

**From Geophilosophy to Geoaesthetics: The Virtual and The Plane
of Immanence vs. Mirror Travel and The Spiral Jetty**

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In this article I to switch the ontological categories for thinking art away from a certain *representational* register.¹ In particular, I want to explore other ways of thinking the ethical and political effectivity of art, and specifically its 'other worldliness' (its resistance to the present milieu) away from a horizon of transcendence and a logic of the possible. I propose to do this by adopting a double pronged and somewhat experimental approach. The article then involves two philosophical discussions - or two philosophical *encounters* - with Deleuze *and* at the same time a kind of non-philosophical *encounter* with an art practice which mirrors the philosophy (and in some senses 'grounds' it). To a certain extent I might be accused of deliberately *misreading* Deleuze here insofar as I utilise his ideas on philosophy, rather than on sensation and affect, to think these practices. The article is then an experiment in taking Deleuze's philosophical concepts into other realms, other milieus (and in allowing the latter to feed back back on Deleuze). It is in this sense that the artistic 'case studies' are meant *not* as illustrations but as *parallels* to, and in some senses *deviations* from, the conceptual work. They also serve to demonstrate that art is a form of thought in and of itself.

The first philosophical discussion, which begins with a brief contrasting of Deleuze with Theodor Adorno, is on the notion of the *virtual*.² It is here that I track through Deleuze's *Bergsonism*, and

¹ This article is part of a larger book project entitled *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (forthcoming with Palgrave Macmillan). The book stages a series of encounters between specific modern and contemporary art practices and the writings of Deleuze. The book is then both 'on' Deleuze and his thought - but also an attempt to 'do' Deleuze by smearing his concepts into other milieus. Other encounters will involve: rhizomatics/machinics and expanded practice/relational aesthetics; affect/the logic of sensation and installation; minor literature and collaborative practice; and the fold and abstract painting.

² In a previous article, 'The Aesthetics of Affect: Thinking Art Beyond Representation, *Angelaki*, vol. 6, no. 3, December 2000, pp. 125-35, the virtual was configured as the realm of *affect*. Here, as a kind of corrective, I attend more to the virtual's *temporal* aspect, which is to say I turn from Deleuze's *Spinozism* to his *Bergsonism*. In both the argument is in part made against Adorno, and as such what follows involves a reworking of some material from the previous article (see also footnote 31 below).

think about the application and implication of the latter to/for art. The second philosophical discussion is on *immanence*, and specifically the *plane of immanence*, the latter understood as a kind of non-philosophical, but founding moment of philosophy. I also make a detour here to Deleuze and Guattari's important notion of the *Body without Organs*. The other two sections, or *excurses*, concern the art practice of the so called earth artist Robert Smithson who, in his earthworks, non-sites *and* in his copious writings, presents us, I would argue, with what Deleuze might call a new 'image of thought'. As we shall see, we might also characterise Smithson's works as the construction of a Body without Organs.

Although Smithson died young, he was nevertheless one of the most influential (and least containable) artists of the late 1960s. This was a time when artists were radically questioning accepted assumptions about art and involving themselves in practices that located themselves outside of the gallery (and indeed beyond representation altogether).³ Smithson, like Don Judd, Robert Morris, and others, took the break with representation to its most extreme edge, in Judd's case expunging any reference to anything outside of the object.⁴ Smithson's practice was also located 'beyond' representation in this sense, although it also had a *mythic* quality to it. Indeed, as we shall see, a certain notion of narrative, albeit a kind of posthuman geological narrative, is present throughout his work. As such, although he can be grouped with other artists of his generation, Smithson stands out as somewhat singular and atypical. He also draws attention to the always partial and occasionally reductive readings that are given to minimalism when it ignores these more fantastical (we might even say *psychedelic*) elements. This article focuses on this

³ For an account of sculpture's movement beyond the gallery, as well as to its relationship to landscape and architecture (*and* to the variety of positions taken by artists in relation to these coordination points) see Rosalind Krauss' essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', republished in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. D. Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). One might argue that in attending to the structural possibilities inherent in the expanded field, i.e. giving a relational account of various practices, Krauss loses sight of each work's singularity. Her discussion of Smithson would be a case in point (*ibid.*, p. 295-296).

⁴ As Smithson also remarks in his essay on 'Donald Judd':

With Judd there is no confusion between the anthropomorphic and the abstract. This makes for an increased consciousness of structure, which retains a remote distance from the organic. The 'unconscious' has no place in his art. His crystalline state of mind is far removed from the organic floods of 'action painting'. He translates his concepts into artifices of fact, without any illusionistic representations (R. Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, ed. J. Flam (Berkeley: University of California, 1996), p. 5, hereafter *CW*).

more fantastical element to Smithson's practice, and on just two of Smithson's projects: *Incidents of Mirror Travel in the Yucatan* and the *Spiral Jetty*, both of which, in their own way, are exemplary of Smithson's attitude and style as an artist.

The late 1960s were of course also a time of wider political unrest and ethical experimentation. Indeed, for Hardt and Negri, the plane of immanence, understood by them in a geopolitical sense, was itself being activated once more in a new revolutionary energy: new non-traditional modes of being, and new non-formalised practices of life and art, were both being experimented with.⁵ It is the same moment that Deleuze's philosophy comes into its own, the publication of *Difference and Repetition* announcing a project of thinking differently and of constructing an image of thought beyond representation. This article then marks a moment, *the* moment, in which a philosophy of difference and an art practice of immanence are both being constructed (what we might call in each case a move towards abstraction). Of course, this is not the first time that such a philosophy is produced (one need only think of Spinoza), but it might be argued that at this moment philosophy *and* art so closely follow one another that they become two forks of the same serpent's tongue.

1 The Virtual (or Deleuze's Bergsonism)

In a difficult passage from *Bergsonism* Deleuze outlines what for him, as for Bergson before him, is the important, in fact crucial, difference between the ontological couplings of the actual and the virtual, as opposed to those of the real and the possible. This difference, as Deleuze remarks elsewhere, is not simply a question of terminology, but rather 'of existence itself.'⁶ Here is the passage in full:

The possible has no reality (although it may have an actuality); conversely, the virtual is not actual, but *as such possesses a reality* ... On the other hand, or from another point of view, the possible is that which is 'realised' (or is not realised). Now the process of realisation is subject to two essential rules, one of resemblance and another of limitation. For the real is supposed to be in the image of the possible that it realises. (It simply has existence or reality added to it, which is translated by saying that, from the point of view of the concept there is no difference between the possible and the real.) And, every possible is not realised, realisation involves a limitation by which some possibles are supposed to be repulsed or thwarted, while others 'pass' into the real.

⁵ M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 260-79.

⁶ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton (London: Athlone, 1994), p. 211, hereafter *DR*.

The virtual on the other hand, does not have to be realised, but rather actualised; and the rules of actualisation are not those of resemblance and limitation, but those of difference or divergence and of creation.⁷

The possible then is realised through resemblance *and* limitation, whereas the virtual is actualised through difference *and* creation. Indeed, the key issue with the possible, which is implied above and pursued by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*, is that it is ‘retroactively fabricated in the image of what resembles it.’⁸ Put simply, the possible is always already a kind of *representation* of the real that appears to pre-exist it. We might say then that the possible becomes as such by a kind of sleight of hand. It is in fact merely an isotope of the real inasmuch as it only lacks reality (it merely ‘doubles like with like’).⁹ The possible then operates as a kind of mirror image of the real, but one which sets itself up as if it offered a ‘real’ alternative. This is the illusionistic moment, the *camera obscura* of the possible which appears to offer something ‘new’ but in fact only offers more of the same. Indeed we might rename this logic of the possible a logic of *utopia*, inasmuch as utopian thinking (and this includes *representations* of utopia) is often locked into this double movement. Utopia, we might say, can be nothing more than a mirror reflection (however distorted) of the real.

As a contrast to Deleuze we might look at how Adorno deploys a notion of utopian thought, specifically in relation to art. Here he is from *Aesthetic Theory*:

Art’s utopia, the counter-factual yet-to-come is draped in Black, it goes on being a recollection of the possible with a critical edge against the real ... It is the possible, as promised by its impossibility. Art is the promise of happiness, a promise that is constantly being broken.¹⁰

For Adorno art operates as a kind of ‘utopian blink’; it presents the *possible* through its *apparent* difference to the existent. Indeed, for Adorno, art is not really ‘of’ this world at all, it prefigures and *promises* a world yet-to-come. Art, if you like, operates within *messianic* time. And yet art is inevitably doomed to frustration: the promise (of reconciliation) is constantly being broken. Art is positioned within this melancholy field, this always-already defeated logic. In fact it is worth noting that philosophy, for Adorno, operates on this register also: ‘The only philosophy which

⁷ G. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York: Zone Books), pp. 96-97, hereafter *B*.

⁸ *DR*, p. 212.

⁹ *DR*, p. 212.

¹⁰ T. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 196.

can be reasonably practised in the face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption.¹¹ In a sense then Adorno has abandoned the existent. Indeed, this is what gives his work its particular tenor.

On one level this is certainly different to Deleuze's position inasmuch as the possible, for both writers, appears to be a form of transcendent criticism (that is to say, criticism made from the standpoint of redemption). If, however, we were to position Adorno's broken promise as a form of *immanent* criticism, that which seeks to grasp the contradictions inherent in the existent by presenting, via art, something 'different', then we might be able to stake out some common territory between Adorno and Deleuze.¹² In fact there seem to be many points of connection between Frankfurt School Critical Theory and the later writings of Deleuze and Guattari. In fact in their last work together, Deleuze and Guattari themselves attend to a notion of utopia, and to a notion of what they call *immanent, revolutionary, utopias* (as opposed to authoritarian, transcendent ones).¹³ Such utopias are synonymous with what they call political philosophy: 'that

¹¹ T. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1978), p. 247.

¹² This is to simplify somewhat Adorno's notion of criticism and his own use of the categories transcendent and immanent. In fact for Adorno both of these forms of criticism have advantages - but also drawbacks: transcendent criticism allows a vantage point 'outside' of ideology and thus the possibility of a critique of the whole *but* in so doing it locates itself at a kind of fictitious (and utopian) Archimedean Point. It also tends towards a kind of escapism, and to sweeping (barbaric) generalisations. Immanent criticism, on the other hand, seeks to grasp the contradictions within concrete phenomena (i.e. culture). It seeks to reveal the contradictions between the objective idea and its pretension *but* as such it can overlook the general ideological character of society (it neglects to link the object back to the life processes that produced it). Ultimately, of course, it is a form of *dialectical* criticism, moving between the two 'perspectives', which Adorno advocates (See T. Adorno, 'Cultural Criticism and Society,' *Prisms*, trans. S. and S. Weber (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1981), esp. pp. 23-33). It is worth pointing out here that the notion of criticism, as Adorno deploys it, is of a fundamentally different nature to the notion of philosophy, as Deleuze and Guattari understand it. The first is negative almost by definition, the second, again by definition, is creative and affirmative. This is not to say that one must be oblivious to the history, the 'life processes', that produce Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, but it is to say that Adorno's critical operation presumes the always already ideological character of philosophy and thus can operate as a kind of trap for thought.

¹³ In a tantalising footnote Ernst Bloch is given as an example of a thinker of immanent utopias (*WP*, p. 224, f. 12).

conjunction of philosophy, or of the concept, with the present milieu.¹⁴ For Deleuze and Guattari this utopian impulse in philosophy (which *is* philosophy) involves a resistance to the present. ‘The creation of concepts [which] in itself calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist.’¹⁵ That is, precisely, revolution, understood as the affirmation of a ‘people-yet-to-come.’

Can Adorno be brought into this fundamentally affirmative and creative project? To a certain extent (after all both Adorno and Deleuze articulate a resistance to the present, and in so doing make a call to the future), however it is really Adorno’s attitude, his *philosophical* attitude, which is the stumbling block (his particular *style* of thought as perhaps Deleuze would say). Adorno, as a thinker, is trapped in a form of negativity (as are all proponents of negative critique).¹⁶ For Adorno then, art, that very autonomous of objects, operates in/as a negative dialectic (it is the ‘impossible possible’). We can return to Deleuze here and remind ourselves that Deleuze’s issue with the possible is that it is never a genuinely creative category (even if it may seem so) but is in fact always already limited by the real that it resembles and cannot help but resemble. This is the case even, and perhaps especially, when it seeks to *negate* this real. This is not to disavow the criticality of art works but it is to say that this criticality must be accompanied by creativity (and in fact we might say that the former, when it really *is* criticism, is only ever really produced by the latter).

Back to Deleuze then, who in his discussion of the possible is keen to demarcate a notion of difference that does not imply a negativity and indeed that escapes ‘identity thinking’ altogether. He will do this *not* through recourse to a negative dialectic but through recourse to a notion of the virtual. First though, back to the possible once more who’s characteristic, for Deleuze, is that it ‘refers to the form of identity in the concept’.¹⁷ Difference here is nothing but the ‘negative

¹⁴ G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. G. Burchell and H. Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994), p. 100, hereafter *WP*.

¹⁵ *WP*, p. 108.

¹⁶ As Jean-Francois Lyotard once remarked, the danger of negative critique is that ‘the thing criticised holds back and even consumes the one who criticises, as Sodom petrified Lot’s wife’ (‘Beyond Representation’, trans. J. Culler, *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. A. Benjamin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 155).

¹⁷ *DR*, p. 211.

determined by the concept.’¹⁸ Another way of saying this is that the possible, in order to be realised, merely has existence *added* to it, *but* an existence which is already determined by the concept albeit as a kind of outside. Here then the possible operates as a point of transcendence, but, as with all transcendence, is in fact a product of immanence which has been abstracted out *and then* ‘projected’ back on to the plane of immanence as if it came from an ‘elsewhere’.¹⁹

The virtual on the other hand names a field of difference which is not, and cannot be, subsumed by the concept. The virtual ‘designates a pure multiplicity’ which as such ‘radically excludes the identical as a prior condition.’²⁰ The virtual then names a *real* place but one which has yet to be actualised. Whereas the real and the possible instigate a philosophy of transcendence, the virtual and the actual affirm immanence. We might rephrase this and say that whereas the possible names a logic of Being (ontology of stasis), the virtual affirms a logic of *becoming* (ontology of process). Indeed it is only with, and within, the virtual that we have pure difference in and of itself (we might call this *anoriginal* complexity,²¹ pure multiplicity, *aliquid being*,²² or simply the realm of the undifferentiated). The virtual, or rather the process of actualisation of the virtual, is then *the* creative act, precisely the production, or actualisation, of difference and thus diversity from of a pre-existing field of potentialities.

¹⁸ *DR*, p. 211.

¹⁹ It is the same operation, *or* inversion, that ideology performs as mapped out in the early Marx. For example, with religion: God, which is a *product* of man is then abstracted out and made into that which apparently *produces* man (transcendence is here precisely a product, albeit *masked*, of immanence).

²⁰ *DR*, p. 211-12.

²¹ The term *anoriginal* is taken from Andrew Benjamin’s work where it is used to give: ‘original complexity an ontological foundation’ (A. Benjamin, ‘Time, Question, Fold’, at http://www.basilisk.com/V/virtual_deleuze_fold_112.html, p. 5). Benjamin continues:

The point of such an undertaking is to indicate that the complexity in question does not involve an amalgam of simples that could ever be further reduced, but rather that there is complexity *ab initio*. In order to identify this other origin the term ‘anoriginal’ has been used. In sum, what it seeks to name is this complex possibility (*ibid.*, p. 5).

²² See Deleuze’s discussion of the Stoics in *The Logic of Sense*, trans. M. Lester (New York: Columbia University, 1990) where bodies and states of affairs (i.e. substance) are portrayed as just one element of a larger ‘ground’ that includes effects and incorporeal events (*ibid.*, p 6). ‘The highest term therefore is not being, but *Something (aliquid)*, insofar as it subsumes being and non-being, existence and inherence’ (*ibid.*, p. 7).

Another way of thinking this process of actualisation is as problem solving. To quote Deleuze: 'the virtual possesses the reality of a task to be performed or a problem to be solved: it is the problem which orientates, conditions and engenders solutions, but these do not resemble the conditions of the problem.'²³ It is in this sense, thinking biologically, that the organism is the solution to a problem: the eye as a solution to the specific 'problem' of light; the claw as a solution to the need for food, and so on. Art can also be seen as a 'solution' in this sense, as part of a general, creative evolution. The forms of art precisely providing 'solutions' to 'problems' of space, time - perception *and* memory (that is, specifically *human* problems).²⁴

One way to think this virtual multiplicity is as the 'pure' memory of Bergson's thesis. As such the virtual can be understood as a temporal dimension of the object. The virtual is 'a part of the real object – as though the object had one part of itself in the virtual into which it plunged as though into an objective dimension.'²⁵ We might say then that the virtual is a kind of *fractal* realm. The virtual would always be 'contained' within the actual as it were, though in an ever more condensed state as it approaches the present. In fact the same might be said of perception: the closer one is the more apparently simple forms become complex, which is to say the realms of space and time are *both* fractal in character.²⁶

It is here that the differences between Deleuze's notion of the virtual and its more common usage within AI and VR parlance become clear. In these latter places and spaces the virtual is understood as a kind of property of matter, albeit matter interpenetrated by information. With Deleuze however the virtual *differs in kind* from the actual. It is not 'of' matter but 'of' spirit as

²³ *DR*, p. 212.

²⁴ This is precisely the argument set out in Henri Focillon's *The Life Forms of Art*, trans. C. Beecher Hogan and G. Kubler (New York: Zone Books, 1992). Here the work of art is 'an attempt to express something that is unique, it is an affirmation of something that is whole, complete, absolute. But it is likewise an integral part of a system of highly complex relationships' (*ibid.*, p. 31). Art emerges from this complexity but does not necessarily resemble these conditions. Furthermore art works *back* on these conditions, for example, in relation to space, Focillon points out: 'A work of art is situated in space. But it will not do to say it simply exists in space: a work of art treats space according to its own needs, defines space and even creates such space as may be necessary to it' (*ibid.*, p. 65).

²⁵ *DR*, p. 209.

²⁶ This is to follow Henri Bergson's account of memory and temporality (the celebrated cone). See *Matter and Memory*, trans. N. M. Paul and W. S. Palmer (New York: Zone, 1996), pp. 150-163, hereafter *MM*.

Bergson might say (as Deleuze remarks, Bergson reserves the use of the possible only in relation to matter – that is to a *closed system*).²⁷ In a sense the realm of pure perception (‘before’ any selection on the basis of needs and interests has been made) is a virtual realm but this ‘pure perception’ is not the same kind of virtuality as that of pure memory (it exists, as Bergson demonstrates on a different axis: it is *spatial* rather than *temporal*).²⁸ In fact both pure perception (*matter* - or, in Deleuze’s terms the ‘movement-image’) and pure memory (*time* - or, in Deleuze’s terms again, the ‘movement-image’) are intuitive abstractions from what, in experience, is a mixed state of affairs (our habits of representation and of representational thought). Pure memory (‘identical to the totality of the past’) is then like pure perception (‘identical to the whole of matter’), an inhuman, super objective state which can only be accessed intuitively. Put bluntly, it is difficult given the present human configuration to access this pure perception and pure memory which is nevertheless a kind of ‘background’ to our experience. We live in a state in which differences in kind (between matter and memory) are mixed. We are ‘badly analysed composites’ ‘that arbitrarily group things that *differ in kind*.’²⁹ Deleuze’s transcendental empiricism is then as such because it involves intuitively going beyond experience towards the *conditions* of experience (and not the conditions of possible experience (Kant) - but the conditions of *real* experience).³⁰ This implies an ethical imperative, the latter understood as a pragmatic enquiry into our particular space-time coordinates (or simply our consciousness). We must divide these mixed composites along lines that differ in kind, and then follow these lines to their pure states, before returning back, armed with a kind of Spinozist ‘knowledge’, to the mixtures.

When it comes to actually actualising different spatialities and temporalities then technology has a crucial role to play. For Deleuze this is paradigmatically the case with the movie camera. In *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2* this machine-eye-consciousness is portrayed as a kind of ‘actualising machine’. It opens up perception and memory to a world beyond the strictly human (it’s mechanical eye moves towards a state of pure perception in the Movement Image and towards a state of pure recollection in the Time Image). For Deleuze, following Bergson, this gets to the very heart of philosophy’s role: to think *beyond* the human (*beyond* representation). We might

²⁷ *B*, p. 43.

²⁸ For Bergson’s major statement on this see *MM*, pp. 77-131.

²⁹ *B*, p. 18.

³⁰ As Deleuze remarks: ‘Intuition leads us to go beyond the state of experience toward the conditions of experience. But these conditions are neither general nor abstract. They are no broader than the conditioned: they are the conditions of real experience’ (*B*, p. 27).

say then that the camera, and in fact all ‘visualising’ technologies, continue Bergson’s intuitive method ‘outside’ of philosophy. We might also say that the actualisations these technologies perform and produce are specifically *non-human*, or *machinic* modes of consciousness.

Equally important is that we look to the field of that which has already been actualised. Again, we must ask the fundamentally ethical questions of how and why such and such *becomes* actual (how and why are we the mixtures that we are, perceiving the mixtures that we do?) Indeed, following Brian Massumi, it might be argued that it is not the actual that should hold our attention, nor in fact the virtual, but rather the *processes of actualisation* (the processes of *selection* if you like). We need to attend to that border, or ‘seeping edge’ as Massumi calls it, between the actual and the virtual. For Massumi it is precisely in this place that potential is found, the potential for transformation.³¹

We might say then, again following Massumi, that the world of things (the object world) is but that which has been extracted or has *emerged* from the realm of relations, or *conditions*.³² Technology being the name for that which manipulates this emergence. Late capitalism’s most sinister aspect is then that it controls many if not all of these matrices of emergence. That is to say, it *determines* what becomes actual. Art practice might have a role to play in reversing this process, in reconnecting us with pre-objective relations/conditions and allowing a different combination, a different set of *modulations* as it were, to emerge. Art practice might then, like philosophy, involve intuition. An intuition incarnated in materials which takes us ‘beyond’ the actual, plunges us deep into the virtual, before returning with new actualisations. Indeed art practice can be positioned at that ‘seeping edge’ between the existing state of affairs and a world ‘yet-to-come.’³³ Again, this is not to position art as transcendent, for as we have seen the

³¹ It is important to point out that Massumi’s understanding of the virtual, at least in his essay ‘The Autonomy of Affect’, *The Deleuze Reader*, ed. P. Patton (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996), is that it is the realm of *affect*. The ‘seeping edge’ then is the point at which that which is immanent to experience (affect) becomes conceptualised within experience (specifically with language) (pp. 217-239). This is not however to contradict a more Bergsonian notion of the virtual as the relation between affect and its articulation is specifically a temporal one.

³² Massumi pursued this line of argument in a recent paper, ‘Living Memory’, at the *Life’s (Re)emergence: Philosophy, Culture, and Politics* conference, Goldsmiths College, May 2003.

³³ Antonio Negri also attends to this ‘edge’ – which he names ‘*Kairos*’ – where invention and innovation take place:

ontological coordinates of the actual and the virtual operate ‘within’ immanence (within *this* world). The virtual does not *lack* a reality, but is merely that which has yet to be actualised.

Excursus 1: Mirror Travel

In the essay ‘Entropy and the New Monuments’ Robert Smithson writes about those artists who are his contemporaries (and as such he is also writing about himself) precisely in terms of pure matter and pure memory. The new monuments, the emerging minimalist objects and expanded practices of the late 1960s, are here described as *crystal* objects with a face turned to the actual, and a face plunging deep into the virtual. Indeed, for Smithson, this is what characterises the new monuments: they present a different view of matter *and* a different conception of time:

Instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future. Instead of being made of natural materials, such as marble, granite, or other kinds of rock, the new monuments are made of artificial materials, plastic, chrome and electric light. They are not built for the ages but against the ages. They are involved in a systematic reduction of time down to fractions of seconds, rather than in representing the long spaces of centuries. Both past and future are placed into an objective present. This kind of time has little or no space in it; it is stationary and without movement, it is going nowhere, it is anti-Newtonian, as well as being instant, and it is against the wheels of the time-clock ... [The] destruction of classical time and space is based on an entirely new notion of the structure of matter.³⁴

This ‘new’ image of time is then one in which the past is coextensive with the present, which itself is coextensive with the future. This is an image of time in which the latter is no longer

From this perspective, what I call *kairos* is an exemplary temporal point, because Being is opening up in time; and at each instant that it opens up it must be invented - it must invent itself. *Kairos* is just this: the moment when the arrow of Being is shot, the moment of opening, the invention of Being on the edge of time. We live at each instant on this margin of Being that is endlessly being constructed (A. Negri, *Negri on Negri* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 104).

See also Negri’s *Time for Revolution*, trans. M. Mandarini (London: Continuum, 2003) where Negri remarks: ‘*Kairos* is the power to observe the fullness of temporality at the moment it opens itself onto the void of being, and of seizing this opening as innovation’ (ibid., p. 158).

³⁴ CW, p. 11.

determined by movement.³⁵ A stationary time, the time of *cronos*. As Smithson remarks this involves the production of a ‘new’ image of matter also, we might say, following Deleuze-Bergson a kind of ‘pure perception’ of matter, produced by ‘new’ synthetic materials. We might then call these new monuments, following Deleuze, the production of a specifically *Bergsonian* image of thought. To quote Deleuze: ‘Bergson’s major theses on time are as follows: the past coexists with the present that it has been; the past is preserved in itself, as past in general (non-chronological); at each moment time splits itself into present and past, present that passes and past which is preserved.’³⁶ It is this preservation of the past in the present that Smithson sees in the new monuments (a kind of ‘freezing’ of time). In fact for Smithson the new monuments go one step further in also actualising a kind of future within the present (we might say that this is their future orientation or *prophetic* function).

Smithson calls this ‘backward looking future’, and sees it as a characteristic of many of the new monuments where there is the conjunction of an ‘extreme past’ with a kind of Science Fiction future.³⁷ Put simply, for Smithson, the new monuments activate a different, non-human, inorganic and what we might call *geological* duration. This becomes paradigmatic in Smithson’s own work, and especially with the later and larger earthworks which Smithson completed (for example *Broken Circle*, *Spiral Hill*, or *Spiral Jetty* (both of which one had to *enter* into)). However even with Smithson’s smaller works, his crystal and mirrored objects, time becomes a material to play with. Indeed, as Smithson remarks, in very much a Bergsonian vein:

When a *thing* is seen through the consciousness of temporality, it is changed into something that is nothing. This all-engulfing sense provides the mental ground for the object, so that it ceases being a mere object and becomes art. The object gets to be less and less but exists as something clearer. Every object, if it is art, is charged with the rush of time even though it is static, but all

³⁵ See Deleuze’s book on *Kant’s Critical Philosophy*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (London: Athlone, 1995) for a discussion of this revolution in time (and encapsulated by Hamlet’s phrase ‘The time is out of joint’):

As long as time remained on its hinges, it is subordinate to movement: it is the measure of movement, interval or number. This was the view of ancient philosophy. But time out of joint signifies the reversal of the movement-time relationship. It is now movement that is subordinate to time. Everything changes, including movement ... this is the first great Kantian reversal’ (ibid., p. vii).

³⁶ G. Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time Image*, trans. H. Tomlinson and R. Galeta (London: Athlone, 1989), p. 82, hereafter *C2*.

³⁷ *CW*, p. 15.

this depends on the viewer. Not everyone sees the art in the same way, only an artist viewing art knows the ecstasy or dread, and this viewing takes place in time.³⁸

It is then as much the viewer (a *specific* kind of viewer) as the object that produces art in this sense (we might say that actualises the virtualities of the 'object'). For Smithson art is the name for this encounter in which an object rejoins the flow of time it was always already a part of (but had been extracted from). Indeed all these objects and practices, these new monuments, might be located on that 'seeping edge' between the actual and the virtual, which we might rephrase here as the coexistence of the pure past (and future) with the present, or simply a seeing of the object *as* object, and a seeing of the object *in* process, *as* duration.

In the above quote, and in Smithson's essay in general, there is, I would argue, a kind of philosophy going on, inasmuch as there is the deployment of certain concepts (for example of a 'time' no longer determined by movement) in order to 'think' a new kind of art. Nevertheless there is not, in this essay anyway, the *production* of a 'new image of thought.' There is a *description* of how the new monuments actualise certain virtualities but not the performance of this actualisation itself. For this we have to go to another of Smithson practices. This is not to say we leave the realm of words, for Smithson these are as much the matter of art as any geological material, but we do turn to a different kind of writing, a *programmatic* piece of writing in which Smithson 'records' and in some senses reflects on the construction of his 'Incidents of Mirror Travel in the Yucatan'.

'Incidents' involved nine 'displacements': the positioning of twelve small square mirrors in different constellations within the South American desert landscape which Smithson and his fellow travellers were driving through. Each displacement had, and has, a peculiar quality to it which comes down to the specifics of the context in which it was placed (geology, flora, weather, etc). Each displacement then extracts and pictures a particular set of durations (or simply alternative temporalities). But 'Incidents of Mirror Travel in the Yucatan' is not just Smithson's journey, and not just the photographs of each displacement either. It is also the essay itself which operates as a kind of *programme* of how to access, or actualise, other virtualities.³⁹ Indeed the

³⁸ *CW*, p. 112.

³⁹ In this sense Smithson's essay performs much the same function as Carlos Casteneda's writings as they are characterised and utilised by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (see especially pp. 161-2). Indeed, inasmuch as *A Thousand Plateaus* is itself programmatic it resonates very well with Robert

essay records what ‘happens’ with each displacement, a disruption of time and space (precisely mirror travel), but also, and I think more importantly, contained within the essay are the instructions on how to conduct the displacements again. Here for example is an extract from ‘The Third Mirror Displacement’ (Fig. 1):

In the side of a heap of crushed limestone the twelve mirrors were cantilevered in the midst of large clusters of butterflies that had landed on the limestone. For brief moments flying butterflies were reflected; they seemed to fly through a sky of gravel. Shadows cast by the mirrors contrasted with those seconds of colour. A scale in terms of ‘time’ rather than ‘space’ took place. The mirror itself is not subject to duration, because it is an ongoing abstraction that is always available and timeless. The reflections on the other hand, are fleeting instances that evade measure.⁴⁰

In each of the displacements Smithson ‘inserts’ the mirrors *into* the earth. The mirrors then become *apart of the* landscape placed as they are in the geological ground zero of the desert. And yet the mirrors are also *a part from* the earth inasmuch as they reflect the sky (and other flora and fauna) and in so doing actualise other durations of organic and inorganic life. In fact the mirror, in Smithson’s hands, becomes a device for ‘erasing’ typical duration, or simply human, linear time. For flattening it out, precisely for making time into a multiplicity: ‘But if one wishes to be ingenious enough to erase time one requires mirrors, not rocks. A strange thing, this branching mode of travel: one perceives in every past moment a parting of ways, a highway spreads into a bifurcating and trifurcating region of zigzags.’⁴¹

This ‘switching’ of registers via the mirror displacements (for Deleuze it would be the crystal) occurs in ‘space’ as well as time.⁴² The mirror displacement journey involves the actualisation of

Smithson’s *The Collected Writings*. In fact Smithson’s book operates as a kind of intense condensation of plateaus 3, 4, 5 and 6.

⁴⁰ CW, p. 122.

⁴¹ CW, p. 131.

⁴² We might compare this with what Deleuze says about time in *Cinema 2*, although here it is the crystal, rather than the mirror, that allows for ‘time travel’:

Time has to split at the same time as it sets itself out or unrolls itself: it splits in two dissymmetrical jets, one of which makes all the present pass on, while the other preserves all the past. Time consists of this split, and it is this, it is time, that we *see in the crystal*. The crystal- image was not time, but we see time in the crystal. We see in the crystal the perpetual foundation of time, non-chronological time, Cronos and not Chronos. This is the powerful, non-organic Life which grips the world. The visionary, the seer, is the one who sees in the crystal, and what he sees is the gushing of time as dividing in two, as splitting’ (C2, p. 81).

those micro-universes usually imperceptible. Here for example is Smithson again, this time from 'The Fifth Mirror Displacement' (Fig. 2):

On the outskirts of the ruins of Palenque or in the skirts of Coatlicue, rocks were overturned; first the rock was photographed, then the pit that remained. 'Under each rock is an orgy of scale,' said Coatlicue ... Each pit contained miniature earthworks - tracks and traces of insects and other sundry small creatures. In some beetle dung, cobwebs, and nameless slime. In others cocoons, tiny ant nests and raw roots. If an artist could see the world through the eyes of a caterpillar he might be able to make some fascinating art. Each of these secret dens was also the entrance to the abyss.⁴³

For Smithson each of the displacements also operates to 'summon forth' a Mayan God from the Mexican desert that then articulates the workings of the displacements. Here art practice has left the realms of representation and become an *incarnation* of sorts, each God 'coming-forth' to embody a certain Mayan understanding of the world. Are these Gods figures projected onto the plane of immanence (figures of transcendence)? Perhaps, but they can also be understood as Smithson's *conceptual personages*, 'future-people' that embody a certain mode of being, a certain *style* of life. For example Quetzalcoatl from 'The Ninth Mirror Displacement': 'The double aspect of Quetzalcoatl is less a person than an operation of totemic perception. Quetzalcoatl becomes one half of an enantiomorph (*coatl* means twin) in search of the other half. A mirror looking for its reflection but never quite finding it ... By travelling with Quetzalcoatl one becomes aware of primordial time or final time - The Tree of Rocks.'⁴⁴

See Brian Massumi's 'Painting: the Voice of the Grain', in *Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger: Artworking 1985-1999*, (Brussels: Palais des Beaux-Arts, 2000) for an interesting utilisation of the time-crystal in relation to contemporary art, and specifically to the photocopied/painted surfaces of Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger's work:

Lichtenberg Ettinger's paintings function to preserve the evanescence of things: their always coming too early to be what they should become, and too late to remain what they would have been. Freeze-framing the too-early-and-too-late captures the image in what Deleuze would call a time-crystal. The time-crystal holds together, as accompanying facets, what in the linear unfolding of things are successive beats, the risings and fallings, in the rhythm of interweaving (ibid., p. 11).

⁴³ CW, p. 126.

⁴⁴ CW, p. 131.

Smithson's essay is then a work of imagination, a kind of creative fabulation, a story that *mythifies* reality.⁴⁵ And yet the essay also works as a manual. It gives instruction on 'mirror travel', an undertaking we might recast in Deleuzian terms as 'travel' 'into' the virtual. Importantly this mirror travel must be performed: the instructions must be followed. Smithson gives us an account of his own journey, and in doing so informs us how we might repeat the experiment. What we have here then is an example of a pragmatic and practical philosophy (philosophy as a way of life as it were). After all you can *read*, and *understand* the concepts of the actual and the virtual but in order to actualise the virtual then these 'concepts' need to be incarnated in other materials and via other practices. We might say that this is the ritualistic function of art such as Smithson's which endeavours to take us out of our usual space/time coordinates, precisely to produce a reconfiguration of our habitual mode of being.⁴⁶

2 The Plane of Immanence (or the Non-Philosophical Moment of Philosophy)

⁴⁵ The artist Matthew Barney would seem to be a kind of successor to Smithson in this sense: a producer of modern myths for a modern world. In the *Cremaster* cycle of films, and in particular *Cremaster 3*, we also see an emphasis on the sculptural element of film: 'The Cremaster cycle tries to take on a cinematic language...I wanted to see how this sculptural project, which is what it is, could align itself with the cinematic form, and still come out as sculpture' (M. Barney, 'Artists Project', *Tate: International Arts and Culture*, issue 2 (Nov/Dec 2002), p. 59). In *Cremaster 3* there is also the inclusion of Richard Serra - one of Smithson's friends and allies - as master architect whom Barney himself, as apprentice, must overcome. This is not to give the film an overly narrative/linear reading for in fact Barney is attracted to icons such as Serra because they are 'physical states' and not so much 'developed narrative characters' (ibid., p. 59). The connection with Deleuze-Bacon's notion of the figural seems apposite here. There is also the importance of landscape/location in the *Cremaster* films, as kind of characters in themselves: '...it is important for that landscape to be drawable as a discrete object. That it should be possible to make a sculptural form from the Canadian Rockies or the Utah Salt Flats (ibid., p. 59). As we shall see, Smithson produces just such a sculpture from the Utah landscape. Indeed, Barney's films here mirror Smithson's earthworks: both operate on an epic scale, both are landscape sculptures, and both involve the construction of new myths that invoke a people-yet-to-come.

⁴⁶ This is ritual in the sense that Georges Bataille uses the term: to refer to a form of play which takes the participants out of mundane consciousness (or 'work time') and into the realm of the sacred (the time of the instant). See G. Bataille, *Prehistoric Painting: Lascaux or the Birth of Art* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

In short, the first philosophers are those who institute a plane of immanence like a sieve stretched over chaos. In this sense they contrast with sages, who are religious personae, priests, because they conceive of the institution of an always transcendent order imposed from outside ... Whenever there is transcendence, vertical being, imperial State in the sky or on earth, there is religion; and there is philosophy whenever there is immanence.⁴⁷

For Deleuze and Guattari philosophy *is* thinking immanence. Philosophy operates *on* the plane of immanence and through ‘forms’ which are themselves immanent to the plane (they do not ‘arrive’ from ‘elsewhere’). In this sense philosophy is radically opposed to religion which projects its figures *onto* the plane of immanence from a transcendent point. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari write about Chinese hexagrams, Hindu mandalas, Jewish Sephiroth, Islamic ‘Imaginals’ and Christian icons all as being *projections* from a kind of vertical being, precisely a populating of the plane with *figures*.⁴⁸ Philosophy, on the other hand, populates its plane with concepts which are intimately connected to one another and to the plane from which, in some senses, they emerge.

But philosophy is only one form of thought amongst many, each with their own specificity. Indeed *What is Philosophy?* demarcates what Deleuze and Guattari see as the *three* great forms of thought: philosophy, but also science and art, each of which throws a ‘plane over chaos’ and has their own particular milieu *and* rules of invention.⁴⁹ In fact, in *What is Philosophy?*, notions of the virtual are only really relevant to the first two forms of thought: philosophy actualises the virtual in an event by means of the concept. (Deleuze’s famous example, from Lewis Carroll, being ‘the smile without the cat’). Science, on the other hand actualises the virtual in ‘states of affairs’ on a plane of reference, by a process of ‘slowing down’ and the positioning of ‘partial observers’ (we might say simply ‘a cat’).⁵⁰ Art, in this book anyway, and despite what Deleuze and Guattari say elsewhere, is more involved in notions of the possible. The aesthetic figures with which it populates its plane of composition express *possible* worlds. I have dealt with what *What is Philosophy?* has to say about the workings of art elsewhere.⁵¹ Here I want to continue paying attention to philosophy, and more specifically to what appears to be the *non-philosophical*

⁴⁷ *WP*, p. 43.

⁴⁸ *WP*, p. 89.

⁴⁹ *WP*, p. 197.

⁵⁰ *WP*, p. 197.

⁵¹ See reference in footnote 2 above.

moment of philosophy, and which in a sense *grounds* the philosophical enterprise. In fact we might say that this moment lies at the very heart of all creative thought.

Before moving on however it is important, in fact it is one of the avowed purposes of *What is Philosophy?* to distinguish these three forms of thought from mere opinion or *doxa*. Whereas opinion merely reproduces the present milieu, forms of thought such as art and philosophy are rather future orientated. In their construction they ‘summon forth a new earth, a new people’.⁵² Indeed this, for Deleuze and Guattari, as we have seen, is what makes philosophy political, if not revolutionary. Philosophy’s *absolute* deterritorialisation (of the concept on the plane of immanence) conjoins with the present milieu in a *resistance* to the present (the *relative* deterritorialisation of capitalism and the concomitant domination of opinion). At stake here are new becomings which are always *minor* in nature.⁵³ Opinion then might be characterised as the *quasi* thought of the *majority*, the *doxa* of any particular time. The latter works by proposing:

a particular relationship between an external perception as state of a subject and an internal affection as passage from one state to another (exo- and endoreference). We pick out a quality supposedly common to several objects that we perceive, and an affection supposedly common to several subjects who experience it and who, along with us, grasp that quality.⁵⁴

When philosophy becomes confused with opinion (which, when it is called ‘theory,’ it so often does) then thought itself suffers and becomes little more than the confrontation of rival opinions, or, as Deleuze and Guattari remark, little more than ‘pleasant or aggressive dinner conversations at Mr. Rorty’s.’⁵⁵

For Deleuze and Guattari then doing philosophy involves something a good deal more precise, and we might say a good deal more *radical*. Indeed it involves three interconnected operations: the creation of concepts, the construction of conceptual personages, and the ‘throwing down’ of a plane of immanence. Each in some senses relies on the others. The plane of immanence is the

⁵² *WP*, p. 99.

⁵³ For a discussion of the minor, specifically in relation to literature, see G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986), esp. pp. 16-27. For a discussion of the minor in relation to film, and specifically ‘Third-world’ film, see *C2*, pp. 215-224.

⁵⁴ *WP*, p. 144.

⁵⁵ *WP*, p. 144.

philosopher's point of view or attitude. It is the laying out of the ground, or terrain on which concepts (themselves territories) can be constructed. Concepts are constructed through the combination of various components (which are invariably 'borrowed' from other concepts) and which are then given a certain consistency. This latter procedure itself involves a further invention of *conceptual personages* that 'live' these concepts (these characters are kind of philosophical avatars of the philosopher himself: Descartes' idiot, or Nietzsche's Zarathustra for example). It is the last however, the laying down of the plane of immanence, understood as the philosopher's particular *style* (what Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* calls an 'image of thought') which procedurally comes first. It is the laying out of a plane as the conditions of a problem, the concepts which populate it being the case of a solution. Importantly it is a non-philosophical undertaking. It is in fact the non-philosophical moment of philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari's project here, as in *Difference and Repetition*, is to excavate and map out the *modern* image of thought and specifically that of Kant. How the latter always returns to resemblance, to recognition (to *representation*) and ultimately to an unquestioned assumption of common (read *good*) sense. However it follows from this that 'other' images of thought, 'other' planes of immanence can be instituted (we might see this as one of the many undertakings of *A Thousand Plateaus*). Indeed, as Deleuze and Guattari say: 'those who do not renew the image of thought are not philosophers but functionaries who, enjoying a ready-made thought, are not even conscious of the problem and are unaware even of the efforts of those they claim to take as their models.'⁵⁶ This is why the encounter, the *non-philosophical* encounter, is of such importance to the philosopher: it can bring about the destruction of a previous image of thought. Here then are Deleuze and Guattari talking about this encounter with the 'outside' of thought:

Precisely because the plane of immanence is prephilosophical and does not immediately take effect with concepts, it implies a sort of groping experimentation and its layout resorts to measures that are not very respectable, rational or reasonable. These measures belong to the order of dreams, of pathological processes, esoteric experiences, drunkenness, and excess ... To think is always to follow the witch's flight.⁵⁷

The plane of immanence is then precisely a form of *experimentation* and implies a certain experimental mode of being. It is a 'sieve stretched over chaos', an attempt to give consistency to chaos ('to give consistency without losing anything of the infinite').⁵⁸ This is opposed to science

⁵⁶ *WP*, p. 51.

⁵⁷ *WP*, P. 141.

⁵⁸ *WP*, P. 141.

which 'seeks to provide chaos with reference points' thus abandoning infinite movement in a general limitation of speed (the slowing down that science, to be as such, must perform).⁵⁹ It is also, as we have seen, opposed to religion, which installs a transcendent order from above, by the projection of figures *onto* the plane of immanence.

This non-philosophical moment of philosophy (that in turn *renews* philosophy) can only proceed by intuition and by a certain amount of 'losing-one's-self'. Deleuze and Guattari cite the example of Henri Michaux and the notion that one only really *thinks* by 'becoming something else, something that does not think - an animal, a molecule, a particle - that comes back to thought and revives it.'⁶⁰ Deleuze and Guattari are not referring to Michaux's art works here ('usually these measures do not appear in the result, which must be grasped solely in itself and calmly') but rather, it seems to me, are referring to the journeys, the adventures (whether drug influenced or not), which in some senses allow for, and perhaps provoke, such and such a concept, or indeed such and such an art work, to be made.⁶¹ It is at this place that we move away from the three forms of thought to something wilder, something more chaotic. Indeed, later in *What is Philosophy?* art, science and philosophy are characterised as *chaoids*, forms of thought which refer back to chaos, and are in fact *of* chaos (a chaos given consistency).⁶² However before this consistency is achieved there is the moment of the *encounter* with chaos, the confrontation with non-thought. It is in this place, at this moment, that the plane of immanence is instituted, almost as a survival mechanism, but also as that which will allow thought and creativity to unfurl.

It might be useful to turn here from *What is Philosophy?* to *A Thousand Plateaus*, the latter being very much a book about the non-philosophical adventures of philosophy. In this earlier, and in many senses *wilder*, work we have, as might be expected, a series of *strategies* for 'accessing' immanence, which is here described in more concrete terms. The plane of immanence in *A Thousand Plateaus* is a more slippery, we might even say more liquid 'place'. It is Spinoza's God/Nature/substance, but the latter *stretched*, a place in which:

There are no longer any forms or developments of forms; nor are there subjects or the formation of subjects. There is no structure, any more than there is genesis. There are only relations of

⁵⁹ *WP*, p. 42.

⁶⁰ *WP*, p. 42.

⁶¹ *WP*, p. 41-42.

⁶² *WP*, p. 208.

movement and rest, speed and slowness between unformed elements, or at least between elements that are relatively unformed, molecules and particles of all kinds. There are only haecities, affects, subjectless individuations that constitute collective enunciations.⁶³

Here the plane of immanence is opposed to the plane of transcendence (also called the plane of organisation and development). It is the realm of the *molecular* from which *molar* aggregates such as our subjectivity and identity are formed.⁶⁴ It is, if you like, the ground zero of non-organic life. And it is on, and across, this plane that the 'Body without Organs' (BwO) moves, the latter understood, at this point anyway, as itself a kind of surface upon which the 'I' is a mere striation. As such, the BwO is a mechanism, a procedure, for undoing the strata that binds us:

Let us consider the three great strata concerning us, in other words, the ones that most directly bind us: the organism, signification, and subjectification. The surface of the organism, the angle of signification and interpretation, and the point of subjectification or subjection. You will be organised, 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).⁶⁵

The BwO is then, paradoxically, a kind of aesthetic machine *but* its operating field is immanence rather than transcendence. It breaks down the subject object split, tears apart what Guattari once

⁶³ *ATP*, p. 266.

⁶⁴ It is to this notion of subjectless individuations that Deleuze returns in his last writings. In *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*, trans. A. Boyan (New York: Urzone, 2001) Deleuze gives us the example of young children - who might as yet have no, or next to no, individuality as such (they all resemble one another) - but who do have singularities: 'a smile, a gesture, a funny face - not subjective qualities. Small children, through all their sufferings and weaknesses, are infused with an immanent life that is pure power and even bliss' (ibid., p. 30). It is this life of immanence that runs parallel to any psychosocial notions of individuality: 'the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other' (ibid., p. 29). For Deleuze this *life*, or 'great health' is the proper subject of literature - and we might say of art also (see also *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. D. W. Smith and M. A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), and also Daniel W. Smith's informative introductory essay).

⁶⁵ *ATP*, p. 159.

called the 'ontological iron curtain between being and things.'⁶⁶ It is always *a* BwO, never mine, or yours, or his, or hers. It is constituted solely by *apersonal* affects, by intense thresholds and differential gradients of speed and slowness. It has a relation with the strata that it is in some senses a part of, but it is also that which sets the strata free, that which allows for the possibility of *destratification*.

Of course, the point is to *build* yourself a BwO, and as such the BwO is a technique of construction as well as the production of intensities: 'But what comes to pass on the BwO is not exactly the same as how you make yourself one...One phase is for the fabrication of the BwO, the other to make something circulate on it or pass across it.'⁶⁷ In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari offer us a whole selection of constructed BwO's, some of which are botched (simply do not 'work'), some of which are cancerous (producing a proliferation of strata, that is, fascism), and others of which are destructive (for example the drug addict producing a hollowed out and ultimately nihilistic BwO, or the masochist who might build a BwO but then find no intensities come to pass). Perhaps the most successful BwO's are those that can be repeated, those that can be 'reused'. Art might be a name for these experimental modes of being, these strange and exciting (and sometimes frightening) 'new' images of thought. Although art can also be, and often is, the name for those BwO's which have precisely been blocked, botched or otherwise broken. This amounts to saying that the dangers of transcendence everywhere and always accompany experiments and adventures in *thinking* immanence.

Excursus 2: The Spiral Jetty

In the essay 'A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects' Smithson lays out his project of 'abstract geology' understood as a general 'slowing down' of thought.⁶⁸ This is how the essay begins:

⁶⁶ F. Guattari, 'On Machines', *Complexity: Architecture/Art/Philosophy*, trans. V. Constantinopoulos (London: Academy Editions, 1995), p. 8.

⁶⁷ *ATP*, p. 152.

⁶⁸ Smithson, in another essay, also lays out a parallel project of 'abstract cartography'. Again there are many similarities between this project and the Deleuzoguattarian project of rhizomatics. In the essay Smithson notes that:

The earth's surface and the figments of the mind have a way of disintegrating into discrete regions of art. Various agents both fictional and real, somehow trade places with each other - one cannot avoid muddy thinking when it comes to earth projects, or what I will call 'abstract geology.' One's mind and the earth are in a constant state of erosion, mental rivers wear away abstract banks, brain waves undermine cliffs of thought, ideas decompose into stones of unknowing, and conceptual crystallisation break apart into deposits of gritty reason. Vast moving faculties occur in this geological miasma, and they move in the most physical way. This movement seems motionless, yet it crushes the landscape of logic under glacial reveries. This slow flowage makes one conscious of the turbidity of thinking. Slump, debris slides, avalanches all take place within the cracking limits of the brain. The entire body is pulled into the cerebral sediment, where particles and fragments makes themselves known as solid consciousness. A bleached and fractured world surrounds the artist. To organise this mess of corrosion into patterns, grids, and subdivisions is an esthetic (sic.) process that has scarcely been touched.⁶⁹

Here the artist confronts chaos or as Smithson calls it, the 'undifferentiated', in front of which he organises grids and patterns, his 'abstract geology', as the precondition for thought and creativity.⁷⁰ This is the 'primary process' of 'making contact with matter', a process which Smithson feels is often overlooked in favour of the 'finished' piece.⁷¹ Indeed, according to Smithson, critics such as Michael Fried disparage the encounter (the 'abyss' fills them with fear) choosing instead to cast their gaze at the second moment, the construction of that which 'fences in' the abyss (that which halts becomings).⁷² Smithson is not nihilistic, he does not plunge into

From *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* of Orrelius (1570) to the 'paint' - clogged maps of Jasper Johns, the map has exercised a fascination over the minds of artists. A cartography of uninhabitable places seems to be developing - complete with decoy diagrams, abstract grid systems made of stone and tape (Carl Andre and Sol le Witt), and electronic 'mosaic' photomaps from NASA...Lewis Carroll refers to this abstract kind of cartography in his *The Hunting of the Snark* (where a map contains 'nothing') and in *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (where a map contains 'everything') (CW, p. 92).

⁶⁹ CW, p. 100.

⁷⁰ Smithson's 'theoretical' resources here, as he himself remarks elsewhere, are Freud (notions of the 'oceanic') and the Freudian psychoanalyst Anton Ehrenzweig (notions of the unconscious as 'de-differentiated'). See A. Ehrenzweig's *The Hidden Order of Art: A Study in the Psychology of Artistic Imagination* (London: Weidenfeld, 1993). See also Lyotard's preface to the French edition, 'Beyond Representation', trans. J. Culler, republished in *The Lyotard Reader*, ed. A. Benjamin ((Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

⁷¹ CW, p. 103.

⁷² CW, p. 103-04.

the abyss, but like Deleuze he favours that art which has something of the abyss, of chaos, about it.⁷³ Hence his preference for material and for forms which arise from the earth itself.

As a case study of this process we might take Smithson's most well known earthwork: *The Spiral Jetty* (Fig. 3). Like 'Incidents of Mirror Travel in the Yucatan' it has now disappeared (although it still 'exists' under the waters of the Great Salt Lake in Utah), but like the latter 'The Spiral Jetty' is also an essay which itself constructs the *Spiral Jetty* via words.⁷⁴ The essay then records and recounts Smithson's selection, construction, and 'activation' of *Spiral Jetty*. Like 'Incidents' it is also a kind of philosophy, a practical philosophy, in the sense that it draws concepts the ('spiral' or the 'helicopter' for example) across an already constituted plane of immanence, understood here as both Smithson's attitude to the salt lake *and* the salt lake itself.

The first stage then, as the essay tells us, is the search for the 'site' (we might say the 'throwing down' of the plane, or the construction of the BwO). The search is careful, not just any place will do, but somewhere which 'grabs' Smithson (which 'selects' him as it were). It is in fact the 'site' that will determine the earthwork. Eventually Smithson locates it:

About one mile north of the oil seeps I selected my site. Irregular beds of limestone dip gently eastward, massive deposits of black basalt are broken over the peninsula, giving the region a shattered appearance. It is one of the few places on the lake where the water comes right up to the mainland. Under shallow pinkish water is a network of mud cracks supporting the jig-saw puzzle that composes the salt flats. As I looked at the site, it reverberated out to the horizons only to suggest an immobile cyclone while flickering light make the whole landscape appear to quake. A dormant earthquake spread into the fluttering stillness, into a spinning sensation without movement. This site was a rotary that enclosed itself in an immense roundness. From that gyrating space emerged the possibility of the *Spiral Jetty*. No ideas, no concepts, no systems, no structures, no abstractions could hold themselves together in the actuality of that evidence ... No sense wondering about classifications and categories, there were none.⁷⁵

⁷³ For Smithson art does not involve a wild destratification, but what we might call the development and maintenance of a 'strategic zone'; a space of experimentation *between* the strata and the outside (in fact a place in which one might *encounter* the outside). See Deleuze's book on *Foucault*, trans. S. Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988), especially pp. 120-22.

⁷⁴ In fact, according to recent reports, *Spiral Jetty* is now re-emerging from the lake as the water level drops (See for example J. Dickie, 'Something in the Water', *Independent on Sunday*, 20 October 2002, and for a record of a trip there (with photographs of the now white jetty) S. Husband's 'Ever Decreasing Circles', *Observer Magazine*, 25 April 2004.

⁷⁵ CW, p. 146.

For Smithson then there is not so much a *before* to the selection, an idea that might be represented in a given site. In fact the site itself functions to suggest the work, and as such might be said to already hold within it a *potentiality* (precisely the *Spiral Jetty*) which is then brought out in the resulting construction.⁷⁶

The second moment commences with the construction of the jetty itself. The tail and spiral are staked out and then the machines - two dump trucks, a tractor and a front loader - move the earth and fill the jetty in. Smithson's use of machines is important. This is not a return to some kind of primitive pre-modern practice, or rather it is not *just* this. Indeed *Spiral Jetty* involves a mobilisation of the technology of modernity but precisely to produce, to *actualise*, something *different* (a *novel* assemblage). The landscape Smithson works on is likewise less a raw 'nature' than an always already 'contaminated' terrain, a terrain moulded as much by modern man as by elemental forces. Indeed it is particularly these industrial wastelands that attract Smithson, and which provide the ground for his constructions. Again, we might say that these kinds of terrains are already overflowing with potentialities of which the work actualises just a selection.

Third moment. In standing on the jetty, there is a switching of registers, the switching of what Smithson calls 'scale' ('To be in the scale of the *Spiral Jetty* is to be out of it. On eye level, the tail leads one into an undifferentiated state of matter').⁷⁷ This involves a further 'activation' of the earthwork, the passing of intensities 'across' the body-without-organs, understood here as a body-brain-earth assemblage:

⁷⁶ Craig Owens makes a similar point in his essay 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', republished in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. D. Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Here he is discussing *Spiral Jetty* in relation to allegory:

The site-specific work often aspires to a prehistoric monumentality; Stonehenge and the Nazca lines are taken as prototypes. It's 'content' is frequently mythical, as that of the *Spiral Jetty*, whose form was derived from a local myth of a whirlpool at the bottom of the Great Salt Lake; in this way Smithson exemplifies the tendency to engage in a *reading* of the site, in terms not only of its topographical specifics but also of its psychological resonances' (ibid., p. 318).

Although agreeing in kind with Owen's notion of allegory in relation to Smithson, one might want to question whether *reading* is the right term for Smithson's *encounter* with the site. Indeed, it would seem that Smithson's response and attitude is precisely one of *not* reading.

⁷⁷ *CW*, p. 147.

On the slopes of Rozel Point I closed my eyes, and the sun burned crimson through the lids. I opened them up and the Great Salt Lake was bleeding scarlet streaks. My sight was saturated by the colour of red algae circulating in the heart of the lake, pumping into ruby currents, no they were veins and arteries sucking up the obscure sediment. My eyes became combustion chambers churning orbs of blood blazing by the light of the sun. All was enveloped in a flaming chromosome.⁷⁸

Finally in the helicopter ride over the jetty the earthwork is further activated. Scale is again introduced (registers are switched). Questions of natural versus artificial become redundant here as Smithson reaches degree 0, *THE* plane of immanence understood here as precisely a state of non-organic life:

The helicopter manoeuvred the sun's reflections through the Spiral Jetty until it reached the centre. The water functioned as a vast thermal mirror. From that position the flaming reflection suggested the ion source of a cyclotron that extended into a spiral of collapsed matter. All sense of energy accelerated expired into a rippling stillness of reflected heat. A withering light swallowed the rocky particles of the spiral, as the helicopter gained altitude. All existence seemed tentative and stagnant. The sound of the helicopter motor became a primal groan echoing the tenuous aerial views ... I was slipping out of myself again, dissolving into a unicellular beginning, trying to locate the nucleus at the end of the spiral. All that blood stirring makes one aware of protoplasmic solutions, the essential matter between the formed and the unformed, masses of cells consisting largely of water, proteins, lipoids, carbohydrates, and inorganic salts.⁷⁹

We might say that the above narrative is merely a fiction, after all *Spiral Jetty* is at least on one level just earth and rocks deposited in a lake. But *Spiral Jetty* is also a machine which produces a different experience of the world and thus a different, we might say altered, consciousness. It is in this sense that the film of *Spiral Jetty* is as important as the essay. The film - a kind of *geo-cinema* - is a construction just as the essay, and the jetty, themselves are (all involve the manipulation of matter). Through the use of montage, close ups and stills (for example of maps and charts, of the ripples of the lake, of the sunlight), as well as the different 'view points' of the car speeding through the desert towards the lake, the slow motion and low camera angle of the dump trucks constructing the jetty (themselves paralleling the dinosaurs in the Natural History Museum) and the helicopter's birds eye view over the jetty itself, the film actualises the different durations and different scales written about in the essay. The camera then operates here as a machine eye opening us up to other non-human worlds.⁸⁰ The soundtrack also works to produce

⁷⁸ *CW*, p. 148.

⁷⁹ *CW*, p. 149.

⁸⁰ As Smithson remarks in 'A Cinema Atopia', echoing Deleuze's own thoughts: 'One thing all film has in common is the power to take perception elsewhere' (*CW*, p. 138). In this essay Smithson outlines a kind of

different and fractured temporalities, from Smithson's mantra like reading of the directions of the compass to the silences of the National History Museum and the sound of the helicopter blades. We might say then that the film parallels the work of the essay, which itself parallels the construction of the jetty: each are components of the *Spiral Jetty machine* whose operative field we might give here a new name: *geoaesthetics*.

geo-cinema in which 'all films would be brought into equilibrium - a vast mud field of images forever motionless' (CW, p. 142). Smithson also outlines the construction of a literal *geo-cinema*, made in a cave or cavern, and made out of crude materials. This geo-cinema shows just one film - a record of its own construction.