

THE GUATTARI EFFECT

Edited by

Éric Alliez and Andrew Goffey

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Chapter 12

Repression, Expression, Depression¹

Franco 'Bifo' Berardi

REPRESSION

The Repression – Liberation Dialectic

The cultural landscape of the 1980s, which was organized around the notion of anti-authoritarianism, is dominated by a dialectic of liberation and repression. In a Hegelian and Marxist context, the historical process is interpreted as a process of the liberation of a possibility for expression that is included in the present order of things, while remaining compressed, perverted and, properly speaking, repressed.

The general curve of the process is sketched out according to the Hegelian architecture of negation and of the negation of negation. Even Freud's thought, while coming from an epistemic field with an entirely different origin, conceives the historical process beginning from a notion of repression. In his essay *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud can thus write:

At this point we cannot fail to be struck by the similarity between the process of civilisation and the libidinal development of the individual. Other instincts are induced to displace the conditions for their satisfaction, to lead them into other paths. In most cases this process coincides with that of the *sublimation* (of instinctual aims) with which we are familiar, but in some it can be differentiated from it . . . it is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilisation is built up upon a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts. This 'cultural frustration' dominates the large field of social relationships between human beings. As we already know, it is the cause of the hostility against which all civilisations have to struggle.²

Freud, therefore, considers repression as an irreducible element, one that constitutes social bonds. Halfway through the twentieth century, between the 1930s and the 1960s, European critical thought questioned the link between the anthropological dimension of alienation and the historical dimension of liberation. The historical theses presented by Sartre in *The Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960), a work directly influenced by Freud's thought, recognized the anthropologically constitutive (and, therefore, irreducible) character of alienation. Marxist thought, in its historicist and dialectical version, considers alienation on the contrary as a historically determined phenomenon that one could overcome through the abolition of capitalist social relations. In 1929, Freud anticipated the elements of this debate,

by criticizing the naivety of dialectical thinking:

The communists believe that they have found the path to deliverance from our evils. According to them, man is wholly good and is well-disposed to his neighbour; but the institution of private property has corrupted his nature . . . If private property were abolished, all wealth held in common, and everyone allowed to share in the enjoyment of it, ill-will and hostility would disappear among men . . . I have no concern with any economic criticisms of the communist system; I cannot enquire into whether the abolition of private property is expedient or advantageous. But I am able to recognise that the psychological premises on which the system is based are an untenable illusion.³

I don't wish to reopen the debate between existentialism and historicism, or between Marxism and psychoanalysis, which concerns the historians of the twentieth century. Above all, I would like to signal the existence of a common philosophical context, a shared analytic premise, constituted by the identification of modern civilization as a system founded on repression.

For Freud, modern capitalism, like every system of civilization, is founded on the necessary repression of individual libido, and on an organization that passes via the sublimation of collective libido. This intuition is stated in a different fashion by twentieth-century thinking. In the field of Freudian psychoanalysis, this discontent is constitutive and irreducible, and psychoanalytic therapy sets out to cure the neuroses that it produces through language and through anamnesis. The philosophical tradition of existentialism shares this Freudian conviction concerning the unsurpassable dimension of constitutive alienation and the repression of the libido and of the drives. On the contrary, in the context of anti-authoritarian Marxist thinking, repression must be considered a socially determined form that social action can eliminate by liberating the productive and desiring energies that the real dynamic of society contains in itself.

The anti-authoritarian thinking of the 1970s arises from the Freudian conceptual sphere, even if it enlarges it and overturns its historical horizon. In *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse proclaims the actuality of a liberation of collective Eros. Repression reduces the potentialities of technology and of knowledge and prevents them from being fully deployed, but critical subjectivity develops its action precisely by creating the conditions of possibility for libidinal potentialities and the potentialities productive of society to be fully expressed and for the pleasure principle to be entirely realized.

The analysis of modern society is mixed together with the description of disciplinary apparatuses that orientate social institutions and public discourse towards repression. The recent publication of Foucault's course at the Collège de France in 1979 (and particularly the publication of his lectures devoted to the birth of biopolitics⁴) obliges us to displace the centre of Foucault's thinking from repressive discipline to the creation of apparatuses of biopolitical control, even if in the works devoted to the genealogy of modernity (notably *The History of Madness*, *The Birth of the Clinic* and *Discipline and Punish*) Foucault remains faithful to the 'repressive' paradigm in his own way.

Desiring Thought

Despite the openly proclaimed abandoning of the Freudian field in *Anti-Oedipus*, even Deleuze and Guattari occupy the theoretical field opened up by Freud in 1929 in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Desire is the motor of the movement that traverses society as well as the trajectory of singularity, but desiring creativity must continuously confront the repressive war machines that capitalist society deploys in each niche of existence and in the imaginary. The Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of desire cannot be reduced to a reading of a 'repressive' type. In *Anti-Oedipus*, desire is opposed to lack. The lack on which dialectical philosophy was built, and on which the fortunes (or misfortunes) of twentieth-century politics were made, arises from dependency and not autonomy. Lack is a product of the economic, religious and psychiatric order.

Processes of erotic and political subjectification are not born out of lack but from desire as the locus of creation. From this point of view, Deleuze and Guattari allow us to understand that repression is only a projection of desire. Desire is not the manifestation of a structure, but it can create a thousand structures. Desire can crystallize structures, transform them into obsessive refrains. Desire creates the traps that capture desire. And yet, in the analytic apparatus that is constituted through Foucault's genealogy and through Deleuzo-Guattarian creationism, it is a vision of subjectivity as a form of repressed desire which wins out over repressive social sublimation. An anti-repressive, or better still, an expressive vision.

The relationship between structure and desire is the essential element leading Guattarian schizoanalytic thinking out of the orbit of Lacanian Freudianism. Desire cannot be understood, starting from structure, as a possible variant that depends on the invariant of the psychic matheme. Creative desire produces infinite structures, and also those that function as repressive apparatuses, among others.

The notion of 'repression' doesn't play any role in the philosophical texts of Deleuze and Guattari, but defines the background for the reception of their thinking, as well as the effect that it produces in the context of anti-authoritarian culture. In the 1960s and 1970s the concept of repression persisted in all discourses with an anti-authoritarian inspiration. In this context, the political significance of desire is opposed to the repressive apparatuses. But this thinking often ended up becoming a conceptual and political trap. In 1977, for example, the Italian social movement (after the wave of arrests which followed the insurrection of the months of February and March) chose to unify around the theme of repression, with the rally that took place in Bologna in September. This was perhaps a conceptual error: by choosing the theme of repression as the principal subject of our discourse, we entered into the narrative machine of power, and we lost the capacity to imagine different forms of life, independent from power. But at the end of the twentieth century, every problematic of repression seemed to dissolve and disappear from the scene. The pathologies of our epoch are effectively no longer the neurotic pathologies produced by the repression of the libido, but rather the schizoid pathologies produced by the expressive explosion of *just do it*.

In the Sphere of Semiocapital

Jean Baudrillard, whose name was for a long time a sort of taboo, offers a different perspective in the field of desiring thinking. In his work from the beginning of the 1970s (*The System of Objects*, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, *Requiem for the Media* and, finally, *Forget Foucault*) Baudrillard affirms that desire is the motor for the development of capital, that the ideology of liberation corresponds to the domination of the commodity, and that the new dimension of the imaginary is not that of repression but that of simulation, the proliferation of simulacra, of seduction. In expressive excess, Baudrillard identified the essential core of the overdose of the real: ‘The Real is growing like the desert, “Welcome to the Desert of the Real”. Illusion, dreams, passion, madness and drugs, but also artifice and simulacrum – these were reality’s natural predators. They have all lost energy, as though struck down by some dark, incurable malady’.⁵ Baudrillard anticipated a tendency which has been affirmed in the course of recent decades: in his analyses, simulation modifies the relationship between subject and object, by keeping the subject confined in the subaltern position of submitting to seduction. The actor is no longer the subject, but the object. As a consequence, the whole problematic of alienation, of repression and of the discontent that they produce, disappears.

In one of his last, and most frequently cited texts, devoted to disciplinary and control societies, Deleuze seems to call into question the conceptual architecture that the Foucauldian notion of discipline derives from and to take the same direction as that taken by Baudrillard since the start of the 1970s.⁶ But I don’t wish to compare the thinking of the simulacrum and the thinking of desire here (a comparison which is nevertheless worth pursuing). I would like instead to study the psychopathological background that begins to emerge in the years in which industrial society gives way to semiocapitalism, that is to say, to a capitalism based on immaterial labour and the explosion of the infosphere.

Overproduction is inherent in capitalist production, because the production of commodities does not respond to the logic of the real needs of humans, but to the abstract logic of the production of value. But in the sphere of semiocapitalism, overproduction is manifest specifically as semiotic overproduction: an infinite excess of signs circulates in the infosphere and individual and collective attention is saturated by it.

Baudrillard’s intuition turned out to be significant in the long term. The essential pathology of the coming time is not produced by repression but by the drive to expression, by the generalized obligation to express. In the first video-electronic generation, the most widespread pathologies are not those of repression but those of hyper-expression.

When we take an interest in suffering in the present epoch, in the forms of discontent of the first network generation, we are no longer in the conceptual field described by Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents*. The Freudian vision posits a hidden dimension at the origin of pathology. Something is hidden, something disappears in repression, access to something is forbidden to us.

What seems evident today is the fact that at the origin of pathology, one no longer finds this hidden dimension, but rather hyper-vision, the excess of visibility, the explosion of the infosphere, the overloading of stimulation produced by information. The technological and anthropological context starting from which we understand the genesis of contemporary psychopathologies is not that of repression but that of hyper-expression: disturbances of

attention, dyslexia, panic. Pathologies that perhaps signal new modalities in the elaboration of information, but which for now are manifest in the form of suffering, discontent, marginality.

EXPRESSION

Expression, Proliferation, Cyberculture

In *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*,⁷ Deleuze introduces a new approach, situated outside and beyond the conceptual horizon of the dialectic or of Freudianism. In the introduction to his book, Deleuze interrogates the sense of expression: ‘expression is, on the one hand an explication, an unfolding of what expresses itself, the One manifesting itself in the Many . . . Its multiple expression, on the other hand, involves Unity. The One remains involved in what expresses it, imprinted in what unfolds it, immanent in whatever manifests it: expression is in this respect an involvement.’⁸

Emanation and the development of something that is implicit, but also complication and creation. The notion of ‘expression’ is situated at the crossover of Spinozist notions of *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata* and constitutes an essential junction between Spinoza’s thinking and that of Hegel. Hegel (as Deleuze recognizes in his introduction) considers expression to be a process through which something appears which cannot be reduced to *explicatio*, but which implies a *complicatio*, a novelty.

The question of expression is central in the Deleuzo-Guattarian thinking of creativity. In the text ‘Millions and Millions of Potential Alices’,⁹ initially published as the introduction to the book *Radio Alice, Radio Libre*,¹⁰ Félix Guattari wrote: ‘imminent danger. Watch out! The slightest line of flight can make everything explode. Special surveillance of little perverse groups propelling words, turns of phrase and attitudes able to contaminate whole populations’.¹¹ The danger of which he was speaking was the danger that the liberation of expression constituted for power. Access to the media – to radio, offset printing, and to video – by a proliferating quantity of groupuscules, constituted the condition for an overthrowing of the powers that be: ‘in Bologna and in Rome, the fires of a revolution that bears no relation to those that have hitherto disrupted history have been lit, a revolution that will not only sweep away capitalist regimes but the bastions of bureaucratic socialism too’.¹² Guattari is speaking here of proliferation: he was already thinking of a post-media era. In the 1970s and 1980s, when the media gained power over minds, Guattari envisaged a post-media era. By that he understood that, through the proliferation of collective assemblages of enunciation, multiplied and amplified by technology, the frontier between the universe of sources of information and the universe of reception was rapidly disappearing: ‘Alice. Radio line of flight. Theory-life-practice-group-sex-solitude-machine-tenderness-caress assemblage’.¹³

In speaking of Radio Alice and of the explosions of creativity linked to the electric media of the period, which were in the process of becoming mass media, it is evident that Guattari

clearly imagined the future of the network. The word ‘network’ had already been a part of Guattari’s vocabulary for a long time, and when the free radios allowed the possibility of a proliferation of vectors of communication to be glimpsed, he saw in this proliferation a possible line of flight vis à vis all forms of power: not only the form of capitalism that existed at the time but equally diverse forms of bureaucratic socialism.

It is only today, more than 30 years afterwards, that one can understand just how right he was. Bureaucratic socialism in its various forms was disrupted and finally collapsed, thanks, precisely, to the proliferation of media, which set off an irresistible deterritorialization of the imaginary and the social. Even capitalism was disrupted by the proliferation of the media and the imaginary, but its reterritorializing power turned out to be infinitely superior to that of bureaucratic socialism, which collapsed, while liberal capitalism was reborn from its ashes with a renewed power and a multiplied capacity for expansion.

But if we want to understand how capitalism has been able to react to its political and cultural crisis, to the workers’ struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, to the wave of refusal of work which traversed the global system of production of the time, we will have to deepen the problem of expression and the link between expression and repression. A social system founded on expression was in the process of taking form in the 1970s and 1980s, while a new assemblage of communication was beginning to appear, beginning with the popular diffusion of the tools of electronic communication: the screen, the radio, the computer, the video-camera.

In the 1990s, this technological assemblage will find its full expression in the construction of the internet, an industrial and economic – but also a creative, linguistic and expressive – production. Guattari had conceived the deployment of the network through the notion of proliferation and the idea of a post-media society, since the invention of the network exceeds the distinction of emission and reception (at least at a conceptual level, but also in a concrete fashion in its first phase).

Power and Saturation

A reterritorializing dynamic of capitalism, which codes fleeing segments according to the principles of value, competition and accumulation, corresponds to the powerful deterritorialization created by the network. Forms of power redefine themselves. They were organized as a function of the principle of repression, they now follow the principle of expression. If today, with several years distance, we observe the functioning of the forms of power that preceded the explosion of proliferating creativity and the functioning of those that followed it, we can see that they follow two entirely different models. We have passed from a form of power founded on consensus to another, founded on saturation.

Consensus-power presupposes the slow rhythm of the circulation of information: the flux of information advances slowly, crossing society in depth, fabricating consensus vis à vis fundamental statements of power, and violently represses demonstrations of opposition. The stake of this dynamic is the production of sense. In the sphere of saturation-power, sense no longer generates any conflict, because it is erased, forgotten, eliminated. The impossibility of elaborating sense is the foundation and the purpose of the proliferating organization of

communication. The flux of information accelerates progressively, to the point of no longer reaching conscious awareness.

In an essay called 'Learner-based Listening and Technological Authenticity',¹⁴ Richard Robin, a researcher at George Washington University, studied the effects of the acceleration of vocal utterance on listeners' understanding. Robin recorded radio broadcasts of Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union in the dying years of socialist power and then recorded other broadcasts in the first years of Boris Yeltsin's Russia, in 1993. Listening to his recordings, he discovered that the speed of vocal utterance had doubled, shifting from three words a second in 1988 to six words a second in 1993. In between, there had been a shift from a regime founded on consensus, which imposes adhesion to the dominant sense and represses opposition, to a regime founded on the fragmenting of sense and the acceleration of the flux of enunciation.

In his study, Robin calculated the number of syllables pronounced every second and found that as the rhythm of vocal utterance accelerates, more syllables are pronounced every second and, subsequently, the amount of time for critical re-elaboration by the listener shrinks. The speed of the utterance and the quantity of signs transmitted in the unit of time determines the time available for a conscious re-elaboration of the message on the part of the listener.

Robin's observation has very interesting consequences for understanding the passage from an authoritarian form of power founded on persuasion (like the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century) to a form of diffuse biopolitical power (like the contemporary info-crazy). Totalitarianisms are founded on consensus: the citizens must understand the president, the general, the 'Führer', the 'Secretary', the 'Duce'; only one source of information is authorized; dissident voices are censored. The info-cratic regime of semiocapital is, on the contrary, founded on an excess and an acceleration of fluxes of information, and makes sources of information proliferate to the point that they become undecipherable and insignificant.

This change implies a transformation of the pathologies linked to forms of power: if the predominant pathology in modern society was the neurosis produced by repression, today the most widespread pathologies have a psychotic character. The hyperstimulation of attention reduces the capacity for critical interpretation, but equally reduces the time available for understanding the other, the body of the other and his or her discourse, which endeavours to be understood with succeeding.

DEPRESSION

Depression and Chaosmosis

Why, at a certain moment, does sadness prevail, and why do the fragile architectures of collective happiness collapse, one after the other? That is the question that Félix Guattari asks himself on the last page of the last of his books, which appeared in 1992, shortly before his death:

In the fog and miasma that obscure our *fin de millennium*, the question of subjectivity is now returning as a leitmotiv. It is not a natural given, any more than air or water. How do we produce it, capture it, enrich it and permanently reinvent it in a way that renders it compatible with Universes of mutant value? How do we work for its liberation, that is, for its resingularisation?¹⁵

Some months earlier, in 1991, his penultimate book, written with Gilles Deleuze, *What Is Philosophy?* had been published.¹⁶ These two books have many themes in common, especially those of chaos and of old age. It is a matter of two themes that are very close, as one might notice.

We require just a little order to protect us from chaos. Nothing is more painful, more distressing than a thought that escapes itself, than ideas that fly off, that disappear hardly formed, already eroded by forgetfulness or precipitated into others that we no longer master.¹⁷

Chaos takes hold when the world goes too quickly for our mind to appreciate its forms, to grasp its sense, when the flux is too intense and too rapid for it to be apprehended. Crushed by this speed, our mind is seized with panic, troubled by the uncontrolled movement of psychic energies that are a prelude to depression. In the introduction to *What Is Philosophy?*, a fantastic, wrenching book written on the edge of an abyss, Deleuze and Guattari evoke old age. Old age opens the doors to a chaotomic wisdom, one capable of elaborating, with all the necessary slowness, the infinite speed of fluxes. ‘Chaos chaotises’ and undoes all consistency in the infinite: the problem of philosophy is that of constructing planes of consistency without losing the infinity from out of which thinking materializes. The chaos of which it is a question here has a mental and physical existence:

Not only objective disconnections and disintegrations but an immense weariness results in sensations, which have now become woolly, letting escape the elements and vibrations it finds increasingly difficult to contract. Old age is this very weariness: then, there is either a fall into mental chaos outside of the plane of composition or a falling-back on ready-made opinions.¹⁸

Chaos is a milieu that is too complex for the interpretative grids available to us to decipher, in which fluxes that are too rapid for the mind to elaborate circulate. Subjectivity, or rather the process of subjectification, constantly confronts chaos. It is constituted precisely in this incessant confrontation with an infinite speed out of which the conscious organism draws the elements necessary for the creation of a *cosmos*, of a provisional, variable and singular order. But subjectivity doesn’t simply choose the chaos that immobilizes it: chaos is an adversary, but equally an ally: ‘It is as if the *struggle against chaos* does not take place without an affinity with the enemy’.¹⁹

How can one elaborate the infinite speed of fluxes without also suffering the effect of disaggregation produced by panic? Concepts, artistic forms, friendship are the operators of

speed that allow us to understand what is infinitely rapid in slowness, without losing infinite complexity, without falling back on the banality of opinion, of communication, of redundancy. The process of subjectification produces the semiotic, artistic, emotional and political assemblages thanks to which the chaosmos becomes possible. For example, art creates semiotic apparatuses capable of translating the infinite speeds of the fluxes of the real into the slow rhythms of sensibility. Deleuze and Guattari call these sensible translators ‘chaoids’:

Art is not chaos but a composition of chaos that yields the vision or sensation, so that it constitutes, as Joyce says, a chaosmos, a composed chaos – neither foreseen nor preconceived. Art transforms chaotic variability into *chaoid* variety, as in El Greco’s black and green-grey conflagration, for example, or Turner’s golden conflagration, or de Staël’s red conflagration. Art struggles with chaos but it does so in order to render it sensory, even through the most charming character, the most enchanted landscape (Watteau).²⁰

Becoming subject is not a natural process but it unfolds in a social, economic and mediatic context that is continually changing.

The Old Age of the World

These two books appeared at the beginning of the 1990s, the years of passage beyond the modernity of the twentieth century. These years announce the epoch of the dissolution of the community of happiness and the formation of a new system of production in which the structures of solidarity disappear, the links of the world of the worker are destroyed by technical innovation, work becomes precarious and collective intelligence becomes the object of an ambiguous process of subjection, one that is difficult to decipher.

It was in these years that Guattari once again confronted the problem of the production of subjectivity. Modernity constructed ‘chaoids’: tools for sensible, conceptual and political translation and transformation. As old age approaches, the two authors discover the process of dissolution of modern chaoids and perceive the signs of a new appearance of chaos. Perhaps their old age was the old age of the world? Demographers confirm for us that aging is the destiny of the planet. The demographic curve has already slowed down in its course. Fifty years ago, it was predicted that size of the human population would reach 12 billion, but we now know that it will not exceed 9 billion. The falling birth rate prevails in all regions of the planet, except in the Islamic world.

In the years that followed 1989, after the sudden and ephemeral hope for a period of world peace, and the equally sudden reappearance of war, were the years of a dramatic, painful and obscure change. The carnage in ex-Yugoslavia, and the disappearance of the Soviet Union announced the return of a nationalism subsequently incarnated in the figure of Vladimir Putin. The fanaticism of Islamic fundamentalism was asserted as the political identity of a large part of the ‘wretched of the earth’. The ecological catastrophe was announced as an inevitable prospect after the summit at Rio de Janeiro, when the American president, George Bush Sr. announced that the American way of life was non-negotiable. In these same years,

Guattari registered an accumulation of signals that announced the barbarity of new forms of fascism and the new violence produced by the victory of capitalism on the planetary scale. The line of conceptual creation was displaced, fragmented and recomposed in new directions, often losing itself and becoming less directed and less recognizable.

Depression. One will not find this word in Guattari's texts. It remains in the margins as if it was a subject that was incompatible with the creative energy that animated his work, his research and his existence. But if one reads the last chapter of the last book co-authored by Deleuze and Guattari, one notices that it is a matter of a discourse on depression, on confusion, on the darkening horizon: one sees chaos emerge. Depression is the *bête noire* of modern culture, because youth and energy are the conditions for the unfolding of the history of modern culture, from *Sturm und Drang* in Romanticism to the revolutionary aspirations of anarchists and communists, the surges of nationalism in the nineteenth century and then the fascisms of the twentieth. Energy is the necessary premise for the machine of production and growth to function.

Perhaps today the moment has come to refound Utopia, which in modernity was always the expression of youth and energy. It is a matter of conceptualizing a 'senile' Utopia of slowness, of the abandoning of the economic paradigm of growth. Only by overturning the sense and rhythm of Utopia will it be possible to avoid the current aging of the world manifesting itself as depression.

Depression implies a change of speed. Only if language, culture and politics can interpret and translate into signs the slowing down that is necessary and urgently demanded by the psychic and social organism, will depression be able to evolve towards a new, happy form of exchange of human and world.

An Aesthetic of the Refrain

Chaosmosis marks the beginning of a reflection that Guattari has left us as an inheritance so that we might continue to develop it. It concerns the creation of a singular *cosmos*, that is to say, the continual reconstruction of desiring energy beyond depression, beyond the obscure (but also illuminating) experience that it constitutes.

There is a form of truth in depression. And, in fact 'the *struggle against chaos* does not take place without an affinity with the enemy'. Depression is the vision of the abyss of the loss of sense and, like political creation, poetic creation and conceptual creation constitute the paths of 'chaosmotic' creation, as the construction of bridges over this abyss. Friendship, love, sharing and rebellion.

Chaosmosis is a book that endeavours to overcome chaos through creation, which seeks the practical levels (aesthetics, philosophy, schizoanalysis, politics) that might enable the singularization of chaos, the slowing down of its infinite speed. Philosophy creates concepts, and concepts are chaoids capable of cutting out a singular cosmos. Art, on the other hand, is a singular composition of chaos by the elaboration of forms, gestures, milieus that take on body concretely in the space of vision, communication, projection.

With the expression 'aesthetic paradigm', Guattari refers to the privileged position that sensibility has acquired in our epoch, as the exchanges of production and communication

lose their materiality and emerge in the space of sensible projection. Aesthetics is the discipline that is interested in the syntony between the human and his or her milieu, a syntony that is troubled today by the excess of information, semiotic inflation, the saturation of all the recesses of attention and of consciousness. Art registers and signals these troubles, but it also goes looking for possible new modalities of becoming, and aesthetics appears at the same time as a diagnosis of the pollution of the psychic sphere and as a therapy for the relation between the organism and its world.

Guattari institutes a privileged link between the aesthetic and the psychotherapeutic dimensions. The problem of the relationship between chaos and the singularity of lived time thus becomes decisive. To cling to the temporal flux, the mind has to be able to construct its own temporalities: these singular temporalities, which enable us to orient ourselves, are called 'refrains'. The notion of the refrain takes us to the heart of the schizoanalytic project: the refrain is the singular temporality, the niche of individuation in which one can create a cosmos.

Philosophy, art and schizoanalysis are singular practices of chaosmotic creation, which make refrains that constitute the map of an existence emerge from infinite chaos. But refrains can 'harden', be transformed into semiotic, ritual, sexual, aesthetic or political obsessions. On the one hand, the refrain protects us from the chaotic current of the 'infosphere', from the semiotic fluxes that carry us off like a storm: that is how one can construct one's own path, one's own sphere of signs, of affects, of sharing. But on the other hand, the refrain can become a cage, a rigid system of references and of obsessively repetitive existential paths.

Schizoanalysis intervenes at precisely these points of neurotic hardening of the refrain. Analysis here is no longer understood as the interpretation of symptoms and the search for a latent content that pre-exists the neurosis, but as the creation of new foci of attention, which can induce a bifurcation, a deviation of the path, a rupture of the closed circuit of obsessive repetition and open a new horizon of possibility for vision and for experience. *Chaosmosis* is situated in a historically precise dimension, that of the fog and miasma that began to spread at the start of the 1990s and which, today, a long time after, seems to have invaded every point of the infosphere, the atmosphere and the psychosphere.

It has become difficult, almost impossible, to breathe and we are effectively suffocating. One suffocates every day and the symptoms of this stifling are disseminated all along the paths of everyday life and the highways of planetary politics. We don't have much chance of getting out, and we know it. There aren't any trustworthy maps any more, there aren't any desirable destinations either. There is no alternative to capitalism: becoming semiocapitalism, it has swallowed not only forms of life but also thought, imagination and hope in the grinding machinery of exchange value.

Maybe we should put the theme of old age at the centre of our discourse, as Deleuze and Guattari do in the Introduction to *What Is Philosophy?* Old age is no longer a marginal and rare phenomenon, like it was in the times when the old man or old woman was considered the bearer of knowledge that was precious for humanity. Today, old age is becoming the tendentially dominant social condition, and at the same time, the condition that metaphorically expresses the depletion of energy that is hitting humanity. Libidinal energy diminishes when the world becomes too rapid for one to be able to apprehend it in the long

times of emotion, and when entropy seizes hold of the cerebral tissue. The decline of libidinal energy and entropy are two phenomena that advance together. Alzheimer's disease becomes the metaphor for a future given over to forgetting, whereas the new video-electronic generations seem to have been swept away by whirlwinds of panic, and sunk into the spiral of depression.

The problem of sensibility is, then, confused with the problem of politics, and the redefinition of an ethical prospective cannot be dissociated from it. At the start of the new century, the end of modernity is revealed to be the end of humanist heritage. Hypercapitalism is in the process of distancing itself from the heritage of the West and its supposed 'values'. But the consequences of this phenomenon are terrible: capitalism without the heritage of the Renaissance and without the heritage of the Enlightenment is a regime of pure, unlimited, inhuman violence.

The mind must go to work in conditions of economic and existential precarity. The time of life is subjected to work by an action of fractalization of consciousness and experience which breaks the coherence of lived time. The psychosphere becomes the scene of a nightmare, and the link between human beings gives up its surface of humanism. The universality of modern reason gives way to a violent logic of belonging. For brains decomposing in the infosphere, God appears as the only path to salvation, transforming as always into an infernal trap. Religious fundamentalism and the cult of purity are mixed with ignorance and depression, and feed ethnocentrism and nationalism.

The global panorama islamicizes [*s'islamise*] in different forms: submission becomes the dominant form of relation between individual and group. Whereas the collective dimension abandons all forms of desiring energy, and is reduced to a skeleton of fear and necessity, adhesion to the group becomes compulsive and obligatory. And conformism is the last shelter for souls without desire or autonomy.

REPRESSION (AGAIN)

In July 1977, when in Italy hundreds of intellectuals, students, workers and young people were imprisoned, I fled to Paris and tried to organize a riposte with Félix Guattari. We decided then to organize a rally on repression, against repression for that September. It was an error. It was an error on my part most of all: by proposing this colloquium, I led my friend Félix astray, and together we shifted the discussion to a plane that, in the long term, proved harmful. Even if police repression had struck the popular movement, and even if the consequence of this repression was the appearance of terroristic impulses, which would subsequently be manifested in a disastrous fashion, we should not have focused our attention on the question of repression. We should have thought about the future potential that this movement bore within it, we should have foreseen the crises that were looming, and prepared the collective imagination for the technological and mediatic mutation that was going to come.

The situation of the time implied openings onto the future, and we have to recognize that this anti-repressive choice constituted a limitation of our vision. Can we think of the future

alternatives hidden in the folds of the past? In the month of July 1977, we wrote the text of an appeal against repression in Italy and against the ‘historical compromise’ between the PCI and the Christian Democrats. The appeal was signed by Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Philippe Sollers, Maria Antonietta Macciocchi and Jean-Paul Sartre, among others. In Italy it had a powerful effect, and the reaction of Italian intellectuals was divided. The opposition of intellectuals was manifest on an international level for the first time and opposed Western capitalism and Soviet oppression with the same force. For the last time, perhaps, the French appeal raised the question (that is so strictly linked to twentieth-century history) of the role of intellectuals in society.

The September rally was an event without any real consequences. Tens of thousands of people turned up in Bologna. There were enormous gatherings, colloquia and theatrical representations in the street, political meetings and concerts. It was an explosion of joy rather than rage, but in a certain sense it marked the end of the history of Italian movements and opened the phase of the drift into terrorism and of state action to crush dissident social forces. During the period of the rally, people turned up in Bologna almost in the expectation of a magic formula that might open up a new history, an egalitarian and libertarian history, one worthy of the future. Everyone was trying to avoid violence, catastrophe, isolation and the undoing of all solidarity. We didn’t find the magic formula, and we know all the rest.

Capitalism’s counter-offensive was imminent and in the years that followed it struck against the social composition of the working class on a planetary scale. The cultural counter-revolution was looming, and in the 1980s, it opened up the path to individualism, to heroin and to solitude.

In the reconstruction of events fabricated by journalists and historians, one ended up using the expression ‘the years of lead’ to refer to the 1970s in Italy, without making any distinction. But the years of rebellion and insurrection were not years of lead. One can only say that of the years that followed the defeat of the social movements and which erased the traces of this cultural explosion in the life of people and the city.

But the memory of these years has not been extinguished, because the hope for a world in which friendship prevails over competition, joy over oppression and boredom cannot be extinguished. That is why ‘77’ is always on the horizon. It is the revolution to come.

Translated from French by Andrew Goffey

NOTES

- 1 This text is a synthesis of three papers given at three successive conferences on the work and thought of Félix Guattari: at the Akademie der bildenen Kunste, in Vienna on 4–5 May 2007; at the Université de Paris VIII on 15 March 2008; and at Middlesex University in London on the 17–18 April 2008.
- 2 Freud, S. (1999), *Civilisation and its Discontents*, in the *Standard Edition XXI*. London: Vintage, p. 97.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 113.
- 4 Foucault, M. (2008), *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979*. Translated by Graham Burchell. London: Palgrave.
- 5 Baudrillard, J. (2005), *The Lucidity Pact or the Intelligence of Evil*. Translated by C. Turner. Oxford: Berg, p. 27.
- 6 ‘Postscript on Control Societies’ in Deleuze, G. (1995), *Negotiations 1972–1990*. Translated by M. Joughin. New York:

Columbia University Press, pp. 177–82.

- 7 Deleuze, G. (1990), *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Translated by M. Joughin. New York: Zone.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 9 Guattari, F. (1977), 'Des millions et millions d'Alice en puissance', in *La Révolution moléculaire*. Paris: Recherches.
- 10 Guattari, F. (1977), 'La laboratoire de sociologie de la connaissance' in *Radio Alice Radio Libre*. Paris: Editions Jean-Pierre Delarge.
- 11 Guattari, 'Des millions et millions d'Alice en puissance', *op.cit.* p. 143.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 151.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- 14 Robin, R. (2007), 'Learner-based Listening and Technological Authenticity' in *Language Learning and Technology* 11.1: 109–15.
- 15 Guattari, F. (1995), *Chaosmosis. An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. Translated by J. P. Bains and J. Pefanis. Sydney: Power Institute, p. 135.
- 16 Deleuze, G., and Guattari, F. (1994), *What Is Philosophy?* Translated by H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell. London: Verso.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 201.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 204.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 203.
- 20 *Ibid.*, pp. 204–5.