

Pragmatics for the Production of Subjectivity: Time for *Probe-Heads*

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This article attends to the collaborative project of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and specifically to their concept of "probe-head" as mapped out in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Probe-head names the rupturing of, and production of alternative modes of organisation to, the mixed semiotic of faciality that determines much of our lived life, in fact that constitutes us as "human". In exploring this alternative "production of subjectivity" the essay attends also to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "several regimes of signs", and to the idea of an experimental "pragmatics" of living. The essay goes on to map out what might be called two operating terrains of probe-heads, in fact two different "times" of the contemporary - the past and the future - and looks at how these might be deployed against the impasses of the present. As far as the latter goes the essay looks at case studies of myth/modern paganism and contemporary art production.

Introduction

The only acceptable finality of human activity is the production of a subjectivity that is auto-enriching its relation to the world in a continuous fashion. (Guattari 1995, p. 21)

I take it that one of the things the Deleuzoguattarian corpus of writing offers cultural theory is a kind of pragmatics; a set of tools for undoing certain habitual ways of being in the world - and for constructing our lives, producing our own subjectivity, differently. Indeed, such writings have been positioned as specifically "post-human" in this sense, when human denotes a very particular (and historically specific) set of capacities, attitudes and knowledges. Philosophically speaking then one can identify a logic of dissolution in this corpus, and especially in Deleuze's own writings. There is, at times, a manifest desire to escape the human, and the world the latter moves through. Nevertheless, one can also identify a fundamentally constructive and creative project within this programme.

Indeed, these two orientations often go hand in hand. This is perhaps most apparent in the work Deleuze collaborated on, especially with Guattari (and especially in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988)). In fact, Guattari's solo work, as well as his contributions to the collaboration, seem to me to work as a corrective, or grounding mechanism, to Deleuze's own particular philosophical and post-human trajectory. Indeed, it is Guattari who focuses almost exclusively on the question of the production of subjectivity, especially in his major solo work *Chaosmosis* (1995), alerting us in particular to the importance of art - and aesthetic experience - in the creation of new incorporeal universes of reference and the new modalities of subjectivity attendant on these. Guattari also draws attention to the always already mixed nature of the elements that make up our subjectivity, for example, those "archaic attachments to cultural traditions that nonetheless aspire to the technological and scientific modernity characterising the contemporary subjective cocktail" (Guattari 1995, p. 4). We might say that Guattari's writings offer a spatial and temporal cartography of, and a pragmatics for, contemporary subjectivity, understood as a material *practice*, whilst at the same time offering insights, again especially as regards art, into the possibilities of reconfiguration, or what Guattari calls "resingularisation": "the constitution of complexes of subjectivation" that "offer people diverse possibilities for recomposing their existential corporeality" (Guattari 1995, p. 7). Guattari's hands on involvement in the expanded psychoanalytical practice of *La Borde*, as well as his experiences in radical and collective politics, are here the crucial and lived elements that are brought into encounter with Deleuze's own colder and more abstract conceptual manoeuvres.

Below I want to attend to some of the actual mechanisms of this subject production by looking at certain moments of Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative work, and in particular at certain concepts deployed in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1988) (although I will also make reference below to *Anti-Oedipus* (1984), *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1986), and *What is Philosophy?* (1994)). I am particularly interested in the way this second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* involves the creation of novel forms of thought that might allow us to live our lives apart from the dominant regimes of the present. Below then I want to begin what I anticipate will be a larger project by focussing on one such concept, *probe-heads*, and think a little about the latter in relation to the production of subjectivities in the "first world", and specifically the production of other forms of subjectivity "beyond" the alienated and fearful metropole individual. This will involve a further exploration of what we might call two operating fields of *probe-heads*, in fact two different "times" of the contemporary.

From Faciality to Probe-heads

To the point that if human beings have a destiny, it is rather to escape the face, to dismantle the face and facializations, to become imperceptible, to become clandestine, not by returning to animality, nor even by returning to the head, but

by spiritual and special becomings-animal, by strange true becomings that get past the wall and get out of the black holes. (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 171)

Faciality, or the white wall/black hole system, is the human system of organisation of our present times. It lies at the intersection of two regimes: the signifying regime (premised on signifiante; on the desire for interpretation) and the post-signifying regime (subjectification; consciousness, or the turn inwards). This faciality machine is however not reducible to signifiante and subjectification, but “subadjacent to them”, operating as their “condition of possibility” (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 180). The faciality machine “carries out the prior gridding that makes it possible for the signifying elements to become discernable, and for subjective choices to be implemented” (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 180). Put simply, the faciality machine delimits, to a large extent, human experience. In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, it is the dominant abstract machine of the contemporary world; it provides the coordinates and contours that allow the signifying subject to emerge. As such faciality is an affair of economy and the organisation of power (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 175). It organises a field of possibilities, determines, at least to a certain extent, what we are capable of seeing, doing and being.

Faciality is produced, as a first moment, through the deterritorialisation of the head, “when the head ceases to be a part of the body, when it ceases to be coded by the body”, and its subsequent overcoding/entry into another strata (i.e. signification/subjectivation) (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 170). In fact, this facialisation does not end with the head but proceeds over the body and indeed the “landscape” in which the facialised “subject” moves (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 172). As Deleuze and Guattari remark, the faciality machine “performs the facialization of the whole body and all its surroundings and objects, and the landscapification of all worlds and milieus” (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 181). We might say then that as well as producing a subject, faciality also produces the world he or she moves in and through.

This facialised subject/world is characterised by fear, a fear played upon and accelerated by various aspects of contemporary culture (and in particular the mass media), but which does not have its origin there.¹ Indeed, the “origin” of

1. The mass media presents events in such a way as to produce a climate - or landscape - of anxiety (always the fear of rupture, of interruption, of “death” (however this latter is figured)). This is particularly the case with so-called news programmes, which select, isolate and exaggerate apparent threats and in so doing contribute to the alienation of contemporary life (we become spectators on a fearful world). A case study of this, especially today, would be the “terrorist threat”. As regards the mass media, little attention is given to the complexities of any given geopolitical situation, or indeed the different “terrorisms” that are invariably grouped together (in legal and popular terms), and instead “terrorists” are presented as personifications - faces - of evil that may strike anyone in any place at any time. The enemy is amongst us in this sense; anyone and everyone might be the potential suicide bomber. It is the apparently arbitrary nature of this threat that constitutes its force. Paradoxically these faces of evil operate to reassure a public that evil does indeed have a face, although it is not the white man’s face, hence the emphasis on “terrorist” “leaders”, the obsession with the face of Saddam Hussein or Osama Bin Laden for example. In fact, the real threat (but also the hope of a kind of liberation) is of the faceless, of that which might disrupt the face, and with it the typical norms and procedures of subject-production (that is, the faciality machine).

this fear is the faciality machine itself. The faciality machine performs a basic abstraction of the "human" from the world/the body, the latter then becoming a threat to the very regime of faciality. It is in this sense that aberrations to, or deviations from, faciality are intolerable. Lines of flight are blocked or become lines of abolition. Deterritorialisations are quickly reterritorialised. Indeed, there is no easy escape from faciality; the strata that binds us being nothing if not resilient and resourceful. This fear then is a product of the very emergence of the "modern" subject, at least as he or she is in turn the product of the mixed semiotic that is faciality. Any attempt to live in the face of this fear must then trace the latter back to its root, account for it, and posit an alternative "organisation" that is not premised on faciality and on this fundamental separation.²

Deleuze and Guattari contrast this faciality machine - that operates through the conjunction of the two regimes mentioned above - with a more primitive, presignifying/presubjective regime ("nonsignifying, nonsubjective, essentially collective, polyvocal and corporeal" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 175)). This is a regime that involves specifically non-human becomings. We might say involves a different relation to, a different connection with, the world. However, for ourselves it is not a question of a return to some kind of primitive pre-faciality (if this were indeed possible) but rather of "going through" faciality as it were, disrupting existing modes of organisation from within that organisation, utilising the stuff of the world (what else is there?) but in a *different* way. "Probe-heads" are Deleuze and Guattari's name for these alternative modes of organisation. They are not involved in signifiante, or indeed with subjectification, at least not to do with their particular combination in faciality, but in "escaping" these two sticky mechanisms.

Probe-heads then "dismantle the strata in their wake, break through walls of signifiante, pour out of the holes of subjectivity, fell trees in favour of veritable rhizomes, and steer the flows down lines of positive deterritorialization or creative flight" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 190). But they are also, as the name suggests, productive of other, stranger and more fluid modes of organisation: "Beyond the face lies an altogether different inhumanity: no longer that of the primitive head, but of 'probe-heads'; here, cutting edges of deterritorialization become operative and lines of deterritorialization positive and absolute, forming strange new becomings, new polyvocalities" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, pp. 190-1).

We might say then that it is a question of inventing our own "faces", or rather our own heads - probe-heads - which themselves will be the platforms for other, even stranger modes of organisation and subsequent deterritorialisations. But what *is* a probe-head? To a certain extent this is an open

2. Although I do not look at it in this essay, Buddhism might be seen as a diagnosis of this situation produced by the faciality machine, and as a series of strategies for living "against" it. It is in this sense that practices of Western Buddhism in particular might be said to operate as probe-heads. See my article "In Violence: Three Case Studies Against the Stratum" (O'Sullivan 2000) for the beginnings of an account of Deleuze's resonances with Western Buddhist practices.

question. It will depend on the specifics of time and place, on the particular materials at hand - and on the concrete practices of individuals. A probe-head might in fact be any form of practice - any regime - that ruptures the dominant (faciality). An individual "subject" in his or her live might operate as a probe-head in this sense (but in which case are they any longer a subject?).³ Groups might also function as probe-heads (radical political groupings, but also any intentional community that turns away from typical regimes and transcendent points of coordination). Art works might likewise operate as probe-heads (Francis Bacon's portraits for example (at least as Deleuze writes about them), but we might also add the more expanded practices from the 1960s to today that offer even stranger - non-human, non-facialised - diagrams for subjectivity).⁴

In fact, it is in the realm of art that we can identify a key modality of probe-heads: that they are somehow orientated against the present time. I want now to attend to this strange temporality of probe-heads, in fact to think about two terrains, or resources, of probe-head construction, the past and the future. I want also to give two brief case studies involving these "times": modern paganism and contemporary art. To thematise myself into this project, and I think a certain amount of foregrounding one's self is important when it comes to writing about the production of subjectivity, I can say that these two modalities have both been of crucial importance to my own subjectivity, but also in taking me

3. The plateau, "November 28, 1947: How Do You Build Yourself a Body Without Organs?" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, pp. 149-66), offers a series of case studies of just such a programme. The Body Without Organs (BwO) is a parallel concept to probe-heads, both being names for those constructive and experimental practices that involve living against that strata that binds us and constitutes us as human:

Let us consider the three great strata concerning us, in other words, the ones that most directly bind us: the organism, signifiante, and subjectification. The surface of the organism, the angle of signifiante and interpretation, and the point of subjectification or subjection. You will be organized, you will be an organism, you will articulate your body - otherwise you're just depraved. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted - otherwise you're just a deviant. You will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement - otherwise you're just a tramp. To the strata as a whole, the BwO opposes disarticulation (or *n* articulations) as the property of the plane of consistency, experimentation as the operation on that plane (no signifier, never interpret!), and nomadism as the movement (keep moving even in place, never stop moving, motionless voyage, desubjectification) (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 159).

Importantly, the BwO plateau also alerts us to the need for caution in such experimental practices. Building yourself a BwO, and we might say the same about constructing probe-heads, is an art of dosages. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, "Staying stratified - organized, signified, subjected - is not the worst that can happen; the worse that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back down on us heavier than ever" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 161).

4. As Deleuze remarks:

As a portraitist, Bacon is a painter of heads, not faces, and there is a great difference between the two. For the face is a structured, spatial organization that conceals the head, whereas the head is dependent on the body, even if it is the point of the body, its culmination ... Bacon thus pursues a very peculiar project as a portrait painter: *to dismantle the face*, to rediscover the head or make it emerge from beneath the face. (Deleuze 2003, pp. 20-1)

beyond a certain alienated subjectivity. Both, if you like, have offered up the possibility for resingularisation, the diagramming of alternatives to those subjectivities on offer elsewhere.

The Past: Myth

In a more general way, one has to admit that every individual and social group conveys its own system of modelling subjectivity; that is, a certain cartography - composed of cognitive references as well as mythical, ritual and symptommatological references - with which it positions itself in relation to its affects and anguishes, and attempts to manage its inhibitions and drives. (Guattari 1995, p. 11)

In a time of what Antonio Negri has called the "total subsumption of capital" strange and contradictory strategies for producing subjectivity, for building probe-heads, will be required (Negri 2003, pp. 23-9). Indeed, in a time in which the present has been colonised, other "times" becomes a resource to be utilised. In his own work Negri turns to Spinoza and to the notion of deploying a kind of future orientation (*kairos*), and indeed the eternal, against time.⁵ I shall be returning to this particular orientation later in this essay. First however I want to think through the potentialities enfolded within the past.

As far as this goes, we might look to Deleuze's writings on cinema, a medium that itself involves the actualisation of different durations and non-human modes of perception (that is to say, operates as a probe-head). In fact, I want to look briefly at what Deleuze actually says about the content of films such as those by Glauber Rocha in which there is a utilisation of the past, and in particular myth, in a specifically contemporary manner. As Deleuze remarks: "...it is not a matter of analysing myth in order to discover its archaic meaning or structure, but of connecting archaic myth to the state of the drives in an absolutely contemporary society, hunger, thirst, sexuality, power, death, worship" (Deleuze 1989, p. 219). This is a careful business for a people are often already colonised by myths of which they are not the origin (these are the myths imposed on them from outside). In *Cinema 2* (1989) Deleuze remarks that in the Third World: "The cinema author finds himself before a people which, from the point of view of culture, is doubly colonised: colonised by stories that have come from elsewhere, but also from their own myths become impersonal entities at the service of the coloniser" (Deleuze 1989, p. 222). In such a situation the artist must not "make himself into the ethnologist of his people, nor himself invent a fiction which would be one more private story: for every personal fiction, like every impersonal myth, is on the side of the 'masters'" (Deleuze 1989, p. 222). Here then a

5. For Negri, this future orientation/creation begins with *naming* (Negri 2003, pp. 147-58). Although it is not within the scope of this essay, an interesting comparison might be made between Negri's act of naming and the work of art as understood by Deleuze and Guattari. A crucial question would be whether a people can be called into being without a linguistic utterance (that is, through a bloc of sensations that is irreducible to signification).

productive utilisation of myth is not impersonal and neutral, but it is not a purely personal affair either. In fact, it is explicitly collective: the production of collective enunciations, which in itself involves a calling forth of the people to whom the myth is addressed. If myth is to be utilised as strategy, as a component in the production of subjectivity, it must then be utilised in a contemporary manner, for a contemporary people, in order to get them out of the impasses of the present. Again, we might remark that probe-heads do not involve a simple "return" to a primitive pre-facialisation, but that they might well involve the mobilisation of elements from a previous regime in a new and different way, and in way that connects them with the concerns of the present. Again, the films of Rocha would be a case in point.

We can usefully turn here to Deleuze and Guattari's plateau "On Several Regimes of Signs" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, pp. 11-48). As we saw above there is the signifying regime of signs (despotic, paranoid), but also "the so-called primitive, *presignifying semiotic*", which "fosters a pluralism or polyvocality of forms of expression that prevents any power take over by the signifier and preserves expressive forms particular to content; thus forms of corporeality, gesturality, rhythm, dance, and rite ..." (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 117). And then there is the postsignifying regime, the passional regime of subjectification.⁶ Here a line of flight is drawn from the signifying regime, "*a sign or package of signs detaches from the irradiating circular network and sets to work on its own account*" (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 121). In this regime "there is no longer a centre of signifiacance connected to expanding circles or an expanding spiral, but a point of subjectification constituting the point of departure of a line" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 127). As was remarked above, our own semiotic - faciality - is composed of a mixture of these two regimes.

"The point of subjectification is then the origin of the passional line of the postsignifying regime. The point of subjectification can be anything. It must only display the following characteristic traits of the subjective semiotic: the double turning away, betrayal, and existence under reprieve" (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, p. 129). For Deleuze and Guattari this subjectification is the birth of modern man; it "attains an *absolute* deterritorialisation expressed in the black hole of consciousness and passion" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 133). Indeed, consciousness, we might say our interiority - and thus our alienation - is produced through this turning away, and concomitant turn inwards. This is not wholly to be lamented for this procedure of subjectification - or what Deleuze elsewhere

6. Deleuze and Guattari note a further "*countersignifying semiotic*" of "a nomad war-machine directed against the state apparatus" that proceeds by an asignifying numeration: "breaks, transitions, migration and accumulation" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 118). See Chapter 3, "Art and the Political: Minor Literature, The War Machine and the Production of Subjectivity", of my *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari* (O'Sullivan 2005) for an exploration of this semiotic in relation to the Red Army Faction guerrilla formation.

calls folding - is the condition of possibility of our modern subjectivity.⁷ We might say then that further mechanisms of subjectification, and indeed of disrupting certain processes of subjectification, must proceed from this first turn, this first fold.

We might say further that the contemporary utilisation of myth can involve this double turning away, this seizing upon a different object, a different point of subjectification. As Deleuze and Guattari remark: "A thing, an animal, will do the trick" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 129). As such elements of the presignifying regime can be brought forward and become elements in our own regime. In fact, there is always a movement between regimes. We always exist within a mixed semiotic that is not reducible to faciality. It is here that we must note Deleuze and Guattari's comments on the translation between, and thus transformation of, different regimes of signs:

A transformational statement marks the way in which a semiotic translates for its own purposes a statement originating elsewhere, and in so doing diverts it, leaving untransformable residues and actively resisting the inverse transformation ... It is always through transformation that a new semiotic is created in its own right. Translations can be creative. New pure regimes of signs are formed through transformation and translation. (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 136)

It is also here that we might position Deleuze's notion of contemporary-myth; practices from the past that are lived in a contemporary manner. Again, this is not necessarily the take-over of a presignifying element by a signifying regime, but the transportation of an asignifying element into our own regime, which thus operates to disrupt - and potentially transform - that regime. Such elements operates as what Guattari might call "mutant nuclei of subjectification" (Guattari 1995, p. 18). Here a part object detaches itself from a specific regime thus allowing for a potential resingularisation. That this element is from the "past" constitutes its power to operate as an effective point of deterritorialisation from the present. Those practices - or rituals - that utilise the past in the present often involve this choice of an anomalous object, objects from an "elsewhere", that are then mobilised in the present and in order to move beyond that present.

Importantly, "in each case we must judge whether what we see is an adaptation of an old semiotic, a new variety of a particular mixed semiotic, or the process of creation of an as yet unknown regime" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 138). The utilisation of the past, of myth, is often invariably just the adaptation of an old semiotic in such a way that does not challenge, and perhaps even promotes those of the present regime (after all past cultures are often utilised to prop up dominant narratives and knowledges, or to sell present day

7. For Deleuze's account of the fold of modern subjectivity, see the section "Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)", pp. 94-123, in *Foucault* (1988a). See also Deleuze's *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993), and especially "The Two Floors", pp. 100-21, for a more complex account of the baroque fold of subjectivity.

commodities). Such a use of the past can however also involve the production of a new variety of a mixed semiotic, which in itself might suggest the possibility of an altogether new regime.

Case Study: Modern Pagans

An interesting "case study" of this mixed semiotic, in this case a meeting between modernity and a certain pre-modern paganism, is the art historian Aby Warburg. Warburg, who wrote his lecture on the serpent rituals of the Pueblo Indians in order to prove (unsuccessfully) that he was fit to leave the sanatorium in which he had been incarcerated, writes of his fascination with pagan pre-modern culture - and about his own involvement in the dances of the Indians (Warburg 1998). Indeed, Warburg demonstrates the ritualistic, or performative, aspect of myth mentioned above. Such practices allow for a different kind of connection - a magical connection - with the world (in the case of the masked serpent dances, a veritable becoming animal). For Warburg, Western modernity, and especially the telegraph and telephone, had closed the distances required for this connection and contemplation. Western modernity had destroyed the "sanctuary of devotion" (Warburg 1998, p. 206). Indeed, Western modernity had, for Warburg, produced a facialisation of the world, personified in the picture of Uncle Sam with his white face and top hat that Warburg ends his lecture with, and which contrasts so sharply with the pictures of the masked Indian dances.⁸

Warburg was also particularly attuned to the persistence, and also the importance, of the survival of "pre-modern culture", of pagan elements, in the modern world, working as they might to counteract the increasing domination of the natural world and the concomitant production of an alienated subjectivity. Indeed, his lecture specifically maps out instances of this. We might say then that Warburg's essay is an example of Deleuze and Guattari's "Pragmatics", and especially the latter's first two aspects: "Generative - the demonstration of always already mixed semiotics (tracings of mixed semiotics), and transformational, showing how these regimes are translated between (maps of transformations)" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 139).

Again, it is worth remarking that this utilisation of the past in the present can go both ways. We might point to that other apotheosis of modernity, Nazi Germany, and to the utilisation of past, and often non-western, myth in the promotion of a kind of hyper faciality (the Aryan *übermensch*). Indeed, a presignifying regime can always serve the dominant. It is in this sense that myth analysis must always involve a mapping of all the components of a myth-system, and in particular note whether the latter has a deterritorialising function, or

8. We see a similar ambivalence towards modernity in Walter Benjamin's writings, the oft-quoted loss of aura and replacement of the sorcerer by the surgeon. See Benjamin (1999, pp. 226-7). Again, there is no call for a return here, indeed Benjamin's essay precisely affirms, at least in one sense, the technological developments of modernity and the subsequent democratisation of art. There is however a call to the past as a corrective to a simple celebration of the regime of the present.

what we might call a prophetic orientation. Even more crucial is to ascertain what kind of future, what kind of people, is called forth. We might turn to Deleuze and Guattari's book on Kafka here, and note that primary characteristic of a minor literature, that it calls forth a people-yet-to-come, but one that is irremediably *minor* in nature.⁹ We might also note the comments Deleuze and Guattari make about Heidegger in *What is Philosophy?(WP)*. He mistook not only "the German for a Greek but the fascist for a creator of existence and freedom" (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, p. 109). Indeed, Heidegger "got the wrong people, earth, and blood. For the race summoned forth by art or philosophy is not the one that claims to be pure but rather an oppressed, bastard, lower, anarchical, nomadic and irremediably minor race" (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, p. 109).

The Future: Art

Artists can only invoke a people, their need for one goes to the very heart of what they're doing, it's not their job to create one, and they can't: Art is resistance: it resists death, slavery, infamy, shame. But a people can't worry about art. How is a people created, it's through its own resources, but in a way that links up with something in art ... or links up art to what it lacked. (Deleuze 1995, p. 174)

If the present has been colonised, and the past is always in danger of being colonised, then what of the future? Certainly for Deleuze, the future holds a powerfully resistant potential. Indeed, it is the future orientation of practices such as art and philosophy that holds his interest.¹⁰ Art especially invokes its own audience, calls a people into being. We might say that art is not made for an existing subject in the world, but to draw forth a new subject from within that which is already in place. This constitutes the difficulty of art, we might even say its ontological difficulty (there is never anything to "understand" with such art; it is not a form of knowledge in this sense). But if art's operating field is the future, how does this link with the production of subjectivity that must always begin in the present? Well, we might say that art operates as an intentional object - a point of subjectification - whilst at the same time functioning as a corrective to any simple assertion and affirmation of a "new" people already here.

We can turn here to Deleuze and Guattari's own ideas on art as they are written about in *What is Philosophy?* (1994). In this final collaborative work art is defined as a bloc of affects and percepts, a bloc of becomings frozen in time and space (Deleuze & Guattari 1994, pp. 163-99). Such blocs are non-personal monuments that operate as alternative centres of subjectification. It is in this sense that Deleuze affirms the *difference* of art. It is different from those affective

9. See Deleuze and Guattari 1986, especially pp. 16-19.

10. For a more sustained account of art's relation to the production of subjectivity, and for a series of case studies that bring Deleuze into contact with modern and contemporary art, see my *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (O'Sullivan 2005).

assemblages that surround us on a day-to-day basis and that operate as the props for our *doxa*, or simply the regime of opinion.

In one sense then, the sense of the present, art is indeed always already captured within certain dominant regimes. But from another perspective this incorporation will always miss that which defines art: its future orientation. This orientation is not necessarily disabled even if such art, apparently, is located within a *major* institution. The field of art might then be understood as a kind of future field - the field of the abstract machine itself: "The diagrammatic or abstract machine does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality" (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, p. 142). In fact, ultimately, it is the abstract machine that produces faciality, but the very same machine is also capable of producing deterritorialisations from faciality - drawing out the contours for worlds yet-to-come.

Indeed, the abstract machine is the cutting edge, the point of deterritorialisation, of any given assemblage. It is where everything happens. In order to understand this mechanism we can look once more to Guattari's writings. For Guattari, in the art experience, there is a "detachment of an ethico-aesthetic 'partial object' from the field of dominant significations" that "corresponds both to the promotion of a mutant desire and to the achievement of a certain disinterestedness" (Guattari 1995, p. 13). The partial object operates as a point around which a different subjectivity might crystallise; a point of entry into a different incorporeal universe. Importantly, and as Guattari remarks above, this must involve a certain disinterestedness (Guattari is indebted to Kant in this sense). We might say that the activation of art involves a prior preparation of the participant (after all anything can always be referred back, *read* through a signifying regime). One has to be open to the deterritorialising power of art - its molecularity, or affective power - that operates "beneath" its molar "appearance".

Our interaction with art then has the character of an event; an event that must be seen, and responded to, as an event, "as the potential bearer of new constellations of Universes of reference" (Guattari 1995, p. 18). This is Guattari's ethico-aesthetic paradigm in which "one creates new modalities of subjectivity in the same way that an artist creates new forms from the palette" (Guattari 1995, p. 7). This is to affirm those virtual ecologies that art can open up, to affirm an "ethics and politics of the virtual that decorporealises and deterritorialises contingency, linear causality and the pressure of circumstances and significations which besiege us" (Guattari 1995, p. 29). Art ruptures dominant regimes and habitual formations and in so doing actualises other temporalities, other possibilities for life.

To recap then, the practice of Pragmatics as Deleuze and Guattari see it:

would consist in this: making a *tracing* of the mixed semiotics, under the generative component; making the transformational *map* of the regimes, with their possibilities for translation and creation, for budding along the lines of the tracing; making the *diagram* of the abstract machines that are in play in each case, either as potentialities or as effective emergences; outlining the *programme* of

the assemblages that distribute everything and bring a circulation of movement with alternatives, jumps, and mutations. (Deleuze & Guattari 1988, pp. 146-7)

It is within the field of art that we see the latter diagrammatic and programmatic functions. Put simply, art is experimentation; it leads us beyond the known, beyond the face, towards new territories and strange new polyvocalities.

Case Study: Contemporary Art

All art offers alternative points of subjectification, but it is within the field of contemporary art (and indeed with that which is contemporary in all art) that this future-orientation - this diagrammatic and programmatic function - is particularly evident. Contemporary art operates at the cusp between the present and the future. It is "made" in the present, out of the materials at hand, but its "content" calls for a subjectivity to come. This stuttering and stammering of existing materials and languages, this deterritorialisation of existing regimes of signs, constitutes the ethicoaesthetic function of art. We might say then that contemporary artists operate as traitor prophets, traitors to a given affective regime (and often to previous regimes of art).¹¹ In the best cases such artists turn away from the present, offering up new assemblages, new combinations, to those that surround us on an everyday basis. They offer up a new dice throw as perhaps Deleuze would say.

Indeed, such practices can be understood as probe-heads, alternative abstractions or crystallisations from a pre-existing field of potentialities. We might say that this is also what constitutes a certain politics of art, for political art does not necessarily look political (and art that looks political ("speaks" its message as it were) does not always operate politically). Such a politics comes from this play with matter and temporality, this production of new assemblages and subsequent opening up of new universes of reference and alternative durations. We might make a further point about capitalism and its own forward movement here. Probe-heads are produced from within the capitalist mode of production, from the same materials as it were, but they are that which deterritorialises its flows further, operating against the axiomatic functioning of capital, but plugging into its logics of invention and innovation. From the perspective of the present such probe-heads are redundancies - often they are "unrecognised", dismissed, laughed at or provoke anger (they do not operate through faciality). Unproductive on one level they are super productive desiring-machines on another.

Contemporary art is then less involved in putting a break on capitalism's flows, than in pushing these further, displacing the limits as Deleuze and Guattari might say. It is then less a question of "withdrawing from the world market", but of proceeding "in the opposite direction" (Deleuze & Guattari 1984, p. 239). "To go

11. See Deleuze and Parnet (1977, pp. 36-76), for a discussion of the traitor in this sense.

still further, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization” (Deleuze & Guattari 1984, p. 239). “For perhaps the flows are not deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough ... not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to ‘accelerate the process’, as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven’t seen anything yet” (Deleuze & Guattari 1984, pp. 239-40). We might say that we need more expression, more invention (and not the proliferation of controls on the latter). We need more stammering, more stuttering, more deterritorialisations - more art. We might add further, along with Joseph Beuys - an individual who collapsed the above future orientation and utilisation of the past in his own shamanic art practice - that everyone can be an artist in the above sense. Everyone can experiment with the materials at hand and produce something new in the world or themselves anew in that world. Indeed, it is only with this creative participation in and with the world that the production of an “auto-enriching” subjectivity can proceed.

Conclusion: Beyond Subjectivity

In the above I have attempted to begin the task of mapping out a kind of dissident subject diagram for our contemporary world. Lack of space prevents further development, although an obvious omission is the question of technology; the new universes of reference opened up by the World Wide Web, by VR, and other contemporary prosthesis (and this would need to involve a serious consideration of Science Fiction). Again, Guattari’s own work is particularly attentive to this. There is also the notion of collectivity that I mentioned briefly above; the production of collaborations and alliances that work against that atomised individualism produced by the faciality machine. Deleuze’s work on Spinoza would be particularly relevant here - the mapping out of productive, joyful encounters that increase our capacity to act in the world (that is, friendship). In fact, for Deleuze’s Spinoza this affective mapping - or ethics - is just a stage in an ongoing programme towards the attainment of that third kind of knowledge, or “beatitude”. Joyful, productive encounters, and the “adequate ideas” produced by them, ultimately result in a state in which everything in the world agrees with oneself (and thus produces joy) (Deleuze 1988b, pp. 114-21). This is a state of involved disinterestedness and compassion - looking out on a world of pure intensities. It is also the experience of eternity within duration (we might even say the deployment of the eternal *against* duration). This is a kind of non-human state, in fact a state “beyond” subjectivity.¹²

It is here that we can note Deleuze’s “correction” of Guattari, his readings of Spinoza, Nietzsche and Bergson in particular giving him a feel for the production of a state beyond subjectivity. We might note as well Deleuze’s essay on Michel

12. See “Beatitude”, the final section of *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (Deleuze 1991, pp. 303-20), for an account of this third kind of knowledge and what can only be described as the *trans* human state it produces.

Tournier's *Friday*, and on what happens to an individual in which a certain subject-constructing mechanism (that produced by "others") breaks down (Deleuze 1990). Indeed, we have an intimation in Deleuze's reading of Tournier's novel of what might happen in a world in which the faciality machine has ceased to function. Robinson, on his desert island, operates as a probe-head, an experiment in living against the strata that binds us. Once again it is partial objects, strange assemblages, rites and rituals that allow Robinson to "access" this "beyond", to "become world". Whether these are elements from the past, or elements that point towards a future, they are positioned in the now, in the contemporary world, but utilised in such a manner as to allow a movement beyond that very world.

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