if the diagnosis is true.\(^{32}\) Yet at the same time, *ressentiment* and dignity are precisely two radically different modes of existence, two incommensurable perspectives on the same event. This is because their hierarchy is the genealogical difference par excellence, the ultimate difference that constitutes philosophy as a typology of modes of existence (S, 130): ‘To have *ressentiment* or not to have *ressentiment* – there is no greater difference, beyond psychology, beyond history, beyond metaphysics. It is the true difference or transcendental typology – the genealogical and hierarchical difference’ (NP, 35). Or as Deleuze & Guattari put it in *What is Philosophy?* ‘A mode of existence is good or bad, noble or vulgar, complete or empty, independently of Good and Evil or any transcendent value: there are never any criteria other than the tenor of existence, the intensification of life’ (WP, 74). In other words, while glory and shame are always mingled in the same way that becoming and being or form and matter can never be disconnected, dignity and *ressentiment* refer only to forms of becoming. Of course, grandeur is always inherent to, and doesn’t exist outside, material mixtures of shame and glory. But there is dignity only in the glorious counteractualization of shame, while there is *ressentiment* only in its staying passive. In the latter case, shame is internalized in the form of a guilty ego from which there is no escape. This doesn’t mean that shame can be reduced to *ressentiment*, or that *ressentiment* can be reduced to shame, but rather that shame turns into *ressentiment* as soon as it ‘ceases to be acted in order to become something felt (*senti*)’ (NP, 111). From then on, shame no longer qualifies what we cease to be but what we inalterably are, what we must take responsibility for and will never have done with. There is, in other words, a worthy way of dealing with shame and the way of *ressentiment*. Only the worthy way leads to glory, while only the latter intensifies shame, (Obviously the same goes for the relations between health and illness, where the *ressentiment* is defined by the very reactionary becoming of reactive forces that are no longer acted upon from outside and therefore develop into nagging perceptions).

One of the more elaborate examples of this radical difference between dignity and *ressentiment* given by Deleuze is that of war as pure event, that is, the theatre of war abstracted from all particular interests and parties. This example also sheds some more light on his remarks on the grandeur of Arafat or the Arab Revolt: ‘There is […] a good deal of ignominy in saying that war

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concerns everybody, for this is not true. It does not concern those who use it or those who serve it – creatures of ressentiment. And there is as much ignominy in saying that everyone has his own war or particular wound, for this is not true of those who scratch their sores – the creatures of bitterness and ressentiment. It is true only of the free man, who grasps the event, and does not allow it to be actualized as such without enacting, the actor, its counteractualization. [...] Only by spreading ressentiment the tyrant forms allies, namely slaves and servants. The revolutionary alone is free from the ressentiment, by means of which one always participates in, and profits by, an oppressive order’ (LS, 152). In this passage, Deleuze gives his first elaboration of his later famous contrast between combat and ‘the shame of battles’ (CC, 121), or between the active war machine and reactive state armies (TP, 351-80). We can see it as Deleuze’s ultimate answer to ‘this gray zone and indiscernibility where for a moment the combatants on the ground are confused, and the thinker’s tired eye mistakes one for the other’ (WP, 109). Whereas the US, Israel or the Kaeteb party appropriated the war machine in their own interest, turning it into a matter of fact that forecloses any noble transformation of suffering by offering only death to the Palestinians (TR, 161), combat or war is a matter of concern for everybody, from refugees to militants, and does not belong to anyone in particular. Indeed, while the Israeli’s want to be an exceptional, ‘transcendent’ people and therefore ‘not a people like any other people’ (TR, 199), as Deleuze says in conversation of Elias Sanbar, it is key that the Palestinians remain ‘a people like any other people’, an infinite now complicating multiple possible futures and pasts in a completely immanent fashion without being slowed down by the history of external parties. For in the end, only those who need

33 Deleuze, Grandeur of Yasser Arafat. See also Deleuze’s remark in ‘The Gulf War: a Despicable War’: ‘Our [the French government’s] highest goal is to wage war well so we are given the right to participate in peace conferences [...]’ (TR, 375-6)

34 The Palestinians are made to pay the ‘infinite debt’ that ‘Europe owes its Jews’ (TR, 333) through ‘infinite occupation’ by Israel, such that ‘the stones raining down on them [the Israeli’s] come from within, they come from the Palestinian people, to remind us that there is a place in the world, no matter how confined, where the debt has been reversed. The stones thrown from the hands of the Palestinians are their stones, the living stones of their country. A debt cannot be paid with one, two, three, seven, ten murders a day, and it cannot be paid with third-party agreements. The third-party is ultimately nowhere to be found, every death calls out to the living, and the Palestinians have become part of the soul of Israel. The Palestinians sound the depths of that soul and torment it with their piercing stones.’ (TR, 334)
war resent the war machine as a problem of terror and therefore as a mirror of their own paranoia.\(^{35}\) From their perspective, the Palestinians are simply ‘the spoilers of peace for everyone involved’ (TR, 161), i.e., for all the professional and ‘legitimate’ shareholders. Moreover, if the war of the Palestinians is their ‘first war’\(^{36}\) (TR, 333), as Deleuze writes, then because it is an entirely active war. It is active precisely because it is ‘a war they did not chose’ (TR, 163) among a number of tactical options, but rather a necessity, whereas the Israeli war is a secondary, reactive war that is inseparable from the ‘forced and shameful servitude’ (CC, 122) of armies and their pre-established interests. It is because of this necessary spontaneity of the war machine that Arafat is a free man, capable of opening himself up to an impersonal and pre-individual role, and of discovering, from the vantage point of imperceptibility, new institutions and new ways of life testifying to a mutation that lives on in the war regardless of actual atrocities and injustice. Thus again, we see that the dignity of Arafat is that of a seer, a clairvoyant, who, no longer able to define his freedom in terms of concrete possibilities, invented an abstract possibility created by the war. Worthiness belongs to a perverse rather than subversive potentialization of subjectivity. Although it refers to the subjective aspect of nobility, it lies precisely in reaching the limit where the individual is transfixed and substituted by a singularity. Arafat bears witness to a strange kind of exterior vitality beyond all victimhood: the cruel consistency of the war as event, imperceptible, incorporeal, universal and ideal (LS, 155). And in this way, he gains eternity, the ultimate sign of grandeur, the point where history and becoming coincide: ‘This is the ultimate difference, therefore, between the good man and the bad man: the good or strong individual is the one who exists so fully or so intensely that he

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\(^{35}\) Today with the boundless war on terror we can see ever more clearly how terrorism inevitably becomes the future of a war that involves everybody but is at the same time appropriated by a limited number of ‘shareholders’ such as the secret services, the arms industry, the Church, intelligence networks, NGO’s and so on: ‘The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a model that will determine how problems of terrorism will be dealt with elsewhere, even in Europe. The worldwide cooperation of States, and the worldwide organization of police and criminal proceedings, will necessarily lead to a classification extending to more and more people who will be considered virtual “terrorists”.’ (TR, 162)

\(^{36}\) ‘From the beginning, the Palestinian people have carried out, on their own, a war which continues to this day in defense of their land, their stones, their way of life.’ (TR, 333)
has gained eternity in his lifetime, so that death, always extensive, always external, is of little significance to him’ (S, 41).

Now it is this amor fati, the power of incorporating this strange cosmic presence of the event sub specie aeternitatis, which Deleuze, through Arafat no less than through Levi, claims especially for philosophy. It is grafted upon what Spinoza calls beatitude, but also upon a Stoic cosmopolitanism understood as the ‘question of becoming a citizen of the world’ (LS, 148). ‘There is a dignity of the event that has always been inseparable from philosophy as amor fati’ (WP, 160). We have already seen that shame, the very ‘shame of being a philosopher’ (Stengers), is Deleuze’s inherited sentiment. A shame, for example, about the image of thought defended by bureaucrats or journalists; about what his critics write about him (‘Letter to a Harsh Critic’); about what ‘what the “new philosophers” have been doing with Marx’; about the decadence of a media practice that ‘has nothing to do with philosophy’ and merely cultivates the ‘witness-function’ (TR, 144-5) at the cost of resistance fighters and victims of the Gulag; about Jean Baudrillard as the ‘shame of the profession’37, and so on – Deleuze even lets himself be seduced into the nostalgic remark that Sartre’s ‘presence alone would have kept them from talking such nonsense’ (TR, 231). It is only out of a ‘resistance […] to shame’ (WP, 110) or nostalgia, then, that the active force of contemporary philosophy can attain dignity or grandeur, even if this grandeur of the philosopher may have very little to do with the prevalent humanist idea of philosophy: ‘there is no way to escape the ignoble but to play the art of the animal (to growl, burrow, snigger, distort ourselves): thought itself is sometimes closer to an animal that dies than to a living, even democratic, human being’ (WP, 108).38 ‘There may be an intricate complicity with baseness in all becoming-noble, but at the same time, baseness is defined by the lowest power of becoming, whereas grandeur is becoming taken to its nth power, beyond all self-preservation and self-defense towards the creation of a new self of everyman or everywoman (C2, 141-2).

Of course, besides illness and shame, there are many other powerful motifs of creation. In principle, any crisis or event – death, a wound, a naval battle, a catastrophe etcetera – can be an incentive for philosophy. Hence

38 Or again on the alliance between nobility and animality: ‘Ours is the age of communication, but every noble soul flees and crawls far away whenever a little discussion, a colloquium, or a simple conversation is suggested.’ (WP, 146)
these motifs do not yet tell us anything about the way in which philosophy attains its own grandeur. For example, it is the grandeur of Leibniz to have become worthy of the spiritual crisis of the Baroque. As Deleuze says, Leibniz is very close to another of Shakespeare’s singular-universal characters, Prospero: ‘a dispenser of good fortune, but who is himself lost in his splendid isolation’ (TF, 76). It is important to emphasize this tense conjunction of the isolated philosophical grandeur of the private thinker with intense public engagement, as it is precisely this grandeur which Deleuze opposes to the analytical philosophy of Wittgenstein and his pupils, which he describes as ‘a system of terror in which, under the pretext of doing something new, it is poverty introduced as grandeur’ (L’Abécédaire, W; TF, 76). But the most exemplary of philosophical grandeur is undoubtedly Spinoza, ‘the Christ of philosophers’ (WP, 60) and therefore the brother of all, of whom Deleuze writes that ‘[n]o philosopher was ever more worthy, but neither was any philosopher more maligned and hated’ (S, 17). More precisely, Deleuze – perhaps the ascetic philosopher of the twentieth century, as Alain Badiou once remarked (Badiou, 2000: p.13) – identifies Spinoza’s grandeur with the same ascetic virtues that Nietzsche ascribed to the philosopher (Nietzsche, 2006, pp.77-81). The key is that, being a philosopher and not a priest, Spinoza makes not a moral use of them, but an ethical use: ‘Humility, poverty, chastity are his (the philosopher’s way) of being a grand vivant, of making a temple of his own body, for a cause that is all too proud, all too rich, all too sensual. So that by attacking the philosopher, people know the shame of attacking a modest, poor, and chaste appearance, which increases their impotent rage tenfold; and the philosopher offers no purchase, although he takes every blow’ (S, 3; NP, 6). The dignity of the philosopher coincides with his ascetic virtues, not because these are valued for their own sakes, but because they are valued as the most advantageous conditions under which philosophical activity can flourish. They are its conditions of its becoming-imperceptible. It is in these virtues that the essence of philosophy, i.e. its grandeur, could first express itself, even if they were only its mask. In fact, a conjunction between philosophy and asceticism lies at the very core of Deleuze’s understanding of philosophy and its political implications and marks the point of complete sobriety where philosophy loses its external anchoring and becomes a great gust of wind blowing us away (S, 130).
Conclusion

All of the considerations above may not be sufficient to get a full grasp of what Deleuze might have meant with ‘the grandeur of Marx’. But it is now clear that grandeur is not so much a quality of Marx, rather than Marx being an individuation of grandeur. The grand man exposes himself to a concept, a percept, a politics. His grandeur may pertain to certain virtues, but it may just as well be the nobility which belongs to the ‘infamous men’ of Foucault who are beyond the reach of the charity of the empirical aristocracy, or indeed beyond the empirical stratification of socio-economic class. Indeed, Deleuze’s nobles are usually of the likes of Bartleby, Falstaff, Don Quixote, or K – pariahs, braggarts or pitiful figures which history seems to have passed by, but who are nonetheless experts in metamorphoses of life (C2, 142). For what, according to Deleuze, is noble or grand? ‘[T]o become a beetle, to become a dog, to become an ape, ‘head over heels and away,’ rather than lowering one’s head and remaining a bureaucrat, inspector, judge, or judged’ (K, 12).

Without a doubt, the grandeur of Marx lies in his invention/fabulation of the concept/percept of the global proletariat as the summoning up of the revolutionary people to come. The touchstone for his grandeur is ultimately whether his concept of the proletarian revolution is a dialectical negation – dialectics for Deleuze being the ‘ideology of ressentiment’ (NP, 159) – or whether it belongs to the positivity of a problematic structure, in other words, to a speculative ‘power of aggression and selection’ (DR, xviii) of

39 Deleuze refers to Foucault as ‘a man without references’ (D, 11).
40 Must we say that the return to Nietzsche implies a kind of aestheticism, a renunciation of politics, an “individualism” as depersonalized as it is depoliticized? Maybe not. Politics, too, is in the business of interpretation. The untimely, which we just discussed, is never reducible to the political-historical element. But it happens from time to time that, at certain great moments, they coincide. When people die of hunger in India, such a disaster is political-historical. But when the people struggle for their liberation, there is always a coincidence of poetic acts and historical events or political actions, the glorious incarnation of something sublime or untimely. Such great coincidences are Nasser’s burst of laughter when he nationalized Suez, or Castro’s gestures, and that other burst of laughter, Giap’s television interview. Here we have something that reminds us of Rimbaud’s or Nietzsche’s imperatives and which puts one over on Marx–an artistic joy that comes to coincide with historical struggle. There are creators in politics, and creative movements, that are poised for a moment in history.(DI, 130)
minoritarian becomings. It is in this latter, structuralist way that Marx figures in *Difference and Repetition*. He embodies a new positive form of social multiplicity in which the negativity of the economical is articulated back into the virtual positivity of real abstraction: the social Idea that defines capitalist society as a structure of differential elements with no prior identity, although determined by virtual relationships of production and incarnated in actual relationships between wage-labourers and capitalists. ‘The economic instance is constituted by such a social multiplicity – in other words, by the varieties of these differential relations’ (DR, 186). In other words, in structuralism we find the ideal or speculative causality of machinic processes as found in Marx but without the economic determinism as found in certain forms of Marxism.

To think or to speculate is to find a new freedom beyond the socially produced limits that transform relations into objects, i.e., beyond commodity fetishism (DR, 193). Social relations do not develop linearly, according to the history of modes of production, but in qualitative leaps. As a consequence, revolutionary thought is no longer eschatological, rooted in the history of economic relations, but oriented towards everything that exceeds society as a fetish, exposing the virtual relations and micropolitical transformations that constitute a sociality that exceeds any delimited society and drags it into the future. In this way, Marx can become the proper name of a renewed belief in the world and the *Communist Manifesto* the expression of something like an avant-garde percept that re-poses the social problem, for which there are no more existing (economical) solutions, and affirms a new way out. ‘As opposed to history as apocalypse, there is a sense of history as possibility, the multiplicity of what is possible, the profusion of multiple possibilities at every moment’ (TR, 200).

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41 As Simon Chaot frames the challenge: ‘Is Marx trying to save the dialectic from sliding into nihilism or does he join Nietzsche in defeating it? […] Is negation in Marx an active self-destruction, or is he caught up with the concept of contradiction’? Simon Choat, 2009. ‘Deleuze, Marx and the Politicisation of Philosophy.’ In: *Deleuze Studies*. No. 3, pp. 8-27, (pp. 13-4).


References


The Healing Practices of Language: Artaud and Deleuze on Flesh, Mind and Expression

Joeri Visser

Abstract
Both Antonin Artaud and Gilles Deleuze have diagnosed our Western European civilization with symptoms as sick, sluggish and worn-out. We live in a world where we do still not know what the body is capable of and still hold to a paranoid and narcotizing fixity within body, mind and language; we live in an age where the vital and healthy link between man and his body is broken. Alluding to Artaud as a genuine initiator, pioneer and physician in the process of healing the broken link between man and his body, Deleuze contends we need a belief in this world, which is a commitment and conversion to absolute immanence. This chapter firstly discusses Deleuze’s conception of the healthy link between man and his body after which it investigates in what way Artaud’s writings engage with the vitality of our body and how his linguistic devotion to absolute immanence will give us reasons to believe in this world, this life and this body.
Joeri Visser

‘The truth of life lies in the impulsiveness of matter. The mind of man has been poisoned by concepts.’

Antonin Artaud

Do We Know What The Body Is Capable Of?

Discussing the writings of Pierre Klossowski, Deleuze concludes in *Logic of Sense*, that ‘[e]voked (expressed) are the singular and complicated spirits, which do not possess a body without multiplying it inside the system of reflections, and which do not inspire language without projecting it into the intensive system of resonances. Revoked (denounced) are corporeal unicity, personal identity, and the false simplicity of language insofar as it is supposed to denote bodies and to manifest a self’

1 ‘La vérité de la vie est dans l’impulsivité de la matière. L’esprit de l’homme est malade au milieu des concepts’ (p. 149). [Translation by Helen Weaver].

The Italian language owns the expression ‘Traduttore, traditore’ that concisely and straightforwardly condemns the treason of translation. Translations always miss the constitutive noises between words, the connotations around words and the vital vibrations within words and every translation is therefore essentially a treason to the original (that is itself already often a treason). In order to enhance the readability of this article, I present the quotes in an English translation in the head text while reproducing the French original in the footnotes (abandoning the redundancy of notes within footnotes, I will not translate French texts that are only quoted in footnotes). In this way, these footnotes become important healing practices of language, because they restore and heal the puns, portmanteaus and neologisms that have been modified or (partially) lost in the English translation. I will come back to this point later.

I have used the available and generally good English translations of Deleuze’s texts. The bibliography contains the name of the many translators of Deleuze’s work and they will consequently not be named after the reproduction of the French originals in the footnotes. For Artaud, I have used the available but often mediocre English translations of his texts. Because of the few good translations of Artaud’s texts, I have thus sometimes translated or modified his texts myself. For this reason, I have mentioned the translator after the French originals for Artaud’s texts.

2 ‘Ce qui est évoqué (exprimé), ce sont les esprits singuliers et compliqués, qui ne possèdent pas un corps sans le multiplier dans le système des reflets, et qui n’inspirent pas le langage sans le projeter dans le système intensif des résonances. Ce qui est révoqué (dénoncé), c’est l’unicité corporelle autant que l’identité personnelle, et la
language as a system that falsely appropriates the singularities of bodies, Klossowski’s novels would disclose the ground that makes both thinking and speaking possible. In his literary and critical works, Klossowski is interested in the tension between the linguistic expression of the body in a formalized system of signs. In exploring and reflecting on ways to communicate the linguistic incommunicability of flexion (the vitality, singularity and intensity of a body), Klossowski is constantly confronted with the tension between a pure language that evokes an impure silence and an impure language that articulates a pure silence. Deleuze argues, following Klossowski, that:

The body is language because it is essentially ‘flexion.’ In reflection, the corporeal flexion seems to be divided, split in two, opposed to itself and reflected in itself; it appears finally for itself, liberated from everything that ordinarily conceals it. […] But if the body is flexion, so too is language. An entire reflection of words, or a reflection in words, is necessary for the flexional character of language to appear, finally liberated of everything that covers it up and conceals it. ³ (LS, 286)

In other words, it is only through the repetition – reflection – that we can perceive the initial difference – the flexional singularity of both body and language. There is thus only flexion through reflection. Although reflection precedes flexion in a certain sense, Deleuze finds its effectuations and violations improper or, to use a word that is closer to Klossowski’s writings, obscene. Deleuze therefore notes that ‘the obscene is not the intrusion of bodies into language, but rather their mutual reflection and the act of language which fabricates a body for the mind. This is the act by which language transcends itself as it reflects a body. ‘There is nothing more verbal than the excesses of the flesh […] The reiterated description of the carnal act

³ ‘Le corps est langage parce qu’il est essentiellement « flexion ». Dans la réflexion, la flexion corporelle est comme dédoublée, scindée, opposée à soi, reflétée sur soi ; elle apparaît enfin pour elle-même, libérée de tout ce qui la cache ordinairement. […] Mais si le corps est flexion, le langage aussi. Et il faut une réflexion des mots, une réflexion dans les mots, pour qu’apparaisse, enfin libéré de tout ce qui le recouvre, de tout ce qui le cache le caractère flexionnel de la langue’ (pp. 331-32).
not only reviews the transgression, it is itself a transgression of language by language\(^4\) (LS, 281).

These last sentences from Klossowski’s essay on Bataille in *Such A Deathly Desire* are interesting since they notice the transgressive nature of a description of carnal excess, but Klossowski similarly indicates the transgression of language through the act of description. The excesses of the flesh are events that cannot simply be reproduced by a pure language (a formalized system of signs) and must thus consequently be reiterated in a description of the carnal act that finds its articulation in an impure language. In line with Klossowski’s reasoning, Deleuze therefore considers flexion as a double ‘transgression;’ ‘of language by the flesh and of the flesh by language’\(^5\) (LS, 286). Putting it differently, whereas flexion disrupts both-flesh and language, reflection creates bodies for the mind and an obscenely doubled language. It is interesting to notice, as we have seen, that Deleuze differentiates between ‘body’ (*corps*) and ‘flesh’ (*chair*). I already noted above that whereas flesh is flexion, the body must be seen as a product of reflection, but in what way, then, does the flesh relate to the body? And if expression becomes intelligible within a formalized system of signs, how can language ever adequately and intelligibly denote this flesh? And how, finally, might we then ever touch upon the vital powers of flexion?

Revaluating and re-engaging with the vital powers of flexion, the intensity of the flesh and the singularity of expression is difficult and a seemingly insignificant task in an age that Deleuze characterizes with symptoms as sick, sluggish and worn-out\(^6\); an age where we, following

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\(^4\) ‘l’obsèque n’est pas l’intrusion du corps dans le langage, mais leur commune réflexion, et l’acte du langage qui fabrique un corps pour l’esprit, l’acte par lequel le langage ainsi se dépasse lui-même en réfléchissant un corps. « Il n’est rien de plus verbal que les excès de la chair... La description réitérée de l’acte charnel non seulement rend compte de la transgression, elle est elle-même une transgression du langage par le langage »’ (p. 326).

\(^5\) ‘du langage par la chair, et de la chair par le langage’ (p. 332).

\(^6\) In ‘The Ethics of Becoming-Imperceptible,’ Rosi Braidotti similarly describes our age as a time of ‘advanced capitalism [that] has simultaneously reduced all counter-cultures to objects of commodified consumption and re-established a conservative ethos that spells the death of all experimentations aimed at transformative changes’ (p. 142). In an age of advanced capitalism, we must however not rest in the rusting of a conservative ethos but rather, following Braidotti, ‘cultivate the ethical life by applying the principle of joyful transformation of negative into positive affects’ (Braidotti, 2006: p. 142).
The Healing Practices of Language

Spinoza, do still not know what the body is capable of. Ascertaining that we keep on holding to a paranoid and narcotizing fixity within body (the idea of a definable and healthy organism), mind (the transcendentally formalized spirit of man) and language (the order-word assemblage: a function of language that restricts, selects and regulates the unlimited and vital flux of expression), Deleuze sets his hope on the ‘creation of a health […]’, that is, a possibility of life (CC, 4). As a genuine clinician, he diagnoses our age as a time where the vital and healthy link between man and his body is broken and where we have stopped believing in this world – this world; a world of immanence that is not pre-determined, that escapes determination and definition and that is consequently full of potency, vitality and unexplored creative fluxes. If we want to heal – in its etymological sense of ‘curing’ and ‘making whole’ – this broken but vital link between man and his body, we must dare thinking the unthinkable and, from there, believe (we must remember that a belief is something different than a knowledge or a science) in the vital forces of this world, this life and this body. Deleuze states in The Time-Image that to believe ‘[i]s simply believing in the body. It is giving discourse to the body, and, for this purpose, reaching the body before discourses, before words, before things are named […]. Artaud said the same thing, believe in the flesh […]. Give words back to the body, to the flesh’ (C1, 167, emphasis in the original). Alluding to Artaud as a genuine initiator, pioneer and physician in the process of healing and reconverting man to a belief in this world, Deleuze contends in The Time-Image that ‘[w]e need an ethic or a faith, which makes fools laugh; it is not a need to believe in something else, but a need to believe in this world, of which fools are a

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7 ‘création d’une santé […], c’est-à-dire une possibilité de vie’ (p. 15).
8 Deleuze contends that ‘[l]e fait moderne, c’est que nous ne croyons plus en ce monde. Nous ne croyons même pas aux événements qui nous arrivent, l’amour, la mort, comme s’ils ne nous concernaient qu’à moitié’ (L’Image-Temps, p. 223). The impossible link between man and this world is broken because we do not seem to have the power and force to genuinely think, and therewith believe, anymore. The detachment from this world makes us megalomaniac but also passive and sick.
9 ‘c’est simplement croire au corps. C’est rendre le discours au corps, et, pour cela, atteindre le corps avant les discours, avant les mots, avant que les choses soient nommées. […] Artaud ne disait pas autre chose, croire à la chair […]. Rendre les mots au corps, à la chair’ (p. 225, emphasis in the original).
part” (C1, 167). A belief in this body and this world is thus essentially a commitment and a conversion to absolute immanence.

In this article, I will focus on the healing practices of language and discuss this immanent conversion that Deleuze prescribes as a remedy for the broken link between man and his body. I will discuss the immanent conversion, which is a belief in this world, this life and this body, by analyzing the writings of Artaud (Deleuze often alludes to the late writings of Artaud, but rarely quotes, comments or analyzes them). Before doing so, I will firstly select the concepts, or bricks, for my analysis by looking at Deleuze’s differentiation between body and flesh. The interrelatedness of body, flesh, mind and language will be further developed in the analysis of two poems by Artaud (from his early and his later writings) that describe, evoke and perform the vitality and the impulsiveness of the materiality of language. In this article, I thus want to show how Artaud’s writings can participate in the revaluation and re-engagement with the potency of flexion, the powers of the flesh and the vitality of expression and from there contribute to a healing process from a narcotic state or territory where the vital link between man and his body is broken.

The Art of the Flesh

In Logic of Sense Deleuze does not extensively elaborate or exemplify the distinction between body and flesh. In order to understand these terms more clearly, I therefore read these different concepts along with Deleuze’s Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation (FB) in which he usefully distinguishes between body, flesh, meat, bones and spirit. A clear differentiation and understanding of these concepts is necessary before we can consider the constitutive role of the healing practices of language.

In his discussion of a large number of paintings by the Irish painter Francis Bacon (1909-1992), Deleuze substantiates the logic of sensation that

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10 ‘Nous avons besoin d’une éthique ou d’une foi, ce qui fait rire les idiots ; ce n’est pas un besoin de croire à autre chose, mais un besoin de croire à ce monde-ci dont les idiots font partie’ (p. 225).

11 This commitment to immanence essentially implicates a process of dis-identification. In an interview for the monograph New Materialism, Braidotti rightly points at the dangers of this commitment, because ‘[d]is-identification involves the loss of cherished habits of thought and representation, a move that can also produce fear and a sense of insecurity and nostalgia’ (Braidotti, 2012, p. 35).
creates a consistency or rhythm while remaining catastrophically chaotic in order to recreate an initial unity of the senses (FB, 42). The differentiation between body (corps), flesh (chair) and meat (viande) will be both useful in understanding the logic of sensation, the task and difficulties of expression and in grasping the distinction that Deleuze makes between body and flesh in Logic of Sense. Already on one of the first pages of his analysis, Deleuze opposes the figurative against what he calls the ‘Figure.’ Whereas the figurative narrativizes and merely represents, this Figure breaks with narration and representation through isolation – ‘Isolation is thus the simplest means, necessary though not sufficient, to break with representation, to disrupt narration, to escape illustration, to liberate the Figure: to stick to the fact’\(^\text{12}\) (FB, 3). The strategy of the Figure is to break with the conventional relation between image and object and therewith articulates a disorganized whole that resists representation. In this sense, the Figure is a mode of sensation that is, as Deleuze contends, ‘[…] master of deformations, the agent of bodily deformations’\(^\text{13}\) (FB, 36). The hierarchized, formalized and organized body – one could also read ‘language’ instead of ‘body’ – is thus the material for the Figure that isolates it and therewith disrupts its former figurative, narrative and illustrative characteristics. The Figure must however not be reduced to a clumpy piece of meat, an unreasoned brushstroke or an incorrect sentence, because ‘[…] it is a spirit which is body, corporeal and vital breath, an animal spirit; it is the animal spirit of man’\(^\text{14}\) (FB, 20). In other words, the Figure and its non-structured bodily material pervert the imposed organization in order to articulate the corporeal and vital breath that is the animal spirit of man. This corporeal vitality is important since it essentially opens up to the infinity of potentialities that life can offer. In this sense, the animal spirit is a disorganized body and a mesmerizing cry that Deleuze, following Artaud, calls the body without organs (BwO). Deleuze situates this BwO ‘[…] beyond the organism, but also at the limit of the lived

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\(^{12}\) ‘Isoler est donc le moyen le plus simple, nécessaire quoique non suffisant, pour rompre avec la représentation, casser la narration, empêcher l’illustration, libérer la Figure : s’en tenir au fait’ (p. 12). Deleuze insists that the articulation of the Figure is not the only way to escape from the figurative, the narrative and the illustrative because one can also look for a pure and ‘factual’ form through abstraction.

\(^{13}\) ‘maîtresse de déformations, agent de déformations du corps’ (p. 41).

\(^{14}\) ‘c’est un esprit qui est corps, souffle corporel et vital, un esprit animal, c’est l’esprit animal de l’homme’ (p. 27).
body^{15} (FB, 44). The BwO therewith transcends the phenomenological concept of the lived experience, because this BwO dwells beyond or under the organism where the organized body becomes exhausted and subject to impossible and inconceivable forces. Deleuze insists that the BwO is rather opposed to the organization of the organs instead of the organs as such.\textsuperscript{16} Whereas the sick making disciplined body is an organized, normative or stratified whole that is dominated and bridled by the judgment of God,\textsuperscript{17} the BwO is ‘an intense and intensive body. It is traversed by a wave that traces levels or thresholds in the body according to the variations of its amplitude’\textsuperscript{18} (FB, 47). The BwO is thus a non-hierarchized body that, liberated from all its (terminological) determinations, operates on the plane of consistency.

The concept of the BwO cannot be pinpointed to one exclusive definition and therewith already performs the instability, the energy and the creativity to which it alludes. At best, it can only be described, evoked or suggested. Related to the body, flesh and meat, Deleuze asserts in Francis Bacon that ‘the Figure is the body without organs (dismantle the organism in favor of the body […]); the body without organs is flesh and nerve’\textsuperscript{19} (FB, 45). The flesh, that Deleuze equates with the Figure and the BwO, must be understood as a vital substance from which genuine thinking emerges. Before drawing such a radical conclusion, it is useful to look at the specific relation between the body and the flesh. Like the body, flesh equally contributes to the articulation of the Figure but only in the sense that it is a powerful nonorganic life that disrupts and subverts any form of supposed fixity. The intense and vital body – the BwO – is thus only articulated when the flesh dances again inside out. Before we can understand the task of language and the way in which language might articulate the flesh (Klossowski’s idea of a perfect silence in an imperfect language), we must pay attention to the role of bones and meat in Deleuze’s reading of Bacon’s paintings. Deleuze considers the bones as the framework within which the flesh can play its tricks, because ‘the bones are like a trapeze apparatus (the carcass) upon which the flesh is the acrobat.

\textsuperscript{15} ‘Au-delà de l’organisme, mais aussi comme limite du corps vécu’ (p. 47).
\textsuperscript{16} As we shall see, one could also read ‘signs’ or ‘words’ instead of ‘organs.’
\textsuperscript{17} Both the ‘body without organs’ and ‘the judgment of God’ allude to Artaud’s last major work Pour En Finir Avec Le Jugement De Dieu (1947).
\textsuperscript{18} ‘un corps intense, intensif. Il est parcouru d’une onde qui trace dans le corps des niveaux ou des seuls d’après les variations de son amplitude’ (p. 47).
\textsuperscript{19} ‘la Figure, c’est précisément le corps sans organes (défaire l’organisme au profit du corps […] ) ; le corps sans organes est chair et nerf’ (p. 48).
The athleticism of the body is naturally prolonged in this acrobatics of the flesh\(^ {20} \) (FB, 23). The body is thus exactly the corporeal extension of the interplay between flesh and bones. But what if the acrobat falls from one of his gymnastic apparatuses? What if the flesh loses its grip from the bones?

Deleuze considers meat as precisely this state of the body where ‘[…] flesh and bone confront each other locally rather than being composed structurally. […] In meat, the flesh seems to descend from the bones, while the bones rise up from the flesh\(^ {21} \) (FB, 22, emphasis in the original). We must however take care not to equate meat with lifeless flesh, because ‘[…] it [meat] retains all the sufferings and assumes all the colors of living flesh’\(^ {22} \) (FB, 23). Whereas Deleuze contends that meat must not be confused with dead flesh, I think on the contrary that meat must be understood as dead flesh, but not as lifeless. The difference between ‘dead’ and ‘lifeless’ is subtle, but in order to clearly differentiate between body and flesh, I think it will be useful to consider meat as dead but not lifeless flesh. The meat that emerges from the confrontation between the bones and the flesh – the emergence of the skeleton from which the flesh has dropped off – constitutes what Deleuze calls ‘the common zone of man and the beast, their zone of indiscernibility; it is a “fact”’\(^ {23} \) (FB, 23). Meat thus creates this ‘fact’ – the undecidable form of the Figure – and therewith constitutes a double becoming. Deleuze asserts that within this zone of the indiscernible ‘[…] man becomes animal, but he does not become so without the animal simultaneously becoming spirit, the spirit of man, the physical spirit of man presented in the mirror as Eumenides or fate’\(^ {24} \) (FB, 21). Being confronted with meat, we simultaneously see, feel and perceive how this meat affects us through its becoming of the physical spirit of man or, as Arsalan Memon concisely summarizes in his article ‘Un-Marking and Re-Marking the Border

\(^{20}\) ‘les os sont comme les agrès (carcasse) dont la chair est l’acrobate. L’athlétisme du corps se prolonge naturellement dans cette acrobatie de la chair’ (p. 29).

\(^{21}\) ‘la chair et les os se confrontent localement, au lieu de se composer structuralement. […] Dans la viande, on dirait que la chair descend des os, tandis que les os s’élèvent de la chair’ (p. 29, emphasis in the original).

\(^{22}\) ‘elle [viande] a gardé toutes les souffrances et pris sur soi toutes les couleurs de la chair vive’ (p. 29).

\(^{23}\) ‘la zone commune de l’homme et de la bête, leur zone d’indiscernabilité, elle est « fait »’ (p. 30).

\(^{24}\) ‘L’homme devient animal, mais il ne le devient pas sans que l’animal en même temps ne devienne esprit, esprit de l’homme, esprit physique de l’homme présenté dans le miroir comme Euménide ou Destin’ (p. 28).
Between Humanity and Animality’, ‘[…] the human becomes the animal, while the animal becomes the animal-spirit of the human. Flesh becomes meat and concomitantly, meat becomes spirit’ (Memon, 2006: p.16).

Deleuze insists that this mutual becoming is not the combining of a determined form of man and that of animal; they reveal on the contrary ‘[…] rather a common fact: the common fact of man and animal’ (FB, 21). The common fact between man and animal is thus meat that becomes the physical spirit of man when it emerges in front of our eyes. And when the meat becomes the physical spirit of man, our flesh dances again around the bones. This dance differs however from the organized dance, because it is an animal dance or, better, a dance in which the difference between man and animal becomes undecidable. The flesh makes the body think, reason and speak and it is in this dance that the most healthy life can be done justice because the body can only acquire a great Health when it becomes dysfunctional.

Deleuze’s revaluation of the flesh is thus first and foremost a cult of the meat, because the intense body, the BwO and the vital powers of flesh are essentially unrepresentable and incommunicable. Taking the work of the Irish painter as a point of departure, Deleuze creates a logic of sensation that he substantiates with Bacon’s approach to meat. Because of the way in which Bacon produces affects with meat, Deleuze consequently concludes that ‘[…] the painter is certainly a butcher, but he goes to the butcher’s shop as if it were a church, with the meat as the crucified victim’ (FB, 23-24). Deleuze considers Bacon not as a Christian painter, but rather as a religious painter that tries to recreate the broken link between man and this body, this life and this world. Meat has the potency to revitalize our flesh: genuine life is thus to be found among the dead.

The Cry of the Flesh

The concept of the BwO was first used by Deleuze in Logic of Sense in which he associated the term with the active nonsense that generates what Artaud termed as ‘cruelty’ – the ‘submission to necessity’ (Artaud, 2004, p.566). Focusing on formalist linguistics, Deleuze finds their logic that merely focuses on the surface of language insufficient. Their logic should not

25 ‘plutôt le fait commun: le fait commun de l’homme et de l’animal’ (p. 28).
26 ‘Le peintre est boucher certes, mais il est dans cette boucherie comme dans une église, avec la viande pour Crucifié’ (p. 30). In the English translation, the direct association with Christ – the Crucified – gets lost in order to generalize the crucified.
concern the problem of sense and nonsense, but on the contrary the critical
and clinical problems of language. Whereas the first set of problems focuses
on ‘the determination of differential levels at which nonsense changes shape,
the portmanteau word undergoes a change of nature, and the entire language
changes dimension,’ a clinical approach concerns ‘a problem of sliding from
one organization to another, or a problem of the formation of a progressive
and creative disorganization’ (LS, 83). Following these definitions, the
BwO is a clinical practice of creative disorganization of both body and
language that opens up to a productive nonsense. In Logic of Sense, Deleuze
considers Artaud as the main pioneer of this creative destruction, because
‘Artaud is alone in having been an absolute depth in literature, and in having
discovered a vital body and the prodigious language of this body. As he says,
he discovered them through suffering. He explored the infra-sense, which is
still unknown today’ (LS, 93). The term infra-sense is interesting since it
positively subverts the negative connotation of the word nonsense – maybe it
would thus even be more fruitful to speak in terms of sense and infra-sense.
Whereas nonsense (which is the strategy of humor) inflicts a torsion on
words by perverting the stability of the order-word assemblage (the
formalized system of signs), the infra-sense (which is rather the strategy of
irony) is a vacuole in which we are confronted with the vibration of words,
the stuttering of the system of signs and the performance of the instability of
language.

27 ‘Le problème est celui de la clinique, c’est-à-dire du glissement d’une organisation
à une autre, ou de la formation d’une désorganisation, progressive et créatrice. Le
problème est aussi bien celui de la critique, c’est-à-dire de la détermination des
niveaux différentiels où le non-sens change de figure, le mot-valise de nature, le
langage tout entier de dimension’ (p. 102).
28 ‘Artaud est le seul à avoir été profondeur absolue dans la littérature, et découvert un
corps vital et le langage prodigieux de ce corps, à force de souffrance, comme il dit. Il
explorait l’infra-sens, aujourd’hui encore inconnu’ (p. 114).
29 By using the physical term ‘torsion,’ I also want to highlight, following Artaud in a
letter from the 22th of September to Henri Parisot (see Artaud, p. 1014), the inherent
energy of words themselves.
30 A vacuole is a botanical term that designates an organelle – the functional unit
within any cell – which functions quite similar to a mammal kidney or a liver. The
vacuole is indispensable to a plant, because besides water, it also contains ‘stored
food, salts, pigments, and metabolic wastes’ (Solomon, p. 84). A vacuole is thus an
organelle of becoming, a unit of non-fixity and a site of creation.
We must understand the functioning of the formalized and organized body in the same way as Deleuze understands ‘sense’ – in its opposition to the non-sense of formalist linguistics. The BwO should then be understood not as the opposite of the body, but rather as the infinite depths of the body, the vital and healthy power that constantly haunts the sick making stratified body and the body that opens up to a virtual multiplicity of potentialities: the infra-body is life. But how can this infra-body be suggested, evoked or folded within an intelligible language? How can language ever attain the vital flexion of the infra-body? And in what way is the mind folded in this interrelatedness? In what follows, I will discuss and analyze both critically and clinically a poetic article from Artaud’s early writings. In doing so, I shall focus on the interrelatedness of flesh, mind and expression.

In 1925, Artaud publishes his article ‘Situation of the Flesh’ that he starts off with absolute engagement: ‘I reflect on life.’ After his commitment to life, Artaud continues by throwing a dark glance over his beginning – ‘All the systems I may erect never will match these cries of a man engaged in remaking his life.’ In other words, the cries that try to re-engage with life can never be expressed within any system of thought or expression. Despite this impossibility, Artaud imagines a system in which ‘all of man would be involved, with his physical [flesh] and its heights, the intellectual projection of his mind.’ In two rich and eloquent sentences, Artaud defines what he calls flesh: ‘One day my reason must surely honor the undefined forces besieging me – so that they replace higher thought –, those forces which, exteriorly, have the form of a cry. There are intellectual cries, cries which proceed from the delicacy of the marrow.’ Undefined forces, forces from the outside and the delicacy of the marrow thus create intellectual cries – cries that are incommunicable forces if they are articulated within the conventions of the formalized languages – that must, sooner or later, be welcomed by the

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31 See appendix I for the English and French versions of Artaud’s complete article. For the readability of the head text, I have omitted the notation of the page numbers at the end of each quote.

32 In the English translation, the French word ‘chair’ has falsely been translated as ‘body.’ In resting faithful to Artaud’s logic, I have replaced the word ‘body’ by the more appropriate word ‘flesh.’

33 In his short article, Artaud capitalizes the word ‘flesh’ three times. I will however consistently transcribe ‘flesh’ with a minuscule (it goes without saying that I do not want to relativize the enormous potency and powers of the flesh as defined by Artaud).
'higher’ thoughts. Artaud insists that these thoughts must not be separated from life and he therewith suggests an intricate relationship between flesh and what we habitually call consciousness. Evelyn Grossman consequently defines the artaudian flesh as ‘the complete body, this not yet broken body-thinking continuum […]. The flesh is an inseparable double from matter and mind, from merged organic and spiritual features.’ 

Body and thinking are thus different modes of the same vital substance and it is within this flesh that body and thinking form a continuum. It is in his short article ‘Situation of the Flesh’ that Artaud linguistically explores ways in which he can articulate and express this continuum: the flesh.

It is only by a deprivation of life – life is understood as the incessant flow of undefined forces or, in Artaud’s words, ‘man’s incomprehensible magnetism’ – that we can see to what extent ‘the Sensibility [Sens] and Science of every thought is hidden in the nervous vitality of the marrow.’ This awareness shows how intelligence and intellectuality are deceptive since sensibility, sense and science – on a phonetic and linguistic level the mutual implication of these terms is already suggested – ultimately come from the flesh. In revaluing all old-fashioned values, Artaud states that he has lost his life. In his search of the vital substance that he calls life, he considers himself ‘[…] in a way […] the Excitator’ of my own vitality: a vitality more precious to me than my conscience, for what to others is only the means for being a Man is for me the whole Reason.’ Artaud thus wants to live his life in accordance with this vitality and not escape the chaos of the flesh through a misleading use of reason. Genuinely living therewith implies and even necessitates the downgrading (or, depending the perspective one takes, upgrading) of reason to the vitality of the flesh. Artaud warns however that one has to look for this vitality slowly and cautiously, especially ‘if you have lost understanding of words. It is an indescribable science which explodes by slow thrusts.’ On a textual level, it is only through a slow, close and almost recitative reading of the French original that we perceive the analogy between ‘connaissance des mots’ and ‘science indescriptible’ in order to touch upon the vitality and undefined forces of the words (the Figure).

34 ‘Le corps intégral, ce continuum corps-pensée non encore rompu […]. La chair est un double indissociable de matière et d’esprit, d’organique et de spirituel fusionnés’ (Grossman, 2003: p. 76, emphasis in the original). [My translation].

35 The French word ‘excitateur’ has a religious and technical connotation. Whereas Weaver translates the word by ‘Generator,’ (p. 110) and Aldan by ‘Animator,’ (p. 59) I have chosen to preserve the religious connotation by using the word ‘excitator.’
Language thus seems to operate along the same axes as the flesh and Artaud illustrates this implication when he describes the significance of the flesh: ‘For when I say Flesh I say, above all, apprehension [appréhension], hair standing on end [hérissé], flesh naked with all the intellectual deepening [approfondissement] of this spectacle of pure flesh, and all the consequences [conséquences] in the senses [sens], that is, in feeling [sentiments]. And whoever says feeling [sentiment] says intuition [pressentiment], that is, direct knowledge [connaissance], communication turned inside out to its source to be clarified interiorly.’ Both on the level of sense and the level of sonority and materiality, we perceive the vitality of the nerves which function as undefined but intense forces. By exemplifying ‘apprehension’ with ‘poil hérissé,’ Artaud linguistically generates an intimate relationship between hair standing up – an expression that is mostly used for animals – and apprehension. The established assemblage goes on to extend itself and breaks up through its connection with ‘approfondissement intellectuel de ce spectacle de la chair pure.’ Intellectual deepening is thus not to be found in a critique of pure reason, but rather in a critique of pure flesh. Apprehension, hair standing up and intellectual deepening are overlapping, if not implying or even generating one another, on the level of sense, sonority and materiality. Artaud therewith shows how the sonority of the words produces a spiritual unity that is essentially material. The order-word assemblage thus loses its predetermined organization because the significance of words is semantically generated from a creative play with them: meaning thus emerges from the performativity of words. In other words, the subtle and creative play with the sound, form and restricted meaning of linguistic units makes words vibrate, the system of signs stutter and language perform its initial instability.

The words that generate and imply each other thus reveal that ‘there’s a mind in the flesh but a mind quick as lightening.’ The same flashing spirit that emanates from the vitality of the flesh – the delicacy of the marrow – is created when Artaud equates feeling – ‘sentiment’ – with presentiment or intuition – ‘pressentiment.’ Artaud already embedded ‘feeling’ in the consequences of the intellectual deepening of the naked flesh. In other words, ‘feeling’ is a consequence of the ‘flesh.’ Reasoning the other way round, this ‘feeling’ is equated with ‘intuition,’ that is in its turn characterized as direct knowledge, communication that turns from the inside to the outside. In other words, sense and mind are effects of the vitality and undefined forces of the flesh or, to put it in artaudian words: ‘the perturbation of the flesh partakes of
The high substance of the mind.’ Artaud finishes his article where the performativity of words is crucial by claiming the uniqueness of the flesh. Flesh is interrelated with sensibility – one should note the beautiful connection that ‘sensibilité’ makes with ‘sentiment,’ ‘pressentiment,’ ‘connaissance’ et cetera – and sensibility must be understood as ‘an intimate, secret, profound assimilation, absolute in relation to my own suffering, and consequently a solitary and unique consciousness of this suffering.’ However vital and energetic Artaud started off, he thus sadly ends his article by noticing that the flesh also creates a solitary and unique consciousness around our suffering. This sadness is only relative if we take into account that Artaud has nevertheless managed to articulate this unique consciousness of his suffering. Combating the order-word assemblage that has not ceased to submit and to domesticate in vain the vitality of his flesh, Artaud has formulated a body-language (an impure language) – a powerful biopolitical intervention – that serves as a vacuole against the paranoid and narcotizing fixity within body, mind and language that Artaud called the judgments of God and to which we sickly keep on holding today.

Artaud’s short article opened up with a commitment to life. This life is a capricious, but healthy and vital life that is inseparable from the delicacy of the marrow from which it emerges. Subtly sacrificing words in order to suggest the corporeal ground from which they emerge is the strategy of Artaud’s writing that fathoms the depths and the vitality of language. In doing so, Artaud clearly substantiates the intricate relationship between flesh, mind and expression and illustrates how meat, bones and flesh are related to words, grammar and sense. In ‘Situation of the Flesh,’ Artaud therewith shows how reflection can attain the singular flexion and how the repetition of a transcendent order-word assemblage can suggest the initial difference through the subtle articulation of the infra-sense of language. Artaud calls his corporeal writing a ‘nerve-meter’ – Grossman notices that the French word ‘pèse-nerf’ is also a ‘quasi anagram for “thinking”’ [penser]36 – that he describes as ‘[a] kind of incomprehensible stopping place in the mind, right in the middle of everything’37 (Grossman, 2003, p.86). The incomprehensible station of the ‘nerve-meter’ thinks the unthinkable forces of the flesh that incite us to think and makes them vibrate within words. In Francis Bacon, Deleuze equates this incomprehensible station with a hysteria which gives

37 ‘Une sorte de station incompréhensible et toute droite au milieu de tout dans l’esprit’ (p. 165). [Translation by Helen Weaver].
way to a very peculiar feeling that arises from within the body, precisely because the body is felt under the body, the transitory organs are felt under the organization of the fixed organs (FB, 49 [emphasis in the original]). Deleuze relates the vital powers of the BwO to the sensual writings of the ‘nerve-meter’ that is thus a creative and non-organized, non-stratified and undefined force of becoming. The ‘nerve-meter’ is there with the Figure that disrupts representation and the conventional sense of words in order to articulate the ground where body, thinking and language are intricately related. In his article ‘From Stuttering and Stammering to the Diagram: Deleuze, Bacon and Contemporary Art Practice,’ O’Sullivan concisely summarizes that it is the task of art to voice ‘the production of worlds (the figural) that sit between that which is known (the figurative) and that which is unknown (chaos)’ (O’Sullivan, 2009, p.255-56). Writing should similarly situate itself between an intelligible language that is deepened and rendered a stranger to itself through a subtle and creative play with chaos. The vital language of the ‘nerve-meter’, the expression of the flesh and the suggestion of the infra-body will then give us reasons to believe in this world since these creative vacuoles evoke the flexional singularity from which body, mind and language emerge; matter.

The Healing of the Flesh

The privileging of matter and the commitment to immanence have enormous implications for our conception around health and sickness. On 7 June 1946 Artaud writes his poem ‘The Patients and the Doctors’ which he records in a radio show by Jean Tardieu the next day. This poem from Artaud’s later writings more concretely demonstrates and substantiates the necessity of his project of revitalizing language into healing practices in order to re-engage with the impulsiveness of matter.

Artaud begins his poem with the neutral observation that health and sickness are two distinct states. In what follows, this state of affairs is perverted in order to re-evaluate the fruitfulness of sickness in relation to health. ‘Lousier’ than sickness, Artaud asserts that he finds the state of health

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38 ‘un sentiment très spécial de l’intérieur du corps, puisque le corps est précisément senti sous l’organisme, des organes transitoires sont précisément sentis sous l’organisation des organes fixes’ (p. 51, emphasis in the original).

39 See appendix II for the English and French versions of Artaud’s poem and the numbering of the verses.
‘meaner and pettier’ (v.4). Health is protective, conservative and prescriptive and therewith more restrictive, narrow-minded and bridling than sickness. Without any recourse to the pity of his reader, Artaud stately declares: ‘I have been sick all my life and I ask only that it continue’ (v.8). With a certain pride and wisdom, he explains that ‘[…] for the states of / privation in life have always told me a great deal more about the plethora of my / powers than the middleclass drawing – / AS LONG AS YOU’VE GOT YOUR HEALTH’ (v.8-11). If we do not know what a body is capable of, it is in a state of sickness that we discover the abundant powers of the nervous system, the delicacy of the marrow and the vitality of our flesh. The use of the word ‘plethora’ is significant in this sentence, because it designates on the one hand the infinite potentialities of our bodies, while, on the other hand, the word also medically connotes an abundance of blood. ‘Plethora’ and ‘my powers’ are linked in such a way that the poem generates a direct relationship between the body and the power to act within the virtual multiplicity of life. The health of the petty middleclass bourgeois shall therefore be insufficient if we want to attain or effectuate the vital and disorganized BwO.

After a praise of his hideous, dreadful and feverish being and after having expressed his aversion against those who want to heal the sick – ‘Curing a sickness is a crime’ (v.14) – the poem establishes a triad relationship between love, sickness and the effects of drugs. Artaud evokes this Trinity by italicizing interrelated words: ‘But, sick, one doesn’t get high by opium40, by cocaine, or by morphine. / It’s the dread of the fevers / you got to love, / the jaundice and the perfidy, / much more than all euphoria’ (v.17-21). When the patient learns to love the grim of his sickness, the use of drugs becomes redundant, because these stimulating medicines will sooner or later emanate from the sick body itself. Affirming sickness is therefore a belief in the vital powers, the infinite potentialities and the yet still unknown capabilities of this body:41 a re-engagement with absolute immanence. A few lines later, Artaud

40 In the French poem, the word ‘dopé’ is also put in italics. In the English translation, only ‘sick’ – ‘malade’ – and ‘love’ – ‘aimer’ – are italicized so that the interrelatedness between love, sickness and the effects and drugs gets lost. For this reason, ‘high’ or ‘high by opium’ should also have been put in italics.

41 Focusing on pain (which is an essential characteristic of sickness), Braidotti rightly describes its usefulness in her article ‘Nomadic Ethics’ – ‘It forces one to think about the actual material conditions of being interconnected and thus being in the world. It frees one from the stupidity of a perfect health, and the full-blown sense of existential entitlement that comes with it’ (Braidotti, 2012, p. 186).
wishes therefore that his sickness shall be his administered drugs (v.26) because he asserts that ‘cocaine is a bone, / and heroin a superman in the bones’ (v.32-33). Heroin\textsuperscript{42} as a kind of Übermensch\textsuperscript{43} reveals the inhuman forces that are too great to conceive. The following seemingly unintelligible exclamations (v.34-37)\textsuperscript{44} are perhaps the most adequate expressions of these vital forces that are located in the flesh and the marrow of our bones. Artaud continues by stating that his flesh thus dopes his sick body with an incomprehensible and yet individuated language which expresses the ‘conscience of sickness’ (v.48). This thinking, that moves by shocks and constantly disrupts and perverts any fixation, emerges from the vitality of the flesh. Consciousness – the French word ‘conscience’ contains the prefix (which is formally not considered to be a prefix) ‘con’ – ‘cunt’ – so that consciousness could well designate the ‘science of the cunt’ – thus already linguistically generates the corporeal, material and fertile ground from which this carnal thinking emerges. Like a phoenix that rises from its ashes – ‘this excrement of an old kid’ – the vitality of the flesh that sensually dances around the bones frees the body, thinking and therewith language from its limitations in order to experience inhuman forces (spiritual silences and vital cries) that are too great to conceive but that bear witness to a great Health.

Ironically expressing his will to ‘cure all doctors, – born doctors by lack of sickness’ (v.56-57), Artaud accuses the doctors of being ignorant of the valuable experiences of their patients. Before they ‘impose their insulin...
therapy on me’ (v.59) – a therapy that does not cure but rather makes the patient dependent on insulin – Artaud therefore asserts that doctors should learn about ‘my dreadful states of sickness’ (v.58). Their normative, disciplinary and torturing therapies – Artaud especially complained about the severity of the electroshock therapy that he underwent in 1943 and 1944 during his internment in Rodez – slowly consolidate themselves – ‘opium of the father and shame, / shame on you for going from father to son’ (v.49-50). The French words ‘fi’ – translated as ‘shame on you’ – and ‘fils’ – ‘son’ – share a linguistic, sonic and material proximity that directly suggests the easily transmittable terror of these therapies. The son incarnates therewith the detestabilities of the father – the son is caught in the order-word assemblage – and thus constitutes a regime of health that is ‘meaner and pettier’ (v.4) compared to the state of sickness.

Alluding to the powers of heroin, Artaud asserts that ‘now you must get [powder]'\footnote{The French word ‘poudre’ designates both the power of gunpowder, but also connotes heroin. By translating the word ‘poudre’ with the neutral – maybe more religious – word ‘dust,’ Rattray omits the fruitful connotation of gunpowder (that physically serves similar to the carnally inherent heroin). For this reason, I will use the more effective and powerful word ‘powder.’} back at you’ (v.51). This powder should cure doctors by showing the vitality of the flesh, the infinite capabilities of the body and thus the importance of sickness through which they will renounce the normative, restrictive and ‘middleclass’ idea of a good health. Putting it differently, by showing how the body and its interrelated thinking and language go off the rails and therewith reveal inhuman forces that have hitherto been unknown, we can escape the terrible regimes of judgments and thus create a possibility of life by re-engaging with the vitality of the expression of our body. Artaud therefore ends his poem by qualifying insulintherapy as a ‘health / for a worn out / world’ (v.60-62) – a world where the vital link between man and this world, this body and this life is broken.

In a discussion with Grossman on Deleuze’s reading of Artaud, Rogozinski asserts that:

Deleuze deviates from Artaud’s experience on two critical points: because of his praise of folly considered as a resource for writing and because of his apology of the destruction of the ego. […] Artaud’s experience of madness fits well with a desubjectification, in which his personal identity seems to disappear and by which he can no longer sign by his own name. But this is first and foremost a proof of a
disaster: Artaud was not that poet of genius because he was mad, but because he has been mad.46

However right his statement might be, Grossman nevertheless contends that Deleuze does not misread Artaud, because ‘I do not think that there is a praise of folly in Deleuze’s thinking, but a praise of delirium, which is something very different. He understands the word in its well-known etymological sense: what goes out of the furrow, the straight line. A praise of curves, swirls, those forces that make the discourse deviate from its common law to an outside that overflows it.’47 Both in the performative article ‘Situation of the Flesh’ and his poem ‘The Patients and the Doctors,’ Artaud indeed creatively destructs the formal sense of the order-words in order to suggest and explore a more profound sense or infra-sense that can be found by making words delirious – making them go off the rails without completely throwing them into a destructive psychosis, fathoming the depths of language and filling the interstices with a deafening but productive hum. In doing so, Artaud’s writings are important healing practices of language, because they expose its reader to yet unknown forces of the body. These linguistic biopolitical interventions therewith suggest us that another health is to be found in the vitality of the flesh, an intense life and affectively vibrating words: flexion and matter. Diagnosing Artaud as a schizophrenic (a rather philosophical concept that insists on the destructive and yet creative split – the excentricity – within his writings), Deleuze considers his writings healing practices because they make the system of signs stutter, make words vibrate and thus create vacuoles that affectively stimulate a healing process of the broken link between man and this world and this body.

46 ‘Je crois qu’il [Deleuze] s’écarte de l’expérience d’Artaud sur deux points décisifs: par son éloge de la folie considérée comme ressource de l’écriture et par son apologie de la destruction de l’ego. […] L’expérience de la folie coïncide bien, chez Artaud, avec une dé-subjectivation, où son identité personnelle semble disparaître, où il ne parvient plus à signer de son nom. Mais c’est avant tout l’épreuve d’un désastre : Artaud n’était pas ce poète de génie parce qu’il était fou, mais bien qu’il l’ait été’ (Grossman and Rogozinski, 2008, p. 79, emphasis in the original). [My translation].

47 ‘Il n’y a pas, je crois, un éloge de la folie chez Deleuze mais un éloge du délire, ce qui est très différent. Il entend le mot au sens étymologique bien connu : ce qui sort du sillon, de la ligne droite. Éloge donc des courbes, des tourbillons, de ces forces qui font dévier le discours de droit commun vers un dehors qui le déborde’ (Grossman and Rogozinski, 2008, p. 79). [My translation].

48 Artaud was clinically diagnosed with schizophrenia in 1937.
In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze contends that every alimentary word – a word that is supposed to have an intrinsic meaning – that is scattered and decomposed directly affects and acts upon the body since these words are essentially physical. Deleuze therefore asserts that Artaud ‘means to activate, insufflate, palatalize, and set the word aflame so that the word becomes the action of a body without parts, instead of being the passion of a fragmented organism’⁴⁹ (LS, 89). Making the word a BwO – the action of an intense body – is essentially what Artaud aims at in his positioning of the flesh: the productive infra-sense of language emanates from a creative play with words – a spirit emanates from, between and within the ruins of these order-words – like the powers and powders of the flesh appear from its dance around the bones – dead but not lifeless meat gives way to an animal spirit that revitalizes the yet still unknown potency of the nervous system, the delicacy of the marrow and the vitality of the flesh. In this sense, Deleuze does not praise Artaud’s madness (or better: his moments of severe physical sickness or mental illness), but rather celebrates his capacity to make body, thinking and language instable, delirious and, from there, creative and full of potency.

**Breaking the Circuit**

Diving into the order-word assemblage to fathom its depths and from there perform its instability disorganizes language and evokes how the flexional vitality of the flesh is the ground of what we thought to be just some bones of a carcass. Artaud’s revaluation and creative re-engagement with the vibrating and flexional cries, sounds and words of the flesh combats the paranoid and narcotizing fixity within body, mind and language.⁵⁰ Evoking, suggesting and

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⁴⁹ ‘il s’agit d’activer, d’insuffler, de mouiller ou de faire flamber le mot pour qu’il devienne l’action d’un corps sans parties, au lieu de la passion d’un organisme morcelé’ (p. 110).

⁵⁰ Bouthors-Paillart concludes her analysis of Artaud’s writings by asserting that he has never succeeded in his creation of an autonomous, alienated and authentic language that is the genuine expression of the flesh, because ‘[m]ême dans les textes les plus incohérents, les mots qu’Antonin Artaud (dés)articule (on l’a vu à propos des logatomes glossolaliques [see footnote 44]), sont eux-mêmes préinscrits dans une langue et un code régis par la Loi Symbolique. C’est en cela qu’Antonin Artaud ne peut que tendre vers une désaliénation de son texte et de son discours, sorte d’utopique point de fuite qui, pour être inaccessible, n’en demeure pas moins le point de mire vers lequel s’orientent ses derniers textes’ (Bouthors-Paillart, 1977, p. 195, emphasis in the original).
celebrating a triad relationship of flesh, mind and expression, Artaud’s writings linguistically support his devotion to the impulsiveness of matter and the generation of the BwO: the evocation of an infra-body. His perpetually instable and vibrating writings in a schizophrenic language have the potency to recreate the broken link between man and the vitality of this world, the creative forces of this life and the unexplored but infinitely potential and healthy powers of this body. As a medically affective therapy and a healing practice to cure the sickness of our modern age, this language creates vacuoles that interrupt, pervert and break the sensory-motor circuits of the formalized system of signs by deterritorializing language in order to make a minor use of it that is subject to a constant becoming. Although this vacuole is the unstable product of an impersonal life and a flexional singularity, it nevertheless destabilizes and perverts the order-word assemblage that has collaborated in the breaking of the vital and healthy link between man and the infinite possibilities of this world.

In a letter written during his internment in Rodez, Artaud asserts that ‘what I want to say Dr. Ferdière is this: that in the case of Antonin Artaud, there is no question of literature or theatre, but of religion and that it is for his religious ideas, for his religious and mystical attitude that Antonin Artaud UNTIL HIS DEATH [Artaud retrospectively claims that he has died in August 1939 during his internment in Ville-Évrard] has been pursued by the French crowd’ 51 (emphasis in the original). Artaud’s use of the word ‘religion’ – to be read in its etymological sense 52 of ‘reconnecting’ or ‘rereading’ and not in its more decayed sense of an institutionalized dogmatism – is significant, because this word also connotes the act of rereading. Rephrasing Artaud in this manner, reading reconnects and has, at least on an etymological level, the potency to heal and cure the sick making broken link between man and this body, this life and this world. From his early to his later writings, Artaud has constantly insisted that he is not sick or

51 ‘ce que je veux vous dire D’ Ferdière est ceci : c’est que dans le cas d’Antonin Artaud il n’est pas question de littérature ni de théâtre mais de religion et que c’est pour ses idées religieuses, pour son attitude religieuse et mystique qu’Antonin Artaud JUSQU’À SA MORT a été poursuivi par la foule des Français’ (Artaud, 1977, p.28). [My translation].

52 On the one hand, ‘religion’ is etymologically derived from the Latin word ‘religare’ (‘to connect’) or ‘religio’ (‘veneration’) while on the other hand, the word is also rooted in the Latin word ‘relegere’ (‘recollect,’ but also, with its stem ‘legere,’ ‘rereading’).
The Healing Practices of Language

mad. A lot of his articles, letters and poems are affective healing practices, because they expose its readers to inhuman forces of this body and this life that are too great to conceive; another possibility of life: a great Health. The formalized system of signs is a detaching and sick making burden, but language also has the potency, as have seen, to re-engage with absolute immanence and to heal the broken link between man and his body if we make it creatively delirious, delicately imperfect and subtly unstable. In this article, I have firstly discussed, following Deleuze’s differentiation, the vitality of the flesh within the limits of the body after which I have read two short performative texts by Artaud in order to show in what way body, flesh, mind and language are interrelated and how matter is implicated within our thinking, reasoning and feeling. Artaud’s linguistic devotion to absolute immanence essentially brings about a more vital and intense play with words, signs and sounds. This religious project (i.e. a linguistic praxis that reconnects with the vitality of this world – a healing practice of language) evokes new possibilities of life and from there creates a healthier consciousness around the vitality of matter. A revaluation and re-engagement with the potency of flexion, the powers of flesh and the vitality of expression – a genuine devotion, commitment and conversion to immanence – will then give us reasons to believe in this world, this life and this body.

References

Braidotti, Rosi, 2012. ‘The notion of univocity of Being or single matter positions difference as a verb or process of becoming at the heart of the


Appendix

I.a Antonin Artaud, ‘Situation of the Flesh’ (1925)\textsuperscript{53}
Translation by Daisy Aldan

I reflect on life. All the systems I may erect never will match these cries of a man engaged in remaking his life.
I conceive a system in which all of man would be involved, with his physical body and its heights, the intellectual projection of his mind. As far as I am concerned, you have to reckon above all with man’s incomprehensible magnetism, with what, for lack of a more piercing expression, I am obliged to call his life-force.
One day my reason must surely honor the undefined forces besieging me – so that they replace higher thought –, those forces which, exteriorly, have the form of a cry. There are intellectual cries, cries which proceed from the \textit{delicacy} of the marrow. Which I call the Flesh. I don’t separate my thought from my life. With each vibration of my tongue I return over the paths of my thought to my flesh.
You have to have been deprived of life, of the nervous irradiation of existence, of the conscious fulfillment of the nerve, to become aware of the extent to which the Sensibility and Science of every though is hidden in the nervous vitality of the marrow, and to what degree those who bank solely on Intelligence or absolute Intellectuality are in error. Above all is the essence of the nerve. Fulfillment which contains all consciousness and all the occult paths of the mind in the flesh.
But what am I in the midst of this theory of the Flesh, or rather of Existence? I’m a man who has lost his life and is seeking by every means to reintegrate it in its proper place. In a way I’m the Animator of my own vitality: a vitality more precious to me than my conscience, for what to others is only the means for being a Man is for me the whole Reason.
In the course of this quest into the hidden limbo of my consciousness, I believed I felt explosions like the collision of occult stones or the sudden petrification of fires. Fires that would be like unconscious truths that miraculously vitalized.
But you have to tread slowly on the road of dead stones, especially if you have lost \textit{understanding of words}. It is an indescribable science which

explodes by slow thrusts. And whoever possesses it doesn’t understand it. But the Angels also do not understand, for all true knowledge is obscure. Clear mind belongs to matter, I mean the mind clear at a given moment. But I have to examine this aspect of the flesh that should provide me with a metaphysic of Being and the definitive understanding of Life. For when I say Flesh I say, above all, apprehension, hair standing on end, flesh naked with all the intellectual deepening of this spectacle of pure flesh, and all the consequences in the senses, that is, in feeling. And whoever says feeling says intuition, that is, direct knowledge, communication turned inside out to its source to be clarified interiorly. There’s a mind in the flesh but a mind quick as lightning. And yet the perturbation of the flesh partakes of the high substance of the mind. And yet whoever says flesh also says sensibility. Sensibility, that is, assimilation. But an intimate, secret, profound assimilation, absolute in relation to my own suffering, and consequently a solitary and unique consciousness of this suffering.

I.b Antonin Artaud, ‘Position de la Chair’ (1925)\(^{54}\)

Je pense à la vie. Tous les systèmes que je pourrai édifier n’égaleront jamais mes cris d’homme occupé à refaire sa vie. J’imagine un système où tout homme participerait, l’homme avec sa chair physique et les hauteurs, la projection intellectuelle de son esprit. Il faut compter pour moi, avant tout, avec le magnétisme incompréhensible de l’homme, avec ce que, faute d’expression plus perçante, je suis bien obligé d’appeler sa force de vie. Ces forces informulées qui m’assiègent, il faudra bien un jour que ma raison les accueille, qu’elles s’installent à la place de la haute pensée, ces forces qui du dehors ont la forme d’un cri. Il y a des cris intellectuels, des cris qui proviennent de la finesse des moelles. C’est cela, moi, que j’appelle la Chair. Je ne sépare pas ma pensée dans ma chair. Il faut avoir été privé de la vie, de l’irradiation nerveuse de l’existence, de la complétude consciente du nerf pour se rendre compte à quel point le Sens et la Science de toute pensée est caché dans la vitalité nerveuse des moelles et combien ils se trompent ceux qui font un sort à l’Intelligence ou à l’absolue Intellectualité. Il y a par-dessus tout la complétude du nerf.

Complétude qui tient toute la conscience, et les chemins occultes de l’esprit dans la chair. 
Mais que suis-je au milieu de cette théorie de la Chair ou pour mieux dire de l’Existence ? Je suis un homme qui a perdu sa vie et qui cherche par tous les moyens à lui faire reprendre sa place. Je suis en quelque sorte l’Excitateur de ma propre vitalité : vitalité qui m’est plus précieuse que la conscience, car ce qui chez les autres hommes n’est que le moyen d’être un Homme est chez moi toute la Raison.
Dans le cours de cette recherche enfouie dans les limbes de ma conscience, j’ai cru sentir des éclatements, comme le heurt de pierres occultes ou la pétrification soudaine de feux. Des feux qui seraient comme des vérités insensibles et par miracle vitalisées. 
Mais il faut aller à pas lents sur la route des pierres mortes, surtout pour qui a perdu la connaissance des mots. C’est une science indescriptible et qui explode par poussées lentes. Et qui la possède ne la connaît pas. Mais les Anges aussi ne connaissent pas, car toute vraie connaissance est obscure. L’Esprit clair appartient à la matière. Je veux dire l’Esprit, à un moment donné, clair.
Mais il faut que j’inspecte ce sens de la chair qui doit me donner une métaphysique de l’Être, et la connaissance définitive de la Vie. 
Pour moi qui dit Chair dit avant tout appréhension, poil hérissé, chair à nu avec tout l’approfondissement intellectuel de ce spectacle de la chair pure et toutes ses conséquences dans les sens, c’est-à-dire dans les sentiments. Et qui dit sentiment dit pressentiment, c’est-à-dire connaissance directe, communication retournée et qui s’éclaire de l’intérieur. Il y a un esprit dans la chair, mais un esprit prompt comme la foudre. Et toutefois l’ébranlement de la chair participe de la substance haute de l’esprit. Et toutefois qui dit chair dit aussi sensibilité. Sensibilité, c’est-à-dire appropriation, mais appropriation intime, secrète, profonde, absolue de ma douleur à moi-même, et par conséquent connaissance solitaire et unique de cette douleur.
II.a Antonin Artaud, ‘The Patients and the Doctors’ (1946)\textsuperscript{55}
Translation by David Rattray

1. Sickness is one state
   health is only another
   but lousier.
   I mean meaner and pettier.
5. There’s no patient who hasn’t grown.
   as there’s no one in good health who hasn’t lied one day in order not
to have the desire to be sick,
like some doctors I have gone through.
   I have been sick all my life and I ask only that it continue. For the
   states of
   privation in life have always told me a great deal more about the
   plethora of my
10. powers than the middleclass drawing –
   AS LONG AS YOU’VE GOT YOUR HEALTH.
   For my existence is beautiful but hideous. And it isn’t beautiful only
   because it is hideous.
   Hideous, dreadful, constructed of hideousness.
   Curing a sickness is a crime.
15. It’s to squash the head of a kid who is much less nasty than life.
   Ugliness is con-sonance. Beauty rots.
   But, sick, one doesn’t get high by opium, by cocaine, or by
   morphine.
   It’s the dread of the fevers
   you got to love,
20. the jaundice and the perfidy,
   much more than all euphoria.
   Then the fever,
   the glowing fever in my head,

\textsuperscript{55} Artaud, Antonin. 1965 (1925). ‘The Patients and the Doctors.’ In: David Rattray
(trans.) and Jack Hirschman (ed.), \textit{Artaud Anthology}. San Fransisco: City Light
Books, p. 191-93.
– for I’ve been in a state of glowing fever for the fifty years that
I’ve been alive, –

25. will give me
   my opium,
   – this existence, –
   by which,
   I will be a head aglow,

30. opium from head to toe.
   For,
   cocaine is a bone,
   and heroin a superman in the bones,

   ca i tra la sara
   ca fena
   ca i tra la sara
   cafa

   and opium is this vault,
   this mummification of blood vault,

40. this scraping
   of sperm in the vault,
   this excremation of an old kid,
   this disintegration of an old hole,
   this excrementation of a kid, little kid of the buried asshole,

45. whose name is:
   shit,
   pi-pi,
   con-science of sickness.

   And, opium of the father and shame,

50. shame on you for going from father to son, –

   now you must get dust thrown back at you,
   and after suffering without a bed for so long.

   So it is that I consider
   that it’s up to
55. the everlasting sick me
   to cure all doctors,
   – born doctors by lack of sickness, –
   and not up to doctors ignorant of my dreadful states of sickness,
   to impose their insulintherapy on me,
60. their health
   for a worn out
   world.

II.b Antonin Artaud, ‘Les Malades et les Medecins’ (1946)56

1. La maladie est un état.
   La santé n’en est qu’un autre,
   plus moche.
   Je veux dire plus lâche et plus mesquin.
5. Pas de malade qui n’ait grandi.
   Pas de bien portant qui n’ait un jour trahi, pour n’avoir pas voulu
   être malade,
   comme tels médecins que j’ai subis.
   J’ai été malade toute ma vie et je ne demande qu’à continuer. Car les
   états de
   privations de la vie m’ont toujours renseigné beaucoup mieux sur la
   pléthore de ma
10. puissance que les crédences petites-bourgeoises de :
   LA BONNE SANTÉ SUFFIT.
   Car mon être est beau mais affreux. Et il n’est beau que parce qu’il
   est affreux.
   Affreux, affre, construit d’affreux.
   Guérir une maladie est un crime.
15. C’est écraser la tête d’un môme beaucoup moins chiche que la vie.
   Le laid con-sonne. Le beau pourrit.
   Mais, malade, on n’est pas dopé d’opium, de cocaïne et de
   morphine.

Et il faut *aimer* l’affre
des fièvres,

20. la jaunisse et sa perfidie
beaucoup plus que toute euphorie.

Alors la fièvre,
la fièvre chaude de ma tête,
– car je suis en état de fièvre chaude depuis cinquante ans que je suis en vie, –

25. me donnera
mon opium,
– cet être, –
celui,
tête chaude que je serai,

30. opium de la tête aux pieds.
Car,
la cocaïne est un os,
l’héroïne, un sur-homme en os,

\[ \text{ca i tra la sara} \]
\[ \text{ca fena} \]
\[ \text{ca i tra la sara} \]
\[ \text{cafa} \]

et l’opium est cette cave,
cette momification de sang cave,

40. cette raclure
de sperme en cave,
cette excrémentation d’un vieux mâle,
cette désintégration d’un vieux trou,
cette excrémentation d’un mâle, petit mâle d’anus enfoui,

45. dont le nom est :
merde,
pipi,
con-science des maladies.

Et, opium de père en fi,
fi donc qui va de père en fils, –

   il faut qu’il t’en revienne la poudre,
   quand tu auras bien souffert sans lit.

C’est ainsi que je considère que c’est à moi,

sempternel malade,

   à guérir tous les médecins,
   – nés médecins par insuffisance de maladie, –
   et non à des médecins ignorants de mes états affreux de malade,
   à m’imposer leur insulinothérapie,

santé

   d’un monde
d’avachis.
Humile Art: Enhancing the Body’s Powers to Act – or Bringing Art (back) Down to Earth

Frans-Willem Korsten

Abstract
In the last decades St Paul has been at the centre of debates on the relation between (radical) politics and religion. Taking a painting by Pieter Bruegel the Elder as point of departure – a painting that depicts the moment when Saul is struck – this article investigates the quasi-theological role that art has been given by important thinkers longing for the revolutionary New. By turning Gilles Deleuze and Hannah Arendt into allies, this article first of all explores the political derailment of fabrication caused by the turn towards sovereignty and then investigates how art could get back its potential to enhance the body’s power to act by means of its connection with ‘earth’.¹

¹ This is a much expanded and reworked version of an article that appeared in Frame: ‘Revolution Fabrication Convulsion: Bringing Art (Back) Down to Earth’, Frame 25, October 2012.
**Saul/Paul, and the theological turn**

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, also known as Peasant Bruegel, has been a favorite for all those who have reflected on language and the theme of the Tower of Babel, or who wanted to think through the human desire to be divine – in relation to the story of Icarus. He is a little less known for a painting that might well be of more importance for current debates in which (St.) Paul plays a pivotal role: *The Conversion of Paul*, from 1567. I would like to rename the painting by giving it the title *The Convulsion of Saul*, by means of which I am putting my cards right on the table. The latter title is more apt since at the moment of being struck down Saul is not converted as yet. He is, above all, hit by something he cannot fathom. Some two thousand years later one could stick to a down to earth or literal explanation of what happened to Saul. Still, today as well, there are a considerable number of people that want to read what happened ‘there’ theologically, as a conversion, and because of the historical importance of Paul, by extension, as a revolutionary change of history. In fact, Paul functions prominently in what may be called a considerable theological revival in the domain of the humanities and political theory in the last decades, one that has been connected explicitly or implicitly to a longing for revolution, if we understand revolution here as a sudden and unexpected opening up of history towards the New.

In this revival, Paul has been a topical figure. In a sense there is nothing new here. Blaise Pascal, for instance, already declared Paul to be pivotal. More recently, however, either upfront or constantly at the back of them, Paul was dominant first in the work of Martin Heidegger, and from thereon in the works of Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, and Simon Critchley, respectively. My argument with especially the latter four will not be philosophical per se. It concerns the task, impossible in my view, given by these thinkers to art and literature. It is a task that has distinctly theological overtones or underpinnings. This shows itself in Heidegger’s idea that art and literature can replace both the loss of God (or the gods) and be a medicine for the technological rage of modernity. Art is explicitly linked to religion, here,

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2 Bruegel is the name used by the artist himself, but he is also called Breughel or Breugel.
3 To be found in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.
4 Some natural or medical explanations ranging from being struck by a lightning to an epileptic attack can be found at http://www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/medicalbag/6/blinded_by_the_light.html.
in the shape of a ‘poetry of religion’.\textsuperscript{5} For the other three art and literature both have to, and can, save the world by a messianic intervention (Agamben) or a revolutionary opening up of history towards the New (Badiou and Critchley). In the words of Alberto Toscano, this theological turn of late is not to be explained by a real religious need, but by a theoretical necessity, or better: a theoretical deficit.\textsuperscript{6}

I find the choice of the word ‘deficit’ telling. If even theory runs the risk of deficits, not only the theological frame but also the financial frame has become all dominant. To be sure, as long as political philosophers, or philosophers of any kind, cling to theology, at the back or at the front door of their thinking there will always be a deficit. In fact ‘deficit’ is key to the form of Christianity that Nietzsche and Deleuze find repellant. It is because of an eternal deficit that people can be judged which is why Friedrich Nietzsche (who saw in Paul a paradigm of ‘holy lying’) and Gilles Deleuze opted for a straightforward rejection of the figure of Paul. The latter did so, distinctly, in ‘Nietzsche and Saint Paul, Lawrence and John of Patmos’ (CC).\textsuperscript{7}

Indeed, the theological turn of late, in fact any theological turn, is what Deleuze would find a depressing mistake, or perhaps better: an option that would imply sadness and, as a consequence, a diminution of the power to act. In one of his Vincennes lectures on Spinoza, Deleuze states:

> Spinoza will engender all the passions, in their details, on the basis of these two fundamental affects: joy as an increase in the power of acting, sadness as a diminution or destruction of the power of acting. This comes down to saying that each thing, body or soul, is defined by a certain characteristic, complex relation,

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\textsuperscript{5} On this see Ben Vedder, 2006. \textit{Heidegger’s Philosophy of Religion}. Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press. For the political consequences of Heidegger’s turn towards religion in the light of St. Paul, see C. Rickey, 2002. \textit{Revolutionary Saints: Heidegger, National Socialism, and Antinomian Politics}. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, in which he states: ‘[…] in fact Heidegger’s political regime was really a community of saints’ (Rickey 12).

\textsuperscript{6} Alberto Toscano talks a lot about such a ‘deficit’ in ‘Geography Against Capitalism’<http://roundtable.kein.org/node/1525>; the theme was picked up by Simon Critchley in an interview with STIR, see below.

\textsuperscript{7} For a good example of someone who desperately tries to preserve the theological option, see Clayton Crockett, 2011. \textit{Radical Political Theology: Religion and Politics After Liberalism}. New York-Chichester: Columbia University Press. Especially pp. 138-142 where Crockett even attempts to theologize Deleuze, and incredibly so, with regard to the figure of Paul.
but I would also say that each thing, body or soul, is defined by a certain power [pouvoir] of being affected. Everything happens as if each one of us had a certain power of being affected. If you consider beasts, Spinoza will be firm in telling us that what counts among animals is not at all the genera or species; genera and species are absolutely confused notions, abstract ideas. What counts is the question, of what is a body capable? And thereby he sets out one of the most fundamental questions in his whole philosophy (before him there had been Hobbes and others) by saying that the only question is that we don’t even know [savons] what a body is capable of, we prattle on about the soul and the mind and we don't know what a body can do.  

Although Badiou, Agamben, Critchley (or Crockett) are calling for creative ways out of the suffocating subjection by capitalism, their fascination with and, in essence, return to theology can hardly be creative or adequate in Deleuze’s frame of mind. The simple reason is that they appear to miss body. By implication they cannot even talk about what it is capable of. And although they may call for action, many actions even, they do not seem able to talk about what could enhance the body’s powers to act.

Bruegel’s painting will help me to bring literature and art down to earth from the high philosophical realms and deep demands of religion and theology, in order to deal with the question of what art’s role could be in the enhancement of bodily powers to act. Theoretically speaking the painting will help me to forge an alliance between Gilles Deleuze and Hannah Arendt, while being fully aware that the philosophy of both is in some senses incompatible. Yet this is why calling them allies is putting it the right way. It is the difference between them that is productive in their battle against a common enemy. In calling them allies, besides, I mean to hint at what for both Arendt and Deleuze is at the heart of politics. This is not power and violence but the ability and potential to connect bodies and parties that have their own inconsistencies and are not living in harmony, but that will be able to act and work together nevertheless. Such collective (Arendt) or synthetic or correlative (Deleuze) enactment will help them, moreover, to be overcome by surprise, in meeting the new – a ‘new’ that, in what follows, will be distinguished principally from the high, and always separating demands of the revolutionary New.

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Politics derailed: sovereignty and the moment of separation

Bruegel is one of the few who depicts Saul’s convulsion in the proper context. In the earlier Tintoretto-version of 1545, Saul is lying on the ground in utter helplessness while his companions flee the scene. These companions are clearly soldiers but it was surely not with a few companions that Saul was on his way to destroy the Christian community in Damascus. In the two later versions by Caravaggio, from 1600, the company has even been reduced further to one or three companions. Instead, in the Bruegel version we see an army on its way through the mountains to Damascus. In this train of men, Saul’s convulsion does not take place center stage, up front, as with Tintoretto, nor is it taken out of its context. The inattentive viewer might miss the scene, and even those who know what the theme of the painting is will have to look for it. As Jonathan Goldberg defines it ‘Paul is all but visible in

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9 To be found in the National Gallery in Washington; <http://www.nga.gov/fcgi-bin/timage_f?object=46142&image=9189&c=>, [accessed September 18, 2014].
10 To be found in the Odescalchi Balbi Collection, Rome, and in the Cerasi Chapel of the Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, respectively.
the press of figures’. To be sure, a convulsion hitting their leader would certainly be of major concern to all soldiers. As it is, however, the majority does not even seem to notice what is happening since Saul is in the midst of the train.

For the convulsion to become a conversion, Saul first has to be taken out of the context of his army, so that the story of what had happened can be made up. As a result he changed, from someone suffering from a convulsion to someone who found himself to have become an instrument in the hands of God. The convulsion-turned-conversion becomes a revolutionary, that is to say ‘separating moment’, not just in the basic sense of a complete upturn of the status quo but also in the more fundamental sense that the world can be defined anew, or better: that the world, through the gateway of the unconventional, as Badiou defines it, can be separated from the old one in opening up towards the New.

In St. Paul: The Foundation of Universalism Alain Badiou reads the writings of St. Paul ‘literally’, as he puts it: non-hermeneutically. Badiou is not looking for the text’s deeper or true meaning, that is to say, its religious meaning. In an interview with Adam S. Miller this is emphasized. According to Badiou there is no deeper truth in his reading of Paul, nor is he developing a ‘revelation’ since his relation to Paul ‘does not involve faith or church’. His basic or literal reading of Paul serves to provide us with ‘the general conditions for a new truth’. With the latter phrase Badiou indicates that he is looking for a possibility, or an event, that is essentially revolutionary, in that it upturns and exceeds ‘evident differences’. This is not to say that there are no differences, as Badiou himself admits in chapter ten of his book, but they are that ‘which must be traversed in order for universality itself to be constructed, or for the genericity (généricité) of the true to be immanently deployed.’ In the case of Paul the difference that is to be exceeded is the one between Jew and Greek, between the law of circumcision and the irrelevance of circumcision, even between man and woman, according to Badiou (following Paul, Galatians 3:28). Paul is

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11 Goldberg, p. 218.
13 Badiou, p. 98.
creative in defining the New, the New Faith, as open to all – all falling under the same all encompassing, *universal* rubric.\(^{14}\)

If understood in a mathematical sense, I have no problem with universality. It comes down to saying that, for instance, all beings on this planet have to obey the law of gravity, which exerts a universal force. My problems start when, by analogy, Badiou’s Paul becomes the first to say that on earth all differences between religions can be exceeded since all people can belong to the same, universal faith. This would be the end of sectarianism, by the installment of an ultimate limit. Surely, however, this must be read as an attack on all those who want to emphasize difference, or it must be read as the prohibition of sectarianism. In the affairs of human beings there is no installation of a limit – or what Hannah Arendt defined, in the context of classical Greek political thought, as *nomos* – without violence, or without politics. Badiou’s Paul creates an opening towards the New by creating an all-encompassing limit politically, distinctly different from Galileo’s revolutionary laws, although Badiou explicitly compares the two. Whereas Galileo’s natural laws separate his form of science from previous forms, to be sure, this separation is not political, or if so only by implication. In contrast, Paul’s new law of separation is basically political, and it must be. And whereas Galileo was persecuted because he had defined a new law of nature, Paul was at the basis of a perpetual political persecution machine, as Deleuze defined it. According to the latter, it is the ‘black Saint Paul’ (CC, 37) who installs a system of terror that almost had no equivalence before its invention.

As if to avoid the issue of politics, Badiou states to read Paul literally. He does so, however, without reading the story of his conversion literally, as the description of a convulsion. He cannot read it as such, of course, since the story is *about* Paul, but not *of* Paul. Yet, the story of the convulsion-turned-conversion is of the essence since it is through this revolutionary moment that Paul becomes the instrument in the hands of a supreme, sovereign God that separates this belief from all others, and that as a result exceeds, for instance, the difference between the God of the Jews and other gods. As a consequence of a sovereign act of grace, Paul can extend the sovereign gesture by opening

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\(^{14}\) Badiou is not the first, of course, to define Paul’s movement as one of universal implication. This has been a commonplace in modern Catholic theology. There, obviously, the universality of the Catholic belief must also imply the antagonism with others, as was also a point of concern in Giorgio Agamben’s *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans.*
up the faith to all, universally. In this context the subtitle of Badiou’s study is apt. Very much unlike Galileo, Paul is *founding* something, if not a community then a set or collection, by means of a sovereign gesture. When with Badiou politics becomes thinkable in terms of truth by means of the universal, this comes at a cost. It is only possible, principally, if one thinks politics in terms of sovereignty, that is: in terms of a supreme power to whose laws all have to obey.

According to Hannah Arendt, the turn towards sovereignty and the beginning of political philosophy is where the European trajectory of political practice got fundamentally derailed. Or, to put this differently, the turn towards sovereignty implies the betrayal of politics. Likewise, for Deleuze, the option of sovereignty as supreme power inescapably installs a dialectic of despot and subjects, which has a lot to do with power but fairly little with politics, in a macro or micro modality. For Deleuze, politics concerns the realm of the potential, an uncontrollable vitality of things and beings – bodies – that want to exist, connect, and in the process find already established or new modes of existence. Instead of separation, connection is here of the essence. Yet, for all those who believe in sovereignty such an uncontrollable world of connections is too messy.

With respect to this, Arendt’s position is summarized by Keith Breen in a recent volume on Arendt and law under the telling title: ‘Law Beyond Command?’\(^\text{15}\) For Arendt, first of all, sovereignty must always be defined in terms of a house or household, an *oikos*, since in the Greek context any household has to have a master of the house. And indeed, with Paul the universalism of the new faith consists in the fact that all are welcome in the Father’s house. His is certainly not the domain of contest and compromise of the *agora*, not even of the *ecclesia*, where at least things are pronounced openly and, as a consequence, remain contestable. Or better: these he will use as his domains as long as he is busy with founding the new faith. As soon as it is established there is no longer a need for *agora* or *ecclesia*. The *oikos* of the church will do, when the lord of the house has become the lord of the public realm as well. Secondly, Arendt’s important implication is that politics can never be the domain of truth. It must be the domain of disaccord or of, indeed, conflict, but a conflict that is organized and put on hold by the principle of living together in disaccord. This brings her to state, thirdly, that

ever since Plato the desire of political philosophers has been ‘to escape from politics altogether’ in turning from the messy world of *praxis* to the sovereign and supposedly pure realm of *poiesis* that is one of *strategic fabrication*. With respect to this, the recurrent idea is to *make* the world anew, or New, more true of course, or really true. For this, Revolution is required, for how else can one get rid of the messy old world? Such a revolution requires conversion, since people will have to see the New first, they have to be enlightened, they have to hear a divine voice showing them the way to ‘the objective’. I am willfully punning here on Badiou’s idea of objectivity, which, with his reading of Paul, turns into a political objective.

Despite, then, Badiou’s insistence that his reading of Paul is *literal*, i.e. not religious and not political, not concerned with church or house but with truth, it stands in the tradition of sovereign thought which is unthinkable without the theological source of supreme power. This sovereign power can be traced at the moment of separation, which is tellingly defined by Badiou in passive terms: ‘the becoming separate of universalism’. Such ‘becoming separate of a universalism’ has been part and parcel of political thought after the fusion that took place between the former ‘Creator God or Immortal Legislator’ (Breen, 2012, p.19) and the supreme secularized, judicial power of the sovereign. For Arendt, this ‘transference of absolute authority from the divine to the mundane realm set in train events that could only conclude in misfortune’ (Ibid.). Such misfortune can be sensed in Badiou’s dealing with Paul. The becoming separate must imply at least a limit, and by implication some form of ‘house’. This is evidently Badiou’s pain point. Things must remain open, for him, although they always run the risk of closure, as happened for instance with the revolutionary Leninist party – Badiou’s example. With respect to this example it is telling that Deleuze defines Saint Paul as ‘a kind of Lenin who will organize the collective soul’ (CC, 51). From her part, Arendt would argue that ‘the risk of closure’ is not a risk, but an inevitability that is intrinsic to the separating sovereign power.

The struggle between opening up the New and its untimely or unfortunate closure translates itself to the connection between Paul, on the one hand, and Badiou’s thoughts on ‘politics, art, science, and love’ on the other. On the one hand Paul, so states Badiou, has nothing to do with these four. Paul’s concern is philosophical in offering ‘a new experience of what is probably something like a truth’. Nevertheless, this requires a sovereign gesture to

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open up the New. For this opening up the New, the connection between politics, art, science and love is of the essence since they all can bring us the New – and Truth. This brings me back to the point with which I began. Why would art have to be part of the quartet that brings us the New and Truth (or love, for that matter)?

**Supreme fabrications**

Pieter Bruegel the Elder was also called Peasant Bruegel because, as stories go, he liked to put on peasants clothes to mingle among peasants, feast with them, work with them, eat with them – and then paint them. Whether these stories are fabricated or not, it is well known and documented that Bruegel functioned among the cultural, political, and financial elite of his time and was a smart businessman as well, who claimed the intellectual and commercial ownership of his engravings with the signature ‘Bruegel inventor’. Not much is known explicitly about his religious belief, let alone theological convictions, but mingling with the best and brightest of contemporary humanists, he must have picked up a lot of the spirit of revolt alive in these circles. It may have inspired him to engrave ‘Big fish eat the small ones’ and it must have defined his views on the relation between religion and politics. One scholar has it that ‘God and religion are humbled in Bruegel’s art’ – Brian McClinton is focusing, in this case, on the 1562 painting entitled *The Triumph of Death.* The painting, according to McClinton, reflects explicitly on the enormous destruction wrought by politically inspired religious conflicts or religiously inspired political conflicts in both the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In this context McClinton brings in the famous poem by W.H. Auden about Bruegel’s painting *The Fall of Icarus.* When visiting the Musée des Beaux Arts in Brussels, which gave the poem its title, Auden was so impressed by the painting that he made the following poem:

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About suffering they were never wrong,
The old Masters: how well they understood
Its human position: how it takes place
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While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer’s horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree
In Breughel’s Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water, and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

The poem has been read as a call to accept both the complexity and ordinariness of life, despite shocking events, and for some it foreshadows Auden’s reconversion to the Christian faith. I read the poem, first of all, as a poem, a work of art, which mirrors the work of art that is its theme. As such, the poem becomes a reflection on how the painting may work in the domain of religion and politics. It brings together things in fundamental disaccord, things and bodies that co-exist and relate despite the disaccord, a world more of alliances than of lineages, to put it in Deleuzian terms. The Icarus painting depicts not just one dominant or supreme poetic moment, but a simultaneous or coexistent set of moments, inconsistent in themselves but kept together through a style, just as the poem grasps moments of praxis and refuses to capture them under the heading of a supreme fabrication.

If I bring Auden’s reflection on The Fall of Icarus to bear on The Conversion of Paul, the first thing to keep in mind is that we do not know whether this is the title of the piece. The title is given to it with hindsight, in a double sense: on the level of diegesis after the depicted moment, and on the level of representation in the centuries after Bruegel made the painting. As for the first, we only know it as a conversion because of poetic fabrication. After Saul has been brought speechless and blind to Damascus he will resurface as the very eloquent Paul, backed up by a story of what happened. The moment depicted in the painting itself, however, is in the midst of things.
In this context, the painting is, literally, a pre-fabrication. This is not like saying it is no fabrication. The painting is a work of art, and as such poetic: a product of fabrication. But it is not serving the fabrications of power. It depicts not just one moment but a set of moments, one of which concerns a military leader that has fallen from his horse and whose body is lying on the ground, twisted, in apparent convulsion. Some of his companions respond immediately, a few are struck by a ray of light, one calms down the horse, others are pointing: ‘Look, something is happening to Saul!’ Many others have not even noticed what has happened and busy themselves with other things. The majority is making its arduous way through the mountains. As such the painting is a pre-fabrication in the sense that it chooses a moment amongst a set of moments, before one of them is turned into a decisive story by later poetic fabrication, as a result of which Saul the exterminator will have changed into Paul, the theologically chosen and underpinned founder of a House, or, as Deleuze describes him, its ‘ultimate manager’ (CC, 44).

What Arendt would describe as the key-characteristic of poiesis in the political realm after Plato is this element of strategic fabrication. It concerns fabrications such as: ‘Look, this is not just the one dominating our house and subjecting all that live under his rule, it is a divinely inspired and supported force that brings us the New!’ It is such fabrication that is explicitly reflected upon by Simon Critchley in his The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology, from 2012. About this book, Critchley himself states in an interview with STIR:

[...] we live in a world where the realm of politics is a realm of fiction. It’s a realm of what Hobbes called the artificial man and the artificial soul. But to expose those fictions as fictions – so the fiction of popular sovereignty, the idea that we the people actually govern things or that we don’t live in a plutocracy or an oligarchy – it doesn’t mean we go from fiction to fact but that there can be this other idea of which I call a supreme fiction, which we knew to be a fiction yet we still believe. That in many ways is a way of formulating what might be a kind of political, poetic, and religious project.  

With the last sentence we enter familiar ground again: the conflation of politics, religion and art. And as sympathetic as I am with regard to Critchley’s explicit rejection of ‘phallic, heroic politics’, as reserved am I... 

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about the source-less source of this supreme fiction. Theologically speaking, in terms of our having to believe it, this must fall back on a masked Prime Mover, a Creator God, an Immortal Legislator, or if not all of these, than the Supreme, i.e. the masked sovereign. Even if Critchley’s study is defined by himself as an examination into ‘the dangerous interdependence of politics and religion’, and even if this relationship, as he states, is important for the diagnosis of a problem, the book connects to, and depends on the sovereign gesture – if not directly, as with Badiou, then indirectly.

Accordingly, the critics are astute in defining the project behind Critchley’s book as a search for truth, either by repeating the quote with which the book starts (Oscar Wilde: ‘Everything to be true must become a religion’), or by bringing in the fabrication of Jesus: ‘Like Christ’s brokenness on the cross, he opens up a way through suffering that does not cancel out the void and lack that grounds us but unites us in the very brokenness itself’ (Creston Davis on his blog Political Theology). This, of course, is what all-sovereign rulers would like us to believe: that we are in void, in lack (in untruth) and that we need to be filled in, by a supreme power. Such a power needs poiesis, fabrication, fiction, even a supreme fiction, to show us the New.

Why, on earth?

Earth and Utopianism

In Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth Elizabeth Grosz (2008) attempts to redefine the political potential of art through what, ultimately, turns into a formal reading of Deleuzian aesthetics, when ‘sensation’, which is key to Deleuze’s thought on art, becomes a magic word. No mistake, ‘sensation’ emphasizes the importance of the sensibility and sensuality of knowledge as opposed to, for instance, the instrumental ‘stupidity’ (bêtise) of scientific knowledge. However, it easily runs the risk of

20 This connects also to what Critchley himself has said about Wilde. For this see: ‘Oscar Wilde’s faithless Christianity – Oscar Wilde’s radical reinvention of Christianity while he lay in Reading Gaol is a profound justification of faith’; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/jan/14/religion-wilde>. [accessed September 18, 2014].
becoming little more than a magic word that is, in the end, reductive. This is, for instance, how Grosz opens chapter 3 of the book, entitled ‘Sensation, the Earth, a People, Art’:

Art is of the animal. It comes, not from reason, recognition, intelligence, not from a uniquely human sensibility, of from man’s higher accomplishments, but from something excessive, unpredictable, lowly.22

Whereas, before, I argued against a theological framing of art, here I would like to argue against an animal framing of it through such phrases as: ‘Art is of the animal’. There is too close an alliance between art and technics for this, which is not to say that animals have no technique, on the contrary. I mean to say that there is no such thing as the so-called unreasonable, unintelligible animal ‘sensible’ on the one hand and, on the other, human sensibility understood as intelligence, rationality and recognition. I understand Grosz when she states that art is not first and foremost a window on worlds, or a mode of representation, or that it ‘does not take the place of social and political analysis’ (2008, p.78). That said, I know lots of works of art that are, also, windows on a world, or the force of which also depends on their being a mode of representation. The danger, here, is again one of essentializing art in delimiting it to the domains of the ‘excessive, unpredictable, lowly.’ With the latter term ‘earth’ is implied, but this is not simply equitable with the lowly, in Deleuze and Guattari’s reading.

In A Thousand Plateaus Deleuze and Guattari equate ‘earth’ with the virtual, which is something that well accords with Spinoza’s notion of potentia. Their dealing with the notion of earth is slightly more complicated in Anti-Oedipus where earth does not exist apart from the socius, but is at the basis of its productive existence in relation to the primitive tribe. The best passage to get their ideas on earth and earthliness in clear view, however, is the start of chapter 4 in What is Philosophy, entitled ‘Geophilosophy’. Not only is it the case there that ‘thinking takes place in the relationship of territory and earth’, the concept of earth is all encompassing in the following way:

the earth constantly carries out a movement of deterritorialization on the spot, by which it goes beyond any territory: it is deterritorializing and deterritorialized. It merges with the movement of those who leave their territory en masse, with crayfish that set off walking in file at the bottom of the water, with pilgrims or knights who ride a celestial line of flight. The earth is not one element among others but rather brings together all the elements within a single embrace while using one or another of them to deterritorialize territory. (WP, 85-6)

With hindsight we can read Bruegel’s army differently through this quote. The army’s major task, as for now, is not to destroy the Christian community in Damascus, but to find its way through the mountains, twisting and turning, almost forced into a convulsion by the limits of nature. There is nothing of a revelation, here. It is hard work getting an army through the mountains, an army that is being merged with the earth and, as a consequence, is wrestling with its embrace. In this context it may also be evident that, in first instance, there is no need to read ‘territory’ immediately political, as the example of the crayfish suggests.

Yet in the realm of human beings there is no escaping the political aspects of any form of territorialization either. Or, to put this in the context of my example: the army is still also an expeditionary force that realizes its own ‘line of flight’, and is possibly realizing the opening towards a new world.

For Hannah Arendt the principal openness of politics, or its potential of acting, resides in the idea of natality. This is why, in her doctoral thesis, a strange alliance was forged between the Christian church father Augustine and the Jewish philosopher and political theorist. For Arendt, birth is of the essence since it is not something human beings can make. It may be something they can simply do, but even then giving birth can prove to be an act, beforehand because of its political potential, with hindsight because it stood at the basis of a new political reality. Natality serves to emphasize the fact that human beings enter the world through birth, which to Arendt is crucial in a ‘mortality-obsessed tradition’.  

utopian quality, or a matter of high ideas, it is basic to all beings that in case of human beings relates to the new instead of the New. It concerns the earthly potential of new political beginnings, a new earth, or a new people. Politics in Arendt’s view is not only a matter, then, of ‘concerted action’. It basically concerns the way in which something new can be created, unexpectedly, freely, as opposed to the strategic fabrication of the theologically inspired New. Poiesis as sovereign fabrication is opposed here, as we saw, to political praxis. Such poiesis is not the same as the poiesis offered by art. The latter’s poiesis cannot exist without things being made. To be sure, art is fabrication, as the very term art suggests, but it is not necessarily strategic fabrication; it does not serve the ends of sovereign Power, or of Truth.

With respect to this, Arendt’s idea of judgment is distinctly non-Paulinian, and connects to the sharp distinction that is also made by Deleuze between Christ and Paul. Judgment for Arendt comes down to the politically adequate assessment of interacting factors in the common world. It claims no higher ground, that is, and relates to Kant’s aesthetic judgment only in the sense that it is concerned with particulars that do not fall under an already established rule. I read Arendt not so much as in accordance with Deleuze, here, but as an ally that fights a similar battle from the standpoint of radical particularity in relation to bodies, bodies that can give birth, that is to say: in relation to a becoming.

In this context, it is of importance to be specific about the notion of utopianism in Deleuze’s work because it marks the difference between the new and the New. Whereas Ed Romein in the Dutch Deleuze compendium stated that for Deleuze all philosophy is utopian (2009, p.42), this stands in distinct contrast with what Deleuze and Guattari state themselves in What is Philosophy?

The word utopia therefore designates that conjunction of philosophy, or of the concept, with the present milieu – political philosophy (however, in the view of the mutilated meaning public opinion has given to it, perhaps utopia is not the best word). (WP, 100)

A few pages later Deleuze and Guattari give the example of Peguy and wonder what acting nowadays can mean:

Acting counter to the past, and therefore on the present, for the benefit, let us hope, of a future – but the future is not a historical future, not even a utopian
history, it is the infinite Now, the Nun that Plato already distinguished from every present: the Intensive or Untimely, not an instant but a becoming. (WP, 112)

Not only is Deleuze explicit, here, about his reservations with regard to the idea of the utopian, it is also of interest to see how the spatial and material concept of earth is expressed in terms of time. The utopian only exists in the potential of the material, radically immanent, now. It is in this intensely charged now that a potential of art resides, or better: the materialization of this momentous intensity can be the matter of art, as the painting of Bruegel suggests.

**The Potential in Humile Art**

One reason I love the Bruegel painting is that Saul is so clearly depicted as a contorted, twisted body-in-convulsion that has fallen to earth. The body is *down to earth* for a literal and figural reason, with the figural meaning being that nothing divine is going on but that a body is grasped by earthly contractions, since it is not God pulling the strings of these muscles. As a spastic, uncontrollable body that is the object of a convulsion, the body of Saul-to-be-turned-Paul is a much better metaphor for what, for instance, a revolution really is than the established utopian meaning of a wheel revolving and bringing up what was down, and down what was up. The latter image is, in fact, the result of a fabrication with either pre-sight or hindsight that fits all too well in the sovereign trajectory sketched earlier. God brought down brings the king up. The king brought down brings up the people. Saul the particular destroyer brought down brings up Paul the Founding Father of Universality. And although poetic fabrication wants it that the wheel of history has turned, as in progress, bringing in new hierarchies, the system of sovereignty, in all of these cases, remains intact.

As may have become clear, with all this I am not implying or saying that there is either no progress possible or that a world cannot be made anew. However, it can surely not be of our ‘making’, poetic or not. A distinction that structures Deleuze’s thought is pivotal with respect to this: the distinction between the possible and the virtual. In a sense, what is possible is already here, conceivable, as a plan, a project, a supreme fiction, or what have you. I can think of the possible as indeed, something possible. The virtual is not un-real. It is real, but cannot be known. For this, it first needs to be actualized, and this actualization, described by Deleuze as dramatization,
introduces the new. The virtual cannot be actualized, then, through strategic fabrication, it can only be actualized through enactment. It cannot be a matter of grace, consequently, only of surprise.

If Deleuze would have busied himself with the specific moment of Saul’s/Paul’s convulsion/conversion his diagnosis would have been that Paul is clearly affected. His body is acted upon and as a result acts, in loneliness. Nothing new happens: he is struck, like many before and after him. Afterwards, the story of his conversion is fabricated to serve strategic purposes; nothing new there as well. Saul’s changing sides, from being a persecutor to a defender, is not new either. The historical cases abound. What nobody could have foreseen and what did materialize, what became actual, was the Roman Catholic Church. In this context the title of the relevant Bible book is more than apt: Acts. Perhaps there would have been no Church without Paul, but he was certainly not the one fabricating it. It was a matter of collective dramatization, of enactment, and in that sense a matter of politics, be it one with a-political effects. With the founding of the Church, however, Christianity becomes the Anti-Christ itself by means of a ‘collective soul’ that wants ‘Power’ (CC, 38-39). It is a power that falls under the rubric of absolute sovereignty, not under the rubric of empowerment, let alone the enhancement of powers to act, in the Deleuzian sense of the phrase.

The role of art in such collective dramatization is not a single one, or a fundamental one, let alone an essential one, and as much a matter of praxis as of poïesis. In terms of enactment, art has many roles to play, including roles that consist in confirming, defending, intensifying, or flattening out what already exists. There is no reason to posit that it would have to be art, and art per se, to show us the New. The issue, here, is that we not consider art essentialized, as the quasi-theological royal instrument for the realization of the New (or of Truth). Again, art has many roles to play. It may even operate strategically, for instance, in the service of political purposes. In relation to art’s ability to affect us bodily, however, I would like to specify some roles, out of the many roles that art can play, under the heading of a specific form of art that I want to define as humile.

In Cicero’s De oratore he distinguishes between the three styles or modes of presenting something: genus humile, modicum and vehemens. Tellingly, however, the genus humile was also called subtile. In the middle ages, this style would be called ‘low’ (derived from Latin humilitas), connecting to the lower classes and the lower genres. With Cicero there is nothing pejorative, derogative, or hierarchical in his distinction between the genera. The genus
humile or subtile relates to the attempt to prove something (with modicum and vehemens relating to pleasing and moving or persuading respectively). The genus humile or subtile connotes puritas and perspecuitas: purity and clarity. No nonsense; no fancy decoration, no rhetorical fabrication.

It seems to me that for the theologically inclined thinkers mentioned previously, it is almost impossible to think of art and literature in terms of this genus humile. For this, their demands are too high. In contrast, by turning the adjective into a noun I want to radicalize the potential of art to be plain and down to earth and to relate to us bodily. I know it is never wise to introduce a new concept, but then again, that is not what I am doing, although I am appropriating Cicero’s term. The humile already exists as a Latin adjective. As a noun, now, it may serve to indicate a position or way of life that is literally and figuratively close to earth, doing justice to the etymological root of humile, which is humus – ground. Still, apart from the etymological root, I would like to take the contemporary meaning of humus on board as well, as the subtle, fertile and slightly messy product of reworked and decomposed animal and vegetable material (although newspapers, coffee filters and some forms of plastic would be equally helpful) that enhances the powers of plants growing on them. Furthermore, and lastly, I would like to do justice to the association of the humile with the human. The humile would concern a kind of humanity that would not mind mixing up materials, because it would be close to life as zoë, and that would be more interested in the enhancement of the powers to act than in the orchestration and fabrication of history.

Such art could not exist without things being decorated or fabricated, to be sure. Art in general is artificial, and it may fabricate things from the extremely complex to the extremely simple. Likewise, humile art can be both, highly complex or extremely simple. In both cases it will be subtile. With regard to the question whether it is able to work in the service of the high demands of the Revolutionary New the answer is surely: no. Humile art’s first and foremost characteristic is its potential to enhance the ability of bodies to act. This could well be in some form of Deleuze’s ‘enthusiasm’ (WP, 100-101) but it would concern unexpected revolutions, then, not projected ones. Would humile art suffocate in a totalitarian system and as a result scream for the utopian New? No. It would try to find niches, try to be invisible, it would try to breath and to sense possibilities for a new earth, a new people. Humile art is analogous to the lifeworld, here. It may exist in impossible places. With respect to this, humile art will always try to
find productive, down to earth modes of being that keep it alive, exploring its capabilities and limits, connecting and disconnecting with whatever surrounds it. Any form of sovereignty will, in the end, be incompatible with humile art, even it seems to serve it. For humile art the material of sovereignty can be used in a process of decomposition only, one that will serve as nutrition for other bodies and beings. As a consequence, it will enhance their powers to act. It will not fall back on the depressing theological option of deficits and judgment but will seek ‘joy’, if this is understood in Spinoza’s sense, as an increase in the power of acting.

Reading Bruegel’s painting literally I noted that Paul’s convulsion is happening in the margin of a marching army, and that this army itself is marginal in the vast mountainous landscape, indeed wrestling with the earth’s embrace. All of a sudden, there is a surprise and the momentous intensity of a now: the leader falls from his horse, his body shaking, losing his ability to see and hear. The surprise is translated to the unsuspecting viewers who might miss the scene unless it hits them with the realization: ‘Damn, that is Saul in convulsion.’ As such, the painting is revolutionary: it may upturn the way in which we saw it at first. Yet, as I stated earlier, it does not turn like a wheel, bringing in hierarchy and historical progress through a fabricated story of conversion. When being hit by the body of Saul through this work of art, we may either enter his convulsion, his being struck, being the subject and object of the event. We may also be like one of the soldiers realizing that something is happening, our heartbeats fastening. Or we may be like one of the many others, struggling with the embrace of the earth, focusing on the peace of soil just in front of us.

Humile art would not be interested in participating in the fabrication of a story that would reconfigure the convulsion into a revolutionary conversion. If confronted with Paul’s convulsion, humile art might flee the scene fearing to be affected or destroyed likewise; it might start a conversation with a passing soldier; it might attempt to find a place next to Saul, or next to his horse, in the grass. It might even fall asleep and wake up after the body of Saul was already taken out of context by the fabricating Powers of the Future. It would think: ‘Let them have him.’

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Materiality of Affect: How Art can Reveal the more Subtle Realities of an Encounter

Agnieszka Anna Wołodźko

Abstract
This paper focuses on the question of what it is to affect and how art can reveal a more subtle awareness of affect in terms of multiple reciprocal relations. Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of a block of sensations preserved in art will be discussed here as a way towards learning how to generate more nuanced connections and ways of encountering the agency of matter. The analysis of the particular works of art will be taken in view of how they allow us to go beyond the anthropocentric privilege of human cognition as the only carrier of agency and meaning generation. In this way encounters with art will be presented as the necessity to readdress the notion of matter as a carrier of agency from this new, non-anthropocentric perspective (Jane Bennet, Karen Barad). As such, this article will ask how through art a more attuned understanding of entanglements between human and non-human bodies is possible.
Introduction

Contemporary technological practices which manipulate the body, such as genetic modification, cloning and tissue engineering, present a challenge to traditional notions of the materiality of the body as the passive bearer of identity and individuality. These new technologies not only reconfigure the image of the body but often, as Rosi Braidotti noticed, create ‘mutual interdependence’ between bodies and technologies amounting to ‘a new symbiotic relationship.’¹ A way to fully explore this new type of entanglement between human and non-human bodies starts with rethinking the notion of matter as the bodies shared realm of encounter.²

It is argued that this symbiotic approach to the body would begin with, on the one hand, a rethinking of the idea that matter is subordinate and passive and, on the other hand, the rejection of the idea that consciousness and identity are the primary issues to be addressed (Bennett, pp.viii-x). By engaging in an analysis of the bare material things and their relations, this ‘new material turn’ or ‘new materialism’ stresses ‘real bodies and real materiality’³ reflecting a more egalitarian, self-critical and ecological understanding of our future. It allows to go beyond the privilege position of human as the only carrier of agency and meaning generation that marks the anthropocentric paradigm in western culture.⁴ However, while these studies can theoretically overcome the hierarchization between beings, the actual encounter with non-anthropocentric notions of matter is considered as a merely theoretical engagement. In this chapter, I will explore how, through art, a more tangible analyses of materiality is possible. Following Jane Bennett’s call for a more environmentally critical engagement with materiality, I will analyze particular works of art as ‘ethical, perceptually

I will analyse how particular works of art by Asger Carlsen and Patricia Piccinini confront us with the materiality that matters. In other words, this article will discuss how their works of art reveal other semiotics than language such as affects and sensualities. Through dealing with the image of carnality, the works of art raise questions not only of what affect is and does but mostly why affect matters. I will discuss how art opens up the possibility of thinking about materiality beyond the representational boundaries through the practice of matter’s expressive and affective qualities. In this way, I will analyze Deleuze’s material notion of meaning that not only forces a different approach to art but also opens up discussion about aesthetico-ethical implications for meaning production within art encounter.

What is affect?

The word affect derives from the Latin word affectus and was used by Spinoza to denote transmission of both: passions that originate outside the individual; and actions that originate inside the individual (S, 27-8). It was ‘the passage from one state to another […] purely transitive, and not indicative or representative, since it is experienced in a lived duration’ (S, 49). Transmission expresses the idea thus that to affect means also to be affected. Affect is transmitted on the parts of a relation that are at work. Massumi defines such understood affect as an extension of the boundaries of the particular bodies, being a part of an encounter between bodies.5

In this sense, through affect bodies belong to the shared realm of encounter. This belonging, however, has an ambivalent character, as affect does not originate in any particular body or outside it. As for the relation between beholder and the work of art, affect does not belong exclusively to a beholder and neither does it depend on the work of art alone. As Seigworth and Gregg state, an affect is rather ‘born in in-between-ness and resides on accumulative beside-ness.’6 This, however, does not explain, as Seyfert argues, how affect actually occurs: ‘how can an affect be simultaneously

defined as an effect that only emerges from the encounter between bodies and also as a force of external to these bodies.\textsuperscript{7} For Seyfert, to understand this characteristic of affect the body must be regarded as fluid.

Fluidity of the body means the actual change in the body’s capabilities resulting from each encounter. To talk about the body means to comprehend the body as a mode which is co-present within an infinite number of different modes. This fluidity of the body is therefore a multiplicity of ways in which bodies may interact. That affect has this double side of originating from and outside of the body means that each body is already changed by affect just as an affect is already a part of a body (Seyfert, p.30-33). In other words, each body articulates its unity through affect.

Massumi describes this characteristic of affect as ‘unqualified,’ (2002, 28) meaning that due to its lack of a fixed attachment to particular bodies, human or non-human, it is open and therefore autonomous. This autonomy of affect, as Eugénie Shinkle rightly pointed out, should not be, however, treated too literally, that is as autonomous from any forms of meaning generation.\textsuperscript{8} Instead, the autonomy of affect opens up a possibility of a different form of meaning which would overcome the regime of cognitive semiotics grounded in the signifier/signified paradigm.\textsuperscript{9}

The structuralist’s linguistic established signification as a free circulation of signifiers where meaning is autonomous from materiality (TP, 48-9). Operating within the given for the subject realm of interpretation, the meaning of the work of art is determined by the signifier and not by its materiality. The notion of affect opens thus a way to a direct contact of meaning with matter. As a sign that does not circulate within representational system of signifiers, but rather emerges as an assemblage of bodies within encounter, affect ‘puts the sign back into contact with the material and vital plane of consistency that constitutes it’ (Zepke, 2005, p.121). In this way, affect redefines the encounter with the work of art, revealing its dimension of

an event. Through thinking in terms of affect meaning appears not as given to the subject for interpretation, but rather as created during the encounter.

This opening up to possibilities that affect reveals is preserved in art. For Deleuze and Guattari it is art that preserves the sensations in a form of the block of affects and percepts. Art ‘preserves and is preserved in itself […]’ The young girl maintains the pose that she has had for five thousand years, a gesture that no longer depends on whoever made it. The air still has the turbulence, the gust of wind, and the light that it had that day last year, and it no longer depends on whoever was breathing it that morning’ (WP, 163). Regardless of the perception and feelings of a spectator, art generates and produces intensities, sensations, affects. It becomes an event of experience (Shinkle, 2013, p.76).

Within this dimension of an encounter, a new question reveals itself: what does affect actually do between the seen and unseen, sensed and un-sensed, as opened to beyond, an excess, being of the material yet incorporeal? A more subtle dimension of the encounter within which affect emerges can be revealed when extended to the visual art and images. A profound dimension of an affect is yet to be explored, specifically how affect matters, in other words, how affect affects.

How affect matters

When I first encountered photographs by Asger Carlsen published in his artbook *Hester* (2012), I remember the strange notion of awkwardness on seeing these images. Anxious whether they are real or manipulated, I realized however that the attempt to make this division following the traditional notions of representation of images is rather obsolete. These photographs reveal an incorporeal yet material dimension of an image in which what is rendered is all that we actually encounter. They seem to be liberated from the representational division between the image and what is represented. They rather appeal to sensuality as emergence of meaning. Despite their obviously ‘photoshopped’ nature, these photographs confront the

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beholder with an ambiguity as well as an excess of the materiality of the body. They are manipulated images of the human figure where bodies are without a head or limbs altogether. These images produce the human body as something other and alien, yet awkwardly present and real.

While representational approaches hold that an artwork represents a given idea or thing, suggesting an opposition between the work of art and what it represents, Carlsen’s photographs force an approach in which the sensual dimension of the body is recognized as the defining moment of the art work. They expose materiality as a grounding moment in the emergence of meanings, an excess.

Next to the surface of the photo shopped images of carnality, Carlsen’s work accesses what is parallel to it, specifically the vibrant, excessive dimension of materiality. Rather than represent or imitate, they produce existence, ‘affective contamination,’ where matter becomes inseparable from meaning. Unlike significance that marks representational logic of division between materiality and meaning, Carlsen’s photographs open up the realm where sensations, affect preserved in the image act directly upon the nervous system of the beholder. Nevertheless, as Deleuze and Guattari predicted, one can still argue for the preservation of resemblance in the painting, or as it is in this case – in a photograph. This falling into the representational structure reflects our position within the regime of the linguistic semiotics which forces to refer all signs into the signifier/signified relation.

However, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, ‘if resemblance hounts the work of art, it is because sensation refers only to its material: it is the percept or affect of the material itself, the smile of oil, the gesture of fired clay, the thrust of metal’ (WP, 166). Carlsen’s photographs seem to expose art as ‘capable of extracting full meaning from all the empty signal system that invest us from every side.’ They reveal how sign rather than mediation or representation can be ‘embedded knowledge production in which signs can have a real and direct effect on bodies.’

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This ability of a sign to directly act upon bodies is due to a lack of its strict differentiation form the material. The entanglements of materials with a sign which Deleuze calls here sensation, makes them not only indistinguishable but it also reveals matter’s expressive qualities. As such, art can become what Deleuze describes as an experimentation (LS, 297-8) of this expression without a representational appropriateness of signifiers.

Through making visible of the intensities and forces of materiality beyond human interpretative boundaries and yet awkwardly present, Carlsen’s photographs open up what is beyond but not disconnected. They ‘connect us to the world,’ enabling us to be ‘resonating with the matter around us,’ (O’Sullivan, 2006, p.50) to reciprocally relate within the realm of shared matter.

However, as Seigworth and Gregg argue, the acknowledgment of this reciprocal entanglement between bodies is not enough. The process of relatedness is an ethical, aesthetical and political task (Seigworth and Gregg, p.3). They argue for the need to explore what role affect plays in these reciprocal relations, that is, how it affects and is affected by as an aesthetical and ethical inquiry (Seigworth and Gregg, p.14). What is it to encounter the visual work of art within an event of shared materiality? Can affect reshape models of society, ethics and aesthetics?

When the pictorial turn has undermined language as the paradigm of meaning, questions arise as to how affect can convey meaning in a non-cognitive manner in the experience of art. As Gumbrecht noticed, our acknowledgment of the need to stop separating the meaning from materiality came with the realization that the old hermeneutical tools which examine the conditions of interpretation cannot grasp our contemporary world anymore. In view of the emergence of new media and materialities of expression and communication, the new question emerged: ‘how different media – different materialities – of communication would affect the meaning that they carried’ (Gumbrecht, p.11). In order to confront the materialist notion of meaning,
Gumbrecht creates the term ‘moments of intensity’ that reflects an event of encounter with the work of art as an emergence of affect and sensualities.

These ‘moments of intensity’ can be seen in terms of aesthetic experience however they are deprived of the connotation to the tradition of interpretation ascribed to this experience (Gumbrecht, p.100). Thus Deleuze’s notion of emancipation from narration embedded in art (FB, 7) becomes here a way towards learning how to generate more subtle connections, more subtle ways of encountering between beings. The work of art cannot be here positioned as an object of comprehension, as an expression and narration of meaning. Similarly, the beholder is not a distanced spectator, an actor of the meaning. In the moment of the intensity, sensations materialize to such a degree that affect exposes itself as material yet incorporeal, independent from human and yet there. As ‘a zone of indetermination,’ (WP, 173) the event of affect acts immediately on matter, on bodies nerves and organs (Grosz, 2008, p.22). As argued earlier in this article, these affects are not of the work of art or of the encounter but emerge within shared materiality, revealing the possibilities of being with the world as opened to nonhuman becomings.

‘Affect are precisely these nonhuman becomings of man, just as percepts […] are nonhuman landscapes of nature […] We are not in the world, we become with the world’ (WP, 169). The phenomenon of ‘becoming with’ that emerges through affect marks a way towards deformations, towards becoming the other, becoming new, that is grounded in the material notions of meaning. Through sensation preserved in the work of art, art encounter enables to such deformation, to becoming with the other bodies.

In the experience described by Gumbrecht as a moment of intensity, Carlsen photographs emerge as an actual encountering with the presence of the flesh, corporeal matter, captured in a highly direct flash light, as if made by the amateur camera, in a hurry. We can feel the warmth of the skin, softness of the flesh, stretched and simply there, without daring to deny its presence. Neither as space nor in space ‘[i]t is matter that occupies spaces to a given degree – to the degree corresponding to the intensities produced’ (TP, 153). As an awkward, strange, unsettling compound of organs joined by the skin, yet without any firm organization, we encounter their vibration and experience the lived relation in its dynamic movement. Because of this experience, they become real and present. These photographs expose the event of the experience that is foregrounded by the body’s capacity to affect and be affected by as ‘[c]onnection of desires, conjunction of flows,
continuum of intensities,’ (TP, 161) neither mine nor yours and yet as shared matter – ours.

Through thinking in terms of affect in the experience, Carlsen’s photographs expose not only our entanglement with the intensities of matter but also a need for different modes of sensibility when encountering them. In the next section, I will discuss how thinking through affect as a material notion of meaning fosters aesthetico-ethical implications within art.

**Affect that matters**

According to Latour, between man’s aspiration to master the world and to be affected lies a phenomenon that, as he puts it, ‘could offer a very important touch stone for detecting where we are heading and how well modernism (and also postmodernism) has been faring.’\(^{19}\) For Latour, this phenomenon can be described by the word ‘design’ which could be considered a substitute for the word revolution, today. As he states, the word design evokes the way things have been historically situated, formed, presented and associated. In other words, how things are not a matter of facts but rather a matter of concern. Here I will argue that this concern is embedded in the style of art which enables the organization of matter in the form of affect and percept. (WP, 170-171) Through this thinking about the organization of matter in the form of affect and percept, particular works of art, such as of Patricia Piccinini’s can bring a more profound understanding of shared materiality in terms of Bennett’s call, (2010, p.13-4) exposing the concern embedded in an encounter.

Piccinini is an Australian artist, who works in various media and fields – including sculpture, photography, drawing, and video. Her work is usually discussed in the context of the relation between biotechnology and society, as the ‘complex flexibility of bioethics and the ecology’\(^{20}\) in its confusing and diffuse relation between what is considered as natural and artificial. But as

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she states herself, her focus as an artist is the question of ‘how the conceptual or ethical issues are transformed by emotional realities.’

In her latest works, Piccinini explores a particular attachment to things embedded in the entangled relations between bodies where the distinctions of species and genus lose their boundaries. She explores these relations within shared materiality, on which basis the concern is exposed. If she mimics carnal materiality, she does so in a way that does not evoke the fear of losing control over our creations. Her sculptures preserve what is invisible and untraceable, independent and yet there. She asks, ‘[w]ether we will be able to love’ our creations and maybe ourselves in the future that is more present than we would like to admit. In other words, in her work, she reveals bodies, material and carnal as matters of concern, as matter which matters. She exposes the ethical and political implications within aesthetics.

As Guattari states, ‘[t]o speak of creation is to speak of responsibility of the creative instance with regards to the thing created’ (Guattari, 1995, p.107). What distinguishes this from a simple ethical paradigm in Piccinnini’s works is that her artworks do not rely on the logic of appropriateness. They rather create, to use Guattari’s words, a ‘new taste of life.’ They bring the future into the present, invisible into existence, exposing not matters of fact but rather matters of concern. The responsibility, as Deleuze and Guattari argue, is not however, in terms of responsibility for but rather responsibility before something (WP, 109). It is activated by the shame, which is revealed in Piccinini’s work so vividly: awkward carnalities, hairy anuses that stare back and dazzle with their ordinary present. They become Bataille’s solar anuses, haptic and formless.

This dimension of responsibility before in Piccinini’s works exposes an ethics that is not grounded in the selection of a particular relation, but is rather a material entanglement, a dynamic, contingent and fluid relational process. It indicates ethics’ opposition to morality mapped by Deleuze. For the philosopher, ‘[e]thics is a set of optional rules that asses what we do, what we say, in relation to the ways of existing involved’ (N, 100). In other words,


ethics, for Deleuze, is experimentation with and an increase of affects in order to explore what the body can do. Morality, for that matter, is ‘a set of constraining rules of a special sort, ones that judge actions and intentions by considering them in relation to transcendent values’ (N, 100). In other words, unlike ethics, morality is grounded in the system of representation, where there is no place for any deformation. In such a way, ethics is intertwined with aesthetics, as it seeks to invent new possibilities of life, new ways of existing in terms of experimenting with new relations, in terms of how it is to affect and be affected by.

Moreover, the notion of responsibility before revealed in Piccinini’s work cannot be positioned in terms of pity, as Deleuze would argue (WP, 107-109). This would presuppose what Braidotti described in terms of the trap of the ‘ethics of care.’ Specifically, within this ‘good-bad’ selection, issues of power appear within the questions: ‘why should people care?’, ‘how can one make them care?’ and ‘what do we do with those who do not care at all?’ (Braidotti, 2006, p.118-9).

Piccinini’s work, I argue, exposes ethics that is not grounded in the selection of the particular relation, but is rather the anticipation of relation to expand alliance with the other. She experiments with what the body can do, what its affect are, outside hierarchization and species separation. She forces the encounter with an active, dynamic matter in the relational process within which meaning and affect emerge as intertwined. Her sculpture based on the hyperrealism, similarly as Carlesn’s photographs, blur distinction between sensation and matter. The lack of the logic of representational appropriateness within the experience breaks the habit in the visual experience leading to the emergence of concern. In that sense, Piccinini reveals in her art a self-overcoming imperative that marks what Gauttari described in terms of ethico-aesthetical paradigm. She reveals new, emerging forms of subjectivity in this process of matter as self reconfiguration.

Due to this sharedness, being in it together yet disinterested, as Braidotti puts it, the ethics of concern has its ground, transforming into ‘collaborative morality’ (2006, p.162). This notion of shared sensibility, slips into Piccininini’s work revealing collective, multiple caring which are beyond human-human or organic-organic relations. Her work introduces ‘careness’, the notion of connection embedding all hybrid relation, giving ‘a model of porosity, fluidity, multiple interconnections’ (2006, p.123). In that sense, Piccinini works capture affects as the prior expression of bodies – their ability to affect, to generate concern. In her work she seems to simply follow
Deleuze and Guattari’s call: ‘In the same way that we avoided defining a body by its organs and functions, we will avoid defining it by Species or Genus characteristic; instead we will seek to count its affect’ (TP, 283).

The *Ghost* (2012)\(^\text{23}\) as embedding of organic with inorganic, becomes a creature that may haunt us in our dreams, it does not mean, however, that it belongs more to artificial imaginings than to actual presence which we already encounter. Rather than being a monstrous version of future fears, the *Ghost* embodies symbiosis between organic, fleshy matter and inorganic products of technologies that already inhabit our realm. This work of art seems to follow what Braidotti has called for, namely the need for ‘positive representation of anomalies,’ where anomalies rather than fearsome become a part of our thinking ‘through techno-teratological culture.’\(^\text{24}\) As it is exposed in the work *Nectar* (2012)\(^\text{25}\), the lack of boundaries between entities, instead of fear and anxiety, may be just a new feature of symbiosis between beings.

Piccinnini’s artworks convey the ethical dimension grounded in ‘coming-together or belonging-together.’ They are without moralistic segregation, judgment. Emerging from symbiosis, they expose what Massumi describes as ‘amoral collective ethics,’ pursuing ‘a caring to belonging as such’ (Massumi, 2002, p.255). As Karen Barad argues, actual concern and responsibility within relations is not a result of the being-in-the-world. Instead, as Piccinini's sculptures exercise, concern and responsibility are due to our being-of-the-world (Barad, 2007, p.160). Being-in-the-world, the particular situatedness of the body in the world, presupposes for Barad a radical difference between entities, its pre-existing state before relation that leads to ontological differences and social inequalities. Bodies are not made, as Barad argues following Haraway, bodies are rather in the making.

In her work, Piccinnini can be said to reveal Barad’s performative understanding of a relation that challenges not only language as a paradigm of knowledge mediating the world but captures this relation as within the

\(^{23}\) Patricia Piccinini, *Ghost*, 2012. Silicone, fibreglass, human hair, auto paint. 70 x 54 x 40cm. For the view of the art work see the artist's website: <http://www.patriciapiccinini.net/>


\(^{25}\) Patricia Piccinini, *Nectar*, 2012, Silicone, fibreglass, human hair, refrigerator. 83 x 48 x 51 cm. For the view of the artwork see the artist's website: <http://www.patriciapiccinini.net/>
phenomena of intra-action. Intra-action embeds not only relations between human and non-human but ‘the larger material arrangement, set of material practices’ (2007, p.139-40). Within this dynamic reconfiguration and articulation of the world, relata emerge. Instead of talking about fixed entities with inherent properties and boundaries, Barad proposes talking about intra-action within which components of phenomena become relata, acquiring determination and properties. The question of concern is not therefore a property of individual action and mind but material reconfigurations. Just as ethics is not the question of being responsible because of a particular relation but rather due to reciprocally affecting bodies or, as Barad would say, because of intra-actions within phenomena. Here the work of art, as preservation of affects and percepts, becomes a sphere that captures and organizes the sensations allowing for deformation of bodies, for becoming something other. To quote Deleuze and Guattari: ‘At each stage of the problem, what needs to be done is not to compare two organs but to place elements or materials in a relation that uproots the organ from its specificity, making it become ‘with’ the other organ’ (TP, p.259).

In other words, what Piccinini’s works expose in these entangled relations, is that responsibility or concern regards not only ‘how each intra-action matters in the reconfiguration of these entanglements,’ (Barad, 2007, p.160) but also of how our desires, emotions, affects are reconfigured through these entanglements (Barad, 2007, p.384). This means that the analyzed works of art can directly pose a change, affect, and act on the materiality of the beholder. They create, rather than express, meanings as not only new configuration but also as an ongoing articulation of ethics entangled with aesthetics (Barad, 2007, p.379). Specifically, discussed art works reveal how meaning emerges not as a mediation between entities nor as a result of cognitive, individual acts but as a part of dynamic re-articulation of matter.

**Conclusion**

The discussed notion of affect reveals how art, although not autonomous or disconnected from the social and cultural realms, cannot be regarded as their representation, as ‘a window into these worlds’ (Grosz, 2008, p.78). If this was the case, the works of art would be mere tools, objects of self reflection,
or mimetic signs of the status quo. The works of Carlsen and Piccinini expose instead how a work of art is an expression of its own, preservation of sensation, affects, vibrating forces, ‘possibilities of new, more different semiotics than these we know’ (Grosz, 2008, p.79). In this way, art can be approached as the exercise of relational entanglements between bodies that are grounded in their aesthetico-ethical dimension. Carlsen and Piccinini explore in their works how responsibility or concern regards how our desires, emotions and affects are reconfigured through these entanglements (Barad 2007, p.384). The works of art represent the future, capture the sensation of what is not there yet equally independent and existing, ‘affectively engaged yet largely disinterested’ (Massumi, 2002, p.255). As Guattari would say, ‘They start to exist in you, in spite of you’ (Guattari, 1995, p.93).

What is crucial now is to learn how to operate, move and encounter within the shared materiality without our anthropocentric, self-oriented attitude. We need tools and maps to readdress the ways of encounter more attuned to realities of mattering. In this article, I have analyzed how through affect the works of art can be seen as already tangibly exploring these practices of intertwining of ethics and aesthetics. The works of art which I have analyzed here reveal that what is left is the question of whether we allow ourselves to be attuned to matter’s subtle forms of calling.

References


The Revelation of a World that was Always Already There: The Creative Act as an Occupation

Rick Dolphijn

Abstract
This chapter sees Deleuze’s concept of ‘occupation’ as the greatest power of art. In occupying that which is loved so dearly, great literature, great music, is able to reveal another world. A world that is completely new yet always already there. The power of art is thus about addressing human deafness and human blindness. This is particularly needed in our times in which the economical and ecological crisis, once again confirm our inability to see and to hear our environment. With the work of Deleuze and Guattari in particular, we see that only art, in occupying spaces and times, has the power to realize a ‘wholly otherness’, both materially and mentally. In present times the explorations of the digital gives rise to a new creative activism that reveals a new world to us. Traversing the dualist oppositions between nature and culture, between technology and the earth, between organic and inorganic, between the mind and the body, as they have been classifying our environments for so long, they embody the creative power necessary to realise another earth, another humanity.
For Samuel Beckett, For Marcel Proust

‘[F]or Proust the quality of language is more important than any system of ethics or aesthetics […] Indeed he makes no attempt to dissociate form from content. The one is a concretion of the other, the revelation of a world’.¹ These words by Samuel Beckett in an early essay on the prose of Marcel Proust aptly summarize what art can do. The power of language, in Proust’s magnum opus *À la recherche du temps perdu*, is expressed not by setting up an ethics or an aesthetics. Proust’s language, in being written, in carving, curving and edging a series of signs and figures, is able to reveal not so much a character or a thing but an entirety, an infinity, a world. This means first of all that in being written, a world is *(per)formed*. For it is not *the* world which rises from the interstices of language, nor are new types of signs ‘appearing though material means’ as Judith Butler would put it.² It is *a* world which is revealed, a world *unforeseen*. Secondly, and consequential to Beckett’s refusal to start with entities and structures, this new world realizes itself immediately, which is to say that neither the book, nor language as such, functions as the ‘medium’ through which the world travels. Proust’s language is not so much offering us an *other* world as in a world that is ‘different from ours’, relative to ours or in-response-to the world we live. Proust creates ‘*another*’ or a ‘*wholly other*’ theory of abstraction (see also LS, 317), as Beckett emphasizes that it is in the concretion of content and in the refinement with which this concretion shapes the prose, that a new world arises.

The epic oeuvre of Marcel Proust reveals a world previously unknown to us, or better yet, a world not yet inhabited. Nevertheless, albeit that the quality of language expressed by Proust is by all means unique, the ability to raise a world is not. The quality of language of Samuel Beckett himself for instance, whose oeuvre may just offer us one of the finest and most revolutionary languages produced by twentieth century authorship, has a world to offer. It is probably a different world compared to the world raised by Proust, as in ‘achieved by different means’, resonating with wholly other events or happenings. For Gilles Deleuze, who analyzed the works of both authors meticulously, the quality of Proust’s language consisted of

differentiations of ‘capture’ (PS). Whether it concerns the relation between the madeleine and the church in Combray, the nineteenth century rivalries in aristocracy (with all of their jealousies and betrayals, their involuntary memories and unprecedented deformations), or the relation between the wasp and the orchid, it is at the moment of capture as it differently yet continuously marks the plot, that an infinitely complex world is opened. When Deleuze analyzes the works of Beckett, the concept that arises from the quality of his language is ‘exhaustion’. In being written, Beckett’s prose exhausts the possible between words but also the possibilia of words themselves. Deleuze connects the possibilia to objects and things, and to voices uttering them in the same way the possible can be linked to events, to series as they make up space. For this is what he considers Beckett to be doing (from the Unnamable onward): to exhaust space, to dry up all the (possible) relations that striate our world, that organize it. And it is only by tearing all of these relations apart (not just tiring them, but exhausting them beyond recovery) that another world can be revealed. As misery realizes itself within the characters staged and consumes them from the inside, slowly but surely the words undo a world that was there from the beginning. Similar to the Menger Sponge in topology, Becket’s writings execute the formula that simultaneously exhibits an infinite surface area and encloses zero volume, inventing, in language, a language that has always already eaten. To dispose, to disempower, to disenfranchise, to alienate, to incomprehend: those are the forms Beckett writes, the languages he unfolds/smoothen. Deleuze concludes that ‘to exhaust space is to extenuate its potentiality by making any encounter impossible’ (CC, 163).

Then what happens when a composer – Morton Feldman – offers us a composition entitled ‘For Samuel Beckett’? What quality of language – musical language, composition in this case (let us not hinge on the concept of language too much) – is at work here? What world is being revealed? ‘For Samuel Beckett’ was the last great composition of Feldman, an icon in contemporary (or twentieth/twenty-first century) music, before he left us in 1987. Feldman and Beckett had been friends since the 1950s and worked together on several occasions. This particular composition could well be listened to as a conclusion to their close friendship. It is spun from their friendship, extracting the tones and the resonances that signed it. One might say that, in naming the piece ‘For Samuel Beckett’, Feldman composed a final gift to his friend, as if it was a present in return for the friendship that had been so important to him, that gave form to his own life and his art in
such an important way. Nevertheless, experiencing Feldman’s composition it makes much more sense to conclude that, in his love for Beckett’s writing, for the world/the quality of language his oeuvre reveals, Feldman’s music in a way exhausts the possible between sounds but also the possibilia of sounds themselves, pulling characters and things apart sonically, thus showing us his world, by other means. Feldman’s music does not perform Beckett’s writings but rather executes the same formula. Throughout the entire forty-five minutes of this composition it is made sure that the elements do not meet, do not relate, do not merge into one. As an event, ‘For Samuel Beckett’ exhausts the world, offering a sonic mapping and thus revealing an unknown and uninhabited world of Samuel Beckett.

This extraordinary relationship between music and language resembles how the music of Pierre Boulez rewrites the oeuvre of Marcel Proust, as Deleuze discusses in one of his last published essays. Focusing not so much on the quality of language/composition but rather on what actually happens when Boulez sets himself to compose the works of Proust, Deleuze in this text conceptualizes their relationship in terms of an occupation: Boulez ‘occupies’ Proust, he claims. The way Deleuze gives form to this occupation comes remarkably close to the relation between Feldman and Beckett as discussed above. Noting how Boulez grasped Proust musically with such apparent ease or tactic, Deleuze concludes; ‘[I]t is as if he [Boulez] knew him [Proust] by ‘heart,’ by will and by chance’ (TR, 40), which is precisely how Feldman ‘knew’ Beckett. With Feldman’s occupation of Beckett we noted that an exhaustion was repeated; first a literary, then a musical space was being exhausted. When Boulez occupies Proust, what is occupied in particular is a notion of time, Deleuze claims. Boulez later referred to this duration as time ‘in its pure state’. And in another text, Boulez adds to this that Proust, for his part, occupied Wagner’s time in a similar way: ‘[…] Proust completely understood how Wagner worked, never going back on himself but always using the same motifs, the same basic resources, in order to achieve a continuous development that is both extremely concise and extremely free’.4

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To Occupy

Two remarks need to be made concerning Deleuze’s emphasis on occupying. Firstly, to occupy is ‘not connective’, as Brian Massumi calls it. Though occupying Wagner’s music ‘extremely concise’ as Boulez put it above, the À la recherche du temps perdu does not need Wagner, nor does it need any outside world to possibly come into existence. The Recherche does not need any object outside of itself (the book) to refer to, nor does it need subjects (authors, readers) to code and decode the world it holds (see also TP, 23), and this is not just the case with Proust. Also in the works and worlds by Beckett himself, by Boulez, by Feldman, but also by Joyce (as Beckett discusses this elsewhere, there is in the end no-thing being occupied. Or to put it in more formal terms: in all of these works of art there is no difference between content (a Proustian, Wagnerian or Beckettian world) and form (a book, a composition). Beckett confirms this in his reading of Joyce: ‘Here form is content, content is form. His writing is not about something; it is something itself’. It is an event, an occurrence, an occupation.

Thus, when occupying Wagner, Proust or Beckett, an artwork is not revealing the beauty of its ‘original’. Knowing it by heart, by will and by chance, the genius writers and composers discussed are not interested in ‘copying’ or representing anything. In more general terms, when art reveals a world this is therefore not about revealing ‘the beauty of nature’ in the Kantian sense. Deleuze concludes that the Kantian aesthetic dictum tells us that ‘he who leaves the museum to turn towards the beauties of nature deserves respect’ (K, 56), which is not something that Beckett (nor Deleuze himself) could agree with. When Beckett asks of art to reveal another world (in space, in time), this anotherness is never ‘outside’ of something. A world is revealed in the abstraction, in the composition, in the occupation itself. Beckett is not interested, as Harvey puts it, in ‘the wholeness and autonomy that is present throughout the Search and he pays homage for it to Wager (even though Vinteuil is supposedly very different from Wagner)’ (P, p. 293).


of the work of art’, but rather in how this revelation takes place in art (not in the artwork). Thus he is interested in how music includes the unheard, in how painting shows us the unseen and how the written word reveals to us the unwritten. The twittering birds from Oliver Messiaen, Eric Dolphy as well as those from Paul Klee, have nothing to do with ‘the beauty of nature’, rather, they reveal a world we have been deaf and blind to, as Michel Serres put it recently, a wholly other nature that we have just never ‘been in’ before. Experimenting with the ‘terrible materiality’ Beckett placed himself ‘on the road to this, for me, very desirable literature of the unword’ (2009, p.173). Traumatized by the memories and the deforming caused by our ongoing interpretation, Beckett occupies Proust by loving his writings as well as his unwritings, exhausting the habits (for instance subjectivity) that never stop categorizing our worlds.

Secondly, Deleuze’s emphasis on occupying is necessarily both mental and physical. The revelation of a world is in no way imaginary or idealist. The world given rise to is revealed as both a new material assemblage and as the idea that belongs to it. This necessarily doubled power of the arts is explained by Deleuze in terms of theatre, as he concludes: ‘Theatre is real movement, and it extracts real movement from all the arts it employs. This is what we are told: this movement, the essence and the interiority of movement, is not opposition, not mediation, but repetition’ (DR, 10, italics in original). In repetition lies occupation.

The importance of art for any kind of activism, for the well-being of our planet, for love, cannot be underestimated. We should therefore push the argument even further: the revelation of another world is written, painted, sculpted, composed, and created exclusively by and solely within art. This is what Deleuze means when he claims that ‘It is only on the level of art that essences are revealed’ (PS, 38). Beckett and Deleuze’s intensive experiments with art, are not interested in identifying the locus (the origin) of creativity within the artwork (or the artist, or the mind of the receiver), but rather start from sense, sensation, and intra-active creativity. Battling chaos, battling opinion, battling the hard classifications that suffocate our environments, it is

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the revolt itself (the chaosmos as Joyce puts it) that reveals essences. Or as Deleuze puts it: ‘What is an essence as revealed in the work of art? It is a difference, the absolute and ultimate Difference. Difference is what constitutes being, what makes us conceive being. That is why art, insofar as it manifests essences, is alone capable of giving us what we sought in vain from life […]’ (PS, 41) Proust continues the argument by claiming that this absolute, ultimate difference is ‘a qualitative difference that there is in the way the world looks at us, a difference that, if there were no such thing as art, would remain the eternal secret of each man’ (quoted in PS, 41).

But why the urgency, that is obviously imposed upon us when Deleuze stresses the necessity to occupy? Why this activist need to reveal another, a wholly other world, through the arts? Again, two remarks need to be made regarding this. First, contrary to current political ideology, to occupy is not about critiquing that which is being occupied (it is not about recognizing an opposition), but rather about fully affirming it. Instead of occupying ‘something’ (an outside object) we are now asked ‘to be occupied with something’ (the revelation of a world). It turns a passive, subjecting force into an active and creative one. At the same time the occupation is not directed towards a presence but is equally interested in those things that are not there (yet). To occupy is then not a response to repression, it is not a resistance. It is not even about adding Ideas to the flows of matter or to having an idea on something (which would again be a Kantian solution). Occupation, rather, comes with an intense love, with an unbound desire to explore a new landscape. With great love, Boulez read Proust (as Proust read Wagner), feeling how all the different relational movements in Proust (jealousy, memory, etc.) having already liberated themselves from the characters involved, gave rise to composition. In loving-to-read Proust so intensely a transposition took place that was ‘playing the positivity of difference as a specific theme of its own’. Thus the words and the unwords of Proust resonate into something wholly other: another world. The music, with meticulous precision, was creating-while-liberating a block of duration, or, a type of time, that was always already there (in the text). Occupying Proust, to Boulez, was about opening up a new perceptual field (expressing itself musically) and revealing as Beckett told us the ‘androgynous doubled earth on the other side’, making apparent an unheard and an unforeseen in Proust (in Wagner).

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Deleuze uses ‘to occupy’ thus not primarily as a socio-political term but as central to a creative act. It signals how art itself, rather than the artist/activist, as an event, searches to give form anew. To occupy, then, does not start as a political act or as social engagement, it concerns the event that reveals another politics, another ecology and another sociology always already there. ‘To occupy’ conceptualizes a force which sets about creating or materializing a new environment in which objectivities and subjectivities take shape. To occupy is then not an activity which has to start with human activity. On the contrary: it is creativity itself and its ability to involve others (and the way these others, like us, allow themselves to be involved with it), that mobilizes the true revolution. In other words: it is not the activist, the composer or the writer who ‘occupies’. It is art that occupies, that releases the suppressed and that takes over and thus has the power to stage another world. Art realizes occupation as it thinks through involvement like any other ‘persona’ by involving the flows of matter (from paint to the hand of the painter) and the network of ideas linked to it (from fear to jealousy, from subjectivity to objectivity).

In an interview, published in his latest book, Brian Massumi aptly summarizes in what way art holds the power to occupy and how it is able to actualize radical change. Massumi stresses the presence of art in our everyday life, not by making art ‘democratic’, but by showing us how great art has the power to deterritorialize the everyday with its revelations. Remembering great artists like Gustav Mahler and Pina Bausch, Massumi concludes: ‘Art brings back out the fact that all form is a full-spectrum dynamic form of life. There is really no such thing as fixed form […] Art is the technique for making that necessary but normally unperceived fact perceptible, in a qualitative perception that is as much about life itself as it is about the things we live by’ (2011, p.45, italics in original). This allows him to assert that ‘There is an artfulness in every experience. Art and everyday perception are in continuity with one another […]. Art foregrounds the dynamic, ongoing relational pole. Everyday experience foregrounds the object-oriented, action-reaction, instrumental pole’ (Ibid.).

To Occupy in Philosophy

In What is Philosophy? Deleuze (with Félix Guattari) uses ‘to occupy’ again as a necessarily affirmative and creative concept. This time however, instead of raising it through art, to occupy is now primarily shown at work in doing
philosophy. For although Deleuze and Guattari consider philosophy to be very different from the arts, it is an equally creative and equally affirmative act that is taking place (they argue that whereas art creates ‘blocks of sensation’ consisting of affects and percepts, philosophy is about creating concepts). Therefore, philosophy occupies our histories and speculates upon the futures already anticipated upon, similar to the arts. At the same time they fully affirm that the problems and the positions that one (the philosopher) finds on the ‘plane of immanence’ of philosophy as it crosscuts chaos, are very different from ‘the plane of composition’ of art (although these planes can also occupy each other (WP, 66)). Doing philosophy (i.e. creating concepts) is all about the quest for the ‘anotherness’ inside the problems and positions occupied.

Considering the various types of planes (of philosophy and art but also of science) as mappings that cut through chaos, Deleuze and Guattari show that occupation concerns not merely ‘time’ but proves itself just as creative with regard to ‘space’. The encyclopedic collection of maps brought together by the Mexican artist and anthropologist Erick Beltrán immediately shows us how different forms of occupation as they were performed throughout history and throughout time, create a world in all of its geographical, spiritual, ethical and political dimensionalities and directionalities. The stellar constellations on the robe of the magician do not ‘mediate’ orbital figures, but think a galactic world in their own, in their relation to the face of the magician, to the dance being performed, to the crowds that surround it. The back of the turtle, from the Delaware Indians to the Sumerian priests to Buddhist cosmogonists, not only carries and maps the world, it offers us an entire world.

Beltrán’s projects show us that art, in the widest sense of the word, has never evolved from mirroring the real dutifully (realist painting, tonal music) to mirroring the real undutifully (abstract painting, atonal music). Art was always already an abstraction in itself (see also WP). It had to invent or create the figurative/the figure over and over again. It has never represented images or words and has never produced ready-mades (it cannot). Rejecting the opposition between real and abstract altogether, art is never a secondary principle when it comes to staging a world. A world is its point of departure. In its power to revolt, art creates truth, or as Deleuze put it before (in his reading of Proust): ‘Truth is never the product of a prior disposition but the result of a violence in thought’ (PS, 16). Even when it comes to photography, the art form most commonly accused of ‘realism’, truth is not in need of an
outside, but comes about in the creative process: ‘The most significant thing about the photograph is that it forces upon us the ‘truth’ of implausible and doctored images […] [they] cut across ages and temperaments, to come from afar, in order to fill every room or every brain […] they impose themselves upon sight and rule over the eye completely’ (LS, 64).

The various planes that Deleuze (with and without Guattari) conceptualizes (art, science, philosophy, and the multiplicity of transversal connections that structure the surface of the earth) are the territories we live. Organizing the portraits and landscapes abstracted from chaos, they allow for the creation of the nets of thought that our minds inhabit. In this sense the ‘reality of photography’ is in no way different from the ‘truth of logic’, a type of thinking that insists on transforming the philosophical concept into a mathematical function. Deleuze and Guattari, talking about logic, stress this by claiming that ‘[t]he set of a function’s truth values that determine true affirmative propositions constitutes a concepts extension’, and they continue by stating that ‘[…] the concept’s objects occupy the places of variables or arguments of the propositional function for which the proposition is true, or its reference satisfied. Thus the concept itself is the function for the set of objects that constitute its extension’ (WP, 136).

The affirmative and creative act of occupation is then by all means an abstract gesture that reaches out towards chaos, and that in every possible way follows its flows (of chaos). At the same time however, it reterritorializes and deterriorializes a crossroad of planes. There, rhythms, resonances and differences are experimented with and make the creative act. The planes themselves are not so much part of the creative act but rather allow it to take place. In the conclusion of What is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari (WP, 218) explain this in terms of the plane of philosophy:

The plane of philosophy is prephilosophical insofar as we consider it in itself independently of the concepts that occupy it, but nonphilosophy is found where the plane confronts chaos. Philosophy needs a nonphilosophy that comprehends it; it needs a nonphilosophical comprehension just as art needs nonart and science needs nonscience.

Deleuze and Guattari end their quest to what is philosophy, not surprisingly, with the nonphilosophy of François Laruelle with which they deeply sympathize, and whose general attack on transcendentalism they fully support. Also his urge to get closer to chaos or the Real as Laruelle calls it (a desire we also recognize in the work of Michel Serres today) from which the
planes abstract is interesting because Laruelle, in this way, also strongly critiques philosophy for its claim to domination which it has made numerous times in (recent) history. Laruelle is right when he states:

The superior or dominant place is in effect always occupied by philosophy: with the unification or intersection of two regions, it is still philosophy as over-dominant, if we can put it this way, that triumphs, the satisfaction of the need to philosophize; the synthesis is made to the benefit of philosophy and this is what consummates the encyclopedia and enjoys it.\(^\text{11}\)

It is for good reason that Deleuze, after rewriting the History of Philosophy at the start of his career, wrote his philosophy as close to the arts as possible (starting with *Logic of Sense*). For it is only there, at the pole of the philosophical plane closest to the arts, that creation matters, that new worlds are being revealed and that a true political, social, ethical and environmental activism can be practiced. The future of philosophy, the future of the humanities even, the future of the world, *necessarily* has to be developed in the closest possible connection with the arts.

**Non-human occupation**

Let us therefore move back a bit to the idea of occupation in its most direct and expressive form – as it happens in the arts. For it is within the arts that ‘a shock to thought’ materializes and smoothes the dimensionalities (the classifications, the organizations) we find ourselves in. Following Deleuze, we spent a lot of time at the beginning of this chapter, on how great authors and composers have been able to occupy various worlds (infinitely). In the end however, my analysis did not concern the artists nor their artworks but the plane of art as *a whole* and the creative act that one way or the other takes over. I was interested in the moment art and everything else involved in the creative act, *opens up*, and realizes another world. This implies that although there lies great importance in rethinking the great artists and artworks that have marked our history, the whole idea of occupation is not in any way limited to humanity. Again, this is where art, more than philosophy and the sciences, cannot be reduced to a humanism. Deleuze and Guattari summarize this most convincingly when they state that ‘the creative act does not wait for

man to begin’ (TP, 320). The creative act has a history that extends far beyond human possibilities and a future that, with or without the human being, looks brighter than ever. Serres, though always very enthusiastic about the sciences (mathematics, physics, chronobiology, earth science), finds music to be at the basis of everything (perhaps resonating the nonphilosophical with the nonscientific and the nonartistic). Deleuze and Guattari are more or less of the same opinion, stressing over and over that the creative act cuts across every possible territory without humanity being aware of this. When analyzing the non-human nature of art it was especially the role animals play in this, that received their attention. Occupying spaces and times, revealing new worlds, the animal actualizes new material assemblages continuously, as the following example sets out beautifully:

Every morning the *Scenopoeetes dentirostris*, a bird of the Australian rainforests, cuts leaves, makes them fall to the ground, and turns them over so that the paler internal side contrasts with the earth. It is this way it constructs a stage for itself like a ready-made; and directly above, on a creeper or a branch, while fluffing out the feathers beneath its beak to reveal their yellow roots, it sings a complex song made up from its own notes and, at intervals, those of other birds that it imitates: it is a complete artist.’ (WP, 184)

The bird is an artist in that it allows the accident to happen, and as such the creative act can be realized. Thus, the example given is not so much concerning the bird. By focusing on the circulation and not on the particular forms, the creative act we witness bring about ‘anotherness’ which was always already there (it just needed to be differentiated). The cutting and the turning over of the leaves, the staging, the singing of the bird and its revealing the yellow roots of its feathers, altogether occupy that which is loved so dearly. Liberating the leaves from the trees, the pale from the dark surface, the music from the other birds and the earth, this creative act plays the positivity of difference and proposes us a wholly other object of the mind. Without offering us an alternative (possible) world, the scene above most of all shows how ‘the functional play of repetition and difference replaces the organic play of identity and variation’: it shows how occupation is about a spatial discovery, the creative revelation of a world unforeseen. The creative act thus necessarily performs a territorialization (WP, 185):

Every territory, every habitat, joins up not only its spatiotemporal but its qualitative planes or sections: a posture and a song for example, a song and a
color, percepts and affects. And every territory encompasses or cuts across the territories of other species, or intercepts the trajectories of animals without territories, forming interspecies junction points.

When Serres, in his ecological work\(^\text{12}\), concludes that music precedes everything (as noted above), he hopes that the human being, stuck in the organic play of identity and variation, becomes a musician, a complete artist (very much like the Scenopoetes dentirostris). Not because he wants us to excel in our abilities to compose, to paint, to write, but much more because being a complete artist allows us to live our bodies in a better way, to live better lives to – finally – to be worthy of being in the world. To flow with and play with the winds, the rivers, rhythms of our bodies, is by all means the best life to live. It is time for us to understand (again) that we are all composers by nature.

**Occupy natures**

When Deleuze and Guattari conclude that territoriality is a consequence of art and that art does not wait for man to begin, Eric Alliez concludes that ‘art is the concern of a philosophy of nature’.\(^\text{13}\) Art unites within itself the combination of ‘territory and deterritorialization, finite melodic compounds and the great infinite plane of composition, the small and the large refrain’ (Alliez, 2004, p.176). As such, Deleuze and Guattari’s relation between art and nature is radically different from dualist Kantianism that up to today dominates our thinking of art and nature. Asking art to know nature by heart, by will and by chance, in other words asking art to occupy nature, proposes a very different type of activism and foresees a much more prominent role of the arts as a means to analyze the current crises critically and clinically.

Especially in the later part of both their careers, Deleuze and Guattari both set themselves to developing this new philosophy of nature. In the late 1980s Deleuze had announced that he and Guattari even had the intention to write a book on their philosophy of nature (N, 155), continuing the naturalism already so dominant in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Probably this particular book was not written because of the sudden death of Guattari in 1992. Yet it is by all means clear that the ‘geophilosophy’ that makes up such

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an important part of *What is Philosophy?* introduces us to this new philosophy of nature, that asks us to occupy nature creatively, that asks us to become true artists, to open ourselves up to the event and to realize an absolute deterritorialization of the planes (of art, science, philosophy, and many more) in which we find ourselves.

Since the publication of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze had been working on this naturalist philosophy to come. Many of the texts dealing with occupation discussed so far have been written during this last part of his career, and also the final monograph he published in his own name, *The Fold, Leibniz and the Baroque* (TF), reads both the history of philosophy and the history of art as a creative act and as a territorialization (the Baroque house with its open common room and its closed private room). At the same time, Guattari, who was always much more involved in the post 1968 movements and the political struggles of his times, was working on the same naturalism by means of an ecological activism. His *The Three Ecologies* showed us that not only the study of environmental ecology but also the development of a social ecology and a mental ecology (much inspired by Gregory Bateson\(^\text{14}\)) was necessary to release us from what he termed *Integrated World Capitalism* (IWC) (see TE, 47) and the horrors this caused to late 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century life. Seeking refuge in contemporary art time and again, and stressing that it was only through art that activism mattered, Guattari turned ecology into a complete philosophy, necessary to liberate nature *as a whole* from the obscuring (dualist) forces that divide, split, and take pride in defending territories (capitalist, humanist, environmentalist) that have fallen into a deep crisis at the start of the 21\(^{\text{st}}\) twenty-first century. Guattari critiqued the ongoing ecological discussions concluding that: ‘Ecology in my sense questions the whole of subjectivity and capitalistic power formations, whose sweeping progress cannot be guaranteed to continue as it has for the past decade’ (TE, 35).

In our times, critique on Integrated World Capitalism and its consequences predominantly comes from ecocriticism and from the followers of Arne Naess (Ecosophy T/the Deep Ecology Movement). Ecocriticism considers aesthetics crucial for ‘saving the world’ yet contrary to Deleuze and Guattari, they consider aesthetics to be representational, or as Timothy Morton (echoing Beckett) claims in our times: ‘Ecocriticism has overlooked the way in which all art – not just explicitly ecological art – hardwires the

environment into its *form*. Ecological art, and the ecological-ness of all art, isn’t just *about* something [...] Ecological art *is* something, or maybe it *does* something’. Of course Deleuze and Guattari agree with this but at the same time they (already two decades ago) made a much stronger claim when concluding that not only eco-art, not only birdsongs, not only primitive or archaic art, but all art, in making new rhythms, new dances, new colors and new lines, both occupies and territorializes. All art wards off the intruders, announces the arrival of predators and thus marks (necessarily) an entire world. John Cage’s iconic composition 4’33 perhaps most convincingly summarizing the arguments made into one event: every time it is performed it has the power to occupy a territory, to realize a series of material assemblages that reveal an altogether new world. Spun from all the silences and sounds that make up the event, in all of its fixedness and unfixedness, 4’33 time and again proves how art has nothing to do with the human being, how there is no ‘author’ anymore, how art – contrary to philosophy – never has the will to install a new regime of power, how it is concerned with the opening up of the world as we know it, and with creating all different sorts of percepts and affects, songs and colours (see also TP, 267). Is there any other composition better able to confront us with human deafness?

How different is Guattari’s ecosophy from that of Arne Naess! Naess’s ecosophy hardly speaks of art, and by considering ‘Self-realisation’ its goal, aiming at a humanist *identification* with the Other (the existing natural world), Naess doesn’t even come remotely close to the ecosophy that Guattari (and Deleuze) were developing. Naess’s ecosophy as well as ecocriticism is largely dualist (it keeps opposing culture to nature, technological processes to natural processes), deeply conservative (the natural equilibrium that culture disturbs should be kept intact) and *anthropocentric* (in terms of energy, in terms of land use, in terms of food production, in terms of a general economics: all ‘solutions’ to the current crisis are meant to secure our human needs).

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To occupy nature by ‘heart’, by will and by chance

To dismantle the most resilient powers that have been structuring the earth for so long and, more importantly, in such a bad way ‘[…] requires all of the resources of art, and art of the highest kind’ (TP, 187). In conformity with our times, so overwhelmingly dominated by its ecological, financial and technological crisis, this highest kind of art perhaps first of all happens according to what we should call ‘the digital’, and in the activism that the digital gives rise to. The hacker culture that the internet in our days facilitates, was already foreseen by Guattari as he noticed that: ‘Technological developments together with social experimentation in these new domains are perhaps capable of leading us out of the current period of oppression and into a post-media era characterized by the reappropriation and resingulatization of the use of media. (Access to data-banks, video libraries, interactivity between participants, etc.)’ (Guattari, 1995, p.5-6). Contrary to Naess\(^{17}\) and ecocriticist theory, today’s digital humanities have shown in many ways that e-culture is as material as any other technological revolution.\(^{18}\) As with all forms of technique, the digital too is an abstraction of the forces of nature, which is then about conforming to nature (as an expression of its mode of interaction), as Whitehead\(^{19}\) and Simondon\(^{20}\) already told us long ago. Along those lines, Guattari’s post-media era is once more a new trajectory across the autopoetic processes of nature by turning from consensual (top down) to dissensual (bottom up) practices. These processes are in no way limited to particular net-environments, but deteritorialize the earth as a whole, opening up a new landscape (without image) that is unknown to us, as Rodowick (with Godard) so beautifully put it.\(^{21}\) A new landscape that demands to be occupied, territorialized.


\(^{18}\) See for instance: Marianne van den Boomen et.al. (ed.), 2010. Digital Material, Tracing New Media in Everyday Life and Technology. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.


\(^{21}\) Rodowick shows us how the cinematographic age (the media age?) was given form to by iconical and indexical imagery whereas the digital age is primarily symbolic: it depends upon the intervention of a digital codification system that intervenes. See
The digital, as I have already said, is crucial in understanding the new machinic process through which forms are being created in our age, especially in relation to the new spatialities we are now confronted with. Albeit such a central term in contemporary art and culture, the digital is still poorly conceptualized. Architect and new media theorist Lars Spuybroek is one of the few great minds who has done radical ecological experiments with the digital in his designs since the late 1980s and in his writings afterwards. He states: ‘We often understand ‘digital’ as meaning ‘electronically computed,’ but the speed of those electrons is actually irrelevant to the notion of computing, which refers solely to the method of calculation, a stepwise procedure of iterative adjustments based on the minimization of difference.’

Rather than focusing on the computer, Spuybroek shows that the ecologies of the digital are defined by ‘difference’. Referring to Bergson’s idea of variation both in terms of difference in degree and difference in kind, Spuybroek emphasizes how the simple behavior of individual elements (the smallest geometrical modulations that practice a difference in degree) leads to complex (and irreducible) collective behavior (a new and unique beauty that reveals a difference in kind). Thus, the new digital landscapes (actual and virtual) are realized and given form (territorialized).

The digital as difference in itself

The highest kind of art, as demanded by Deleuze and Guattari, is then perhaps the first of the arts, as they termed architecture in their final project: ‘The frames and their joins hold the compounds of sensations, hold up figures, and intermingle with their upholding, with their own appearance. These are the faces of a dice of sensation. Frames or sections are not coordinates; they belong to compounds of sensations whose faces, whose interfaces, they constitute’ (WP, 187).

Today’s digital design, then, is the intricate relational process of giving form geometrically not only to the built environment but to all possible life. Thus we should take very seriously


23 The preference for architecture as the first of the arts seems to match the way in which Deleuze conceptualized the Baroque house in his book on Leibniz and the Baroque as we discussed this earlier in this chapter.
Madeleine Gins and Shusaku Arakawa’s last project, entitled *Architecture Against Death*, as proposed in their manifesto *Making Dying Illegal*. The new ecologies they develop (think of designs such as *Yoro Park* in Gifu, Japan, and the *Reversible Destiny* apartments in Mitaka, Japan) are in search for a radically new form of life by realizing radically different territories (in terms of the objects and the subjects involved). Their projects are mapping a new vitalism similar to what Spuybroek is after, revealing us a new earth in the tradition of how Proust gave us Combray and how Joyce gave us Dublin. Striving to know nature by ‘heart,’ by will and by chance, they refuse the abstract Cartesian line and instead explore the (digital) geometric topologies of the real. Their wholly other landscapes, reach out for a new humanity, a playful human that cannot die.

Nevertheless, asking ourselves what kind of new form (difference in kind) the digital can reveal, what kind of differences are produced by changing the zeros into ones and back again, is of course a question that is not limited to the architectural. Elementary questions like these traverse the architectural into design, into installation art, body art, and eco-art (to name just a few directions). Thus we see the contemporary artistic experiments (and writings) by Alisa Andrašek, Natalie Jeremijenko, but also Usman Haque mapping a variety of new natures, new forms of life affirmatively realizing a new world that was there all along just waiting to be realized. Similar to the experiments of Spuybroek and Gins and Arakawa, these artists occupy nature digitally.

As art has shown us the active role played by matter in ‘receiving’ a form, the digital difference in itself does not only offer us a new (architectonic) landscape, but it is in the same cut that new and unknown types of emancipation are released together with race, class, gender and age; the predominantly socio-political terrains that academia and activism have been struggling with since 1968 at least. Guattari (TE, 23-4) pungently

summarizes this humanism-in-crisis when noting the transversal powers of ecological thinking:

The same ethico-political aim runs through the questions of racism, of phallogocentrism, of the disastrous legacy of a self-congratulatory ‘modern’ town planning, of an artistic creation liberated from the market system, of an education system able to appoint its own social mediators, etc. In the final account, the ecosophic problematic is that of the production of human existence itself in new historical contexts.

Guattari is right when noting that the final question to be answered is the question of subjectivity. The explorations in today’s digital culture are not just about hacking data, or about resisting all forms of control through digital means. There is a clear materialist agenda at work in these new forms of art that in the end addresses Kantian humanism at its core. The (digital) activism discussed above all shows how new territories are being occupied. New territories that refuse to accept the dualist oppositions between nature and culture, between technology and the earth, between organic and inorganic, between the mind and the body. To occupy nature thus means that we cannot, like the dualist, conservative and anthropocentric environmentalist, start with asking ourselves ‘how we might save the world’. We cannot and we should not save the world. We ought to dismantle the world and ourselves… through a world proposed to us by art. Only thus new forms of subjectivity more worthy of the crisis we are in can come into being. After all: ‘Can art, painting, and music have any other goal…?’ (Beckett in CC, 158).

References


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The Ethico-Aesthetics of the Figure

Jay Hetrick

Abstract
In this essay, I argue that Gilles Deleuze’s logic of the figure – if abstracted and connected to certain other of Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts – provides the ground for not only artistic practice, but for any creative act, including what Guattari calls the ‘ethicopolitical.’ The first part of the essay analyses in some depth the concept of the figure before testing and further extending it through Henri Michaux’s art informel. I suggest that this logic of the figure – when we consider the closely related concepts of the line of flight, formlessness, as well as the new type of praxis it entails – may serve as a ground, more specifically, for the construction of a future post-autonomist politics, a ground in the sense of providing a non-dialectical political ontology. In conclusion, I propose that the scream of the figure – the scream that implies ‘another world is possible!’ as Isabelle Stengers has noted – is itself an ethico-political act that is in some ways superior to the idea of a political program.
In Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, the diagrammatic plane of immanence is the ground of any creative act, properly speaking, whether we consider the philosophical creation of concepts, the scientific creation of functions, or the artistic creation of figures. We could also speculate – beyond Deleuze and in response to Alain Badiou’s charge that the plane of immanence does not allow for the emergence of a politics – that it also grounds a certain anarchic conception of the political.¹ Deleuze suggests that the establishment of such a ground itself, understood as a redistribution of sensation, is already a kind of micropolitical act. And Guattari even preempts Badiou’s rather disingenuous claim when he says that the ‘different domains of thought’ or ‘powers’ include not only philosophy, science, and art but also ‘acting politically.’² I would like to take a step back and intimate that, considering the potent metaphysical vision to which it is linked, the plane of immanence may indeed serve as a ground – in the sense of providing a non-dialectical political ontology – for the construction of a future post-autonomist politics. Nonetheless this is not my explicit concern here. Rather, I will draw out precisely what Deleuze means by the artistic composition figures, or ‘blocs of sensation,’ since the logic of such composition seems to most clearly and directly illustrate the type of creative act that necessarily emerges from any plane of immanence.³ As Guattari adds, the ‘aesthetic power of thought, although equal in principle with the other powers,’ occupies ‘a privileged

¹ ‘How is it that, for Deleuze, politics is not an autonomous form of thought, a singular section of chaos, one that differs from art, science, and philosophy? This point alone bears witness to our divergence and there is a sense in which everything can be said to follow from it.’ Alain Badiou, 2004. ‘One, Multiple, Multiplicities.’ In: Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (trans., eds.), Theoretical Writings. London: Continuum, p. 68.
³ In the broadest possible sense, Deleuze and Guattari describe ‘the diagrammatic or abstract machine’ simply as that which ‘does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come.’ (TP, 142). And such a construction can occur in any field. John Mullarkey has constructed the beginnings of a diagrammatic philosophy in which a ‘flexuous line’ would become ‘the out-line of philosophy, what picks philosophy out from the non-philosophical background while also tying its figure to its background conditions.’ Such a philosophical diagram would be ‘the pre-philosophical, meta-philosophical, and ante-philosophical all in one ... the outline of a process (of thinking).’ John Mullarkey, 2006. Post-Continental Philosophy: An Outline. London: Continuum, p. 157.
position’ in our age of immaterial labor and semiocapitalism (1995, p.101). I will conclude by testing and further extending this idea through the art informel of Henri Michaux and by suggesting how the Deleuzian figure – when we consider its closely related concepts of the line of flight, formlessness, as well as the new logic of praxis it entails – can provide the basis for not only artistic but also ethico-political thought. This imbrication of the aesthetic, ethical, and political follows Guattari’s ethico-aesthetic paradigm, which begins with ‘aesthetic perception’ (1995, p.131) and moves through a ‘processual creativity’ (1995, p.13) that informs ‘the site of a work, a potential praxis,’4 which is finally qualified as ‘ethicopolitical.’5 I would like to clarify at the outset that, by focusing upon the artistic figure in order to extract a framework for post-Deleuzian thought – including ethico-political thought – I am not championing some kind of modernist position. It is important to resist an uncritical conflation between art and politics, which happens continuously in the literature. I will do this by building upon the fact that Deleuze and Guattari themselves do not emphasize works of art but rather an onto-aesthetics of asignifying signs, or blocs of sensation, in constant flux and interaction (1995, pp.101-2):

> [i]t might be better here to speak of a proto-aesthetic paradigm, to emphasize that we are not referring to institutionalized art, to its works manifested in the social field, but to a dimension of creation in a nascent state, perpetually in advance of itself, its power of emergence subsuming the contingency and hazards of activities that bring immaterial universes into being.

In order to get the fullest sense of the logic of the figure, we must trace its provenance back to the concept of abstract line, which is the third and final characteristic of what Deleuze and Guattari call nomad art. The first two of these characteristics – both of which come from their particular reading of the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl – are close-range vision and haptic space, which delineate the synesthetic vision of the artist as well as the space s/he creates in the work, respectively.6 Deleuze and Guattari derive the concept of

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6 For more details on Deleuze’s appropriation of Riegl, see Jay Hetrick, February 2012. ‘What is Nomad Art? A Benjaminian Reading of Deleuze’s Riegl.’ In: Deleuze Studies. Vol. 6, no.1, pp. 27-41.
abstract line from the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer, who developed a theoretical schema for the analysis of non-representational art, whether Egyptian, Oriental, Gothic, or the type of abstraction that was beginning to emerge in Europe in the early twentieth century. Worringer’s art theory builds upon Riegl in interesting ways that have often been dismissed by art historians as merely popularizing, in a ‘vulgarized and sensationalized’ way, Riegl’s work. But Worringer’s historical schema – which is driven by the non-linear alternation and repetition of the sentiments of abstraction and empathy – challenges the more or less Hegelian historiography posited by Riegl, a move that Walter Benjamin builds upon and more adequately articulates in his conception of cultural history, and which Deleuze follows in his own non-progressive history of haptic and optic regimes of art. Furthermore, Worringer’s invocation of Georg Simmel at the start of his two major works, *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, implicitly injects a socio-political element to his analyses that is lacking in Riegl, but essential for both Benjamin’s and Deleuze’s philosophies of art. In addition to broadening the scope of Riegl’s art theory to include innovative historical and political concerns, Worringer expands upon Riegl’s technical discussion concerning the haptic and optic regimes, replacing them with the terms abstraction and empathy, and investing them simultaneously with new affective and formal significance. The concept of the abstract, or ‘Gothic,’ line marks the apex of Worringer’s innovation since it combines the formal and affective elements of his two regimes of art. However, Deleuze and Guattari’s use of this term in *A Thousand Plateaus* is ambiguous and does not adequately distinguish the formal and affective registers, as indicated by his use of the terms ‘abstract’ and ‘inorganic’ almost interchangeably. This ambiguity may be resolved if we allow these two registers of the abstract line.

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8. For an excellent exposition of these themes, in regard to Benjamin, see Michael Jennings, 1995. ‘Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy.*’ In: Neil Donahue (ed.), *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, pp.87-104. It should also be noted that, in addition to Deleuze’s texts that display more explicit art theoretical themes, Worringer is named in his overtly political ‘Treatise on Nomadology.’ (TP, 411-415). Furthermore, both Benjamin and Simmel are cited in Deleuze’s book on the time-image, precisely at the moments in which he is attempting to articulate the political consequences of the cinematic regime. (C2, 264-322)
to simply collapse into and then further articulate the concepts of smooth space and haptic vision, respectively, which is indeed a perfectly viable reading given Deleuze’s relative lack of clarity on these points. However, I will argue instead that the abstract line becomes, in the Bacon book, the ‘figure’ which emerges from the catastrophe of the diagram.

Deleuze and Guattari write that ‘the abstract line is the affect of smooth spaces, not a feeling of anxiety that calls forth striation’ (TP, 497). The first part of this statement – that the formal element of the line is an affect – already conveys a sense of the ambiguity at the heart of Deleuze’s notion of abstract line. The second part is a direct reaction to Worringer, whose book *Abstraction and Empathy* uses these two terms to replace Riegl’s sensorial schema of the haptic and the optic with concepts that are more affectively charged. ‘Abstraction’ – which is most fully exhibited in the geometric lines and bas-relief surfaces of Egyptian art, but finds a modern expression in the early works of Mondrian and Malevich – is the artistic response to a primal psychic anguish according to Worringer. It is motivated by an intense ‘spiritual agoraphobia’ of open space, which avoids the representation of distance and perspectival depth through the use of stable, tactile forms that arrest the flux of a threatening and incomprehensible world. Unlike abstraction, ‘empathy’ had been a well-developed idea in the context of German art theory since the late nineteenth century, which Worringer appropriates and applies to the art of classical Greece. He argues that the Greeks quelled their anxiety of open space through the use of reason and were thus able to identify with the organic and changing forms of nature. These two emotional responses associated with abstraction and empathy are mixed in Gothic art, which according to Worringer is an expression of ‘sublime hysteria’ (Worringer, 1957, p.79, 42. translation modified):

This is not a case of the harmonious interpenetration of two opposite tendencies, but of an impure, and to a certain extent uncanny, amalgamation of them, a requisition of our capacity for empathy (which is bound up with organic rhythm) for an abstract world which is alien to it. Our organically tempered sense of vitality recoils before this senseless rage of expression as from a debauch. When, however, finally yielding to compulsion, its energies flood these lifeless lines, it

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feels itself carried away in a strange and wonderful manner and raised to an ecstasy of movement, far outstripping any possibilities of organic movement.

While the concepts of abstraction and empathy give affective value to Riegl’s haptic and optic, for Deleuze they are merely psychological affects associated with human emotion. However, in the ‘sublime hysteria’ Worringer uses to describe the sensibility of Gothic art – and which was subsequently applied to the existential angst associated with modernity by the German Expressionists – Deleuze finds a movement beyond the human. This is because Worringer qualifies this affective sublime as ‘inorganic,’ as a ‘vitality which appears ... to have an expression of its own, which is stronger than our life.’ (1957, p.42) This inorganic affect traverses the haptic space that envelopes the artist, canvas, and surrounding environment alike. And indeed, Deleuze introduces Worringer in *Logic of Sensation* with the chapter entitled ‘Hysteria,’ which outlines the specifically nonhuman character of this affect: ‘This is not a hysteria of the painter, but a hysteria of painting. With painting, hysteria becomes art. Or rather, with the painter, hysteria becomes painting.’ (FB, 52) That is, one way to understand this affective aspect of the abstract line is as further expressing the cine-aesthetic qualities of haptic vision beyond phenomenological notions of the subject:

This rhythmic unity of the senses can be discovered only by going beyond the organism. The phenomenological hypothesis is perhaps sufficient because it merely invokes a lived body. But the lived body is still a paltry thing in comparison with a more profound and almost unlivable Power [which is defined by] axes and vectors, gradients, zones, kinematic movements, and dynamic tendencies, in relation to which forms are contingent. (FB, 45)

With this nonhuman notion of affect, Deleuze bypasses the embodied subject of phenomenology. And by connecting it to the inorganic – a trope that he inherits not only from Worringer, but also, through Bergson, from the early Naturphilosophien of Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin – he completely sidesteps the phenomenological debate concerning the metaphysics of presence: ‘The concept of presence, even if I use the word, does not interest me much. It’s too pious. It is “life” which seems essential [...] a conception of life as a non-organic power.’ The inorganic ultimately points to the perpetual and ‘false movements’ of differentiation in Deleuze’s ontology that completely disallow the empirical notion of present time as well as any form of stable proximity. In a way, it might be understood as Deleuze’s version of the critique of the ‘metaphysics of presence.’ Furthermore, it is only with this

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The inorganic notion of hysteria that Deleuze’s flirtations with the Romantic ideas of the genius or seer – in his books on Kant and the time-image, respectively – can be adequately understood. As indicated by Deleuze’s transformation of Worringer’s ‘sublime hysteria’ into a more inhuman ‘hysteria,’ the seer of haptic vision is not a sublime hero, but one who has been completely effaced by a shock to thought that pushes her beyond the threshold of the human.

The term inorganic was initially employed as a formal concept by Riegl. In *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*, he develops a formal schema – utilizing a dualism between the ‘organic’ and the ‘inorganic’ or ‘crystalline’ – that roughly maps onto the historical development from the haptic to the optic he develops in his analyses of Egyptian, Greek, and late Roman art.\(^{11}\) Worringer retains the formal status of organic and inorganic elements in *Abstraction and Empathy*, where he begins his analysis by describing his relation to Riegl: ‘Just as the urge to empathy as a pre-assumption of aesthetic experience finds its gratification in the beauty of the organic, so the urge to abstraction finds its beauty in the life-denying inorganic, in the crystalline’ (Worringer, 1953, p.4). In Worringer’s *Form in Gothic*, the function of the inorganic becomes ambiguous, qualifying both the formal aspect of Gothic ornament as well as the sublime hysteria that produces it. Here, he goes beyond Riegl’s dialectic of organic and inorganic – the boundary between which is defined by ‘life, as manifested in

\(^{11}\) In this work, Riegl claims that all artistic representation can be divided ‘into two main categories: (1) inanimate, inert, inorganic motifs; (2) animate, organic motifs. The criterion is life, as manifested in movement.’ Alois Riegl (translated by Jacqueline Jung), 2004. *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*. New York: Zone Books, p. 343. While the organic is represented, for example, by plant and animal motifs, the crystalline is characterized by absolute symmetry, sharp distinction, and lack of emotional expression. He found the perfect model of crystalline art and beauty in the legacy of ancient Egyptian figures, which ‘sit stiffly and lifelessly but whose torsos and heads display both proportion and symmetry.’ Ibid., p.349. He was clearly more fascinated by this form and devoted less attention to the organic, perhaps since it is the inherited norm of high art. Although Riegl doesn’t explicitly link the haptic-optic historical development to the crystalline-organic scheme, it would be fair to broadly draw this parallel. For example, he argues that the haptic-optic art of the Greeks also exhibits ‘the proper balance by organizing the crystalline.’ Ibid., p. 372. And in late Roman art, crystallinity was, in large part, ‘surrendered.’ Ibid., p. 393. Deleuze develops an opposition between ‘organic’ and ‘crystalline’ regimes of the image in his philosophy of cinema, which bears a trace of resemblance to Riegl’s concepts.
movement’ (Riegl, 2004, p.343) – since he posits a sublime affect associated with inorganic vitality. This ambiguity remains in A Thousand Plateaus and is only worked out fully in the Bacon book, where we can locate a formal concept of the abstract line that is conceptually distinct from the inorganic affect that traverses its surface.

Just as the affective register of the inorganic is an ‘impure and uncanny amalgamation’ of abstraction and empathy, the Gothic line strikes an uneasy balance between the free-flowing organic forms of the former and the crystalline geometry of the latter, which Worringer describes with the words ‘vitalized geometry.’ Worringer describes the Gothic line quite remarkably: 12

Once the natural barriers of organic movement have been overthrown, there is no more holding back: again and again the line is broken, again and again checked in the natural direction of its movement, again and again it is forcibly prevented from peacefully ending its course, again and again diverted into fresh complications of expression, into confused and spasmodic movements.

All that remains is a lingering impression of a formless, ceaseless activity […]. But it is more than enigmatic, it is labyrinthine. It seems to have neither beginning nor end and above all no center: there is a total absence of any such means of allowing for the organic feeling of pause. We find no point of entrance, no point of rest. Every point in this endless movement is of equal value and all of them combined are without value compared with the agitation they produce […]. Symmetry is replaced by repetition and multiplication, […] by an uninterrupted, accelerating, mechanical movement … that moves ever further forward until it has covered the whole surface.

In the last few pages of A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze and Guattari use precisely this language to invoke the formal qualities of the abstract line: a zigzagging, feverish, and mutant trait of continuous variation, without beginning or end, which outlines no form but rather describes a smooth space. The best examples are ‘certain works by Pollock: multidirectional, with neither inside nor outside, form nor background, delimiting nothing, describing no contour, passing between spots or dots, describing a smooth space, stirring up a close-lying haptic visual matter.’ But Deleuze also calls to mind Kandinsky’s ‘lines of march or transit that seem to recall Mongolian nomadic motifs’ (TP, 575, translation modified). In anticipation of our

conclusion, we might add to this list the informel paintings of the Belgian artist Henri Michaux, which have been described in a strikingly similar manner:

The most conspicuous departures from earlier modes are in the realm of rhythm, movement, and space. What was initially felt as a flickering, subliminal texture or appearance and implied disappearance has now become a sustained structure across the page, evoking something akin to the movement of wild geese in the sky or a horde of mounted Tartars across the Asian steppes.¹³

But the problem with this easy conflation of Pollock (or Michaux) and Kandinsky is that, in The Logic of Sensation, they express tendencies of two different artistic movements that deal with the problem of representation in supposedly diametrically opposed ways: the tactile works of abstract expressionism and the optical works of abstraction, respectively. As we shall see, this conflation is part of a larger muddle Deleuze subjects himself to in this book, a muddle born of the fact that it is indeed a book about Francis Bacon even as it attempts to propose a general theory of painting.

In this book, the diagram is most clearly depicted by works of abstract expressionism and art informel. Furthermore, as we have already seen, the diagram is also specifically related to the smooth space of Bacon’s Sahara, a chaos or catastrophe that involves ‘the collapse of visual coordinates,’ (FB, 102) that is, the collapse of representation and figuration from which a figure emerges. Like smooth space, the diagram follows the logic of Riemannian space:

Neither form nor ground exists any longer, in any sense, because the powers of the line and the plane tend to be equalized: by constantly being broken, the line becomes more than a line, while at the same time the plane becomes less than a surface. as for the contour, the line does not delimit one; it is never the outline of anything, either because the line is sept along by the infinite movement, or else because it alone possesses an outline, like a ribbon, as the limit of the movement of the inner mass. (FB, 130)

On one level, the abstract line, or trait, of A Thousand Plateaus gets subsumed within the diagram of The Logic of Sensation, where it is defined as a set of non-representative ‘line-strokes [traits] and color-patches [taches]’

that covers the entire canvas (FB, 101). In the latter book, Deleuze follows
the Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin in distinguishing the linear [linear] from the pictorial [malerisch] in the formal analysis of art. He further explains that the German word for painting, Malerei, derives from the Latin macula, which refers to a stain, blotch, or tache in French (FB, 177, n.6). This point cannot be ignored, since the transformation of le trait abstrait into the traits et taches of the diagram is only the preparation for a more important move Deleuze needs for the description of Bacon’s paintings: the movement from a nomadic, informal principle of the pure abstract line to the formal principle of haptic colorism, in which tonal color-patches define the entire space of the canvas. This is precisely the move from the ‘catastrophic mess’ or ‘black hole’ of the diagram to the emergence of Bacon’s figures. In this analysis of Bacon, Deleuze uses Worringer – on the one hand – for the concept of the inorganic, which becomes the inhuman affect of smooth, diagrammatic space that is necessary for effacing figuration and – on the other – in order to imagine the possibility of a formal haptic principle beyond Riegl. But in the end, this formal principle is not the Gothic or abstract line, but rather the haptic colorism of Cézanne, Van Gogh, and Bacon. This non-figurative but formal colorism is directly inspired by Maldiney even though, ironically enough, Maldiney himself describes this colorism as the pinnacle of optical art.

The basic function of a figure can be described quite succinctly: in the formal register, it must ‘break with representation’ without collapsing into complete formlessness and, in terms of sensation, it must break with the ‘old tactile-optical function,’ in order to become haptic and express inorganic forces (FB, 3, 151). Deleuze argues that the abstraction of Kandinsky and the expressionism of Pollock simply bypass representation. The former does this by reducing the canvas to a ‘purely optical space,’ a ‘coding of the figurative’ that ultimately proves to be ‘cerebral and lacks sensation’ since it fails to touch the nervous system directly (FB, 109). And the latter remains subsumed within the ‘manual rhythm’ of the diagram, which ‘covers the entire canvas’ and therefore ‘creates a veritable mess’ without achieving the haptic, even though ‘this time sensation is indeed attained’ (FB, 109). But this easy dichotomy is too reductive to be useful beyond the analysis of Bacon’s canvases. For example, not only have Kandinsky’s ‘nomadic’ lines already been evoked in A Thousand Plateaus as examples of the manual,

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14 He defines the abstract line as a trait in (TP, 499).
abstract line; his early abstract works have been described by art historians as evoking the sense of touch. Furthermore, Kandinsky is one of the key figures who has offered a theory and practice of modern art based largely upon a conception of synaesthesia. It has been argued that – while some of Kandinsky’s early works seem to resonate with Deleuze’s characterization of abstraction as optical, geometric, and cerebral – certain works of his later period in fact ‘seem to produce a Deleuzian figure.’ In the end, reducing Kandinsky’s work to optical abstraction only serves Deleuze’s analysis of Bacon and ‘cuts off a vast source of Figural energy that can be found in abstract art’ (Collins, 2008, p.61). This oversimplification is based upon an uncritical appropriation of Maldiney’s already ‘inaccurate analysis of Kandinsky’ that renders Deleuze’s schema ‘misguided’ and ‘riddled with contradiction’ (Ibid., pp.60-1). Likewise, Deleuze’s term for abstract expressionism, ‘art informel,’ appears to come directly from Maldiney’s Forme et Art Informel, and has its own complex definition, relevance, and historiography.... Maldiney’s ‘art informel’ in fact seems to fit with Deleuze’s ‘abstraction’ more than his ‘expressionism,’ which is confusing, unreferenced, and raises difficulties around what they are both trying to describe. The influence of Maldiney thus poses problems for the clarity of Deleuze’s Logic of Sensation. (Ibid., p.59)

To this confusion we have to add that Bacon himself, whose writings Deleuze relies heavily upon, says that the composition of his own figures involves traversing ‘a tightrope between what is called figurative painting and abstraction,’ the latter of which includes for him abstract expressionists like Pollock. And when we add to this the confusion surrounding the possible role of the line in Deleuze’s theory of painting beyond the traits of a diagram, the contradictions are compounded. For example, given Deleuze’s schema, how can we properly describe Worringer’s Northern Gothic or German Expressionist line, or Paul Klee’s various ‘adventures in lines’?

16 Lorna Collins, June 2008. ‘Sensations Spill a Deluge over the Figure.’ In: Deleuze Studies. Vol. 2, no. 1, p. 63.
18 ‘Adventures in Lines’ is the title of the preface Michaux wrote for an important exhibition catalogue on Paul Klee, which has been translated in Henri Michaux
Like Kandinsky, Klee scrambles the dualistic schemas that Deleuze appropriates from Riegl, Worriinger, and Maldiney: abstraction versus expressionism, crystalline versus organic, optical versus tactile. But ultimately, albeit in a different way than Bacon, his work does seem to fit within the conceptual solution Deleuze proposes. That is, Klee’s sketches and drawings can be described as Figural, inorganic, and haptic. In fact, Klee’s work is evoked as the primary example of figural art in Jean-François Lyotard’s Discourse, Figure, a book which fundamentally grounds Deleuze’s own conception of the painterly figure. For Lyotard, ‘the line is figural when, by her or his artifice, the painter or drawer places it in a configuration in which its value cannot yield to an activity of recognition.’ Of course, Deleuze parts with Lyotard in many respects, but perhaps if we revisit Discourse, Figure we can find a place within Deleuze’s own schema for painterly lines that are figural, inorganic, and haptic.

The motivation behind Lyotard’s text – which was originally published in 1971 – is to offer a theory of art that avoids, on the one hand, the Structuralist tendency for textualizing any and every object of analysis and, on the other, the reduction of art to the time and space of the phenomenological subject. He claims that the sensual realm of art always presents itself in excess of the codings of rational and linguistic systems: ‘It presents itself as a fall, a slippage, an error, exactly the meaning of lapsus in Latin. This event clears a vertiginous space and time; untethered from its context or perceptual environment, this discontinuity or hovering goes hand in hand with anxiety’ (Lyotard, 2011, pp.129-30). We should note that the elements of error and discontinuity beyond recognition immediately evoke Deleuze’s conception of fabulation; moreover, vertigo and anxiety evoke the affective qualities of Worringer’s Gothic line. In any case, the temporal order of this realm is fundamentally other than the structure of Husserl’s ‘living present,’ which Lyotard describes as the unity of the temporally diverse within consciousness, the ‘retention and protention’ of the past, present, and future within a ‘hyper-presence’ of the phenomenological subject (Lyotard, 2011, p.148). Likewise, the spacial order of this realm of the figure is beyond, or before, Merleau-Ponty’s ‘lived body.’ Even though Merleau-Ponty posits a primary layer of synaesthetistic sense experience that operates below conscious


19 Jean-François Lyotard (translated by Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon), 2011. Discourse, Figure. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 213.
intentionality, it still assumes a space in which objects are properly recognized as having ‘good form.’ Instead, Lyotard claims that the event of art renders inoperative the ‘Gestaltist organization of well-measured depth,’ allowing ‘the fundamental heterogeneity and unevenness of the spatial field to be approached,’ forcing us to ‘unlearn how to recognize’ (Lyotard, 2011, p.153).

In contrast to the world of phenomenology – whose artist of choice has been, more often than not, Paul Cézanne – Lyotard presents the art of Klee. Unlike Cézanne, who is primarily taken to be a colorist, for Klee ‘the line and the chromatic element are in conflict’ without there ever being a subordination of one to the other. And Lyotard always chooses examples of his work that exhibit ‘the way in which line and color intermingle’ (Lyotard, 2011, p.218). Furthermore, he claims that Klee rejects the classical problem of making ‘recognizable an intelligible world.’ Instead, Lyotard says that the problem for the modern artist, according to Klee, is to create an “interworld,” another possible nature, extending creation, making visible what is not – without, however, falling prey to subjective imagination’ (2011, p.218).20 This interword points to a realm beyond normal empirical vision that might best be understood in Deleuzian or Bergsonian terms. As Klee insists, it is not the product of a mystical or fantastical imagination, but rather points to the imperceptible, inhuman force of nature constructing itself through the artist. Lyotard claims that Klee’s work attests

[1]o the fact that creation exceeds created nature, and that the artist is a site where nature continues to bear fruit. Creation holds sway over both nature and art. The latter, however, owes nothing to the former.... [To the type of art that attempts to produce] a ‘good nature’ through geometric reason, a nature closer to the intelligible than visible nature, Klee might have replied with Aristotle’s two contradictory statements: ‘Techne brings to completion what phusis failed to craft;’ ‘the way it is crafted determines the way it grows, and the way it grows

20 In Klee’s own words: ‘I overstep neither the picture’s nor the composition’s limits. But I do stretch its content by introducing into the picture new subject matter – or rather, not so much new as barely glimpsed subject matter. Obviously this subject matter, like any other, maintains its ties to the natural world. By natural world I am not referring to nature’s appearance (as would naturalism) but to the sphere of its possibilities: this content produces images of nature’s potentiality.... Worlds have come into being and continuously unfold before our eyes – worlds which despite their connection to nature are not visible to everybody, but may in fact only be to children, the mad, and the primitives.’ Klee quoted in Ibid., p. 446 n.32.
Jay Hetrick

determines the way it is crafted, each and every thing.’ Klee states that the artist is no more than a tree trunk in which sap rises – but no one had seen the fruit borne by this tree before, making recognition, even reminiscence, impossible. (Lyotard, 2011, p.231)

This statement perhaps only makes sense within the context of a distinctly modern art. And, in certain ways, it repeats some of the rhetoric of phenomenological aesthetics. For example, Maldiney explains that ‘figurative art [...] moves itself in the act of formation. This act is that by which a form forms itself: it is its autogenesis.’ Recently, Jean-Luc Nancy has used similar, albeit more nuanced, post-phenomenological language to describe how the gestures of drawing express a ‘metastable’ power that hovers between ‘energeia and dynamis, to speak in Aristotle’s terms, the power of the élan.’ Nancy also calls this gestural power – following Spinoza’s natura naturans – ‘forma formans,’ by which he means ‘the sense of a form that forms, in the act, the power and tension of its own self-formation.’ Nonetheless, without falling again into the murky borderlines of phenomenology, the most important point here is that Lyotard offers us a way to understand and conceptualize the figure, in a sense beyond Deleuze, and in terms of Wölfflin’s notion of the linear as it is distinguished from his notion of the malerisch.

In Cinema 1, two years after the publication of his book on Francis Bacon, Deleuze offers another way to think about the figure. Remarkably, this occurs at the beginning of the chapter that discusses the genetic elements of the action-image: the ‘broken stroke’ of the vector and the ‘single stroke’ of the encompasser that are inspired in part by principles from East Asian calligraphy. Deleuze states that some directors have created ‘an original form, a deforming form, capable of playing on the two others [the Small and Large forms] [...] We call the sign of such deformations, transformations, or transmutations Figure. There are here all kinds of aesthetic and creative evaluations, which go beyond the question of the action-image’ (C1, 178). Eisenstein, for one,

[r]ightly considers himself to have created a transforming form, capable of passing from SAS’ to ASA’. [...] Starting out from the large organic

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22 Jean-Luc Nancy, 2009. Le Plaisir au dessin. Paris: Galilée, pp. 35; 49. Élan is indeed a direct reference to Bergson, who is evoked in the previous sentence.
representation, from its spiral or respiration, he subjects them to a treatment which relates the spiral to a cause or law of ‘growth’ (golden section) and thus determines as many caesuras within the organic representation as intervals of respiration. And we can see how these caesuras mark crises or privileged instants which, on their own account, enter into relationships with each other according to vectors. This is the *pathos*, which undertakes the ‘development’ by carrying out qualitative leaps between two moments carried to their peak. (C1, 180)

Here, we can see that the creation of a cinematic figure, by dialectically informing and enfolding the two types of action, produces the necessary affective charge Eisenstein calls ‘pathos’. But, of course, Eisensteinian affect is still caught within the beautiful, *organic* logic of the golden section as well as the whole it both constructs and is grounded upon. Deleuze claims that Werner Herzog’s early films go much further than Eisenstein’s in the production of figures since the ways in which they transform the logics of action, more often than not, produce *inorganic* or *inhuman* affects. For example, in the cases of *Heart of Glass* and *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*:

> [t]here is both a hallucinatory dimension, where the acting spirit raises itself to boundlessness in nature and a hypnotic dimension where the spirit runs up against the limits which nature opposes to it. And the two are different, they have a figural relationship. [...] In both cases – the sublation of the large form and the enfeeblement of the small form – Herzog is a metaphysician. He is the most metaphysical of cinema directors (although German Expressionism had already been imbued with metaphysics, this was within the confines of a problem of Good and Evil to which Herzog is indifferent). (C1, 184-5)

This connection that Deleuze evokes between Herzog and German Expressionist cinema is significant in that it brings us directly back to its logic of the ‘intensive composition’ of light and shadow that is informed by Worringer’s inorganic lines.

In *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema* – a book Deleuze relies heavily upon for his analysis of German Expressionism – Lotte Eisner also traces this link between Herzog and Expressionist cinema.  

> She also explains that the Expressionists have an ‘eerie gift for animating objects [...] such that they seem to have an insidious life of their own. [...]”

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This is Worringer’s “spiritual unrest” creating the “animation of the inorganic.” (Eisner, 1973, p.23). In addition to inorganic life, the particular qualities and themes of this cinema – unstable compositions of diagonals and sharp-angled shots, dramatic chiaroscuro effects, madness and hallucination – are taken to be directly informed by a conception of intensive movement that finds its inspiration in Worringer and Goethe. The intensive movement of inorganic life produces a spasmodic and broken line without resolve that refuses the organic composition of Hollywood and Soviet cinema since it finally ‘constructs space instead of describing it.’ I quote Deleuze at length in order to fully capture the sense of Expressionism he is trying to convey:

Expressionism invokes a dark, swampy life into which everything plunges, whether chopped up by shadows or plunged into mists. The non-organic life of things, a frightful life, which is oblivious to the wisdom and limits of the organism, is the first principle of Expressionism.... It is not the mechanical which is opposed to the organic: it is the vital as potent pre-organic germinally, common to the animate and the inanimate, to a matter which raises itself to the point of life, and to a life which spreads itself through all matter. The animal has lost the organic, as much as matter has gained life. Expressionism can claim kinship with a pure kinetics; it is a violent movement which respects neither the organic contour nor the mechanical determinations of the horizontal and the vertical; its core is that of a perpetually broken line, where each change of direction simultaneously marks the force of an obstacle and the power of a new impulse; in short, the subordination of the extensive to intensity. Worringer, its first theoretician, created the term ‘Expressionism,’ and defined it as the opposition of vital force [élan vital] to organic representation, invoking the ‘Gothic or Northern’ decorative line, a broken line which forms no contour by which form and background might be distinguished, but passes in a zigzag between things, sometimes drawing them into a bottomlessness in which it loses itself, sometimes whirling them in a formlessness in to which it veers in a ‘disorderly convulsion.’ (C1, 50-1)

This concept of the inorganic does not easily point to debates surrounding ‘vitalism,’ a term which has recently become an empty signifier even as it remains a term of abuse in uncritical and uninformed charges against Bergson and Deleuze. Rather, the latter’s ‘inorganic vitality’ should be understood within the context of the non-deterministic theories of biology, for example, of Raymond Ruyer and Francisco Varela. Those who continue to use this word without qualification simply disclose their naive adherence
to a rather antiquated conception of nature. And while it seems as though Deleuze isn’t doing himself any favors by expressing these themes with the Romantic language of Worringer and Goethe, this move should in fact be understood strategically and as a provocation: the post-Kantian debate surrounding the concepts of the organic and inorganic needs to be reopened today, in light of the new biology.

In any case, for our purposes here, Worringer and Goethe are essential also because they allow us to think the figure in terms of broken black and whites lines that logically precede and engender color. In his analyses of Leibnizian perception, Deleuze uses Goethe’s theory of color in order to explain the actualization of the visible world. He reads Goethe through Eliane Escoubas, who explains that the visible is produced through a fundamental interaction of light and darkness and that colors are merely degrees of opacity through which an ‘invisible and blinding’ luminosity gradually congeals into objects as white darkens to yellow and black brightens to blue: ‘color is that through which the visible begins, it is the arche of the visible.’

24 Kant – despite his dogmatic adherence to Newtonian science, as well as his equally dogmatic aversion to theories of hylolosism – has to rekindle Aristotelian hylomorphism to bolster his conceptions of genius and teleology in nature. In the first chapter of his Creative Evolution, Bergson offers a new solution to the false-choice between mechanism and teleology and this solution has nothing to do with the naive vitalism of which he is all too often accused. Such vitalism, which assumes the existence of an extra-physical force animating nature, is yet another form of hylomorphism that is entirely incompatible with Bergson’s élan vital. Rather, Bergson’s ‘vitalism,’ if we insist on using that word, has arguably more in common with recent developments in non-equilibrium thermodynamics (Ilya Prigogine) as well as autopoetic biological systems (Francisco Varela). For excellent coverage of these themes, see Keith Ansell Pearson, 1999. Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze. London: Routledge.

25 Incidentally, Deleuze also evokes Leibniz in his exposition of German Expressionism. If the movement of Soviet cinema is symbolized by the spiral, he argues, the image of Expressionist cinema is that of ‘the ideal summit of a pyramid which, in rising up, constantly pushes away its base.’ (C1, p.54). This is a direct reference to the last, hallucinatory scene of Leibniz’s Theodicy in which Theodorus becomes entranced when he encounters the infinite possible worlds contained within a pyramid of rooms that ‘had an apex, but no base; it went on increasing to infinity.’ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (translated by E.M. Huggard), 1952. Theodicy. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 372.

white, the world becomes increasingly colorful and distinct. This is why Escoubas refers to the Goethean universe as a world of ‘speed and movement’ and why, remarkably, he calls Goethe’s theory of color ‘a theory of the contour, a theory of the figure’ (Escoubas, 1982, pp.235-237). Perhaps the fact that Escoubas’s article was published a year after Deleuze’s book on Bacon and a year before Cinema 1 helps explain why, in the former text, Deleuze couldn’t yet connect the Expressionist line with the birth of the figure. Nonetheless, he does claim in The Movement-Image that, despite Griffith’s and Eisenstein’s experiments in polychrome, ‘it is undoubtedly Expressionism which was the precursor of real cinematic colorism.’ And its formula, according to Deleuze, comes straight from Goethe:

In contrasts of black and white, or in the variations of chiaroscuro, one might say that what is darkened and black is toned down. It is as though two degrees were apprehended in an instant, points of accumulation which would correspond to the upsurge of color in Goethe’s theory: blue as lightened black, yellow as darkened white. [...] Goethe explained precisely that the two fundamental colors – yellow and blue as degrees – were grasped in a movement of intensification that [...] culminates in a vivid red, which has become independent, pure incandescence or blazing of a terrible light, which burns the world and its creatures, a fire which belongs neither to nature or to our organic individuality. (C1, 52-3)

And in The Logic of Sensation – despite the fact that the main line of argumentation points to the pinnacle of haptic art occurring in the works of ‘colorists’ like Cézanne, van Gogh, and Bacon – this haptic colorism is defined again in terms of Goethean color contra the Newtonian conception of purely optical color. But the philosophical foundation of this colorism will ultimately help support another, more subdued, line that emerges from

27 However Romantic this vision of the universe sounds, it has in fact been corroborated by some recent cognitive neuroscientists and philosophers of mind. For instance, Thomas Metzinger has argued that: ‘The world is not inhabited by colored objects at all. It is just as your physics teacher in high school told you: Out there, in front of your eyes, there is just an ocean of electro-magnetic radiation, a wild and raging mixture of different wavelengths. Most of them are invisible to you and can never become part of your conscious model of reality. What is really happening is that the visual system in your brain is drilling a tunnel through this inconceivably rich physical environment and in the process is painting the tunnel walls in various shades of color.’ Thomas Metzinger, 2009. The Ego Tunnel: The Science of the Mind and the Myth of the Self. New York: Basic Books, p. 20, my emphasis.
Deleuze’s theory of painting. He says that ‘colorists can indeed make use of black and white, light and dark; but this is because they treat black and white as colors, and establish tonal relations between them [...]. Against the Newtonian conception of optical color, it was Goethe who laid down the first principles of such a haptic vision.’ The main tenant of such haptic colorism is simply ‘the prohibition of mixtures except to obtain a broken tone,’ which in practice means ‘the abandonment of local tone; the juxtaposition of unblended patches; the aspiration of each color to tonality by appealing to its complimentary color’ (FB, 139). But, if these colors remain the primordial qualities of light and dark of Goethe’s color theory – as Deleuze’s colorism allows – at the extreme limit we are left with a kind of monochromatic impressionism of broken black and white taches, which might convey ‘the incandescent flash or brilliance, the turbulence of fire at the extreme limit of the visible’ (Escoubas, 1982, p.241).

Surprisingly enough, it is with German Expressionist cinema that we have the most elaborate theory of a figure composed solely of ‘broken’ or ‘zigzag’ lines (C1, 51). For Deleuze, these films are generally composed by a ‘whole contrasting series of white and black lines, rays of light and outlines of shadow: a striped world which could already be seen in the painted canvases of Wiene’s The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari’ (C1, 50). The logic of this type of Expressionist composition is grounded upon and ‘invents false continuities, which express the intensive changes of the whole’ even if it ‘sometimes whirls into the formlessness’ reminiscent of a diagrammatic catastrophe (C1, 51-2). Nonetheless, it primarily expresses ‘intensive movement par excellence [...] indeed as an abstract kinetic art,’ which ‘decomposes organic composition’ (C1, 49-53). But sometimes – having plunged into this formlessness – it moves beyond it, ‘passes through the fire [of Goethean luminosity] in order to break its sensible attachments with the organic and the human’ and ultimately construct ‘the abstract spiritual Form of the future (Hans Richter’s Rhythms)’ (C1, 55). It is difficult to know precisely how to understand this reference to Richter’s highly abstract films except by noting that Eisner describes them, in relation to Expressionism, as ‘capturing plastic forms in movement while accounting for their dynamism [...] the primordial rhythmic function of movement’ (Eisner, 1973, p.265). That is, Richter’s Rhythms do precisely what Deleuze seems to imply: they initiate a movement from formlessness to form, or to the figure, within the logic of the

28 Deleuze relates this formless tendency of Expressionist cinema to the logic of Kant’s dynamic sublime.
Expressionist line. It is worth noting that, along with Walter Ruttmann and Viking Eggeling, Richter helped to create an experimental cinematic language in the early 20s that scrambled the distribution of the senses and the arts. They described their ‘absolute films’ variously as abstraction in motion, painting in time or, in more synesthetic terms, visual music. For our purposes here, Deleuze’s evocation of both Richter – the Dadaist who worked at the crossroads of painting, graphic design, and cinema – as well as the ‘painted canvases’ of The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, already incites us to extract this Expressionist figure from the confines of film form. This move forces us to recast montage as the cinematic ‘composition of an aesthetic figure’ – with or without film – that disrupts the hierarchical taxonomy of the arts (WP, 67).

Art is not chaos but a composition of chaos that yields the vision or sensation, so that it constitutes, as Joyce says, a chaosmos, a composed chaos – neither foreseen nor preconceived. Art transforms chaotic variability [the formlessness of the dynamic sublime] into chaoid variety, as in El Greco’s black and gray conflagration [...]. Art struggles with chaos but it does so in order to render it sensory. (WP, 204-205)

With this in mind, we can begin to draw out even further a conception of the linear figure that remains latent in The Logic of Sensation.

There are at least two distinct ways in which the traits and taches that make up the diagram – whose purpose is to ‘introduce formless forces throughout the painting,’ that is, to disrupt figuration – are subsequently able to inform a figure. Quite simply, and beyond the analysis of Bacon’s colorism, traits and taches are able to emerge, each in its own way, into a figure: the former emerge as ‘broken lines’ while the latter become ‘broken tones’ (FB, 46, 158). As Deleuze insinuates, ‘this is enough to make the beautiful unity of the haptic world seem doubly broken’ (FB, 136). He also seems to acknowledge that the two main forms of painting – linear and malerisch – allow for these two different solutions to the problem of the figure and that, in a way, his focus on the work of Francis Bacon has complicated this possibility: ‘The two definitions of painting, by line and color, and by the trait and the tache, do not overlap exactly, for the first is visual, but the second is manual ... The relationship between the hand and the eye is infinitely rich, passing through dynamic tensions, logical reversals, and organic exchanges and substitutions’ (FB, 154). The broken tones of Bacon’s canvas indeed compose a figure – for example, ‘those painted in the colors of meat, red and blue’ – but only with fully visible or actualized colors,
The Ethico-Aesthetics of the Figure

according to Goethe’s schema (FB, 26). Without imposing a logic of either/or, there is a sense in which the broken line composes a figure while still maintaining another important requirement of painting that Deleuze takes from Klee’s art theory:

In art, and in painting as in music, it is not a matter of reproducing or inventing forms, but of capturing forces. For this reason no art is figurative. Paul Klee’s famous formula – ‘Not to render the visible, but to render visible’ – means nothing else. The task of painting is defined as the attempt to render visible forces that are not themselves visible. Likewise, music attempts to render sonorous forces that are not themselves sonorous. (FB, 56, cf. TP, 310-12)

While there is no doubt that Bacon’s figures express the inhuman forces that pulse beneath the flesh, Klee’s own figures, as Lyotard suggests, do this mainly at the level of the painterly line in a way that remains closer to the prescriptions of Goethe’s colorism: ‘the world of black and white is still invisible’ (Escoubas, 1982, p.235). The point to be taken here is simply that, in a more expansive logic of sensation beyond the analysis of Bacon’s paintings, broken lines are just as capable of composing figures as broken tones are. And the former perhaps have the advantage of remaining closer to the invisible forces of the diagram even as a figure is allowed to emerge from its catastrophe. A figure is a composed bloc of sensation, of percepts and affects, that expresses not the pure formlessness of the diagrammatic plane of immanence – that is itself necessary since it erases all the cliches of figuration and injects the force of the haptic into a work – but rather a perpetual coming-to-form that retains the synesthetic qualities of the haptic and the inorganic. The figure attests to a shock to thought and thus remains, in a certain sense, unrecognizable without being completely anarchic or completely formless. The figure ‘emerges both gradually and all at once’ and therefore expresses a logic of ‘painting as process, in which there is a continual injection of the manual diagram into the visual whole, a “slow leak,” a “coagulation,” an “evolution”‘ (FB, 160). Such figural composition expresses a type of action, creation, or indeed praxis that we can glean from the thought of Giorgio Agamben, in particular from a series of essays in which he discusses cinematic gestures.

In the opening paragraph of an essay curiously entitled ‘Difference and Repetition,’ Agamben suggests that, instead of focusing upon the rather outdated conception of a finished artwork, the important question should be one of action and its potential: ‘Rather than inquiring into the work as such, I
think we should ask about the relation between what could be done and what actually was done.’ This would be a first step in theorizing about an unfinished art of gestures that are not resolved by reified images. Agamben further characterizes what he means by gestures in another essay by evoking the work of Gilles de la Tourette, the French neurologist who ‘discovered’ Tourette Syndrome at the very moment cinema was in its birth pangs. Tourette, Agamben suggests, possessed a vision that was ‘already prophetic of the cinema’ since both Tourette’s and early cinema display ‘amazing proliferation of tics, spasmodic jerks, and mannerisms’ that constitute a ‘generalized catastrophé of the sphere of gestures’ (2004, p.106). This connects Agamben’s conception of gesture to both Paul Virilio’s idea of cinematic ‘picnolepsy’ as well as Deleuze’s idea of broken lines, broken tones, and broken strokes. In any case, what is important here is that Agamben inscribes such gestures within the sphere of action, while distinguishing it from both acting (agere or praxis) and making (facere or poiesis): ‘What characterizes gesture is that in it nothing is being acted or produced, but rather something is being endured and supported (gerere)’ (2004, p.110). That is, with gesture, Agamben is advocating a third type of action that attempts to short-circuit the traditional Aristotelian dichotomy between praxis and poiesis. If the latter is a means in view of an end and the former is an end without means, ‘the gesture then breaks with the false alternative between ends and means that paralyzes morality and presents instead means that, as such, evade the orbit of mediality without becoming, for this reason, ends’ (2004, p.110). Cinematic gesture negotiates this dualism between means and ends by creating a mode of expression that is neither mere practice nor production towards an end, but a production without end – and therefore without image – which operates by continuously reinventing its own medium. Nothing is represented and nothing is completed; there is only perpetual gestation.

30 Giorgio Agamben, 2004. ‘Notes on Gesture.’ In: Hemma Schmutz and Tanja Widmann (eds.), Dass die Körper sprechen, auch das wissen seit langem. Köln: Walther König, p. 105. Translation modified. There are three slightly different versions (and translations) of this essay. This relatively unknown version is, in fact, the most worked-out with six sections as opposed to the four of the other versions, which appear in his books Infancy and History and Means without End.
With this concept of gerere, there is a creative suspension of climax reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari’s powerful concept of milieu, which is of course etymologically related to the words media and means: ‘a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end’ (TP, 22). But we can also make sense of gerere through Deleuze’s early reading of Bergson’s Creative Evolution, in which he already connects a new conception of action to the logic of lines and figures:

Actualization, differentiation are genuine creation […] and must create divergent lines according to […] the dissimilar means utilized on each line. There is finality because life does not operate without directions; but there is no ‘goal,’ because these directions do not pre-exist ready-made, and are themselves created ‘along with’ the act that runs through them. Each line of actualization […] must invent the figure […] and create the means for its development. (B, 106, translation modified)

In any case, however ambiguous this appeal to gestures still seems to be, Agamben argues that by focusing upon ‘the gesture and not the image,’ the attention shifts to ‘the realm of ethics and politics (and not only to that of aesthetics)’ (2004, p.109). With the idea of broken gestures, we enter the realm of action, that is, the realm of ethics and politics in addition to the realm of aesthetics, which still obtains since, as Agamben claims, gerere is the only way to make sense of Kant’s otherwise obscure aesthetic formula ‘purposiveness without purpose.’ This type of action short-circuits the traditional Aristotelian dichotomy between praxis and poiesis in order to become (dis)continuous, broken gestures in which ‘nothing is being acted or produced, but rather something is being endured and supported (gerere)’ (Agamben, 2004, p.110). To make all this a bit more concrete, I propose that we should read The Logic of Sensation beyond Bacon even as we read Deleuze’s Cinema books beyond film. And we could do this in a way that allows us to interpret Henri Michaux’s self-described ‘cinematic’ drawings and paintings, which emerge from the catastrophe of his mescaline period.31 Here, the broken gestures of Michaux’s action painting in turn inform the

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31 Anne Sauvagnargues analyses Michaux's place in Deleuze's aesthetics in Chapter 8, 'The Violence of Sensation', of her book Deleuze and Art (London: Bloomsbury, 2013). The encounter between Deleuze and Michaux is also the topic of my PhD thesis (University of Amsterdam, 2012).
figural expression of broken lines. And, following Lyotard, we could also say that this broken linear figure would be ‘an anti-good form, a “bad form” as an energetics indifferent to the unity of the whole’ (Lyotard, 2011, p.275).

Deleuze agrees with Bacon, who thinks that in the domain of ‘the irrational trait and the line without contour, Michaux went further than Pollock,’ but only because he is the ‘master of the diagram’ (FB, 110). However, by perhaps too hastily aligning himself with this statement, Deleuze makes a fundamental mistake. Michaux and Pollock should not be grouped together as proponents of the same artistic tendency. Nor should Michaux be simply called a *tachiste*, a label he himself rejects. This is because the majority of his visual works present not simply the formless *traits* and *taches* of the diagram, but a more self-conscious movement that simultaneously draws-out the maximal amount of affective, diagrammatic energy while avoiding the violent and uncontrolled spontaneity of Pollock. His works hover or, to speak with Agamben, gesticulate within the very moment of the birth of the figure, in the interstice between the pre-gestural and the gesture. That is, they are works that present a pulsing and perpetual *gestation*. As Michaux himself explains, his works express a ‘teeming space of gestation, of transformation.’ Or again, ‘these lines of discontinuous growth ... are born by means of strange multiplication and spasmodic gestation.’

Deleuze argues that, in order for a figure to emerge, the diagram must ‘remain operative but controlled, the violent methods must not be given free reign’ (FB, 110). I would argue that it is precisely to the extent that Michaux *does* control his gestures that his cinematic drawings and paintings go further than Pollock and, in this way, ultimately express figures.

Curiously enough, Bacon himself has said that Michaux’s paintings ‘have always been about delayed ways of remaking the human figure, through a mark which is totally outside an illustrational mark, but yet always conveys you back to the human image – a human image generally dragging and trudging through deep ploughed fields, or something like that. They are about these images moving and falling and so on’ (Bacon, 1987, pp.61-3). And Michaux often explains that much of his work presents emergent humanoid figures that continuously metamorphose into various forms of nature even as they emerge from and dissolve back into the chaos of informal brushstrokes: ‘Their dance is that of a crayfish-human, a demon-human, a spider-human, a beyond-human with a hundred hands, or a hundred snakes, feverishly

escaping from all sides.’ He calls this dynamic movement of figures ‘emergence/resurgence’ and refers to the works themselves as ‘drawings of disaggregation and reaggregation.’ One art critic has adequately described the relation between the purely informal aspect of Michaux’s work and the figures that simultaneously emerge from it:

Technically, these images of exploding, speeding clusters are accomplished by dropping black inkblots directly out of the bottle upon the paper surface and then subjecting them to further manipulation. The method lends itself perfectly to Michaux’s undefined imagery, as the blot, on the one hand, remains just that, while, on the other, it assumes, as if by magic, physiognomies that cannot but evoke human or animal likenesses or refer to plants, trees, or inorganic matter. (Messer, 1978, p.181)

Further corroborating my argument, Michaux describes his drawings as compositions of ‘multiple broken lines,’ (2002, p.59) lines produced by ‘jerky and disheveled gestures,’ (2001, p.28) ‘lines beyond beaten paths […] that break lose and take flight’ (2001, p.50). Following Deleuze and Guattari, we should perhaps understand such precarious ‘lines of flight’ not as the imaginary play things of a solitary artist, but as machinic realities that ‘are very dangerous for societies’ (TP, 204). In any case, Michaux considers these broken lines as the traces of various gestural attempts to express the very inorganic and haptic qualities that define Deleuze’s figure as well as the Goethean incandescent brilliance that lies at the extreme edge of the visible:

Lines, more and more lines, which I am not sure I really see, though already distinct and fine (which I feel?), which I begin to see.... The diabolical lines of dismemberment are still growing. These lines of incessant, inhuman speed. (Michaux, 2002, p.113, 123)

This is a crystalline flux […] fractured into a thousand shards (2002, p.13) and against the golden section. (1997, p.328)

The luminous, scintillating, wild ‘colors’ had without a doubt entered into me as brutally and bluntly as a worker’s thick thumb into a soft slab of clay, at moments

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causing me considerable pain – iridescent, glaring, dazzling, and outrageously vivid. (2001, p.74)

I managed to provide a sort of graphic translation in pen and ink of the vibratorium I had experienced. As for the colors? No, impossible. […] But without wanting to, I was involved in color fabulation. (2001, p.64, 52)

And, like the lines themselves, Michaux explains that his ‘attempts at composition are endlessly broken up,’ that his figures express a ‘disorder of composition and of creation […] impulses [élancés] in jerks, indefinitely renewed’ (2002, p.70, 30 my emphasis). Figures do in fact appear, but these are kinematic figures that seem to perpetually dance and grow within the space of the canvas. They convey, to borrow a term from the art historian Frank Popper, ‘virtual movement.’

Formed, unformed, re-unformed, a jerking building, a building in abeyance, in perpetual metamorphosis and transubstantiation, sometimes appearing to be the rough draft of an immense and almost orogenic tapir. (2002, p.32)

The rending of luminous loops and arcs and lines. The occultations and reappearances of dancing bursts of light being decomposed, recomposed, contracted, spread out, only to be redistributed once more. (2002, p.12)

All this impels us to describe Michaux’s cinematic drawings as compositions of broken – and virtually moving – lines in which, following Deleuze, ‘multisensible Figures appear visually […] in a common exercise of all the sense organs at once’ (FB, 42). Michaux himself claims that the figures depicted in these visual works simultaneously express a broken movement in the image as well as a synaesthetic movement in the mind: ‘all emerge from the human figure, perhaps missing legs or arms or torso, but nonetheless but we feel the inner dynamics, twisting, exploding, stretching, expanding in every direction, in every sense’ (2001, p.34, translation modified).

In his musings on synaesthesia, Jean-Luc Nancy claims that the singular-plurality of zones of sensation ‘breaks down the living unity of perception and action.’ Similarly, Deleuze argues that the cinematic creates

‘movements in esprit,’ which means – all at once – movements in the image, movements in the mind, and movements that ‘include aberrant actions’ (TR, 283, my emphasis). In a world where organic action has been made impossible by our picnoleptic condition of increasing speed, ‘cinematic’ gestures and figures restore our belief that broken gestures and broken lines – that is, aberrant actions – still connect us back to ourselves and to the movements of the world, which are themselves broken. The logic of this action is not one of infinite deferral – it is not, for example, the catatonia of Artaud or the mind-numbing anaesthetics of fascism – but rather of a continuous, if quasi-epileptic, gestation at the edges of an anarchic formlessness about to take flight, or take shape. We cannot retrieve the old forms of wholesome revolutionary action here. In this sense, Peter Hallward is correct. If we are still looking for an October revolution, we must indeed ‘look for our inspiration elsewhere’ than in Deleuze.37 But perhaps we should leave behind the comfort of our old ways and believe in the emergence of new modes of existence and new forms of action. In the aesthetic regime of art we have entered the ‘domain of cold decision, of absolute obstinacy, of the choice of existence’ (TR, 283). Deleuze makes an effort to distinguish Worringer and Romanticism and he does so, surprisingly, in a way that allies Worringer with Kandinsky. At the same time, he gives us an affective formula for what such obstinacy might look like:

Worringer’s modernist positions seem to us to be very close to those of Kandinsky. Both criticize a concern – in both Goethe and Romanticism – to reconcile spirit and nature, which keeps art tied to an individualistic and sensualist perspective. They conceive, on the contrary, of a ‘spiritual art,’ which goes beyond persons and keeps nature in the background, relating them to a chaos from which modern man must emerge. They are not even sure that the enterprise will succeed, but there is no other choice: this is the origin of Worringer’s comments on ‘the scream’ as the only expression of expressionism. (C1, 225)

Such broken action and broken connection to the world is therefore accompanied by an ‘“affective athleticism,” a scream-breath’ (FB, 45) to which of course Bacon, but also Michaux, attests: ‘To arrive at such thinking is an athletic feat – you have to be in excellent shape.’38 The ethico-aesthetic

athleticism involved in constructing a figure – or a philosophical concept, or a scientific function, or a political program – necessarily begins with a scream, a scream which attests to the fact that such praxis subsists at the borders of a formless chaos. This is one reason why Deleuzian constructivism should simultaneously be characterized as an expressionism. In the realm of politics, however, we should perhaps follow Isabelle Stengers and Philippe Pignarre in speaking about ‘political creation’ or ‘experimentation’ rather than a program.\footnote{Isabelle Stengers and Philippe Pignarre (trans. Andrew Goffey), 2011. \textit{Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell}. Basingstoke: Palgrave, p. 123.} As in the construction of a figure, such experimentation consists in an ‘art (or craft)’ of transformation (2011, p.135) that proceeds locally and pragmatically through:

\begin{quote}
[t]he production of a new type of expertise, which is alone capable of destroying what has been monopolized by the minions [of capitalism]. It is this process that we want to celebrate, that of creating new means of grasping a situation, leading to the production of new ways of acting, of connecting […] As every hold is local, it is impossible to sketch out a general picture, and we must limit ourselves to the trajectories that we have, in one way or another, been implicated in. (2011, p.77, my emphasis)
\end{quote}

By focusing upon the creative impulse of the scream, we situate ourselves in the middle, armed with a new type of act, a new type of praxis that refuses generalities as well as predefined (i.e. utopian) or programmatic ends. A praxis that savors the energies of the depths:

\begin{quote}
One must refuse to pass from the scream ‘another world is possible!’ to a program describing ‘this other world that we want.’ Because this program would have either to appear utopian or to take no notice of the primordial unknown of every situation: the difference that the event by which people seize hold of a problem that concerns them can create. (2011, p.105, translation modified, my emphasis)\footnote{‘Scream’ renders the French word cri in both Deleuze and Stengers.}
\end{quote}

Such ‘groping experimentation’ – as Deleuze and Guattari name this new type of praxis – must remain incredibly sensitive to the shifting contours of a given situation, no matter what the field. It therefore always involves drawing-out a line, or following a kind of ‘sorcerer’s flight’ in the midst of an almost formless chaos, since it must constantly reconstruct the conditions of
thought and creation from the ground up, without the aid of any preconceived program or goal: ‘Thought as such begins to exhibit snarls, squeals, stammers; it talks in tongues and screams, which leads it to create, or to try to’ (WP, 55). Stengers clearly constructs her idea of capitalist sorcery with Deleuze and Guattari’s last book in mind, in which they write that all acts of creation entail ‘following the sorcerer’s flight. Take Michaux’s plane of immanence, for example, with its infinite, wild movements and speeds’ (WP, 41, translation modified).

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Thinking ‘a Life’: Nomadism as a Challenge for (Post-)Genomics

Tom Idema

Abstract
This chapter ventures into an epistemological and political tension around the question of life in (post-)genomics, focusing on the case of leading genomicist Craig Venter. On the one hand Venter’s research signals a movement away from on-to-one correspondences between genotype and phenotype, i.e. a movement towards complexity. On the other hand, it tends to cling to a notion of the genome as a ‘command-center’ of life. This tension can be analyzed on the basis of Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of ‘nomad science’ and ‘State science’. State science is organized in hierarchical institutions and is predominantly oriented towards order, while nomad science navigates between dominant institutions, practices, and ideas looking for phenomena of fluidity. In the light of the gaining importance of corporate science, and in congruence with Deleuze’s notion of ‘societies of control’ in which flexibility and fluidity are key terms, this chapter introduces an additional concept: ‘control science’. It is argued that whereas Venter’s case exhibits aspects of nomad science, it is better understood as control science. In order to develop a nomadic approach to the question of life, (post)genomics would benefit from conceptual encounters with Deleuze’s biophilosophy and the work of biologists such as Lynn Margulis.
‘Life goes beyond the limits that knowledge fixes for it, but thought goes beyond the limits that life fixes for it.’
Gilles Deleuze

Introduction

In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari propose that science has two forms. On the one hand there is ‘royal’ or ‘State’ science, which is organized in hierarchical institutions at the service of power. Power binds science to its own purposes – organizing and thereby controlling the world – and in return grants science a sense of autonomy and authority (TP, 373). The fundamental operation of State science, according Deleuze and Guattari, is reproducing knowledge as well as its conditions of production (TP, 372, 374). On the other hand, there is a mode of science that lacks a fixed institutional form, refusing to be directly and permanently linked to power; it is ‘itinerant,’ ‘ambulant’ or ‘nomadic’ (TP, 372-3). Nomad science is characterized by four preferences: fluidity rather than solidity, becoming rather than being, topology rather than Euclidian geometry, and problematization rather than theorem (TP, 361-2). The basic mode of nomad science is ‘following the flow of matter’ (TP, 373 italics in original) without aiming to control it. Although Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that nomad science is not better than State science, ‘just different’ (TP, 372), they clearly encourage nomad thinking. State science, in its urge to arrive at solutions sooner rather than later, can severely limit the potentials of thinking, and even produce ‘solutions’ that are entirely unfitting.

A number of scholars have offered historical and contemporary examples of nomad science. Manuel Delanda traces nomadic lines on both sides of the debate between Isaac Newton (1642-1727) and Robert Hooke (1635-1703). Newton initially followed nomadic lines (including those of alchemy) but eventually just became an ultimate State scientist ― the head of the Royal Society.¹ Andrew Pickering argues that the prospect for nomadic perspectives in contemporary science lies with ‘the sciences of complexity,

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emergence and becoming’ which he traces back to early cybernetics specialists working outside state funded research. Along the same lines, Sian Sullivan and Katherine Homewood link nomad science to contemporary ideas about non-equilibrium dynamics that fly in the face of government and corporate practices of control and postures of certainty. Jeremy Hunsinger argues that nomad science describes well those scientists advocating ‘open and mutable’ cyberinfrastructures and Marcelo Svirsky discerns a nomad science of political activism that resists strategies of incorporation in government and corporate programs of participation, instead spurring ‘creative acts of citizenship that actualize ruptures’. To summarize, keywords of contemporary nomad science appear to be complexity, open infrastructures, and non-institutionalized creativity.

Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of State and nomad science can be used fruitfully in Science and Technology Studies (STS). They answer to a call for more politicized analyses – or, to borrow Latour’s words, a move ‘from matters of fact to matters of concern’. I see two major challenges. Firstly, the label ‘State’ is outdated in the sense that it does not do justice to the increasing role of corporations in scientific research, often in combination with governmentally funded initiatives and programs. As a response to this problem, I want to propose a new term, ‘control science,’ to analyze corporate science as well as scientific projects where the state and corporations work in tandem. Control science can be understood as analogous to what Deleuze’s has called ‘societies of control,’ a contemporary constellation of power emerging in the era of global capitalism in which control is no longer primarily disciplinary (as in Foucault’s notion of biopolitics), but rather distributed or networked. This new biopolitics is

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distinguished by heightened levels of flexibility – a capacity to ‘modulate’ subjects, policies, methodologies, etc. in response to new circumstances. A second challenge is that, given the ubiquity of terms like ‘complexity’ and ‘emergence’ (also in state-funded programs), drawing distinctions between State, control and nomad science is often a difficult task. As I will show below, scientific projects which appear to truly ‘follow’ complexity wherever it leads them can easily reterritorialize on the grounds of capital and the state, thus leaving nomadic potentials untapped. The challenge for STS is to map the tendencies or lines of de/re/territorializations of science.

In order to start thinking about contemporary dynamics of control and nomad science, addressing the challenges mentioned above, this article analyzes the story of the Human Genome Project (HGP) and the subsequent scientific adventures of biologist Craig Venter. I do not wish to argue that Venter is somehow ‘representative’ for all research done under the banner of (post-)genomics – quite the contrary, Venter is ‘biology’s bad boy,’ as the popular media have it, someone who opens up new vistas for science. Venter’s autobiography *A Life Decoded: My Genome my Life* is fascinating because it reveals the deep ambiguity of his ideas, practices, attitudes, and desires. On the one hand, Venter’s entrepreneurship, his capacity to think beyond scientific and national borders, his flexibility, and his dedication to making life as such susceptible to modulation on the molecular level, puts his research squarely into the category of control science. Indeed, scholars see a significant role for genomics in the new era of technoscientific biopower (Cooper; Marks; Rose). However, Venter’s recent effort to sequence ‘the genome of the ocean’ (Venter, 2012a, 343) out of the DNA extracted from water samples collected in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans also points to nomadic potentials in (post-)genomics. The ocean is a ‘nomadic’ space *par excellence*: a topological space that is difficult to navigate let alone to control. The water samples collected by Venter and his team are not discrete

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6 Pickering’s assessment that State science includes ‘classically modern sciences like physics and sociology’ (2013, p. 155) seems to me problematic; I would rather argue that all science is dominated by the State science model, and that nomad science is everywhere present as potential (perhaps some fields have historically developed to be more hospitable to nomad thought than others). In this I follow Isabelle Stengers’s critical interrogation of the State – nomad distinction, see: Isabelle Stengers (trans. Robert Bononno), 2011. *Cosmopolitics II*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

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objects but fluid ecologies, becomings, whose complexity may problematize
the way we think about aquatic and terrestrial life. The question is to what
extent these potentials can be actualized within the parameters of Venter’s
overall research project aimed at the unraveling of life’s essence, and I argue
that this is difficult. To draw out the nomadic potentials of Venter’s (post)
genomics\(^8\) projects, I will contrast his work with ideas about life from
Deleuze’s biophilosophy and from the work of evolutionary biologist Lynn
Margulis.\(^9\) This kind of cross-fertilization seems vital in order to recast (post)
genomics’s desire to understand and modulate life in more humble terms: as
an experiment that is clearly beyond anyone’s control, but in which we
participate nevertheless.

**Genomics and the New Biopower**

As Foucault’s work has shown, the emergence of modern biology around the
beginning of the Nineteenth century coincides with the birth of the modern
state, and the two phenomena have been deeply intertwined from the start.
Science provided important armamentarium for mapping and controlling the
behaviors of individuals and populations, enabling modern states to wield a
more or less rationalized biopower or ‘power over life’.\(^ {10}\) Foucault’s
historical analyses, complemented with Deleuze and Guattari’s ruminations
on the state and State science, can be used to understand how the confluence
of (cold-war) militarization and state-funded science since World War II,
particularly in the US, gave rise to a new form of biopower. After World War
II, with the exodus of physicists to the biosciences, and, concomitantly, the
introduction of the discourse of information and communication science into
biology (Kay), the biosciences became increasingly dominated by a big
science approach (De Solla Price), enabling unprecedented possibilities for

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\(^8\) The term post-genomics is commonly used to refer to a number of fields that have
emerged out of genomics, including transcriptomics (transcription of DNA into
RNA), proteomics (how genes are expressed as proteins), and metabolomics (how
genes influence cell and metabolic processes).

\(^9\) My critical reading of (post-)genomics is partially informed by several articles from
a very useful volume, edited by Eva Neumann-Held and Christoph Rehmann-Sutter,
2006, entitled *Genes in Development: Re-reading the Molecular Paradigm*.

\(^ {10}\) Michel Foucault (ed. by Michel Senellart, trans. by Graham Burchell), 2008. *The
prediction and control. In her influential historical study of the ‘cracking’ of the genetic code, Lily Kay shows that in the 1950s molecular life became the preferred object of State-sponsored science. Kay describes how during this period ‘military power extended into the world of the mind’ and came to dominate the biosciences ‘through its various discourses and representations, notably the discourse of information and the technoscientific imaginary of communication and control systems’. Through this novel constellation, Kay argues, the molecular biosciences helped to inaugurate a new form of bio-power where ‘the genetic code became the site of life’s command and control’ (Kay, 2000, p.5). Kay’s historical analyses form a highly significant backdrop for contemporary biology, which continues to be closely aligned with governments, military incentives, and discourses of control. The simultaneity of intensified observation, access to vast genetic data sets, and new prospects for genetic manipulation mark the ‘new’ biosciences, and (post)genomics in particular, as a biopolitical site pur sang (Marks), a site that has been the subject of critical debates in scholarship and society alike.

It is in this context of emergent biopower that I want to place the story of the Human Genome Project (HGP), a story that is unfinished because debates about its course and its results are still going on. The HGP was not the consensual international endeavor it sometimes appeared to be. Its central figures cooperated but also competed fiercely in a race to decode the human genome, quarreling over the appropriate route to take in what has been dubbed a series of ‘gene wars’ (Cook-Deegan). While the leaders of the HGP tend to celebrate its results as revolutionary, critical voices argue that the HGP suffered from basic misunderstandings which explain is allegedly unspectacular results (Gould; Sarkar). The story’s culmination point was the June 2000 announcement of the completion of the sequence of the human

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12 Compared to previous developments in biology such as the biotech revolution, genomics is extraordinary in that it has an auxiliary discourse attached to it in the form of ELSA genomics (ethical, legal and social aspects of genomics). ELSA research explores the knowledges, technologies and practices of genomics and their societal repercussions. The same is being done in fields like Science and Technology Studies, the Social Studies of Science, the Cultural Studies of Science, Literature and Science, and the Medical Humanities. Scholars from these various fields not only critically analyze how genomic knowledge, data and technology function in particular contexts, but also evaluate the tenability and desirability of certain ambitions in genomics.
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genome at the White House under the auspices of President Clinton. The protagonists – genome scientists Francis Collins and Craig Venter (on stage) and James Watson (in the front row of the audience) – presented the world with an image of the human genome as a ‘book of life’ whose contents would bring to light the secrets of human biological existence once and for all. President Clinton likened the sequencing of the human genome to a mapping endeavor not unlike the famous expedition by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, who in 1801 set out to explore the huge area of land to the West of the United States in order to pave the way for colonization. The celebration of the finalized HGP, an inner journey to the essence of humanity, marked a moment when the biosciences decisively claimed the societal role of the pioneer, and the image of the triple helix attained a status more iconic than ever before, a symbol for the identity and destiny of the human species. As Zwart has observed, such figures and metaphors are not innocent. ¹³ Clinton’s proud allusion to the Lewis and Clark expedition – a prelude to the full colonization of the North American continent – condones the controversial aspects of state sponsored scientific explorations.

Ironically, the moment when the human genome was announced decoded also became the moment when the idea of a genetic code, as a paradigm, began to crumble. When the human genome was sequenced, it turned out that the human species has approximately 23,000 genes – much fewer than previous estimates which had ranged from 100,000 up to 300,000. Moreover, the human genome turned out to be extremely similar to the genomes of other species, thus positioning humans far closer to other animals, at least genetically. This realization has been interpreted by Zwart as a ‘narcissistic offense’ to the human race (Zwart, 2009), but it can also be seen as a major blow to the scientists involved as well as to State science, with its reliance on the reproduction of steady identities. With this number of genes, the one-trait-one-gene model became an historical artifact. The very scientists who had wholeheartedly embraced the discourse of genetic determinism for many years, using it to promote their research, were now forced to substitute it for an emphasis on (genomic) complexity, foregrounding the significance of such processes as gene interaction, gene transcription, gene splicing, and epigenetic regulation of protein synthesis. The possibilities for therapy that had appeared to be just around the corner now seemed much farther away. Although certainly for its staunch critics, in the end the HGP was a humbling

lesson (Gould) or even ‘an unmitigated failure, the most colossal misuse ever of scarce resources for biological research’, the end of the HGP did not signal the end of genomics. Rather, what has occurred in ‘post-genomics’ is a shift in discourse and, to some extent, in research, which has moved towards the multiple elements at work in the expression of genes.

Molecular biology’s post-genomic course can be interpreted as a movement from State science to control science. This reconfiguration is implicated in a shift towards new forms of biopower which was prefigured in a short text by Deleuze written in the early 1990s, ‘Postscript on Societies of Control.’ Here Deleuze speculates on a new era that begins to take shape roughly around the 1950s, in which State ordained disciplinarity begins to wane, giving way to a multiplication of ‘soft’ strategies throughout the various levels of society as well as beyond the borders of the state. Capitalism features prominently in this dissemination process, completely reshaping the role of classical centers of control as analyzed by Foucault, such as the prison, the school, and the hospital. Apart from taking biopolitics as a heuristic instrument beyond the disciplinary world of modernity that Foucault’s work maps, Deleuze intensifies the point that Foucault’s concept of the subject is not reducible to the notion of ‘the individual’ – that bed-rock of humanist and Enlightenment understandings of

15 In each institution, Deleuze discerns processes of deterritorialization: ‘In the prison system: the attempt to find penalties of ‘substitution,’ at least for petty crimes, and the use of electronic collars that force the convicted person to stay at home during certain hours. For the school system: continuous forms of control, and the effect on the school of perpetual training, the corresponding abandonment of all university research, the introduction of the ‘corporation’ at all levels of schooling. For the hospital system: the new medicine ‘without doctor or patient’ that singles out potential sick people and subjects at risk, which in no way attests to individuation—as they say—but substitutes for the individual or numerical body the code of a ‘dividual’ material to be controlled.’ (‘Postscript.’ 4). Deleuze here adopts a polemical style and a mode of future telling almost unique in his oeuvre. In spite of its speculative features, scholars have found this text useful in trying to fathom the directions in which biopower is heading.
the self.\textsuperscript{16} The notion of ‘dividual’ presented here by Deleuze points to the ways in which the uniqueness of each individual life, whose psychological and social life was the object of disciplinary logic, is now being displaced by new assemblages in which the modern notion of ‘mass’ gives way to ‘samples, data, markets, or “banks”.’\textsuperscript{17} The flexibility of dividual and collective life under contemporary capitalism is thus closely related to the rise of global, computer-driven systems of modulation in place of the conventional modes of production. Rather than organizing life through specialized enclosed spaces (families, factories, states), techno-scientific capitalism’s global scale and 24/7-economy raises the imperatives of productivity and training to a level that is at once grand and molecular, totalizing and dispersive.

This historical shift of biopower sketched by Deleuze (a shift already implicit in Foucault’s work, who understood the disciplinary society to be vanishing) is the background against which the notion of control science becomes intelligible. Control science is epitomized by a decentralized, more flexible and fine-grained kind of reproduction of knowledge and information. In molecular biology genetic networks and cellular interactions replace the gene as guiding metaphors, which no longer apply to definite units (an individual, ethnic group or species) but rather establish transversal connections between (sub)levels of analysis (cellular, organismal, ecosystemic), disciplines, and species. In medicine, the distinctions between illness and health, hospital and home, patient and doctor, are blurring. Health is no longer a particular situation in the present (one is never really healthy), but something that is continually monitored and modulated. Patients are increasingly managing their health on the basis of genetic data and other bioinformation, even without a doctor acting as intermediary (for example through direct-to-consumer genetic testing and through devices that measure heart rate). Opaque notions such as ‘life style’ are becoming increasingly important in thinking about health, thereby dispersing it, making it non-local, yet also personalized. It seems that the more information one has, the more one is able to prevent disease, but the more precarious and elusive one’s health becomes. In this sense, health is becoming an ‘event’ in the Deleuzian


\textsuperscript{17} Gilles Deleuze, Winter 1992. ‘Postscript on the Societies of Control.’ In: October. Vol. 59, p. 3.
sense – an event that rather than actually happening is always ‘that which has just happened and that which is about to happen’ (LS, 8).

Deleuze’s notion of societies of control and the idea of control science resonate with a number of important recent writings on biopolitics and genomics. In his book *The Politics of Life Itself*, Nikolas Rose (citing Deleuze’s essay on control societies a number of times) argues that the linkages between power and biomedicine in the genomic age cannot be adequately interpreted within the framework of coercive control by the State (eugenics). Instead, what arises is a ‘politics of life itself’ in which all citizens participate: ‘It is neither delimited by the poles of illness and health, nor focused on eliminating pathology to protect the destiny of the nation. Rather, it is concerned with our growing capacities to control, manage, engineer, reshape, and modulate the very vital capacities of human beings as living creatures’.

What Rose argues here is that the newly available knowledge and biotechnologies are profoundly emancipatory if treated ethically and democratically. Civilian organizations such as patient groups give rise to a new ‘biosociality’ (Rose, 2007, pp.131-154) (a term coined by Paul Rabinow), ensuring that genomics does not become a tool for the top-down governance of life.

Melinda Cooper offers a more critical examination of the new possibilities offered by genomic knowledge and data, which function as new forms of capitalism-driven control, but also reterritorialize on the state. According to Cooper, what we are witnessing in the (post)genomic era is an intensification of the relations between biology, corporations, the state and the military, especially in the US. After the 9-11 attacks, the Bush administration developed an agenda of permanent warfare (the ‘preemptive strike’ policy), where war is waged no longer for states or for human beings:

[War is waged] in the name of life in its biospheric dimension, incorporating meteorology, epidemiology, and the evolution of all forms of life, from the microbe up. The extension of preemptive warfare to include the sphere of environmental and biopolitics conflates the externalization of war with the evolution of life on earth – as if permanent war were simply a fact of life, with no other end than its own crisis-driven perpetuation.

In other words, the biologization of politics and war goes much further than preventing pandemics and fighting bioterror; it concerns the recruitment of humans and other species in new regimes of safety and health that work according to a logic of continuous (pre-emptive) modulation. This regime makes use of new forms of technology and information, creating what Victor Toom has termed a mode of ‘forensic-genetic biopower’ through which biological life increasingly comes to fall under the law.  

These divergent assessments of genomics and contemporary biopolitics make it more challenging to mark a clear distinction between State science, control science, and nomad science. On the one hand, genomics, as a massive data-producing machine designed to forge a map of life itself, seems primarily engaged in reproduction, rather than the nomadic practice of following the singularities of matter (TP, 372). The question is what happens to genomics after the HGP: are nomadic notions of complexity and emergence being mainstreamed into a new control science? Or, more in line with Rose’s work is there an affirmation of nomadic potential in genomics after the HGP, altering the very axioms of genomics?

**Venter’s Adventures**

Genomics has produced its own stories through popular scientific publications and the media (Wald, ‘Blood and Stories’; Zwart, ‘Understanding’). As Priscilla Wald makes clear, these stories are not merely ‘personal’ anecdotes or marketing instruments. Rather, they are ‘fundamental in the production of scientific and medical knowledge and, therefore […] attention to them needs to be incorporated into scientific and medical research’.  

The stories genomicists tell are not just about their work: they narrate the processes of life itself, for example, how Homo sapiens disseminated over the continents. Wald argues that the narratives provided by genomics and population genetics should not be taken at face value, since there are many possible narratives based on genetic information. Moreover, these biological narratives ought to be understood in the social context where

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they emerge – they necessarily merge with cultural narratives (‘What’s in a Cell?’). Starting from Wald’s assumptions, I want to show that Venter’s stories about science and about life are suitable for tracing nomadic potentials in genomics. We may then raise the question whether, or to what extent, his adventures are instances of nomad science, or rather expressions of the new flexibility of control science.

In his autobiography *A Life Decoded: My Genome: My Life*, published in 2012, Venter recounts his converging personal, scientific and entrepreneurial struggles and successes. The main text is interspersed by text-boxes in which Venter reflects on his own personal traits on the basis of genomic data, producing what he calls a ‘genetic autobiography’ (Venter, 2012a, p.7). Even though many of these text-boxes stress that there is still a lot to be learned about the actual meaning of genomic information, and despite Venter’s reference to new perspectives in areas such as epigenetics (Ibid., p.332), the provocative formula of his autobiography reinforces the image of life as a genetic ‘book’ that can be read but also (re)written. Venter’s autobiography is a strong testament to what Zwart has called ‘a bioinformatization of the life-world’: ‘Genomics-based technologies have begun to pervade our daily lives, our autobiographies and narratives, as well as our anthropologies, rather than our genomes as such’ (Zwart, 2007, p.135).

In the following I will limit myself to some of Venter’s descriptions of his major scientific achievements. In 1999, when the HGP was already nearing completion, Venter established his own research institute Celera genomics, competing with the state-funded genome sequencing efforts. Using his newly developed ‘shot-gun sequencing’ method, Venter wanted to show that the instruments of the official HGP, funded by the US government, were too cumbersome and too slow. His philosophy was that the map of the human genome should be a common source for everyone, not the exclusive possession of the state or of corporations (2012a, p.260). Venter was struggling on two frontiers as it were. On the one hand, against William Haseltine (representing big business), he was fighting for his integrity and that of his team because he had promised to make the human genome publicly available (Ibid.). On the other hand, John Sulston of the Wellcome trust accused him of leaning too much towards privatization of the human genome (which is why Venter could not publish the results in Nature and had to opt for Science instead). A major incentive for writing this book seems to have been to strike back at his scientific adversaries (John Sulston, James Watson, Francis Collins, and Eric Lander, among others) who accused
Venter of turning life science into a business rather than a joint effort for the common good. These struggles indicate how State science and control science vie for dominance, each mode offering different versions of what counts as the common good. The camp of Sulston, Watson and Collins, representing State science, wanted to keep the HGP centrally organized in order to make sure that it would benefit everyone, while control science, represented by Venter, opportunistically explored new possibilities, decentralizing and speeding up the project.

After the publication of the human genome in *Science*, which indicated that much more than the genome sequence alone was needed to understand life and develop new therapies, Venter decided that genomics needed to take up the challenge of the newly discovered complexity of life. Venter literally embarked on a new adventure on his sailing boat *Sorcerer II* which took him and his team across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans to map ‘the genome of the ocean itself’ (Venter, 2012a, p.343). Every hundred knots he and his crew took water samples which were then stored in freezers and analyzed in his laboratories at the J. Craig Venter Institute, resulting in ‘four hundred newly discovered microbes and 6 million new genes, doubling the number then known to science’ (Ibid., p.346). Venter’s claims that the results of his expedition will contribute to a better grasp of oceanic and atmospheric ‘health,’ to generating new biotechnologies that use microbes to generate clean fuel (Ibid., p.334), and to methods for ‘engineering our sick atmosphere’ (Ibid., p.348). The *Sorcerer II* expedition took genomics out of the sphere of the human toward the natural environment that sustains human life.

In some respects, the Venter’s ocean expedition seems to illustrate perfectly a nomadic approach to genomics. In *A Life Decoded*, Venter presents himself as a *free* scientist with a passion for life, rather than a scientist working for the State or for a corporation. Zwart has argued that Venter’s ‘aquatic’ desire for adventure can be opposed to the ‘territorial’ style of his scientific adversary Francis Collins:

> Mapping the earth is a practice that is part of strategies of colonisation and annexation, establishing firm governance on *terra firma*. It is an effort to transform the diffuse and unknown into something discrete and accessible, and therefore governable. [...] The sea has always been associated with freedom of movement, with migrating beyond the spheres of action of established rulers. [...] Whereas Collins identified himself as a ‘trusted aid’ in service of a governmental programme, Venter’s work has always had a rather different moral profile, that of
embarking and setting sail to places where one is left to one’s own devices [...] discovering new worlds, breaking away from entrenched positions.22

Indeed, Venter’s independence and mobility, most significantly his ventures into ocean life, can be regarded as tenets of nomad science *par excellence*. The water samples, each containing thousands of microorganisms, contain great complexity, a ‘milieu’ of life rather than merely the genomic data. The same possibility is found in research fields like metagenomics and eco-genomics, which work with soil samples that hold information about ecosystems rather than single organisms. But does Venter’s work aim at understanding ocean life as a multiplicity in becoming? Does the smooth space of the ocean propel him to adopt more ‘fluid’ scientific practices and ideas? More concretely, are Venter’s unorthodox manners reflected in alternative views that problematize the idea of the genome as information center and essence of life?

In a more recent scientific saga in which Venter stars, the potential of genomics is actualized in the form of a procedure and a research object that, I argue, unequivocally defies a nomadic notion of life as multiplicity. Venter has been engaged in various projects aimed at creating ‘synthetic life,’ for example, by ‘transplanting the genome of one bacterium in another, marking the first example of species transmutation’ (Venter, 2012a, p.356). Whereas the objective is to create new life forms that may help make the planet healthier, there is a deeper scientific desire that animates Venter’s project of artificial life: ‘I want to take us far from the shore and into unknown waters, to a new phase of evolution, to the day when one DNA-based species can sit down at a computer to design another. I plan to show that we understand the software of life by creating true artificial life’ (Ibid., p.357). It is striking how among Venter’s quotations of famous scientists like Watson, Schrödinger and Pasteur, Darwin is quoted by far the most in *A Life Decoded*. However, Venter’s ambition, it seems, is not just to rival Darwin: inaugurating a new era of the artificial transmutation of species is clearly not just a paradigm shift and a world-historical event — it constitutes an evolutionary leap.

Venter’s recent projects highlight a cybernetic view of life first developed by thinkers such as Norbert Wiener, Erwin Schrödinger and Richard

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Feynman. In a 2012 lecture entitled ‘What is Life? A Twenty-First Century Perspective,’ given on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of Schrödinger’s classic study What is Life?, Venter looks back in history to argue that his work is ‘consistent with Schrödinger’s code-script,’ thus suggesting that the information-turn in biology was a crucial one in the search for the essence of life. Venter argues that the synthesis of new genomes and their successful transplantation into cells is proof of the idea that ‘life is based on DNA software; we’re a DNA software system. You change the DNA software, you change the species. It’s a remarkably simple concept, remarkably complex in its execution.’ Venter ends his lecture with a spectacular image of the not-too-distant future:

Try to imagine 70 years from now in the year 2082 what will be happening. With the success of private space flight, the moon and Mars will be clearly colonized. New life forms for food or energy production or for new medicines will be sent as digital information to be converted back into life forms in the 4.3 to 21 minutes that it takes for a digital wave to go from earth to Mars. (Venter, 2012b, no page number)

It is unclear what Venter’s scenario of the digitalization of life, which, he keeps repeating throughout his lecture, is so ‘remarkably simple,’ promises for the future. In any case, it is consistent with a tradition of ‘command-and-control’ cybernetics, and with the transition to bioinformatic biopower described by Cooper, Kay, Zwart and others, with its belief in the economy and in technoscience to regenerate wealth ad infinitum. If a virtually endless assortment of bio-objects can be designed on a computer and engineered using a ‘minimal genome’ as basic tool kit (Venter, 2012a, p.354), then, in Judith Roof’s words, ‘DNA, a small operative molecule, becomes the twirling model of an imaginary of self-replicating wealth’.

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23 In one of his experiments, Venter water marked a ‘synthetic cell’ with several sentences transcoded into the four-digit code of DNA, one of which was a famous sentence from cybernetician Richard Feynman ‘What I cannot create, I do not understand’ (Venter, 2012b, no pagenumbers). Indeed, this seems to be the dictum of Venter’s work.

24 As Kay has pointed out, in The Human Use of Human Beings (1950) already argued that the possibility of transmitting a living human being in coded form and then reconstructing the body was theoretically possible.

My point is not merely to criticize the ‘program’ metaphor as a feat of genetic or biological determinism. Rather, I would like to point out that, as Haraway has shown more than three decades ago, there are multiple metaphors, and clusters of metaphors, for life at work in twentieth-century biology, for example the ‘organicist’ metaphors of fields, liquid crystals and fabrics in developmental biology.\textsuperscript{27} As Haraway demonstrates, these metaphors challenge the reductionist or determinist tendencies in genetics (and, to extrapolate her argument to the present, in genomics), bringing to light what biologist Paul Weiss termed a ‘molecular ecology’ of the cell (Haraway, 1976, p.183) as well as exposing analogies between the organization of ‘molecular populations, the cell, the whole organism, and the ecosystem’ (Haraway, 1976, p.205). As I will demonstrate below with reference to the work of biologist Lynn Margulis, metaphors that are able to connect different levels and scales without reverting to reductionism seem more likely to correspond to nomad science.

Through innovative research methods, pioneering projects, entrepreneurial audacity and a planetary vision, Venter indeed brings about a degree of deterritorialization of State science, making it more flexible and adaptive. Venter’s exploration of ‘unknown waters’ clearly yields new possibilities for understanding and modifying life. At the same time, Venter’s projects reterritorialize on corporate profit and personal gain.\textsuperscript{28} But what is really significant, is that the foundations of a molecular biology based on cybernetic models of control remain firmly in place. Venter’s ‘shotgun sequencing of the oceans’ (2012a, p.334) seems more of a planned effort at containment than a nomadic adventure: it literally freezes that which was fluid, forcing life into a reductionist model where it becomes intelligent software ‘building its own hardware’ (\textit{What is Life}). In Venter’s reductionist discourse, the story

\textsuperscript{26} On the potential of tissue engineering to generate endless wealth, see Cooper 2008, p. 120.


\textsuperscript{28} An example of personal gain is Venter’s decision to use his own DNA for the sequencing of the human genome. After sequencing his genome, Venter learned about his health risks, and immediately began to diminish them in various ways. Mayeri qualifies Venter’s secret decision as narcissistic, see Rachel Mayeri, 2010. ‘Soft Science: Artists’ Experiments in Documentary Storytelling.’ In Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip (eds.), \textit{Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism and Technoscience}. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 76; 80.
of science becomes a molecular puzzle in which technical obstacles are gradually overcome until, finally, life’s secrets are revealed and the genome becomes an infinite source of reproducible solutions. I would argue that nomad science, instead, puts itself genuinely at risk by immersing into an ocean of problems that are not man-made, much in the way that Manuel Delanda describes the practice of making ‘intensive maps’:

What need to be mapped in this case are not the borders of entities possessing a spatial organization, like the boundaries of an ocean, a lake, or another body of water, but thresholds of intensity causing spontaneous transformations in the spatial organization of those bodies.  

Such a search for critical ‘thresholds’ imply a differential spatio-temporal topology, not a neutral reservoir from which an essence – in Venter’s case a ‘genome of the ocean’ – can be extracted. Instead of reducing ocean life twice – first to DNA and then to digital codes – a true exploration of the ocean’s complexity would produce rich developmental and evolutionary stories featuring a myriad of species (including humans), cells, genomes, technologies, the elements, weather, and so on. Since humans and scientists in particular, are part of the experiment, they too may be transformed in unpredictable ways.

**Thinking ‘a Life’**

As the case of Venter illustrates, (post-)genomics has nomadic aspects – searching for complexity and exploring prospects for new life – but these aspects are not sufficiently fleshed out in Venter’s project to turn genomics into a genuine nomad science. In spite of the apparent scientific defeat of genetic determinism, science still operates within the dimensions of a ‘molecular paradigm,’ a general inclination in biology to reduce life to the workings of small parts that can be reproduced digitally as well as analogically.  

Scientific efforts such as Venter’s, aimed at reproducing and mastering life, may lead to impressive results and stories, but not, as Venter

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claims, to a capacious understanding of what life is. Venter’s case shows that whereas (post-)genomics claims to be a multifaceted, non-deterministic line of research, it may still regard the genome as a ‘center’ from which life is produced, thus swapping genetic determinism for genomic determinism. Some argue that, in fact, much research in contemporary molecular biology still tends to treat the environment as a purely secondary, exterior ‘condition,’ a source of perturbations that has to be distinguished from a true genomic cause.\footnote{Hoffmeyer, Jesper, 2006.‘Genes, Development and Semiosis.’ In Eva M. Neumann-Held and Christoph Rehmann-Sutter (eds.), *Genes in Development: Re-reading the Molecular Paradigm.* Durham: Duke University Press, p. 156.}

Is a nomadic mode of molecular biology at all possible? As Maureen O’Malley and John Dupré argue, a transition in (post-)genomics ‘from a dissection of things to the dynamics of processes’\footnote{O’Malley, Maureen A. and John Dupré, 2005. ‘Fundamental Issues in Systems Biology.’ In: *BioEssays*, Vol. 27, no. 12, pp. 1270-1276.} requires a genuine effort to think through the idea of a biological system, which in turn hinges on ‘demonstrations that the behaviour of single components cannot be understood simply in terms of their intrinsic properties, but must be seen as simultaneously determined by features of the systems of which they are part’ (O’Malley and Dupré, p.1274). Some of the most convincing proposals for such an approach in (post-)genomics come from biologists and philosophers working together. In a paper entitled ‘Genes in the Postgenomic Era,’ biophilosopher Paul Griffiths and biologist Karola Stotz argue that if genes are currently defined by ‘the way DNA sequences are used in particular cellular and broader contexts, and not merely by their structure,’ then, strictly, genomics should also embrace the idea that ‘phenotypes are not simply expressions of genetic information but rather emerge from a “developmental system”’.\footnote{Griffiths, Paul E. and Karola Stotz, 2006. ‘Genes in the Postgenomic Era.’ In: *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics*. Vol. 27, pp. 515-6.} In order to add more conceptual grounding to this systemic approach, I will now turn to Deleuze’s biophilosophy, whose emphasis on connectivity and processuality strongly resonates with approaches in contemporary bioscience such as the above.

For Deleuze, if we want to understand specific differences, for example between biological species, we cannot simply presuppose the identities of these species. Organisms and species are the results of repetitions of differences across scales, including the molecular and the territorial, not the
execution of a pre-existing Bauplan (Williams, 2003, pp.11-12). In Difference and Repetition, Deleuze looks to the field of embryology to develop this idea. An embryo is complex, ‘vague’ body in a continuous process of transformation: it is a body that cannot be divided in distinct parts and whose developments are continuous, i.e. irreducible to a linear succession of phases. Rather than treating embryology as a special case at the margins of biology, Deleuze takes it as a starting point for the question of life, thus prefiguring a move in biology ‘from linear causal chains to non-linear dynamics’. Even mature bodies are but coagulations or decelerations of life as intensive movement. This leads to a point that is perhaps counter-intuitive: the embryo and its intensive processes are ontologically prior to species and organs. This means that it is inaccurate to say that the embryo constructs itself according to a pre-existent set of instructions along the lines of ‘become a fish, form gills.’ Embryogenesis is the ontological problem-field (or, in Deleuze’s terminology, the ‘Idea’) in relation to which species and organs develop as solutions or reified categories. In other words, the individuation of intensities precedes their differenciation as species and organs. According to Deleuze, this primacy of intensities (or individuals: entities that cannot be divided into parts) is also seen on the level of phylogeny:

A living being is not only defined genetically, by the dynamisms which determine its internal milieu, but also ecologically, by the external movements which preside over its distribution within an extensity. A kinetics of population adjoins, without resembling, the kinetics of the egg; a geographic process of isolation may be no less formative of species than internal genetic variations, and sometimes precedes the latter. (DR, 216-7)

34 James Williams’s guide to Difference and Repetition is highly recommendable, clarifying aspects of Deleuze’s philosophy through a myriad of examples. As Williams explains, ‘things acquire fixity, that is, they acquire parts and hence boundaries through repetition. These parts and boundaries then allow us to see the individual as a member of a class or species. For example, the boundaries of an animal’s territory come from the repeated prowling and marking of its perimeter. Or we acquire an accent by the repetition of particular intonations. Neither the actual territory nor the accent exist prior to the repetitions’.

Whereas the ordeals of the fetus testify to an ‘unlivable life’ that remains hidden within the organism, the vicissitudes of populations bear witness to a fundamental openness of organisms to their surroundings and the ‘formative’ (i.e., constructive) role of ecological connections. Like the embryo, the intermingling of diverse populations is a non-metric, topological phenomenon: population is a vague essence ontologically prior to the reified category of species.

Deleuze’s fascination with embryology is salient in the context of contemporary alternatives to the molecular paradigm. As Griesemer argues, whereas in (post-)genomics ‘process is pushed into the methodological background,’ a field like embryology ‘foregrounds development and backgrounds hereditary transmission’\textsuperscript{36}. Evelyn Fox Keller even goes as far as to argue that the dominant focus on genes has led to the ‘eclipse of embryology’ and, thus, a situation where the ‘problems of development, still unresolved, lay dormant’.\textsuperscript{37} Deleuze’s argument in \textit{Difference and Repetition} about the neglect of ‘difference-in-itself’ in western thinking, I argue, serves as a general framework for understanding the neglect of embryology and other fields that foreground process.

The image of a creative and connective life is elaborated in \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}. Here Deleuze and Guattari typify the dominant (neo-)Darwinian story of life as ‘arborescent’ (tree-like) because it assumes a branching out from the one to the many, from sameness to difference, from the primitive to the complex. Discarding the image of life as linear transmission or reproduction, Deleuze and Guattari replace the arborescent model with a ‘rhizomatic’ one. In biology, a rhizome is a network of plant-roots that overgrow and connect to one another in the soil in such a way that it becomes hard to determine where one plant ends and the other begins. Plants that may be easily identified above the ground appear to be local and temporary manifestations of a much more complex rhizomatic process. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome model is generally applicable to life. For example, while humans and other animals can be distinguished as separate


species, they are fundamentally connected through symbiotic relations on the molecular level:

Under certain conditions, a virus can connect to germ cells and transmit itself as the cellular gene of a complex species: moreover, it can take flight, move into the cells of an entirely different species, but not without bringing with it ‘genetic information’ from the first host […] We form a rhizome with our viruses or rather our viruses cause us to form a rhizome with other animals. (TP, 10)

Here Deleuze and Guattari suggest that, while contagion is commonly envisioned as something negative, threatening the life of the organism, from the perspective of evolution viral contamination can be a way of renewing life. In fact, for Deleuze and Guattari, real variation or difference is largely created on the level of the rhizome; the incredible diversity found in nature cannot be understood by the essentially conservative processes of random mutation and natural selection alone (Ansell-Pearson 1999, p.40).

From the perspective of Deleuzian biophilosophy, a fundamental challenge for (post-) genomics and molecular biology in general is to confront the question of life beyond the theorematic apparatus that establishes the genome as essentially molar (a measurable unit) and as a center of analysis. As Deleuze phrases it in his last work, Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life, the challenge is to think life as ‘a life’ that cannot be ascribed to this or that individual entity (organism, cell) or cause (genes, natural selection):

A life is everywhere, in all the moments that a given living subject goes through and that are measured by given lived objects: an immanent life carrying with it the events or singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects. This indefinite life itself does not have moments, close as they may be to one another, but only between-times, between-moments. (Deleuze, 2001, p.29)

38 In his study of Deleuze’s biophilosophy entitled Germinal Life, Ansell-Pearson traces Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome, as well as Deleuze’s idea of an embryological life that stays part of the organism, back to Bergson: ‘Although Bergson is close to Weismann he does not wish to locate the vital principle in something as specific and self-contained as a germ-plasm, since this would reduce the scope within ‘creative evolution’ for invention and innovation. For Bergson what is transmitted is not imply the physic-chemical elements of the germ-plasm but also the vital energies and capacities of an embryogenesis and morphogenesis that allows for perpetual invention in evolution’.
It is here that Venter’s image of life as a ‘DNA software system’ becomes most vulnerable to philosophical critique. Venter’s claim that life can be (re)produced from the digital code is wrongheaded because genesis always happens on a plane of immanence, not on a plane that is already organized and controlled. Genetics and genomics are revolutionary in the sense that they intervene in rhizomatic processes on the molecular level (horizontal gene transfer), but the idea of reproducing life is illusory – how can one reproduce a becoming which is never actual? Life as becoming cannot be represented, recorded or reproduced, because, in Elizabeth Grosz’s words, it is ‘not a capacity inherited by life, an evolutionary outcome or consequence, but the very principle of matter itself, with its possibilities of linkage with the living, with its possibilities of mutual transformation’ (2011, p.52).

Deleuze’s approach to life as connective and processual, partially derived from embryology and the idea of the rhizome, resonates strongly with contemporary alternatives to the molecular paradigm in biology. One example is provided by evolutionary biologist Lynn Margulis’s theory of endosymbiotic evolution, a critique of and an alternative to genocentrism as well as neo-Darwinism. Neo-Darwinism reconciles Darwin’s ideas with the molecular paradigm in contemporary biology, stating that evolution (the production of biological novelty) occurs through the gradual accumulation of random DNA mutations subject to natural selection. In Acquiring Genomes, co-written with her son Dorion Sagan (a science writer), Margulis argues that the genesis of new forms out of existing ones cannot be explained by examining species in isolation: ‘Animal evolution resembles the evolution of machines, where typewriters and televisionlike screens integrate to form lap tops, and internal combustion engines and carriages merge to from automobiles. The principle always stays the same: well-honed parts integrate into startling new wholes’. Margulis’s work examines the ways in which symbiotic relations between animals, for example bacteria living in the guts of mammals, are often useful, thus offering counterweight to the dominant idea of a competition between species. Radical transformation of species is simply unthinkable in neo-Darwinism, which is overly preoccupied with linear genetic transmission from generation to generation and thereby ‘misses the symbiotic forest for the genetic trees’ (Margulis, 2002, p.201). Margulis’s work on symbiosis as a generative process resonates strongly with Deleuze and Guattari’s adoption of the rhizome, and instantiates elements of nomad

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science. Rather than taking the gene or the organism as centers of analysis, Margulis starts from highly fluid *relations*, which allow her to explain the variety of forms and the potential of becoming in nature. The fact that a tree can offer food and shelter for a great number of species is an instance of life’s tendency to ‘literally incorporate more and more of its environment into itself’. In place of a distinction between genetic causes and phenotypic effects, genome and environment, what emerges is a topological space in which everything is connected. Margulis’s theory of endosymbiogenesis has by now been accepted by the scientific community as an additional model of evolutionary change, but not, as Margulis proposes, a more significant model than the classical one.

Margulis’s work testifies to Deleuze and Guattari’s idea that life is not determined by essences but by relations and becomings, which do not belong to organisms but subsume them (TP, 238-9). This scientific and philosophical endeavor may serve as an antidote against presentism (‘let’s stick to the here and now and be realistic’) as well as against the sort of speculative claims such as Venter’s that mechanistically project a future world of our own making. Margulis rethinks life in ways far more imaginative than the Human Genome Project could ever have achieved. Putting the very axioms of modern biology into question, she has met with great adversity in her professional life. Yet for all its boldness, there’s a humbling quality to the work of Margulis, placing humans within this dynamic field of relations rather than at the top of the pecking order. Margulis differs in that respect from the (predominantly male) celebrity scientists in the field of genomics like Francis Crick, Jameson Watson and Craig Venter, who claim to have found the essence of life in DNA. If science, like literature, creates stories about life, stories in which science itself appears as a character (Wald ‘Blood and Stories’), then the figure-heads of genomics narcissistically allow themselves a far greater role in these stories. As several feminist scholars have argued, women are able to make a difference in science by resisting the climate of aggressive competition, fostering cooperative and caring attitudes not just toward one another but also toward (living) research objects and the world at large. There seems to be a significant overlap between the phenomenon of nomad science and the work of female (and sometimes feminist) scientists such as Margulis, working in the margins of bioscience, emphasizing humility and togetherness – a claim that begs further analysis.

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Conclusion

How can (post-)genomics, having moved from genome mapping to the study of bi-directional cellular processes, deepen its commitment to complexity, meaning its biological, scientific and social ‘outsides’? How can nomadically inclined scientists connect to the molecular paradigm to insert more complexity, without relinquishing their relative independence? And, zooming out to the level of culture, how can scientists address Jackie Leach Scully’s observation that ‘the deterministic program model of gene action is currently the only one available for popular discourse on human nature’? These epistemologically and politically difficult challenges need to be taken on because our understanding of the biosphere, and our ability to intervene in it, I argue, depend on interdisciplinarity. The whole spectrum of sciences is needed to curtail and modulate anthropogenic transformations of the biosphere in order to prevent humanity from destroying significant parts of it, including itself. Humans’ exceptional abilities to affect their environments should be deployed in responsible ways. That is, based on a long-term, co-evolution perspective on life on Earth and perhaps even beyond. Interdisciplinarity also includes the social sciences and the Humanities, because social, technological and cultural processes are crucial in co-evolution. But interdisciplinarity goes further: literature and art can let the biophysical aspects of human existence rise from the background, enmeshing them with sociality, psychology, and culture, thus imagining, in Deleuze and Guattari’s Nietzschean formulation, ‘a new earth and people that do not yet exist’ (WP, 108).

As I hope to have showed, Deleuze’s work, including his texts co-written with Guattari, offers scientists and scholars useful tools to understand the interaction between dominant and submerged perspectives on life, and offer potential routes to further develop nomadic ideas. The nomad-State science pair, complemented by control science, serves as a means for bringing more (bio)political analysis into STS. Moreover, Deleuze’s elucidation, critical interrogation and recombination of ideas in biology offers a fertile ground on which to bring multiple branches of the (bio)sciences and the humanities

closer together. In spite of scientific skepticism about philosophy, we can observe unprecedented opportunities for such a joint-venture: genomics and other fields in the biosciences are devoting (significant) portions of their budgets to addressing the societal impact of their work. An important next step is nomadic interdisciplinarity – a readiness to transform in the encounter with other disciplines. For STS, nomadic interdisciplinarity implies not just engaging with social implications of science, but also with the ideas about life itself that science is investigating. Paradoxically, it is through critically re-examining the fundamentals of biology that science becomes most thoroughly open to the concerns of society.

References


Reflection about science often occurs outside science departments, and many scientists regard exercises of philosophical reflection as impediments to their workflow. Biologists Richard Levins and Abha Sur explain this lack of philosophical interest within the contemporary life sciences by pointing to the pressure to increase academic production levels in an ‘era of neo-liberal economics’: ‘Commodification of science and its institutional organization works against self-reflectivity and produces contempt for philosophy. This contributes to the narrowness of contemporary science even when there are pleas for complexity, interdisciplinary methodologies, and wholeness. So far the appeals to complexity tend to live in the introductory chapters of books, while the main text is still fragmented and narrowly focused. Scientists are evaluated mostly by their contributions within the bounds of their department’s definitions’ (37).


Nomadism as a Challenge for (Post-)Genomics


Mesopolitical Interests: Rotterdam Skillcity as Rhizomatic, Ecosophical, Reflective Event

Henk Oosterling

Abstract
This paper finds its inspiration in the philosophical analyses of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. Their pragmatic perspective offers a conceptual framework for Rotterdam Skillcity, a systematic and long-term urban strategy that intervenes in pedagogical and societal practices in socio-economically deprived neighborhoods in the Southern neighborhoods of Rotterdam. It is argued and shown that although the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari cannot be applied as a theory to this practice, yet, their concepts are adequate tools to analyze current urban problems in order to design policies that handle these problems more adequately than the ones that have been applied the past decades. So the topic of this contribution is mesopolitical emancipation in the 21st century. This mesopolitical focus deals with the ways how power can be redistributed in and by groups that self-consciously and interdependently reflect and act in a society that is politico-economically and socio-ecologically challenged to change its way of life. The DeleuzoGuattarian perspective offers an ecosophy as the core of a relational philosophy the crucial concept of which is inter-esse or a being in between. Once we reconceptualize urban policies focused on a transition to a politically more democratic and ecologically more integrated world, it becomes clear that DeleuzoGuattarian schizoanalysis envelops an emancipatory practice. Part 1 consists of a survey of the adopted key concepts and how these are adapted in order to construct a conceptual ‘war machine’ that provides tools for an urban intervention. In Part 2 the concrete tactics and operational trajectories of Rotterdam Skillcity are sketched.
The topic of this paper is politics and emancipation in the twenty-first century, inspired by the philosophical ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari who, in my opinion, have more adequately than other philosophers, diagnosed our current situation. The focus of this article is a systematic and long-term intervention in pedagogical and societal practices in the Southern neighborhoods of Rotterdam, based on DeleuzeGuattarian concepts like desiring-machine, assemblage, rhizome and the in between. Yet, the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari cannot be applied as a theory to a practice. Speaking about their critical enterprise Paul Patton remarks: ‘their aim is not primarily to describe particular societies but to present concepts, along with historical examples and illustrations, which may in turn be applied to the analysis of concrete social formations’

1. I interpret application as the implementation of concepts as tools, as Foucault suggests in his preface to the English translation of Capitalism et Schizophrénie. Anti-Oedipe. (1972) when he labels this book not as ‘a new theoretical reference’ (AO, xii) but ‘as a manual or guide to everyday life’ (AO, xiii). Concepts do exactly what they suggest: assembling, taking (capere) together (con), creating coherence from within the process. For Deleuze and Guattari concepts are not representations, but integral parts of a practice. Concepts are always already interwoven into what we can see (visible), read (lisible) and speak off (dicible): concepts are in media res and in actu, immanent to the process, and as such always becoming. Concepts are performative. The moment one adopts the concepts Deleuze and Guattari offer, one must adapt those, as they did with concepts of other philosophers. Betrayal is as imperative as is collaboration. The reception of their discourse cannot be but (t)reasonable.

In a more conventional phrasing, the political focus of this paper is: How can power be redistributed in and by groups that self-consciously and

2 Michel Foucault developed the idea of a toolbox together with Deleuze. See Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, 1980. ‘Intellectuals and Power.’ In: Michel Foucault (ed. and intro. by Donald F. Bouchard), Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 206.
interdependently reflect and act in a society that is politico-economically and socio-ecologically challenged to change its way of life? Changing implies realizing that nothing ‘is’, but every thing is ‘becoming’. From a DeleuzoGuattarian perspective this emancipatory focus can be rephrased as follows: How can some ‘one’ be educated and equipped to actualize the potential of all virtual connections to every ‘thing’? As for the utopian or better ‘atopian’ implications: How can the past be folded over the future and bent back upon a present that is both a no-place and a now-here? How are ‘some’ related to all in a ‘post’political world that consciously feeds back on its past trying to get beyond the unintended catastrophes of modern life? What kind of DeleuzoGuattarian landscape unfolds beyond the political once we reconceptualize urban policies focused on a transition to a politically more democratic and ecologically more integrated world? I will sketch how an urbanistic strategy like Rotterdam Skillcity adopts, adapts and performs the DeleuzoGuattarian schizoanalysis to design an emancipatory practice, focused on what I will finally label as ‘a medial enlightenment’. Part 1 consists of a survey of the adopted key concepts and how these are adapted in order to construct a conceptual ‘war machine’ that provides tools for an urban intervention. In Part 2 the concrete tactics and operational trajectories of Rotterdam Skillcity will be sketched.

Preliminary remarks

In a DeleuzoGuattarian landscape the pyramids of power are overgrown by networks of rhizomes. In our network society, as Manuel Castells exhaustively has described,\(^3\) politics in the modern sense – parliaments, elections, nation building – is still part of the discourse, but no longer explanatory for what happens on the globe. Once speculative global capital rules the world, political decisions are no longer made in national capitals. Subversion and resistance too have changed dramatically in this information society. While Echelon and Galileo surveys every email, WikiLeaks makes the system porous. So, living in a network, information, and media society what does ‘beyond the post-political’ mean once we take the following DeleuzoGuattarian statements into account: ‘For politics precedes being’

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(TP, 203). What does eventually concrete ‘political action’ mean in this politico-ontological configuration?

In answering these questions, we have to unbind the paradoxes that haunted pseudo-philosophical debates in the eighties when postmodernity positioned itself as the ‘new’ paradigm. In trying to get beyond modernity it proclaimed itself to be ‘post’ and ‘new’, implicitly reproducing most of modernity’s presuppositions. The utopian battle for the beyond resulted in double binds and aporia, the postmodern modalities of which are hyper-mobile immobility (strung down by your seatbelt, looking at your TomTom, driving 130 kilometers an hour, while hands free making a deal in Alaska) and fully surveyed and regulated freedom (state controlled checks of every inter- and transaction while spending your money, travelling around and talking to your friends all over the world). These paradoxes are inherent to a global economy that defines individuals in terms of consuming citizens that are both allies and potential threats. It is precisely this neo-liberal discourse of a hyper-individualistic, market driven risk society that is criticized once it functions as a legitimation discourse for exclusive politics, inadequate policies and rigorous policing practices. This discourse does not explain why modern western society gradually got entangled in paradoxes the most astonishing of which is the abundance of self-imposed scarcities (desperately in need of the newest iPhone, shrinking fossil energy resources, and so on). Neoliberal discourse still diagnoses global and local problems in terms of profit, implicitly extending the colonial discourse of exploitation of peoples and planet, cynically ignoring the possibility of global prosperity. Economic and financial crises are proclaimed accidental, ecological catastrophes are nothing new, just cyclic repetitions on a much broader geological scale.

Neoliberals deny the discursive salto mortale we need to perform in order to grant a qualitative life for future generations: development of prosperity without self-destructive growth. This paradigm shift or turning of discourses requires more than solely adjusting our mindset. We have to re-evaluate the use of our (human) resources in problematizing our so-called ‘fundamental’ needs. This necessarily touches upon our concept of what human beings ‘are’ or better: will become. In my philosophical estimation this requires something as huge as a second Enlightenment beyond modern rationality. Variations of this second Enlightenment were already proposed by Nietzsche, Adorno and Foucault, but also by scholars like the sociologist Ulrich Beck, the sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson and the primatologist Frans de Waal. The point is that, although nowadays many (wo)men are mentally
enlightened and alphabetically literate, they are hardly medialogically or physically enlightened. They exploit their bodies as their ancestors once exploited their slaves and use their technology while believing that they can control the performance of these media. We are desperately in need of media literacy and eco literacy.

Modern man defines his subjectivity and autonomy in rational terms while ignoring how technological media determine both his brain and body. DeleuzoGuattarian rhizomatic reflection on what it means to be right in the middle – milieu, interstice, medium – throws new light on our psychotechnological state of being, i.e on man’s technologically mediated frame of mind. It enables us to problematize, diagnose and handle our lack of medial sensitivity and physical awareness. Guattari’s programmatic text *Les trois écologies* (1989) provides an ecosophical perspective and formulates a political ecology that was also articulated by Andre Gorz, Isabelle Stengers and Bruno Latour. All of them acknowledge that there is an urgent need of other literacies to counterweight our paradoxical Western rational enlightenment.

In the final instance rational enlightenment got caught in a pragmatic aporia: modern man has become smarter than smart – i.e. cynical – as a result of which he does no longer know how to act anymore. Rational enlightenment must therefore be enhanced by literacies that reflect upon our use of technology – media literacy – and our environmental interventions – eco literacy. We need a new environmental wisdom – an ecosophy – in order to be able to more adequately act and affirm today’s urgency to tackle global problems. We need a twenty-first century mesopolitical ecosophical discourse. ‘Meso’ refers to a discourse of the in between, a discourse of an inter, of relations, but on an urban scale, connecting subindividual (micropolitics) and global (macropolitics) scales. Mesopolitics affirms the overlap of reflecting and acting, i.e. ecosophical reflection.

In this way modern ego-emancipation is enveloped in an eco-emancipation. But then again, how can emancipation – a modern phenomenon par excellence – be radically revaluated and redirected, when at the same time the idea of the linear-progressive accumulation of collective

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4 This was preceded by the works of Gregory Bateson and Arne Naess. The latter defined ecosophy in 1989 (published in Norwegian in 1976), in *Ecology, community and lifestyle*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, as an ecology centred philosophy ‘one’s own personal code of values and a view of the world which guides one’s own decisions’(36). Thinking implies acting. I coined this practise ‘reflection’.
learning processes, aiming at an enlightened state of mind and being, is no longer valid? Can subjectivity, i.e. rational agency still be the core business of a ‘new’ emancipation beyond utopian desire? I think that a mediational translation of DeleuzeGuattarian rhizomatic *agencement* or assemblage is crucial to understand how political agency as an emancipatory force can still be implemented in urban policies. Once we have redefined politics, emancipation and agency against this complex discursive horizon for a world that within the next fifty years will be urbanized for more than eighty percent, we are able not only to diagnose and criticize current policies, but moreover implement and practice a DeleuzoGuattarian urban mesopolitics.

The ecopolitical diagnosis needed to map our present global and local situation is very simple, the cure however as immensely hard: We have to redesign our daily lives on a mesopolitical scale – in schools, neighborhoods, community centers, on a local level – inspired by a less egocentred ecopolitics. This asks for both an institutional and an existential transition. Individually and collectively we have to transform bad habits and disastrous routines that reproduce our needs and focus our behavior. This demands the affirming of interstitial forces that bind and bridge, but also asks for a revaluation of our psychotechnological media performances, acknowledgment of our relational embedding in layers of networks and requires the respect for a symmetrical co-existence of human and non-human actors. On a philosophical level we need to acknowledge the primacy of relations over identities, of the in between over oppositions, and the explication of interests of inter-esse as a guarantee for ecopolitical global co-existence.

**Part 1. Deleuze and Guattari: an ‘inter’view for interviduals**

All this presupposes a philosophic anthropological and an ontological framework that differs from the framework of modern human sciences like psychology, pedagogy, psychiatry and sociology. Can Deleuze and Guattari provide this new framework? For most readers of their texts the concepts they propose are notorious for their non-applicability due to their complexity and abstractness. They are even ‘accused of coldness’.

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Guattarian view on the in between or inter is useless for raising political awareness of real people and for solving real local and global problems. Although some dialectical diehards like Slavoj Žižek initially appreciated Deleuze’s unconventional, yet clear cut philosophical explorations before 1970, for them these are blurred after Deleuze started to co-write with Guattari. But exactly this ‘guattarizing’ of Deleuze – as Žižek pejoratively labels it – is interesting, because it redefines the political in embedding Žižek’s psychoanalytically flavored dialectics in a philosophy of differences and relations.

This entire book is about drawing cartographies of DeleuzoGuattarian political activism. However, we must differentiate this concept without taking it apart into macropolitical, micropolitical, and mesopolitical levels and scales of political action.

Every society, and every individual, are thus plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, the other molecular. […] In short, everything is political, but every politics is simultaneously a macopolitics and a micropolitics. (TP, 213)

The third notion – mesopolitical – is provided by Isabelle Stengers. The first notion deals with pre-individual forces, affects and intensities (connective), the second with institutional powers that force groups to choose (disjunctive) and the third with conclusive psychotechnological compositions of what Deleuze and Guattari in Anti-Oedipus labeled as ‘desiring-machines’. I rephrase these compositions from a medialogical point of view as psychotechnological assemblages. These are what we conventionally label: ‘individuals’ (conjugative). On a mesopolitical plane nowadays individuals already self-consciously acknowledge that they are nodes in layers of networks. But they still act like autonomous controllers of their lives. Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) identifies these fields of self-reflective connectors in his ‘actant-rhizome ontology’. As Deleuze and

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7 See: <https://www.academia.edu/4854566/Ecosophical_Activism_Between_Micropolitics_and_Mesopolitics_conversation_with_Isabelle_Stengers_and_Henk_Oosterling>[accessed September 18, 2014].

Guattari, Latour addresses the practice of assembling, stressing the emergent productivity of symmetrical processes. And as DeleuzoGuattarian rhizomatics, in spite of its name, ANT is not a theory. Both are toolkits that enable its users, focusing on mediations, to map reality in process. On an ontological level ANT unravels hybrid chains of actants. DeleuzoGuattarian rhizomatics maps networks of micropolitical compositions acting mesopolitically in yet unprecedented ways in order to enhance the ecosocial quality of shared life styles. Eco emancipation and medial enlightenment principally unfold on a mesopolitical level.

1.1 Macropolitics and subpolitical

How to use DeleuzoGuattarian concepts? In the final instance there is no guarantee for a ‘proper’ political use. As ‘actants’ these need self-critical experimentation in specific contexts on specified scales. Squatters have adapted the non-conformist, nomadic discourse of Deleuze and Guattari to legitimize their counter-violence to state terrorism. But DeleuzoGuattarian ideas have also been adopted by the Israeli army to develop operational theory in between strategy and tactics for countering terrorist actions. And a decade ago even the newly formed Dutch department for counter-terrorism invited some art related theoreticians to explore the possibility of implementing DeleuzoGuattarian concepts in their new strategy. They soon found out that this was principally impossible. In the final instance they preferred to stick to their strategic and operational infrastructure in hierarchically structured pyramids, performing their favorite top-down approach instead of rhizomatic weaving and knitting.

The state oriented sub-political strategies of Dutch squatters and Israeli soldiers are still functioning within a macropolitical power game. Can this sub-political quality be ascribed to the sub-individual power play of affects – hate, love, fear, hope, greed, generosity – that constitute desires of individuals?

It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. What a mistake to have ever said the id. Everywhere it is machines – real ones, not figurative ones: machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections.

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Hence we are all handyman (*bricoleurs*): each with his little machines. (AO, 1)

These affects are eventually incorporated in a coherent identity – ‘I’ – and interpreted as emotions of a psychological subject – ego. That explains Michel Foucault’s conclusion that *Anti-Oedipus* ‘is a book of ethics […]': being anti-oedipal has become a life style, a way of thinking and living’ (AO, xiii). Foucault is not referring to politics but to ethics. Yet he has no subject in mind when he speaks about ethics. In this art of living – in his last texts and lectures labeled as an aesthetics of existence – affected bodies are mutually connected and webbed into assemblages that in *Anti-Oedipus* are still called ‘desiring-machines’. These wage war upon the modern subject by undermining its autonomy and forcing other desires upon it. Subjectivity is just the transcendentally overdetermined outcome of a play of heteronomous forces that per definition transgress the borders of the individual. In Foucauldian ethics what is at stake is the self as a sub-individual field of forces and a micropolitical power play.

Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘inter’view of reality also qualifies this play of forces inscribed into power relations as micropolitical, emphasizing the emergence of concepts on a *plane of immanence*. Concepts are not in opposition to acts. These are per definition performative. Oppositions like theory versus practice are no longer effective. Although they frequently use dichotomies – production/antiproduction, fascist/anarchist, molar/molecular, smooth/ striated, segregative/nomadic, – Deleuze and Guattari’s use of oppositions is purely heuristic and tactical, never ontological. Their use opens our minds and eyes for a reality beyond dialectics and does not describe reality as such. Just like all these so-called oppositions, theoretical reflection and practical action are supplementary.

Still, to walk the talk, to practice what you preach, or to put your money where your mouth is, is not enough. One must be prepared to self-critically wage war upon oneself. This is the core of an ‘art of living’ that, Foucault concludes, ‘counter to all forms of fascism’, and the first essential principle of which is ‘free political action from all unitary and totalizing paranoia’ (AO, xiii). DeleuzoGuattarian discourse forces us to track the slightest traces of fascism in our corporations, both micropolitically – our bodies – and macropolitically – corporate global players.


1.2 Micropolitics: Problematizing individualized subjectivity

Yet, ‘sub-political’ and ‘sub-individual’ are no adequate qualifications. Sheer conversion of oppositions does not suffice to transform the concept of the political. Sub-political still refers to a vertical model and has Freudian overtones. In *Anti-Oedipus* these Marxist and Freudian discourses are radically deconstructed. They are rhizomatically reinscribed in part 2 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: Mille Plateaux* (1980). In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari have argued that Marx’ and Freud’s critical diagnoses of individual and collective desire – why do people want what they want and how is this desire constituted? – are still biased by negativity and lack. They counter these dialectical and libido analyses with an affirmative diagnosis of desire beyond oppositions and beyond any lack or scarcity. Their Nietzschean vitalism values an affirmation of forces ‘beyond good and evil’. This explains the affirmative approach of the schizo in *Anti-Oedipus*: ‘a schizoanalysis in relation to the revolutionary movements […] we’ll never go too far with the deterritorialization, the decoding of flows’ (AO, 382). This absolute affirmation of nomadic flows fitted both the then ruling squatter ideology and and hyperindividualist anarcho-capitalism. Their final conclusion ‘It therefore remains for us to see how, effectively, simultaneously, these various tasks of schizoanalysis proceed’ (AO, 382) led them to redefine and differentiate the concept of desiring-machine into ‘assemblage’. The French ‘agencement’ points towards a qualitatively other subjectification.

Even on an affective or molecular scale power is omnipresent as gender theory has shown in describing how gender is inscribed in bodies. It is therefore more instructive to qualify these power relations as micropolitical instead of sub-political, in line with Foucault’s description of a microphysics of power. But micropolitics is not the opposite of the macropolitics of national politics and geopolitics. Micropolitical concerns the embodiment or incorporation of those power relations on a molecular level and the subtle ways resistance is articulated as a bundle of forces that transverses individual desires.

1.2.1 Dividual as desiring-machine: force becoming power

How do forces enter meso- and macropolitical assemblages? Force was Deleuze's basic concept before he started to cooperate with Guattari. Never
embracing the Bataillean transgressive dynamics with its dark romanticism, Deleuze and Guattari favor a Nietzschean perspectivism, based on an ontology of forces: the will to power is not an individual will, but a focused interaction of forces striving to strengthen themselves, enhancing and expanding by connecting to other forces in all directions. Force is difference in itself, because as pull, push or pressure it is in itself already a differential tension. Affects as love and hate are bodily forces. A psychological subject incorporates this struggle, but pacifies it through concepts that create coherency, consistency and continuity: Man's self-consciousness results from a systematic incorporation by means of ‘order-words’ like ‘I’ (TP, 84). What counts for the individual, goes for society too. In the DeleuzoGuattarian ‘inter’view society is a multilayered battlefield, where forces struggle to enforce themselves upon one another to gain meaningful coherence from within. Macropolitically individuals identify with groups incorporating sociopolitical concepts as ‘people’ and ‘nation state’. In this way forces are inscribed in power relations.

In *Anti-Oedipus* an individual is in the final instance a desiring-machine. In *A Thousand Plateaus* desire produces the assembling of bodies and discourses through media. In that sense an individual is a technopsychological entity.

We think the material or machinic aspect of an assemblage relates not to the production of goods but rather to a precise state of intermingling of bodies in a society, including all the attractions and repulsions, sympathies and antipathies, alterations, amalgamations, penetrations, and expansions that affect bodies of all kinds in their relations to one another. (TP, 90)

From this machinic perspective an individual is, first and foremost, a divided being, a ‘dividual’ or a ‘schizo’: a tensional in between, a knot of affections and desires that only through reflective feedback from within the process, enabled by technological media, produces coherence and continuity. What is criticized by Deleuze and Guattari are totalities that pretend to be exclusive and that legitimize their exclusiveness by invoking intimacy with a transcendent being: Logos, God, Nature, Subject, and Humanity. They wage war upon capitalism and its specific subjectification or ‘agencement’ in radically affirming life forces, not allowing lack and scarcity to intervene. Modern capitalism is diagnosed as an axiomatic system that decodes and recodes profits, deterriorializes and reterritorializes the planet, designs products and resigns people. But instead of remaining open minded and
inclusive, after each decoding a subsequent recoding follows. In producing scarcity capitalism forces choices upon dividuals, defining there needs through producing desire as a result of which the dividual is fixated as an undivided being: an individual, i.e. a subject.

However, according to Deleuze and Guattari life forces cohere from within, not from above or outside. Yet this does not mean that their ‘materialism’ is one dimensional. On the contrary. Bodies are affected and affect in many ways and always on different plateaus and strata: epistrata, substrata, meta-strata, parastrata, interstrata (TP, 40). A ‘plateau’ – the concept was taken from Gregory Bateson’s *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972) – ‘is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end’ (TP, 21, 22).

Understanding a dividual as an in between of strata asks for another topology. The dividual time-space is beyond the vertical and horizontal of the modern pyramid of power and lacks a coherent linear historicity. History is a construct. A dividual is achronic and atopic, or better: traverses time and space in all directions. Ask yourself where in media society the virtual is situated and what time it is exactly in the virtual. It is not over there, not above or below but always already now here in the actual that is virtualized from everywhere. In the now here it is nowhere. The virtual is an invisible supplement, the existence of which demands to be interfaced in order to have direct and concrete material effects in this actualization. The actual and the virtual form, inform and perform each other.  

Given our communication media – smartphone, iPad, Google Glasses – a dividual is always right in the middle. It is a mediator: ‘Mediators are fundamental. Creation is all about mediators’ (N, 125).

1.2.2 Rhizomatic assemblages: interviduals in networks

Thus on an affective level there are no individuals. That is why Deleuze and Guattari qualify these connectives – referring to Nietzsche – as *dividuals*: some ‘one’ who is divided, i.e. who is split and differs within itself, but is *per se* interested too, in between (op)positions that are forced upon him. Children are in-betweens par excellence, open to every connection, principally interested. From the point of the ‘inter’view an affirmative pedagogy cherishes this in between.

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Philosophy reformulates this inter in terms of relations in a performative ontology that is per se (micro)political: becoming as being (esse) in between (inter). It affirms literally inter-esse. What are the interests of inter-esse?

For RVS, pedagogy deals with the systematic incorporation of affected bodies – especially that of children and youngsters – in hegemonic discourse: forces that are inscribed in institutional power relations. Bodies are literally overpowered in institutional practices, to begin with the nuclear family and primary schools. Foucault has dedicated much effort to elucidate this in his books. Institutionalized power forces ‘docile’ yet stubborn bodies to make choices: either this or that. Eventually power hierarchizes and conjuncts these choices into fixed identities: so this is who I am (a good pupil, a talented student, a delinquent adolescent, a violent pervert, and so on). Yet, anarchy, i.e. absolute deterritorialization cannot be a pedagogical imperative.

However, before going into detail as to the strategies and operational trajectories of RVS I will explain my adaptation of the DeleuzoGuattarian ‘inter’ a bit more. In texts published after Anti-Oedipus Deleuze and Guattari stress the primacy of the inter over that of differences. In A Thousand Plateaus they distance themselves from the anarchistic image that stuck to them after Anti-Oedipus final conclusion. The absolutization of anarchistic tendencies in their work was first taken back in Kafka, Toward a Theory of Minor Literature (1975), their second project. Yet, the anarchist image was reinforced after an essay on the rhizome a year later. A Thousand Plateaus opens with this essay. They – ‘the two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd’ (TP, 3) – now emphasize the differential tension between de- and reterritorialization, between de- and recoding. The notion ‘desiring-machine’ is abolished and replaced by ‘assemblage’. In the English translation ‘assemblage’ of the French original agencement the crucial aspect of acting and agency disappears in favor of the machinic aspect. Yet we need to keep in mind that the ‘agent’ of assemblages is still there, not as an intentional, rationally calculating subject, but as a transversal vector of affects as ‘components of subjectification’:

Vectors of subjectification do not necessarily pass through the individual, which in reality appears to be something like a ‘terminal’ for processes that involve human groups, socio-economic ensembles, data-processing machines, etc. Therefore, interiority establishes itself at the crossroads of multiple components. (TE, 25)
The crossroad appears to be a knot or a node. Beyond the opposition interiority/exteriority the in between is constitutive for individuation. Therefore the favorite spaces of DeleuzoGuattarian pedagogy are relational fields, networks that converge concretely in all kinds of media – from computers and smartphones to cars and trains – connecting individuals. From a mediological point of view an individual is a node in networks and as such an *inter-vidual*. An individual is the conclusive result of overlapping feedback loops. It is as it were wrapped up in affective cycles that cohere as an ‘I’: so this is who I am. This ‘I’ is a self-reflective node in machinic assemblages: ‘Assemblages are necessary for states of force and regimes of signs to intertwine their relations’ (TP, 71). ‘Assemblages of bodies’ that act upon and affect each other through media incorporate ‘collective assemblages of enunciation’ (TP, 88).

The immanent result is an intervidual. This is not a *fundamentum inconcussum*, but a performative practice, composing its forces through enunciative assemblages. Discourses and bodies, reflection and action, virtual and actual, global and local are folded into each other. On an affective level forces (content) are formalized (form) as an assemblage of bodies that performs (expression) its being via assemblages of enunciations. ‘The two forms are in reciprocal presupposition. […] they are two sides of a single assemblage’ (TP, 140). Realization is a double articulation: in realizing itself to be a performative practice, the intervidual is realized.

### 1.3 The inter as medium: radical mediocrity

What does the ‘interviduality’ imply ontologically and politically? In the preface of *A Thousand Plateaus* 'rhizome' is defined as a middle, a milieu, an inter.

The middle (*milieu*) is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. Between (*entre*) things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away. (TP, 25)

The middle as medium picks up speed: every medium dictates its pace to its user, a pace that accelerates as a result of positive feedback and the desire to internalize unforeseen applications and use values. The hectic acceleration of daily life with its inevitable burnouts results from the sped up production of desires in an economy that works on scarcity.
Media are ‘at the same time’ omnipresent – now/here – and because of their transparency, absent – no/where. The smartphone has become the interface of our mind. As a omnipresent medium it constitutes an intervidual plane on which unforeseen assemblages are realized. But the medium as a middle – inter – is not a zone in between one already given position and another. It becomes a ‘milieu’ that formats our sharing. Nowadays babies get blogs as a present. As an inter it ‘exists’ ‘before’ any position is taken. We are always already connected to the world, to others and to our ‘soul’, ‘psyche’ or self, in spite of the fact that we discursively can describe this in between only ‘afterwards’. The quotation marks indicate that in order to circumscribe this in-between, a discursive explanation in linear time/space grossly fails. Thus the middle as an indiscernible zone – as an inter-esse – is not a neutral space. This in between is always already overdetermined by interests, because every connective force is immediately inscribed in power relations. These interests are never in the first place egocentric, they are per definition ecocentric: inter-esse enables an exclusive group to identify themselves through the power invested interests they pretend to represent.

The concrete inter-esse of a group, i.e. its consistency or plane of immanence is in the final instance its culture as the historical articulation of how acquired technology and skills are institutionally transmitted to next generations. In internalizing these skills the medium or middle as a dispositional relation, slowly dissolves and becomes part of our behavioral grid. The former exteriority becomes an integral aspect of interiority. ‘Beginning with Descartes, and then with Kant and Husserl, the cogito makes it possible to treat the plane of immanence as a field of consciousness’ (WP, 46). In order to sensitize individuals for this ‘milieu’ in an affirmative sense Deleuze and Guattari time and again stress the importance of art practices. Bodies have to become responsive before the mind can be responsible. Art is a ‘sensational’ sensitizer, sensation being a compound of affects and percepts, as they explain in What is philosophy? (1991), their fourth and last coproduction.

So politically spoken, an individual is non-existent without a milieu. As an intervidual it is a node in networks. Against this mediological background society is no longer a repressive power pyramid, in which one needs to work its way up the ladder. On the contrary, a ‘socius’ consists of fabrics of layered networks, one traverse in ever returning feed back loops. Not through progressive linearity, but in cyclical refrains. Nodes in these networks arti-
culate themselves performatively via ‘their’ media, connecting to all directions, being actual and virtual ‘the same time’.

By now it is clear that, in adapting the DeleuzoGuattarian interview, RVS applies a very broad understanding of media. This involves not only IT but also transport media. In the final instance it involves all technological extensions of our limbs, senses and organs as Marshall McLuhan proposed in *Understanding Media. The Extensions of Man* (1964). Media regulate how individuals connect to others and participate in networks. But the relation between man and media is ambiguous. People do not only use ‘their’ media; media also ‘abuse’ or consume their users. Addiction to games, cars, drugs, sugar, alcohol, all this is an indication for the affective impact of media and the lack of understanding modern man has on how media determine his mind. Modern man lacks media literacy.

Media literacy transforms dividuals into interviduals. Medial subjectification – *assujettissement* or *agencement* of the inter – means becoming-individual in realizing interindividuality. Concretely this implies that people are prepared to take responsibility for the effects of how they interact on a specific scale. This also explains why becoming-individual asks for eco-literacy as well. Our global problems with our environment or milieu result from unreflected and arrogant use of our technology. Ecology is not about nature. Ecology deals with unreflected, uncritical use of technology, of our media in the broadest sense of the word. In being media literate and eco-literate then and then only it is evident that an individual is first and for all an expressive performance, i.e. a becoming in which expression produces effects that overdetermine Aristotelian hylemorphism, i.e. forms realizing matter as content.

We must recognize that expression is independent and that this is precisely what enables it to react upon contents. This independence, however, has been poorly received. (TP, 89)

By now DeleuzoGuattarian concepts appear to be powerful tools for diagnosing our problematic medial embedment, both in a mediological and in

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12 This DeleuzoGuattarian emphasis on expression is derived from Hjelmslev’s critique on Saussurean structuralism. (TP, 43)
an ecological sense. Yet in a ‘poor reception’, addiction supplements diction. Both mobile phone – nowadays the smartphone and iPad – and the automobile are expressive performances, i.e. machinic assemblages that inform human agency in defining its basic needs and desires. Through these ‘formats’ media direct ‘our’ choices and intentions and finally constitute our self-consciousness.

Realizing the primacy of expression draws our attention to the handling of tools and the role of media.

Even technology makes the mistake of considering tools in isolation: tools exist only in relation to the interminglings they make possible or that make them possible. (TP, 90)

Skillful handling of this ambiguous media – being effect and cause, instrument and goal, diction and addiction\(^\text{13}\) – once more stresses the importance of media literacy and eco literacy. Our insufficient sensibility for the constitutive impact of media on our mind urges the cultivation of specific skills and by implication a revaluation of a specific apprenticeship craftsmanship. Acquiring skills and cultivating the inter are aspects of a medial enlightenment and an eco emancipation.

Adopting and adapting the DeleuzoGuattarian interview I have qualified our current state of mind and state of being ‘radical mediocrity’. (Oosterling, 2000) Media \((\text{medio -- the middle})\) rule \((\text{kratein -- to rule})\) our daily life. Via our communication and transport media we are rooted \((\text{radix -- root})\) in the world, connected to others. Rooted via our router to the globe, media provide interfaces – after broadcasting of the TV screen, the computer screen with Google earth and TomTom, and increasingly smaller screens from iPad via smartphone to GoogleGlass. Modern man has truly become a cyborg: man-machine, desiring-machine, agencement. Connecting our bodies to their repetitive refrains the pace of our daily rhythm is set by ‘our’ media. After throwing away one’s smartphone a world falls apart. Dumping one’s car will initially cause complete panic before one discovers how public transport position people as nodes in networks.

Everyday comfort offered by technological gadgets pacifies bodies: the medium is the massage. Once the medium becomes the message, we are massaged into our comfort zones. And since ‘even technology makes the mistake of considering tools in isolation’ radical mediocre modern man cannot but use ‘his’ media separately, without considering the integrated effects. Eco literacy needs to enlighten this uncritical use of media. Media literacy and eco literacy are emancipatory constituents of a medial Enlightenment.

In short, I define radical mediocrity simply as an uncritical consumption of technological comfort that consumes its users, blocking the view on how dependent they are upon their media. The autonomous subject that is supposed to manage this dependency is a transcendental stupidity (bêtise). The modernist reduction of political subjectivity to this rational interiority – cogito, subject, self-consciousness, ego – is criticized by Deleuze and Guattari, inspired by a philosophy of differences that by now needs to be transformed into a relational philosophy.

1.4 The Mesopolitical: threefold ecosophical interests

Yet a medial and ecological emancipation cannot be realized except on a political level. It demands systematic implementation of media and eco literacy programs on an institutional level like this was realized in the course of modernity as for rational Enlightenment. The core business was education and culture with economy following suite. Adopting and adapting the DeleuzeGuattarian interview, where can we trace forms of this political activism in postpolitical times? It is evident that it is not the modern subject as an autonomous individual that leads the way. Is agency micropolitical or macropolitical? Whatever it is, the emphasis is on the inter, on the node in networks with the intervidual as creative mediator. Creativity is not a quality of interiority, but from the in between. In spite of the impact of agitators, suicide bombers and dictators, the core unit of politics has always been a group that was united and legitimized by a discourse: ‘You are always working in a group, even when you seem to be on your own’. The emphasis on the work of binding and bridging explains Deleuze’s remark in the heading of this paper on the role of the mediator.

This insight is highly appreciated by Isabelle Stengers. She enhances the

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Deleuzo-Guattarian pragmatics in her political ecology. Political ecology too sheds light on the uncritical use of our media, i.e. on our radical mediocrity and the disastrous effect for our environment. However, Stengers does not accept the notion of micropolitics. Politics for her is a collective performance of subjects, beyond the micropolitical struggle of affects and bodies: ‘I originally trained as a chemist, and maybe that is why the terms ‘micro’ and ‘macro’ don’t work for me’.\textsuperscript{15} If ecology is ‘the science of multiplicities, disparate causalities, and unintentional creations of meanings’,\textsuperscript{16} ecology becomes political when practices, out of their own efficacy and immanence, create agency in making people realize their interdependency: in literally being (esse) the in between (inter), being interested, being an intervidual. Stengers introduces the notion of the mesopolitical, articulating the middle politically as meso. Mesopolitics is what happens between groups that are not yet or no longer determined by macropolitical discourse, trying to figure out and affirm their collective desire. They perform their own assujetissement.

Stengers’ ecology is chiefly a critique of scientific labor. Like Latour, she describes how laboratory research gradually transcends concrete experimental practices. She deconstructs the role of successive mediations in laboratory experiments. The subtle nuances of the will to knowledge, constructing a universal, objective truth in the selective translation of layered experimentation, acts in accordance with a will to power that, in these series of translation, erase the open source quality of the initial experiment. Specific contextual results start to lead a life of their own as theoretical elements. Transcendence overpowers immanence.

In politics Stengers stresses the role of diplomacy as a highly sensitized step-by-step pragmatics. As Guattari’s threefold ecology her political ecology sheds light upon the environmental effects of our collective lifestyle, specifically on the exploitative and destructive aspects and long-term repercussions. Environmental ecology issues are interwoven with molar geopolitics with its macropolitical power relations. Environmental or physical ecology is entwined with socio-political implications. Guattari adds to this Bateson’s concept of mental ecology that is based on his analyses of schizophrenia with its double binds. A mental ecology knows how to deal with dilemmas, paradoxes and double binds, i.e. with the tension of clashing

\textsuperscript{15} <http://www.senselab.ca/inflexions/volume_3/node_i3/stengers_en_inflexions_vol03.html> [accessed September 18, 2014].

interests. Eventually all this results in a threefold ecology: physical, socio-political and mental.

Here we are talking about a reconstruction of social and individual practices which I shall classify under the three complementary heading, all of which come under the ethico-aesthetic aegis of ecosophy: social ecology, mental ecology and environmental ecology. (TE, 28)

Mesopolitics articulates itself in traversing these different scales. It confronts macropolitical hyperindividualism with micropolitical dividualism and articulates a mesopolitical intervidualism, transforming egoism into an ecoism in which both bodies and minds are at stake.

**Part 2. Urbanistic tinkering: Rotterdam Skillcity**

The ecopolitical philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari can be more than just an inspiration for geopolitical analysis. It can be applied in urban strategies and tactics that transform this diagnosis into concrete and successful interventions. Following Hannah Arendt – and her former student, the sociologist Richard Sennett who in part 2 of his trilogy on craftsmanship *Together. The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation* (2012) states that cooperation is a skill – the mesopolitical focus demands a specific human onto-political condition: inter-esse. ‘Think global, act local’ demands sensitivity for inbetween-ness, involving at least three scales of politics: the affective/physical (micropolitical), the sociopolitical (mesopolitical) and geopolitics (macro-political). Once sociopolitical sharing (People) and ecological wellbeing (Planet) are interwoven with economic interest (Profit), mesopolitical ecological subjectivity can arise in enhancing cyclical reflectivity and glocal responsibility.

Being interested is a counter force against cynicism and indifference. We can surpass hyper-individualistic consumerism by turning uncritical radical mediocrity inside out, unfolding the interests of inter-esse. Leaving the interiority/exteriority opposition behind (micropolitics), we still have to get beyond the practice of outsourcing our work to former colonies that still provide cheap labor (macropolitics). These laborers are the vanishing mediators of our wealth. Our work is done in sweatshops and studios the labor conditions of which don’t even get close to our own standards. This mediation has to be made explicit in order for the whole production-distribution-consumption chain to reposition itself. On top of this
‘internalisation’ of our outsourcing, we have to demystify the myth of our autonomy in handling our media. In this second Enlightenment, added to the ones already proposed by Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), and by Ulrich Beck in *Ecological Enlightenment: Essays on the Politics of the Risk Society* (1995) the core value and substantial base for ‘ecoistic’ agency is nothing but inter-esse.

2.1 Rotterdam Skillcity: walking the talk

Rotterdam Skillcity (RVS) labels this strategy ECO3.\(^{17}\) RVS is a long term strategic, tactical and operational network of practices that adopted and adapted the DeleuzoGuattarian discourse to diagnose urban problems in order to effectively intervene. RVS designs and operationalizes long term projects in educational, managerial and professional practices in Rotterdam, especially in the socio-economically deprived neighborhoods of the Southern parts of the city. The RVS strategy traverses several political scales: micropolitical (affected bodies of participants), mesopolitical (grass root emancipatory groups) and macropolitical (local and national institutions and organizations). *Tactically* it derives its coherence and consistency from a cooperative network cluster of educational institutions, grassroots organizations, local authorities, corporate responsible entrepreneurs, and housing corporations. The *strategic vision* inspiring this project combines philosophical, artistic and political concepts and practices, integrating these into ecosophical scenarios. The ecosophical proposition presented here breaks with the presuppositions of (post)modern (hyper)individualism. It favors relationships over individuals – *interviduals* – and prefers networked interests over private business, while promoting scaled responsibility.

RVS takes the DeleuzoGuattarian machinic perspective serious: she emphasizes expression over content and form in stressing 1) the constitutive impact of media on relations and 2) presenting itself as an open source design that changes over time. Next to that RVS favors the concept of performance over competence, i.e. skill as an expressive performance over intentional interiority. RVS promotes skilling as an emancipatory practice in order to invest in a twenty-first century sustainable craftsmanship. What is triggered in skilled performance is not the potential but the virtual: the unexpected connections that emerge in the interaction between (wo)men and their media. Focusing on this ‘work aesthetics’ in which the creative handling of media

\(^{17}\) See: <http://www.vakmanstad.nl/page/english> [accessed September 18, 2014].
constitute the foundation of an aesthetics of existence as Foucault proposed in his last texts, RVS intervenes in school curricula from primary school to higher vocational education and proposes trajectories to empower people, i.e. pupils, parents, professionals and policymakers. Crucial to these interventions is the notion of scale as a translation of the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of stratum. RVS maps the scales on which groups can and want to regain responsibility for what they are thinking and doing, i.e. for their reflections.

How can all this be wrapped up in a strategic vision, producing tactical coherence and providing an operational focus for urban policymakers? In Urban Assemblages. How Actor-Network Theory Changes Urban Studies (2010) the efficacy of Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts, embedded in Latour’s ANT, is acknowledged. It is embedded in Latour’s ANT that is radically democratic, anticipating a ‘generalized symmetry’ (Farias/Bender, 2010, 3) as he proposed in his anthropology, the pièce de résistance of his critique on modernity in We have never been modern (1993). For Latour ‘never been modern’ means that Enlightenment was never completed. And will not be completed as long as the Great divide between Nature and Culture, between Mind and Matter determines the mindset and practices of ‘modern’ science. With Deleuze and Guattari he is in agreement on the non-oppositional relation between these terms. In line with Latour RVS argues that as long as we do not explicate the interests of our radical mediocrity in a medial enlightenment, we will never be modern.

2.2 Craftsmanship, interculturality, sustainability and integrality

Craftsmanship, skills, media literacy and eco literacy, all wrapped up in the concept ‘medial enlightenment’, these are the constituents of the scenario’s that RVS has implemented. How does Deleuzo-Guattarian discourse with its desiring-machines, in-betweens, rhizomatics, assemblages, plateaus, strata, expression, and ecosophy discursively fit in? Ten years ago, in 2004, I was asked to give a lecture on the deplorable state of public space in Rotterdam after the murder of a well-known public figure, Pim Fortuyn, and just before another well-known media figure, Theo van Gogh, was murdered. Moroccan jobless youngsters were blamed for this deplorable situation.

These political murders, respectively committed by an eco-fundamentalist and an Islamist radical, shattered Dutch society’s enlightened self-image of a tolerant society. The conceptualization of this problem asked for new
concepts. The debate on integration needed deconstruction. I formulated four core concepts: Craftsmanship, interculturality, sustainability and integrality and placed those under the heading of Rotterdam Skillcity, providing an analysis of the transition of Rotterdam from a laborer city to a city that branded itself as a festival city, loosing sight on the motivation of those that came from all over the world: skilled work.

In the course of the following years RVS was asked to develop systematic programs, the core of which consisted of the introduction of soft skills, sport, cultural, and philosophical skills in educational curricula in order to change the daily routines and habits of youngsters, while meso‘politicizing’ their networks of parent, teachers and sustaining professionals. Learning is not alone about how to do things, but also about why you are doing this with whom. RVS tackles bad habits with self-reflective skills.

The conceptual tools of my diagnosis were provided by texts of Foucault and Deleuze/Guattari. I sketched society as a layered network many of which were torn apart, no longer functioning as safety nets or trampolines for young people. I analyzed how in media and information society the desires of jobless, recalcitrant kids are torn apart in all directions, leaving them without a focus, lacking a career perspective. On top of that media determine their views on terror, connecting their brains and bodies to interfaces that stimulate them to consume identities that lack a substantial footing in Dutch society.

The ‘multicultural debate’ focused on integration ignored our present intercultural quality with its creativity of the in between. ‘Allochtonous’ kids are negatively described as hybrid beings that are systematically excluded from jobs, because they are either unfit or unwilling.

This socio-economic impotence is enhanced by the fact that school curricula and job profiles do no longer match the jobs needed in the urban region, especially in the technical and welfare sectors. Rotterdam as a harbor city evolved over the years into a festival city, promoting creative industries. But this creativity needs to be promoted on all scales of the vocational education spectrum in order to implement an actualized form of craftsmanship. A new professionalism is needed that combines integrated reflection with professional focus, an expertise that combines technical skills with sustainability and cooperation. Schooling has to be adapted to a new era. Concepts like desiring machines, rhizomes, strata, assemblages, discipline and skilling were the concepts that focused my analysis and allowed me to sketch a different relation between people, criticizing the outdated concept of modern individualism that had been hijacked by a neoliberal discourse.
Building corporations, local politicians and school directors challenged me to sketch the tactical and operational implications of this unconventional yet seductive diagnosis and provided funds to design and operationalize projects to stimulate young people to take their civic responsibility while performing their skills. I worked with street groups – free runners, scooter pimpers – empowering their urban skills, managed a pilot on social care to empower less socially abled citizens, and wrote integral area development strategies on social sustainability for deserted harbor areas. In all this craftsmanship in an extended version – cutting through all social and economic categories – was the core concept: how are you going to design your life together with others in our network and media society? Arendt provided the basic term: Interesse. And her inspiration – Heidegger – fed my adaptation of Foucaultian aesthetics of existence: Dasein is design (Oosterling 2010).

2.3 Physical integrity: ECO3

Media and eco literacy are foci of all the trajectories that were designed for school curricula. Sport is a great connector. It triggers sensitivity for specific sports skills. In 2008 I was asked to design a subcurriculum to empower primary school pupils, parents and professionals in socio-economically deprived neighborhoods of the South of Rotterdam. The basic idea was to enhance the positive interests of these kids within an extra 6 hours program every week via skills. In between the drill and the chill, RVS promotes skill. The ultimate goal was enhancing informed responsibility, i.e. create agency in groups. Ecosocial skills were looped into coherent assemblages, focused on developing an ecosocial sensibility: sporting, eating, cooking, growing food, mediating in conflicts and philosophical debating. The basic idea was 1) to empower these kids and their parents to more creatively develop their

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18 Scientific monitoring of the project between 2008 and 2012, executed in line with the ECO3 focus on physical, socio-emotional and cognitive skills, has shown significant changes. By the close of 2012, the research team concluded that: 1) physically, there is no significant change yet, but 2) on a socio-emotional scale, a highly significant change is evident, and 3) the final scores of the CITO tests – indications for entrance to secondary education – have improved from far below neighborhood and local average (527 and 532, respectively) to the national average (535).
talents and competences and 2) to learn them to negotiate their specific desires in mutual interdependence.

The basic ‘soft’ skills needed were downscaled to the daily practice and the curriculum of the school: judo, cooking, ecogardening, environmental lessons, peace lessons and philosophy. All 330 kids from the first to the eighth grade are taught in judo, they all enjoy a warm and healthy lunch four times a week, get cooking lessons and environmental lessons in specially designed gardens in the neighborhood and the three highest grades are educated in philosophy. Together these trajectories compose an ecosocial assemblage, onto which the desires and interests of parents are linked, having them participate in the school. But also onto the vocational desires of trainees from different vocational education institutes who from the beginning of the project assisted in respective activities. Traineeships – the master-bachelor relation – play an important role in the process of societal initiation. In school related networks students not only learn the skills of the craft, they also learn how to deal with other people in unknown situations.

This became the dynamic networked coherence of an ecosocial education at the Bloemhof School. The emphasis is on cooperation and relations, i.e. on cultivating the in between. The relational quality and the necessity to cooperate are implemented in judo (physical) and philosophy (mental), in cooking and eco gardening that both have a physical and social dimension, demanding cooperative planning. In this threefold ecology – ECO3 – that is in line with the positive definition of health proposed by the World Health Organization of the UN – ‘Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ – brains, bodies and bonds are intertwined as are fighting and caring, dialectics and dialoguing in order to learn these kids to cope with their dilemma’s and tensions that they are confronted with in an intercultural society.

All these different activities empower each other: in order to do judo one needs to eat, that demands preparing and growing food with a knowledge of sustainable processes. Philosophy provides basic communicative and argumentative skills that are needed to discuss environmental topics and handle conflicts. ICT courses thematize the interdependency of man and media. The pupils get familiar with environmental and philosophical issues, the former covering the subject matter, while the latter addresses the expressive form: listening, dialoguing and debating. The most positive results are well-informed conversations and dialogues on wind energy, solar power, peak oil, exploding oilrigs, and tsunami-driven nuclear disasters, producing
the awareness of how feed back loops back all human intervention into the system. Eventually media literacy and eco literacy are folded upon each other in ecosophy lessons: these comprise philosophy lessons, eco lessons and what we prefer to call peace lessons in which kids learn to handle conflicts and are taught to mediate in conflicts in school and on the playgrounds. Ecosophy contains a built-in form of diplomacy. Pupils learn to appreciate diplomacy as an irenic practice.

RVS has labeled this program Physical Integrity, stressing the triple meaning of the word integrity: a mental disposition (integer), a sociopolitical policy (integration) and an inclusive approach (integral), all wrapped up in an ecosophical discourse. Integrity as a process is about becoming-a-whole. This becoming traversing a range of scales: from the individual body via the political civic body to the globe as a self-sustaining system, and vice versa. The ethico-aesthetic focus aims at balancing these scales in a responsible lifestyle – an ethos – that transforms mere survival into an aesthetic of conviviality, in an art of living together.

The RVS strategy is as layered as its networked cooperation with other ‘stakeholders’ in the neighborhood. Physical Integrity on the primary school unfolds as the first ‘field of interaction’. The second field embeds the school in the neighborhood where active citizenship is enhanced: youngsters are empowered to participate in activities centered on the so-called craftshouse, a new form of community house where kids between 10-14 years can train skills in technics, health/care, ICT and culture. The third field of interaction is the market that is in need of a new professionalism, based on sustainable craftsman: cooperating with local enterprises and vocational educational institutes 14-19 year-olds are enabled to improve their specific craft skills in a craftswharf as a production unit, connected to trainee sustaining corporations and organizations. The fourth and last field of interaction is RVS as a discursive practice: ECO3: Urban infrastructure. RVS’ research, its concepts and scenario are now parameters of policies that are developed for local authorities and building corporations. These reports incorporate the results of the three other fields of interaction.

2.4 RVS as a mesopolitical event

What does this look like in daily practice? How does an emancipatory mesopolitical event, connecting and empowering different groups that take care of each other in enhancing their skills, looks like? RVS’ core business
on a daily basis is simply this. Twelve solar panels, a glasshouse and two huge eco-waste bins face each other along the margins of one of the primary school’s five educational gardens that have been developed in the neighborhood. 330 pupils of Bloemhof public primary school, whose parents come from all over the world – 96% of them have a Muslim background – tend the vegetables, fruit and herbs. Every day at noon, lunches are prepared and served in the central school kitchen overlooking the garden. The Halal meat comes from local stores. Professional cooks, former artists, paid through regular school fees and assisted by trainees and parents prepare the fresh and healthy three-course lunch. All pupils can see and smell how the meal is prepared, enjoying the fancy colors, smelling the different ingredients. During lunch the high-grade pupils taking care of the youngest. These kids can taste their food consciously, because they have prepared similar meals in cooking classes, purchasing food at the local market, negotiating with the merchants on price and quality.

While eating, on specially designed interfaces connected to the solar panels in the garden, the kids can see how the solar energy fluctuates. Displays with different symbols light up to indicate the intensity of the solar power. This specially designed installation enables kids to experience photovoltaic energy through mechanical force. By manipulating wheels, pulleys and handles, they can physically experience what this energy really costs in terms of physical effort. Garden, glasshouse and kitchen have been designed and paid for by a coalition of parties that notwithstanding their different economic and political interests – improved schooling, safer public space, more trustworthy tenants, electoral gain – share a common goal: empowering the neighborhood by empowering their inhabitants via their networks.

In this ecosocial environment the affected bodies of pupils are physically, socially and mentally connected to other bodies in machinic assemblages as a result of which their scope and experience is broadened. Eco literacy on grass root level asks for footprinting the foodprint by expressing the different flows of food, sun, bodies, energy, movement and forces into skills as cooking, eating, debating, mediating. Psycho-technologically these children are addressed as relational nodes in scaled networks that in ever widening circles connect the local to the global. The ‘we’ repositions the ‘I’. Yet, in spite of being a node in a network, every unique individual as a medial knot is always a center of the globe. Hard to conceive psychologically, but easy to grasp psycho-technologically: kids – screenagers – handling iPhones, browsing and
texting, effortlessly cover a time-space in between the virtual and the actual, 
the global and the local, being hyper-mobile and immobilized at the same 
time.

In the ICT laboratory in the Craftshouse that they can visit after school 
hours and during the weekends these kids are sensitized for the medial 
impact. They can follow workshops to make a film, but can also follow a 
course in first aid. There are cooking contests, courses on woodwork and 
electronics and they can learn to play guitar. All this to enhance their 
wellbeing, i.e. their being interested and to stimulate their abilities to 
cooperate with others.

2.5 Skill is will: reflactive agency

So in spite of all complex philosophical discursivity, we are still talking 
about real people of flesh and blood. The basic line of interest are bodies that 
collide, forces that connect, affects that melt together or confront each other, 
desires that are positively affirmed. But these assemblages of bodies attains 
only ‘agencement’ mesopolitically on a techno-psychological level when 
these forces are skilled in mediatized context, directed and focused in 
assemblages of enunciation. Then urban agency pops up: ‘Agency is thus an 
emergent capacity of assemblages’ (Farias/Bender, 2010, p.15). Emergent, 
while unpredictable and always already in action, connecting to all sides, 
while contracting rhizomatically in knots and nodes. In this way will as an 
inner quality of individuals is rephrased on an expressive scale as skill, 
connecting man and medium. Skill is thought in action – reflaction – and as 
such agency. Skill is will as a collective endeavor, not rooted in an individual 
intention, but in a discursive practice.

Urban studies have been executed over the past decades, applying 
variations of structuralist analyses aimed at global city networks and scalar 
structuration. But these macropolitical analysis can not explain the 
microphysics of human interactions and transactions with their subtle 
affective displacements that gain momentum in a line of flight like the ones 
that allochtonous youngsters ‘choose’. How to feed back the energy of these 
kids into assemblages that virtualize and empower their networks and 
reorientates their negative focus? Sticking to a ‘rather dated paradigm’ runs 
the risk of ‘taking meta-narratives of structural change for an explanation of 
urban life. [...] the risk of disconnection from contemporary theoretical 
developments in social sciences’ (Farias and Bender, 2010, p.1). So other
concepts are needed. Even better, concepts have to become events (WP, 36). A concept is ‘neither beginning nor end but only a milieu’ (WP, 110). RVS concepts are ‘not paradigmatic but syntagmatic; not projective but connective; not hierarchical but linking (vicinal); not referential but consistent’ (WP, 91). Interviudality indicates a cooperative event. As ‘reflaction’ tries to draw our attention beyond the opposition of theory versus practice, and ‘radical mediocrity’ names a noncritical ‘field of interaction’ that as a machinic assemblage is desperately in need of ‘interesse’, ‘intervidual’ is a concept born out of the crisis of hyperindividualism. These concepts force us to grasp why they were created as an answer to a problem.

Is RVS a new discourse beyond the postpolitical? Perhaps. Is her analysis and diagnosis true? I don’t think so. Foucault’s final remark in the preface of Anti-Oedipus, with which the editors started the introduction of this book, is also conclusive for the way I tried to adapt the DeleuzoGuattarian conceptuality: ‘It would be a mistake to read Anti-Oedipus as the new theoretical reference. […] Anti-Oedipus is not a flashy Hegel. I think that Anti-Oedipus can best be read as an “art” […]’ (AO, xii). Foucault gives seven hints for the use of this specific DeleuzoGuattarian toolkit. We have to free political action from unitary and totalizing paranoia, to proliferate differences to counter pyramidal hierarchization, to mobilize desire and let flow in withdrawing allegiance from the negative and the lack, to appreciate the affirmative over sadness, to de-individualize by means of multiplication and displacement and last but not least one should not become enamored of power, while knowing that every force is inscribed in power relations. I cannot but finish with his hint number five:

Do not use thought to ground a political practice in Truth; nor political action to discredit, as mere speculation, a line of thought. Use political practice as an intensifier of thought, and analysis as a multiplier of the forms and domains for the intervention of political action. (AO, xiv)

References


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