

On Lines of Flight: A Study of Deleuze and Guattari's Concept

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Edward Thornton, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the concept of the line of flight (*ligne de fuite*), as it appears in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. By mapping the individuation of this concept within a number of different works, authored either by one of these thinkers or by the two of them together, I show how and why the concept of the line of flight was created, how it functions within the conceptual domain of Deleuzoguattarian writing, and what kind of philosophical and political work it can do.

The first two chapters of the thesis examine the work completed by Deleuze and Guattari before their collaborations, especially Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and Guattari's *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* (1972). Here I pay close attention to Deleuze and Guattari's reinterpretations of basic philosophical questions concerning the nature of space, time, and human agency and show how Deleuze and Guattari's anti-capitalist politics is connected to their anti-representational metaphysics.

In the latter sections of the thesis I argue for a more vigilant reading of the politics contained in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). Chapters 3 and 4 examine Deleuze and Guattari's creation of the concept of the line of flight in *Anti-Oedipus*, where it plays a central role in their analysis of both desiring-machines and social-machines. Chapters 5 and 6, on the other hand, examine the development of the concept in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where it is a key component in both their creation of rhizomatics and their political pragmatism.

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Introduction – How to Approach a Line of Flight

Contents:

- i. Introduction
- ii. The line of flight in context
- iii. The line of flight within Deleuze and Guattari Studies
- iv. Thesis methodology
- v. Chapter overview

i) Introduction

This thesis is a study of the concept of the line of flight (*ligne de fuite*), as it appears in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. By mapping the emergence of this concept within a number of different works, authored either by one of these thinkers or by the two of them together, my analysis will show how and why this concept was created, how it functions within the conceptual domain of Deleuzoguattarian writing, and what kind of philosophical and political work it can do.

This introduction includes four sections. First, I will offer a brief overview of the concept of the line of flight. I will explain where it appears in Deleuze and Guattari's work and make some preliminary comments concerning the role it plays within Deleuze and Guattari's project. Second, I will offer an overview of the reception and interpretation of this concept in the secondary literature. Here I will explain why the concept has been overlooked by a number of major commentators and why it has been misunderstood and ill-used by others. In the third section of this introduction, I will explain my methodology and offer a brief defence of why it will be productive to map the individuation of this concept within the work of both Deleuze and Guattari. Finally, in the fourth section, I will give a brief synopsis of the content of each of the six chapters that make up the substantive work of the thesis.

ii) The line of flight in context

By the time Deleuze and Guattari met in June of 1969,¹ the former had published eight monographs, each offering a novel reading of an influential figure in the history of western thought: first Hume, then Nietzsche, Kant, Proust, Nietzsche again, Bergson, Sacher-Masoch, and Spinoza. The controversial young philosopher had also recently published two other prodigious works, *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *Logic of Sense* (1969), in which he put forward his own metaphysical system. In these two books, Deleuze built on the criticisms and reinterpretations he had made of the history

¹ Dosse, 2010, 3

of philosophy to produce a new form of metaphysics. He set out to understand the world as an inherently dynamic process, rather than one governed by static principles of identity.² He argued that the mode of thought that had dominated the western mind since Plato had made the recurring mistake of assuming that the basis for thought must be something unchanging and unified. For Deleuze, philosophy has consistently directed itself towards the goal of attaining unchanging knowledge of that which does not change: Platonic 'Forms', Aristotelian 'essences', Cartesian 'clear and distinct ideas', and Kantian 'categories' or 'pure concepts of the understanding' are all taken as examples of this tendency. According to this tradition, our understanding of the world must be based on *identity*, with any *differences* only being thought as secondary relations between things. Similarly, change itself must be thought as a kind of deviation from the otherwise essentially static nature of truth.³ In an attempt to reverse this tendency within philosophy, which Deleuze dubbed the 'image of thought', he produced a new metaphysical system, centred around the concept of difference.⁴ We will see later on in this thesis, especially in the first main chapter, how influential this metaphysics was for Deleuze and Guattari's shared project.

Guattari was not a philosopher in the traditional sense, but a psychoanalyst and self-styled political militant. As well as being well known for his numerous positions in student assemblies and communist groups, especially those of a Trotskyist bent, Guattari was a psychoanalyst who had been analysed by Jacques Lacan, by far the most influential figure in French psychoanalytic circles at the time and one of the most influential living European intellectuals.

² To say that Deleuze's metaphysics was posed as a challenge to the history of philosophy does not mean that his work had no precursors. Deleuze attempted to realize a hidden or 'minor' history of philosophy, via the Stoics, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson, that had previously been covered over by the 'major' history of western thought, running from Plato, through Descartes, to Kant and beyond.

³ These themes will all be discussed in more depth in later chapters. Here I can only offer direction on where to find Deleuze and Guattari's direct comments on the history of philosophy: DR 164; LS 86, 111, 291, AO 26, 83, 85, 116; ATP 17-18, 415.

⁴ Deleuze is not the only 20th century French thinker to suggest the priority of the concept of difference; Derrida's use of *différance* plays a similar conceptual role (1982, 3-27). Deleuze is unique, however, in developing a positive and productive conception of difference that he could use to tackle some of the major problems that have arisen in the history of western metaphysics.

Guattari was an intimidating and forthright character, who had helped set up one of the most forward-thinking psychotherapeutic centres in France, the psychiatric clinic at La Borde, where he worked until his death. Until Jacques Alain-Miller's rise to prominence, Guattari was also recognised as the heir-apparent to Lacan's throne as the head of the *École Freudienne de Paris*. As a therapist, Guattari was intent on developing a method for the treatment of psychotics, a group Freud famously thought to be immune to the psychoanalytic method, due to their inability to maintain the analytic 'contract'. Despite having written his doctoral thesis on psychosis, Lacan also tended to eschew the treatment of psychotics due to his understanding of psychosis as a result of psychic 'foreclosure'. Guattari's major theoretical revision to both traditional Freudian and Lacanian methods, was his attempt to think psychosis as a social and cultural occurrence, rather than simply as an individual ailment. He recognised that psychotics were affected by, and embedded in, an historical, cultural and political situation, and that in order to treat these individuals it was necessary to take therapy out of the consulting room, away from the couch, and to put it in conversation with a broader political critique. Drawing on the practices developed at St Alban by figures such as François Tosquelles and Lucien Bonnafé, Guattari and his colleague at La Borde, Jean Oury, set out to create a form of group therapy that could treat psychosis by opening up the psychoanalytic encounter to the dynamics of the surrounding context. The result of this effort was 'Institutional Psychotherapy', which, unlike traditional psychoanalytic methods, rejected both the unity of the subject, either as a reality or a goal of analysis, and the unity of the symptom.

We will look more closely at Guattari's work in chapter two of this thesis, but I have given this brief overview here in order to provide the necessary background for an introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's joint project. Specifically, I hope this précis will show that what Deleuze and Guattari had in common before their collaboration was an aversion to the centrality of the individual. For Deleuze, this was manifest in his philosophical critique of the concept of identity, while for Guattari it revealed itself in his attempts to develop a therapeutic practice, and a psychoanalytic theory, that did not foreground the individual subject.

Deleuze and Guattari's first collaborative work, *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), is a philosophical and political critique of the traditional psychoanalytic institution, its interaction with the history of capitalism, and their shared basis in a philosophy of identity and a conception of desire as lack. It analyses the relationship between reality and desire and puts forward a new, materialist psychiatry. This book, which made up the first half of the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series, sets out a revolutionary project and it is no coincidence that it was produced in the wake of the student and worker riots that erupted in France in May of 1968. The second part of the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series, published as *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), is more diverse in its aims and notably less militant in its revolutionary demands. It is a kind of field guide for a reinterpretation of the universe, covering a huge range of registers, including the cosmic, geological, evolutionary, ethological, mythological, anthropological, historical, economic, political, literary, and musical. While the differences between these two books are striking, Deleuze and Guattari never let go of their critique of the concept of identity. In the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters of this thesis we will look closely at the intricacies of these two books, but here I just want to highlight one effect of this consistent critique of identity, which will allow us to give a brief definition of the line of flight. What Deleuze and Guattari are constantly fighting against in their collaborative works is the image of the world as an object, which is in turn made up of other objects. They want to avoid the kind of thinking that assumes the universe is a closed totality, the truth of which is essentially static and unitary, and replace it with an understanding of the world as an open-ended dynamic process, the constituent parts of which are also not objects of identity, but further processes. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari do not try to analyse the 'things' they find around them, but instead try to explain the genetic processes that give rise to these apparently unified things.

In a discussion with Claire Parnet, Deleuze explains that his work with Guattari is not interested in offering an analysis of "things, but of a multiplicity of dimensions, of lines and directions", a collection of dynamic elements that they

will name an “assemblage”.⁵ An assemblage is a set of connections that come together for a period of time and which, when taken together, produce a recognisable behaviour or effect. Each assemblage is a constellation of heterogeneous elements, however these constituent elements are not to be taken as entities in themselves, but are also to be understood as processes or connections. Throughout their work, Deleuze and Guattari will refer to the connections that constitute an assemblage as ‘lines’.⁶ In the same essay, Deleuze states that according to their mode of thought: “Whether we are individuals or groups, we are made up of lines and these lines are very varied in nature.”⁷ If the world is made up of assemblages, and these assemblages are constituted by lines, then in order to give an account of phenomena encountered in the world, it will be necessary to develop a theory of what these lines are, how they function, and how they interact. Subsequently, the whole of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophical project becomes an attempt to do just that: “What we call by different names – schizoanalysis, micro-politics, pragmatics, diagrammatism, rhizomatics, cartography – has no other object than the study of these lines.”⁸ As an assemblage is not a static entity, but something dynamic, it is not always useful, or even possible, to answer the question ‘what is it?’ but only ‘how does it function?’ or ‘what can it do?’. Deleuze and Guattari will also aim to answer the more fundamental, ‘how was it produced?’ and ‘how is it reproduced in such a way that it appears to have a duration in time?’

As part of this project, Deleuze and Guattari will differentiate between three different kinds of lines, and it is in this context that the line of flight first emerges as a concept. For any assemblage to exist, it must be the case that some of the lines, or connections, that make up the assemblage serve to uphold its structure. These lines, which hold the assemblage together, are referred to as lines of rigid segmentarity, or molar lines. On the other hand, for the

⁵ DII 100

⁶ The concept of the ‘line’ goes through a number of transformations in Deleuze and Guattari’s work. See Deleuze’s comments on the ‘line’ and the ‘vector’ (DR 290; LS 65, 125); and on the ‘line’ as an ‘arrow’ (DR xiii; N viii).

⁷ DII 93

⁸ DII 94

assemblage to reproduce itself in such a way that it survives over time, it must also be able to adapt or change. The lines which bring about these revisions are referred to as lines of supple segmentarity, or molecular lines. Finally, there are those lines that reach outside of the assemblage, those parts of the assemblage that escape the structure of which they are a part and serve to connect such an assemblage to that which is outside itself. These lines are referred to as *lines of flight* and it is these lines that are the object of study for this thesis.⁹ Over the course of the next six chapters I will aim to give a comprehensive and technical account of the concept of the 'line of flight'. I will show how it draws on previous ideas developed by the two authors and how it fits into the many different philosophical and political projects conducted by Deleuze and Guattari. In order to do this, I will also explore a much broader repertoire of Deleuzoguattarian concepts, and will draw on far more sources than I am able to include in this introduction. By way of compensation, I will include one example here of an assemblage that Deleuze and Guattari describe in order to illustrate how the concept of the line of flight might function elsewhere.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explain how the evolutionary development of two biological species can affect each other by taking the example of the wasp and the orchid. For the wasp species to exist over time it must have some means of reproducing itself: there is the chemical reproduction of genetic code which ensures that the species can exist from one generation to the next, and there are also behavioural functions, such as the division of labour between the egg-producing queen and the pollen collecting workers that ensure the survival of the colony. These processes, which serve to maintain the structure of the life of the species over time, can be understood as lines of rigid segmentarity, or molar lines. However, in order for the wasp to survive changes in its environment it must also have some methods for adaptation: the reproduction of genetic code must include the right number of mutations to allow for slight alterations in the chemical make-up of the wasp, and similarly there must be an element of contest within the social

⁹ ATP 225-228

structure of the colony so that a weak queen can be replaced when necessary. These tendencies of alteration and revision, which are equally necessary for the existence of the wasp species, can be understood as lines of supple segmentarity, or as molecular lines. However, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the tendency of the wasp that Deleuze and Guattari are most interested in is the mutual dependence it develops with the orchid.

There are particular species of orchid whose flowers reproduce the colour and patterned effect of the female wasp in order to attract the pollinator. However, Deleuze and Guattari see this as something other than a simple imitation of form. Under their interpretation, the wasp “becomes a liberated piece of the orchid's reproductive system”, while the orchid “becomes the object of an orgasm in the wasp, also liberated from its own reproduction”.¹⁰ The important point here is that there is a particular set, or series, of functions that define the development and survival of the wasp, and there is a separate series that defines the development and survival of the orchid, however, in this interaction a line is formed that connects these two series. The two series resonate with each other, affecting both the wasp and the orchid. Deleuze and Guattari write that in this example: “There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight.”¹¹ The line that connects the wasp and the orchid is a line of flight. It produces a “coexistence of two asymmetrical movements” and is thus referred to as “a line of flight that sweeps away selective pressures”.¹²

To clarify, for Deleuze and Guattari, lines of flight are not secondary to the assemblages that they escape. It may seem as if wasps and orchids exist as species prior to their interaction, and that the line connecting them is only of ancillary or supplementary interest. In direct opposition to this intuition, Deleuze and Guattari claim that lines of flight are constitutive and substantive. Assemblages can only come into existence through the creative capacities that

¹⁰ ATP 324

¹¹ ATP 11

¹² ATP 324

lines of flight expose.¹³ This is a complex and counterintuitive philosophical position to maintain – and it is one that will be explored throughout the thesis – but it is not uncharacteristic of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophical style. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze argues that difference is the necessary precondition for the genesis of identity, and in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, Guattari argues that group phenomena of desire logically precede individual desires. Once we have had a chance to explore these texts more closely, Deleuze and Guattari’s claims in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* that lines of flight constitute the necessary preconditions for the genesis of assemblages will be much easier to swallow.

As well as taking examples from evolutionary biology, the concept of the line of flight is worked out in a number of alternative case studies from a range of disciplines including psychoanalysis, semiotics, ethnography, and political economy. It is particularly influential in Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of social structures, where the concept of the line of flight is linked with nomadic social groups and a nomadic mode of thought. The concept of the line of flight allows Deleuze and Guattari to offer a reinterpretation of a classical Marxist perspective by claiming that social formations are defined not by their internal contradictions, but by what escapes them.¹⁴ They are clear that their political philosophy is based on an analysis of the lines of flight operative in a society. In an interview with Negri in 1990, Deleuze states that one of the three central objectives of *A Thousand Plateaus* was to show that “any society is defined not so much by its contradictions as by its lines of flight” and that one task of the book was “to try and follow the lines of flight taking shape at some particular moment or other.”¹⁵ Across all of these cases, Deleuze and Guattari constantly warn that lines of flight have both a creative and a destructive capacity. The lines that escape the apparatus of the assemblage can open it onto new possibilities, as in the case of the wasp and the orchid, or they can pull the assemblage apart from the inside. This double-edged nature of lines of flight

¹³ ATP 585; May, 2005, 137

¹⁴ See Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of the role of mercantilism in the downfall of feudalism and the advent of capitalism (ATP 452-458). See also Massumi (1992, 204).

¹⁵ N 171

is something that is often disregarded in the secondary literature. Deleuze and Guattari take great pains to point out that lines of flight “always risk abandoning their creative potentialities and turning into... a line of destruction.”¹⁶ It is one of the aims of this thesis to explore how Deleuze and Guattari differentiate productive and creative lines of flight from those that are negative and destructive.

Deleuze and Guattari’s shared commitment to overturning the traditional ‘image of thought’, and its reliance on the concept of identity, not only determines the content of their work but also their methodology and their style. In an attempt to produce a philosophical method that is capable of thinking the dynamism of the world, it is necessary that Deleuze and Guattari do not produce a unified system of thought, which coheres into a complete whole. Instead, these two thinkers develop a philosophical methodology that is actively incomplete.¹⁷ It is a method of thinking and of writing that opens thought onto novel problems by developing an ever-new conceptual apparatus, which evolves and mutates depending on the work being done. In short, their work is an assemblage. It is a dynamic process that changes over time and cannot be understood as something separate from the function it performs. This means that when we try to single out a concept from their work, we will not find something with a coherent and static identity. The line of flight is a concept that runs through Deleuze and Guattari’s work. While not present in either of their writings before 1972, there are precursors of this concept running back through both Deleuze and Guattari’s earlier writing. First emerging as a defined concept in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), it then morphs as it passes through *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). It has slightly different uses again in later works by Guattari and in Deleuze and Guattari’s final collaboration *What is Philosophy?* (1991). Just as the wasp exists as a species not despite its alterations and adaptations but because of them, and just as the development of the wasp is tied up with

¹⁶ ATP 558

¹⁷ Drawing on Deleuze’s terminology in *Difference and Repetition*, we could say that while Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptual framework is completely determined, it is produced out of the relationship of indeterminate elements which reciprocally determine one another.

the environment in which it functions, we will see that the concept of the line of flight has a consistency throughout Deleuze and Guattari's work because of the ways in which it adapts and because of the various ways in which it resonates with the conceptual environment of its use.

iii) The line of flight within Deleuze and Guattari Studies

The secondary literature on Deleuze and Guattari's work is both vast and continually expanding, but while certain aspects of the pair's work have been studied and applied with great care, there are a number of aspects that have been systematically overlooked or carelessly deployed. It is my contention that the concept of the line of flight, despite its recurrence through a number of different works by Deleuze and Guattari, and despite the authors' comments concerning its importance to their project, has been treated particularly poorly within the secondary literature. To my mind, this is due in part to a number of issues surrounding the translation of the concept, and in part to the ways in which the secondary literature is internally divided.

The English translation 'line of flight' from the French term *ligne de fuite* is problematic in a number of respects. In later chapters I will explain why this translation can be misleading for Anglophone readers, due in part to the fact that the French word *fuite* only means flight in the sense of fleeing, or escape, and not in the sense of a controlled movement through the air. I will save this discussion of the quality of the translation for later chapters. Here I will only point out the issues arising from inconsistency of translation. As I have previously noted, the concept of the line of flight does not appear until Deleuze and Guattari publish their first collaborative work, *Anti-Oedipus*, in 1972. However, before this, Guattari does use the French word *fuite* regularly on its own, for example in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, where the translations render the word *fuite* as 'escape'. Following this, all of the major publications of *Anti-Oedipus* in English,¹⁸ which use the same translation by Robert Hurley,

¹⁸ Including those from University of Minnesota Press, Penguin, Random House, and Bloomsbury Continuum.

Seem Mark, and Helen R. Lane, also render *ligne de fuite* as 'line of escape'. The accepted translation of *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975), by Dana Polan, follows this translation in most instances,¹⁹ but occasionally opts instead to translate the term as 'line of flight'.²⁰ On the other hand, the accepted translation of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), by Brian Massumi, uses the now conventional term, 'line of flight'. The English translations of Guattari's other work, including Andrew Goffey's recent translation of *Lines of Flight: For Another World of Possibilities* also use 'line of flight'.²¹ Curiously, given the translation of the concept from *Anti-Oedipus*, the English translation of Guattari's preparatory notes for that work, published as *The Anti-Oedipus Papers* and translated by Kelina Gotman, also uses the more common 'line of flight'. The result of this confusion is that the Anglophone literature on Deleuze and Guattari rarely recognises that there is a direct continuity between the 'line of escape' of *Anti-Oedipus* and the 'line of flight' of *A Thousand Plateaus*. It is one of the aims of this thesis to correct this oversight.

If we turn to the full collection of works authored by either Deleuze or Guattari, and to the works they produced in collaboration, and if we include published collections of essays and interviews as well as other books, the resulting bibliography includes up to forty-six titles. These books range over a great variety of disciplines, including philosophy, psychoanalysis, political theory, literature, film studies, and art criticism and also vary greatly in their style, from more traditional monographs on well-defined philosophical questions and relatively conventional discourses on psychoanalytic theory, to more experimental and interdisciplinary works of schizoanalysis and rhizomatic micro-politics. Given this fact, it is unsurprising that the secondary literature also comes in a variety of styles and disciplines. Here I am going to consider five relatively distinct groups in order to point out the different ways the concept of the line of flight has been received in each of them. The five groups I will consider are: the philosophical reception of the work Deleuze produced without

¹⁹ K 6, 21, 34-36, 41, 59, 61, 65, 67, 86-87.

²⁰ K xvi, 14, 69

²¹ For an explanation of the provenance of the work, and its position in Guattari's oeuvre, see Goffey's preface (LF xiv).

Guattari; the psychoanalytic, political, and philosophical reception of the work produced by Guattari without Deleuze; the philosophical reception of Deleuze and Guattari's collaboratively authored work; the range of reader's guides and introductory dictionaries for Deleuze and Guattari's work; and finally the various literary and other interdisciplinary works that draw on a Deleuzoguattarian framework. After running through these five groups in turn, I will offer some comments about the equivalent reception of the concept of the line of flight in the Francophone literature.

The secondary literature on Deleuze's philosophical project is impressive in size. The first major attempts in English to grapple with the legacy of Deleuzian thought include Michael Hardt's *Gilles Deleuze: an Apprenticeship in Philosophy* (1993) and Keith Ansell-Pearson's *Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze* (1999). Among the most engaging of the works to follow, we find a number of incisive philosophical texts that attempt to offer comprehensive readings of Deleuze as a major philosopher in his own right. This list includes, but is far from limited to, Gregg Lambert's *The Non-Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze* (2002), James Williams' *The Transversal Thought of Gilles Deleuze: Encounters and Influences* (2005), and Levi Bryant's *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence* (2008). There have also been a number of attempts to use Deleuze's writing to produce a systematic response to one area of philosophy, such as in Manuel DeLanda's scientific interpretation of Deleuzian metaphysics in *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (2002). On top of this, the secondary literature also includes a number of attempts to clarify or develop specific arguments that are developed across Deleuze's many works, such as Henry Somers-Hall's *Hegel, Deleuze, and the Critique of Representation* (2012). Finally, within this category it is also important to include the works written by Deleuze's critics, the most influential of which are Alain Badiou's *The Clamour of Being* (2000) and Peter Hallward's *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation* (2006).

As the concept of the line of flight is one that is produced during Deleuze and Guattari's collaboration and deployed almost exclusively in their co-authored

works, it might be expected that the concept would be absent in this section of the secondary literature altogether, however this is not the case. The concept of the line of flight is in fact referenced in a number of places throughout these works, but without any accompanying definition or analysis.²² On closer inspection, it is not unusual to find a number of other concepts developed during Deleuze's work with Guattari scattered throughout this literature, without much in the way of an accompanying explanation.²³ In short, among the vast literature on Deleuzian philosophy, the concept of the line of flight is rarely mentioned and is never taken as an object for investigation in its own right.

The literature surrounding the work published by Guattari is noticeably smaller. A great deal of this work has been written by Gary Genosko, who has published three books on Guattari: *The Guattari Reader* (1996); *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction* (2002); and *Félix Guattari: A Critical Introduction* (2009). The small selection of other publications on Guattari in English include Franco Berardi's *Félix Guattari: thought, friendship and visionary cartography* (2008), Eric Alliez and Andrew Goffey's *The Guattari Effect* (2011), Janell Watson's *Guattari's Diagrammatic Thought: Writing Between Lacan and Deleuze* (2009), and Paul Elliot's *Guattari Reframed* (2012). Given the fact that the literature on Guattari is so restricted in comparison to the work devoted to his collaborations, it is unsurprising to find that there is very little analysis in these works of the conceptual schema developed in Deleuze and Guattari's works, with most of the analysis devoted instead to an interpretation of the aspects of Guattari's writing that are unique to his individually authored works, most notably the concept of 'transversality'. As such, the concept of the line of flight is not analysed in depth at any point within this section of the literature.

Deleuze and Guattari do not refer to their collaborative publications as works of philosophy, but instead call them by a host of different names, such as

²² Ansell Pearson (1999, 186-189); DeLanda, (2013, 128); Badiou (2000, 36); Hallward, (2006, 3, 28, 40-44, 57-58, 99).

²³ 'Rhizome' in Ansell Pearson (1999, 156-157); Widder (2002, 6-7); DeLanda (2013, 137); Hallward (2006, 2, 39, 83). 'Deterritorialization' in Ansell Pearson (1999, 199-208); DeLanda, (2013, 206-208).

schizoanalysis, micro-politics, diagrammatism, rhizomatics, and cartography.²⁴ They also explicitly call for their readers to treat their work as a kind of toolbox that should be applied to any number of problems, philosophical or otherwise.²⁵ Most readers have taken Deleuze and Guattari at their word and there has been surprisingly little work done to assess their collaborative project from a purely philosophical standpoint. Nonetheless, there are a handful of books which do treat Deleuze and Guattari's work, especially the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series, from a relatively traditional philosophical perspective. Unfortunately, within these works the concept of the line of flight is given little more than a cursory investigation. For example, in Ronald Bogue's *Deleuze and Guattari* (1989), the first book length study of Deleuze and Guattari's work to be published in English, there is only a single reference to the line of flight and the extent of the analysis is confined to a one-sentence definition given in parenthesis.²⁶ A number of other works, such as Charles Stivale's otherwise impressive book, *The Two Fold Thought of Deleuze and Guattari* (1998), use the concept of the line of flight regularly, but at no point try to offer a statement of its meaning or a guide for its use.²⁷ Somewhat surprisingly, some works that explicitly attempt to explore the philosophical dimensions of Deleuze and Guattari's project, such as the collection of essays titled *A Shock to Thought: Expression after Deleuze and Guattari*, edited by Brian Massumi, hardly mention the concept at all.²⁸ The most recent book to include in this grouping, *A Thousand Plateaus and Philosophy*, edited by Henry Somers-Hall, Jeffrey A. Bell, and James Williams, treats each plateau of the eponymous text separately, and while many of the authors explore the relevance of the concept of the line of flight for a specific plateau, there is no consideration given to the role it plays in connecting the different plateaus.²⁹ The concept of the line of flight appears most frequently among this section of the literature during philosophical attempts to explore Deleuze and Guattari's aesthetics. For example, Simon O'Sullivan gives a concise but relevant

²⁴ D 94; AO 301; ATP 48, 161, 277

²⁵ ATP 26

²⁶ Bogue, 1989, 110-112

²⁷ Stivale, 1998, 12-13, 32-35, 80-84, 104-105, 112-119, 158-159.

²⁸ The line of flight is only mentioned during Mani Haghighi's section of this book (2002, 134-137).

²⁹ Somers-Hall et. al. (2018)

analysis of the concept and its relationship to art in his book *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (2006).³⁰ For reasons that may be linked to the issues of consistent translation that I mentioned earlier, the overwhelming tendency within the philosophical reception of Deleuze and Guattari's work is to use the concept of the line of flight for ornament, or by way of example, but with little or no attempt to explore the specific and technical way in which Deleuze and Guattari use the term.

Given the range of new terminology developed by Deleuze and Guattari, the breadth of their references to scientific, literary, and philosophical figures, and their occasionally abstruse style, it can be difficult for new readers to access their texts. In response to this, a number of readers' guides and introductions have been published, as well as two 'dictionaries' of their concepts. Of the two guides to *Anti-Oedipus*, neither of them give any space to the concept of the line of flight: Ian Buchanan's *Deleuze and Guattari's 'Anti-Oedipus': A Reader's Guide* (2008) only mentions the concept once and, when it does so, it is drawing on a comment made by Deleuze and not to the text of *Anti-Oedipus*;³¹ Eugene W. Holland's *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus: Introduction to Schizoanalysis* (1999) also only mentions the concept once, and without any accompanying analysis.³² This book also includes one quote from *Anti-Oedipus* in which the concept appears as the 'line of escape', but no connection is made between this and the line of flight.³³ Eugene W. Holland's follow-up guide to *A Thousand Plateaus*, titled *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus: A Reader's Guide* (2013), fares slightly better, with a number of references to the concept, however there is still no attempt to explain the term or explore its technical usage within Deleuze and Guattari's project.³⁴ Brian Massumi's *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1992), which covers both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, is interesting for the fact that it follows the translation given in the English publications of the former and refers to the concept throughout as the 'line of

³⁰ O'Sullivan, 2006, 32-35, 67-68, 147-150; Zepke, 2005, 122-127.

³¹ Buchanan, 2008, 5.

³² Holland, 1999, 121

³³ Holland, 1999, p104.

³⁴ Holland 2013, 9, 84-85, 99, 110.

escape'.³⁵ Massumi's analysis is thorough and he does give some explanation of how the line of escape functions within Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of social formations.³⁶ The only guide to Deleuze and Guattari's work that gives considerable space to this central concept is Brent Adkins' *Deleuze and Guattari's a Thousand Plateaus: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (2015), which explores Deleuze and Guattari's use of this concept in a number of different passages, including its relation to the concept of the rhizome and to the example of the wasp and the orchid;³⁷ its use within semiotic analyses;³⁸ its role in the process of subjectivation;³⁹ the divergence between its creative and destructive tendencies;⁴⁰ and its use in the analysis of social formations, especially capitalism.⁴¹ This work is a considerable resource for the analysis of the concept of the line of flight as it appears in *A Thousand Plateaus*, however Adkins' book makes no connection between this concept in *A Thousand Plateaus* and its use in *Anti-Oedipus*, or in any of Deleuze and Guattari's other work.

Of the two dictionaries, *The Deleuze Dictionary* (2010), edited by Adrian Parr, gives the most space to the concept of the line of flight, with separate entries on 'Lines of Flight', 'Lines of Flight + Art + Politics', and 'Lines of Flight + Suicide'.⁴² However, while each of these entries follows up on a particular aspect of the concept and its application within *A Thousand Plateaus*, none of the entries refer to *Anti-Oedipus*, and none of them show how the different uses of this concept should be understood together. The entry on the line of flight in *The Deleuze and Guattari Dictionary* (2013), edited by Eugene Young, Gary Genosko, and Janell Watson, does refer to the different applications of the concept of the line of flight in the different works of Deleuze and Guattari, and even clarifies the fact that the 'line of escape' in *Anti-Oedipus* refers to the same French term as the 'line of flight', as it is used elsewhere.⁴³ The entry on

³⁵ Massumi, 1992, 77, 85, 105, 117, 151, 175, 204.

³⁶ Massumi, 1992, 204.

³⁷ Adkins, 2015, 28, 31-32.

³⁸ Adkins, 2015, 86, 94.

³⁹ Adkins, 2015, 88.

⁴⁰ Adkins, 2015, 118, 126-127, 138-139.

⁴¹ Adkins, 2015, 216, 230.

⁴² Parr, 2010, 146, 149, 151 respectively.

⁴³ Young, Genosko & Watson, 2013, 183-185.

the line of flight in Mark Bonta and John Protevi's *Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Glossary and Guide* (2006) is also relatively comprehensive and makes some useful comments on the distinction between relative and absolute forms of the line of flight.⁴⁴ What both of these references to the line of flight lack is an account of the philosophical work performed by the concept and its role in Deleuze and Guattari's larger project.

The final section of the literature that I would like to make reference to here includes works that fall outside of the boundaries of traditional philosophical discourse, but which draw heavily on the theoretical framework supplied by Deleuze and Guattari. The extent of this Deleuzoguattarian-inspired literature is considerable and there are a number of works that align themselves specifically with the concept of the line of flight. For example, there are a handful of works of literary criticism that use the concept, including John Hughes' *Lines of flight: reading Deleuze with Hardy, Gissing, Conrad, Woolf* (1997), Stefan Mattessich's *Lines of flight: discursive time and countercultural desire in the work of Thomas Pynchon* (2002), and Hidenaga Arai's *Literature Along the Lines of Flight: D.H. Lawrence's Later Novels and Critical Theory* (2014). While each of these works deploys the concept of the line of flight in an innovative way, they tend to gloss over the more technical aspects of the concept and, perhaps understandably, do not give any space to its direct philosophical analysis. This is also the case for the collection of essays titled *Intensities and Lines of Flight: Deleuze/Guattari and the Arts* (2012), edited by Antonio Calcagno. On top of this literary interest in Deleuze and Guattari's concept, a range of thinkers writing on topics as diverse as art, the law, education, music, and politics have also put it use in their own discipline.⁴⁵ The apparent applicability of this concept to such a range of fields only confirms the need for a deeper analysis of its philosophical underpinnings. This thesis does not only intend to serve as a corrective to those texts that have taken Deleuze and Guattari's work as their point of departure without a deep understanding of their metaphysical implications, but also as a guide to those

⁴⁴ Bonta & Protevi, 2006, 106.

⁴⁵ Sauvagnargues (2013); Murray (2013); Semetsky & Masny, (2013); Campbell (2013); Evans & Reid (2013).

interdisciplinary thinkers in the future that wish to draw on the concept of the line of flight, and wish to do so with an awareness of its technical application and philosophical lineage.

While most of the secondary literature published in this field has either been written in English, or has been translated into English almost immediately, there are a number of works in French that remain untranslated. French-speaking readers of Deleuze and Guattari are also at a considerable advantage when seeking to analyse the concept of the line of flight as they do not have to grapple with the aforementioned issues of translation. Despite this, the French literature reflects the broader literature's limitations in a number of ways. For example, the main works of philosophical analysis that aim to assess Deleuze's contribution to that field do not also explore the philosophical aspects of his collaborations with Guattari: Anne Sauvagnargues' *Deleuze: l'empirisme transcendantal* (2009) is a good example, with a couple of mentions of the line of flight, but no close analysis,⁴⁶ as is Véronique Bergen's *L'Ontologie de Gilles Deleuze* (2001) which offers no mention of it whatsoever. Some of the more expansive texts that tackle Deleuze and Guattari's collaborative work, such as Manola Antonioli's *Géophilosophie de Deleuze et Guattari* (2003) and the work she produced with Pierre-Antoine Chardel and Hervé Regnaud, titled *Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari et le politique* (2006), do offer some space to the line of flight, but only by paying attention to one of the particular ways in which it is used by Deleuze and Guattari. For example, the former of these works includes a section on the line of flight that explores its connection with Deleuze and Guattari's investigation of nomadism.⁴⁷ By far the most comprehensive analysis of the concept of the line of flight in the French literature comes from Philippe Mengue's *Espaces lisses et lignes de fuite: Ethique, esthétique et politique deleuziennes* (2015). However, as the title suggests, this work explores the ethical, aesthetic, and political *implications* of this concept, and not its development or its place within Deleuze and Guattari's project.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Sauvagnargues, 2009, 350, 414.

⁴⁷ Antonioli, 2003, 26-35.

⁴⁸ Mengue (2015 & 1994)

In summary, we can say that the line of flight is recognised by a number of commentators as a central concept and that Deleuze and Guattari pick it out as crucial for an interpretation of their project. However, despite its recurrence across Deleuze and Guattari's works and its recurrence within the secondary literature, this concept has not yet been the subject of a focused philosophical investigation. Specifically, there has not yet been any attempt to look at how the concept of the line of flight arises out of the work produced by Deleuze and Guattari before their collaboration, or at how the term develops across their collaborative works. This deficiency in the secondary literature means that there is, as yet, no definitive answer to the questions: How does the line of flight function in Deleuze and Guattari's work? How can we differentiate between creative and destructive lines of flight? What kind of analytic work can the concept be used for? This thesis is an attempt to answer these questions.

iv) Thesis methodology

This thesis is an attempt to map the individuation of the concept of the line of flight.⁴⁹ Instead of stating what this concept signifies, or what it refers to, I will instead explore how this concept comes into existence. By mapping its emergence in Deleuze and Guattari's collective oeuvre, I will explain why and how it can be productively used. As such, this thesis not only concerns what the concept of the line of flight means, but what it can do.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ The theory of individuation that I am drawing on here comes mainly from the work of Gilbert Simondon. In both *The Physico-Biological Genesis of the Individual* (1964) and *Psychic and Collective Individuation* (1989), Simondon's work was concerned primarily with the question of individuation. It is my decision to apply this theory to the individuation of a concept. Deleuze was heavily influenced by Simondon, praising his work as "a profoundly original theory of individuation, which entails an entire philosophy" (2001, 43).

⁵⁰ I have decided to follow a methodology of mapping the individuation of a concept, over the more well-known practices of archaeology and genealogy (in both the Nietzschean and Foucauldian senses), for two interconnected reasons. First, I do not treat Deleuze and Guattari's work as a 'discourse' in need of excavation, but as an open-ended system of thinking, for which we require entries and exits. Second, while my chapters do follow a chronological order, I am not conducting an historical analysis of the concept. I do not wish to show what the concept meant at different moments in history, or to look at how it came to mean what it means today. Instead, I aim to show how the consistency of the concept emerges across its many variations. To borrow from Deleuze and Guattari, we could say that I aim to map the becoming-concept of the line of flight, and not the history of how it became a concept.

In a letter to his student Kuniichi Uno, Deleuze offers a comment on his own philosophical method, stating that, “For me philosophy is an art of creation... Philosophy creates concepts.”⁵¹ If we are to take this comment seriously, however, it must be understood within the context of Deleuze and Guattari’s broad critique of the concept of identity. In short, Deleuze and Guattari are committed to the idea that whenever we are faced with identity, we must first try to explain how that identity has been generated and we must do this without simply referring back to some prior identity from which it arose. Commenting again on his own philosophical approach, Deleuze explains that whenever we are faced with something that appears as an individual, and which subsequently exists in opposition to other individuals, “we should ask what such a situation presupposes. It presupposes a swarm of differences, a pluralism of free, wild or untamed differences; a properly differential and original space and time.”⁵² This swarm of differences is referred to elsewhere as a ‘pre-individual’ field. Using this terminology, we can say that, according to Deleuze and Guattari’s own methodology, in order to give an account of an individual, we must first give an account of the pre-individual field out of which such an individual arose.⁵³ This prioritisation of the process of *individuation* over the unity and identity of the *individual* can also be explained in terms of the relationship between Being and Becoming. According to Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, creation, or genesis, is not a linear process through which something is brought into being, a movement from non-Being to Being, but is instead a constant process of individuation that does not presuppose Being, but seeks to explain its very possibility. As such, we can say that Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy is one of Becoming, which seeks to explain the genesis of Being. Given this context, Deleuze’s claim that philosophy is the art of creating concepts must be re-evaluated. Under this interpretation, philosophy would not simply be the movement from the non-existence of a concept to its existence, but instead the process of thought that constitutes the constant becoming of the concept.

⁵¹ TRM 238. See also WIP 15-60.

⁵² DR 61

⁵³ For Deleuze’s use of the concept of the pre-individual, see DR 320-322.

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari draw an analogy between a concept and a brick, stating that, "It can be used to build the courthouse of reason. Or it can be thrown through the window."⁵⁴ Once again, we must be careful to recognise that within the framework of Deleuze and Guattari's thought, even the brick is not understood as a fully individuated, complete object with an essence or an absolute form. The brick has its own process of becoming, one which can proceed in the context of its use as a component of a building, or as a weapon of revolt. In either case, the brick does not pre-exist its activity, but is engaged in a constant process of genesis through its activity. This same point must equally be kept in mind when reading Deleuze's oft-quoted comment during his discussion with Michel Foucault, where he states: "A theory is exactly like a box of tools... It must be useful. It must function."⁵⁵ A theory is not a set of discrete tools, each of which fulfil a singular function, but a collection of tools that function together, each one defined by the connection it has with the group. The tool-box is also not an inert medium which simply contains the tools, but a specific collection, which allows for certain tasks to be performed rather than others. The tool-box is an assemblage. A theory is then an assemblage of tools, each of which is created and actualised by the diverse set of relationships it has with other tools, and in the affects it produces through its functioning. A concept, like a tool, is constituted by its process of becoming and can only be understood through the interrelationships it has with other concepts and through the affects that these relationships create.

During this thesis, I will treat the concept of the line of flight in its process of becoming, charting the procedure by which it becomes individuated. Instead of attempting to separate this concept out from the context in which it was created, in order to offer an abstract definition, I will aim to put this concept into a dynamic relationship with a set of other concepts, such that they create an

⁵⁴ ATP xiii. This is also a reference to Kant's comments on the first critique as a courthouse of reason (1998, 9/CPR A xii).

⁵⁵ Deleuze & Foucault, 1977, 208.

assemblage. This assemblage will bring together Deleuze and Guattari's critique of psychoanalysis, and their borrowings from it, as well as the relationships they maintain with a set of other thinkers and writers, both from within the philosophical tradition and outside of it. Through these connections, the concept of the line of flight will be individuated in a dynamic system of concepts that include 'the multiplicity', 'de/reterritorialization', 'transversality', 'the molecular', and the 'regime of signs', among others.⁵⁶ By carrying out this process it will be possible to see not only what the concept of the 'line of flight' signifies, but more importantly, how it functions, what affects it produces, and, ultimately, what it can do.

v) Chapter overview

When the concept of the line of flight emerges in the collaborative work of Deleuze and Guattari, it does so amid a mass of other concepts. It is introduced as a "molecular schizophrenic line of flight"⁵⁷, and a rhizomatic, micropolitical, "line of flight or line of deterritorialization."⁵⁸ While much of this conceptual web is specific to the milieu of Deleuze and Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project, these concepts are offered up to the reader within an expanded philosophical discourse that takes many other concepts for granted. A large number of these concepts are not original to the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project and have a specific and detailed history in either the philosophical work completed by Deleuze before his collaborations with Guattari, or in the psychotherapeutic framework that Guattari produced before he met Deleuze. For example, in both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, the authors regularly refer to the distinction between the virtual and the actual,⁵⁹ the question of intensity,⁶⁰ the concept of the multiplicity,⁶¹ and the problematic relationship between quantity and quality,⁶² all of which Deleuze

⁵⁶ For example, we will see in chapters four and six that the concept of the line of flight takes on different senses in its relation to relative and absolute deterritorialization in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* respectively.

⁵⁷ AO 347 (translation modified)

⁵⁸ ATP 141, 134

⁵⁹ AO 129, 249, 255, 358; ATP 104-110, 122, 153, 396, 445

⁶⁰ AO 160-162

⁶¹ AO 38, 42, 60, 181, 280, 309; ATP 4-10, 17-19, 23-59, 170-175, 202-204

⁶² AO 65, 247, 301; ATP 35-37, 487-488, 502-504

discusses and defines in his earlier work. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari regularly utilise concepts such as ‘transversality’⁶³ and the ‘machinic’,⁶⁴ which are developed in Guattari’s work before 1969. Any comprehensive account of the meaning and use of the concept of the line of flight should, therefore, be able to explain the way in which it emerged out of this dual intellectual history.

In order to offer such an account, I will spend the first two chapters of this thesis looking at the work produced separately by Deleuze and Guattari before 1972. Following this, in chapters three and four, I will turn my attention to *Anti-Oedipus* and then in chapters five and six to *A Thousand Plateaus*. In line with my previous comments on the process of individuation, the first two chapters can be understood as an exploration of the pre-individual field of the concept of the line of flight, while the third and fourth chapters chart its differentiation from its accompanying milieu, and the fifth and sixth chapters look at the activity of the individuated concept in both theoretical and practical situations.

Chapter 1 – Deleuze: *The Metaphysics of Difference*

This chapter will focus on the metaphysics of difference that Deleuze develops in *Difference and Repetition* (1968), but will also touch on some ideas that arise in *Logic of Sense* (1969), and in relation to Deleuze’s comments elsewhere regarding Bergson, Spinoza, and Merleau-Ponty, among others. The reason for this selection is both pragmatic and retrospective. It is pragmatic in the sense that it is a concession made to the impossibility of ever covering the totality of Deleuze’s early philosophy in a single chapter. It is retrospective in the sense that, having considered the way the concept of the line of flight is used in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project, I have traced the development of any related concepts back into the work of Deleuze and have found that they are most clearly articulated in *Difference and Repetition*. Knowledgeable readers of Deleuze may also be surprised that, given the fact that the line of flight first emerges in the context of Deleuze and Guattari’s most psychoanalytic writing, I have not chosen to look more closely at Deleuze’s early comments on psychoanalysis, either in his work on Masochism or during

⁶³ AO 47, 77; ATP 12, 28, 184, 327-333.

⁶⁴ AO 43-44, 252-258, 355-356; ATP 4-8, 40-46, 97-100.

the more psychoanalytic sections of *Logic of Sense*.⁶⁵ This decision is based on the observation that Deleuze's relationship with psychoanalysis changes irrevocably after his first interactions with Guattari. This fact will become apparent as we look at Guattari's pre-1972 writings and his notes for the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*.⁶⁶

The specific topics that will be covered in this chapter will be as follows: first I will explore Deleuze's metaphysics of difference, its relationship with the concepts of the multiplicity, the virtual, and the actual; next I will turn to his theory of individuation and depth; finally, I will look at the theory of linear perspective, analysing how the concept of the line of flight is used here and the implications of Deleuze's criticisms of it.

Chapter 2 - Guattari: *Psychotherapeutic and Militant Escapes*

Here I will explore the practical and theoretical work undertaken by Guattari before his collaborations with Deleuze. As a psychoanalyst within the Lacanian school and one of the founding members of the clinic at La Borde, Guattari's life was consumed by the practical task of delivering therapy. Before *Anti-Oedipus*, Guattari had not produced any book-length works of theory and the only evidence we have of his thought at the time is contained in the collection of shorter works published under the title *Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Texts and Interviews 1955-1971*. Consequently, my analysis in this chapter will concentrate on this collection. Fortunately, while the full extent of Guattari's social and political theory could not be assessed without an analysis of the work he published during the final two decades of his life, including *The Molecular Revolution* (1977/1980), *The Machinic Unconscious* (1979), *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* (1989), *The Three Ecologies* (1989), and *Chaosmosis: an Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (1992), this first collection of short texts contains a clear statement of his early psychoanalytic theories. It lays out his initial disagreements with both Freudian and Lacanian orthodoxy and explains the theoretical basis for the development of Institutional Psychotherapy.

⁶⁵ LS 208-288

⁶⁶ See especially section vii of Chapter 2 of this thesis, titled 'Machine and structure'.

By working through this collection, and by drawing on a range of secondary sources, this chapter will offer a close analysis of three of the key aspects of Guattari's thought, namely the production of group-subjectivity, the role of the coefficient of transversality, and the material nature of machinic processes. This will allow me to highlight the role of 'escape' in Guattari's understanding of subjectivity and his theory of revolution, which will provide the pre-individual field for the production of the concept of the line of flight in *Anti-Oedipus*.

Chapter 3 - Anti-Oedipus 1: *Desiring Machines*

This chapter will offer an analysis of the emergence of the concept of the line of flight in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari's first collaboration. The book was produced in reaction to the mobilisation of French students and workers in mass protests, strikes, and riots in May of 1968.⁶⁷ The result is a full-scale attack on both psychoanalytic orthodoxy and the system of capitalism, which, according to Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, both serve to uphold one another via their shared misunderstanding of desire. This chapter will focus on the pair's engagements with psychoanalysis. I will show how Deleuze and Guattari attack psychoanalytic theory over the Oedipus complex and how they attempt to provide a positive account of desire to replace the traditional understanding of desire-as-lack. Here I will give an outline of the *schizophrenic line of flight*. I will look at how the concept emerges in an attempt to theorise how a schizoid-breakthrough is possible, one which escapes the oedipal relation of the family and releases the productive and creative capacities of desire. This is the line of flight which Deleuze and Guattari claim provides a model of resistance to psychoanalysis and can lead the schizoanalyst beyond the repressive representation of individual desire.

Chapter 4 – Anti-Oedipus 2: *Social Machines*

According to *Anti-Oedipus*, psychoanalysis and capitalism collude with one another to produce oedipalised, docile, and consuming subjects, who are easily controlled. As an analysis of power and of social control, this work is

⁶⁷ Dosse, 2010, 179

also distinctly anti-fascist.⁶⁸ In this chapter, I will show how Deleuze and Guattari organise a form of resistance against this collusion, which relies not only on a schizophrenic, but also a *revolutionary line of flight*. By providing an outline of Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between molecular and molar processes, and by exploring their ironic account of the history of capitalism, I will show how this revolutionary line of flight operates in their anti-capitalist politics. At the end of this chapter, by bringing together my previous comments on the schizophrenic line of flight and the revolutionary line of flight, I will offer an analysis of the four different senses of the concept of the line of flight in *Anti-Oedipus*.

Chapter 5 – A Thousand Plateaus 1: *The Line of Flight as Concept*

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, the concept of the line of flight finds its full application across a range of different theoretical contexts. This chapter will introduce the conceptual framework of *A Thousand Plateaus* by offering an analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic or vegetal image of thought, and their concepts of the assemblage and of the refrain. Here we will see how the concept of the line of flight begins to take on a new level of conceptual consistency. I will then explain how Deleuze and Guattari use the concepts of content, expression, and stratification to provide a dynamic account of the ontogenesis of physical, organic, and 'alloplastic' matter. Once this is complete, I will use Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between the plane of consistency and the plane of organisation to return to the theory of linear perspective, and to reassess the role of the line of flight in Deleuze and Guattari's reworking of the theory of space found there. This chapter will end with a discussion of the Body without Organs (BwO) and the role of the line of flight in Deleuze and Guattari's ethics.

Chapter 6 – A Thousand Plateaus 2: *The Line of Flight and Political Pragmatism*

⁶⁸ For more on the anti-fascism of the book, see Foucault's preface. He writes of *Anti-Oedipus*: "the major enemy, the strategic adversary is fascism... And not only historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini... but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behavior, the fascism that causes us to love power" (AO xv).

The final chapter of this thesis will move from the metaphysical and ethical dimensions of *A Thousand Plateaus* to the political aspects of the book. I will offer an analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's linguistic pragmatism, concentrating on the way in which they differentiate between four different 'regimes of signs'. Each of these regimes entails a different politics, which can be defined by the particular relationship it holds with its lines of flight. Through a close reading of Deleuze and Guattari's comments on molecular becomings, and on the possibility of micropolitics, I will show how the concept of the line of flight takes on new political senses in this work. After returning to the concept of the refrain, and after repositioning Guattari's work with Institutional Psychotherapy in relation to *A Thousand Plateaus*, I will show how Deleuze and Guattari's politics can only be articulated as an experimental process of drawing lines of flight. To conclude this chapter, I will show how the different senses of the concept of the line of flight, as it appears in *A Thousand Plateaus*, map onto the various ways the concept was deployed in *Anti-Oedipus*. We will see that, while the concept of the line of flight takes on different senses at different points in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series, these different senses are not unconnected, and it is precisely from the resonance between them that the concept of the line of flight gains its consistency.

Chapter 1 – Deleuze: The Metaphysics of Difference

- i) Introduction
- ii) The dogmatic image-of-thought
- iii) The virtual and the actual
- iv) Riemann and the multiplicity
- v) The virtual Idea as multiplicity
- vi) Individuation, intensity and dynamism
- vii) Depth in linear perspective
- viii) Difference contra linear perspective
- ix) Intensity contra linear perspective
- x) The *ligne abstrait* and the *ligne de fuite* in *Difference and Repetition*

i) Introduction

At the time of publishing *Difference and Repetition* (1968), and *Logic of Sense* (1969), Deleuze had not yet begun to use the concept of the line of flight. His work from this time does, however, contain a number of clues as to the origins of this concept. The purpose of this chapter is to track down these clues and to provide a strong basis for subsequent chapters, where the examination of the concept of the line of flight, as it appears in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series, will begin in earnest. I have chosen to concentrate the majority of my analysis in this chapter on *Difference and Repetition*, not only because it is the text that contains the most comprehensive account of Deleuze's metaphysical programme, but also because it contains Deleuze's most sustained comments on the problematics of traditional philosophical conceptions of space. This is important because it is here that Deleuze will brush up against the concept of the line of flight.

As we will see, *Difference and Repetition* is scattered with critical references to traditional methods for representing space. Specifically, we will find a large number of references to the way in which painters use techniques of linear perspective to simulate depth in their work. For Deleuze, these techniques can tell us a great deal about the kinds of assumptions that western thought has made about the nature of space. Crucially, the phrase '*ligne de fuite*' is a common piece of terminology used in French to describe one feature of perspectival painting. This connection has been almost completely missed by Anglophone commentators and translators of Deleuze and Guattari's work: while many have noted that the French term *ligne de fuite* might have some connection to the French term *point de fuite*, a concept conventionally translated into English as 'vanishing point', there is an almost complete lack of recognition in the secondary literature that the phrase *ligne de fuite* is used in linear perspective to designate a specific line. Brian Massumi's note to his translation of *A Thousand Plateaus* is typical:

“*Fuite* covers not only the act of fleeing or eluding but also flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance (the vanishing point in a painting is a *point de fuite*). It has no relation to flying.”⁶⁹

Similarly restrained references to the possible connection with the concept of the vanishing point are made by Massumi elsewhere, and are echoed by Ronald Bogue, Jean-Michel Rabate, Janae Sholtz, Meaghan Morris, and Edward Kazarian, among others.⁷⁰ The connection with linear perspective is only made in these instances to clarify what kind of escaping or disappearing might be implied by the French word *fuite* and no direct reference is made to the technical meaning of the *ligne de fuite* in linear perspective.⁷¹ In the latter sections of this chapter I will give a full account of the use of this term among theorists of linear perspective and will aim to show how Deleuze’s critiques of the model of space that these techniques assume contain an implicit reworking of the concept of the *ligne de fuite*.

Deleuze’s comments on linear perspective are, however, only given within the much broader context of his attempt to overturn many of the assumptions embedded in the philosophical canon. Before attempting to comment on his specific critiques of linear perspective it will therefore be useful to give a more comprehensive account of what is going on in *Difference and Repetition*. This analysis will also allow us to touch on a number of key pieces of terminology that will be useful in our analysis of both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, including the distinction between the virtual and the actual, the concept of the multiplicity, the distinction between intensive and extensive differences, and the individuation of spatio-temporal-dynamisms.⁷²

⁶⁹ ATP, xvii

⁷⁰ Kazarian, 2001, 219; Morris, 2006, 195-196; Sholtz, 2015, Footnote 18; Bogue, 2007, 130; Bogue, 2003, 156; Bogue, 2004, 110; Rabate, 2014, 43; Lamarre, 2002, 162.

⁷¹ Bonta and Protevi (2004, 106-107) are a notable exception. This text references the importance of the *ligne de fuite* in linear perspective, however, the implications of this allusion are not followed up.

⁷² While the majority of the conceptual framework presented in *Difference and Repetition* will be radically altered in Deleuze’s collaborations with Guattari, it is also the case that much of Deleuze and Guattari’s collaborative work can be read as a direct response to problems raised in *Difference and Repetition*. See Deleuze’s preface for the English translation of *Difference and Repetition* (DR xvii). See also DI 238.

ii) The dogmatic image-of-thought

Deleuze's self-professed project in Chapter 1 of *Difference and Repetition* is "[t]o rescue difference from its maledictory state."⁷³ The 'maledictory state' Deleuze is referring to here is the state of being subordinate to identity, such that 'difference' is only understood as the difference *between* two entities, which each possess their own identity. The problem, as Deleuze puts it, is that, "[t]he difference 'between' two things is only empirical, and the corresponding determinations are only extrinsic," however, properly understood, "[d]ifference is the state in which one can speak of determination *as such*."⁷⁴ His point here is that any conception of difference that relies on a prior distinction between objects of our judgement, which are said to differ from one another, has already assumed that each of these objects can be determined as individual objects, and such a procedure already requires them to have been *differentiated* from their surroundings. In order to avoid the circularity of this presupposition, Deleuze argues that philosophy must find a way of thinking the concept of 'difference-in-itself' as something positive, which differs not from other things, but only from itself.

In the first chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, after working through the various methods used by a number of canonical western thinkers for conceptualising difference, Deleuze picks out Aristotle and Hegel as those who typify the main forms of philosophy's traditional misrecognition of difference most clearly.⁷⁵ According to Deleuze's reading, Aristotle defines difference in terms of contrariety, which he asserts, over contradiction or privation, to be the most perfect form of difference because, "[c]ontrariety alone expresses the capacity of a subject to bear opposites while remaining substantially the same."⁷⁶ Hegel takes contrariety as his starting point but he "extends it to the infinite" by requiring of absolute difference that it entails the identity of contraries. However, according to Deleuze's critique, both of these methods

⁷³ DR 37

⁷⁴ DR 36

⁷⁵ Deleuze discusses Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger, among others (DR 38-58).

⁷⁶ DR 39

for defining difference rely on some prior understanding of identity, which itself requires an understanding of difference for its determination. We will never escape the vicious circle of definition by finding 'stronger' forms of difference, because the problem does not lie in the fact that Aristotle or Hegel's conceptions of difference are somehow too weak, but in the fact that they only consider difference from the point of view of identity. The problem is not one of degree, but one of kind. Insisting on the need for a new kind of understanding of difference, Deleuze writes that, "a more profound real element must be defined in order for oppositions of forces or limitations of forms to be drawn."⁷⁷

In the central chapter of the book, Deleuze will claim that conceptual philosophical thought has "as its implicit presupposition a pre-philosophical and natural Image of thought."⁷⁸ What this means is that, despite the fact that philosophers have often defined their practice by the way in which they banish all previously held assumptions, the very practice of philosophising has retained a set of implicit presuppositions concerning thought itself. What philosophers have taken for granted is "not a particular this or that but the form of representation or recognition in general."⁷⁹ This image-of-thought contains two distinct presuppositions that Deleuze will attempt to overturn, namely those of *good sense* and *common sense*. Good sense is the assumption that each of the faculties of the mind is faithful in principle and naturally tends towards truth. Common sense is the assumption that these faculties cohere in a common subject and share a common object. Despite his appreciation for the Kantian project, Deleuze picks out Kant as having taken both common sense and good sense for granted. He writes that "the Kantian critique is ultimately respectful: knowledge, morality, reflection and faith are supposed to correspond to natural interests of reason, and are never themselves called into question" and the purpose of Kant's work is only to declare each of the faculties

⁷⁷ DR 61

⁷⁸ DR 167

⁷⁹ DR 166

“legitimate or not in relation to one or other of these interests.”⁸⁰ The acceptance of the two presuppositions of good sense and common sense has led philosophers to characterise thought as inherently representative, so that the quality of thought has been judged on its ability to represent the world accurately.⁸¹ This representative image-of-thought presupposes a certain distribution of the empirical and the transcendental resulting in an “inability to conceive of difference in itself”.⁸² Deleuze’s task in *Difference and Repetition* is therefore to critique this distribution of the empirical and the transcendental to produce a “thought without image” capable of thinking difference-in-itself.⁸³

The fallout from rejecting both good sense and common sense as the foundation for thought is considerable. No longer can the apparent individuality of the subject of thought, or the individuality of the object of thought, be taken for granted. To give an indication of the consequences of this move I will give two quick examples of the kind of philosophical problems that arise. First, with neither good sense nor common sense on our side, it is no longer possible to take the agreed-upon sense of language for granted. If language appears to have a sense, so that individual words have individual referents, and individual signifiers correlate with individual signifieds, then this ordered and individualised reality of sense is what needs to be explained. Deleuze tackles this problem in *Logic of Sense*, where he reads Stoic philosophy alongside the writings of Lewis Carroll, to offer a genetic account of the way in which sense arises out of non-sense. Here he argues that a ‘surface’ of sense is produced as a mediating boundary between the preconscious and pre-individual depths of nonsense and the transcendental and structuring force of the “voice of the heights”.⁸⁴ Deleuze’s arguments in this book are organised as a series of paradoxes in which he describes both the dynamic genesis of sense, from the

⁸⁰ DR 173. Deleuze’s reading of Kant is not straightforward. While he recognises that for Kant “Ideas lead us into false problems” he does not attribute this error to the faculties themselves, but to their misapplication (DR 214)

⁸¹ For Deleuze, this model of representation relies on Plato’s theory of the Forms, and his theory of recognition as anamnesis. Following Nietzsche, Deleuze therefore writes that “the task of modern philosophy has been defined: to overturn Platonism” (DR 71). For Deleuze’s engagements with Plato, see DR 154-156 and LS 145-154 and 219-302.

⁸² DR 174

⁸³ DR 208

⁸⁴ LS 271

perspective of psychoanalytic development, and the static ontological genesis of sense.

Second, without good sense or common sense being assumed, the framework of spatio-temporal reality and the individuality of the here-and-now can no longer be taken for granted. If it is the case that experience is organised in such a way that space and time appear as regular and rationally ordered, and that the current moment appears to have its own individuality, then this structuring of phenomena is what needs to be explained. If the “here and now” are presupposed “as empty identities” and “as abstract universalities”, then the identity and universality of these categories must be accounted for.⁸⁵ This problem, concerning the given spatio-temporal structure of phenomenal reality, is what Deleuze attempts to respond to in *Difference and Repetition*. To a certain degree, Deleuze’s response to this problem follows from Kant, who also recognises that the spatio-temporal structure of experience must not be assumed to organise the world as it is in itself, but only our phenomenal experience of it. However, Deleuze aims to go further than Kant by attempting to give an account of the categories of experience that is both transcendental and genetic. What makes both of these problems all the more challenging is that in each case the apparent orientation of experience along a subject-object axis is also problematized and is taken to require an explanation.⁸⁶ In order to introduce Deleuze’s solution to this problem, and to prepare us for Deleuze’s critiques of linear perspectival conceptions of space, we will first need to comprehend the distinction that Deleuze’ makes between the virtual and the actual aspects of reality.

iii) The virtual and the actual

Commenting on a passage from Plato’s *Republic*, Deleuze makes a statement that describes his project in *Difference and Repetition*: “This text distinguishes

⁸⁵ DR 63

⁸⁶ Deleuze’s characterisation of his philosophy as a ‘transcendental empiricism’ is defined by exactly this problem. While Kant’s problem was “How can the given be given to a subject?” and Hume’s problem was “How is the subject constituted within the given?”, his own problem is “How can a subject transcending the given be constituted in the given?” (EP 86).

two kinds of things: those which do not disturb thought and... those which *force* us to think.”⁸⁷ That which does not disturb thought is given by representation and includes all that appears to us in an actual and constituted reality composed of individual objects of thought. That which forces us to think is the problematic dimension of reality. If we are to think difference-in-itself then we must learn to think these problems, which are real and yet do not present themselves to us in what is actual. To name those aspects of reality that are real without being actual, Deleuze uses the term ‘virtual’. Deleuze’s ontology is therefore composed of two aspects, the first includes what is given (including the subject to whom the given is given) and the second includes that which explains how the subject is constituted and how the given is given to such a subject. For Deleuze, “the virtual and the actual are two mutually exclusive, yet jointly sufficient, characterisations of the real.”⁸⁸ While the actual aspects of reality are extended in space and time, the virtual aspects of reality are defined by the problems that such an extended entity has been actualised to solve.

In his article, ‘Deleuze’s secret dualism?’, Dale Clisby offers us the useful example of a knot to explain the relationship between the virtual and the actual: “[W]hat is ‘actual’ is that which appears to us in spatio-temporal reality. A knotted rope is one such example of an actual object. The virtual, on the other hand, explains the development of the actual object. In this case, a knot exists as the solution to a problem, perhaps, ‘how do we fasten one object to another?’” What is key in this example is that the problem “exists independently of the various actualised forms of objects that provide a solution to it.”⁸⁹ The virtual field may determine all of the possible solutions to a problem, but the structure of the problematic field is not only possible, but real. For this reason, Deleuze is very clear that the virtual “is opposed not to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual.”⁹⁰ Because this virtual problematic field exists not only in possibility, but in reality, Deleuze

⁸⁷ DR 175

⁸⁸ Boundas, 2010, 300

⁸⁹ Clisby, 2015, 128

⁹⁰ DR 260

describes the virtual as the structure of the object. He states: “The reality of the virtual is structure.”⁹¹ Let us take the example of a block of ice. There are certain things that are true about the structure of a block of ice, but which are not located anywhere in the extended spatio-temporal actuality of the object. The melting point of ice is a real and determinate point defined by the temperature and pressure at which the ice will change from a solid to a liquid. This point is not located anywhere in the actual space and time of reality, but it is nonetheless a real aspect of the block of ice. The ‘structure’ that Deleuze describes as virtual, is not the extended spatial structure of the object, but the structure of the singular points, like the melting point of ice, that define its conditions. It is important to note here that, for Deleuze, the virtual, problematic structure of an object and the actual, extended qualities of an object are in constant interaction, and mutually presuppose each other, such that the reality of the object is produced by the relation between these two aspects.⁹²

For Deleuze, the virtual does not resemble the actual, just as problems do not resemble their solutions. Instead, responding to Kant’s understanding of an Idea as that which is not instantiated in actual reality and yet “must be thought” according to certain categories, Deleuze describes the virtual as being populated by Ideas.⁹³ Unlike Kant, however, Deleuze takes these Ideas to be multiple and to operate as the structuring principle which gives rise to actual objects. We have already seen that Deleuze produces his theory of the virtual in order to combat the representational and dogmatic image-of-thought. This means that his conception of virtual Ideas must not take good sense, common sense, or the category of individuality for granted. In order to avoid these potential pitfalls, Deleuze argues that virtual Ideas are not individual and that they are not self-identical. Instead, virtual ideas are composed of “a continuum of differential relations” which differ from themselves and which therefore

⁹¹ DR 260

⁹² It is a common misreading of Deleuze’s work to assume that the virtual simply precedes the actual and gives rise to it. See, for example, *Out of This World* (Hallward, 2006). For correctives to this misreading see Seigworth and Protevi’s respective reviews of Hallward’s book: Seigworth, 2007; Protevi, 2007.

⁹³ CPR, A245/B302; DR 263

contain their own difference.⁹⁴ This form of logical structure is what Deleuze will call the ‘multiplicity’.

iv) Riemann and the multiplicity

The concept of the multiplicity is used to designate a substantive and numerical property that is opposed to both the many and the one.⁹⁵ For Deleuze, the substantive categories of the ‘one’ or the ‘many’ are both aspects of the representational image-of-thought, which reduces reality to either a complete individual or a series of individuals. Neither of these options are able to capture the problematic nature of virtual Ideas. The concept of ‘multiplicity’ is important for Deleuze because it “denounces simultaneously the One and the many, the limitation of the One by the many and the opposition of the many to the One.”⁹⁶ Simply put, a multiplicity is a collection of elements in which the elements themselves are completely indeterminate, are reciprocally determining in their relation to one another, and give rise to the complete determination of a virtual object. Speaking of virtual Ideas, Deleuze states that “Ideas are pure multiplicities which do not presuppose any form of identity” and that “Ideas are multiplicities: every idea is a multiplicity.”⁹⁷

Deleuze borrows this concept from the work of the 19th Century mathematician Bernhard Riemann, a figure who became a regular point of reference for Deleuze.⁹⁸ Riemann’s work is important for Deleuze because he sees it as the first successful attempt to formally describe how a collection of elements could be held in a relationship with one another, such that these elements would be indeterminate in themselves and yet wholly determined by their relations.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ DR 315

⁹⁵ DR 230

⁹⁶ DR 254

⁹⁷ DR 230 and 243

⁹⁸ B, 39-40, 79, 117; F, 14; TF, 179; ATP, 36, 157, and 532-536; WIP, 124, and 161

⁹⁹ We might assume that Deleuze would champion Spinoza as the first to have achieved this feat. However, Deleuze never takes up Spinoza’s terminology of attributes, substances, and modes in order to talk about the transcendental field. This decision can probably be attributed to Deleuze’s claim that the only fault in Spinoza’s philosophy is that he defined the modes in relation to substance, rather than making “substance turn around the modes” (DR 377).

Such a collection would thus be constituted not simply by a set of individuals, but by the interrelations of a set of relations. Riemann's major contribution to the study of geometry came with his use of integral calculus to construct a theory of multiplicities, which could explain the properties of a space, without giving a designation of the locations of points within that space.¹⁰⁰ When giving an exposition of the logical form of virtual ideas, Deleuze states specifically that he is using the "Riemannian usage of the word 'multiplicity'."¹⁰¹ Given the fact that both Edmund Husserl and Henri Bergson also developed the concept of the multiplicity, and given the fact that Deleuze also writes extensively on Bergson's use of the concept, it will be useful here to provide a careful analysis of Riemann's specific understanding of the concept of the multiplicity.¹⁰² This

¹⁰⁰ Riemann, 2005. The term used by Riemann was not multiplicity, but *Mannigfaltigkeit*, which is most often translated in English as *manifold* or *manifoldness*. However in French, it is most often translated as *multiplicité*, while the accepted English translation of the term *multiplicité* in Deleuze's work is *multiplicity*.

¹⁰¹ DR 230

¹⁰² While I will be taking Deleuze at his word when he says that he is relying on the Riemannian usage of the concept of the multiplicity, it is worth sketching out Deleuze's reasons for choosing to follow Riemann here over Bergson. In *Time and Freewill* and *Duration and Simultaneity*, Bergson developed the concept of the multiplicity to elaborate the structure of the experience of time, or duration, as opposed to that of space. Here Bergson will argue that while space can be understood as a quantitative and discrete multiplicity, time, or duration, must be understood as a qualitative and continuous multiplicity. In his book on Bergson, Deleuze laments the fact that "too little importance has been attached to the use of this word 'multiplicity'", which in Bergson's work, "is not there as a vague noun corresponding to the well-known philosophical notion of the Multiple in general" (B 38). According to Deleuze, Bergson was well aware of Riemann's concept, and the book *Duration and Simultaneity* should be seen as an attempt on Bergson's part to distinguish his own ideas from Relativity theory by opposing his own concept of the multiplicity to that of Riemann (B 39). Unfortunately for Deleuze's purposes, there is one fatal flaw in Bergson's understanding of the concept of the multiplicity. Bergson's mistake, according to Deleuze, was to align the distinction between continuous and discrete multiplicities with two further distinctions, namely the split between the qualitative and the quantitative and the split between the intensive and the extensive. While Bergson will say that duration is a continuous, qualitative, intensive multiplicity and space is a discrete, quantitative, extended multiplicity, Deleuze will keep these distinctions separate while also putting forward the argument that Bergson reintroduces quantity into continuous multiplicities. As we will see in the rest of this chapter, Deleuze will argue that both continuous and discrete multiplicities can be understood as quantitative because the relation between them is "static and purely ideal" and "implies no more than number" (DR 218-219). On the other hand, Deleuze will argue that the question of intensity does not concern the relation between the kinds of multiplicity directly, but instead informs the process of individuation, which occurs between the virtual continuous and the actual discrete multiplicity. For this reason, Deleuze will ultimately argue that "the Bergsonian critique of intensity seems unconvincing" (DR 299, fn. 14 329). Craig Lundy is therefore incorrect to claim that "Deleuze's understanding of intensity draws from Bergson's heterogeneous multiplicity" (2010, 74). Ansell-Pearson makes a similar error in claiming that Deleuze is entirely consistent in his acceptance of Bergson's theory of multiplicities (1999, 155). In his later works, Bergson sees the relationship between the two forms of multiplicity as a Russelian-style paradox: is the difference between qualitative multiplicities and quantitative multiplicities a qualitative or quantitative difference? In answer to this problem, Bergson talks about a qualitative multiplicity

will also allow us to give a more precise account of how Deleuze attempts to define virtual ideas in such a way that they will contain difference in themselves.

Riemann's work responds to a particular problem that arose at the beginning of the 19th Century. At this point, a number of mathematicians, including Carl Friedrich Gauss, Ferdinand Karl Schweikart, János Bolyai, and Nikolai Ivanovich Lobachevsky, had all shown that it was possible to construct internally consistent geometries that contravened Euclid's fifth axiom. What these mathematicians had shown, contra Euclid, was that there was no way of proving *a priori* that parallel lines will not intersect when they are extended. In fact, these mathematicians had shown that the opposite was true: that it was possible to construct coherent geometrical systems in which, for any straight line, and for any point not on that line, there are either zero, or multiple other straight lines that run through the point that are parallel to the initial line. In brief, space need not be 'flat' but could be 'curved' in a number of different ways. The problem facing Riemann was the following: if there are multiple possible, consistent geometries, then how are we to know for sure which of them is applicable in reality? While it is possible to use experience as a guide and to select the geometry which seems most applicable to space as it is experienced, this will lead the truths stated by geometry to lose their rigorous mathematical basis and become "not necessary, but only of empirical certainty".¹⁰³ In order to overcome this challenge, Riemann developed a new and particular form of non-Euclidean geometry, which aimed to provide a mathematical description of all possible spaces, or 'multiply extended manifolds', of which Euclidean space and the non-Euclidean spaces that had now been proved possible, would be particular limit cases.

Up until the point at which Riemann tackled this problem, there was one method for representing curved spaces geometrically, namely by embedding

that represents a higher-order difference, which subsumes the difference between the two. In *Creative Evolution* the qualitative multiplicity becomes both 'a unity that is multiple and a multiplicity that is one.' See also Mullarkey, 1999, 142-144.

¹⁰³ Riemann, 2005, 380

these non-Euclidean spaces in a Euclidean space with an added dimension. For example, a two-dimensional surface with constant positive curvature can be represented as the surface of a three-dimensional sphere. The problem with using this process to overcome the metaphysical problem of how to select a single geometry out of the many internally consistent geometries available, is that it begs the question: if we have abandoned Euclid's fifth axiom following the proofs that show it cannot be taken as a necessary truth, then to assume the framework of a higher-dimensional *Euclidean* geometry will simply reintroduce the contingency of this form of geometry at a higher level. If Riemann wanted to define a geometry which could account for all possible, consistent geometries, without having to assume the applicability of Euclid's fifth axiom, then he would have to do so without also assuming the existence of any higher-dimensional Euclidean space.¹⁰⁴

Riemann required a way to express the curvature of a space immanently. To do this, he turned to differential calculus. Differential calculus is a field of mathematics that concerns itself with the study of the rates at which quantities change. In practical terms, differential calculus does this by discovering the properties of singular points that lie on a curve. To take an example, in order to determine the speed of an accelerating object at a specific point in time, calculus can be used to measure the angle of a curved line used to represent the acceleration of the object, at a specific point. Because this line is curved, it is not possible to determine the speed of the object by comparing the distance covered over a set period with the time taken to cover this distance. Instead, differential calculus solves this problem by *initially* considering the average velocity of the object over a period of time. By then slowly decreasing the duration used, our equation will approach the instantaneous velocity of the object at the point we want to consider. The shorter the duration we consider, the closer our result will be to the instantaneous velocity of the object. By making the duration tend to zero, we are able to discover the exact instantaneous velocity of the object. This is written in differential calculus using

¹⁰⁴ In Deleuze's attempt to define depth without simply assuming a 'fictitious third dimension' we can see an echo of this problem. Both Riemann and Deleuze recognise that to explain the extended dimensions of space a non-extended spatial thinking is required.

the symbols dx and dy , where each of these refer to the ever decreasing, or infinitesimal, quantities used to determine the rate of change at the point. The most important thing to note here is that while the dx and the dy are indeterminate in themselves, by their mutual determination they fully determine the rate of change at a singular point.

Carl Friedrich Gauss, one of the originators of non-Euclidean geometry, and under whom Riemann had studied, had proved that it was possible to use calculus to analyse two-dimensional curved spaces without the need to embed them in a non-curved three-dimensional space.¹⁰⁵ Gauss showed that the curvature of a particular surface could be derived from the way that distances relate to each other on that surface, just as the curvature of a particular point on a line can be derived from the relations between two differentials on that line. Riemann developed Gauss's proof in order to apply it to multiply extended manifolds, or multiplicities, with any number of dimensions, so that a curved, n -dimensional manifold could be defined without embedding it in an $n+1$ -dimensional Euclidean space. By using this method, Riemann had showed that a multiplicity of n -dimensions, and with any possible curvature, could be analysed using a combination of n -dimensional geometry and differential calculus.

What Riemann found, however, was that when space is treated according to this form of differential geometry, and when curvature is understood intrinsically, it has a number of striking features that distinguish it from Euclidean space. Spaces whose curvature is expressed extrinsically, or whose curvature is expressed as a variation in another dimension, can be defined using a grid of regular points, which are metrically determined. Riemann refers to these multiplicities as *discrete manifolds* because relationships within the manifold occur between points, whose location can be determined irrespective of the location of other points, and hence form a discontinuous sequence. A discrete manifold of three dimensions, for example, can be defined using a Cartesian co-ordinate system, in which any point in that space can be

¹⁰⁵ Greenberg, 1980, 373-374

determined by 'x', 'y' and 'z' values, which each define the distance of the point from one of the three axes. However, multiplicities in which curvature is expressed intrinsically cannot be defined by such a regular grid because the 'curvature' of the space is manifested as the variability of distances within the space. In a curved three-dimensional space, the distances defining the 'x', 'y' and 'z' values would vary depending on their position in the manifold. Manifolds, or 'multiplicities' of this type are called *continuous manifolds* because relationships within the manifold occur continuously throughout the space.¹⁰⁶

In continuous multiplicities, unless curvature can be determined as regular, measurements of distance cannot be generalized across the space. This is due to the way in which the concept of quantity is applied here. Riemann explains that "quantity comes in discrete magnitudes by counting, in continuous magnitude by measurement".¹⁰⁷ While discrete manifolds are defined by regular points, so that the length of a line can be measured by counting the number of points it passes through, in a continuous manifold there is no such regular grid. As magnitudes can only be quantified by comparing one against another, in a continuous manifold this can only be done when one length constitutes a part of the other length. These measurements are only locally defined and cannot therefore be generalised across the manifold. Riemann is clear that in the case of continuous multiplicities, all quantities can only be measured relative to one another and this makes it impossible to give magnitudes any absolute quantity:

"Measuring consists in superposition of the magnitudes to be compared; for measurement there is requisite some means of carrying forward one magnitude as a measure for the other. In default of this, one can compare two magnitudes only when the one is a part of the other, and even then one can

¹⁰⁶ Riemann offers the following definition: "Notions of quantity are possible only where there exists already a general concept which allows various modes of determination. According as there is or is not found among these modes of determination a continuous transition from one to another, they form a continuous or a discrete manifold" (1929, 412). I have given my own definition above in order to highlight the importance of expressing curvature internally for the determination of curvature in continuous manifolds.

¹⁰⁷ Riemann, 1929, 413

only decide upon the question of more and less, not upon the question of how many.”¹⁰⁸

Here it is only possible to discuss quantity in relative terms. For example, it is possible to determine that a straight line A is longer than another straight line B, if B is included in A, and that B is longer than another straight line C, if C is included in B. In this case, it is also possible to say that A is longer than C and therefore that the order of the lines in terms of their length is A, then B, then C. However, we cannot determine by how much each of these lines varies in length from the other two. For this reason, our method of measurement is restricted to the use of ordinal numbers, such as 1st, 2nd and 3rd, and we cannot legitimately apply any cardinal numbers to lengths, such as 1cm, 2cm and 3cm. Riemann sums up the results of this investigation into the legitimacy of the use of measure in the case of continuous manifolds, stating that: “the metric relations of the manifold are completely determined by the measure of curvature” and that given the impossibility of proving mathematically the necessary curvature of space, it is quite conceivable that “the spatial relations of size are not in accord with the postulates of geometry”.¹⁰⁹

The ultimate result of Riemann’s work on the foundations of geometry was a radically new understanding of the nature of geometrical space. Riemann had shown that it was possible to describe curved spaces in any number of dimensions without relying on the assumptions made by Euclidean geometry.¹¹⁰ In doing this, Riemann also showed that space should be considered fundamentally as a continuous, curved multiplicity, of which regular, Euclidean space is only one particular limit case. He also showed that space, when understood as such a continuous multiplicity is necessarily non-

¹⁰⁸ Riemann, 1929, 413

¹⁰⁹ Riemann, 1929, 421; 424. Riemann’s argument at this point turns on the question of whether it is possible for us to assume the ‘flatness in the smallest parts’ of space. Riemann follows up both of these possibilities, while Deleuze is specifically interested in the consequences of *not* making such an assumption. For a detailed account of Deleuze’s interpretation of this aspect of Riemann, see Widder, 2017. It is also due to arguments in this article that I have followed White’s translations of Riemann over the more widely circulated Clifford translation.

¹¹⁰ This application of differential geometry in n-dimensional spaces allowed Einstein to invent his theory of general relativity and the associated concept of space-time.

metric, as relationships can only be measured comparatively rather than absolutely, using an ordinal number system and not a cardinal one. Most importantly, however, Riemann had shown not only that such an understanding of geometry was possible, but that it was the only way that geometry could be practiced without assuming Euclid's fifth axiom, and without subordinating mathematics to physics, by forcing mathematicians to justify the truth of their mathematical analyses on the basis of their applicability to experienced reality.

v) The virtual Idea as multiplicity

As we have already discussed, Deleuze claims that the virtual is populated by 'Ideas' that are composed of "a continuum of differential relations", which differ from themselves and which therefore contain their own difference.¹¹¹ With Riemann's concept of the continuous multiplicity in hand, we are now able to give a clear picture of the logical structure of these virtual Ideas. Here we will see that Deleuze borrows from Riemann's use of differential calculus, but applies its insights outside of the strict field of geometry.¹¹²

The relevance of the differential dx in calculus, as that which is completely undetermined in itself, but determinable in relation to another infinitesimal, dy , is profound for both Riemann and Deleuze. It was calculus that allowed Riemann to develop his own form of differential geometry and to develop his concept of the multiplicity. For Riemann, it is calculus that allows us to define a geometry that can account for a non-metric conception of space. For Deleuze, the dx is important at a conceptual level as that which is indeterminate in itself, but which has a determination when it is put in a relation.¹¹³ The dx and the dy are each indeterminate but determinable

¹¹¹ DR 315

¹¹² It was Russell's view that Riemann's quantitative conception of the multiplicity restricted him to the field of mathematics (Russell, 1996, 25). However, in the lecture where he first presented the concept of the continuous multiplicity, Riemann offered the experience of colour as an example of a non-mathematical use of the continuous multiplicity. Deleuze's use of Riemann's concept of the multiplicity is certainly not constrained to mathematical examples.

¹¹³ Deleuze's interpretation of the calculus is a contentious one. Deleuze wants to consider differentials not as having a minimal (but determinate) positive value, but as genuinely

elements, which are given a reciprocal determination in their relation, and which together absolutely determine a singular point. For Deleuze, it is this differential relationship between the indeterminate, the reciprocal determination, and the absolute determination that defines the virtual Idea, and it is for this reason that Deleuze will name the structure of the Idea a multiplicity. Deleuze makes this explicit when he writes: “The symbol dx appears as simultaneously undetermined, determinable and determination. Three principles which together form a sufficient reason correspond to these three aspects: a principle of determinability corresponds to the undetermined as such (dx , dy); a principle of reciprocal determination corresponds to the really determinable (dy/dx); a principle of complete determination corresponds to the effectively determined (values of dy/dx). In short, dx is the Idea.”¹¹⁴

As a formal definition of the virtual multiplicity that does not rely strictly on differential calculus, Deleuze offers three distinct criteria. First, that a multiplicity is a variety of elements that are not determinate prior to the relations that they form with one another: “the elements of the multiplicity must have neither sensible form nor conceptual signification, nor therefore, any assignable function.” Second, that in a multiplicity the elements come to be determined by the relationships that form between them: “the elements must in effect be determined, but reciprocally, by reciprocal relations which allow no independence to subsist”. Third, that the structure of the multiplicity must be applicable to a number of different states of affairs: it “must be actualised in diverse spatio-temporal relationships, at the same time as its elements are actually incarnated in a variety of terms and forms”.¹¹⁵ For Deleuze, the Idea cannot be split into a number of elements that can be said to have any existence, or any sense, independent of their relation. The definition given by James Williams in his guide to *Difference and Repetition* highlights the way in which the multiplicity, as it is defined by Deleuze, prioritises relationships over pre-existing elements: “The multiplicity is, therefore, a structure of elements

undetermined. For a comprehensive elaboration of Deleuze’s discussion of differential calculus in *Difference and Repetition*, see Somers-Hall, 2013, 131-143.

¹¹⁴ DR 217

¹¹⁵ DR 183

defined as: things in continuous variation resistant to identification; relations between those elements; relations between those relations and actual relations; and relations between the elements and actual forms and terms.”¹¹⁶ Following from the recognition that differential calculus is only a method for thinking such a structure, Williams is right to observe that our structural definition of the multiplicity should not be restricted to a mathematical reading and that Deleuze’s definition of the Idea as a multiplicity is “allied to the statement that everything is a multiplicity.”¹¹⁷

While the mathematics of differential calculus provides the context for Deleuze’s definition of the multiplicity, he is also clear that the structure of the virtual is not strictly mathematic in nature. Echoing his earlier comment about the fact that any space presupposes a problematic structure of primary depth, be it “geometrical, physical, biophysical, social... [or] linguistic,”¹¹⁸ Deleuze states that the virtual, understood as a problematic field, is not mathematical, but dialectic: “*Problems are always dialectical.*” In an attempt to clearly distance himself from what he sees as the pitfalls of the Hegelian dialectic, Deleuze is careful to state that by ‘dialectic’ he does not mean, “any kind of circulation of opposing representations which would make them coincide in the identity of a concept,” but instead, “the problem element in so far as this may be distinguished from the properly mathematical element of solutions.”¹¹⁹ Differential calculus is a method that allows us to think the differential nature of the virtual Idea, but the structure of the virtual problematic field is in no sense mathematical. Instead, “What is mathematical (or physical, biological, psychical or sociological) are the solutions.”¹²⁰

Before moving on from this discussion of the multiplicity of the Idea, and its differential structure, it is worth making two clarificatory points. First, that the virtual Idea is not indeterminate or underdetermined, but completely determined. When discussing the virtual, Deleuze writes: “We have seen that

¹¹⁶ Williams, 2013, 146

¹¹⁷ Williams, 2013, 145

¹¹⁸ DR 62

¹¹⁹ DR 226-227

¹²⁰ DR 226-227

a double process of reciprocal determination and complete determination defined that reality: far from being undetermined, the virtual is completely determined.”¹²¹ Second, that due to the fact that the virtual is real, it is not a negative or inert transcendent field, but a positive and productive immanent one. In his work on Bergson, Deleuze is clear on this point: “One only has to replace the actual terms in the movement that produces them, that is bring them back to the virtuality actualized in them, in order to see that differentiation is never a negation but a creation, and that difference is never negative but essentially positive and creative.”¹²² This is a point reiterated by a number of interpreters of Deleuze’s work and is captured by Michael Hardt when he writes that, “virtual being is not abstract and indifferent, and neither does it enter into relation with what is other than itself – it is real and qualified through the internal process of differentiation.”¹²³

The task of giving an exposition of the differential structure of virtual Ideas is particularly important for Deleuze because it allows him to offer an alternative to the dogmatic image of thought, with its reliance on the subjective presuppositions of common sense and good sense. Now, Deleuze is able to show that the apparent differences that we apprehend between actual entities rely on a virtual realm, which is real without being actual. Here, virtual Ideas form “an n-dimensional, continuous, defined multiplicity.”¹²⁴ The differential relations between the elements of this multiplicity are the internal difference which gives rise to the structure of the world of actual, differentiated objects. It is this realm of virtual Ideas which allows Deleuze to define difference as logically prior to identity. Here, the differential relations between virtual elements ‘make the difference’ between those actual entities that appear to us to differ from one another. To be clear about the relationship between the differential relations that exist between and within virtual Ideas, on the one hand, and the differences that we perceive between actual objects, on the other, Deleuze utilizes two different spellings of the word

¹²¹ DR 260

¹²² B 103

¹²³ Hardt, 2002, 14

¹²⁴ DR 230

differentiation/differenciation. According to this distinction, we can say that there are differential relations (spelled with a 't'), which hold between the pre-individual elements of virtual Ideas. These compose the internal or immanent difference which explains the existence of differences (spelled with a 'c') that exist between actual entities in experience.¹²⁵ In his essay 'How Do We Recognize Structuralism', Deleuze gives the following explanation of these terms: "Of the structure as virtuality, we must say that it is still undifferentiated (c), even though it is totally and completely differential (t). Of structures which are embodied in a particular actual form (present or past), we must say that they are differentiated, and that for them to be actualized is precisely to be differentiated (c)."¹²⁶ In brief, it is the virtual process of differentiation that explains the genesis of the actual process of differenciation.

vi) Individuation, intensity and dynamism

There is one final aspect of Deleuze's metaphysical project in *Difference and Repetition* that we must clarify before we can offer a coherent outline of Deleuze's critique of linear perspective, and before we can see how the concept of the line of flight is prefigured in this text, namely Deleuze's account of the dynamic genesis of the individuation and dramatization of 'spatio-temporal dynamisms'. While Deleuze's use of the concept of the multiplicity has shown how the structural relations of actual terms rely on the differential relations that are internal to virtual Ideas, these relations are static, while the world is dynamic and our experience of it is durational. To account for this, and to complete his genetic account of actual experience, Deleuze will claim that we still require a dynamic and generative process to animate the process of actualization by which a virtual structure can give rise to a set of actual differences. To put this point in more general terms, we could say that while the actual/virtual relation can give us an account of *difference in itself*, we are

¹²⁵ Deleuze's concept of "internal difference" comes from his reading of Bergson. He defines it as the "unity of the thing and the concept" (DI 33).

¹²⁶ DI, 179. For more information on the ways in which Deleuze uses these terms in 'How Do We Recognise Structuralism', *Difference and Repetition*, and *Logic of Sense*, and more on how his understanding of structure changes when he begins to work with Guattari, see Thornton, 2017.

still lacking the requisite account of *repetition for itself*, which will offer a description of the process that drives the genesis of experience.

To appreciate why Deleuze believes it is necessary to offer an account of the dynamic and intensive nature of experience, we must recognize the sense in which he characterises his philosophy as a ‘transcendental empiricism’. At the point of writing *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze was attempting to answer the traditional Kantian problem, namely “How can the given be given to a subject?” by utilizing a form of transcendental philosophy.¹²⁷ This can be seen in the preceding sections where Deleuze shows that the differential relations of virtual Ideas are the necessary preconditions for the possibility of the differences that exist in experience between actual entities. In other words, internal difference is the condition for external differences. Deleuze is also, however, grappling with what he sees as the traditional question of empiricism, namely “How is the subject constituted within the given?”¹²⁸ It is to this latter problem that Deleuze’s analysis of the intensive and dynamic nature of experience is directed.¹²⁹ Deleuze’s philosophical project does not stop here, but aims to synthesize these questions by posing the more complex problem, “How can a subject transcending the given be constituted in the given?”¹³⁰ In order to answer the empiricist’s question of the constitution of the subject, Deleuze begins by recognizing what he calls the “privilege of sensibility as origin”, which he claims “appears in the fact that, in an encounter, what forces sensation and that which can only be sensed are one and the same thing.”¹³¹ It is an encounter with pure sensation that instigates thought, so it is through an analysis of sensation that Deleuze will provide an empirical ground for his transcendental philosophy. What strikes Deleuze about thought’s encounter with pure sensation is that, despite what Kant had claimed concerning the *a priori* nature of the structures of space and time, sensation is not necessarily

¹²⁷ EP 86

¹²⁸ EP 86

¹²⁹ Deleuze’s most direct answer to the question of the constitution of the subject is given in Chapter 2 of DR. Deleuze shows how, starting with the passive synthesis of habit, and via a process of repetition in which what is repeated is not the same but different, the subject-object relation is generated as an integral axis of actual experience.

¹³⁰ EP 86

¹³¹ DR 182

extended spatiotemporally. Instead, sensation is intensive. What can only be experienced in sensation is its intensity. The level of intensity of a colour, or the intensity of a sound or a temperature, are not thinkable outside of sensation itself, that is to say that they cannot be represented. The intensity of a colour is not necessarily experienced as covering a determinate space, or of lasting for a measurable length of time. These intensities constitute a form of difference unlike that of the differential relations internal to virtual Ideas. Here, differences are always degrees of difference and are constantly changing in a dynamic field of intensity. Deleuze will claim that it is through an analysis of this “intense world of differences” that we can account for the extended nature of experience. For this reason, intensity “is precisely the object of a superior empiricism.”¹³² Following this, Deleuze will try to show how this sensory field of difference, which is quantitative and intensive in itself, can give rise to both the qualitative and the extended nature of thought, as it is represented in experience.

The qualitative nature of experience relies on the differences in intensity expressed, for example, in colour, light, sound, and heat. According to Deleuze’s analysis in *Difference and Repetition*, sensation is simply the contraction of intensive differences. To put this another way, we can say that while sensory experience is qualitative, that which is within sensation and gives rise to sensation, and which transcendental empiricism attempts to capture, is a pure intensive quantity. However, Deleuze is not only interested in the intensive nature of sensation as a transcendental ground for the possibility of quality, but also as the explanation of extension. To understand this point we will need to recognize some of the key features of intensive differences. One such defining feature is the fact that while extensive differences are additive, intensive differences are not. Differences like those of length, area and volume are extensive because they can be increased by adding to them and can be decreased by subtracting away from them, or by dividing them. For example, when a length of one metre is added to another length of one metre, the total length is two metres and when this length is

¹³² DR 69

divided into two, we will have two one metre sections again. The defining feature of intensive differences, on the other hand, is that they cannot be increased by adding or decreased by subtracting or dividing. Taking temperature as an example of an intensive difference, we can see that if we add one litre of water at 40°C to another litre of water at 40°C we do not get a body of water that is 80°C. Similarly, if we divide a body of water in two, the intensity of the temperature is not halved. The same can be said for colour, or for sound. Another distinctive feature of intensive differences it that here, increases or decreases in difference will result in a change of nature. For example, if a body of water is heated, it will alter its movement, eventually being transformed into a gas.

According to Deleuze, it is due to the fact that changes in intensity lead to changes in nature that the explication of intensity also gives rise to extension as such. It is the intensities of heat internal to a body of water that determine the way that such a body is extended in space and time, and not the other way around. Manuel DeLanda sums up this position with the slogan, “*intensive differences are productive*”, which he explains by writing that “wherever one finds an extensive frontier... there is always a process driven by intensive differences which produced such a boundary.”¹³³ The boundary distinctions used to measure differences in extension are themselves the result of intensive differences that have no spatiotemporal extension of their own. Deleuze writes that intensity is “the uncancellable in difference of quantity, but this difference of quantity is cancelled by extension”, going on to clarify that extension is nothing other than “the process by which intensive difference is turned inside out and distributed in such a way as to be dispelled, compensated, equalised and suppressed in the extensity which it creates.”¹³⁴ Deleuze’s analysis of intensity is central to his philosophical project, ultimately accounting for both the apparently qualitative nature of things and the way they are extended in space and time. He writes that, “there would no more be qualitative differences or differences in kind than there would be quantitative differences or differences of degree, if intensity were not capable of

¹³³ DeLanda, 2005, 81

¹³⁴ DR 292

constituting the former in qualities and the later in extensity.”¹³⁵ It is intensity that generates extended differences and not the other way around.

According to *Difference and Repetition*, the aforementioned intensive field is populated by ‘spatio-temporal-dynamisms’ and its explication goes by way of two distinct moments, namely ‘individuation’ and ‘dramatization’.¹³⁶ In the first of these moments, bundles of intensity known as ‘spatio-temporal-dynamisms’ become individual objects of thought. Here Deleuze is drawing heavily on Gilbert Simondon’s explanation of the process of individuation in an attempt to explain the genesis of individuated forms from a pre-individual field.¹³⁷ In the second moment, spatio-temporal dynamisms dramatize virtual Ideas in order to produce the actual. In an attempt to describe the relationship of spatio-temporal dynamisms to actualization, Deleuze writes that, “[t]hey are precisely *dramas*, they dramatize the Idea.”¹³⁸ This process of dramatization does not occur within a metric structure of time and space, because these metric qualities only refer to extended entities.¹³⁹ Instead, it is through the dynamic unfolding of individuation and dramatization that the very framework of extended space and time is created. According to Deleuze’s analysis, the category of extensity “does not account for the individuations that occur within it” and is only accounted for by the spatio-temporal dynamisms.¹⁴⁰

Talking of this procedure, Deleuze writes that any difference of intensity “is cancelled or tends to be cancelled in this system, but it creates this system by explicating itself.”¹⁴¹ What is key for Deleuze here is that, in the process of cancelling themselves out, intensive differences create the extended structure

¹³⁵ DR 299

¹³⁶ DR 313

¹³⁷ Deleuze was heavily influenced by Simondon, referencing him in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, *Difference and Repetition*, and *Logic of Sense*, and then with Guattari in both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, praising his work as “a profoundly original theory of individuation, which entails an entire philosophy.” (Deleuze, 2001, 43). See also Simondon, 1964.

¹³⁸ DR 268

¹³⁹ Deleuze begins his analysis of dramatization with Nietzsche, whose method, he claims, is precisely one of dramatization because it relates all (actual) values back to an (intensive) will to power (N 93-94).

¹⁴⁰ DR 288

¹⁴¹ DR 287

in which this process occurs.¹⁴² In this way, the process of dramatization “incarnates the two traits of the Idea, differential relations and corresponding singular points.”¹⁴³ It is through this incarnation that the virtual can eventually be fully differentiated, and can appear in the form of the actual. While some interpretations of *Difference and Repetition* assume that the process of individuation is actual, and must therefore presuppose the process of actualisation, Deleuze explicitly warns against making this mistake.¹⁴⁴ In Chapter 5, Deleuze writes that, “any reduction of individuation to a limit or complication of differentiation, compromises the whole of the philosophy of difference,” and that individuation “does not presuppose any differentiation; it gives rise to it.”¹⁴⁵ It is important to note here that Deleuze does not separate the two processes completely, or say that one is completely conditional on the other. Instead, these two processes embody a complex relation in which the process of individuation can only be understood in the context of the process of differentiation, or actualisation, to which it also gives rise.¹⁴⁶

The intensive realm does not operate of its own accord. It is understood as a kind of theatre that requires stage-direction from the virtual Ideas. Taking the generative processes contained in an egg as inspiration, Deleuze writes: “The world is an egg, but the egg itself is a theatre: a staged theatre in which the roles dominate the actors, the spaces dominate the roles and the Ideas dominate the spaces.”¹⁴⁷ So, while intensively defined spatio-temporal dynamisms drive the process of individuation, this process is directed by virtual Ideas to the extent that we can say that these Ideas are ‘dramatized’.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² See DeLanda, 2005, 81

¹⁴³ DR 270

¹⁴⁴ For a full discussion, see Clisby, 2015, 145.

¹⁴⁵ DR 308-309

¹⁴⁶ This form of complex causation between two different processes is not unusual in Deleuze’s work. For example, it may be worth reading this relationship with reference to the ‘quasi-cause’ as it is discussed in *Logic of Sense*. The static process of actualisation and the dynamic process of individuation in *Difference and Repetition* could then be read alongside the static and logical ontological geneses that Deleuze discusses in the context of Leibniz and the dynamic genesis that he discusses in the context of psychoanalysis (LS 126-144 and 214-220). These two texts do not, however, offer analogous readings of individuation, which is characterized as dynamic in *Difference and Repetition* but as the product of the static ontological genesis in *Logic of Sense* (LS 137).

¹⁴⁷ DR 269

¹⁴⁸ In an echo of Kant’s famous claim that “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (CPR A51/B 75), we could say that for Deleuze, “Virtual Ideas

Ultimately, Deleuze will combine the different processes discussed here into the combination “differentiation-individuation-dramatization-differenciation”, which describes the production of actual experience: a process of individuation in an intensive field of depth produces spatio-temporal dynamisms in accordance with the virtual structure of the Idea; these dynamisms are then dramatised to produce an extended field of actual, differentiated elements that stand in relations of opposition and limitation to one another.¹⁴⁹

The four different moments involved in this process are distinct and they do not play out in a linear order. Deleuze is careful to clarify that the previously discussed process of differentiation-differenciation, which relates virtual Ideas to actual entities, relies on the activity of individuation-dramatization and not the other way around. As Deleuze puts it: “Individuation always governs actualisation”.¹⁵⁰ This means that while there are “the differential relations which constitute the pre-individual field to be actualised”, the actualisation of these differential relations is driven by the individuation and dramatization of spatio-temporal dynamisms.¹⁵¹ Returning to the example of the developmental process undergone by an egg, Deleuze will explain that while the virtual aspect is defined by a set of differential relations, “their actualisation is determined only by the cytoplasm, with its gradients and its fields of individuation”.¹⁵² For Deleuze, the process of individuation is carried out in an “intensive field” where pure intensities explicate themselves, and through this process individuate the differential relations of the virtual Idea. As Deleuze writes: “Intensity creates the extensities and the qualities in which it is explicated; these extensities and qualities are differentiated”, which is to say that they are actualised.¹⁵³

without spatio-temporal dynamisms are empty, spatio-temporal dynamisms without virtual Ideas are blind.” However, Deleuze’s account differs from Kant’s, especially due to the fact that, for Deleuze, the subject is not required to apply concepts to intuitions. On the contrary, the subject is created as a side-effect who experiences the process, without playing an active role.

¹⁴⁹ DR 213

¹⁵⁰ DR 313

¹⁵¹ DR 313

¹⁵² DR 313

¹⁵³ DR 317

vii) Depth in linear perspective

As previously mentioned, despite the fact that he does not mention the concept explicitly in the text, Deleuze's work in *Difference and Repetition* approaches the concept of the 'line of flight' obliquely via his engagement with linear perspective. Now that I have outlined Deleuze's metaphysical project, I will give a short account of linear perspective, including a discussion of the use of the French phrase '*ligne de fuite*' in this context. Following this descriptive section, I will show why Deleuze finds the tendency in the history of philosophy to use linear perspective as a model for our understanding of space problematic, and exactly how he aims to critique such a tendency. Here we will see how Deleuze's discussion of the four-part process of differentiation-individuation-dramatization-differenciation provides an alternative account of the genesis of the spatial structure of actual experience. Finally, putting all of the previous work together, I will offer my own analysis of the somewhat spectral presence of the concept of the 'line of flight' in *Difference and Repetition*.

First, we must begin with linear perspective itself. In the graphical arts, linear perspective is a technique for representing three dimensional shapes, or spaces, on a two dimensional plane, such as a painting on canvas.¹⁵⁴ The techniques associated with linear perspective reach back to Greek and Roman painting,¹⁵⁵ but they were first studied and codified during the Renaissance, by painters such as Piero della Francesca and Paolo Uccello.¹⁵⁶ The historical development of the linear perspectival technique during the fourteenth and

¹⁵⁴ Here I will attempt to explain the theory of linear perspective in the language used by its progenitors. This requires the acceptance of a particular model of space, as it is thought in extension. We will see later that Deleuze's critique of linear perspective is tied to his critique of this understanding of space.

¹⁵⁵ For example, Agatharcus is thought to have used perspective in his *skēnographia*, or stage sets. It is this sort of technique that Plato mistrusts in the arts: "Thus (through perspective) every sort of confusion is revealed within us; and this is that weakness of the human mind on which the art of conjuring and of deceiving by light and shadow and other ingenious devices imposes, having an effect upon us like magic... And the arts of measuring and numbering and weighing come to the rescue of the human understanding – there is the beauty of them – and the apparent greater or less, or more or heavier, no longer have the mastery over us, but give way before calculation and measure and weight" (Plato, 1973, 602c-d).

¹⁵⁶ For a discussion of the ways in which ancient perspectival techniques prefigured the development of geometric linear perspective in the renaissance, see White, 1956.

fifteenth centuries is well documented, as are the ways in which this technique was closely tied to a new understanding of the nature of space.¹⁵⁷ The mathematical form of linear perspective was most clearly conceived in 1425 by Filippo Brunelleschi and later codified as *perspectiva artificialis*, or artificial perspective, by Leon Battista Alberti in his work, *Della pittura* (On Painting), published in 1435.¹⁵⁸ For the artist, linear perspective is intended to provide a rational, geometrical technique for the systematic representation of objects in space. It does this by replicating the visual illusion that the parallel edges of rectilinear bodies converge at a singular point on the horizon. During his discussion of perspective painting in *Mathematics in Western Culture*, Morris Kline explains that, by developing this technique, theorists were “motivated by far more than the desire to attain verisimilitude. The greater goal was understanding of the structure of space.”¹⁵⁹

Linear perspective works by placing the canvas on an imaginary plane between the eye of the artist and the objects perceived. This plane, called the picture plane, sits at right angles to the point of view of the artist and acts as a screen onto which the light from the objects is projected. When a viewer takes up the point of view of the artist, by standing in front of the painting, the painted image forms an approximation of the artist’s view. As the perceived size of an object decreases the further it is from the viewer, linear perspective reproduces this effect through foreshortening. The result is that two parallel lines in space are represented on the picture plane by two converging lines. As these lines recede infinitely into the distance they intersect at a singular point on the horizon. The point at which any two parallel lines converge is known as the *point de fuite* in French, and as the ‘vanishing point’ in English. This point does not have a specific location in the space being represented, but in the painting it is a singular point that orientates the eye of the viewer. A painting in linear perspective can have any number of vanishing points, depending on the number of pairs of parallel lines in the scene being represented. While a vanishing point, or *point de fuite*, refers to the point at which any two parallel

¹⁵⁷ Kline, 1982, 150-169; Panofsky, 1991.

¹⁵⁸ Alberti, 1966

¹⁵⁹ Kline, 1982, 157

lines on a plane will converge if they are extended until they intersect, the vanishing line, or *ligne de fuite*, refers to the line at which any two parallel planes will converge if extended until they intersect. The horizon line is the most common *ligne de fuite*, which represents the intersection of any two planes that are parallel with the ground plane (and are thus perpendicular to the eye of the viewer). However, an infinite number of other *lignes de fuite* are possible, corresponding to the existence of any two parallel planes in the space being represented. While two parallel lines on a plane that is not parallel to the ground plane will form a *point de fuite* that is not on the horizon, two parallel planes that are not parallel with the ground plane will form a *ligne de fuite* that is not coextensive with the horizon line.

The ability for linear perspective to accurately reproduce the experience of vision has been comprehensively contested. For example, in his systematic review of linear perspective, Erwin Panofsky noted that perspective painting makes a number of assumptions about vision, such as the stillness of the eye, that are rarely fulfilled in experience, and that the technique is not able to deal with either the stereoscopic nature of vision or the curvature of the retina. He states that, “In order to guarantee a fully rational – that is, infinite, unchanging and homogenous – space, this ‘central perspective’ makes two tacit but essential assumptions: first, that we see with a single and immobile eye, and second, that the planar cross section of the visual pyramid can pass for an adequate reproduction of our optical image. In fact these two premises are rather bold abstractions from reality.”¹⁶⁰ For the purposes of our discussion, it is also worth noting one further point about linear perspective, which restricts the technique to the formation of an *approximation* of a scene as it is viewed by the eye, namely that while two parallel planes in our field of view seem to converge under certain circumstances, in the three-dimensional space being represented these planes do not converge and will therefore never intersect. While the *ligne de fuite* has a definite and located existence in the picture, it is defined by the position of the viewer and does not correspond to any line in the ‘reality’ of the space depicted.

¹⁶⁰ Panofsky, 1991, 28-30

Following the numerous critiques of linear perspective as a mimetic technique, a number of thinkers have also questioned the social or political neutrality of perspective painting.¹⁶¹ Panofsky addresses the ways in which linear perspective was a kind of visual corollary of the renaissance conception of man as a disengaged, individual and rational observer.¹⁶² The historical question of the relationship between linear perspective and the development of modern subjectivity has also been addressed by thinkers as diverse as Marshal McLuhan, who claims that “far from being a normal mode of human vision, three-dimensional perspective is a conventionally acquired mode of seeing”¹⁶³, and Michel Foucault, who offers an analysis of the mode of subjectivation carried out by the viewing of a perspectival painting.¹⁶⁴

viii) Difference contra linear perspective

As we might expect, Deleuze is heavily critical of the image of human experience, and the image-of-thought, contained in this theory of linear perspective. Put most simply, for Deleuze, the problem is that this way of speaking about vision makes a number of unfounded assumptions: we must assume a fully constituted viewing subject, already distinct from a fully constituted three-dimensional spatial reality; and we must assume that such a subject has an organised two-dimensional field of vision, from which he or she must deduce the existence of a third dimension. For Deleuze, it is precisely these assumptions that need to be explained: How is the subject generated? How is the object of experience constituted? How does experience come to be organised? In more general terms, we can also say that Deleuze will critique the model of linear perspective for its representational form and for its consistent attempts to cover over difference-in-itself and to reduce difference

¹⁶¹ One of the only current writers to offer a philosophical defense of linear perspective is Hubert Damisch, a student of Merleau-Ponty. Damisch offers a Lacanian reading of perspective and claims that the visual grammar of perspective painting is integral to the symbolic formation of subjectivity, in the same way that the grammar of indexicals in speech is necessary for the formation of the self-reflexive subject. See Damisch, 1994; Wood, 1995, 677-682.

¹⁶² Panofsky, 1991, 67

¹⁶³ McLuhan, 1970, 16

¹⁶⁴ See Foucault’s analysis of *Las Meninas* by Velásquez (2002, 3-18).

to the false-differences of opposition and limitation. Deleuze's critique of linear perspective is therefore quite different from that of Panofsky, McLuhan, and Foucault as it is based on a metaphysical disagreement concerning the nature of space and the nature of the subject, rather than an empirical or directly political disagreement. He does not simply want to show that linear perspective is inaccurate, or that it is an historically located form of subjectivation, but that it is part of an image-of-thought tied up with the Euclidean model of space, and the Cartesian model of the thinking subject.¹⁶⁵ Theories of linear perspective, assuming that vision is in some way analogous to the projection of an image onto a screen, or canvas, take for granted the organisation of objects in a field of vision and try to deduce depth. Deleuze will argue that depth, as a form of difference, must be thought independently of vision, and of experience, so that the genesis of such experience can be accounted for.

Perhaps Deleuze's most direct criticism of linear perspective concerns the way in which depth is supposedly generated in a field of view via the opposition between two forms that represent parallel planes. As Deleuze points out, the opposition between these planes, organised by their orientation towards a shared *ligne de fuite*, can only be understood if it is assumed that in vision they are "spread out upon a flat surface" and "polarised in a single plane". The problem with this model is that it requires the implicit assumption of "a fictitious third dimension" in which height and breadth can be differentiated from each other.¹⁶⁶ To put this another way, in order to interpret the apparent location and orientation of the two planes in question as *converging*, we must first recognise that this orientation can only exist in depth. During a discussion of the Hegelian dialectic, Deleuze extrapolates on this line of argument by claiming that philosophers have traditionally misunderstood difference as "traced or projected on to a flat space" only when they have forced it "into a previously established identity." Deleuze goes on to state that the form of the identity that is all-too-often taken for granted is specifically the identity of the

¹⁶⁵ Descartes' discussion of the projection of light onto the retina in optics leads him directly to a theory of geometric space (2001). For more on this problem, see Henry Somers-Hall's discussion of Merleau-Ponty's critique of the impact of Descartes' optical thinking on the development of linear perspective, (2012, 115).

¹⁶⁶ DR 61

'here and now'. He writes that, "the here and now are posited as empty identities, as abstract universalities which claim to draw difference along with them." In direct contrast to this, Deleuze states that, "difference does not by any means follow and remains attached in the depths of its own space, in the here-now of a differential reality always made up of singularities."¹⁶⁷ This comment returns us to one of the central problems of *Difference and Repetition*, namely how to think the genesis of the actual, without assuming in advance anything that is given in the actual. While actual entities are structured in an extended space and an extended time, the process that produces these actual entities cannot be structured in such a way. Talking specifically about the apparent separation of space and time as a duality of structures that contain all actual experience, Deleuze writes that this duality "does not exist in the process of actualisation itself, but only in its outcome, in the actual terms, species and parts."¹⁶⁸ What this section makes clear is that, when it comes to the question of space, a differential metaphysics requires a way of thinking the here-now, not as an empty identity, to be filled by oppositions and limitations, but as a differential and pre-individual reality.¹⁶⁹

We can now begin to see how Deleuze will offer his own, positive response to the problem of depth. Deleuze's recasting of the nature of difference in terms of a relation between the differential relations internal to the virtual Idea and the differences that exist between actual entities, will provide a way of thinking the here-now as a form of differential reality, which does not presuppose any spatio-temporal extension. The difference that exists between the two planes in my field of view is formally determined by a set of differential relations that are purely virtual. It is possible to articulate this response in the terms of Riemann's theory of multiplicities: Just as Riemann had showed how we could avoid any assumption about the geometrical nature of space by creating an immanent geometry using differential calculus, Deleuze produced a metaphysical explanation of the genesis of space, while avoiding any

¹⁶⁷ DR 63

¹⁶⁸ DR 270

¹⁶⁹ The assumption of the identity of the here-and-now is nothing other than the assumption of good sense and common sense, namely the assumption that different representations relate to the same object and that they cohere in a single subject.

assumptions about the structure of such a space, or of the structure of experience in general. Via a form of transcendental argument, Deleuze is able to define virtual ideas as having no identity, but only internal difference among pre-individual elements. This virtual field is a form of the here-now construed as a continuous multiplicity, which can be thought without imposing any particular spatial extension upon it.

ix) Intensity contra linear perspective

Deleuze's critique of linear perspective does not, however, concentrate solely on the problem of difference, and it does not respond only with a theory of virtual multiplicities. On the contrary, perhaps the most consistent critique that Deleuze levels at linear perspectival forms of thinking is that they take for granted an organisation of the visual field. It may be the case that given a two-dimensional representation of an extended space it is possible to simulate depth, but the question remains, how would such a representation be given to a subject in the first place? Taking the most basic operation of linear perspective as an example, in which two parallel planes seem to converge on the horizon, Deleuze asks how each of these planes appear as distinct and individual entities in my field of vision in the first place. To answer this question, we will not only need to mobilise Deleuze's theory of the virtual, but we must return to his comments on intensity and the dynamic individuation and dramatization of spatio-temporal dynamisms.

For Deleuze, before any form can be compared or opposed to other forms, it must become determinate in experience. In vision, we can say that the form must separate itself from an indeterminate background. In direct contrast to the way in which linear perspective relies on the mutual differentiation of two things from each other, Deleuze recommends that, "instead of something distinguished from something else, imagine something which distinguishes itself – and yet that from which it distinguishes itself does not distinguish itself from it."¹⁷⁰ Deleuze also writes here that, "form distinguishes itself... from the

¹⁷⁰ DR 36

ground, but not the converse, since distinction itself is a form.”¹⁷¹ The point Deleuze is making here is deceptively simple; in order to claim that two planes in my field of view are parallel, or that they are converging, I first need to be able to make them out, and this requires a dynamic process by which they come to stand out in my field of view. Deleuze will argue that such a process requires a primary dimension of depth. He writes: “The law of figure and ground would never hold for objects distinguished from a neutral background or a background of other objects unless the object itself entertained a relation to its own depth.”¹⁷² To put it another way, no figure could show up for me, unless it did so out of the depth of my vision. Deleuze concludes that the relation between figure and ground “is only an extrinsic plane relation” and that this relation presupposes “an internal, voluminous relation between surfaces and the depth which they envelop.”¹⁷³ The question here concerns not actualisation as such, but specifically the individuation of figures in a field of view. As we have already seen, it is through the process of individuation that intensive differences are dramatised and ultimately generate extension. Thus, the individuation of figures must be explained by the relation between intensity and extension.

Framing the problem in this way, Deleuze will claim that linear perspective assumes that space is extended, but extensity “can emerge from the depths only if depth is definable independently of extensity.”¹⁷⁴ This means that we cannot use an operation that takes place in extension to give an account of the dimension of depth. Instead we must understand that an intensive depth pre-exists the act of vision, in which the dynamic nature of the visual field is distributed, before it takes on an extended spatial form. While the extended space of actual entities is named the *extensum*, the intensive depth that is its transcendental ground is named the *spatium*: “The extensity whose genesis we are attempting to establish is extensive magnitude, the *extensum* or term of reference of all the *extensio*. The original depth, by contrast, is indeed space

¹⁷¹ DR 36

¹⁷² DR 289

¹⁷³ DR 289

¹⁷⁴ DR 289

as a whole, but space as an intensive quantity: the pure *spatium*.¹⁷⁵ The *spatium* referred to here is the intensive space of spatio-temporal dynamisms and the *extensio* is the space generated by their dramatization. There are four key ways in which these two spaces differ; while the *spatium* is intensive, continuous, unlimited, and immanently defined, the *extensio*, which is simply assumed in the linear perspectival model, is extended, discrete, bounded, and defined transcendentally by an external measure. Instead of thinking of the extended forms as a surface, which completely covers the depths of the *spatium*, the intensive relationship between determinate forms and their indeterminate background means that they are in a constant process of individuation. The result of this constant tension is that intensive space and extended space can never be fully separated from each other.¹⁷⁶

It is interesting to note here the similarity between Deleuze's critique of linear perspective, and that of Merleau-Ponty. Although Merleau-Ponty is only mentioned twice by name in *Difference and Repetition*, the influence of his phenomenological critique of linear perspective is hard to ignore.¹⁷⁷ Deleuze's claim that, "[i]t is no use rediscovering depth as a third dimension unless it has already been installed at the beginning, enveloping the other two and enveloping itself as third", echoes almost exactly the wording used in *Eye and Mind*, where Merleau-Ponty writes of traditional conceptions of depth that: "Once depth is understood in this way, we can no longer call it a third dimension. In the first place, if it were a dimension, it would be the first one."¹⁷⁸ Although articulated in different terms, Merleau-Ponty's argument is based on the same form of critique as that of Deleuze, namely that any attempt to define depth through the opposition of forms is logically undermined by the fact that these forms cannot be determined apart from their relation in depth. He states this by noting that, "there are forms and definite planes only if it is stipulated how far from me their different parts are."¹⁷⁹ Unlike in Deleuze's account, Merleau-Ponty is concerned with the ability of linear perspective to accurately

¹⁷⁵ DR 289

¹⁷⁶ DR 37

¹⁷⁷ DR 77, 209

¹⁷⁸ DR 62; Merleau-Ponty, 1993, 140.

¹⁷⁹ DR 62; Merleau-Ponty, 1993, 140.

describe our experience of vision and unlike Deleuze he aims to recapture an originary and ‘spontaneous’ vision. Despite this difference, the influence of Merleau-Ponty’s critique of depth on Deleuze is interesting to us here for two reasons. Firstly because, unlike Deleuze, Merleau-Ponty specifically discusses the concept of the *ligne de fuite*:

“In spontaneous vision, things rivalled one another for my look and, being anchored in one of them, I felt the solicitation of the others which made them coexist with the first... In perspective, I renounce that ambiguity and agree to let only that figure in my drawing which could be seen from a certain reference point by an immobile eye fixed on a certain ‘vanishing point’ [*point de fuite*] of a certain ‘vanishing line’ [*ligne de fuite*], chosen once and for all.”¹⁸⁰

The distinction made here by Merleau-Ponty, between the fluid and ever-changing experience of ‘spontaneous vision’ and the structured space of linear perspective, with its dominating ‘vanishing line’ or ‘*ligne de fuite*’, shares much with Deleuze’s approach. Both thinkers also refer to the error made by the linear perspectival model as a transcendental illusion. There is, however, a second reason why Merleau-Ponty’s influence on Deleuze is interesting to us here. While Deleuze is ambivalent toward the phenomenological project in general, the similarities between Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty’s critiques of linear perspective highlights a mutual commitment to a philosophy concerned primarily with a metaphysics of immanence. What they share is the recognition that the structure of reality cannot be considered from an imaginary, external, Archimedean point, from which it would be possible to provide the prior conditions for the possibility of that experience. For example, in his comments on the genesis of space, as we have considered them here, Deleuze is critical of any attempt to discover the spatial conditions for experience from a transcendent, non-spatial perspective. Instead, like many thinkers within the phenomenological tradition, Deleuze is committed to a philosophy that accepts its own inherently perspectival nature. This is worth clarifying in the context of his critique of linear perspective.

¹⁸⁰ Merleau-Ponty, 1973, 52 (my parentheses). Merleau-Ponty mentions the *ligne de fuite* at a number of other points in his work (1968, 34, 119, 222).

Deleuze's critique of linear perspective is not based on the way in which such a theory considers the genesis of space in relation to the perspective of a particular point of view. On the contrary, Deleuze's criticism is that linear perspective assumes that any individual perspective is only one of many possible perspectives on an otherwise non-perspectival world. With Deleuze's theory of intensive space, perspective will not only be considered as an aspect of our perceptive apparatus, but as an essential element of the world.¹⁸¹ Returning to Deleuzian terminology, we can say that both Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze show that the *extensio* must presuppose a *spatium*, because the difference that exists between a form and its background is an intensive and not an extensive difference.

x) The *ligne abstrait* and the *ligne de fuite* in *Difference and Repetition*

Given Deleuze's comprehensive critique of linear perspective, we might think that there is no way that the concept of the *ligne de fuite*, as it is used in perspective painting, could be recuperated by a Deleuzian metaphysics. However, in an attempt to prefigure some of the ways in which the concept will appear later in his collaborative work with Guattari, I will offer two possible methods for such a recuperation. The first will involve maintaining the sense of the *ligne de fuite* as a vanishing line, or horizon line, while detaching it from the frame of the visual field and relocating it as a transcendental condition for the emergence of such a field. For the second method, I will introduce the concept of the abstract line (*ligne abstrait*), as it appears in *Difference and Repetition*, and show how these two concepts might relate, and might ultimately collapse into each other. By sketching out these two options, and by

¹⁸¹ Deleuze's perspectivism is worked out in *Difference in Repetition* through his attempt to 'reverse' Platonism, where the power of the *simulacra* is considered as the primary force that constitutes reality, over and above the power of the representative image (DR 81). For more on Deleuze's imaginative reworking of Plato's use of the *simulacrum*, see LS 291. This critique of Platonism is closely aligned with much of the phenomenological project, but Deleuze departs from Merleau-Ponty in his attempt to give a positive account of the genesis of experience by broadening his philosophical view beyond the *actual* world, to the *virtual*. For a more detailed discussion of Deleuze's debt to Merleau-Ponty, and the way in which his perspectival account of the conditions of experience attempts to overturn Platonism, see Somers-Hall (2009; and 2012, 111).

analysing them side-by-side, I hope to give an account of the role that the missing-concept of the line of flight might play in our reading of *Difference and Repetition*. This reading will also give us one final opportunity to examine the precise relationship between the four different moments of differentiation-individuation-dramatization-differenciation.

In standard accounts of linear perspective, the *ligne de fuite* is taken as a line that orientates the viewer within the visual field, by providing a line, nominally located at infinity, toward which parallel planes seem to converge. The problem with this account, according to the Deleuzian critique, is that it is also taken to appear within an already orientated visual field. If the *ligne de fuite* is a necessary condition for the orientation of vision, then it cannot also appear within an orientated vision. This problem may, hypothetically, be resolved by rethinking the *ligne de fuite* as a virtual line. Such a line would be real, in the sense that it marks something that really is significant, without being actual, in the sense that it is not located within an extended spatio-temporal framework. To rethink this line as virtual, we must recognise that it is not given in experience, but acts as a necessary precondition for the genesis of experience. We previously examined the three criteria that Deleuze provides as a formal definition of the virtual multiplicity. First, in the virtual, elements are not determinate prior to the relations that they form with one another: “the elements of the multiplicity must have neither sensible form nor conceptual signification.” Second, that these virtual elements come to be determined by the relationships that form between them: “the elements must in effect be determined, but reciprocally, by reciprocal relations which allow no independence to subsist”. Third, that the structure of this virtual multiplicity must be applicable to a number of different states of affairs: it “must be actualised in diverse spatio-temporal relationships, at the same time as its elements are actually incarnated in a variety of terms and forms”.¹⁸² If we take the horizon line as our example of a *ligne de fuite*, then we can see how it fulfils each of these criteria. A *ligne de fuite* is nothing other than a line that runs through, and connects, all *points de fuite* for a given plane. Each of these

¹⁸² DR 183

vanishing points is an indeterminate element, defined only by the relation between parallel lines on a single plane. These indeterminate elements reciprocally determine one another to form a straight line, which can be actualized in any number of spatio-temporal relationships. That is to say, the horizon is actualized whenever and wherever such a reciprocal relation between vanishing points is generated. It is not the case that parallel objects define the location of the *ligne de fuite*, but that the *ligne de fuite* opens the possibility of parallelism.¹⁸³ In this way, it is possible to detach the *ligne de fuite* from the visual field and to conceptualize it as a virtual precondition for the genesis of any actual visual field. As a line that connects up virtual elements, it should also be understood as the line that separates, and connects, the virtual and the actual. Only when a selection of virtual elements resonate with one another in this way, will a field of vision be actualized. To draw such a line is an act of differentiation-differenciation. It is double edged, in that it is both the point of convergence and the point of divergence between the virtual and the actual.¹⁸⁴

A second method for recuperating the *ligne de fuite* can be accomplished by comparing it with the alternative concept of the *ligne abstrait*. In opposition to his criticisms of the practice of using linear perspective in painting to simulate depth, Deleuze writes positively about painters such as Odilon Redon, who prefer to use the chiaroscuro technique.¹⁸⁵ This technique uses only shading and continuous gradations of colour to convey a sense of depth. It does not rely on the distinct borders of objects, but on the way in which the intensity of light defines the relative positions of bodies. While no border lines are drawn, 'abstract lines' are created by the divisions of light and dark. For example, if a

¹⁸³ By 'parallelism' here I only mean to denote the condition of being parallel. However, this discussion of the way in which parallel planes are generated may also apply to Deleuze's reading of Spinoza's famous 'parallelism' between extension and thought.

¹⁸⁴ The fact that this line is a convergence opens the possibility that it is here that the virtual can be glimpsed in the actual. Deleuze explores the possibility of escaping the actual through the contours of actual forms via an analysis of the subjects in Francis Bacon's paintings, who attempt to "pass through the syringe and to escape through this hole or vanishing point functioning as prosthesis-organ" (FB, 11-14).

¹⁸⁵ In the original French, Deleuze does not use the Italian *chiaroscuro*, but the French term *clair-obscur*. This resonates with Deleuze's critique of Descartes' distinction between 'clear and distinct' ideas and 'obscure and confused' ideas, to which Deleuze contrasts the 'clear-confused' and the 'distinct-obscure'. These alternative pairings are borrowed from Leibniz (DR 315).

body is lit from the side, so that one side of the body is in shadow, the edge of the shadow, where light fades into dark, will create a line that cuts across the face of the body. In a passage that beautifully reflects Deleuze's claim that forms can only be determined in relation to an indeterminate ground, he quotes Redon as stating:

"No plastic form will be found in my works, I mean any form perceived objectively, for itself... All of my art is confined solely to the resources of chiaroscuro, and also owes much to the effects of the abstract line, that agent from a profound source, acting directly on the spirit."¹⁸⁶

For Deleuze, an abstract line of this kind is neither virtual, nor actual, but intensive. It is a line that connects up zones of intensity – here, intensities of light – to allow for the emergence of a determinate form against an indeterminate background. It is a line that individuates a form, and dramatizes it, to allow for the actualisation of an object of experience. What is of extra interest to us here is that, in Deleuze's collaborations with Guattari, the abstract line, or *ligne abstrait*, will become synonymous with the line of flight.¹⁸⁷

As an alternative example of the abstract line, Deleuze discusses the dynamics of a lighting strike. Deleuze calls the abstract line, "the determination absolutely adequate to the indeterminate, just as the flash of lightning is equal to the night."¹⁸⁸ Unlike a line that marks the border between two determined forms, the abstract line is described as a determination, "which is not opposed to the indeterminate and does not limit it."¹⁸⁹ The flash of lightning is of special interest to Deleuze, not only because it seems to differentiate itself from a dark sky, while the sky remains indeterminate, but because it is a connection brought about due to an intensive difference between points of differing

¹⁸⁶ DR 37. Deleuze cites the following reference: Odilon Redon, *A soi-meme: Journal, 1867-1915*, Paris: Fleury, 1922, p. 63

¹⁸⁷ ATP 10, 218, 224, 226, 305.

¹⁸⁸ DR 345. Deleuze also writes that "like thunder and lightning... Spatio-temporal dynamisms come to fill the system" (DR 144). The line of flight can also be understood in relation to the concept of the 'dark precursor' which Deleuze develops while discussing lightning as an example of actualisation (DR 145-151).

¹⁸⁹ DR 345

electrical charge, and made between a set of singular points.¹⁹⁰ By defining the abstract line in this way, and by using both the abstract line in a *chiaroscuro* painting and a lightning strike as his examples, Deleuze gives us a concept that differentiates, or ‘makes the difference’ between, the intensive field, or *spatium*, and extended space, or the *extensio*. It is a line that connects up zones of intensity to allow for the distribution of an individuated entity in space and time, and thus allows for the distribution of space and time themselves. It is also a line of double-orientation at which the intensive and the extensive simultaneously converge and diverge.

What I would like to suggest at the close of this chapter, is that these two lines, the *ligne de fuite* and the *ligne abstrait*, are not wholly distinct, and by thinking them together, we can gain a clearer understanding of the four moments in the process of ‘differentiation-individuation-dramatization-differentiation’. As previously discussed, Deleuze’s metaphysical project in *Difference and Repetition* is a kind of transcendental empiricism. Deleuze aims to show how the intensity of sensation, and the intensity of an encounter in thought, can provide the transcendental ground for the genesis of actual experience, with its subject-object orientation and its extended spatio-temporal structure. Showing how the *ligne de fuite*, once detached from the visual field, and the *ligne abstrait* relate to each other in the context of our experience of visual space, can help us to see this process in action. A field of varying intensities of light, seen from no particular perspective and given no particular extension, begins to individuate as zones of intensity start to resonate with one another. The line that connects these zones of intensity is the *ligne abstrait*. The formation of this line is not, however, totally independent. The individuation of the line is directed by the structure of a virtual multiplicity. This is to say that a collection of indeterminate points reciprocally determine one another to create a complete determination of the line. This is the *ligne de fuite*, taken as a transcendental precondition for the genesis of vision. It is the virtual that directs

¹⁹⁰ Somewhat surprisingly, the mechanics of lightning is not clearly understood by modern science. The basic process involves the polarization of positive and negative charges within a storm cloud and a corresponding polarization of charges in the ground below the cloud. When the electric potential between the cloud and the ground reaches a certain threshold, the electrical energy passes through the atmosphere separating the two bodies, equalizing the polarization (Rakov & Uman, 2006, 4-12).

the individuation and dramatization of spatio-temporal dynamisms, and it is spatio-temporal dynamisms that dramatize the virtual Idea. As such, we can say that it is the *ligne de fuite* that directs the *ligne abstrait*, and it is the *ligne abstrait* that dramatizes the *ligne de fuite*. It is through this interaction that actual forms take shape, become distinct from their background, and orientate themselves to determine the position of the subjective viewer.

The analysis I have provided here must be contextualised. Deleuze does not use the concept of the *ligne de fuite* in *Difference and Repetition* and does not compare the *ligne de fuite* to the *ligne abstrait*. However, by sketching out the possibility of this reading, I have aimed to show how it is possible to find a significant precursor for Deleuze and Guattari's later use of the concept of the 'line of flight' in Deleuze's earlier work. By doing this, the following chapters will be better positioned to show exactly what changes in the shift from *Difference and Repetition*, and to a lesser extent from *Logic of Sense*, to *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. Before moving on to these texts, however, it will be useful to give an account of some of the themes in the intellectual and practical work that Guattari completed before he began his collaboration with Deleuze. This will allow us to give a full account of the problems that both thinkers were dealing with when they created the concept of the line of flight.

Chapter 2 – Guattari: Psychotherapeutic and Militant Escapes

- i) The militant psychoanalyst
- ii) Sartre and group subjectivity
- iii) Lacan, the Symbolic and 'full speech'
- iv) Subject-groups
- v) Transversality and escape
- vi) Materialism contra Lacan
- vii) Machine and structure
- viii) From base to superstructure
- ix) Lacan's machines
- x) Revolutionary escapes

i) Introduction

Guattari was, first and foremost, a political militant and his theoretical work is all produced in an attempt to grapple with questions of political praxis. Unlike Deleuze, whose work aimed to solve long-standing philosophical problems, Guattari wrote that, “[t]he whole fabric of my inmost existence is made up of the events of contemporary history.”¹⁹¹ Shortly after Paris was liberated from the Nazis in 1944, Guattari joined the Student Hostel organization, where his high school social science teacher Fernand Oury, a leftist activist and a great influence on the young Guattari, was in charge of recreational activities.¹⁹² Guattari soon started attending meetings of the French Communist Party, with whom the Student Hostel organization had close ties.¹⁹³ From this point on, and until his death, Guattari would always be involved with communist groups. After his time in the youth wing of the French Communist Party, where he worked on its newspaper *Tribune de discussion*, and in the *Union Nationale des étudiants de France*, Guattari participated in alternative Trotskyist groups and on the subversive journal *La Voie communiste*.¹⁹⁴ He was greatly influenced by Trotsky’s autobiography *My Life*,¹⁹⁵ and most of his early adult life was spent as an organiser of communist splinter groups. Always on the fringes of authority, and permanently uncomfortable with conformity, Guattari preferred the Trotskyist model of permanent revolution and self-emancipation. He maintained Trotsky’s concern for the way in which party bureaucracy could stifle a genuinely proletarian movement and worked constantly to ward off the emergence of Stalinist style dictatorships at any level of the communist program.¹⁹⁶

At university, Guattari initially studied pharmacology before switching to study philosophy at the Sorbonne. However, Guattari never settled into university life and in December of 1950, Fernand Oury suggested that Guattari escape the

¹⁹¹ PT 209-210

¹⁹² Dosse, 2010, 24-25

¹⁹³ Dosse, 2010, 26

¹⁹⁴ Genosko, 2002, 11

¹⁹⁵ PT 209-210

¹⁹⁶ PT 348-356

university and visit the psychiatric clinic at Saumery, where his brother Jean Oury was the director.¹⁹⁷ Jean, in turn, suggested that Guattari read Lacan's recent works and then asked Guattari to attend Lacan's lectures on his behalf. In 1954 Guattari was invited by Lacan to attend his seminar at the Sainte-Anne psychiatric hospital in Paris, where Guattari was the first non-psychiatrist to be a regular member.¹⁹⁸ Guattari would soon go into analysis with Lacan, ultimately qualifying as a Lacanian analyst and joining Lacan's psychoanalytic school, to which he remained a member for life. Jean Oury, who had previously worked at the famous St Alban clinic with the celebrated François Tosquelles, soon left Saumery to set up his own psychiatric clinic at La Borde in 1953. La Borde was founded on communist ideals as an asylum for psychotic patients, where the model was anti-bureaucratic and where the staff would alternate between manual and intellectual work.¹⁹⁹ Oury invited Guattari to work at La Borde and in 1955 Guattari moved there to take up a permanent organizational and therapeutic role. In what follows, it will be important to keep in mind that, as a Trotskyist political activist, with an academic background in both pharmacology and philosophy, Guattari was working in a therapeutic clinic for psychotic patients. Here, as a follower and analysand of Lacan, Guattari was primarily concerned with putting psychoanalytic theory to work in the context of a psychiatric asylum operating under a communist model.

By the time he met Deleuze in 1969, Guattari had already developed a complex and distinctive conceptual style that utilised political, psychoanalytic and philosophical thinking to tackle the practical issues arising in his life as a militant psychotherapist. However, much of the secondary literature discounts Guattari's role in the collaborations with Deleuze, either by paying little attention to his writing²⁰⁰ or by actively deriding Guattari's influence on his

¹⁹⁷ Dosse, 2010, 37

¹⁹⁸ Dosse, 2010, 38

¹⁹⁹ Oury wrote a constitution for his new clinic under the title 'Year I' (Dosse, 2010, 44).

²⁰⁰ For example, while Buchanan (2008) does reference some of Guattari's preparatory notes for *Anti-Oedipus*, he does not consider any of the essays written by Guattari prior to 1972. This is odd given Buchanan's comments that, "the secondary criticism on the work of Deleuze and Guattari has tended to overlook his contributions altogether or consign them to a merely secondary role" (2005, 248). Holland (1999) fares slightly better and includes mention of *Molecular Revolution*, which contains a concise selection of Guattari's work prior to 1972.

more philosophically accomplished counterpart.²⁰¹ The majority of Anglophone readers of Deleuze and Guattari therefore lack the resources to see how the conceptual innovations presented in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series, including that of the line of flight, respond to problems arising in Guattari work prior to 1969.²⁰²

While Guattari does not refer to the *ligne de fuite* before his work with Deleuze, and while he only uses the term *fuite* a small number of times in his writing prior to 1972,²⁰³ he does develop a number of theoretical devices that rely on the concept of an *escape*.²⁰⁴ During the course of this chapter I will try to show the relevance of these references, and demonstrate how they will become integral to Deleuze and Guattari's later project. The ten subsections in this chapter can be divided into two groups. The first five sections explore Guattari's psychotherapeutic work and his theory of group subjectivity. Here I will show how Guattari borrowed from Lacan and Sartre to rethink subjectivity as a group phenomenon, adding his own concept of the 'transversal line' to explain how the ability of such groups to interact with their milieu is determined by something which cuts across them, *escapes* them, and connects them with their outside. By paying attention to these lines, Guattari aimed to empower both therapeutic and revolutionary groups to affect the worlds in which they were embedded. The five subsequent sections will explore Guattari's concept of the 'machine', defined as that which *escapes* structural relations. Here I will show how Guattari used this position to respond to Deleuze's work in *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense* in his essay 'Machine and Structure'. Finally, I will show how Guattari's machinic conception of desire arises from a combination of certain insights from Marx and Lacan. It is these two broad aspects of Guattari's work – the transversal line and the machinic

²⁰¹ See Zizek, (2004, 20). Also see Buchanan's comments on Zizek and Badiou's critique of Guattari (Buchanan, 2008, 135-136).

²⁰² See Watson's characterisation of Guattari's early work (Watson, 2009, 23). Guattari had his own form of Freudo-Marxism (PT 248, 278), and used the concepts of 'machine' (PT, 318-328), 'deterritorialization' (PT 341), and 'war machine' (PT 242 & 262).

²⁰³ In the English publications the French term *fuite* is translated variously as leak, escape, or evasion. See PT 8/ii, 16/viii, 32/14, 87/61, and 202/148 (English/French pagination).

²⁰⁴ Guattari regularly uses the French term *échappe* to refer to escape, for example when he talks about "madness as something that escapes social determination" (PT 62/41). For other uses of *échappe*, see PT 59/37, 89/61, 89/62, 91/63, 123/88, 126/90, 129/93, 134/96, 153/111, 188/137, 236/174, 239/177, 337/255, 360/278.

nature of desire – that allow the concept of the line of flight to emerge in *Anti-Oedipus*.

ii) Sartre and group subjectivity

Guattari's development of a robust theory of group subjectivity can be understood as a reaction to the mismatch between the psychoanalytic theories he had acquired in his Lacanian training and the practical context of working with psychotic patients at La Borde. This mismatch occurred because while both Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory are interested in psychosis as an object of study, ultimately they agree that the traditional method of psychoanalytic treatment in the form of a 'talking cure' cannot be used to treat psychosis. Freud argued that the analyst-analysand relationship is at root a contractual one and the psychotic patient has neither a strong enough ego nor a strong enough grasp on reality to uphold such a contract.²⁰⁵ Despite the fact that Lacan wrote extensively on the question of psychosis,²⁰⁶ his explanation of it as a form of psychic 'foreclosure' led him to side with Freud,²⁰⁷ and to claim that any attempt to apply the therapeutic technique of psychoanalysis to psychosis is "as stupid as to toil at the oars when the ship is on the sand."²⁰⁸ Despite these warnings, this is exactly what Guattari would try to do. To sidestep the issue of the individual psychotic's inability to maintain a therapeutic relationship, Guattari developed a form of psychoanalysis that did not require a one-on-one relationship between the doctor and his patient, but which could operate at the level of the relationship between a large group of patients and the hospital as a whole. In this form of therapy, which, along with Jean Oury, Guattari would name 'Institutional Psychotherapy', the institution becomes an analytic tool capable of working simultaneously with all of the patients in the hospital. The aim here is to foster group subjectivity of a particular kind. The theory of group subjectivity used here by Guattari relies on a distinction he makes between 'subject-groups' and 'subjugated-groups'. To

²⁰⁵ Freud, 1940, 26-37

²⁰⁶ Lacan 1975 & 1993

²⁰⁷ Lacan, 1993, 34

²⁰⁸ Lacan, 1977, 22

understand this distinction, it will be necessary to explore Sartre's theory of groups, as it is developed in *Being and Nothingness* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, and Lacan's theory of the Symbolic, as it is deployed in his early seminars.

Guattari admitted on a number of occasions that his conceptual work owed a great debt to Sartre, whom he idolised in the years before he took up his more long-standing Lacanian affiliation.²⁰⁹ Perhaps surprisingly, Guattari does not draw any explicit connection between Sartre's critique of Freud and his own deviations from psychoanalytic orthodoxy.²¹⁰ Instead, most of Guattari's interactions with Sartre concern the question of the relation between subjectivity and communism.²¹¹ In the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre aimed to create a synthesis of his earlier existentialist position and that of his burgeoning Marxism by reconciling the concept of freedom that he had developed in *Being and Nothingness* with the concrete social context of the subject. Here Sartre moves away from his model of the human being as a distinct and isolated object of study and considers the relevance of the economic, political and social structures in which the individual exists. Sartre aims to immerse the subject "in a material world which radically conditions and limits it."²¹² The result is that one of the central themes that runs through the *Critique* "is the nature of our bond to each other."²¹³ In the first chapter of part three of *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre had explored the way in which the relation between the act of looking at another person and recognising their subjectivity, and the subsequent act of being-looked-at by the other, and thus seeing oneself from the perspective of the other, allows for one to see oneself

²⁰⁹ "Everything I said or did was obviously affected by him. His reading of annihilation, of detotalization, which became becoming for me, deterritorialization, his idea of seriality, of the pratico-inert, which informed my idea of the group-subject, his understanding of freedom, and of the commitment and responsibility of the intellectual, which he embodied, all of these remained imperatives or at least immediate givens for me." Félix Guattari, "Plutôt avoir tort avec lui," *Libération* (June 23–24, 1990), in Dosse (2010, 29). See also PT 210. Guattari interviewed Sartre in February 1961 (Dosse, 2010, 28–31, 33)

²¹⁰ Sartre's accusation is that Freud's metapsychology initially splits the mind into distinct parts in order to overcome the problem of self-knowledge, but then treats at least some of these parts as capable of self-knowledge (1958, 50). See Gardner (2009, 123).

²¹¹ For example, where Sartre aims to establish, "whether the principles and truths that constitute Marxism allow subjectivity to exist and have a function" (2016, 3).

²¹² Anderson, 1993, 88

²¹³ Catalano, 1986, 31

as an object in the world. Following this, Sartre also comments on how a similar process can occur for groups: “[T]here are two radically different forms of the experience of the ‘we’, and the two forms correspond exactly to the being-in-the-act-of-looking and being looked-at.”²¹⁴ In the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre returns to the process of group formation in more detail, now more aware of the ways in which group interactions form the conditioning environment for the emergence of the individual. Here Sartre describes first the process by which a selection of individuals come together to form a group and then goes on to explain the different ways that this group can develop and eventually break down. I am going to concentrate on the distinction Sartre draws between a selection of individuals loosely united around the same object, or what Sartre calls a ‘series’, and the first form of group cohesion, which he calls a ‘group-in-fusion’.

A ‘series’ is a collection of individuals who have no common connection other than the fact that they are part of a particular gathering. There is no internal connection between the members of the series and, as such, each of the members is effectively alone among others. Sartre gives the example of people waiting in a queue, who form a group only in the most basic sense, due to the fact that they all have a similar relation with something outside the group, namely whatever it is they are queuing for. As other, more politically motivated examples, Sartre mentions the workers in a factory and the consumers in a market.²¹⁵ A series is constituted by an external determination in which each of the members is ‘looked at’ by something outside of the group.²¹⁶ As such, each of the members of the series is defined in contra-distinction to the surrounding others. In a series, I am simply that which is not the other, my place in the queue, the market, or the factory is defined in opposition to the place of the others. As Sartre writes: “In the series, however, everyone becomes himself (*as Other than self*) in so far as he is other than the Others, and so, in so far as the Others are other than him... every member is serial by

²¹⁴ Sartre, 1956, 415

²¹⁵ Sartre, 2004, 256 & 277

²¹⁶ Anderson, 1993, 96-97

virtue of his place in the order.”²¹⁷ The series is only a group in the sense that it is defined as such by something external to it. Due to this reliance on an external ‘common object’, the series is incapable of acting as a group. In the case of the queue, this ‘third’ or ‘common object’ would be the item being queued for and in the case of the factory the ‘common object’ could be the commodity being produced, or even the capitalist who owns the factory, to whom each of the workers sells their labour. As Sartre writes: “I have described *serial being* as the determination of the bond of alterity as a unity of plurality by the exigencies and structures of the common object which in itself defines this plurality as such.”²¹⁸ It is this reliance on an external common object that constrains the series to inactivity.

In the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Sartre attempts to explain the possibility for agency by making a distinction between what he names ‘praxis’, which is free, self-conscious, purposive, or active consciousness working on matter, and what he names the ‘practico-inert’, which is the worked matter, the matter in which past praxis is embodied, or sedimented praxis. For Sartre, the series is incapable of acting as a community and taking up a praxis and as such it is said to be embedded in the practico-inert. He states that the series is defined by “relations which are established in the practico-inert field between the *individual* activities of men” and that “this serial being is constituted as a *negative unity*.”²¹⁹ As an alternative to this powerlessness, according to Sartre, it is possible for the members of a group to join together in common action and to form a ‘group-in-fusion’. This occurs when, instead of each defining themselves by their relation with an external object, the members of the group turn to one another and recognise themselves in one another. Describing the change in relation between members of a series and members of a group-in-fusion, Sartre writes: “Through the mediation of the group, he is neither the Other nor identical: but he comes to the group as I do; he is *the same* as me.”²²⁰ If a queue of people is a good example of a series, then a group-in-

²¹⁷ Sartre, 2004, 262

²¹⁸ Sartre, 2004, 303

²¹⁹ Sartre, 2004, 303

²²⁰ Sartre, 2004, 377

fusion is formed when the people in the queue recognise their shared grievance, overcoming their mutual alienation. Now the position of each member of the group is no longer defined negatively by its alterity to the other members, but reciprocally.²²¹ Those in the queue can now work together to take what they are waiting for, or can work to produce it themselves. Subsequently, each individual becomes defined by his or her place in the group, the group is no longer defined by its position of 'being looked at', and the group appears *as a group* from its own perspective.²²² According to Sartre, the act of entering into a group-in-fusion increases the power and freedom of each individual, because it provides a context in which to become active.²²³ Utilising the language of *Being and Nothingness*, we can say that in the formation of a group-in-fusion, the members turn away from 'bad faith', escape their embeddedness in the practico-inert, accept the responsibility of their radical freedom, and become capable of taking up a praxis.²²⁴

Guattari was taken by Sartre's distinction between the series and the group-in-fusion and would try to apply it in the psychiatric hospital as a model for the production of group subjectivity among patients. If psychotics are those who have been excluded from society and from action, and if those in the hospital are defined by the act of being looked at – most commonly by the doctors – then perhaps if they could turn to one another and define themselves via a form of group praxis, thus becoming a group-in-fusion, they could overcome the marginalisation which they face and could work to reshape the institutions that subjugate them. We can see here why Guattari's development of Institutional Psychotherapy had both a therapeutic and a political dimension.

²²¹ In a striking similarity with Deleuze's distinction between continuous and discrete multiplicities, Sartre claims that the distinction between a cardinal and an ordinal number system is analogous to that of the distinction between a series and a group-in-fusion (2004, 262-263).

²²² In these cases, Sartre claims the 'third party' can be each member for the others, or the praxis of the group (2004, 377). These different forms of group determination produce a 'group-in-constraint' or a 'pledged group' (2004, 420). See also Santori (2003, 41-45). Sartre applied this model to the question of psychoanalysis, claiming that the analyst is capable of becoming the 'third party' by which the subject of the analysis can relate to itself (Gardner, 2009, 186).

²²³ Anderson, 1993, 97-98

²²⁴ There may be a linguistic connection here between Sartre's definition of bad faith, or 'la Mauvaise foi', as a fleeing from freedom, or 'la fuite devant la liberté', and Guattari's use of the word 'fuite' in his work with Deleuze.

The production of group subjectivity among the patients could never remain a personal affair as their group action would need to be turned against the practico-inert structures that conditioned them, including the State, the legal system, and all structures of power. However, for Guattari, it is not enough to simply produce group subjectivity in the hospital, instead it must be done in a particular way, so as to guard against the possibilities of destructive group identifications. In order to understand how Guattari attempted to apply this theory of groups *in a particular fashion*, it is important to recognise the ways in which it comes to be embedded within a strictly Lacanian psychoanalytic framework.

iii) Lacan, the Symbolic, and ‘full speech’

Guattari was ultimately critical of Sartre’s theory of groups because it failed to recognise the crucial difference between group identification and group subjectivity. To overcome this issue, Guattari would incorporate Lacan’s distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic into his own theory of group-subjectivity. Lacan’s distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic is explained clearly in his first three seminars, given between 1953 and 1956, at exactly the time Guattari was first working on his theories of group subjectivity.²²⁵ According to this model, the process of ego formation begins in the mirror stage, when an infant first recognises its own reflection. Lacan contends that before this point the child is not able to differentiate between itself and the world around it, but that by seeing an image of itself it becomes aware that it is an individual thing separated from the world. However, in this moment, the infant feels threatened by its image. Unable to control its own body, the child feels inferior to the image, which is clearly constituted and appears complete. To compensate for this inferiority the child appropriates the image it sees in the mirror as the image it has of itself: this constitutes the birth of the ego. The contest that initially defines the ego’s relation with its mirror image recurs throughout life in the relation that the individual holds with the

²²⁵ Speaking of the second seminar, Miller writes: “The imaginary/symbolic distinction is the main thrust of the seminar” (1996, 13).

'other', specifically, the ego is always defined against the image of the other and by internalising the image of the other.²²⁶ As this whole process occurs at the level of images – the ego is the *image* one has of oneself that is generated in contrast to the *image* of the other – Lacan names this register of reality the 'Imaginary'.

For Lacan, this process of ego formation at the level of the imaginary is very different from the process of subject formation, which occurs only with the child's entry into language. In his early seminars, Lacan argued that the social field is essentially linguistic and that, as a social being, the subject only emerges within the structure of language.²²⁷ According to this model, it is by saying the word "I" that one is able to represent oneself with a signifier and locate oneself within the structure of language, and subsequently in the wider social field. Following Saussure, Lacan claims that the subject, like the signifier, is not defined by its relation with a signified (some object for which it stands), but instead by its relation to other signifiers. The subject is constituted by its social relation with other people, in and through language. For Lacan, "the subject is the agency that understands meaning, the agency correlated with meaning", and as such, "[w]e call 'subject' that instance or agency which understands meanings or is correlated thereto, such that there is no meaning without a subject."²²⁸ While the ego was defined at the level of the Imaginary by its relation with an 'other', in what Lacan calls the 'Symbolic' register of reality the subject of language is defined by its relation to the whole structure of language, which predates it and conditions it. This structure of language, which Lacan also equates with the 'law' and ultimately the Oedipal law of the father, and which is what one addresses oneself to when one speaks, Lacan calls the 'big Other'. For Lacan, the ego and the subject are not the same thing: they are generated out of two different processes and they do not necessarily cohere in reality. Lacan clearly states that "the ego is never just the subject."²²⁹

²²⁶ See 'The Mirror-Stage as Formative of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' (Lacan, 2006).

²²⁷ "Prior to signifying something, a sign signifies to someone. Lacan thereby emphasised the fact that a patient speaks *to* someone... He stressed the social function of language – language as a social link" (Miller, 1996, 17).

²²⁸ Miller, 1996, 22

²²⁹ Lacan, 1988, 177

Guattari follows Lacan here almost to the letter, but leaves open the possibility of applying this distinction to group formations when he writes: “A subject is not necessarily the individual or even *one* individual.”²³⁰

While Lacan is careful to distinguish the ego, as a feature of the Imaginary, and the subject, as a feature of the Symbolic, he does not separate the two absolutely, but attempts to describe their interaction by way of a diagram he names the L-Schema: If the ego is constituted by its relation to ‘an other’ and the subject is constituted by its relation with the ‘big Other’, these relations form two different axes, namely the imaginary axis and the symbolic axis. These two axes “are situated in such a way as to intersect and constitute a cross” and “[t]he imaginary relationship – in other words, the relationship that derives from the mirror stage – is an obstacle to the establishment of a truly symbolic relationship.” This means that one must “trespass upon or cross over the imaginary in order to pave the way to the symbolic.”²³¹ For Lacan, in the process of psychoanalytic treatment, the analyst is tasked with helping the patient form a cohesive subject position. What matters here is the relation that the analyst holds with the subject and not with the ego of the analysand. The analyst and the analysand must work to ‘cross over’ the Imaginary axis of the ego and constitute their relationship in the register of the Symbolic – this is why Lacan was so staunchly opposed to ego-psychology. While the ego is purely imaginary and based on phantasy, the subject is able to speak and to communicate, and thus to interact. Stressing the difference between the imaginary nature of the ego and the symbolic nature of the subject, Miller states that: “The imaginary level is fundamentally characterized by aggression, so we have to distinguish the level of language, where understanding and dialogue are possible, from the level of the imaginary... The imaginary is war; the symbolic level of speech is language, and its fundamental phenomenon appears to be peace.”²³² Guattari, at this point a loyal follower of Lacan, found that Sartre’s theory of groups did not distinguish between the Imaginary and the Symbolic registers of reality. For Guattari, this meant that Sartre’s theory

²³⁰ PT 69

²³¹ Miller, 1996, 29

²³² Miller, 1996, 21

of groups, based as it is on an explanation of the differing dynamics of the act of looking-at and the act of being-looked-at, would be unable to distinguish the Imaginary effects of group phantasy and group identification from the Symbolic effects of group subjectivity. Following Lacan's emphasis on the importance of the Symbolic register for the production of subjectivity, but applying it to the question of groups, Guattari states: "The concept of group subjectivity implies the development of a theory of the signifier in the social field."²³³ To put Guattari's insight another way, we can say that Sartre's category of 'groups-in-fusion' is too broadly construed because it does not distinguish between group identifications, at the level of the Imaginary, and group-subjects, at the level of the Symbolic.

One clarificatory point is required here concerning the relation of language to the Imaginary and the Symbolic in Lacan's early seminars. Despite the fact that the Symbolic is understood as essentially linguistic, while the Imaginary is not, our use of language, and the analysand's use of language, is not confined to the Symbolic realm. It is also possible for speech to be used along the Imaginary axis, as a tool for the antagonistic mirroring that defines that relation. Lacan codifies this by stating that the ego only has access to 'empty speech' in which true desire is avoided or repressed in favour of imaginary identifications. Here language is used only to determine the ego in its relation to an 'other'. On the other hand, when a subject is engaging with another on the level of the Symbolic, this subject has access to 'full speech' which is performative and which allows access to desire.²³⁴ In this case, the speaking subject is addressing himself not only to an 'other', but to the 'big Other' of language itself. The subject is taking part in a collective discourse in which communication and dialogue are possible.²³⁵

iv) Subject-groups

²³³ PT 128

²³⁴ Lacan, 1991, 107

²³⁵ For more on full and empty speech see Soler, 1996, 43-47.

In his group-therapeutic work at La Borde, Guattari was aware that the formations of groups is not always productive: “Group life can have harmful effects: when people use the other as a pretext to quietly turn inward and let things happen.”²³⁶ In order to aid in the formation of groups within the hospital, while avoiding the pitfalls of group identifications and obstructive group phantasy, Guattari produced his own theory of group subjectivity that took Sartre’s theory of groups from the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* as a model, but reinscribed it within a Lacanian framework. Guattari’s theory of group subjectivity relies on a distinction between subject-groups and subjugated-groups. Just as the collection that Sartre named a ‘series’ was defined by an external determination, Guattari’s ‘subjugated-groups’ are those that “receive their law from the outside.”²³⁷ Like those in a ‘series’, subjugated-groups are unable to take up a praxis and are conditioned by the inertia of the practico-inert. They form “a subjectivity which is lost to view in the otherness of society”²³⁸ and consequently they “are only something passive for themselves.”²³⁹ Just as Sartre claims that a series will become a group-in-fusion when it is able to define itself by an internal relation between its members, for Guattari, the formation of a subject-group is “based on the assumption of an internal law,”²⁴⁰ which gives the group a “vocation” and allows it “to control its own behavior and elucidate its object.”²⁴¹

However, Guattari’s distinction diverges from Sartre’s on a number of crucial points. First, Guattari explains that subject-groups differ from subjugated-groups because the former relate to one another at the level of the Symbolic, while the latter relate to one another at the level of the Imaginary: “the subject group is articulated like a language and links itself to the sum of historical discourse, whereas the dependent group... has a specifically imaginary mode of representation, that is the medium of the group phantasies.”²⁴² Guattari is consistent here in using Lacanian terminology to explain the essential

²³⁶ PT 345. See Guattari’s comments on ‘dependent groups’ in PT 119.

²³⁷ PT 64

²³⁸ PT 107

²³⁹ PT 71

²⁴⁰ PT 64

²⁴¹ PT 107

²⁴² PT 224

differences between subject and subjugated-groups, often using the Lacanian concept of '*meconissance*', which characterizes the child's relationship with its image in the mirror stage, to describe the dynamics of the subjugated-group.²⁴³ Second, unlike Sartre, Guattari is keen to stress the fact that the distinction between subject and subjugated-groups is not absolute; the two coexist in any group situation. Guattari's distinction is "not so much with two sorts of group, but two functions, and the two may even coincide."²⁴⁴ Just as Lacan uses the L-Schema to explain how subject formation at the level of the Symbolic must 'cross-over' the Imaginary relation between the ego and the 'other', subject-groups must always contend with their potential subjugation on the axis of group phantasy. Third, while Sartre spoke of the agency of the group-in-fusion in terms of 'praxis', following Lacan, Guattari defines the agency of the group in relation to its ability to engage with speech. For Guattari, the subject group "hears and is heard" and is defined by "a subjectivity whose work is to speak."²⁴⁵ To be more precise here, we should say that the subject-group has access to 'full speech' while the subjugated-group cannot get beyond the barrier of 'empty speech'.²⁴⁶ Applying this Guattarian-Lacanian development to our previous Sartrean example of the queue, we can say that the group that is formed when those standing in the queue turn to one another can either be a subject-group, or a subjugated-group. Imagine that the group produce banners and badges with a chosen slogan, which they chant at the shop owner to express their frustration. It might be the case that the only effect of this act of collective speech is to unite the members of the group. It provides a way for the members to align their group phantasy at the level of the Imaginary by defining who is in the group and who is outside of it, but it does not allow for the production of discourse in the Symbolic. Guattari would call this group a subjugated-group with access to 'empty speech' only. Alternatively, the group might use language to address their demands to the shop owner, or to organise an alternative access to the product. This requires them to relate to

²⁴³ PT 79; 258

²⁴⁴ PT 224

²⁴⁵ PT 107

²⁴⁶ As we will see, Guattari's theory of semiotic relations differs significantly from Lacan's semiotics, based as it is on structural linguistics. For the moment, it is enough to note that unlike Sartre, but like Lacan, Guattari concentrates on the semiotic relations of groups.

one another symbolically, through a shared language in which they are able to listen and to have dialogue. In this case Guattari would say that the group have access to 'full speech' and constitute a subject-group.²⁴⁷

As well as these numerous, Lacanian adaptations of Sartre's analysis of groups, Guattari also makes at least two further modifications that are not borrowed from Lacan. First, unlike Sartre, Guattari does not give any precedence to the role of the individual over that of the group. While Sartre starts from the assumption that a collection of fully individuated subjects exists, and then goes on to explain how they can come together to form a group, Guattari is interested in how subjectivity at the level of the group and the level of the individual are co-produced. Guattari's group practice at La Borde works in the opposite direction to that of Sartre. Institutional Psychotherapy functions precisely by producing a group subject within the hospital, within which psychotic patients will be given the necessary structure to define their own subject positions. As Guattari's theory of groups progresses, he will dismiss the concept of individual subjectivity completely and claim that all subjectivity is always group-subjectivity. In 'We are all Groupuscules', he writes: "[t]he model of the individual... is too fragile" and we must therefore "build a new form of subjectivity that no longer relies on the individual and the conjugal family." Coining a term that will later be used regularly with Deleuze, Guattari names these new units of group subjectivity, "collective agents of enunciation."²⁴⁸

Second, because Guattari recognises that subjugated-groups and subject-groups are not different general categories, but that subjectivity and subjugation exist as the two sides of any group formation, it is not simply the case that a group will be defined either by an external or an internal determination, but instead that any group will be defined by the level of internality/externality of its determining relations. For Guattari, a group is made

²⁴⁷ The key distinction between full speech and empty speech does not concern the content of speech, but on whether it engages in social discourse and whether it is heard. Guattari would readily admit that political chants and slogans fulfil the conditions of full speech in many cases.

²⁴⁸ PT 368-369

up of a multiplicity of relations, some of which exist between members of the group while others connect a member of the group with something outside of the group, while both internal and external connections may be either Symbolic or Imaginary. Group subjectivity is produced when a relative stability is attained between the internal and external relations in the group, which Guattari names, “the notion of *subjective consistency*.”²⁴⁹ For Guattari, the elements that make up any group-subject must relate to one another internally, however the group-subject is defined as much by those connections and relations that escape the group structure as by those that uphold it. This is a line of thought that Guattari will take up with Deleuze in *Anti-Oedipus*, and *A Thousand Plateaus*, where the question of how a group relates to that which escapes it becomes of central ethical and political importance. Interestingly, one of the first occurrences of the concept of the ‘line of flight’ in Deleuze and Guattari’s work comes in Deleuze’s preface to *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, where he praises Guattari’s theory of group subjectivity for “pursuing the flows that constitute myriad *lines of flight*” and allowing “collective agents of enunciation to emerge.”²⁵⁰

v) Transversality and escape

In his role at La Borde, Guattari aimed to find ways of transforming subjugated-groups into subject-groups by altering the institutional operations of the hospital. To do this, Guattari would turn once again to his Lacanian training and adapt the conceptual tools he found there, in this case reworking the traditional psychoanalytic concept of transference into that of transversality.²⁵¹ For Freud, transference refers to the process by which an analysand redirects previously repressed emotions and desires toward the analyst, projecting the role of another person onto the analyst, usually the mother or father. According to Freud, this process can be useful for analysis when, by taking on the projected role, the analyst is able to help the analysand work through

²⁴⁹ PT 346

²⁵⁰ PT 16/viii (English/French pagination).

²⁵¹ For a full discussion of the ways in which the concept of transversality evolved over the course of Guattari’s career see Genosko (2000) and Goffey (2016).

unresolved family relationships. However, it can also interrupt analysis when the love or hate that the analysand ends up feeling towards the analyst blocks the possibility of progress. Lacan, who dedicated his 1960-61 seminar to the concept and named it as one of the ‘four fundamental concepts’ of psychoanalysis in his seminar of 1963-64, recast the double-edged nature of transference using his own distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic.²⁵² For Lacan, transference is ineffective when the analyst becomes a mirror for the analysand’s ego. Here the relation is imaginary and the analysand treats the analyst like an ‘other’ with whom he or she has an antagonistic relationship. Alternatively, transference can be effective when the analysand treats the analyst not as an ‘other’, but as the ‘big Other’, or what Lacan also calls the “subject-supposed-to-know.”²⁵³ As Miller explains: “As long as Lacan defined transference as imaginary, it remained a moment of inertia in psychoanalytic experience... His theory of transference changes when he tries to offer a *symbolic* definition of transference.”²⁵⁴ Where the transference operates in the Symbolic it can be used to foster subject-formation in the analysand.

Guattari borrows this latter, Symbolic, understanding of transference from Lacan, but takes it out of the analyst’s office, where the relation can only ever be enacted by two people, and puts it to work in the hospital.²⁵⁵ At first, Guattari describes how a relation exists between the institution as a whole, which plays the role of the analyst, and the group of patients in the hospital, who play the role of the analysand. However, as Guattari is aware that group subjectivity is not produced by any single relation, but by the ‘subjective consistency’ that is produced out of a multiplicity of interacting relations, he proposed “to replace the ambiguous idea of the institutional transference with a new concept:

²⁵² Lacan, 2015; and ‘The Transference and the Drive’ and ‘The Field of the Other and back to the Transference’, in Lacan, 1998.

²⁵³ For more on transference see Lacan, 2006, 184 & 503.

²⁵⁴ Miller, 1996, 23.

²⁵⁵ For Guattari’s description of the difficulties involved in reworking this concept for use in group therapy see PT 123-124: “In this somewhat eclectic way, we came to recast a series of notions from various sources for our institutional use... Some of these notions, like the superego and fantasy, were easier to adapt due to the ambiguities of Freudian doctrine, which does not differentiate between their use at the level of individuals or groups. Other notions, like transference, involved a deeper reassessment.”

transversality in the group.”²⁵⁶ In geometry, a transversal is defined as a line that crosses any two lines in the same plane at two distinct points.²⁵⁷ Adapting this usage, Guattari states: “Transversality is a dimension that tries to overcome both the impasse of pure verticality and that of mere horizontality” and to describe “communication among different levels and, above all, in different meanings” within the hospital.²⁵⁸ As we have seen, Guattari’s distinction between subjugated-groups and subject-groups recognises the ways in which various internal relations, which tend to be horizontal, and various external relations, which tend to be vertical, exist for the group simultaneously. The degree of openness of this web of relations is what mediates between that side of the group that achieves its own subjectivity and the reverse side which remains subjugated. The overall degree of openness of the group is what Guattari names the “coefficient of transversality”.²⁵⁹

In the hospital, a wide range of relationships exist between the patients, the doctors, the nurses, and the other staff, all of which play a role in determining the ‘coefficient of transversality’ in the hospital. The analyst’s job is to work with all of these different groups to maximize communication between the various levels of language that exist there, and the different meanings that they produce. As Guattari states: “it is possible to change the various coefficients of unconscious transversality at the various levels of an institution.”²⁶⁰ Most of the time, the technical language of the doctors, the social discourse of the cleaning staff, and the schizophrenic speech of the patients do not connect with one another. However, by fostering communication between these different levels, these groups can interact, and group subjectivity can be

²⁵⁶ PT 112.

²⁵⁷ Transversals are used in Euclidean geometry to determine whether two lines are to be considered as parallel to one another. According to Euclid’s fifth postulate, Deleuze’s critique of which I discussed in the previous chapter, if two lines are parallel then the consecutive interior angles produced by the transversal that crosses them will be supplementary, the corresponding angles produced will be equal, and the alternate angles will also be equal.

²⁵⁸ PT 113

²⁵⁹ PT 113. For more on the role of ‘openness’, see PT 108. Here Guattari imagines the effects on a group of horses in a field who are all wearing blinkers. If the blinkers are set too tightly then the horses will not be able to see one another and will not move around freely. However, if one was to open the blinkers too quickly, this could frighten the horses. Guattari equates the degree of openness of the blinkers with the group’s coefficient of transversality.

²⁶⁰ PT 113

produced. For example, Guattari explains how “the overt communication that takes place within the circle consisting of the medical superintendent and the house-doctors may remain on an extremely formal level, and it may appear that its coefficient of transversality is very low” while the “coefficient existing at department level may be found to be much higher: the nurses have more genuine relationships among themselves, in virtue of which the patients can make transferences that have a therapeutic effect.”²⁶¹

Guattari also argued that the formation of subject-groups was central to the practice of Marxist politics. According to Guattari’s analysis, the Communist movement can be understood as an attempt to transform the proletariat from a subjugated-group into a subject-group. Like the factory workers that Sartre gave as an example of a ‘series’, the working classes under capitalism are organized as a group only by a form of external determination by capital. To break out of this subjugation, the proletariat must escape the Imaginary identification which organizes them *as workers* and enter the Symbolic register as a cohesive group-subject. One effect of Guattari’s psychoanalytic evaluation of communist struggle is that it gives him a fundamental distrust of the concept of the avant-garde, or of the centralized Party, who claim to act on behalf of the people. Guattari is clear on this point when he states: “A subject group is not embodied in a delegated individual who can claim to speak on its behalf.”²⁶² The problem with the party structure is that while “[i]t is always the mass of the people who have created new forms of struggle... the Party and the unions have systematically retreated from the creativity of the people.”²⁶³ For this reason, Guattari always aligned himself with the ideas of permanent revolution and self-emancipation, and aimed to ward off the possibility of dictatorships establishing themselves in communist circles.

²⁶¹ PT 113-114. There is an echo here with Guattari’s later distinction between macro and micro-politics: “Everyone knows that the law of the State is not made by the ministries; similarly, in a psychiatric hospital, de facto power may elude the official representatives of the law and be shared among various sub-groups.”

²⁶² PT 219

²⁶³ PT 218

While Guattari was a member of the French Communist Party he was constantly critical of it, claiming that, “revolutionary organization has become separated from the signifier of the working class’s discourse... the subject groups spoken of by Marx.”²⁶⁴ Guattari was especially critical of those intellectuals who proposed to interpret Marx’s texts on behalf of the people, claiming that, “[u]nlike Althusser, the subject group is not a theoretician producing concepts.”²⁶⁵ As an alternative to this intellectualism, Guattari helped set up a number of splinter groups which aimed to dislodge the hegemony of the party line. Pushing against both the idea of the ‘mass movement’ and that of the ‘avant garde’, Guattari spoke of these groups as ‘analytical groups’, defined as “a group that positions itself against the ‘normal’ order of things.”²⁶⁶ In order to produce subject-groups consisting of workers, intellectuals, and young people, capable of producing their own statements and locating themselves in the Symbolic order, Guattari helped set up collaboratively written communist newspapers, including the ‘Tribune de Discussion’ which he described as, “an internal dissident organ within the French Communist Party.”²⁶⁷ In both his psychotherapeutic work and his political militancy, Guattari had discovered that to produce transformations in the normal order of things, it was necessary to produce subject-groups capable of taking responsibility for their own world. To do this, he would manipulate the transversal lines that cut across the varying levels of discourse in any particular milieu, opening the coefficient of transversality in the group, and ultimately reconfiguring the power dynamics that subsided there.

Guattari’s work during this period directly informed his later work with Deleuze, and it is possible to place Guattari’s concept of the ‘coefficient of transversality’ within Deleuze and Guattari’s larger philosophical task. Guattari describes the coefficient of transversality as: “a certain opening or closing of the collective acceptance” of various forms of group investments.²⁶⁸ To put this another way,

²⁶⁴ PT 218

²⁶⁵ PT 219

²⁶⁶ PT 299-300, 316, 357

²⁶⁷ PT 352. This model of dissident collective writing and publication was reused by Guattari outside of a strictly political setting with the research group CERFI.

²⁶⁸ PT 290

we could say that the coefficient of transversality of a group determines the way in which such a group relates to the outside, and to those connections that escape its internal composition. Transformation occurs at the level of group subjectivity only when this coefficient of escape is set at the correct level, too high and the group will be subjugated to an external image, too low and it will turn in on itself toward a reliance on group phantasy. Transformation is determined by the relation of an group to that which escapes it. My intention here is not to claim that Guattari had invented the concept of the line of flight during his early writing on Institutional Psychotherapy without naming it as such, but to point out the way in which he was exploring the role played by 'escape' or 'flight' in transformational change. The idea that transformations rely on a particular kind of escape will, in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, form the basis of one aspect of the line of flight.

vi) Materialism contra Lacan

Guattari's relationship with Marxism and his relationship with Lacanianism were both heterodox. In one sense, however, it was his adherence to Marx's materialism that led Guattari to break from Lacanian orthodoxy over the question of structuralism. Against Lacan's Hegelian understanding of the structural and dialectical nature of change, Guattari would insist on the material nature of the Real. Briefly put, we could say that just as Marx was happy to call himself a pupil of Hegel and to hail him as a "mighty thinker," while simultaneously criticising his master for "mystifying" the dialectic and ignoring the material and productive basis for reality, which exists independently of the structural articulations of thought,²⁶⁹ Guattari remained a committed pupil of Lacan, while criticising Lacan's mystification of the Real and his refusal to deal with the material and machinic nature of the unconscious. Marx famously argued that Hegel's focus on thought over material nature meant that his understanding of the dialectic was "standing on its head" and that it "must be

²⁶⁹ Marx, 1982, 103

inverted.”²⁷⁰ Borrowing this turn of phrase, we might say that Guattari aimed to invert Lacanian theory by jettisoning structural linguistics, simultaneously putting psychoanalysis on its feet by accepting, and then working with, the material and productive nature of the unconscious.

During the 1950s, Lacan attempted to resolve a number of issues he perceived in the received interpretation of Freud’s work. Specifically, Lacan aimed to overcome the split between Freud’s psychological works, where the unconscious is treated as a kind of unthought-thought structured by a strict topography, and his metapsychological works, where the unconscious is understood as an economic machine for the material mediation of sensation.²⁷¹ To produce a theory that could account for both the socially structured nature of desire and the apparently biological and pre-social nature of the drives, Lacan prioritised Freud’s psychological and structural theory of desire over his metapsychological theory, ultimately aiming to show that the drives are always already embedded within a linguistic structure. In his first two seminars, Lacan argues that “the drives are completely embedded in language and that they are structured like a language.”²⁷² In Lacan’s structural and linguistic reading of Freud, the drives appear as the paradoxical element, or *objet petit a*, which circulates within the structure and guarantees both the constant slippage of the signifier and the constant deferral of the fulfilment of desire.²⁷³ Commenting on the *objet petit a*, Miller writes that Lacan “invented it to try to integrate drives into the structure of language,” but that in doing so, “he paid a price; for in the structure of language, you have signifiers and meanings, but he was obliged to invent something which is neither.”²⁷⁴ It is Lacan’s decision to include the drives within a linguistic structure that allows him to reverse the traditional priority of instincts over the complexes and to

²⁷⁰ Marx, 1982, 103. Exactly how this is understood is a matter of contention. For example, Althusser is insistent that it’s not a simple inversion, but a complete overturning of the Hegelian dialectic (1970, 15, 28 fn. 10).

²⁷¹ See Shuster (2016, 27-47), where the author differentiates the alternative methods used by Lacan and Deleuze to overcome this perceived split.

²⁷² Miller, 1996, 20

²⁷³ In Seminar XI, Lacan gives a more complex description of the relation of the subject to the drives, namely that they share the same topological space (1998, 203-209). In this text Lacan also explains that the drives are like ‘headless subjects’ (181-184) that circulate around the *objet a* (174-184). See Widder (2012, 100-104).

²⁷⁴ Miller, 1996, 19

argue that the human psyche is social and structured by language 'all the way down'. However, as Miller adds, "if you do that, instinct in humans appears to be dependent on structure as social."²⁷⁵ Specifically, this move will allow Lacan to claim that the Oedipus complex is not simply an acquired condition, but a necessary aspect of the structure of thought. This affected Lacan's therapeutic practice, because once the apparently organic and pre-social nature of the drives has been recognised as linguistic in nature, the analyst need only deal with the analysand's use of language to cure them: "[I]n psychoanalysis proper, you do not refer anything that is said to what is... you simply check whether his or her discourse is consistent."²⁷⁶ Despite retaining his official allegiance to Lacan, Guattari was uncomfortable with this move away from Freud's material and economic metapsychology of the unconscious.

According to Lacan's tripartite schema, that which is included in neither the Imaginary nor the Symbolic belongs to the Real. There are at least two different interpretations of Lacan's early formulation of the Real. According to the first, the Real is external and prior to the symbolic order, something "concrete and already full, a brute, pre-symbolic reality."²⁷⁷ On the other hand, by his use of the *objet petit a* as an empty placeholder for the lost object of desire, Lacan also describes the Real as the gap within the symbolic structure of thought. It is "a void which is not nothing, but functions to empty the *real* material of the partial drives into language."²⁷⁸ For Guattari, those followers of Lacan who concentrate solely on the latter of these two interpretations make the mistake of confusing the Real with its structural *representation*. According to Guattari, while the Real can only be represented within symbolic reality by the use of a void, psychoanalysis must move past this mere representation and deal with the pre-symbolic nature of the Real as it exists outside of its manifestations in structural thought. If psychoanalysis restricts itself to the Symbolic register, then it can never account for the fact that our motivations for action lie outside of social discourse. Taking anxiety as an example,

²⁷⁵ Miller, 1996, 20

²⁷⁶ Miller, 1996, 17

²⁷⁷ Ragland, 1996, 192

²⁷⁸ Ragland, 1996, 193-194

Guattari writes that, “Freud reaffirms that anxiety precedes repression: the anxiety is caused by an external danger, it is real... It is not therefore any use trying to recognize this persistence of anxiety beyond actual ‘situations of danger’ through some impossible dialogue between the ego ideal and the super-ego.”²⁷⁹ Explaining his therapeutic reasoning for his insistence, Guattari adds: “It is obvious that the theoretical field, while it carries with it a unique requirement of coherence, cannot be separated from the pragmatic field.”²⁸⁰ Ultimately, Guattari will criticize those structuralists who refuse to deal directly with the Real, as something other than a gap in the otherwise consistent symbolic field. As Watson explains, Guattari claims that the Lacanian school closes off access to the Real, “in order to safeguard the tranquillity of the couch setting as well as the sociopolitical status quo,” and that, “[t]o Guattari’s way of thinking, both institution and revolution require access to the real, as do creativity, production, and change.”²⁸¹ At various points in his work, Guattari distinguishes Institutional Psychotherapy from traditional psychoanalysis by the fact that the former insists on a direct interpretation of the Real,²⁸² while also differentiating the full speech of subject groups from the empty speech of subjugated-groups by the former’s ability to engage with the Real.²⁸³ Guattari rarely criticises Lacan directly on this point, but instead attacks those Lacanians who aim to take his thought in a structural direction. Guattari also argues against Lacan’s therapeutic method for its inability to work with patients suffering from psychosis. Despite his ambivalence to the wider anti-psychiatry movement, Guattari sides with thinkers like Laing in their criticism of psychoanalysis’ tendency to ignore the content of the psychotic’s speech and to simply search the structure of their speech for clues about their underlying

²⁷⁹ PT 104-105

²⁸⁰ PT 122

²⁸¹ Watson, 2009, 17

²⁸² “[I]nstitutional psychotherapy... is precisely a determination never to isolate the study of mental illness from its social and institutional context, and, by the same token, to analyse institutions on the basis of interpreting the real, symbolic and imaginary effects of society upon individuals” (PT 305).

²⁸³ See Deleuze’s comments regarding subjugated-groups: “Their centralization works through structure, totalization, unification, replacing the conditions of a genuine collective ‘enunciation’ with an assemblage of stereotypical utterances cut off both from the real and from subjectivity (this is when imaginary phenomena such as Oedipalization, superegoification, and group-castration take place). Group-subjects, on the other hand, are defined by coefficients of transversality that ward off totalities and hierarchies. They are agents of enunciation, environments of desire, elements of institutional creation” (PT 14).

condition.²⁸⁴ Guattari had a further issue with the structuralist Lacanians' interpretation of the unconscious, namely that it could not account for historical change.

In his essay 'Causality, Subjectivity, and History' (1965), Guattari agrees with Lacan's claim that the subject is defined by its structural location in relation to other signifiers, but he also claims that the subject is produced by an alternative, historical process, which cannot be accounted for within a purely structural account of subjectivity. According to Guattari's argument, there is an aspect of durational time that is irreducibly real. He claims that under the auspices of the structural turn in psychoanalysis: "Reality and history have become subject to an eternal symbolic order from which they are totally isolated and which essentially nullifies them."²⁸⁵ Guattari makes the point that while the subject experiences the symbolic structure of language as pre-existing, and while the subject is thus conditioned by the structure of language, the particular nature of the language into which the subject is thrust is historically determined. This line of argument will bring Guattari into dispute with Lacan over the question of the Oedipus complex. For Lacan, the subject only comes into existence when it enters the social and symbolic field of language and, as this symbolic field is structured by the Oedipus complex, all subjectivity is necessarily Oedipal. However, according to Guattari's critique, while the symbolic field pre-exists the subject, we must also give a historical account of the production of the symbolic field. To put this in psychoanalytic terms, we could say that, while conscious desire is socially structured and linguistic in form, the unconscious is not structured like language and as such it is subject to historical change. This is especially important for Guattari at a political level because, "it is primarily at that unconscious level that history is woven and that revolutions arise."²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ For more on Guattari's relationship with Laing, and with the anti-psychiatry movement, see CY 124-129.

²⁸⁵ PT 238

²⁸⁶ PT 245

Guattari has not yet put forward his own account of exactly how it is possible for analysts to access the Real, or how it is possible to analyse the historical progression by which the signifying structure of society is produced. At this point, Guattari is simply making a critical assertion. He is claiming that *if* we treat the Real as inaccessible and *if* we locate the unconscious drives within the structure of language, *then* we will have no way of providing an account of the progression of history. This would mean, for example, that there would be no way to explain how the Oedipal structure of language came about, or why the modes of subjectivation that existed under feudalism are different to those that exist under capitalism. It is at this point that we can see Guattari's critique of linguistic structuralism as an essentially Marxist one: Guattari claims that when the signifier is regarded as a universal category, analysis is subject to "the cleverness of a new idealism that actually betrays the linguistic discovery of the signifier."²⁸⁷ It is a mystification of the unconscious that can only be combated by a return to materialism.

In order to save Lacanian theory from this encroaching threat of idealism, Guattari argues for a move away from the linguistic categories of Saussure to the semiotic theories put forward by Hjelmslev.²⁸⁸ This move will allow Guattari to claim that while subjectivity is necessarily embedded in the structure of signification and is therefore incapable of accessing the Real, signification itself is not a closed totality, but is in constant conversation with other a-

²⁸⁷ PT 238

²⁸⁸ Hjelmslev was a Danish linguist who challenged Saussurean linguistics by recasting the distinction between signifier and signified as the distinction between an *expression plane* and a *content plane*, while simultaneously making a distinction between the form and substance of each of these planes. He was thus able to distinguish between *form of content*, *form of expression*, *substance of content*, and *substance of expression*, where the substances of the content and expression of speech will be the physical and psychical material in which speech is manifest (Hjelmslev, 1969, 57-58). Guattari is drawn to Hjelmslev's work because it shows that "structures are connected to processes" (AOP 201), and that, rather than being inert, "substance functions" (AOP 203). Using Hjelmslev's model, Guattari was able to argue that linguistic processes could interact with non-linguistic semiotic systems. It thus gave Guattari a way of conceptualising the semiotic nature of the unconscious without falling back on the Lacanian understanding of the unconscious as being structured like a language. Having said this, Guattari later criticises Hjelmslev for his "pseudo-dualism for expression and content" (AOP 204). He claims that Hjelmslev leads himself into a paradox when he claims that these two terms are "absolutely reversible", and yet treats them as "two planes: that of the signified—content—and that of the signifier—expression" (AOP 204). In response to this, Guattari suggests to Deleuze that in their work there should not be "two planes of expression and content but one single plane of consistency" (AOP 207).

signifying semiotic forms which are in direct contact with the Real. Here Guattari makes two significant revisions to Lacan's conception of semiotics. First, he expands the Symbolic field to include not only the 'signifying semiologies' of linguistic utterance but also the 'symbolic semiologies' of non-linguistic forms of meaning, such as human gesture.²⁸⁹ Second, Guattari also picked out two further semiotic categories that operate outside of human language, namely 'diagrammatic processes' and 'natural encodings', which include those semiotic practices that operate without expressing any meaning, such as those used in information technology and computer science, and the a-semiotic transmission of codes that occurs in biological and chemical processes. Working against the general turn to linguistics, popular among his contemporaries, Guattari is keen to show that there are material semiotic systems, which exist independently of language and which cannot all be captured under a single signifying logic: "Our aim is not to blur the differences among the various semiotic machines, but, on the contrary, to see as clearly as possible what is specific to each."²⁹⁰ For Guattari, the two categories of 'diagrammatic processes' and 'natural encodings' are non-linguistic and pre-signifying and are thus pre-subjective. This means that they escape the conditions of representation and consistency that are incumbent on human language. While it may be the case that the Real can only be represented in the Symbolic order by a void, semiotic processes that are non-representative have no such constraint. This means that it is possible for the analyst to work directly with the Real by looking outside of the analysand's speech to the material processes that produce the possibility of the entire symbolic field. Guattari "agrees with Lacan that the signifier remains cut off from the real... but he at the same time insists that other semiotic components, such as those at work in nature and in science, can in fact directly connect to the real."²⁹¹

At this point in his work, Guattari's relationship with Lacanian theory is a complex one. Guattari is using Lacan's distinction between the Symbolic and the Imaginary in his analysis of group subjectivity, but he is aware that to stop

²⁸⁹ MR 89

²⁹⁰ MR 90

²⁹¹ Watson, 2009, 48

at this point would be to fall into a kind of psychoanalytic idealism, which would nullify the effects of history and constrain psychoanalysis from ever accounting for the possibility of revolution.²⁹² In order to avoid this fate, psychoanalysis must look outside of language to the Real in order to give a genetic account of the production of the Symbolic field. To carry out such a task, Guattari claims that psychoanalysis must do two things, first it must recognise those semiotic processes that exist externally to linguistic structure, and then it must offer an analysis of how these pre-signifying semiotic processes interact with the Symbolic field. For Guattari, to carry out such a psychoanalytic revolution would be a Marxist political act because, “[t]o recognize non-linguistic semiotic modes, according to his schema, is to find ways of escaping the control of the despotic signifier, which imposes the stifling reign of representation, in collusion with capitalism.”²⁹³ It is as part of Guattari’s attempt to follow this trajectory, and to map out the interactions between the real, material basis for psychic life and the linguistic superstructure of the Symbolic field, that he would begin his analysis of the role played by ‘machines’.

vii) Machine and Structure

Guattari’s introduction of the concept of the ‘machine’ as a means for analyzing the relationship between the structure of the symbolic field and the real, material basis from which it is produced, occurs in two essays, namely ‘From One Sign to the Other’ (1966) and ‘Machine and Structure’ (1969). In both cases, Guattari explains the process by which the structural and symbolic field of language is generated, and on both occasions the majority of the discussion is given over to an exploration of the relationship between subjectivity and ‘the machine’.²⁹⁴ In Deleuze’s introduction to *Psychoanalysis and Transversality* he picks out these two essays as “two texts in particular that seem especially

²⁹² Lacan’s work includes a number of internal changes throughout his career. Guattari’s disagreements with the Lacanian school do not arise during Lacan’s early emphasis on the Imaginary (in the 1930s and 1940), or during his middle stage with its emphasis on the Symbolic (1950s), but over the question of how to interpret Lacan’s seminars that deal with the Real (1960s and 1970s).

²⁹³ Watson, 2009, 48

²⁹⁴ PT 198 & 318

important in this collection.”²⁹⁵ Here I will focus my analysis on ‘Machine and Structure’ as the language developed by Guattari in this essay, such as that of ‘desiring machines’, is carried into Deleuze and Guattari’s collaborative work, whereas the terminology of ‘point-signs’ and ‘unitary traits’ used in ‘From One Sign to the Other’ was dropped prior to *Anti-Oedipus*.²⁹⁶ ‘Machine and Structure’ is of extra interest because of the role it played in Guattari’s personal break with Lacan, and in his first meeting with Deleuze. The essay was written when Lacan asked Guattari to review Deleuze’s recent publications of *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*. However, after Guattari presented his review as a paper at Lacan’s *Ecole Freudienne de Paris* in 1969, Lacan refused to publish it. As a result of this, and via an introduction by their mutual friend Jean-Pierre Faye, Guattari sent the text directly to Deleuze, initiating the pair’s first formal meeting.²⁹⁷

In ‘Machine and Structure’ Guattari sets out to analyse, and then critique, Deleuze’s general use of the concept of structure in both *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*. Paying surprisingly little attention to Deleuze’s use of psychoanalytic theory, Guattari brings together what he sees as the most insightful sections of Deleuze’s work to explain a distinction of his own, namely the distinction between machine and structure. Guattari’s reworking of Deleuze’s concepts can be summed up as follows: first, Guattari accepts Deleuze’s key distinction in *Difference and Repetition* between repetition of the same, defined by the generality of particulars that are inherently exchangeable, and repetition with difference, defined by singularities that cannot be exchanged; second, Guattari maps this distinction onto Deleuze’s split in *Logic of Sense* between the surface of language, which Guattari reads as a space of generality, and a depths of the body, in which Guattari sees the

²⁹⁵ PT 21

²⁹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari’s decision to drop this terminology is frustrating for the reader as Guattari’s use of the concept of the ‘point-sign’ to designate a partial or pre-individual element involved in the differential production of signs resonates with Deleuze’s discussion of partial elements in *Difference and Repetition*. Guattari continued to use this terminology in his notes for *Anti-Oedipus*, but these terms do not appear in the final work. Guattari also connects the point-sign to differential calculus (AOP 360).

²⁹⁷ For an evaluation of the different accounts of this story, see Dosse (2010, 268), and Watson (2009, 39). For Deleuze’s first ever letter to Guattari, and for his first written response to ‘Machine and Structure’, see: Deleuze, 2015, 35-36 and 40-44 respectively.

productive capacity of the repetition of difference. Guattari only criticises Deleuze's work for offering a definition of 'structure' that includes both repetition and generality. Guattari summarises this break from Deleuze in the following way: "Of Deleuze's three minimum conditions determining structure in general, I shall retain only the first two."²⁹⁸ Deleuze's first two conditions, which Guattari accepts wholesale, state that in any structure: "(1) There must be at least two heterogeneous series, one of which is defined as the signifier and the other as the signified", and that, "(2) Each of these series is made up of terms that exist only through their relationship with one another."²⁹⁹ Deleuze's third condition, which Guattari rejects, states that any structure is made up of "two heterogenous series [converging] toward a paradoxical element, which is their 'differentiator.'"³⁰⁰ Guattari's point here is that while the first two criteria deal with the generality of particulars, and are therefore correctly understood as structural, the third criteria deals with the repetition with difference of singularities, which are extra-structural. To put it briefly, if repetition and generality are radically different, then they should not both be considered as aspects of the structure. It is in order to resolve this difficulty that Guattari introduces his distinction between machine and structure: "The essence of the machine is precisely this function of detaching a signifier as a representative, as a "differentiator," as a causal break, different in kind from the structurally established order of things."³⁰¹ While language is structural and defined by its generality, the material body is machinic and is defined by the repetition of difference. As Watson puts it so concisely: "Using Deleuze's terms, Guattari posits that machines involve repetition with difference, while structures consist in repetition of the same."³⁰²

It is worth clarifying here that the structuralism that Guattari finds, and critiques,

²⁹⁸ PT 381

²⁹⁹ PT 381

³⁰⁰ PT 381. It is unclear whether either Deleuze or Guattari distinguish between the two spellings of the "differenciator" and the "differentiator." In *Différence et Répétition*, Deleuze uses *différenciant* (1968, 48, 90, 154, 159, 161, 316, 355) but in *Logique du Sens* he uses *différentiant* (1969, 66). Guattari seems to misquote *Logique du Sens* here by using the term *différenciant* (Guattari 2003, 240). However, this is 'corrected' in the English translations (2015, 322, 382).

³⁰¹ PT 322

³⁰² Watson, 2009, 3

in Deleuze's earlier work is not a traditional form of structuralism. Deleuze had already made his own criticisms of structuralist thought based on the need to give a genetic account of the incarnation of structures. For example, in the field of linguistics, Deleuze is critical of those Saussurean forms of structuralism that "constantly speak in negative terms and assimilate the differential relations between phonemes to relations of opposition".³⁰³ This is inadequate for Deleuze because "opposition teaches us nothing about the nature of that which is thought to be opposed".³⁰⁴ Turning away from Saussure, Deleuze finds an alternative and genetic theory of language in the writing of Gustave Guillaume, whose work carries out "the substitution of a principle of differential position for that of distinctive opposition".³⁰⁵ Following Guillaume, Deleuze will attempt to show how individual phonemes, which constitute the building blocks of the linguistic structure, must first be differentiated in speech. In brief, we could say that Deleuze had already challenged structuralist thought by showing the necessity for a virtual structuralism in which the differential relations that produce the structure are held between pre-individual, rather than individual, entities.³⁰⁶ However, while Guattari appreciates Deleuze's virtual interpretation of structuralism, he argues that Deleuze is wrong to assume that the "differenciator" which "makes the difference" between the preindividual elements is internal to the structure.³⁰⁷ If this differenciator operates via the repetition of difference, then it should not be counted as an element of the structure, but should instead be designated as a 'machine'.

The driving force behind Guattari's criticism of Deleuze's virtual structuralism rests on a disagreement over the nature of historical change. According to Guattari, when Deleuze explains the motivating force behind structural change by positing a paradoxical element, referred to variously as the esoteric word, the phallus, or even the *objet petit a*, within the structure itself,³⁰⁸ he constrains the possibility of real, historical change. According to Guattari's reasoning,

³⁰³ DR 255

³⁰⁴ DR 256

³⁰⁵ DR 256

³⁰⁶ Deleuze is not the first to make such arguments. As well as drawing on Guillaume's work, Deleuze was influenced by Roman Jakobson's concept of the "zero phoneme" (LS 83).

³⁰⁷ DR 365

³⁰⁸ DI 170

such an account of structure can never explain the way in which the particular form of any given structure is contingent upon its historical production. For Guattari, any given structure develops historically because of something alien to it, which intrudes on it. While it may be the case that this intrusion is represented within the structure by way of a paradoxical element such as the *object petit a*, the driving force behind this eruption must be located outside of the structure in a material and ‘machinic’ process. Guattari claims that in order to, “identify the peculiar positions of subjectivity in relation to events and to history” it will be necessary to recognize that no given structure can ever be analysed as something distinct, but must always be treated as the structural articulation of something non-structural.³⁰⁹ This non-structural or extra-structural element, which is articulated by a given structure, Guattari will call the machine. Putting forward his basic claim, Guattari states that “each contingent structure is dominated... by a system of machines” and that conversely “a machine is inseparable from its structural articulations”.³¹⁰ In some ways it may be more accurate to say here that Guattari’s analysis in ‘Machine and Structure’ does not really criticize Deleuze, as much as offer a particular reading of Deleuze’s work that plays up the split between the structural articulation of language and the non-structural force of repetition. Guattari’s comments on Deleuze’s description of the voice in *Logic of Sense* give us a good example of this. Almost echoing Deleuze, he writes that, “[t]he voice, as speech machine, is the basis and determinant of the structural order of language,” but he is careful to warn against overtly structuralist readings of Deleuze: “In trying to see things the other way round, starting from the general, one would be deluding oneself with the idea that it is possible to base oneself on some structural space that existed before the breakthrough by the machine.”³¹¹

Guattari’s use of the concept of ‘the machine’ to designate that which is external to structural thought and that which produces structural thought via

³⁰⁹ PT 318

³¹⁰ PT 318

³¹¹ PT 322. Deleuze writes: “The voice... presents the dimensions of an organized language, without yet being able to grasp the organizing principle according to which the voice itself would be a principle” (LS 221).

the repetition of difference, is not without precedent. In fact, we can see clear precursors of this concept in two of Guattari's most important influences, first in Marx's description of the relation between the material and economic base of reality and its intellectual and super-structural articulations, and second in a section of Lacan's second seminar titled 'Odd or even? Beyond intersubjectivity,' where Lacan uses the concept of the machine to describe the interrelation of the Real and the Symbolic structure of language. In what remains of this section, I will explore each of these references in turn, before returning to Guattari's comments in 'Machine and Structure' to clarify his use of the term 'machine' and its connection to his understanding of subjectivity and historical change.

viii) From base to superstructure

One of the grounding principles of Marxist theory, which announces its radical break from Hegelian philosophy, is the distinction made between the economic base of a society and its institutional superstructure. According to Marx, each stage of history is defined by its mode of production, where the mode of production is understood as a set of material and economic relations that serve to uphold the society and provide for its material needs. At different stages of history, this economic base of society has been constituted by various relations between land, labour, and machinery. What is key here is that the accepted level of political and intellectual discourse is shown to operate at a remove from the historical progress of society, such that anyone interested in the progression of society must turn away from purely intellectual debates and involve themselves in the material conditions of their environment. Describing the role of economic relations, Marx writes that, "[t]he totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure." As a result of this he claims that, "[i]t is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness."³¹² What is crucial here is that, for Marx, the realm of human thought and understanding does not progress according to its own dialectic, as it does with

³¹² Marx, 1987, 263

Hegel, but as a result of alterations in the material constitution of society. For example, Marx explains that technological advances in agricultural and industrial techniques alter the constitution of the material basis for society, and that this leads to a secondary change at the level of the political and legal frameworks of intellectual life. This process does not occur smoothly, however, and as such the historical development of society involves a series of social revolutions: "At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production... The changes in the economic foundation lead, sooner or later, to the transformation of the whole, immense, superstructure."³¹³ Just as Marx claims that changes in the base can be determined with the precision of a natural science, Guattari's materialist psychoanalysis of machinic desire can be read as an attempt to develop a science capable of understanding the unconscious operation of desire.

Translating Guattari's criticisms of Deleuze's structural account of thought, as they are given above, into the terminology of Marxist theory, we might say that Guattari argues that Deleuze's explanation of the structural nature of thought can only account for the legal, political and institutional superstructure of social life, and that by locating the 'paradoxical element' within the structure of thought he is failing to recognize the way in which the whole of the structure is in fact contingent upon the historical development of the means of production. Marx and Engels are careful to clarify that the relation between the base and the superstructure of society is not a simple one-way relation and Guattari is similarly careful to recognize the complexity of the relation between what he calls the 'machine' and the 'structure'. Marx and Engels make at least two clarifications to their general point about the way in which the material base of society effects the constitution of the superstructure, first that the different superstructural activities of man, such as those in the fields of art and politics, can develop at different rates in their relation to the base, and second that the relation between the base and the superstructure is a reciprocal one in which

³¹³ Marx, 1987, 263.

the material base only determines the superstructure in the last instance.³¹⁴ In his essay 'Nine Theses of the Left Opposition', Guattari claims that Marxist theorists have historically failed to give a proper account of the relation between the basic and superstructural elements of social life. He calls it a "real puzzle for Marxist theorists" and one "that revolutionary Marxism must resolve at all costs on the level of theory and on the level of practice, if it wants to move beyond the alternative between vulgar materialism and Hegelian idealism."³¹⁵ The reason for this failure, according to Guattari's analysis, is that Marxist theorists have never successfully solved "the problem of the subject."³¹⁶ Returning to Guattari's founding claim in 'Machine and Structure' that "each contingent structure is dominated... by a system of machines" and that conversely "a machine is inseparable from its structural articulations,"³¹⁷ we can now see this claim as a reworking of the Marxist assertion that the social superstructure is dominated by the material structure of the means of production and that the means of production is inseparable from the superstructure. With this in mind, Guattari aims to go further than Marx by using psychoanalytic theory to explain the way in which the subject emerges only in its relation with the 'machine' at this exact point of intersection between the material base of society and the intellectual superstructure. While the subject of feudalism is produced in part by its direct material relation with the scythe, or with the thresher, the subject of capitalism is produced by its interactions with the factory and the machinery of industrial production. Aware of the myriad of difficulties that Marxist theorists have traditionally faced when trying to think through the 'problem of the subject', Guattari returns to psychoanalytic theory by which he hopes to explain the production of subjectivity using the Lacanian terminology of the Real and the Symbolic.

³¹⁴ Marx and Engels make this point early in their work. See their comments on Feuerbach (1998, 61). For a full discussion of the difficult base-superstructure relation in Marx and Engel's work, see Rigby (1998, 177-180).

³¹⁵ PT 146

³¹⁶ PT 146

³¹⁷ PT 318

ix) Lacan's machines

When Guattari devises this distinction between machine and structure, he is not only offering a Marxist reading of Deleuze's work, and he is not simply rejecting Lacanian theory. As is so often the case in his work, Guattari borrows from Lacanian terminology, even when offering revisions to the work of his teacher. For this purpose, Guattari turns to a discussion in Lacan's second seminar which begins in the section titled 'Odd or even? Beyond intersubjectivity,' and which continues in his 'Seminar on "The Purloined Letter."' ³¹⁸ In this bizarre lesson, Lacan devises a game by which he hopes to explore "what in a confused fashion is called cybernetics" in order to answer the question "*what is the subject?*" ³¹⁹ By the use of this game, Lacan shows how a symbolic field can be produced by an unthinking and machinic process. The Lacanian psychoanalytic subject is a symbolic construction, it inhabits the Symbolic field, rather than that of the Imaginary or the Real, and is defined by a set of structural and symbolic laws. In this seminar, Lacan explores the nature of this symbolic subject by explaining the process by which the entire symbolic field is constituted.

The game that Lacan describes, and which his seminar audience play, is a version of the game 'evens and odds' in which one player flips a coin and the other player must guess the outcome. Lacan explains how it is possible for a machine, which is not conscious, to play the game, and to do so with a strategy. The game begins with a string of random coin tosses, which are written down as a string of symbols, here the plus sign is used to signify a head and a minus sign is used to signify a tail. At this point it is clear that for each toss of the coin there is a 50/50 chance of the machine successfully guessing the outcome. Lacan then explains what happens if you introduce an arbitrary set of symbolic rules into the recording of the series. In Lacan's example, each consecutive group of three coin tosses is named using the following rules: any three tosses of the same result, either (+++) or (---), is called a 1; any three tosses that includes exactly two consecutive tosses of the same result, (+-),

³¹⁸ Lacan, 1988, 175-190; Lacan, 2006b, 35-41

³¹⁹ Lacan, 1988, 175

(+--), (--+), or (---), is a 2; and finally, any three tosses that includes no consecutive tosses of the same result, (-+-) or (+-+), is a 3. Lacan is now able to transcribe a string of plusses and minuses into a string of numbers. When writing this string, each of the numbered triplets of coin tosses overlaps with the previous triplet by two. The string of tosses that results in the series +-+--+ would contain five groupings of three tosses as follows: (++-), (+-+), (-+-), (+--), and (---), which would be transcribed as: 2, 3, 3, 2, and 2. What fascinates Lacan here is that while in the string of plusses and minuses there is no connection between the signs – plusses and minuses follow each other at random – in the string of numbers a set of rules emerges: “This transformation alone gives rise to extremely precise laws. The 1s the 2s and the 3s cannot succeed each other in just any order.”³²⁰ For example, Lacan explains that a 1 will never be able to follow a 3 and that an indefinite number of 2s is always possible between a 1 and a 3.

What is important here is that an arbitrary set of rules produces a string of symbols that have a syntax. In this transcription, each symbol determines the possibilities open to the symbol that will come next so that, “independently of any attachment to some supposedly causal bond, the symbol already plays, and produces by itself its necessities, its structures, its organisations.”³²¹ Lacan is interested in this non-causal but necessary connection between the symbols in the chain because it gives him the opportunity to explain the possibility of unconscious memory. According to the arbitrary rules of transcription used above, certain patterns emerge in the string of numbers that have effects on other numbers occurring at a great distance from them. For example, if a string of an even number of 2s is preceded by a 1, then it will be followed by a 1, but when an odd number of 2s is preceded by a 1, it will be followed by a 3. It is therefore possible for the chain of symbols to ‘remember’ what happened further back in the chain.³²² The lesson that Lacan draws from

³²⁰ Lacan, 1988, 193

³²¹ Lacan, 1988, 193

³²² Lacan uses this phenomenon to argue for the existence of unconscious memory. Fink explains that, in this example, “rather than being remembered by the individual (in an active way, that is, with some sort of *subjective* participation), things are ‘remembered’ for him or her by the signifying chain... We have here a clear connection between the letter (or signifying chain) and the unconscious. The unconscious *cannot* forget, composed of ‘letters’ working, as they do, in an autonomous, automatic way” (1996, 183).

this game, and from the emergence of syntactical rules in the chain of transcribed numbers, is that it is possible to explain the emergence of the entire symbolic field of language as an effect of an unconscious process, carried out by a machine. As we move from the level of the coin tosses to the level of their transcription, “we are no longer at all in the domain of the real, but in that of the symbolic.”³²³ The lesson that Guattari draws from Lacan’s seminar is that the Real and the Symbolic relate to one another via a process in which a machine gives rise to a structure. The machinic and unthinking process that produces the random string of pluses and minuses can be thought of as the productive and material base of this system, while the resulting string of transcribed numbers can be understood as a superstructure of thought, ultimately determined and inseparable from that which produces it.

However, Guattari’s interpretation of Lacan’s ‘Seminar on “The Purloined Letter”’ differs significantly from that of the majority of Lacanians. For example, for Bruce Fink, while this seminar “points to the limits of structure, suggesting there is something ‘above and beyond’ structure, something ‘outside of’ and radically different from or in excess of structure,” the work of the seminar is ultimately seen as a way of “extending ever further the impact of structure” by showing that whatever is ‘beyond’ the structure is something “which nevertheless can be seen at work ‘within’ structure itself.”³²⁴ This is patently not the case for Guattari, who sees this seminar as a means for describing the Real without simply reducing it to something internal to the structure of the Symbolic. Fink and Guattari differ in their readings of Lacan by focusing on different aspects of the coin game: while Fink concentrates on the automatic and machinic production of structural rules and concludes that even the unconscious is structured like a language, Guattari concentrates on the fact that the rules which allow for the transcription of the coin tosses into a symbolic field are *arbitrary*, leading him to conclude that the structure of language is not something eternal and unconscious, but something historically located. The result of these two different readings can also be seen in Guattari and Fink’s alternative readings of the Oedipus complex. For Fink, and also for Miller,

³²³ Lacan, 1988, 182

³²⁴ Fink, 1996, 174

Lacan's seminar shows that the Oedipus complex is embedded in the structure of unconscious desire. For Guattari, on the other hand, the arbitrary nature of the rules of transcription shows that not only is the unconscious not Oedipal, but the subject need not be either.³²⁵ We will see in the next chapter how important this disagreement is for *Anti-Oedipus*, where Deleuze and Guattari first clarify the operational difference between mechanism and machinism. In that text, Guattari and Deleuze sum up their ambivalence to Lacan in a direct reference to Lacan's 'Seminar on "The Purloined Letter"', where they state: "We owe to Jacques Lacan the discovery of this fertile domain of a code of the unconscious, incorporating the entire chain – or several chains – of meaning... The chains are called 'signifying chains' because they are made up of signs, but these signs are not themselves signifying."³²⁶ In short, Lacan was right to think of the unconscious in terms of a machinic code, but he was wrong to have modeled this code on the signifying capacities of language.

x) Revolutionary escapes

If there is a single thought that binds all of Guattari's work prior to 1969, it is that there is something non-structural, or anti-structural, in all assemblages.³²⁷ That which is not structural is *machinic* and it is this which *escapes* structural relations, connects an assemblage with its outside, and brings about revolution. For Guattari, all subjectivity – in the form of group subjectivity – is necessarily revolutionary in the sense that it is only produced when transversal connections cut across the hierarchical stratifications in a group and put heterogeneous discourses into communication. When Guattari claims that the human being "is caught where the machine and the structure meet", he is

³²⁵ Guattari's break from the Lacanian school can be seen clearly in the different ways in which Lacan and Guattari use the example of the coin game to reinvestigate Freud's case of the Wolfman. Lacan argues that this game explains how the Wolfman is able to unconsciously remember the primal scene (1988, 176). Guattari, writing with Deleuze, takes the opposite tack, arguing that it is only the arbitrary nature of the symbolic field that allows Freud to oedipalise the Wolfman's schizophrenic tendencies (ATP, 29).

³²⁶ AO 41

³²⁷ I have used the terminology of 'assemblages' here, despite the fact that it was not part of Guattari's lexicon at the time. While Guattari does discuss groups that consist of heterogeneous, non-human elements, he does not begin using the concept of the 'assemblage' until his collaborations with Deleuze.

pointing out that human subjectivity is only produced when machinic forces cause alterations in structural relations.³²⁸ Guattari's early writings can therefore be understood as an attempt to rethink the relation between subjectivity, history, revolution, and escape.

Initially, Guattari brings Lacan's distinction between the Real and the Symbolic together with Marx's distinction between the base and the superstructure of society. Also following Lacan, Guattari locates the subject within the symbolic field. He writes that, "[t]he agent of action, whose definition here does not extend beyond this principle of reciprocal determination, is included in the structure."³²⁹ Moving away from traditional interpretations of Lacan's work, Guattari then offers his own reading of Lacan's concept of the machine. According to Guattari's interpretation, the structural field of the symbolic realm is not constituted by a set of eternal rules, but is produced by the Real, where the Real is understood to be made up of a set of productive, material, machinic relations. This alteration convinces Guattari that it is a mistake to explain the dynamics of desire using the concept of the *objet petit a*, functioning only as a representation of the drives, and instead to use the concept of the "*objet-machine petit 'a'*" which is "unable to be absorbed into the references of the structure."³³⁰ Once Guattari has recognized that the driving force behind desire is not a gap within the symbolic structure, but the eruption of a machine into the symbolic order, he is able to conceptualize desire as something inherently productive rather than something inherently lacking. However, what is just as crucial for Guattari is the fact that by separating the machine from the structure he is able to give a historical account of the nature of desire.

While Guattari criticizes structuralism for nullifying the effects of history by capturing it within an eternal symbolic order, the concept of the machine allows him to account for historical change. He writes that, machines "are not related

³²⁸ PT 322. Guattari's description of the human being is similar to that of *A Thousand Plateaus*: "the self is only a threshold, a door, a becoming between two multiplicities" (ATP 275); "Every society, every individual, are thus plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, the other *molecular*" (ATP 235).

³²⁹ PT 318

³³⁰ PT 324

in their structural determinations: only by a process of historical analysis.”³³¹ This claim is easy to understand if we return once again to Marx’s distinction between the base and the superstructure of society. The subject exists in the legal and political framework of the superstructure in the sense that one is ‘subject to the law’ or ‘subjected to power’. The productive capacities of the machine are not, however, constrained under any such symbolic law. For example, the development of technology that moves a society from a feudalist to a capitalist mode of production advances by a historical and non-structural progression.³³² Because it is the historical development of the Real that produces the Symbolic realm, in which the subject is embedded, the subject is also historically defined by the mode of production that produced it. It is only one small step from this claim to Guattari and Deleuze’s later criticism of the institution of psychoanalysis. If psychoanalysis restricts itself to the symbolic realm of the political and legal subject, and if the political and legal superstructures refuse to reflect contemporary changes in the mode of production, then the model of subjectivity used by psychoanalysis will soon become regressive and anti-revolutionary.

According to his reinterpretation of the base/superstructure relation, Guattari saw an appalling mismatch developing between the accelerating pace of material change and the inertia of political and legal structures: “With industrial capitalism, the spasmodic evolution of machinery keeps cutting across the existing hierarchy of skills.”³³³ This means that workers become alienated from their society and have no way of being recognized by the legal and political frameworks that govern their lives. According to Guattari’s analysis, the mismatch between the Real and the Symbolic, places the human being in a double-bind. It only survives because political and legal institutions manage to “conceal what is happening by setting up systems of equivalents, of imitations” such as the “oppressive myth of the model worker.”³³⁴ Guattari names this

³³¹ PT 319

³³² In the case of revolutionary struggle, however, Marx claims that the development of technology provides only the conditions for social transformation by creating a contradiction in the mode of production, and that class consciousness of this contradiction is required to bring about the revolutionary transformation.

³³³ PT 322

³³⁴ PT 320

process of concealment ‘anti-production’.³³⁵ To this list of anti-productive practices we could add the way in which the institution of psychoanalysis upholds the oppressive myth of the Oedipus complex and its necessary equivalent of the lacking, neurotic subject.

All of Guattari’s psychoanalytic and political work prior to 1969 leads him to conclude first that revolutionary modes of subjectivity – those not conditioned by the structural determinations of the Symbolic order – are possible, and secondly that such modes of subjectivity are necessary if we are to move past the political stalemates that plague contemporary life. For Guattari, political revolution is always a subjective revolution.³³⁶ Periods of political oppression and stagnation occur, “when the superstructures are imposed as impossible representations of machine effects,” while revolutions are possible, “when the machine represents social subjectivity for the structure.”³³⁷ The work of the politically committed psychoanalyst must be to aid in the exploration and discovery of new forms of subjectivation that are capable of *escaping* from the structural status quo. Psychoanalysts must recognize that the unconscious is not structured like a language, and is not a theatre for the dramatization of desire, but is a factory of material relations.³³⁸ The unconscious must be understood as a factory not only in the sense that it is productive, but also in the political sense that it is the site of structural subjugation. With this in mind, we can now see how closely Guattari’s work at La Borde is connected to his political project. His attempts to aid in the production of group subjectivity should not only be understood as a therapeutic means for treating psychosis, but also as an attempt to deal with the cause of psychosis, namely the double-bind created by the incompatibility of the material unconscious with the structural forms of consciousness currently available. Ultimately, Guattari

³³⁵ This term plays a similar role to that of ‘ideology’ for Marx, however Guattari locates this less in the people’s consciousness and more in the disciplinary functions of social institutions.

³³⁶ As well as placing Guattari in the history of Marxist theory’s attempt to think through the production of revolutionary subjectivities, this move also locates Guattari in a philosophical trajectory that runs through Nietzsche, Foucault and Deleuze.

³³⁷ PT 237

³³⁸ Guattari describes the unconscious as a factory early on: “Grabbing psychoanalysts by the collar and putting them in an asylum is like putting a medieval priest in a factory, or a pool! They would both try to escape by exorcisms and excommunications” (PT 73).

would claim that the theoretical tools available to psychoanalysts were incapable of the task at hand because of the way that they are restricted to a single discourse. After having defined revolution as a moment at which the machine is able to fully determine the form of the structure, Guattari explains that, “no such permanent grasp of machine effects upon the structures could really be achieved on the basis of only one ‘theoretical practice.’” Instead, such a task, “presupposes the development of a specific analytical praxis at every level of organization of the struggle.”³³⁹ This is what Guattari will try to achieve in his schizoanalytic work with Deleuze.

³³⁹ PT 329

Chapter 3 – Anti-Oedipus 1: *Desiring Machines*

Contents:

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- vi) The schizophrenic line of flight

i) Introduction

The concept of the line of flight is first introduced by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*. It arrives in this work with little introduction and yet it plays a central and organising role in the conceptual architecture that Deleuze and Guattari develop in the book. Simply put, Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of the line of flight to define the way that desire operates when it is not inhibited, captured, or turned against itself by the structuring forces of social reality. The concept is an important one, in this sense, because it connects Deleuze and Guattari's theory of desire with their theory of political change. The fact that the concept emerges here is also telling because, unlike many of the other concepts deployed in *Anti-Oedipus*, the line of flight is a novel creation that does not appear in the lexicon of either of the authors previous works. In this chapter, and in the one that follows, I will argue for a particular interpretation of the role that the concept of the line of flight plays in *Anti-Oedipus*. Specifically, I will argue that the concept is used in at least four distinct senses in the text, all of which are necessary to define the political project of schizoanalysis. To do this, in this chapter I will first concentrate on Deleuze and Guattari's novel conception of the unconscious. I will show how the pair use a number of insights from Guattari's earlier, materialist and anti-structural confrontations with Lacan to reformulate the metaphysical framework offered by Deleuze in his earlier works. This will allow me to explain what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they write that, in the unconscious, "it is not the lines of pressure that matter, but on the contrary the lines of escape (*lignes de fuite*)."³⁴⁰ In the subsequent chapter, I will continue my analysis of the role of the line of flight in *Anti-Oedipus* by considering Deleuze and Guattari's historical and political analysis of capitalism.

ii) Framing *Anti-Oedipus*

³⁴⁰ AO 371. As mentioned previously, accepted English translations of *Anti-Oedipus* render 'ligne de fuite' as 'line of escape'. In order to find some consistency with Deleuze and Guattari's later work, and with the majority of the secondary literature, I will include the French phrase 'ligne de fuite' in brackets whenever it is rendered other than as 'line of flight' in the translations.

Up to this point, I have offered my account of what we might call the pre-individual field of the concept of the line of flight, by locating the conceptual moves in both Deleuze and Guattari's separate work before 1969 that prefigure their later use of the concept. In this chapter I will tackle the individuation of the concept directly. However, the fertile domain of individuation created by the collision of these two thinkers has its own historical context. Deleuze and Guattari first met in 1969 with the civil unrest, student protests and massive general strikes of May '68 still fresh in their minds. Besides the grand scale of the protests, what marked out the uprisings of '68 was the fact that they were relatively spontaneous and were directed by a dislocated assembly of students and workers groups. The protests also manifested in an enormous outpouring of desire, with the writing of slogans, songs, and graffiti demonstrating the drive and passion that animated the students and the workers alike. What is more, the events were not predicted by the political scholars of the time, by the government, or by the French Communist Party, and they received little institutional support.³⁴¹ These circumstances fuelled Guattari's scepticism for the revolutionary power of the official French Communist Party, who he had already criticised for their role in restoring the bourgeoisie to power after the end of the Second World War,³⁴² and whose politics he declared "totally determined by the state of the economic and social relations of State monopoly capitalism".³⁴³ Deleuze had also retained his distance from the Communist Party, making him an exception among French intellectuals of the time. Despite this fact, he was a vocal supporter of the student protests and was the only professor in the philosophy department of Lyon to publicly declare his support and attend the student organised events.³⁴⁴ Thus, before their meeting, both Guattari and Deleuze were aware that a new theory of desire and a new theory of political revolution were required, one that did not rely on party political power and that could account for the supposed unpredictability of May '68. Deleuze and Guattari's first meeting was organised after Guattari had sent Deleuze a copy of his

³⁴¹ For more on the role of the PCF in the events of May 1968, see Bell & Criddle (1994, 90-93).

³⁴² PT 158

³⁴³ PT 247-248

³⁴⁴ Dosse, 2010, 177

essay 'Machine and Structure'. These first meetings were highly productive, with each forced to rethink their previous work in a mutual attempt to develop a theory of desire that could account for May '68 and overcome the failures of traditional Freudianism and traditional Marxism. Only three years later, the result of these conversations emerged as *Anti-Oedipus*, a veritable explosion of novel ideas combining philosophical moves from Kant, Spinoza, and Nietzsche, with insights from the literature of D H Lawrence, Samuel Butler, and Antonin Artaud, as well as the anthropological studies carried out by Pierre Clastres, Marcel Griaule, and Germaine Dieterlen (along with the ontologies of the different societies they studied such as the Dogon, Guayaki and nomads from Mongolia), the psychoanalytic work of Freud, Reich, Kline, and Lacan, and of course the theories of political economy advanced by Marx and Engels, Adam Smith, and David Ricardo. The book is an attempt to offer an account of universal history that incorporates a theory of desire and of the unconscious, which is capable of explaining the drivers of political change and political revolution, as well as the ways that these revolutions go sour, or morph into self-destructive fascisms.³⁴⁵ It is in the context of this psychoanalytic and politically motivated text that the concept of the line of flight is born.

iii) Negative psychoanalytic task: dealing with the Oedipus Complex

One of the central aims of *Anti-Oedipus* is to provide a theory of the unconscious that challenges both the Freudian convention of interpreting the unconscious as a kind of theatre, where the narrative of desire is played out, and the Lacanian convention of interpreting the unconscious as an inaccessible and impossible 'Real' defined by its structural role, namely as the gap, cut, or lacuna within the Symbolic.³⁴⁶ Perhaps the clearest reason for

³⁴⁵ While this may sound like a direct continuation of Guattari's work and a change in direction for Deleuze, many of the conceptual innovations of Deleuze's previous metaphysical work involved reworkings of both Marxist and Freudian concepts. Deleuze's earliest academic interests also concerned the relationship between desire and the existence of societal norms. See Deleuze's edited selection of texts in *Instincts et Institutions* (1953), the introduction of which is translated in DI, 19-21.

³⁴⁶ Lacan does not strictly define the unconscious as inaccessible as he does offer a route to the unconscious via the structure of language. It would be more accurate to say that Lacanian theory treats desire as necessarily barred, and therefore the unconscious is only readable in

Deleuze and Guattari's rejection of these approaches is that they both, in their own way, subordinate the activity of unconscious desire to some form of social convention. In both cases this subordination of the unconscious is carried out by a championing of the Oedipus complex. Criticising Freud's insistence on the universality of the Oedipus complex, Deleuze and Guattari question what it means to say that Freud "discovered Oedipus in his own self-analysis."³⁴⁷ According to their reading, it would be more accurate to say that what Freud 'discovered' was only that the familial situation in which he was raised shared certain traits with the patients he treated because of the common family form that conditioned them. Freud's decision to draw on the myth of Oedipus is then simply one way of explaining a societal norm by utilising a familiar trope from his own "Goethian classical culture".³⁴⁸ Unfortunately, according to Deleuze and Guattari's reading, Freud reverses the order of determination by which the social convention of the nuclear family creates Oedipal subjects, instead claiming that the familial romance is a "mere dependence on Oedipus."³⁴⁹ Starting from this error, Freud then "neuroticizes everything in the unconscious at the same time as he oedipalizes, and closes the familial triangle over the entire unconscious."³⁵⁰ The reason that this generalised use of the Oedipus complex is so disastrous in the eyes of Deleuze and Guattari is that, by elevating the Oedipus to the level of the necessary form of desire, Freud also made desire inherently representative or signifying, rather than productive. It is in this move that Deleuze and Guattari claim that, "the unconscious ceases to be what it is – a factory, a work-shop – to become a theatre, a scene and its staging."³⁵¹ To clarify, Deleuze and Guattari do not attempt to dismantle the entire Freudian edifice, but instead attempt to extract those Freudian insights that capture the active, productive and pre-personal aspects of unconscious desire, from those that reduce the unconscious to a theatre for the eternal staging of the oedipal drama. Specifically, Deleuze and Guattari credit Freud

the effects produced by the repression of social reality. Deleuze and Guattari will attempt, however, to analyse desire directly, without any reliance on its repression.

³⁴⁷ AO 62

³⁴⁸ AO 62

³⁴⁹ AO 62

³⁵⁰ AO 62

³⁵¹ AO 62

with the discovery of the unconscious and with the discovery of the abstract category of desire, praising in particular Freud's 1915 paper *The Unconscious*, where he brought together his dynamic, topographical, and economic models of the unconscious. Much to the satisfaction of Deleuze and Guattari, here Freud also shows that unconscious desire is "exempt from mutual contradiction" so that, "there are in this system no negation, no doubt, no degrees of certainty", and finally that the impulses in this system, "are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all".³⁵² On top of this, Deleuze and Guattari are particularly enamoured by Freud's work in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), where Freud moves past his earlier theories of an unconscious desire motivated by the pleasure principle, to more critical and metaphysical questions concerning the necessary existence of a more complex relationship with reality, especially in the context of the apparent tendency of life towards death.³⁵³ Among many other arguments, it is here that Freud elaborates on the ways in which the unconscious is not necessarily ordered by the categories of space and time, and offers a direct challenge to Kantian metaphysics: "As a result of certain insights afforded to us by psychoanalysis, Kant's dictum that time and space are necessary forms of human thought is today very much open to debate. We have come to appreciate that unconscious psychic processes are in themselves 'timeless'."³⁵⁴ While Deleuze and Guattari are more cautious in their analysis of Kant, they praise these works of Freud because it is here that he explicates the abstract concept of desire, without tarnishing this discovery with the apparent necessity of sexual repression.

In the case of Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari also attempt to split those insights they deem useful from those that confirm the psychoanalytic structuring of unconscious desire. Both of these sides of Lacan's work can be seen in his treatment of the Oedipus. For Deleuze and Guattari, Lacan's most influential impact on the interpretation of the Oedipus was his claim that it was purely

³⁵² Freud, 1957, 186-187. See also Freud's comments on "the quantitative distribution of the libido" (Freud, 2006b, 11).

³⁵³ This essay also plays a significant role in Deleuze's previous account of the three syntheses (DR 120-140).

³⁵⁴ Freud, 2006a, 155

imaginary. Where Freud had claimed that all desire related back to the first feeling of lack experienced by the child when he/she was removed from the mother by the imposition of the father, Lacan, “shows on the contrary that Oedipus is imaginary, nothing but an image, a myth.”³⁵⁵ This means that instead of thinking about the Oedipus complex as something which comes into existence at a particular point in the development of subjectivity, Lacan sees it as a myth that is used to explain the fact that in order to enter the Symbolic realm of social interaction the subject must necessarily be lacking, barred or castrated. Interestingly, Lacan’s argument against Freud’s mythical version of the Oedipus is given most explicitly in the two seminars, *The other side of psychoanalysis* and *On a discourse that might not be a semblance*, which he delivered from 1969 to 1971, at exactly the same time that Deleuze and Guattari were writing *Anti-Oedipus*.³⁵⁶ During these two seminars, Lacan continuously refers to the Oedipus as a myth and as a dream of Freud.³⁵⁷ He offers a close reading of the Oedipus myth that Freud borrows from Sophocles, and the alternative Oedipus story that Freud articulated in *Totem and Taboo*, and shows how they contradict each other. Using Barthes’ analysis of the structure of myth, Lacan argues that both versions of the Oedipus are an attempt to deal with the unanswerable question of origin, and that both ultimately grapple with the difficulty of an individual’s conception through the sexual relationship of the parents. However, according to Lacan, the role that the father plays in these two stories is dramatically different. In Sophocles’ Oedipus, neither the father nor the child are allowed to fulfil their desire for the mother. The curse laid upon Oedipus is the result of a previous injunction put upon the father, which forbade him from consummating his marriage. It is when the father breaks this rule that he sets in motion the narrative that will ultimately lead to his own death and the repetition of the transgression by his son. In this story, the father and the son are ultimately ‘castrated’ by the impossibility of enjoyment. The oedipal story in *Totem and Taboo*, on the other hand, does not place the same restriction on the primal father. According to this story, the father initially had free access to all of the women, but when he is killed by the

³⁵⁵ AO 340

³⁵⁶ Lacan, 2008; 2006a

³⁵⁷ Lacan, 2008, 128

horde of brothers the remaining image of the dead father constitutes a rule against the fulfilment of desire by incest. It is the second version of the Oedipus story that Lacan refuses to accept. He calls it a “cock-and-bull story”³⁵⁸ and refers to Freud’s “blessed story of the father of the horde” as a kind of “Darwinian buffoonery.”³⁵⁹ Speaking of the power of the father, Lacan writes that, “the mystagogy that makes him into a tyrant is obviously lodged... at the level of the real father as a construction of language” and adds, “[t]he real father is nothing other than an effect of language.”³⁶⁰ Crucial for Deleuze and Guattari in this interpretation is the fact that if the Oedipus is a myth, then it does not necessarily tell us anything about the nature of desire, but only about a particular way in which that desire has been repressed.

However, the error that Deleuze and Guattari claim to locate in Lacanian psychoanalysis can be seen creeping in just as soon as Lacan first dismissed Freud’s version of the Oedipus as imaginary. Immediately after Lacan’s critique of Freud’s Oedipus myth in seminar XVII, he writes that, despite it being a myth, in analysis “the myth of Oedipus is necessary to designate the real.”³⁶¹ By defining the Oedipus complex as necessary for the interpretation of desire, Lacan is able to develop a structural account of desire, supposedly abstracted from its social, cultural, and historical context. It is precisely at this point, the point at which the imaginary Oedipus is defined as necessary, at which Deleuze and Guattari depart from the Lacanian reading of desire. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari identify the structural development in Lacanian analysis as a missed opportunity in which the discovery of the imaginary nature of the Oedipus was followed by a re-imposition of the Oedipal system in structuralist terms. They write that “it was inopportune to tighten the nuts and bolts where Lacan had just loosened them”³⁶², and even joke about how perfectly the logic of the Oedipus is reintroduced in Lacan’s structuralist account claiming that, “it is like the story of the Resistance fighters who, wanting to destroy a pylon, balanced the plastic charges so well that the pylon

³⁵⁸ Lacan, 2008, 114

³⁵⁹ Lacan, 2008, 112

³⁶⁰ Lacan, 2008, 127

³⁶¹ Lacan, 2006a, 48

³⁶² AO, 84

blew up and fell back into its hole.”³⁶³ In Deleuze and Guattari’s eyes, Lacan had managed to destroy the mythical Oedipus only by creating a structural one, and in this way had reintroduced all of the misconceptions about desire inherited from Freud. Regardless of whether it is used as a mythical reference point or a structural law, if unconscious desire is captured by the yolk of Oedipus, then it will appear as an a-historical mirror of human nature. For Deleuze and Guattari, this interpretation of desire involves an illusion that reverses the true order of determination: unconscious desire is not produced by our lived, socially constructed reality, but is the productive force that gives rise to such a reality. It cannot, therefore, be the case that unconscious desire represents or mirrors the social convention of the nuclear family, on the contrary, it must be the case that desire is inherently an-oedipal and is only captured by the structure of the Oedipus complex under certain historical conditions.

iv) Positive psychoanalytic task: Defining desiring-production

Deleuze and Guattari’s engagements with psychoanalysis are not only critical in *Anti-Oedipus* and it is their stated aim to provide a positive theory of the unconscious that does not reduce it to either a theatre for the shadow play of desire, or a structural void necessary for the process of analysis. Given the fact that the previous two chapters have offered readings of previous works completed by both Deleuze and Guattari, perhaps the most direct way to give a clear account of the positive and productive theory of the unconscious that Deleuze and Guattari develop in *Anti-Oedipus* is to show how it differs from the equivalent theories offered in each of the pair’s work prior to their collaboration.

We saw in the last chapter how Guattari’s essay ‘Machine and Structure’ challenged the form of structuralism found in both *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense* because of the fact that Deleuze was forced to include a non-structural element – variously called the object=x, or the differentiator –

³⁶³ AO, 268

into his definition of the structure itself. In opposition to this, Guattari opened up a distinction between the category of the *structure*, which requires nothing more than two heterogeneous series, the terms of which are defined mutually by their reference to one another, and the category of the *machine*, which functions outside of the structure and plays a role in its genesis via a process of incessant repetition. With Guattari's insistence on the separation of the structure and the machine in mind, in *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari are able to explain exactly where Lacan's Oedipal theory of desire goes wrong, namely in that it does not recognize the a-structural and machinic nature of desire, which, far from being structured like a language, or necessarily structured by the Oedipus complex, is a machine that has logical priority over the structure. When this challenge to the foundations of structuralism is incorporated into *Anti-Oedipus*, we find that the ontological categories offered in *Difference and Repetition* are considerably altered. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze had claimed that the genesis of any actual experience required both a field of individuation and a virtual Idea. The former was intensive and dynamic and served to drive the individuation and the dramatization of spatio-temporal dynamisms, while the latter was differential and provided the structuring template by which the actualization of experience could be given form. To put it briefly, in *Anti-Oedipus*, the main alteration to this process is that the virtual Idea is no longer considered necessary for the process of actualization and the intensive field of individuation is considered capable of directing its own actualization. The intensive field is renamed as the multiplicity of desiring-production and the spatio-temporal-dynamisms, which are now considered as machinic and self-directed, are renamed as desiring-machines. Desiring-production differs from the intensive field defined in *Difference and Repetition*, and from the 'depths' as they are defined in *Logic of Sense*, because of the fact that they do not require any structuring from the heights of the virtual Idea in order to be productive. This is why Deleuze and Guattari claim that "desiring-production is production of production."³⁶⁴ Desiring-machines, on the other hand, differ from the spatio-temporal dynamisms of *Difference and Repetition* because of the fact that they operate

³⁶⁴ AO 6

according to three immanent syntheses of production, which require no interaction with the virtual. Summarizing their position, Deleuze and Guattari state that the real decision to be made in analysis is not between Lacan's structural Oedipus and Freud's mythical one, but "between Oedipus, structural as well as imaginary, and something else that all the Oedipuses crush and repress: desiring-production."³⁶⁵

Where Deleuze and Guattari do retain the category of the virtual in *Anti-Oedipus*, it is no longer used to designate a differential structure that dominates the actualization of reality, but is instead considered as a secondary effect of the machinic process of desiring-production. Take the example of the Oedipus complex again: Deleuze and Guattari show that, while it is the case that a particular, tripartite structure of desire is regularly found in the family unit, this structure is an effect of desiring-production, and not its cause. To follow this logic is not to question the "vital importance" of the love attachments formed in the family, but it is a question of knowing "what the place and the function of parents are within desiring-production", rather than doing the reverse and "forcing the entire interplay of desiring-machines to fit within the restricted code of Oedipus."³⁶⁶ Following from this reasoning, Deleuze and Guattari state that "*it is Oedipus that depends on desiring-production... And it is the Oedipus complex that is virtual.*"³⁶⁷ Oedipus is virtual in the sense that while it is really made manifest in any number of human relationships, it has no actual existence, no spatio-temporal location, and no necessity. This reorientation of the virtual is crucial for Deleuze and Guattari's theory of unconscious desire because it opens the possibility of defining desire as distinct from the forces that dominate and repress it. For Lacan, and perhaps for the early Deleuze too, desire can never be considered apart from its repression, and hence the Real unconscious remains constantly blocked and always impossible, however Deleuze and Guattari's theory makes space for a direct analysis of desiring-production. More specifically, while Lacanian structuralism can only consider desire as it is captured in the Oedipal net,

³⁶⁵ AO 59

³⁶⁶ AO 51

³⁶⁷ AO 140

Deleuze and Guattari aim to analyse those flows of desire that escape the virtual Oedipus. From this perspective, these *escapes* are not anomalies, but indicative of the very foundation of desire itself. Much of the psychoanalytic project of *Anti-Oedipus* is then given over to explaining how desiring-machines function, and how they generate our lived experience without the input of virtual Ideas.³⁶⁸ Central to this task is Deleuze and Guattari's account of the nature of machinic processes and of the three syntheses of the unconscious that define the operations of desire. Here I will first give a brief account of the role of machinic processes, before introducing each of the three syntheses in turn.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari do not simply borrow the concept of the machine from Guattari's work in 'Machine and Structure', but develop it further. Here, Deleuze and Guattari explain their use of the category of the machinic in contradistinction to theories of both mechanism and vitalism and their aim is to produce the category of the machinic by splitting the difference between these two traditional categories.³⁶⁹ Deleuze and Guattari take mechanistic theories as those that explain the real as a series of combinations and collisions of inert material elements, such as atoms, whereas traditional vitalisms assume a teleological force that runs through matter and orientates it. The problem that Deleuze and Guattari see with this binary is that while mechanistic theories are capable of explaining how systems, be they composed of bodies or other structures, maintain themselves over time, they cannot explain how these systems arise, whereas theories of vitalism can explain the genesis of form, but rely on an otherwise consistent and inert matter. Deleuze and Guattari overcome this distinction by recognizing the intensive nature of matter. While theories of mechanism and vitalism each take the extended nature of space and of time for granted, in *Anti-Oedipus* 'matter'

³⁶⁸ The category of the machinic is perhaps the most complex and widely misunderstood innovation of *Anti-Oedipus*. In later additions of the French publication, Deleuze and Guattari added an appendix to correct some of the major misconceptions surrounding their concept of desiring-machines, published in English as 'Balance-Sheet for "Desiring-Machines"' (CY 90-117).

³⁶⁹ For a clear account of Deleuze and Guattari's attempts to collapse the mechanist/vitalist divide see Colebrook (2009, 1-33). Colebrook also explores Deleuze and Guattari's conception of death and its relation to history.

is not something already distributed in space and made up of distinct units, instead it is nothing other than a field of intensities. Intensities always seem to cancel themselves out in extensity, and drive the individuation and dramatization of what in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze had called spatio-temporal dynamisms, which compose their own space and time as they unfold. Crucially then, desiring machines do not operate within the structures of time and space, but produce these structural effects. The tendency of intensive matter that is always oriented outside of itself is what Deleuze and Guattari call desire, and it is the drive of this material desire that produces the actual relations of bodies in space and time. Deleuze and Guattari explain that their theory of desiring machines “shatters the vitalist argument by calling into question the specific or personal unity of the organism, and the mechanist argument... by calling in question the structural unity of the machine.”³⁷⁰ Following from this, the pair note that once the structural unity of the machine has been undone “a direct link is perceived between the machine and desire, the machine passes to the heart of desire, the machine is desiring and desire, machined.”³⁷¹ In ‘Machine and Structure’, Guattari first defined the machine using Deleuze’s category of repetition, in which what is repeated is never the same, but something different. This insistence is carried over into *Anti-Oedipus* via the fact that desiring-machines are said to have no structural consistency of their own; they do not function by simply maintaining a structure, but instead by continually breaking down.³⁷² To put this another way, the driving force of desire is nothing other than the drive towards difference, it is that which continually differs from itself. One important effect of this intensive driving force, that distinguishes the theory of desiring-machines from both mechanism and vitalism, is that it is capable of generating a *history*. Vitalism traditionally requires a particular form of life, such as that of man, to orientate its development and is thus, in a certain sense, anti-historicist, while mechanistic theories traditionally assume that temporal moments are nothing other than

³⁷⁰ AO 313. Deleuze and Guattari are referring to Samuel Butler, who they credit with first collapsing the distinction between mechanism and vitalism.

³⁷¹ AO 314

³⁷² Opposing them to mechanistic processes, Deleuze and Guattari write: “Desiring-machines, on the contrary, continually break down as they run, and in fact run only when they are not functioning properly” (AO 33-34).

reversible or exchangeable states of matter. In contrast to this, desiring-machines emerge historically because the bodies that they compose can only be understood via a historical analysis of the intensive relations that gave rise to them. By defining machinic processes, and therefore the activity of desiring-machines, in this way, Deleuze and Guattari give an intensive, materialist, and historical account of the unconscious.

Another way to characterize Deleuze and Guattari's machinism, and its challenge to mechanism, would be to say that while mechanistic accounts of reality always separate a force from the mechanism that transmits it, machinic accounts conceive of things solely in terms of the interrelation of forces. It is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari define machines in general, and desiring-machines in particular, as systems of flows and breaks in which "every machine functions as a break in the flow in relation to the machine to which it is connected, but at the same time is also a flow itself, or the production of a flow, in relation to the machine connected to it."³⁷³ Flows are only cut by other flows, and there is no external mechanism that moderates their behaviour. If we were to ask what it is that is flowing, then the answer for Deleuze and Guattari could only be 'unconscious desire', understood as a material and intensive force.

To explain how this material and intensive unconscious functions, Deleuze and Guattari offer a transcendental account of unconscious desire. Just as Kant had developed his own critical philosophy of reason, not by considering the external factors that limit reason, but by considering it immanently and noting the illusions that reason creates by its own mode of functioning, in *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari give an immanent account of the machinic processes of desire. In place of Kant's immanent and critical account of reason, Deleuze and Guattari define, what they call, the three syntheses of the unconscious, noting the ways in which each of these syntheses can lead to a specific transcendental illusion. When turning to the three syntheses of the unconscious as they are given in *Anti-Oedipus*, it is worth noting that even in

³⁷³ AO 39

'Machine and Structure', while Guattari was first differentiating the two concepts in question, he was also careful to note that "a machine is inseparable from its structural articulations and, conversely, that each contingent structure is dominated... by a system of machines."³⁷⁴ The theory of desiring-machines in *Anti-Oedipus* is consistent with this early intuition and when Deleuze and Guattari describe the three syntheses of the unconscious that determine the operation of desiring-machines these operations are inextricable from the structural articulations of the body that they serve to organize. In *Anti-Oedipus* there is a continuum between machine and structure, which is filled with the becoming of a body. Bodies can either become more or less organized, depending on the activities of the desiring-machines, and can thus tend towards one of two poles; becoming an organized and structured body that takes the form of an organism, or becoming a Body without Organs (BwO). Specifically, the desiring machines operate according to three syntheses, called the connective synthesis of production, the disjunctive synthesis of recording, and the conjunctive synthesis of consumption-consummation.³⁷⁵ These syntheses describe the self-organising capabilities of intensive matter. They are driven by the tendency within matter to differentiate itself, a tendency which Deleuze and Guattari name *desire*.³⁷⁶

The first, connective synthesis is the operation by which desiring machines connect to one another. If the field of desiring-production is understood as a kind of distribution of energetic indeterminacy, then the first synthesis of the unconscious is the process by which different areas in this field attract one another and form connections. It builds on Freud's notion of libidinal investment and the nature of the drives and is just that process by which desire, understood as the tendency inherent in intensive states, constantly reaches outside of itself. As we have already noted, desiring-production is a multiplicity and desiring-machines can therefore never be understood as

³⁷⁴ PT 318

³⁷⁵ An analysis of how this presentation of the three syntheses differs from Deleuze's earlier account will follow later in this chapter.

³⁷⁶ Deleuze and Guattari's comments echo Simondon's critique of hylomorphic accounts of the relation between matter and form, and his development of the concept of 'information' (1964).

individual. There is never just one machine, but always “machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections.”³⁷⁷ Borrowing from the psychoanalytic tradition, especially that of Melanie Klein, Deleuze and Guattari take the case of the child’s mouth, understood as a sucking machine, to the breast, understood as a machine producing milk, as their primary example of the connective synthesis. In line with their critical project, Deleuze and Guattari aim to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate interpretations of this primary synthesis. According to their analysis, interpretations of this synthesis fail to be legitimate when they do not recognise the fact that the connections made here are always *transverse* connections between *heterogeneous* and *partial* elements. They argue that any interpretation of this synthesis that takes the elements that are connected in this synthesis as logically preceding the connections made between them involves a logical fallacy. To treat the connective synthesis as a process occurring between pre-given homogenous elements produces a transcendental illusion in the following way: That which creates a linear series of connections on a homogenous field must be different in kind from that which it produces; the process of the first synthesis cannot therefore take for granted the pre-existence of the elements that it connects, or of the homogeneity of the field on which it connects them; the first synthesis must therefore connect only *partial* elements, drawn from *heterogeneous* fields. It is important to note here that the transversal nature of the first synthesis results in a series of connections between machines that is constant and additive, not just an “and”, but always “and...” “and then...”³⁷⁸

It is in this first synthesis that the BwO is created. Borrowing the term from Artaud, Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of the BwO to designate the unformed and unorganised state of the body, which desiring machines must work against in the first synthesis to form connections.³⁷⁹ Most generally, the BwO stands for matter without a form of content or expression. The genesis of

³⁷⁷ AO 1

³⁷⁸ AO 5

³⁷⁹ The BwO was first introduced by Deleuze in *Logic of Sense*, where it played a slightly different role (LS 223). For a clear articulation of the concept, and its relation to structure, see the Young, Genosko, & Watson (2013, 51-55).

desiring machines and the BwO are concurrent because they each articulate a force that opposes the other. They both rely on the tension produced in “the opposition of the process of production of the desiring-machines and the nonproductive stasis of the body without organs.”³⁸⁰ At this point, the BwO is understood as nothing other than that force of inertia, against which the connective tendency of desire must work. The first synthesis, by which matter constantly creates new transversal connections between heterogeneous partial elements, begins to construct regularities in matter, understood as primitive chains of code, and these regularities are defined against the threat of absolute indeterminacy, in which difference is equally distributed. The BwO is just that name for the even distribution of indeterminate difference. As connections are constantly formed and reformed by desiring-machines, desiring-production takes on different levels of organisation. The BwO is therefore one pole towards which the desiring machines can tend, namely the pole of absolute disorganisation.

The second synthesis of the unconscious is the disjunctive synthesis of recording. This describes the way in which desiring-machines detach themselves from one another in order to make new connections: for the mouth to move from the breast to the hand, to the hair, to a stone etc., it must also break each connection in turn. Here Deleuze and Guattari develop some of Freud’s thoughts concerning memory and the role of signs in the psyche. They intend to show that by the process of constant disconnection-connection, the desiring machines “attach themselves to the body without organs as so many points of disjunction, between which an entire network of new syntheses is now woven, marking the surface off into co-ordinates, like a grid.”³⁸¹ The processes of disconnection and disjunction are said to ‘record’ desire because they leave traces on the BwO, like scars where connections have been continually reopened and reclosed.³⁸² Once again, Deleuze and Guattari

³⁸⁰ AO 10

³⁸¹ AO 13. Deleuze and Guattari speak of both attaching and detaching in relation to the second synthesis (AO 13, 43). Just as Deleuze and Guattari’s machinism conceptualizes desire as a flow and a break simultaneously, in the second synthesis, each apparent detachment is simply an attachment to something else.

³⁸² AO 360

differentiate between the legitimate and illegitimate uses of this synthesis. Here, legitimate interpretations recognise the inclusive nature of the disjunctions, while illegitimate uses treat disjunctions as exclusive. I will come back to the distinction between inclusive and exclusive disjunctions later in this chapter, however, put briefly Deleuze and Guattari's argument is that because of the transversal nature of the connections being made, the disjunctions of desiring-machines cannot be binary, but instead must be seen as affirming alternatives. To assume that disjunctions are exclusive is based on a transcendental illusion because it involves projecting back the possibility of opposition (which only holds between individuals) to a pre-individual process. According to the legitimate use of the second synthesis, disjunctions do not involve opposition or negation, but positive difference. This means that the aforementioned 'grid' produced on the BwO, which allows for the recording of the process of desire, is not yet a structure in the normal sense of the word. The inclusive nature of the disjunctions means that the process of the second synthesis operates not by the binary of "either or", but by the constant extension of an "either or...or...or".³⁸³

The third synthesis of the unconscious is that of the conjunction of consumption-consummation and it describes the way that the first two syntheses give way to the production of a subject, who exists alongside the desiring-machines, and who experiences the intensities produced on the BwO. Deleuze and Guattari write that in the third synthesis "the subject is produced as a mere residuum alongside the desiring-machines."³⁸⁴ According to this analysis, the first two syntheses produce a series of "intensive quantities", which could otherwise be thought of as pure sensations. These intensive quantities must be "consumed" by "personages" who are not yet individuals.³⁸⁵ In fact, the subject is an effect of these states, rather than being their owner. In his analysis of the third synthesis of the unconscious, Nathan Widder explains the relationship between the subject and the intensive states

³⁸³ Deleuze first describes the difference between inclusive and exclusive disjunctions in LS 194-201. The distinction is important in *Anti-Oedipus* where it marks the difference between the legitimate and the illegitimate use of the second synthesis.

³⁸⁴ AO 19

³⁸⁵ AO 92-95

produced in the first two syntheses when he writes that “[t]hese states are in no way chosen by the subject; rather, the subject is *driven* to them, and is constituted by being so driven.”³⁸⁶ The difference between the legitimate and the illegitimate uses of the third synthesis depends on whether the subject recognises itself as a product of these sensations or projects its own image back into the process as the producer of these states. With this in mind, Deleuze and Guattari can now offer their account of the Oedipus complex as an example of the illegitimate use of the three syntheses. The recognition of this illusion is central to Deleuze and Guattari’s anti-psychoanalytic project in *Anti-Oedipus* in which they attempt to show that the traditional insistence on the necessity of the oedipalization of the child relies on exactly this kind of illusion. The illegitimate use of the third synthesis occurs when the subject produced there “confuses himself with this third productive machine and with the residual reconciliation that it brings about: a conjunctive synthesis of consummation in the form of a wonderstruck ‘So *that’s* what it was!’”³⁸⁷ This misapprehension occurs when the subject places itself, as an individual, before the process of individuation that produces it. It is a retrospective appropriation of the processes of desiring-machines by the subject, who is produced only as an after-effect of the three syntheses. Specifically, the illegitimate use of the third synthesis follows from an illegitimate use of the second synthesis in the following way: while a legitimate and inclusive use of the disjunctive synthesis produces a schizophrenic subject, who experiences only intensive quantities (as delusions and hallucinations), an illegitimate and exclusive use of the disjunctive synthesis produces a neurotic subject who experiences desire as a relation between extended quantities. The way in which the third synthesis of the unconscious relates to the BwO is also dependent on whether it is applied legitimately or illegitimately. According to the former, the body is produced as a site of becoming on which desire remains productive and active, while according to the latter the body becomes an organized, structured and stratified body across which desire can no longer flow. Thus, while it is possible for the unconscious to produce a productive BwO, the systematic misrepresentation of the three syntheses by

³⁸⁶ Widder, 2012, 109

³⁸⁷ AO 19

psychoanalysis instead produces an organism in which each organ plays a specific role in desire and for whom genuine change, outside of an Oedipal structure, becomes impossible.

There are at least two key differences that should be highlighted here between the three syntheses of the unconscious given in *Anti-Oedipus* and the three syntheses of the production of sense given in *Logic of Sense*, and to a certain extent the three passive syntheses given in *Difference and Repetition*. First, the order of the three syntheses has been altered. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze describes the production of the surface of sense, which separated the primary depths of bodies from the secondary organization of language, via the three syntheses of connection, conjunction, and disjunction. In *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze worked on the assumption that it was necessary for a certain kind of subject to be produced in the second synthesis before the disjunction of signifiers could be possible, however in *Anti-Oedipus*, partly due to a new conception of a-signifying semiotics drawn from Guattari's work on Hjelmslev, Deleuze and Guattari can now explain the disjunction of recording on the BwO without reference to a subject of any kind. This is important for Deleuze and Guattari because while the Oedipus complex plays a central role in Deleuze's dynamic account of genesis in *Logic of Sense*, in *Anti-Oedipus* the complex is recognized as nothing other than a misapplication of the syntheses. Subsequently, the synthesis of conjunction is placed after, rather than before, the synthesis of disjunction. Second, while the three syntheses of sense in *Logic of Sense* were placed *between* the primary order of bodies and the tertiary structure of language, in *Anti-Oedipus* the three syntheses operate in the depths of desiring-production. In *Logic of Sense* the primary order of bodies could not be given a semiotic articulation as it was pre-signifying, but in *Anti-Oedipus* this is no longer the case and it is possible for Deleuze and Guattari to claim that the three syntheses are located directly in the unconscious and material real.³⁸⁸ We could say that the theory of signification

³⁸⁸ This resonates with Dan W Smith's argument that the major difference between *Logic of Sense* and *Anti-Oedipus* is that it is only in the latter that Deleuze "unhesitatingly attempts to write about the 'depths' in a straightforward manner" (Smith 2006, 146). While Smith is correct to make this assertion, it is Guattari's reformulation of Deleuze's structuralism and his

available to Deleuze at the point of writing *Logic of Sense* only allowed him to give an account of the three syntheses of sense using Carroll's menagerie of esoteric words, but that at the point of writing *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari can draw on the functioning of a-signifying semiotics to locate the three syntheses directly within the schizophrenic order of language glimpsed in Artaud's use of the breath-word.³⁸⁹ To compare this move with the categories of *Difference and Repetition*, we can simply say that the three syntheses of the unconscious are not virtual or abstract in relation to the unconscious, but are actually present there. They define the way in which the intensive field of desiring-production is able to explicate itself without the direction of the virtual Idea.

This material, intensive and historical definition of the unconscious, and this explication of the immanent regulation of the three syntheses, allow Deleuze and Guattari to describe unconscious desire separately from the various ways in which it is repressed. The machinic unconscious is not understood as a kind of Real or brute force, which requires external articulation, but as an unconscious in possession of its own mode of articulation. It is the machinic character of the unconscious, on top of its intensive nature, that allows Deleuze and Guattari to write that in the unconscious, "it is not the lines of pressure that matter, but on the contrary the lines of escape (*lignes de fuite*)."³⁹⁰ This is to say that the unconscious is not only an intensive field consisting of areas of pressure, which can only be understood by way of its repression, but a machinic entity capable of following its own line of articulation, which is not conditioned by any social structure, but flees and escapes in a direction defined immanently by the legitimate use of its three syntheses. This discovery entails a major reworking of the process of analysis.

introduction of a machinic conception of semiotics that allows Deleuze to write about the depths in this manner (Thornton, 2017).

³⁸⁹ Deleuze had a robust critique of Saussurean linguistics before he began his collaborations with Guattari. However, while Deleuze uses of the work of Gustave Guillaume to challenge the notion of difference utilised by Saussure, he does this in order to give a genetic account of signification, while maintaining signification as the model for language. Deleuze's analysis of Lewis Carroll is telling: esoteric words help us to explore the realm of non-sense and challenge the ground of sense, but what makes them nonsensical is specifically their failure to signify anything. The breath-words and howl-words of Artaud challenge the grounds of sense in another way, namely by exposing the bodily dimension of sound.

³⁹⁰ AO 371

While psychoanalysis can only point toward the underlying lines of pressure in the unconscious by considering the processes of psychic repression, “schizoanalysis follows the lines of escape (*lignes de fuite*) and the machinic indices all the way to the desiring-machines.”³⁹¹ Before we move on to see how Deleuze and Guattari connect their analysis of these lines of flight to the project of revolutionary political change, it is important to recognise why they also claim that the activity of lines of flight renders the unconscious schizophrenic.

v) Multiplicity of Code and the Schizophrenic Unconscious

A number of questions still remain concerning Deleuze and Guattari’s new model of the unconscious. Specifically, how is it possible for an intensive field to contain its own conditions of articulation? The answer provided in *Anti-Oedipus* is that “every machine has a sort of code built into it, stored up inside it.”³⁹² Rather than following the direction of virtual Ideas, the intensive field of desiring-production explicates itself according the chains of code that are contained within desiring-machines. In order to explain this use of ‘coding’ it will be necessary to look again at how Deleuze and Guattari attempt to overturn Lacanian linguistic structuralism. In their resolutely ambivalent fashion, Deleuze and Guattari at once praise Lacan for his “discovery of this fertile domain of a code of the unconscious” while criticising his decision to treat this code as if it were a single language when it is “a multiplicity so complex that we can scarcely speak of *one* chain or even *one* code of desire.”³⁹³ To put it briefly, Deleuze and Guattari agree with Lacan that the explication of unconscious desire necessarily goes by way of a semiotics, but they refuse Lacan’s claim that this semiotics is signifying, or that it is structured like a language.³⁹⁴

³⁹¹ AO 372

³⁹² AO 41

³⁹³ AO 41

³⁹⁴ While it could be argued that the virtual Ideas in *Difference and Repetition* were a-signifying, the important innovation of *Anti-Oedipus* is the ability to analyse processes that are a-signifying and yet semiotic in nature.

For Lacan, reality is made up of the two realms of the 'Symbolic' and the 'Imaginary', which constitute the lived reality of social experience of the psychoanalytic subject. Reality, according to this reading, is made up of a structure of linguistic and social signifying relations and is related to conscious life. The 'Real', Lacan's third category, is that which cannot be captured by either the Symbolic or the Imaginary and which sits outside of it.³⁹⁵ The Real is the site of trauma, of *jouissance* and of unconscious desire. According to this account, the subject is only produced at the moment that it enters the Symbolic, however, as the laws governing the linguistic structure of the Symbolic pre-exist the subject, the subject is never able to fully constitute itself there, while real, unconscious desire always remains 'impossible' for the subject, who can only ever experience it as that which was necessarily repressed in order to enter the Symbolic. According to this psychoanalytic structuralism, the functioning of desire is analogous to the functioning of signification. While any one signifier gains its meaning not by its relation to an external signified, but by the way that it refers to other signifiers, in the same way, desire is not defined by that which it desires, but by the way it relates to other desires. Similarly, just as the Symbolic realm is constituted by a constant slippage of meaning from one signifier to the next, desire is constituted by a constant deferral. The subject thinks it desires an object, but upon attaining the object realises that this was just a stand-in for something else and thus goes on to desire another object. To designate the real object of desire, which is constantly lost, and always retreating from the subject, Lacan uses the term '*objet petit a*'. The impossibility of ever reaching this object, and of fulfilling desire, is constituted by the law of the father and the threat of castration. Thus, in Lacanian terminology, we can say that the subject of desire is a barred subject, the object of desire is the *objet petit a*, and the role of the law is played by the phallus. The barred subject is always in the process of reaching for a desired object and yet always failing to attain it, the *objet petit a* is the name for this desired object, which always retreats and is never attainable, and the

³⁹⁵ Lacan's theory of the three registers is not formally introduced during his seminars as a complete theory, but develops throughout his career. References to these three registers begin at least as early as his first seminar, *Freud's Papers on Technique (1954)*, and continue throughout the rest of his seminars. For more, see the accompanying sections in Evans (1996).

phallus is the abstract third term that signifies the constant failure of the desiring subject to attain the desired object.³⁹⁶ This structural account of unconscious desire operates by using linguistics to universalise the Oedipus complex. The account is Oedipal in the sense that it takes desire to be always unfulfilled, always lacking, and always castrated by the paternal injunction of law. However, as we have already seen, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the logic of the Oedipus is based on a kind of transcendental illusion by which the contemporary, capitalist forms of social repression are assumed to be the logical foundation of desire, rather than its effect. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is not necessarily lacking but is inherently productive, while the real of the unconscious is not impossible or inaccessible, but material and intensive.

While Deleuze and Guattari agree that the unconscious must involve a process of recording, by which unconscious memory is created, the semiotics of this system are not signifying and hence the logic of desire is not Oedipal. They write that the chains of the unconscious “are called ‘signifying chains’ because they are made up of signs, but these signs are not themselves signifying.”³⁹⁷ In a challenge to Lacan, and drawing on Guattari’s work in ‘Machine and Structure’ and on his interest in the semiotic theories of Louis Hjelmslev, Deleuze and Guattari are claiming here that the unconscious process of recording functions by use of a semiotics that is a-signifying. Such semiotic processes function without referring to anything outside of themselves and without the need to express any content. For example, both genetic code and computer code operate by the use of signs, but do not express any sense that exists outside of themselves.³⁹⁸ Perhaps the most important aspect of such semiotic systems for Deleuze and Guattari are their ability to refuse the binary, exclusive disjunctions offered by Saussurean signification, in favour of a form of inclusive disjunction. A brief analysis of the difference between exclusive

³⁹⁶ Lacan’s theory of desire does not remain constant throughout his work and the relationship between these three elements alters during his career. For his most nuanced description of the desiring relationship of the subject, see *The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious* (2006b).

³⁹⁷ AO 41

³⁹⁸ Watson, 2009, 47

and inclusive disjunctions will be useful here in order to show how Deleuze and Guattari will claim that the coding of desiring-machines functions.

Well before the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, at the time of writing *Logic of Sense*, Deleuze makes a distinction between those forms of judgement that are based on binary and exclusive disjunctions, in which two different options are set up against each other and where one must be selected in favour of the other, and the form of the inclusive disjunction, in which two options differ from one another without being opposed, and which can thus both be affirmed together. An inclusive disjunction is defined as “an operation according to which two things or two determinations are affirmed *through* their difference, that is to say, that they are objects of simultaneous affirmation only insofar as their difference is itself affirmed and is itself affirmative.”³⁹⁹ In this case, “we are no longer faced with an identity of contraries, which would still be inseparable as such from a movement of the negative and of exclusion.”⁴⁰⁰ However, while Deleuze makes this distinction in *Logic of Sense*, he also claims there that this “positive difference” of inclusive disjunctions “belongs to topology and to the surface.”⁴⁰¹ This is because, given the understanding of signification utilised by Deleuze at this point, the organisation of the voice bears only exclusive disjunctions of opposition, while the primary depths lack the necessary organisation all together. At the point of writing *Anti-Oedipus*, on the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari speak of a form of semiotic encoding produced by the second synthesis of desiring-machines. Here, the constant disjunction and reconnection of desiring-machines to the BwO creates a web of code that is neither signifying nor exclusive.⁴⁰² The upshot of this is that when it comes to desiring-machines “the breaks in the process are productive, and are reassemblies in and of themselves”, which means that “[d]isjunctions, by the very fact that they are disjunctions, are inclusive.”⁴⁰³ Given the form of

³⁹⁹ LS 197

⁴⁰⁰ LS 197

⁴⁰¹ LS 197

⁴⁰² The first thing that Deleuze and Guattari ever co-published was a paper titled ‘The Disjunctive Synthesis’ which reworks Deleuze’s earlier reading of disjunction from *Logic of Sense* and points towards their use of disjunction in the immanent critique of desire in *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1971, 54-62).

⁴⁰³ AO 45

positive difference used here, we can say that the semiotic encodings that direct the operation of desiring-machines rely on an immanent conception of disjunction, and thus determine the operation of desiring-machines without being external to them.

Once again, it is interesting to note here how Deleuze and Guattari's conceptual innovations are turned against the Oedipus complex. While Deleuze and Guattari claim that the recording function of the unconscious is carried out immanently by a series of inclusive disjunctions, they also claim that an illegitimate reading of the disjunctive synthesis, which considers it from a transcendent point of view, is at the core of the oedipal understanding of desire. They claim that the disjunctive synthesis "is capable of two uses, the one immanent, the other transcendent" and ask "why does psychoanalysis reinforce the transcendent use that introduces exclusions and restrictions everywhere in the disjunctive network, and that makes the unconscious swing over into Oedipus?"⁴⁰⁴ Their point here is that, under a certain reading favoured by Lacanians, there are two options open to the child: either accept the pre-given laws of the Symbolic structure and constitute yourself as a barred subject within a community of speakers where you will remain castrated, or foreclose the Symbolic, fail to develop a subject position at all and become psychotic. In this case, the child must either pass through oedipalization and become a neurotic, or fail to pass through oedipalization and become a psychotic. Deleuze and Guattari's critique against this reading is subtle, they do not simply claim that it is better to refuse oedipalization and become psychotic, but instead that we can refuse the binary decision, or exclusive disjunction, that the whole of the Oedipus presents us with. They claim that "the exclusive relation introduced by Oedipus comes into play not only between the various disjunctions conceived as differentiations, *but between the whole of the differentiations that it imposes and an undifferentiated (unindifferencie) that it presupposes.*"⁴⁰⁵ The result of this analysis is that the binary options of the oedipalized neurotic and the foreclosed psychotic result from a transcendent misapprehension of the recording process of the

⁴⁰⁴ AO 86-87

⁴⁰⁵ AO 87

unconscious in which “there is Oedipus on either side.”⁴⁰⁶ The schizophrenic mode that Deleuze and Guattari champion in *Anti-Oedipus* is not based on the model of the schizophrenic patient who is foreclosed to the Symbolic and has thus become catatonic. Instead, what Deleuze and Guattari seek out is the immanent mode of functioning of the unconscious, where all disjunctions are inclusive and where the question of Oedipus does not arise. This move is important because it gives a positive and productive role to schizophrenia. They claim that in the case of those catatonics given the diagnosis of schizophrenia, it is the case that their “loss of reality is not the effect of the schizophrenic process, but the effect of its forced oedipalization.”⁴⁰⁷ For Deleuze and Guattari, the binary choice offered by Oedipus relies on a misunderstanding of the semiotic nature of the unconscious. The choice need not be between a completely a-signifying and chaotic abyss and a signifying linguistic structure. Instead, it is possible to recognise that the unconscious is a semiotic system that is neither an undifferentiated chaos nor a fully differentiated structure, but an encoded machinic process that resists this binary. From a transcendent interpretation of unconscious recording it would follow that the intensive field of desiring-production required some kind of external direction, however the immanent interpretation of unconscious recording as a series of inclusive disjunctions requires no such thing. Here, the unconscious is not structured like a language, but is organised semiotically by a heterogeneous multiplicity of code that determines the processes of desiring-machines from within.

vi) The Schizophrenic Line of Flight

Given this analysis of the way in which the intensive field of desiring-production contains its own conditions of articulation, we are now closing in on Deleuze and Guattari’s first uses of the concept of the line of flight. In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of the “line of flight” to designate a “schizoid breakthrough”⁴⁰⁸ which is always “schizophrenic, machinic, and

⁴⁰⁶ AO 87

⁴⁰⁷ AO 134

⁴⁰⁸ AO 311

dispersed”⁴⁰⁹. They say that the line of flight is “extra-oedipal”⁴¹⁰, that lines of flight have “the capacity for causing the flows of desire to circulate”⁴¹¹, and that they resist the “familial position”⁴¹² of the Oedipus complex. In this sense, the concept of the line of flight holds an important position in the book. It is central to the anti-oedipal project of showing that the unconscious is not structural, in either a strictly linguistic or oedipal sense, and that unconscious desire is never lacking, but positive, creative, and productive. However, in order to give a technical definition of the line of flight, as it appears in this section of the book, it is important to show how it operates in relation to the coded, machinic and a-signifying nature of the unconscious.

As we have seen, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the unconscious does not represent anything. It is a factory made of desiring-machines and not a theatre for the dramatization of desire. It is constituted by “flows and partial objects” that form semiotic chains that are constantly being decoded and recoded.⁴¹³ Much like the genetic code, it is an open-ended series of coded chains that constantly rewrite themselves. As we have also seen, the processes by which this code is constantly rewritten is defined by the constant connection, disjunction, and conjunction of desiring-machines. However, the resulting encodings never remain static because the three syntheses just mentioned are of a special kind, namely they are “transverse connections, inclusive disjunctions, and polyvocal conjunctions.”⁴¹⁴ What this means is that rather than connections being formed only between part-signs of the same chain of code, the connections are transversal and so they cut across multiple chains of code. Connections are made when a partial-element escapes (*fuite*) one chain to connect with another. Then, because the disjunctions formed are inclusive, and not exclusive, the processes of connection and disjunction are never arrested, but continue fleeing (*fuite*) unceasingly, such that the chains “all intersect, following the endlessly ramified paths of the great disjunctive

⁴⁰⁹ AO 373

⁴¹⁰ AO 136

⁴¹¹ AO 381

⁴¹² AO 311

⁴¹³ AO 308

⁴¹⁴ AO 315

synthesis.”⁴¹⁵ In this way, we can see that there are certain processes within the unconscious that resist the possibility of the codes becoming engrained and that ensure that desire continues to differ from itself. These processes are transformations or mutations that ward-off the possibility of stagnation. In his introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, Mark Seem calls them “the schizzes-flows—forces that escape coding, scramble the codes, and flee in all directions.”⁴¹⁶ When a part-sign makes a connection that is transversal, and when the disjunction from the previous chain is inclusive, “the chain no longer has any other function than that of deterritorializing the flows and causing them to pass through the signifying wall, thereby undoing the codes” and it is thereby called “a chain of escape (*fuite*), and no longer a code.”⁴¹⁷ With the chain of escape, “the signifying chain has become a chain of decoding and deterritorialization, which must be apprehended—and can only be apprehended—as the reverse of the codes and the territorialities.”⁴¹⁸ Subsequently, these decoding processes of the unconscious are named as “the lines of flight (*fuite*)”, and their activity is to “follow the decoded and deterritorialized flows” of the unconscious.⁴¹⁹ Lines of escape, or lines of flight, are simply those schizophrenic processes of the unconscious that create mutations in the code by making transversal links between codes, in an open and inclusive series of disjunctions. The first sense of the word *fuite*, when it appears in the phrase *ligne de fuite*, is therefore the fleeing or escaping of partial elements from one code to another.⁴²⁰

There is, however, a second sense in which the line of flight ‘escapes’ or ‘flees’, namely it designates that which resists capture by signification. While Deleuze and Guattari aimed to show that the unconscious is not structural, but machinic, it remains the case that the unconscious can only be *represented as*

⁴¹⁵ AO 42

⁴¹⁶ AO xxiii

⁴¹⁷ AO 360-361

⁴¹⁸ AO 360

⁴¹⁹ AO 401

⁴²⁰ Speaking of the genetic code of the wasp and the orchid, an example Deleuze and Guattari will use again in *A Thousand Plateaus*, they write that in the unconscious: “Each chain captures fragments of other chains from which it ‘extracts’ a surplus value, just as the orchid code ‘attracts’ the figure of the wasp: both phenomena demonstrate the surplus value of a code” (AO 42).

structural. This is to say that, due to the persistent illusion of individual being in representation, the unconscious appears as structural, or is given to us as such. This makes the practice of schizoanalysis more difficult: “What complicates everything is that there is indeed a necessity for desiring-production to be induced from representation, to be discovered through its lines of escape (*lignes de fuite*).” To put this another way, as an a-signifying machine the unconscious cannot be given directly within the signifying web of consciousness, however, by starting from the point of view of the structure, the analyst can work back to the machinic unconscious by following those lines that constantly fail to be adequately captured by the structure. The primary example of how the schizoanalyst must complete this task is presented in cases of schizophrenia. Rather than interpreting schizophrenia as a failure to enter the structure of the Symbolic, or as a lack of subjective consistency, schizophrenic processes must be understood as excessive and creative forces that actively resist the oedipal structure and escape from it at all costs. Deleuze and Guattari state that in order to reach the unconscious, “schizoanalysis follows the lines of escape (*lignes de fuite*) and the machinic indices all the way to the desiring-machines.”⁴²¹

When we see that, despite its illusions, the structural interpretation of the unconscious can still be a useful tool for discovering the machinic unconscious, it becomes clear why Deleuze and Guattari hold such an ambivalent relationship with Lacan. By breaking with Freud, by showing that the Oedipus complex is imaginary, and by setting up a structural interpretation of the unconscious, Lacan had developed a rigorous method for locating all of the ways in which the unconscious resists the structure of oedipal desire that is imposed on it. Speaking of Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari write that “[t]o trace back from images to the structure would have little significance and would not rescue us from representation, if the structure did not have a reverse side that is like the real production of desire.”⁴²² While the structure is a mere representation of the unconscious, this “reverse side” is made up of “pure positive multiplicities where everything is possible, without exclusiveness or

⁴²¹ AO 372

⁴²² AO 339

negation, syntheses operating without a plan, where the connections are transverse, the disjunctions included, the conjunctions polyvocal.”⁴²³ The signs that compose the signifying structure may follow the rules of signification, but the “signs of desire” on the side of the machine have “no other statutory condition than that of being dispersed elements of desiring-machines that are themselves dispersed.”⁴²⁴ Given this practical restriction on schizoanalysis, which necessitates an engagement with the structural representation of the unconscious, the importance of the lines of flight are doubled. Not only do they have a functional role in the unconscious, namely to constantly ward off the possibility of the codes becoming engrained by creating constant transformations and mutations of the code, but they also have a practical significance for the schizoanalyst. The semiotic encodings of desiring-machines can only be partially captured by the signifying structure of Oedipus, of which it is the reverse side.⁴²⁵ What escapes this capture are those processes of decoding that cannot be integrated into the socio-linguistic structure. These are the lines of escape, or the lines of flight, that the schizoanalyst must follow.

In order to clarify how the line of flight functions in this second sense it will be useful to briefly explore the way in which Deleuze and Guattari draw on Deleuze’s earlier reading of Riemann’s concept of the multiplicity to describe the relationship between the structural representation of the unconscious, which Lacan’s analysis made possible, and the machinic unconscious that is its reverse side. This will lead us back to the critique of linear perspective and the question of intensive depth that Deleuze discussed in *Difference and Repetition*. To put it briefly, Deleuze and Guattari will equate the structured representation of the unconscious with the discrete multiplicity of Riemannian geometry and with the structured space of linear perspective. Here, depth is

⁴²³ AO 339

⁴²⁴ AO 339

⁴²⁵ When referring to the machinic unconscious as the ‘reverse side’ of the structure, Deleuze and Guattari include a footnote on Leclair’s interpretation of Lacan (AO 340). However, it is also likely that the ‘reverse side’ (l’envers) is a reference to Lacan himself, whose seminar of 1969-1970 was titled ‘L’envers de la Psychanalyse’ or ‘The Reverse Side of Psychoanalysis’. Following this chain of reference once more, Lacan seemingly alights on this title for his seminar as an allusion to Balzac’s final novel *L’Envers de l’histoire contemporaine*, published in English as *The Wrong Side of Paris*, (2003).

produced in representation by means of discrete elements, in this case linguistic signifiers, that relate to one another on a flattened plane. The machinic unconscious, on the other hand, will be analyzed using the Riemannian understanding of the continuous multiplicity in which the endless transversal connections of partial-signs create an unconscious of intensive depth. While Deleuze and Guattari do not mention Riemann by name in *Anti-Oedipus*, they are clearly drawing on his work when they describe the process by which the unconscious envelops “distances within intensive quantities” such that “it does not divide without changing its nature or form.”⁴²⁶ They also draw on the language of differential calculus to name the “flows and partial objects” of the machinic unconscious as “infinitesimal lines of escape (*lignes de fuite*).”⁴²⁷ It is also claimed repeatedly that desiring-production, understood as the basic material of the unconscious, is a continuous multiplicity: “It is only the category of multiplicity, used as a substantive and going beyond both the One and the many, beyond the predicative relation of the One and the many, that can account for desiring-production: desiring-production is pure multiplicity, that is to say, an affirmation that is irreducible to any sort of unity.”⁴²⁸ By describing the difference between the structural representation of the unconscious and the machinic unconscious itself in these terms, Deleuze and Guattari are also able to explain how the two relate to each other. As we saw in the first chapter of this thesis, an n-dimensional curved space can be represented within a flat space of n+1 dimensions. For example, it is possible to represent a two-dimensional space of regular positive curvature as the surface of a three-dimensional sphere. However, in order for this representation to be given, a regular measurement is required, taken outside of the space in question, by which to measure the relative distances within the curved space. In contrast to this method, which relies on the ability to transcend the multiplicity in question in order to measure and order it, by the use of differential calculus it is also possible to give an immanent account of spaces of fixed or variable curvature without embedding them in a higher-dimensional space. Using this terminology, we can say that Deleuze and

⁴²⁶ AO 95-96

⁴²⁷ AO 308

⁴²⁸ AO 45

Guattari take the Lacanian structuralist account of the unconscious as a *representation* of the unconscious, which functions by taking the Oedipal relation between the mother and the child as the transcendent measuring rod, against which to judge all other relations. The problem with this method is that it relies on an external measure that can never be immanently justified, and that by the use of this measure the infinite variation of the multiplicity in question is reduced to a single, ordered expression. What Deleuze and Guattari attempt to do in *Anti-Oedipus* is to start with the representation of the unconscious that is handed down to them, but then to carry out a kind of differential calculus of the unconscious in order to move past this representation towards an immanent account of the unconscious.

Interestingly, in a small number of comments, Deleuze and Guattari return to the example of linear perspective, which Deleuze discussed in *Difference and Repetition* as one example of the way in which a representation of space can fail to capture the intensity of the dimension of depth. In the previous analysis, we saw how Deleuze showed that linear perspective creates an organized and regular space of perception at the cost of burying the intensive nature of space under the representation of extensity. This was most evident in the fact that linear perspective gives priority to the two dimensions of height and breadth, which are said to generate the dimension of depth, rather than the other way around. This critique of linear perspective, as it is given in *Difference and Repetition*, acts as a model for the analysis of psychoanalytic structuralism in *Anti-Oedipus*. For example, talking of the way in which Lacan's work points towards the intensive and machinic unconscious as the 'reverse side' that is hidden under the face of the structure, Deleuze and Guattari write: "It is this entire reverse side of the structure that Lacan discovers, with the 'a' as machine."⁴²⁹ However, in an interview given in 1973 in which Deleuze and Guattari defend some of their concepts from *Anti-Oedipus*, Guattari offers more insight into just how the lost object of desire, or the *objet petit 'a'*, points to the real machinic unconscious: "I'm not at all sure that the concept of the "a" object in Lacan is anything but a vanishing point, an escape, precisely, from

⁴²⁹ AO 339. The little 'a' here refers to the French word 'autre' and so is often translated as 'o' for 'other'. I have retained the 'a' in order to conform with the quote from Chaosophy below.

the despotic character of signifying chains.”⁴³⁰ The vanishing point in a painting of linear perspective is the point at which depth is represented by making it disappear at an infinite distance, beyond the picture plane. According to this analysis while linear perspective gives only the illusion of depth, the vanishing point, where parallel lines escape the plane to meet at infinity, offers the viewer a point at which to escape from this frame. What Deleuze and Guattari seem to be saying here is that instead of seeing the object of desire as a kind of cut, a gap, or a vanishing point (*point de fuite*), in the structural organization of desire, we must recognize that this structural organization is only a representation, and that by treating desire as an intensive excess rather than a lack in extensity, it is possible to follow the line drawn by this desire (*ligne de fuite*) to reach the real unconscious. This way of speaking about psychoanalytic structuralism in *Anti-Oedipus* is of particular interest to us here because of the way it combines the insights from both Deleuze and Guattari’s work prior to their collaborations. According to the interpretation of structuralism given by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, both the vanishing point in linear perspective and the *objet petit ‘a’* in Lacanian psychoanalysis can be read as second order differences, much like the ‘empty square’ or ‘object = x’ required in any structure to allow for the circulation of elements between series. However, after Guattari’s reworking of Deleuzian structuralism in his essay ‘Machine and Structure’, the pair can recognize that this element should not be considered as part of the structure at all, but as a machinic element that exists outside of the structure and is not contained by its rules. In ‘Machine and Structure’ Guattari had already named the lost object of desire the “object machine petit ‘a’”⁴³¹. Later, in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari can develop this idea further to show that, rather than being a mere vanishing point (*point de fuite*) in the extended structure of desire, the unconscious is a machine that operates by drawing lines of flight (*lignes de fuite*) that create the extended structure as a secondary effect. The ‘beyond’ indicated by the vanishing point of structural psychoanalysis is not an

⁴³⁰ CY 69. The ‘vanishing point’ referred to here is written in French as ‘*point de fuite*’.

⁴³¹ PT 323-324

undifferentiated abyss, but a heterogeneous interconnection of part-signs in intensive relations: not an Oedipal theatre, but a productive machine.⁴³²

At the beginning of this chapter the line of flight was given a provisional role as the concept used by Deleuze and Guattari to define the way that desire operates when it is not inhibited, captured, or turned against itself by the structuring forces of social reality. Given the subsequent analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's critique of the Oedipus complex, their immanent account of the three syntheses of unconscious, and their positive, machinic, material and intensive account of the unconscious of desiring-production, it is now possible to add some nuance to this definition. Lines of flight are drawn in the unconscious when the code embedded in desiring-machines undoes itself by extracting elements from one code and making transversal connections between heterogeneous chains of code. These lines are endlessly ramified by the inclusive disjunctions of the second synthesis to create ever new forms of desiring activity. This procedure is central to the schizophrenic process of desire, which constitutes the unconscious as a continuous, intensive and a-signifying multiplicity. From the point of view of representation, these lines of flight appear only as processes that escape the capture of signification. Rather than following the Lacanian psychoanalytic tendency of treating these escapes as empty place-holders for the structural invariant of lack, Deleuze and Guattari advocate a new form of schizoanalysis where these lines of flight are treated as positive and creative and are followed in order to reach the real nature of the machinic unconscious.⁴³³

⁴³² Returning to the question of linear perspective, Deleuze and Guattari elaborate this point through an analysis of the later works of J.M.W. Turner, where the structured space of linear perspective gives way to a space of pure colour, a "transverse organization of the canvas is born, with lines of escape (*lignes de fuite*) or breakthrough" (AO 403). They call this move a "decoding of the flows of painting" via a use of "schizoid lines of escape (*lignes de fuite*)" which they contrast with "a properly pictorial axiomatic that chokes off the escapes (*fuites*), closes the whole constellation to the transversal relations between lines and colors, and reduces it to archaic or new territorialities (perspective, for example)" (AO 403).

⁴³³ Lacanian theory does not simply define desire as a lack in the Symbolic, but also as an excess in the Real. However, when Deleuze and Guattari were publishing *Anti-Oedipus* in 1972, Lacan's work gave precedence to the former articulation. For more on the opposing methodologies of Lacan and Deleuze, see Schuster (2016, 98-100).

Chapter 4 – Anti-Oedipus 2: *Social Machines*

Contents:

- i) Introduction
- ii) Molecular processes and molar histories
- iii) Anti-production and the ironic history of capitalism
- iv) The revolutionary line of flight

i) Introduction

Following the discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's reformulation of desire, in this chapter I will explore the theory of history and of political change put forward in *Anti-Oedipus*. We have now seen how Deleuze and Guattari rethink the concept of the unconscious to highlight the role played by schizophrenic processes and by lines of flight, but what we have yet to cover is the way that such a theory opens onto broader political and historical questions concerning the production of reality. To complete our analysis of the role played by the concept of the line of flight in *Anti-Oedipus*, here I will show how Deleuze and Guattari use insights from Nietzsche, Freud, Marx, and others, to offer a new account of the world-historical position of capitalism. This analysis will introduce us to the distinction between the molecular and the molar registers of political activity, and to the different historical stages of Deleuze and Guattari's account of political economy. Finally, by bringing together Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the unconscious with their theory of political change, I will explain why the pair claim that it is only via the revolutionary practice in which the schizoanalyst "follows lines of escape (*lignes de fuite*)" that the social structure of capitalist relations will be overcome.⁴³⁴ This chapter will conclude with a review of the various ways in which Deleuze and Guattari utilise the concept of the line of flight in *Anti-Oedipus*. Here I will pick out four distinct uses of concept and will explain how each of these uses relates to the others. Before reaching this point, however, it will be necessary to get a handle on the mode of political analysis that Deleuze and Guattari are engaging in.

ii) Molecular processes and molar histories

Far from being a one-dimensional polemic against structural psychoanalysis, *Anti-Oedipus* is a kind of political manifesto that incorporates an analysis of the history of political power. In this respect, Deleuze and Guattari are as indebted to Nietzsche as they are to either Freud or Marx.⁴³⁵ By drawing on

⁴³⁴ AO 372

⁴³⁵ For an account of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of social machines that does justice to the influence of Nietzsche, see Widder (2012, 113-122).

Nietzsche's analysis of debt and guilt in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, and the continuation of these themes in *The Antichrist*, Deleuze and Guattari attempt to use Freudian and Marxist theory to bring about what Nietzsche had called a transvaluation or "revaluation of all values".⁴³⁶ In order to give an account of the concept of the line of flight in its full theoretical context, in this section I will explore the place of schizoanalytic concepts within Deleuze and Guattari's political thought. Schizoanalysis is not intended to simply replace psychoanalysis as a method of cure, but is designed as a mode of historical-materialist criticism, capable of producing revolutionary modes of subjectivity. Deleuze and Guattari argue in *Anti-Oedipus* that Marxism must be reworked in order to account for the problem of subjectivity, and that this can be done by analysing the history of political-economy in terms of desire. Contra Marx, and drawing on insights from Reich, Spinoza, and Nietzsche, Deleuze and Guattari claim that it is not ideology that tricks people into working against their own self-interest, but that people become enslaved when their desire is captured by an organisation of force that they cannot resist.⁴³⁷ Deleuze and Guattari's attempts to combine a theory of desire and a theory of political economy can be seen clearly in their use of the previously discussed concepts of desiring-production and desiring-machines, which each attempt to combine the category of labour-power, first analysed by Adam Smith and David Ricardo and later utilised so effectively by Marx, and the category of libido, first analysed by Freud.

However, before moving on to explore the historical account given in *Anti-Oedipus* of the development of different modes of desiring-production, it is important to show how Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of history here. First, the form of historical materialism put forward by Deleuze and Guattari is a subtle one that leads them to claim that the separate discoveries of the category of labour-power and the category of desire were made possible by a specific set of historical conditions. This historical analysis of the discovery of

⁴³⁶ Nietzsche, 2005, 11. It is not by chance that the title of *Anti-Oedipus* reflects Nietzsche's *Antichrist*.

⁴³⁷ For an overview of Deleuze and Guattari's Freud-Marxism, and the place of Nietzsche, Spinoza and others within it, see Holland (1999, 16-19, 106).

labour-power and of desire will serve to cement Deleuze and Guattari's historical critique of the Oedipus complex. Simply put, Deleuze and Guattari claim that it is only with the rise of capitalism, and the separation of the public life of the factory and the private life of the family, that the processes of social reproduction and human reproduction become distinct. Here, "the elements of production and antiproduction are not reproduced in the same way as humans themselves, but find in them a simple material that the form of economic reproduction preorganizes in a mode that is entirely distinct from the form this material has as human reproduction."⁴³⁸ Only once the two domains of work and family have been divided, and thus the two processes of social reproduction and human reproduction have become distinct, is it possible for Smith and Ricardo to set up a science of the former, and for Freud to set up a science of the latter. What makes Deleuze and Guattari's concept of history so interesting here is their claim that while the concepts of labour-power and libido only arise historically, our ability to think this moment in terms of its place in universal or world history also relies on the prior existence of a particular form of libidinal economy. Here Deleuze and Guattari follow Marx directly, when he writes: "World history has not always existed; history as world history [is] a result."⁴³⁹ In order to understand how Deleuze and Guattari can simultaneously hold what seem like two contrary positions, namely that the categories of labour-power and libido only arise historically and that history only arises due to a particular combination of libido and labour-power, it will be necessary to introduce the distinction that Deleuze and Guattari make between the two regimes of the molar and the molecular. This distinction will allow us to see how Deleuze and Guattari's account of the unconscious interacts with their political claims and it will allow us to see where the concept of history fits within them.

The distinction that Deleuze and Guattari make between the two regimes of the molar and the molecular explains why, from within the perspective of capitalism, social reproduction and desiring-production appear to us as separate, and why the Marxist category of labour-power seems distinct from

⁴³⁸ AO 286

⁴³⁹ Marx, 1973, 110

the Freudian category of libido. In effect, what Deleuze and Guattari argue is that while “there is never any difference in nature between the desiring-machines and the technical social machines” there is “a certain distinction between them, but it is merely a distinction of *regime*, depending on their relationships of size.”⁴⁴⁰ To distinguish between the two regimes of desiring-production and social production Deleuze and Guattari borrow the concepts of the *molecular* and the *molar* from the physical sciences. The authors call these “the two directions in *physics* —the molar direction that goes toward the large numbers and the mass phenomena, and the molecular direction that on the contrary penetrates into singularities, their interactions and connections at a distance or between different orders.”⁴⁴¹ While a physical object may be constituted at one level by a collection of *molecular* elements that obey particular physical laws (such as attraction and repulsion), certain qualities, such as temperature and pressure are only defined by the interaction of a large number of molecules and so can only be attributed to *molar* formations. To take a mundane example, while the table in front of me appears to be solid, dark in colour, and warm to the touch, at the molecular level the table is mostly made up of empty space, and the molecules that constitute the table have neither a colour nor a temperature. Rigidity, colour, and temperature are nothing other than effects produced by statistical aggregates of a large number of molecules that possess neither rigidity, colour, nor temperature. As there is only one table, there is no material distinction between the molecular and the molar constitutions of the table, and yet there are different regimes of rules governing these two aspects. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari want to claim, while desiring-production is the “production of production” and is therefore constitutive of all matter, this unconscious formulation gives rise to a social reality that follows a different set of rules.⁴⁴² Just as we must look past the molar formations of physical bodies to discover the molecular processes that produce them, Deleuze and Guattari argue that we must look past social formations of desire to the unconscious processes that produce these effects. For Deleuze and Guattari, “desiring-machines are precisely that: the

⁴⁴⁰ AO 33

⁴⁴¹ AO 308

⁴⁴² AO 4-6

microphysics of the unconscious, the elements of the microunconscious.”⁴⁴³ One of the factors that differentiates Deleuze and Guattari’s use of this terminology from its application in contemporary physics, and which also separates them from the traditional empiricist logics of corporeal substance utilised by figures such as Locke and Berkeley, is their relative use of these terms. For Deleuze and Guattari, the molar and the molecular are not absolutely distinct, but simply offer two different angles from which any phenomenon can be analysed. Thus, while it might seem that the personal realm of desire forms the molecular ground for the molar aggregate of the State, it is also the case that the individual desiring subject is itself a molar aggregate. When examining any particular desiring phenomenon two routes of analysis are available; you can either analyse the molecular forces that produce the phenomenon, or you can analyse the statistical effects produced at the level of molar aggregates.⁴⁴⁴

For Deleuze and Guattari, the distinction between the molar and the molecular regimes of organisation explains the genesis of history as an emergent quality of molar formations of desire. According to 20th century developments in the physical sciences, the unidirectional flow of time is explained by the entropic tendency of heat to dissipate. However, this phenomenon is based on a statistical tendency of the interaction of a large number of molecules and relies on a theory of probability rather than a relation of strict causation. It follows from this that the ordering of time is unidirectional only according to a molar regime of organisation, while at the level of the molecular regime this is not the case.⁴⁴⁵ Taking once again our prior example of the table, the physical laws that govern the molecules that produce the table are time-symmetrical, while the laws of thermodynamics that govern the emergent qualities of the table, such as its temperature, are time-asymmetrical. In *Anti-Oedipus*, the authors attempt to show that the social forms of political economy analysed by Marx,

⁴⁴³ AO 200

⁴⁴⁴ The relative nature of the molar and molecular registers is transformed in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where any assemblage is said to open itself onto both a plane of organisation that stratifies it and a plane of consistency that destratifies it (ATP 77-81).

⁴⁴⁵ For a simple overview of this interpretation of molecular physics see Rovelli (2014, 60). For a more in-depth look at the role of statistical probabilities in determining the directionality of time, see Halliwell, Pérez-Mercader, & Zurek, (1994, 108-115).

such as feudalism and capitalism, are the molar, statistical effects of large aggregates of desire and that under this perspective they are ordered by a “universal history”.⁴⁴⁶ However, they also aim to show that the unconscious processes that produce these statistical aggregates are not ordered historically.⁴⁴⁷ To put this another way, for Deleuze and Guattari, the distinct forms of political economy analysed by Marx are a series of group fantasies and their historical progression is only an effect of the way they are fantasised.

iii) Anti-production and the ironic history of capitalism

The molecular functioning of desire, governed as it is by the three syntheses of the unconscious discussed in the previous chapter, constitutes a pre-individual realm in which part-signs circulate in an open process of coding and decoding, but the effects that these processes create when taken as a large group form a series of molar aggregates, with a fixed historical order. Somewhat counterintuitively, this does not mean that historical analyses of political change can be set to one side, but instead it requires a new technique by which schizoanalysis can reconstruct the way in which history has been fantasised. This is because the molar effects of desire act back on desiring production and capture it in organisations that work against the very interest of desire. While Deleuze and Guattari describe the relation between the molecular and the molar organisations of desire as a broad “parallelism between social production and desiring-production”, they also say that “this parallelism was in no way meant as an exhaustive description of the relationship between the two systems of production” because “there is a strong tendency on the part of the forces of antiproduction to operate retroactively on (*se rabattre sur*) productive forms and appropriate them.”⁴⁴⁸ Large social formations such as feudalism and capitalism are thus treated not as modes of production in their own right. Instead they are understood as representational or phantasmatic effects, produced by the productive capacity of desiring-

⁴⁴⁶ AO 153-154.

⁴⁴⁷ Deleuze and Guattari give a more schematic account of this distinction in *A Thousand Plateaus* when they clearly distinguish the category of ‘becoming’ from that of ‘history’.

⁴⁴⁸ AO 33

production, which then act back on these productive forces to capture and contain them under a certain image.⁴⁴⁹ The historical narrative that Deleuze and Guattari offer in *Anti-Oedipus* of the development of capitalism, is thus an ironic account of the way that production has been fantasised through the categories of “Savages, Barbarians, [and] Civilised Men”.⁴⁵⁰

There are two things to note here concerning the relation between social machines and desiring-machines. First, the representation of production in the molar aggregates is not a good guide to the real functioning of desiring-machines. This is mostly because “every time that production, rather than being apprehended in its originality, in its reality, becomes reduced (*rabattue*) in this manner to a representational space, it can no longer have value except by its own absence, and it appears as a lack within this space.”⁴⁵¹ This is the reason why desire, which is manifestly productive according to an immanent mode of analysis, appears as a lack in social formations. Structural forms of analysis constantly fail to recognize the productive capacity of desire, always casting it back into the net of Oedipus, because when “a structural unity is imposed on the desiring-machines” it “joins them together in a molar aggregate” in which “the partial objects are referred to a totality that can appear only as that which the partial objects lack, and as that which is lacking unto itself while being lacking in them.”⁴⁵² Second, while a structural analysis of the molar formations of social machines may seem to follow a necessary and linear path, the apparently necessary relations between each of the molar formations are illusory. In direct contrast to those structuralist Marxists, such as Althusser, who attempt to give a rigorous scientific account of historical materialist history, Deleuze and Guattari argue that “universal history is the

⁴⁴⁹ Perhaps the best example of this is the ‘Urstaat’. The Urstaat is a name for the original formation of the State, but rather than being taken as naming a particular historical moment, the concept captures the mythical status of the origin and the ways in which any particular State relies on a fantasised origin. The concept of the Urstaat plays on Freud’s concept of the *Urszene*, normally translated as the ‘primal scene’. This is the subject’s fantasy of his/her own conception, an act that by definition must have occurred before the individual was born, but remains in the unconscious memory as a fantasy that regulates desire in the subject.

⁴⁵⁰ AO 153

⁴⁵¹ AO 337

⁴⁵² AO 337

history of contingencies, and not the history of necessity.”⁴⁵³ Through an analysis of the molecular forces that produce molar formations, Deleuze and Guattari show that in order for capitalism to have been produced “great accidents were necessary, and amazing encounters that could have happened elsewhere, or before, or might never have happened”.⁴⁵⁴ Deleuze and Guattari are cautious in *Anti-Oedipus* to distance themselves from the traditional Marxist practice of analysing the material conditions of historical progression, and stress that in order to understand the history of capitalism it is important to recognize the ways in which the apparent historical development of forms of production is an effect of group fantasy that must be treated as such. They clarify this point succinctly when they write: “In a word, universal history is not only retrospective, it is also contingent, singular, ironic, and critical.”⁴⁵⁵

The three stages of historical progression that Deleuze and Guattari name as part of their ironic analysis include primitive societies of savages, despotic societies of barbarians, and capitalist societies of civilised men. Each of these three stages is not primarily defined by its mode of production, but by the mode of anti-production used to organise the socius. In his introduction to *Anti-Oedipus*, Eugene Holland defines anti-production as “the conversion of a portion of the superabundant forces of production into a counter-force that absorbs, distributes, or consumes already-produced products.”⁴⁵⁶ While desiring-production is a creative and productive force, it appears differently under each of these molar formations because of the different ways in which it is captured by a structure that represents it as a lack. Each molar formation of anti-production is understood “as the controlled expenditure of excess” and for Deleuze and Guattari it is therefore “co-terminous with the process of organizing social relations in systems of debt of various kinds.”⁴⁵⁷ In parallel with Deleuze and Guattari’s decision to treat the unconscious as a site of

⁴⁵³ AO 154. Like with Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari’s relationship with Althusser is double-sided. By taking a Spinozist reading of Marx over a Hegelian one, Deleuze and Guattari praise Althusser for opening the possibility of an analysis of historical materialism that does not rely the negative. However, Deleuze and Guattari break from Althusser over the possibility of producing a scientific reading of this process and its structural consistency.

⁴⁵⁴ AO 154. See also Lundy 2013.

⁴⁵⁵ AO 154

⁴⁵⁶ Holland 64

⁴⁵⁷ Holland 64

coding, rather than a site of signification, in *Anti-Oedipus* the three different social formations are considered by the different ways in which they encode society. According to Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, primitive societies organise the socius through a process of coding in which the material flows in society are differentiated and kept separate from one another. Here the "primitive territorial machine" is "already a social machine, a megamachine, that codes the flows of production, the flows of means of production, of producers and consumers."⁴⁵⁸ Without strict social hierarchies, the danger facing primitive societies is that certain individuals may take up positions of control by hoarding a surplus of goods. To resist this possibility, so-called primitive societies destroy any excess that is produced in rituals of sacrifice or of celebration and organise the remaining flows of goods in areas of life that are qualitatively distinct from one another. In order to ward-off the possibility of a social hierarchy forming, it is important that the different areas of social life are coded separately. In these societies, "[f]lows of women and children, flows of herds and of seed, sperm flows, flows of shit, menstrual flows: nothing must escape coding."⁴⁵⁹

Primitive societies do not transform into barbarian societies via any kind of necessary progression, in which the internal contradictions of their mode of production collapses. On the contrary, primitive societies are only transformed due to a contingent set of circumstances by which something arrives from the outside to disrupt their mode of anti-production. Specifically, primitive societies are colonised by despotic regimes that come over the horizon and capture them. Here, the whole organisation of production and anti-production is altered according to the desire of the despot. Rather than destroying their surplus products in ritual celebrations and offerings, when primitive societies are colonised by external powers the surplus is collected by the despot in the form of taxes. This requires a vast machinery of overcoding by which value is extracted from the previous codes and transferred to the despot. The process by which a despotic society captures a primitive society initiates the formation of a State. In this way, "[o]vercoding is the operation that constitutes the

⁴⁵⁸ AO 156

⁴⁵⁹ AO 156

essence of the State”, while the role of the State is nothing other than “to overcode all the existing flows, and to ensure that no intrinsic code, no underlying flow escapes the overcoding of the despotic machine.”⁴⁶⁰ The precise mode by which despotic regimes manage to overcode the previously coded flows of primitive societies is of great interest to Deleuze and Guattari, because these same methods will be utilised later by the capitalist mode of anti-production. Of primary importance here is the emergence of writing in the form of the written decree or law, which must be translated from one language to another. For, while “language itself does not presuppose conquest” it is the case that “the levelling operations (*les opérations de rabattement*) that constitute written language indeed presuppose two inscriptions that do not speak the same language: two languages (*langages*), one of masters, the other of slaves.”⁴⁶¹ The requirement for the colonised people to be able to decode the written decrees issued by the despot means that the act of translation cuts across all of the previous coded flows that were previously kept separate. Deleuze and Guattari write that the “imperial inscription countersects all the alliances and filiations” and in this way all the “coded flows of the primitive machine are now forced into a bottleneck, where the despotic machine overcodes them.”⁴⁶² According to this analysis, the whole operation of signification is recast as a kind of imperial capture, in which the centrality of a Master Signifier allows a fixed set of signifiers to dominate that which they signify. Speaking of the defining points of any system of signification, Deleuze and Guattari write that the “arbitrary nature of the thing designated, the subordination of the signified, the transcendence of the despotic signifier” all point to the fact that “writing belongs to imperial despotic representation.”⁴⁶³

The central example of how the despot overcodes the previously coded flows of primitive societies concerns the emergence of the incest-taboo, which will later form the basis of the Oedipus complex under capitalism.⁴⁶⁴ According to

⁴⁶⁰ AO 217-219

⁴⁶¹ AO 226

⁴⁶² AO 217

⁴⁶³ AO 260

⁴⁶⁴ Instead of relying on Freud's account of incest in *Totem and Taboo*, Deleuze and Guattari draw on Nietzsche's analysis of the transformation of debt into guilt in the second essay of *On*

Deleuze and Guattari's analysis, within primitive societies the incest-taboo does not function as a constraint or a limitation on desire, but only as a "a prescription to form or strengthen family alliances, to share or distribute wealth, to knit social ties, by insisting that the young find their spouses exogamously, outside of their own family group or clan."⁴⁶⁵ However, under the form of the State, the colonised peoples are considered as being infinitely indebted to the despot, who has a symbolic right to procreate with all women in the society, regardless of the pre-existing codes of lineage and affiliation. Taking on the symbolic position of the father, the despot must reissue the prescription of the incest-taboo as a law in which incest "which had appeared as a mere after-image of positive marriage-inducements under savagery, now becomes in a sense ubiquitous and inevitable, if only symbolically, with the new-alliance and direct-filiation relations of despotism."⁴⁶⁶ This act of overcoding on the part of the despot, inscribed in a written law, forms the basis of the Oedipus complex because it is the first moment where the productive capacity of desire is misrepresented as a lack within a generalized system of signification. As Deleuze and Guattari put it in *Anti-Oedipus*, it is only with the Oedipus complex that "desire gets *displaced* onto an erroneous signified belonging to the prohibitive system of representation rather than to desire itself."⁴⁶⁷ It follows from this that "[f]ar from being repressed by the incest prohibition, Oedipal desire is in fact produced by it."⁴⁶⁸ Through this historical analysis of the modes of capture used by despotic regimes, Deleuze and Guattari equate the State form with a process of overcoding and aim to show that both writing and the incest-taboo are inherently linked with despotism.

Before moving on to an analysis of capitalism, we must consider the way that *escape* functions in both primitive and despotic regimes of production and anti-production. As we saw previously, the main form of anti-production operative in primitive societies is the use of the rituals to encode each of the material

the Genealogy of Morality. See sections 21 and 22 of this essay, where Nietzsche comments on the relation between Christian morality and guilt (2006, 62-64).

⁴⁶⁵ Holland, 1999, 70

⁴⁶⁶ Holland, 1999, 75

⁴⁶⁷ AO 37

⁴⁶⁸ AO 37

flows that pass through society in order to keep them separate from one another. It is of primary importance here that “nothing must escape coding.”⁴⁶⁹ Despite the many differences between the primitive and the despotic processes of coding and overcoding, the possibility of escape is also a principal threat to the dissolution of despotic regimes. Put in material terms, the possibility that anyone might appropriate the full products of their labour, and thus build up a personal surplus, is as much a threat to the despot as it is to the primitive society. What makes things worse is the fact that the process of overcoding carried out by the State disrupts the previous system of coding and opens up new possibilities for desiring-production to evade capture by the social machinery. Guillaume Sibertine-Blanc, in his analysis of Deleuze and Guattari’s political philosophy, emphasizes this point: “*The archaic State does not overcode without also freeing a large quantity of decoded flows that escape from it.*”⁴⁷⁰ This puts the colonisation of barbarian societies in a constant state of unrest, in which the process of overcoding social practices always releases the possibility of a breakdown. It is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari write that, by definition, “[t]he despot is the paranoiac.”⁴⁷¹ This process is important for our analysis of the concept of the line of flight because, while Deleuze and Guattari use that term to designate one thing in their analysis of the unconscious, they also use the concept in their historical analysis of political economy. For example, social repression functions in part by “choking off the flows’ lines of escape (*lignes de fuite*).”⁴⁷² For both primitive and despotic regimes of power, which organise the socius via a process of coding, or overcoding, any routes by which the flows may become decoded, and may escape from the body of the socius, must be blocked off. Defined as they are by their respective practices for coding social flows, and for resisting the possibility of decoding and escape, we can now say that the lines of escape, or the lines of flight, act as the external limit of both primitive and despotic societies.

⁴⁶⁹ AO 156

⁴⁷⁰ Sibertine-Blanc, 2016, 44

⁴⁷¹ AO 210

⁴⁷² AO 396

For Deleuze and Guattari, the emergence of capitalism, like the emergence of despotism, relies on a series of contingent factors.⁴⁷³ Using a similar method here as with their analysis of both savagery and despotism, capitalism is seen first and foremost as a mode of representation, which captures the productive forces of desire within a particular image, rather than being productive itself. What sets capitalism apart from the previous modes of social organisation is the fact that rather than operating by a process of coding, or of overcoding, in which the decoding of flows presents an external limit to the socius, capitalism operates precisely by and through the process of *decoding*. Specifically, Deleuze and Guattari aim to show how a number of factors, including the increased circulation of money in the merchant class and the resulting disarticulation of feudal power, produce a situation in which the underlying codes of primitive societies and the overcoded practices of despotism are usurped by a vast and generalised process of decoding. Drawing directly from Marx's work in *Capital*, Deleuze and Guattari see the emergence of capitalism as involving the coming together of two distinct processes: "on one side, the deterritorialized worker who has become free and naked, having to sell his labor capacity; and on the other, decoded money that has become capital and is capable of buying it."⁴⁷⁴ While the twin processes of coding and overcoding resisted the possibility of an accumulation of power via strict social conventions that ensure the circulation of goods, the process of decoding carried out by capital achieves the same effect by the reverse means. The accumulation of capital is not forbidden, but the constant displacement of social codes resists the possibility of any one hierarchy becoming static and ensures that goods continue to circulate. The decoding carried out by capitalism is not a single process, but the convergence of a number of related processes, including "the deterritorialization of wealth through monetary abstraction; the decoding of the flows of production through merchant capital; the decoding of States through financial capital and public debts; the decoding of the means of production through the formation of industrial capital."⁴⁷⁵ This convergence leads Deleuze

⁴⁷³ In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari show why, despite adequate formal conditions, capitalism did not emerge during the Roman Empire (AO 243).

⁴⁷⁴ AO 245

⁴⁷⁵ AO 245

and Guattari to define capitalism primarily as “the generalized decoding of flows”, which is not restricted to a particular field, but becomes universal by constantly reaching outside of itself and decoding the processes it finds there.

While savagery and barbarism both rely on making *qualitative* distinctions between flows, capitalism is different because it relates the flows to one another and decodes them via a series of *quantitative* equivalences. In this sense, capitalism is the first form of social organisation that can properly be called an economy. As Holland puts it: “Savagery and despotism are organized symbolically, via codes and over-codes, while capitalism is organized economically, via axioms.”⁴⁷⁶ In opposition to the symbolic nature of both primitive and despotic methods of organisation which use qualitative distinctions to discover differences in kind between the various functions within society, the *axiomatization* carried out by capital conjoins these heterogeneous flows and extracts the excess that is produced there by quantifying them: “Quantified flows under capitalism get conjoined solely on the estimation that this or that conjunction will produce surplus-value; such estimation involves economic calculation rather than belief: symbolic meaning has nothing to do with it.”⁴⁷⁷

In order to continue functioning, capitalism must never fully erase the social formations that preceded it, but must incorporate them into its machinery. Generalised processes of decoding are thus kept in balance with massive projects of social recoding carried out by the primitive, and especially the despotic, tendencies that exist within capitalism. In the wake of every process of decoding, these latent forces of despotism are given the space to use the despotic machinery of the State, namely the written word and the Oedipus complex, to recode the socius. In this way, capitalist processes play both sides in a global tug-of-war of decoding and recoding. In the hands of capitalism, nation states work to “recode with all their might, with world-wide dictatorship, local dictators, and an all-powerful police, while decoding—or allowing the

⁴⁷⁶ Holland, 1999, 64

⁴⁷⁷ Holland 1999, 66

decoding of—the fluent quantities of their capital and their populations.”⁴⁷⁸ As a quantitative axiomatic, the “co-opting power of capitalism can be explained by the fact that its axiomatic is not more flexible, but wider and more englobing” so that here, “no one escapes participation in the activity of antiproduction that drives the entire productive system.”⁴⁷⁹ The quantitative nature of the axiomatic of capital means that the socius no longer experiences decoding as an external limit to be warded-off, but as something internal to capitalism to be constantly surpassed. Sibertine-Blanc explains that while non-capitalist formations “encountered decoded flows as an extrinsic, accidental, ‘real limit,’ capitalist formations made it their internal limit, a structural limit that they continuously destroy to rediscover on a new scale.”⁴⁸⁰

The decoding power of lines of flight plays a specific role within the anti-productive capacity of capitalist societies. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari see schizophrenia as having a different strategic and revolutionary potential under capitalist regimes. In both primitive and despotic societies, the decoding of flows was synonymous with the problem of over-production; the productive processes of society had to be coded in ritual, or overcoded by taxes in order to ward-off the possibility of a constant surplus. In the case of capitalism, because the extraction of surplus value from the productive work of the working-class through the commodity form leaves the workers unable to buy back the fruits of their labour in sufficient quantities, crises of over-production still occur and still form the external limit of capitalism.⁴⁸¹ However, here they are separated from the process of decoding, which has become the internal or *real* limit of capitalism. While the despot was defined as inherently paranoiac and seen as constantly warding-off the possibility of decoding that would lead to schizophrenia, the processes of capitalism are paranoid-schizoid. Switching incessantly between processes of decoding and recoding. Capitalism therefore relies on schizophrenia as much as it does on paranoia, while it carries out each of these two functions in turn.

⁴⁷⁸ AO 242

⁴⁷⁹ AO 257

⁴⁸⁰ Sibertin-Blanc, 2016, 46

⁴⁸¹ For Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of the problem of over-production in capitalism see AO 252 and Holland, 1999, 138.

iv) The revolutionary line of flight

In *Anti-Oedipus*, the concept of the line of flight is used in a clinical sense to designate a particular function of the unconscious, but it is also used in a political sense to designate the possibility of revolution. To understand this use of the concept we must analyse the place of schizophrenia within capitalism. Given the claim that social machines are defined as much by their processes of anti-production as by their productive capacities, Deleuze and Guattari write that “there is no social formation that does not foresee, or experience a foreboding of, the real form in which the limit threatens to arrive, and which it wards off with all the strength it can command.”⁴⁸² In the case of primitive and despotic regimes of power, this foreboding explains “the obstinacy with which the formations preceding capitalism encaste the merchant and the technician, preventing flows of money and flows of production from assuming an autonomy that would destroy their codes.”⁴⁸³ As we have seen, for capitalism, “[s]chizophrenia is the absolute limit”.⁴⁸⁴ This means that we should be able to see the capitalist processes of anti-production closing off the possibility of schizophrenia. This is why Deleuze and Guattari take such a strong political stance against the institutions of psychoanalysis, even while they hold on to some of its conceptual innovations. For Deleuze and Guattari, the institution of psychoanalysis, and its obsession with the Oedipus complex, is a key implement in capitalism’s toolbox of anti-production. Whenever desire threatens to escape the structuring forces of capital, and whenever the worker no longer desires his own subjugation – in short, whenever the desire of the individual is no longer aligned with the circulation of capital – the priests of psychoanalysis are on hand to re-oedipalize the subject. For Deleuze and Guattari, the schizophrenic process is revolutionary and the schizophrenic subject should be seen as “demonstrating for our benefit an eminently psychotic and revolutionary means of escape (*point de fuite*).”⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸² AO 192

⁴⁸³ AO 192

⁴⁸⁴ AO 192

⁴⁸⁵ AO 145

Schizophrenia is seen as a revolutionary force for Deleuze and Guattari because it draws lines of flight which point the way to an escape from capitalist regimes of power. Capitalism would rather have “a society of neurotics than one successful schizophrenic who has not been made autistic”, and in order to achieve this aim, psychoanalysis acts as a counter-revolutionary force that closes off these lines of flight and covers them over with the image of Oedipus.⁴⁸⁶ To clarify, Deleuze and Guattari claim that capitalism will only come to an end if people stop desiring their own subjugation and that this will only happen when people are no longer oedipalised. Because schizophrenia is a process that resists oedipalization, the institutions of psychiatry and psychoanalysis are used under capitalism to capture schizophrenics and to block their development.

Some caution is advised here. While Deleuze and Guattari pick out schizophrenia as the absolute limit of capitalism, they do not claim that to become schizophrenic is to become revolutionary. As we have seen, unlike both primitive and despotic societies, capitalism does not rely on a process of qualitative coding, but on a quantitative axiomatic of continuous decoding and recoding. This means that, in a certain sense, capitalism relies as much on a constant production of schizophrenia, on the side of the decoding of flows, as it does on the production of neurotics, on the side of recoding. While it is one of the cornerstones of Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis that the “oedipal alliance is capitalism’s molar unit”, it is also the case that schizophrenia plays the role of the molecular unit, constantly working to decode flows, to connect heterogeneous flows together, and thus to open up new arenas for the extraction of surplus value.⁴⁸⁷ It is for this reason that Deleuze and Guattari write that capitalism “produces schizos the same way it produces Prell shampoo or Ford cars, the only difference being that the schizos are not saleable.”⁴⁸⁸ Capitalism requires schizophrenia as one of its two poles, but it also requires that the decoded flows released in schizophrenia are constantly recaptured. The power of the capitalist order comes from the function of

⁴⁸⁶ AO 112

⁴⁸⁷ AOP 36

⁴⁸⁸ AO 266

“binding the schizophrenic charges and energies into a world axiomatic that always opposes the revolutionary potential of decoded flows with new interior limits.”⁴⁸⁹ According to this analysis, capitalism is constantly walking the fine line between the production of schizophrenia, and the huge deterritorializations of the social field that come with it, and the Oedipal production of neurotics via the regressive forces of the family, the State, and the psychoanalytic institution. This is why, despite constantly creating schizophrenics, “capitalist production is constantly arresting the schizophrenic process and transforming the subject of the process into a confined clinical entity, as though it saw in this process the image of its own death coming from within.”⁴⁹⁰ The revolutionary claim made by Deleuze and Guattari relies on the possibility that the decoded flows produced by the capitalist axiomatic may resist, or escape, the regressive forces of recoding that continually block the lines of flight and recapture them in the net of Oedipus. What makes this possibility difficult to see is the fact that the schizophrenic process is constantly confused with the clinical schizophrenic. Here Deleuze and Guattari bemoan the fact that we have “the same word, schizo, to designate both the process insofar as it goes beyond the limit, and the result of the process insofar as it runs up against the limit.”⁴⁹¹ Much of the confusion surrounding the apparent revolutionary force of schizophrenia is based on a misapprehension of this distinction. For Deleuze and Guattari, there is a revolutionary schizophrenic *process* of the unconscious, which is decoding and which has the potential to undo capitalist relations, and then there is the schizo as a clinical *entity*, who has been captured by the recoding side of the capitalist axiomatic.

In our earlier analysis of the concept of the line of flight, as it related to desiring-machines, we found that there were two different senses in which the concept was used. First, the concept of the line of flight was used from the perspective of the machine, where it designated those processes of transversal connection and inclusive disjunction in which partial elements escape from one chain of code to connect with another chain in an infinite series of open disjunctions.

⁴⁸⁹ AO 267

⁴⁹⁰ AO 266

⁴⁹¹ AO 147

Second, the concept of the line of flight was used from the perspective of the structure, where it pointed to the excess of desire that could never be fully captured by the structural articulation of desire. In this second sense, lines of flight acted as a kind of sign-post which the schizoanalyst could follow “all the way to the desiring-machines.”⁴⁹² Given the fact that desiring-machines and social machines are both articulations of the same reality but under different regimes, it is not surprising that we will also find two senses of the concept of the line of flight at play in the latter.⁴⁹³ In the case of our analysis of social machines, and of the history of capitalism, the first sense of the line of flight relates to the decoding of the flows that act as the external limit of primitive and despotic regimes and which capitalism internalises as the limit that it must always transgress. The second sense of the concept of the line of flight, on the other hand, relates to the schizophrenic process as the absolute limit of capitalism, which escapes the recoding of the Oedipus and is charged with revolutionary potential. An appreciation of this distinction leads to a number of important points for Deleuze and Guattari, especially concerning the distinction between the schizophrenic and the revolutionary. In *Anti-Oedipus* they write that the “schizo is not revolutionary, but the schizophrenic process—in terms of which the schizo is merely the interruption, or the continuation in the void—is the potential for revolution.”⁴⁹⁴ The role of the schizoanalyst is thus to follow the schizophrenic process without being blocked. There is subsequently “a whole world of difference between the schizo and the revolutionary: the difference between the one who escapes, and the one who knows how to make what he is escaping escape.”⁴⁹⁵ To put it simply, the imperative of *Anti-Oedipus* is not to follow the line of flight into madness, but to follow the line of flight without being captured and thus to refuse the capitalist axiomatic while avoiding the danger of becoming mad. When Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of the line of flight as a means for describing a way of escaping the

⁴⁹² AO 372

⁴⁹³ The parallels between Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of desiring-machines and social machines are remarkable: direct connections are made between the concept of the BwO and what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘the socius’; and the three syntheses of connection, disjunction, and conjunction relate to the three stages of savages, barbarians, and civilised men, with the illegitimate use of the three syntheses mapping on to the primitive, despotic, and capitalist modes of anti-production (Holland, 1999, 61).

⁴⁹⁴ AO 374

⁴⁹⁵ AO 374

social machinery of capitalism, they present two distinct options: “the paranoiac counterescape (*contre-fuite*) that motivates all the conformist, reactionary, and fascisizing investments, and the schizophrenic escape (*fuite*) convertible into a revolutionary investment.”⁴⁹⁶ While the first case does relate to desire’s ability to escape the axiomatic of capital, the latter “has the capacity for causing the flows of desire to circulate following their positive lines of escape (*lignes de fuite*), and for breaking them again following breaks of productive breaks.”⁴⁹⁷ The question of revolutionary potential is thus not only a question of how to produce lines of flight, but how to follow these lines of flight.

The practice of schizoanalysis becomes a necessary tool for revolutionary action in precisely this regard. While desire is constantly finding leaks or cracks through which it can escape the net of Oedipus, and by which it momentarily escapes the social machinery of capitalism, these escapes are not sustained. In order for the many schizophrenic escapes to produce “the world of transverse communications” that Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a “new earth where desire functions according to its molecular elements and flows” the various lines of flight must meet one another in such a way that they cannot be recaptured by the recoding aspects of the capitalist machinery.⁴⁹⁸ In order to actively work towards this outcome, the schizoanalyst must analyse the molecular functioning of desire, and distinguish the legitimate from the illegitimate uses of the syntheses of the unconscious. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari write that “it is not enough to construct a new socius as full body; one must also pass to the other side of this social full body, where the molecular formations of desire that must master the new molar aggregate operate and are inscribed.”⁴⁹⁹ The first way in which the revolutionary schizoanalyst must relate to lines of flight is therefore by working with the molecular flows of desire. The best way to do this is to work on the project of transforming subjugated-groups into subject-groups, as they were previously

⁴⁹⁶ AO 374

⁴⁹⁷ AO 381

⁴⁹⁸ AO 350

⁴⁹⁹ AO 412

defined by Guattari's work in Institutional Psychotherapy. In the final pages of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari return to this distinction writing that "[i]n the subjugated-groups, desire is still defined by an order of causes and aims", however "[s]ubject-groups on the other hand have as their sole cause a rupture with causality, a revolutionary line of escape (*ligne de fuite*)."⁵⁰⁰ Once these subject-groups have been created, and once they have produced their individual lines of flight, the revolutionary task consists in following each of these lines of flight, which cut across or transect social relations, to make them form connections with one another. Deleuze and Guattari's aim is therefore to construct a molecular revolution by connecting heterogeneous lines of flight together in a non-representational continuous multiplicity of desire. This revolution will not resemble a unified revolution of molar formations, but a multiplicity of schizophrenic lines of flight, all initially opened up by the decoding process of capitalism, but ultimately escaping both the recoding of the State and the recoding of Oedipus. Deleuze and Guattari claim that if you push the different processes of decoding so far that they cannot be recaptured, then "the movement of deterritorialization creates of necessity and by itself a new earth."⁵⁰¹ Only in this case will the flows of desire "cross the threshold of deterritorialization and produce the new land" in which "the person who escapes (*fuit*) causes other escapes (*faire fuir*), and marks out the land while deterritorializing himself."⁵⁰² The relationship of the revolutionary schizoanalyst to the concept of the line of flight is thus quite subtle. The aim of schizoanalysis

⁵⁰⁰ AO 412

⁵⁰¹ AO 353. Contemporary iterations of 'accelerationism' often refer to Deleuze and Guattari's work, and to their comment in *Anti-Oedipus* that "the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and a practice of a highly schizophrenic character" and their apparent command to "[n]ot to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to "accelerate the process"" (AO 260). Nick Land's reference to this passage is especially notable in this regard (2012, 449). A careful analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's work shows, however, that they never simply advocate an intensification of capitalist forces. On the contrary, they continually call for an intensification of only the decoding aspects of capital to the cost of its regressive practice of recoding. This practice does not involve a bolstering of market forces, for example, but an alternative use of the many mechanisms employed by capital. The example that Deleuze and Guattari take in *Anti-Oedipus* is telling: "Psychoanalysis is especially satisfying in this regard: its entire perverted practice of the cure consists in transforming familial neurosis into artificial neurosis (of transference), and in exalting the couch, a little island with its commander, the psychoanalyst, as an autonomous territoriality of the ultimate artifice. A little additional effort is enough to overturn everything, and to lead us finally toward other far-off places" (AO 353). The point here is not to simply push psychoanalysis so far that it breaks, but to select those aspects of the process capable of transforming psychoanalysis from within.

⁵⁰² AO 354

is not simply to produce lines of flight, as it is definitely not the aim to simply become schizophrenic, but to work on the molecular side of desire to form transverse connections between a number of lines of flight. Through the convergence of these lines of flight the schizoanalyst can construct an “active point of escape (*point de fuite*)” in which a number of desiring-machines, including “the revolutionary machine, the artistic machine, the scientific machine, and the (schizo) analytic machine” can become “parts and pieces of one another” in a multiplicity of desiring-production freed from the anti-productive forces of primitive codings, despotic overcodings, and the capitalist axiomatic of constant decoding and recoding.⁵⁰³

We are now in a position to define four distinct uses of the concept of the line of flight in *Anti-Oedipus*, and to explain how each of these uses correlates with the political project that Deleuze and Guattari articulate in the book. Of the four uses of the concept of the line of flight, the first two relate to an analysis of desiring-machines and the latter two relate to an analysis of social machines. The four senses of the line of flight are as follows: i) Those processes of desire witnessed by the psychoanalyst that refuse to be captured by Oedipus; ii) The lines traced by the legitimate uses of the syntheses of the unconscious, namely the transverse connections and inclusive disjunctions between heterogeneous chains of code that form the multiplicity of desiring-production; iii) The decoded social flows that threaten primitive and despotic regimes of power as an external limit and that are internalised by capitalism; iv) The absolute limit of capitalism that can be reached when the decoded flows released by capital cannot be recaptured and reterritorialized by it. Taking these four senses of the concept of the line of flight in turn, the schizoanalytic project can be described by the way that it relates to each of them: The aim of the schizoanalyst is to work with those aspects of desire that escape from the traditional psychoanalytic domain of Oedipus (the first sense), in order to reach a direct analysis of the processes of desiring-machines as they function in the schizophrenic unconscious (the second sense). This understanding of the molecular regime of desire will allow the schizoanalyst to conduct an analysis

⁵⁰³ AO 354

of the way in which formations of desire are decoded in society (the third sense) and to understand how these decoded flows of desire can be made to escape the recoding processes of capitalism (the fourth sense) in order to bring about a post-capitalist future. Taken this way, the concept of the line of flight is a complex one which runs through the many aspects of *Anti-Oedipus*, both psychoanalytic and revolutionary, and connects them together in a political programme for the construction of a molecular revolution.

Chapter 5 – A Thousand Plateaus 1: *The Line of Flight as Concept*

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- vi) The plane of consistency and the question of dimensions
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- viii) The BwO and the ethics of the line of flight

i) Introduction

A Thousand Plateaus, published as the companion volume to *Anti-Oedipus* in 1980, is Deleuze and Guattari's most substantial work. It is also the text in which the line of flight emerges as a philosophical concept in its own right. As we have seen, in *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari marshal a wide variety of historical theories, developed by an array of philosophical, political, anthropological, and psychoanalytic thinkers, in an attack against structuralism, and against structural psychoanalysis in particular. They do this for practical and political purposes and their aim is to produce a new activity – *schizoanalysis* – that would be able to work directly with the unconscious in order to open up the revolutionary potential of desire. In doing this, the pair also begin to use the phrase 'line of flight' in at least four different ways. While each of the four uses we covered in the last chapter share certain features, it would nevertheless be incorrect to say that these 'lines of flight' had a high enough level of coherence to designate a *concept* in the Deleuzoguattarian sense of the term. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, on the other hand, the targets of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis are much broader. Not only do they aim to combat the binarizing, structuralist, molar tendencies within the discipline of psychoanalysis, but they also aim to dismantle these tendencies in almost every other arena of thought. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, any dealings with psychoanalysis proper are relegated to a single chapter, while other sections are given over to similar interruptions in linguistics, literature, political action, music, and religion, as well as the more strictly philosophical domains of metaphysics, ontology, and ethics. In this chapter, I will show how, as the aperture of Deleuze and Guattari's machinery of analysis continues to widen, and as more and more disciplinary discussions are enveloped by their discourse, their philosophical concepts take on a higher and higher level of coherence. Specifically, I will show how, across its many uses in the book, Deleuze and Guattari make a concept out of the line of flight. Drawing on certain other aspects of *A Thousand Plateaus*, one could also say that despite the *pluralism* of epistemological regions over which the concept of the line of

flight ranges, there is also a *monism* put forward in the text concerning the way in which the concept is deployed in each of these domains.

My analysis of the concept of the line of flight, as it appears in *A Thousand Plateaus*, will be split across this chapter and the one that follows it. To begin, this chapter attempts to cover much of the philosophical terminology of the book, taking in the distinctions between the tree and the rhizome, the plane of organization and the plane of consistency, and content and expression, as well as Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the stratification of matter. Here I will show why Deleuze and Guattari articulate their thought in terms of 'lines' and not in 'points', and will offer a first definition of the 'line of flight' as a philosophical concept. The model of political analysis that Deleuze and Guattari develop alongside and within this philosophical discourse, with its focus on the analysis of regimes of signs and the abstract machines that effectuate them, will be covered in the following chapter. There I will show how the philosophical concept of the line of flight is deployed in Deleuze and Guattari's updated political analysis of the State, and how it accompanies a form of pragmatism that is somewhat more cautious than the schizoanalytic practices outlined in *Anti-Oedipus*.

Before moving on to discuss the concept of the line of flight as it appears in *A Thousand Plateaus* however, it will be worth pausing to briefly restate what it means to say that Deleuze and Guattari make a *concept* of the line of flight. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari famously claim that "philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts".⁵⁰⁴ Philosophy proceeds by way of problems, which it articulates by producing new concepts that respond to them. Under this interpretation, a philosophical concept does not represent the world, nor does it define an abstract component of the world, instead it responds to the world by expressing a problem. Instead of following Plato's model of concepts as universal forms, Kant's a priori ideas, or

⁵⁰⁴ WP 2. While *What is Philosophy?* was co-signed by Deleuze and Guattari, the case has been made by a number of commentators that it was almost exclusively written by Deleuze (Stengers, 2006). Stenger's comments on this issue were, however, removed in the revised version of this text (Stengers, 2005, 151-167).

Nietzsche's understanding of the concept as a captured and sedimented metaphor, Deleuze and Guattari treat concepts as complex bodies made up of components that cohere around a particular problem.⁵⁰⁵ Concepts, as they are defined at this point in Deleuze and Guattari's work, are not the same as Ideas, as defined in *Difference and Repetition*. It would be most accurate to say that, at the point of writing the earlier text, Ideas were understood as virtual and problematic multiplicities, whereas at the point of writing *A Thousand Plateaus*, concepts are understood as multiplicities that respond to a problem. If concepts are multiplicities, then the elements that make them up are pre-individual singularities. A concept comes into existence when a set of singularities combine in a specific way, so that a concept can be understood strictly as nothing other than "the point of coincidence, condensation, or accumulation of its own components".⁵⁰⁶ When asked in an interview in 1991 what concepts they had created, Deleuze and Guattari pick out the concept of the refrain, or the ritornello. This concept is nothing other than a response to the problem of the grounding, or ungrounding, of thought and is composed by a condensation or coincidence of a series of singularities, including 'a' tune, 'a' territory, and 'a' home. To say that the line of flight becomes a concept in *A Thousand Plateaus* is to say that it responds to, or expresses, a problem and that it does so by combining a series of singularities in a novel way. In what follows, we will see that the problem Deleuze and Guattari are responding to concerns the possibility of transformation, and the singularities that compose the concept include, among others, 'an' assemblage, 'an' escape, and 'a' regime of signs.

ii) The vegetal image of thought

The first chapter of this thesis showed how Deleuze's work in *Difference and Repetition* challenged the very core of traditional philosophical thinking by arguing for the logical priority of difference over identity. The consequence of this challenge was a new mode of philosophical analysis that took neither

⁵⁰⁵ WP 15

⁵⁰⁶ WP 20

identity nor negation as its ground, but actively took part in the ungrounding of thought via an analysis of the way that experience is produced by the interplay between difference-in-itself and repetition-for-itself. In that text, Deleuze is explicitly concerned with overturning the “dogmatic image of thought” that plagues philosophy, one based not only on identity, but on its corollaries, especially the false goals of representation and resemblance. Deleuze argues in *Difference and Repetition* that this image of thought supports itself with “psychologically puerile and socially reactionary examples” that can only deal with the relatively simple cases of “recognition, error, simple propositions and solutions or responses” and can never do justice to “what should be the most valued in regard to thought - namely, the genesis of the act of thinking and the sense of truth and falsehood”.⁵⁰⁷ At the point of writing *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze takes this image of thought to be a kind of illusory surface effect, which appears in experience due to the individual thinker’s inability to think his or her own pre-individual and pre-representational production. As Somers-Hall puts it, the dogmatic image of thought is “a paralogism created by the reflection of thinking on itself that is at the heart of philosophy’s inability to think depth appropriately”.⁵⁰⁸ What separates *A Thousand Plateaus* from *Difference and Repetition*, and arguably from all of Deleuze’s work with and without Guattari up until this point, is its move away from the somewhat detached and cerebral activity of attempting to produce a thought-without-image and a move towards the creative and active process of producing an alternative image of thought.⁵⁰⁹ In Deleuze’s preface for the English translation of *Difference and Repetition*, he suggests that the third chapter, concerning the image of thought, can be read as an introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*. While the former tackles the dogmatism of the traditional image of thought, it is in the latter that Deleuze and Guattari develop the concept of the rhizome and inaugurate a new “vegetal model of thought”.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁷ DR 197

⁵⁰⁸ Somers-Hall, 2018, 4

⁵⁰⁹ For the many stances that Deleuze takes towards the image of thought, see Lambert (2012).

⁵¹⁰ DR xvii

The vegetal and rhizomatic image of thought elaborated in *A Thousand Plateaus* is contrasted with an arborescent or tree-like image of thought. This arborescent image is a structural model that gives determinate identities to things by using predicates to relate them negatively to one another, by extracting essential properties that determine essences of things, and by organizing all things into a hierarchy of genera and species based on these essences. This arborescent model of thought can be traced back to Aristotle's logic of definitions and can be seen in the many forms of classification that run through the social and natural sciences, most obviously in genealogical family trees and in phylogenetic trees. As we might expect from their critiques of structural psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari criticize this model for relying on a binary logic of exclusive disjunction that creates nothing but a series of identities. They write: "Binary logic is the spiritual reality of the root-tree... this system of thought has never reached an understanding of multiplicity."⁵¹¹ If the concepts 'predicate', 'subject', 'object', 'genus', and 'species' all define an image of thought that is fundamentally unable to think about the dynamics of change, then Deleuze and Guattari aim to do away with these concepts and replace them with a selection of new concepts. Consequently, all of these concepts are dismissed in the introduction to the book, where Deleuze and Guattari write: "All we talk about are multiplicities, lines, strata and segmentarities, lines of flight and intensities, machinic assemblages and their various types, bodies without organs and their construction and selection, the plane of consistency, and in each case the units of measure."⁵¹² This alternative list of concepts should be understood as the toolbox required for producing and then utilizing the vegetal image of thought.

In the first plateau, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the rhizome by way of six principles. These principles do not offer a definition, in the sense of picking out essential and stable traits of the rhizome, but instead outline the different ways in which it is possible to interact with the rhizomatic image of thought. The first two principles concern the connectivity and heterogeneity of the rhizome and come with the following practical directive: "any point of a rhizome can be

⁵¹¹ ATP 5

⁵¹² ATP 5

connected to anything other, and must be.”⁵¹³ These two principles state that rhizomatic thought operates not only by making connections, but by connecting heterogeneous elements of different orders and kinds. In fact, it is the connections that constitute the rhizome and not the other way around. As we have already noted, these two principles recall the transversal connections and inclusive disjunctions of the schizophrenic unconscious as it was discussed in *Anti-Oedipus*, and in many ways the act of schizophrenizing psychoanalysis can be understood as Deleuze and Guattari’s first undertaking in rhizomatic analysis. The third principle of the rhizomatic image of thought concerns the category of the multiplicity and recalls Deleuze’s earlier attempts via Riemann to dismantle the binary between the Many and the One. According to this principle, when “the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive” then thought becomes rhizomatic and “ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object”.⁵¹⁴ The fourth principle concerns what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘assignifying ruptures’. Here Deleuze and Guattari develop the analysis of Louis Hjelmslev’s semiotics that they began in *Anti-Oedipus* and claim that because the rhizomatic image of thought does not rely on the biunivocal relations of signification it has neither a master signifier nor a centre of meaning. Consequently it may “be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines.”⁵¹⁵ According to the fifth and sixth principles, the rhizomatic model operates by “cartography and decalcomania” so that it is “not amenable to any structural or generative model.”⁵¹⁶ This means that, due to the rhizomatic model’s ability to pick out transformations over identities, it is not possible to use it to create a representation of the world. Instead, rhizomatics operates by mapping connections that co-create the world via their organization. These final principles are perhaps the most difficult to comprehend and I will return to them shortly. For now, we can summarize by stating that the arborescent model of

⁵¹³ ATP 7

⁵¹⁴ ATP 8

⁵¹⁵ ATP 10

⁵¹⁶ ATP 13. Decalcomania can refer to either the process of transferring a pattern onto glass or porcelain by using a design on paper as a mould, or the process of creating images on paper by pressing paint between two sheets. It seems likely that Deleuze and Guattari are referring to the latter process, in which there is neither a model nor a copy, but only the mutual production of two images.

thought relies on the attribution of predicates to things and the subsequent split of subjects from objects, but with the vegetal model the basis of determinations “are not predicates of the thing but dimensions of multiplicities”,⁵¹⁷ and these multiplicities entertain “neither object nor subject... [but] variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds”.⁵¹⁸

In order to understand the role that the concept of the line of flight plays in the rhizomatic image of thought, we must first explore the way that Deleuze and Guattari explain the differing perspectives that arborescent and rhizomatic models take on the relation between points and lines. Deleuze and Guattari write: “There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines.”⁵¹⁹ To understand how the image of the tree operates, it will be useful to turn to Aristotle’s *Categories*. Here Aristotle argues that the essence of any species consists in its genus, together with the differentia that define the species. Some species can also become genera, when they can be further differentiated into additional species, while an individual is simply a species that cannot be further differentiated, as the requisite differentia only pick out a single particular. Consequently, Aristotle will write that “the individual man belongs in a species, man, and animal is a genus of the species”.⁵²⁰ The tradition of representing these definitions using the image of a tree begins with Porphyry’s introduction to Aristotle’s *Categories*. According to this method, we can define ‘man’ by starting with a general category such as ‘substance’. We then differentiate this category into its different kinds, here they are ‘thinking substance’ and ‘extended substance’. Taking the differentia ‘extended substance’ as the genus ‘body’, we can then differentiate this genus into ‘inanimate bodies’ and ‘animate bodies’. Continuing this procedure of binary distinction, we can name ‘animate bodies’ as ‘animal’ and then differentiate this genus into the differentiae ‘rational animal’ and ‘irrational animal’. Finally, the differentia of ‘rational animal’ can be

⁵¹⁷ ATP 290

⁵¹⁸ ATP 4

⁵¹⁹ ATP 9

⁵²⁰ *Categories*, 2a13. Aristotle comments on the implications of this schema in Book III of his *Metaphysics* (998b). Deleuze offers his own analysis of the metaphysical problems generated by Aristotle’s theory in *Difference and Repetition* (DR 40).

named as the genus 'man'.⁵²¹ As an *image* of thought, this model for definition sets up a number of points, namely the genera 'substance', 'body', 'animal', and 'man', and shows the connections between these terms by using a series of lines to designate the relations between them. However, the rhizomatic model does away with these points altogether, relying on the lines alone to determine the image. This means that the rhizomatic model allows for the analysis of connections, without the use of the subjects and objects that would otherwise act as nodal points in the tree of definition. Deleuze and Guattari describe it in the following way: "Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between the positions, the rhizome is made only of lines."⁵²² The lines that make up the rhizome are not all alike, and Deleuze and Guattari list at least two kinds of lines. Any rhizome has "lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions" on the one hand "and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis" on the other.⁵²³ The role of these different lines will become more apparent when, in the next chapter, we take up the example of political formations and their transformations. At this point it will be sufficient to say that any rhizome is constituted by transversal connections between heterogeneous elements and that there are at least two kinds of connections; there are those connections that are *internal* to the rhizome and that serve to give it some consistency, and there are those connections that *escape* the bounds of the rhizome and connect it to something else. The former can be said to stratify or segment the rhizome, whereas the latter, which we can call lines of flight, serve to destratify it.

It is important to clarify at this point that Deleuze and Guattari do not claim that the world is made of rhizomes, or that there are some things that are rhizomatic and others that are not.⁵²⁴ Instead, Deleuze and Guattari's substantive use of

⁵²¹ For more on Aristotle's logic and the use of Porphyrian trees, see Eco (1984, 57-67).

⁵²² ATP 23

⁵²³ ATP 23

⁵²⁴ Claims that the internet is a rhizome, or that the brain is a rhizome, miss the point that, as a model for thought, the rhizome does not define the nature of things, but only a methodology for thinking (Young, Genosko, & Watson, 2013, 262-263). Many critiques of Deleuze and

the concept of the multiplicity will allow them to show that the world is populated by assemblages. Assemblages have tendencies towards both relative stasis and relative change and while the arborescent or dogmatic image of thought is only capable of seeing the stratified and relatively static aspects of these assemblages, the rhizomatic image of thought allows the assemblage's tendencies towards change to be analysed and exploited. Brent Adkins picks up on the fact that the concept of the rhizome is used as an image and a directive for thinking rather than as a substantive when he argues for the central role of "perceptual semiotics" in *A Thousand Plateaus*.⁵²⁵ The point to stress here is that the rhizome – and therefore the concept of the line of flight that serves to explain the threshold of transformation for the rhizome – is directly related to a process of *thought*. As de Beistegui notes, for Deleuze and Guattari, "thought consists not in applying universal concepts to a given situation, but in a pragmatics that will identify and exploit its rhizomatic resources."⁵²⁶ The concept of the line of flight is one part of the vegetal image of thought that allows for such a pragmatics.

iii) Assembling the line of flight

If the line of flight is the maximum number of dimensions of the multiplicity after which a transformation occurs, then what is undergoing transformation here? To put this question another way, what is rhizomatic thought thinking about when connections are made that constitute lines of flight? The short answer is that rhizomatic thought engages directly with material reality, including physical and organic matter, as well as semiotic systems. However, it is important to remember that, according to a rhizomatic mode of thought, matter does not compose objects with a pre-given identity, but what Deleuze and Guattari call assemblages. To take one of Deleuze and Guattari's examples, which we have mentioned before, an orchid is not formed by the imposition of the form of an orchid onto inert matter in order to create an individual object

Guattari often fail to differentiate between the rhizome as a pragmatic model and the rhizome as substantive entity. See, for example, Badiou's polemic 'The Fascism of the Potato', (2012).

⁵²⁵ Adkins, 2015, 13. Deleuze and Guattari's use the phrase at ATP 25 & 215.

⁵²⁶ De Beistegui, 2018, 25

that possesses predicates and on which a thinking subject can pass judgement. Instead, an orchid is nothing other than a series of connections and relations that maintain a sufficient level of stability. There are the spatial relations between its parts, such as its petals and its stamen. There are the connections it forms with the insects that pollinate it. There are the connections it makes with other plants and with oceans and seas through the global cycle of water and of nitrogen. To say that rhizomatic thought engages with matter is not to say that it takes inert matter as its object, onto which it imposes a form. On the contrary, rhizomatic thought is a method for mapping the connections that constitute material assemblages. In this case, it would be more accurate to say that rhizomatic thought thinks *with* matter, rather than saying that it thinks *about* matter. As Holland clarifies, this thinking *with* has two senses: we think with the material world in the sense that we use matter as a “tool to think”, but we also think with the material world in the sense that we think “along with the world the way it itself thinks.”⁵²⁷ By setting up *A Thousand Plateaus* as an exercise in rhizomatic thinking, Deleuze and Guattari claim to have written a book that overcomes the dogmatic tendency for thought to impose itself on the world from the outside. They write that, with the rhizomatic image, there is “no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author)”, but that instead “an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders.”⁵²⁸ So, rhizomatic thought thinks *with* matter by mapping the connections or the lines that constitute an assemblage. These assemblages are material and by mapping the lines of flight, which escape the bounds of the assemblage in order to connect it to its outside, rhizomatic analysis is able bring about transformations that take place in between a field of reality, a field of representation, and a field of subjectivity.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁷ Holland, 2013, 37

⁵²⁸ ATP 25

⁵²⁹ Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between the processes of tracing and mapping, where the former is representational and the latter is vegetal. Rhizomatic thought operates by mapping the multiple exits and entryways that connect an assemblage to its outside, rather than by tracing an outline of its form (ATP 13) The two practices are not simply opposed as good and bad, with Deleuze and Guattari stating that “[i]t is a question of method: *the tracing should always be put back on the map*” (ATP 14). Deleuze and Guattari connect this idea to Deligny’s therapeutic practice of mapping (ATP 224; Deligny 2015; De Toledo, 2013). I have

While Deleuze and Guattari's decision to conceptualise this form of thinking as rhizomatic only arrives fully formed in *A Thousand Plateaus*, it is clear that the relation they articulate between matter and thought follows from a continuation of many of the ideas in *Anti-Oedipus*. Specifically, Deleuze and Guattari develop the idea of matter as a "matter-movement, matter-energy, and matter-flow" from Hjelmslev's semiotic concept of 'matière'.⁵³⁰ As in *Anti-Oedipus*, this allows them to describe material systems that are neither vitalist nor mechanist, but operate by machinic processes. A rhizomatic analysis of assemblages relies on a philosophy that "is not animism, any more than it is mechanism; rather it is universal machinism."⁵³¹ Another way in which Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of the assemblage follows from *Anti-Oedipus* concerns its relation to desire. They write that "[a]ssemblages are passionate, they are compositions of desire", and that there are "no internal drives in desire, only assemblages."⁵³² Speaking of these "drives of desire", Deleuze and Guattari also comment that "[t]he assemblage that draws lines of flight is on the same level as they are."⁵³³ The reason for highlighting these points here is to clarify how Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize the line of flight from the point of view of ontology. When we try to ascertain whether lines of flight are movements of thought alone, or whether they are movements about which one can think, we quickly realize that they do not sit comfortably in either of these camps. Assemblages are described as material in *A Thousand Plateaus* in the same sense that the unconscious was understood as material in *Anti-Oedipus*, namely they are both machinic. This materiality is neither inside nor outside of thought. Assemblages are not contained in a field of reality, a field of representation, or a field of subjectivity, but produce these different fields by drawing transversal connections between them. By thinking with material assemblages, rhizomatics can think the concept of the line of flight so that it

described the methodology of this thesis as an attempt to map the individuation of the concept of the line of flight. This means that I have attempted to carry out a machinic analysis of the forces that cross into and escape from the concept, rather than attempting to trace its outline.

⁵³⁰ Bogue, 2018, 47

⁵³¹ ATP 283

⁵³² ATP 440, 234.

⁵³³ ATP 234

occupies neither side of a traditional mind/body dualism. Lines of flight are not just in your head, but they are not simply pre-given in the world and waiting to be found by thought. The transformations that they bring about can thus be deemed “incorporeal”.⁵³⁴ The two points made here – namely that assemblages are material only by way of being machinic and desiring, and that lines of flight operate at this primary level of the assemblage – are important because they show how Deleuze and Guattari’s way of thinking about the assemblage separates them from Foucault. In a footnote to the fifth plateau, Deleuze and Guattari write that their “only points of disagreement with Foucault” are that “assemblages seem fundamentally to be assemblages not of power but of desire (desire is always assembled)” and that within these assemblages there are “lines of flight that are primary, which are not phenomena of resistance or counterattack in an assemblage, but cutting edges of creation”.⁵³⁵ I will return to this footnote in my conclusion, once the philosophical and political context of the concept of the line of flight have been explained in more detail.

iv) Refrains, lines of flight, and absolute deterritorializations

Like many of the conceptual innovations of *Anti-Oedipus*, the language of territorialization returns in *A Thousand Plateaus* with renewed specificity. In the eleventh plateau ‘1837: Of The Refrain’, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the novel concept of the refrain, or the ‘ritournello’, to explain how territories are constituted and how they effectively produce assemblages.⁵³⁶ To

⁵³⁴ This means that a change is brought about in a state of affairs not through the transformation of bodies, but through a transformation of the relations that constitute bodies. Deleuze and Guattari discuss incorporeal transformations at length in the ‘Postulates of Linguistics’ plateau (ATP 83-121). Their analysis follows from Deleuze’s *Logic of Sense*, and conceptualises performative linguistic acts as a kind of ‘event’ that both connect bodies with language and divide them from one another (LS 7-15, 108-125). Incorporeal transformations play an important role throughout *A Thousand Plateaus* and the dates preceding each plateau denote an incorporeal transformation around which the chapter is organised (Holland 2013, 79).

⁵³⁵ ATP 585.

⁵³⁶ Throughout this chapter I have retained Massumi’s translation of the French *ritournelle* as the ‘refrain’. Others have argued for the use of the original Italian word ‘ritornello’ instead (TRM 377-380). While ‘ritornello’ retains some of Deleuze and Guattari’s allusion to the French for Nietzsche’s eternal return, namely the *retour éternel*, I have kept Massumi’s translation because it provides consistency with the English translations of Guattari’s writings on the concept (MU 107).

understand the importance of the concept of the line of flight, we must give a brief account of the role of the refrain and of the different kinds of territorial effects that it produces. To first introduce the concept within the language of *Difference and Repetition*, we could say that the refrain is the pure repetition of difference, and that it is what provides the ground (or unground) for experience by giving it an orientation. Speaking of the context of experience as a 'milieu', Deleuze and Guattari write that experience is produced by virtue of "a periodic repetition, but one whose only effect is to produce a difference by which the milieu passes into another milieu."⁵³⁷ For the concept of the refrain, it is key that it is "the difference that is rhythmic, not the repetition."⁵³⁸ The plateau on the refrain begins with the example of a child lost in the dark and examines the way that such a child can make a home for themselves and orientate themselves in an otherwise undifferentiated chaos by "singing under [their] breath".⁵³⁹ The process by which the child guards against the disorientating darkness is given in three stages: first the child uses the sound of its own voice to make itself feel at home and to find a "calm and stable, centre in the heart of chaos"; next the child effectively uses the refrain, and its relations with other points in the slowly appearing landscape, to draw a circle around the centre and to "organise a limited space" where the "forces of chaos are kept outside" so that "the interior space protects the germinal forces of a task to fulfill"; finally, the child "opens the circle a crack, opens it all the way, lets someone in, calls someone, or else goes out oneself, launches forth."⁵⁴⁰ This three-stage process – of creating a centre, determining an inside and an outside, and using this orientation to explore the world – creates what Deleuze and Guattari call a territory. Territories are the assemblages that we inhabit. It is via the refrain's repetition of difference that a determinable territory can be produced in the chaos, and this territory is the first assemblage with which one

⁵³⁷ ATP 346

⁵³⁸ ATP 346

⁵³⁹ ATP 343. Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the refrain contrasts with the Freudian example of the Fort-Da game. In both cases the child repeats an action in order to overcome a fear, however in the Freudian example this repetition only comes after the loss of the mother and is designed to overcome the loss felt for the presence of the mother; it is an allegory for Freud's basic understanding of repetition as a symptom. For Deleuze and Guattari on the other hand, the repetitive act of the child is originary, does not refer to any pre-existing lack, and is inherently creative. The concept of the refrain thus extends Deleuze and Guattari's positive account of desiring-production offered in *Anti-Oedipus*.

⁵⁴⁰ ATP 343

can think: “The territory is the first assemblage, the first thing to constitute an assemblage; the assemblage is fundamentally territorial.”⁵⁴¹ To put this another way, we can say that it is only via the territorialization of chaos that thought is able to find its object. Thought requires an assemblage with which to think and “[t]he territory makes the assemblage.”⁵⁴²

The concept of the refrain is central to *A Thousand Plateaus* because it is what accounts for the possibility of ‘consistency’ without relying on any form of externally imposed order or ‘organisation’. According to Eugene Holland, the task of “maintaining or creating consistency without imposing unity, identity, or organization... might be said to constitute the holy grail of all of Deleuze & Guattari’s work.”⁵⁴³ Here, we see that Deleuze and Guattari account for such consistency in terms of the relation between processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization: the relative level of consistency of an assemblage is determined by the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization that cross it. The rhizomatic image of thought that we explored at the beginning of this chapter now comes into its own. It is only via rhizomatic thinking that it is possible to map the different kinds of connections and processes that create territorial assemblages and those that cut across them. Simply put, it is possible to define three different kinds of lines in an assemblage that relate to the three stages of the refrain outlined above. First, we go “from chaos to the threshold of a territorial assemblage” by way of lines that run between pure repetitions of difference. These lines are called “infra-assemblage” lines because they exist ‘below’ the assemblage. Then one “organizes the assemblage” via the use of “intra-assemblage” lines which determine an interior and separate it from an exterior. Finally, “one leaves the territorial assemblage for other assemblages” by way of “inter-assemblage” lines, which are passages of “escape”.⁵⁴⁴ This final set of lines that escape the assemblage are what Deleuze and Guattari will call *lines of flight*.

⁵⁴¹ ATP 356

⁵⁴² ATP 555

⁵⁴³ Holland, 2013, 9

⁵⁴⁴ ATP 344-345

There are two important points to make here concerning the line of flight's relation to territorial assemblages. First, despite the order in which the three stages of the refrain are presented, the lines that escape the territorial assemblage do not come after the lines that constitute it. Second, lines of flight do not simply refer to those lines that bring about processes of deterritorialization, but specifically those that lead to *absolute* deterritorialization. The reasoning behind the first point becomes clear when we recognize that assemblages are never individual, but are always in constant interaction with other assemblages. While the problem of consistency was just discussed in terms of a single assemblage, Deleuze and Guattari also write that this problem "concerns the manner in which different assemblages hold together, with components of passage and relay" and that "consistency finds the totality of its conditions only on a properly cosmic plane, where all the disparate and heterogeneous elements are convoked."⁵⁴⁵ This constant interaction and presupposition of assemblages explains why Deleuze and Guattari shift towards a language of deterritorialization and reterritorialization without maintaining a place for an originary territorialization. All territorial processes must take a territorial context for granted, so that infra-assemblage lines, intra-assemblage lines, and inter-assemblage lines are not progressions in a series, but "all confront each other and converge in the territorial refrain."⁵⁴⁶ To put this another way, in the case of the child's refrain, the apparently originary chaos that surrounds the child must have been produced by a previous process of deterritorialization.⁵⁴⁷ This means that, in cases of the refrain and the construction of territorial assemblages, it is the line of absolute deterritorialization that must be taken as primary. Deleuze and Guattari explicitly warn that "under no circumstances must it be thought that absolute deterritorialization comes suddenly, as an excess, afterward, or beyond... In fact, what is primary is an absolute deterritorialization an absolute line of flight."⁵⁴⁸ This comment, however, leads us to a discussion of the relationship

⁵⁴⁵ ATP 361. Viewed from a certain perspective, assemblages are not really distinct at all. Deleuze and Guattari write: "There are only multiplicities of multiplicities forming a single assemblage, operating in the same assemblage." ATP 38

⁵⁴⁶ ATP 345

⁵⁴⁷ For Deleuze and Guattari, chaos and territoriality are not necessarily incompatible.

⁵⁴⁸ ATP 63 (translation modified).

between relative and absolute deterritorializations. What does it mean to say that the line of flight brings about deterritorializations that are absolute? In what sense is it the case that these absolute deterritorializations are primary? The important distinction here is between those inter-assemblage lines whose connections serve to modify one assemblage so that it can maintain homeostatic relations with other assemblages, and those inter-assemblage lines whose connections with the outside bring about a complete transformation of the assemblage.⁵⁴⁹ The former connections can be called relative deterritorializations because in these cases the assemblage only changes in relation to a given form of stability that it maintains over time, while the latter can be called absolute deterritorializations because they effectively destroy the assemblage in the process of transforming it into something else. In these cases, Deleuze and Guattari state: "It is no longer adequate to say that there is interassemblage, passage from a territorial assemblage to another type of assemblage; rather, we should say that one leaves all assemblages behind, that one exceeds the capacities of any possible assemblage, entering another plane."⁵⁵⁰ While there are multiple different inter-assemblage lines that escape from an assemblage, it is only those that bring about absolute deterritorializations that are named as lines of flight. These lines can be taken as primary, because it is only in these cases that all prior organisations of the assemblage are destroyed, allowing for the development of an assemblage that is unconstrained by its previous territorializations.

So far, by exploring the ways in which a rhizomatic or vegetal image of thought is able to map the territorial connections that produce assemblages and define their interactions, I have been able to show that assemblages face in two directions simultaneously, with one deterritorializing edge facing towards consistency and the other reterritorializing edge facing towards organization. I have also been able to show what role the concept of the line of flight plays in determining the power relations of this bivalence. However, Deleuze and

⁵⁴⁹ We will see shortly that political or social formations can be distinguished by their relation to absolute or relative lines of flight.

⁵⁵⁰ ATP 359. See ATP 62 for more on the relation between relative and absolute deterritorializations and the concept of the line of flight.

Guattari also write of lines of relative and absolute deterritorialization that: “The former are stratic or interstratic, whereas the latter concern the plane of consistency and its destratification” and that “absolute deterritorialization becomes relative only after stratification occurs on that plane or body.”⁵⁵¹ To understand this point we must recognise that assemblages are not in fact bivalent, but tetravalent. While they have a vertical axis determined by the two poles of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, they also have a horizontal axis determined by what Deleuze and Guattari call the double articulation of content and expression. The stratifications mentioned here, which relativize deterritorializations and organise the assemblage according to a hierarchy of strata, are produced by this double articulation. In order to give a comprehensive account of the role played by the concept of the line of flight in *A Thousand Plateaus*, it will be important to see how lines of flight cut across the stratifications of an assemblage as well as its territorial boundaries.

v) Content, expression, and stratification

The concepts of the refrain and the territory help to explain how the world is composed of material assemblages that have no identity, but manage to maintain a certain level of stability as they go through constant modifications and occasional transformations. The rhizomatic image of thought gives us a way of thinking with these material assemblages to map the connections that they make, and to explore the different possibilities for change within them. However, it is also the case that material assemblages come in different kinds, and embody different forms. Most importantly, physical matter differs from organic matter, and both differ from the material of linguistics. In order to understand the differences between the physical, the organic, and the linguistic, Deleuze and Guattari must introduce the processes that they call stratification and coding. In the previous sections, we saw how “[s]ubstances as formed matters refer to territorialities and degrees of territorialization and deterritorialization.” In this section I am going to look at how “[f]orms imply a code, modes of coding and decoding.”⁵⁵² By combining the two processes of

⁵⁵¹ ATP 62-63

⁵⁵² ATP 46

de/re-territorialization and de/re-coding together, we will eventually be able to give a comprehensive account of the philosophy of matter that Deleuze and Guattari put forward in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Ultimately, this will allow us to offer a more nuanced definition of the concept of the line of flight as it appears in *A Thousand Plateaus*, one which shows the role that the concept plays on the vertical axis of de/re-territorializations and on the horizontal axis of content and expression.

Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the relation between content and expression, and their accompanying exploration of the processes of stratification and coding, are intended "to account for basic differences among things as diverse as rocks, animals, and language", but "without resorting to a metaphysics of discontinuity, or to any kind of hylomorphism."⁵⁵³ This means that Deleuze and Guattari are trying to show how the real differences between physical, organic, and linguistic materials are created, without relying on any essential difference between these registers, without blocking off the possibility of their communication, and without relying on the arborescent philosophical image of an inert substance that is given form by an intelligent and willing subject. In contrast to this traditional image, Deleuze and Guattari claim that the differentiation of matter into these kinds relies on the 'double articulation' of content and expression. We saw in the previous two chapters how Hjelmslev's categories of a-signifying semiotics and a-semiotic encodings were so important for Deleuze and Guattari's attack on structural linguistics. This analysis is generalized in *A Thousand Plateaus*, so that the material content of all assemblages does not preclude the possibility of it becoming signifying. Here Deleuze and Guattari argue that it is one and the same material-semiotic content that is expressed as physical matter, organic matter, and linguistic matter.⁵⁵⁴ The difference between these categories relies not on any essential difference between these orders, but simply on the process of

⁵⁵³ Adkins, 2015, 51

⁵⁵⁴ It could be argued that Deleuze and Guattari's general ontology relies on the schema of general semiology put forward by Hjelmslev. It is also the case that their concept of matter is derived from Hjelmslev's concept of 'matière' (Hjelmslev, 1969, 47-60; Bogue, 2018, 47). Deleuze and Guattari's use of the concept does not refer to brute or inert matter, but to "the unformed, unorganised, nonstratified or destratified body and all its flows; subatomic and submolecular particles, pure intensities, prevital and preindividual free singularities" (ATP 49).

articulation by which any material-semiotic content comes to be expressed.⁵⁵⁵ In order to explain the double articulation by which contents are expressed, Deleuze and Guattari will also utilize the traditional philosophical categories of 'substance' and 'form', but in a non-traditional way. Specifically, they will argue that every assemblage combines both a content and its expression, and each of these will have its own substance and its own form, so that the distinction between substance and form relates not to the different categories of unformed substance and ideal form, but to the different moments in the articulation of matter.

Deleuze and Guattari introduce their theory of double articulation with the example of the formation of sedimentary rock. According to this analysis there are four distinct moments in the formation of any such rock: first, a number of particles are selected by a flow of water, as in a river; second, the particles become ordered by their size and weight to form levels of silt; third, processes of calcification cause the levels of silt to become fixed; and fourth, this calcification results in a solid mass with relatively static relations between its extensive parts.⁵⁵⁶ The first two stages in this process relate to the first articulation of content, while the latter two stages relate to the second articulation of expression. Each of these two articulations have both a substance and a form. In the first articulation, the substance is constituted by the particles and the process of formation is determined by the way the intensive relations between the weight and speed of these particles creates distinct layers. Generalizing this process, Deleuze and Guattari write: "The first articulation chooses or deducts, from unstable particle-flows, metastable molecular or quasi-molecular units (*substances*) upon which it imposes a statistical order of connections and successions (*forms*)."⁵⁵⁷ The second articulation of the sedimentary rock in this example also has both a form and a substance. Here, the process of calcification provides the form and the solidified rock gives us the substance. Once again, moving from the specifics

⁵⁵⁵ This understanding of the relation between matter and semiotics resonates with Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the material unconscious in *Anti-Oedipus*, where the schizophrenic unconscious makes no distinction between words and bodies.

⁵⁵⁶ ATP 46

⁵⁵⁷ ATP 46

of the rock towards a general theory of articulation, Deleuze and Guattari write: “The second articulation establishes functional, compact, stable structures (*forms*), and constructs the molar compounds in which these structures are simultaneously actualized (*substances*).”⁵⁵⁸ It is important to note here that Deleuze and Guattari use their theory of double articulation to show that the respective relations between intensity and extensity, the molecular and the molar, and content and expression do not map onto one another. While it is the case that the first articulation relies on the *intensive* relations between its parts to provide the form, and the second articulation results in *extensive* relations between the parts of an object, Deleuze and Guattari warn that “it cannot be taken for granted that the distinction between the two articulations is always that of the molecular and the molar.”⁵⁵⁹ The reason for this is that the distinction between content and expression is always relative, so that the substance produced by the second articulation in one case can also play the role of the substance of the first articulation in another. To illustrate this point we only need to recognize that the grains of sand that provided the substance to the first articulation in the example above must have been produced by a previous process of double articulation at a lower level. The final point to make here concerns the relationship between de/reterritorialization on the one hand, and de/coding on the other. According to the schema of double articulation laid out in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the processes of de/reterritorialization relate only to the substances of both content and expression, while the processes of de/coding relate to the forms of both content and expression. To return to the case of the sedimentary rock, the substance of content is composed of deterritorialized flows of particles, the form of content is determined by the coding of these flows into layers, the form of expression is provided by the way that calcification overcodes the first coding into something rigid and fixed, and the substance of expression is the reterritorialized stone. This differentiation of the two processes of de/reterritorialization and de/coding also allows Deleuze and Guattari to strengthen their previous arguments against structuralism. While the binary relations between substance and form may seem to lend themselves to a structuralist analysis, the fact that the substance of content

⁵⁵⁸ ATP 46

⁵⁵⁹ ATP 46

and the substance of expression have their own mode of interaction, while the form of content and the form of expression have another, makes it impossible for any structural analysis to become complete. Deleuze and Guattari write that both articulations “establish binary relations between their respective segments”, so that between the segments of the two articulations “there are biunivocal relationships obeying far more complex laws.” On the basis of this, the authors then claim that “it is an illusion to believe that structure is the earth’s last word.”⁵⁶⁰ Simply put, the biunivocal relations between substances and the biunivocal relations between forms cannot be given a structuralist interpretation because each is interrupted by the binary relations between substance and form at their respective levels of articulation.

Before returning to the concept of the line of flight, it will be important to see how different processes of double articulation can produce organic and linguistic assemblages and not only physical ones. Once we have explored the differences between these three strata, and once we have seen how they interact to form both machinic assemblages of bodies and collective assemblages of enunciation, then we will be in a better position to show exactly what it means to draw a line of flight, and exactly how the absolute deterritorializations that result are distinguished from relative deterritorializations. The physical, organic, and linguistic are not, according to Deleuze and Guattari, different kinds of entities, but different modes of double articulation. Each of these modes of articulation is supported by an ‘abstract machine’ and each proceeds in a different way. On the physical stratum the double articulation proceeds by way of what Deleuze and Guattari call ‘induction’.⁵⁶¹ This is the process by which a slow buildup of the intensive relations between molecules brings about a change in the extended nature of a molar aggregate. The sedimentary rock we considered above is a good example of this: it is by a slow reduction in the relative speed of the particles that they take on a relatively static form. Deleuze and Guattari’s other example here, borrowed from Gilbert Simondon’s analysis of the processes of

⁵⁶⁰ ATP 46

⁵⁶¹ ATP 67

individuation, is that of the crystal.⁵⁶² What interests Deleuze and Guattari in this case is that because it proceeds by way of induction, a crystal is formed, and continues to grow, only at the limit where it interacts with its outside. Simply put, one crystal cannot create another crystal, but can only develop by expanding at its surface. The crystal “expands in all directions, but always as a function of the surface layer of the substance”, so that it is “incapable of formally reproducing and expressing itself; only the accessible surface can reproduce itself, since it is the only deterritorializable part.”⁵⁶³ While the physical abstract machine operates by induction and can only develop by expanding at its surface, the abstract machine that carries out organic stratifications operates by ‘transduction’. Transduction is a complex term that is used differently at different moments in Deleuze and Guattari’s work.⁵⁶⁴ In this context, transduction refers to the process by which material is transferred from the interior of one assemblage to the interior of another. In the case of organic matter this transduction is carried out by genetic material, which allows organisms to develop not only through growth, but also via reproduction.⁵⁶⁵ The third stratum, which Deleuze and Guattari variously refer to as ‘linguistic’ and ‘alloplastic’, operates neither by induction nor by transduction, but by translation. The first thing to note here is that what defines the linguistic stratum is not its use of signs. According to this analysis, all matter goes by way of the double articulation of content and expression and is governed by a general semiotics of signs. What distinguishes the linguistic stratum is its ability to translate “all of the flows, particles, codes, and territorialities of the other strata into a sufficiently deterritorialized system of signs.”⁵⁶⁶ This process of translation does not refer to the ability for one language to be translated into

⁵⁶² For Simondon’s discussion of the individuation of a crystal, see Simondon (1964). For a clear discussion of this process in English, see Sauvanargues (2012).

⁵⁶³ ATP 67

⁵⁶⁴ In biology, transduction refers to the process by which a virus can transfer genetic material from one organism to another. Simondon uses it to describe any process whereby “a disparity or a difference is topologically and temporally restructured across some interface” (MacKenzie, 2002, 25). The concept is also used by Guattari, who defines it as a process that “is simultaneously representation and production” (AOP 258), and describes it rather loosely in an interview as “the idea that, in essence, something conducts itself, something happens between chains of semiotic expression, and material chains” (Seem & Guattari, 1974, 39).

⁵⁶⁵ Deleuze and Guattari have a very particular reading of genetics that relies heavily on the work of the French biologists François Jacob and Jacques Monod. For more on Deleuze and Guattari’s use of biological terms, see Marks (2006, 81-97).

⁵⁶⁶ ATP 69

another, but “the ability of language, with its own givens on its own stratum, to represent all the other strata.”⁵⁶⁷

In order to understand the uses of the concept of the line of flight in *A Thousand Plateaus* it is not vital to explicate the exact mechanisms by which each of these three processes of double articulation operate. It will, however, be useful to recognize two general points concerning their effects. First, Deleuze and Guattari argue that, in the case of the physical strata, expression is dependent on content, but due to the way in which the organic stratum organizes physical matter, in the organic articulation expression becomes independent of content. This means that organisms are able to vary their modes of expression in relation to their milieu, in order to carry out tasks such as the marking of a territory. Because of the way that the abstract machine of the linguistic stratum is able to translate the components of the other strata, Deleuze and Guattari argue that “in language, not only is expression independent of content, but form of expression is independent of substance.”⁵⁶⁸ This simply means that a single form of expression in language can relate to substances that are not linguistic, but organic or physical. The second general point to be made here follows from the first: because of the way that expression becomes more detached from content as we move from the physical, to the organic, to the linguistic, it is also the case that the level of deterritorialization available on each stratum increases. To name this phenomenon, Deleuze and Guattari say that on the physical strata deterritorialization is *superficial*, on the organic strata it is *linear*, while on the linguistic strata it is *superlinear*. This means that language has a higher tendency towards variability and change than either organic or physical matter.

The three processes of double articulation described here are not intended to be thought independently of one another. In reality, each of these processes interacts with the others, and it is possible for the substance of expression of one articulation to be taken up as the substance of content for another articulation of a different order. What this means is that the intermingling of

⁵⁶⁷ ATP 69

⁵⁶⁸ ATP 70

various physical, organic, and linguistic assemblages form larger assemblages. In practice, we are never able to distinguish multiplicities of one order from those of another and must accept that there are “only multiplicities of multiplicities forming a single assemblage, operating in the same assemblage.”⁵⁶⁹ Deleuze and Guattari build on their theory of the machinic capacities of matter, previously developed in *Anti-Oedipus*, to explain how these amalgamations of the assemblages formed by the three different *abstract machines* of double articulation create both *machinic assemblages of bodies* and *collective assemblages of enunciation*. Assemblages interact so that the contents that produce physical, organic and linguistic assemblages are all machined together in an intensive set of relations. This collection of contents is called a machinic assemblage of bodies and relates to the first articulation of content. All of the different expressions of each of these interacting contents are also machined together in an extensive expression that Deleuze and Guattari call a collective assemblage of enunciation. This means that every assemblage has both “its segment of expression, the collective assemblage of enunciation as the set of incorporeal transformations” as well as “the segment of material content where bodies intermingle and interact with one another.”⁵⁷⁰ The importance of this distinction becomes apparent at a pragmatic level. We will see in the next chapter, for example, that these terms are essential for Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of political formations. In fact, while each political form is defined in part by the machinic assemblage of bodies that defines its content, our ability to recognize it as a specific political form is determined by the level of stability of its collective assemblage of enunciation. Specifically, when a collective assemblage of enunciation reaches a high enough level of stability it is called a *regime of signs*. We will return to the importance of these regimes in the next chapter when we examine the pragmatic role that the concept of the line of flight plays in bringing about political change.

Before we go any further, however, we are now in a position to show how the line of flight relates to the stratification of assemblages. We have seen here

⁵⁶⁹ ATP 38

⁵⁷⁰ Bell, 2018, 77

that rather than being defined merely by the interactions between deterritorialization and reterritorialization on a single axis, any assemblage is also stratified on a horizontal axis that splits its content from its expression via a double articulation of matter. It is because of the two directions of each of these two axes that we can say that assemblages are tetravalent. In the last section, we saw that the concept of the line of flight is used to name those interassemblage connections that bring about absolute deterritorializations, but now we must ask how the line of flight relates to stratification as well. The first thing to note here is that while de/reterritorialization and stratification are distinct processes that operate on different axes of the assemblage, they also interact with each other.⁵⁷¹ We can take as a starting point Deleuze and Guattari's claim that "absolute deterritorialization becomes relative only after stratification occurs."⁵⁷² This comment reflects our earlier discussion of the primacy of the line of flight, but adds that it is the process of stratification that relativizes the deterritorializations that the line of flight brings about. What Deleuze and Guattari are saying here is that processes of deterritorialization are not only working against the processes of reterritorialization on the vertical axis, but also that they must cross the physical, organic, and linguistic strata that segment the assemblage on the horizontal axis. Processes of deterritorialization become relative when they must proceed in segments from one strata to another. Speaking of what qualifies a process of deterritorialization as either relative or absolute, Deleuze and Guattari write that it "is not its speed (some are very slow) but its nature, whether it constitutes epistrata and parastrata and proceeds by articulated segments or, on the contrary, jumps from one singularity to another following a nondecomposable, nonsegmentary line drawing a metastratum."⁵⁷³ If we recognize that epistrata and parastrata refer to the spaces above and to the side of the stratifications, then we can see that what defines the line of flight, and allows it to bring about absolute deterritorializations, is its ability to cut across the strata that would otherwise segment the assemblage into the

⁵⁷¹ Adkins (2015, 51)

⁵⁷² ATP 64

⁵⁷³ ATP 63

physical, the organic, and the linguistic. This is why Deleuze and Guattari speak of “a line of flight enabling one to blow apart strata.”⁵⁷⁴

In practice, assemblages are not distinct, but always interacting so that in reality the physical, the organic and the linguistic are always machined together. Now we can see that what separates the absolute deterritorialization of the line of flight from relative deterritorializations is that the former deterritorialize specifically by cutting across the strata. In these cases, an assemblage is transformed because a connection is made not only between two assemblages on the same physical, organic, or linguistic stratum, but between assemblages on different strata and thus between different levels of the collective assemblage. A connection is made between an object, an organism, and a word that brings about an incorporeal transformation in which everything changes. Using Guattari’s concept of the transversal, which we discussed in an earlier chapter, it would be possible to say that a line of flight is like a diagonal line that cuts across both the horizontal axis of the strata and the vertical axis of de/re-territorializations. In this sense, it is also the line of flight which puts these two different axes into relation with each other.

vi) The plane of consistency and the question of dimensions

We have now seen how the rhizomatic image of thought allows us to map the many connections that make up an assemblage and how, on top of the relative deterritorializations that enact alterations in the assemblage, the line of flight can bring about absolute deterritorializations of the assemblage by cutting across the strata. One point that we have not yet explored is the question of what is reached when an assemblage is absolutely deterritorialized. According to the terminology of *A Thousand Plateaus*, the answer to this question is the plane of immanence, or the plane of consistency.⁵⁷⁵ The plane of consistency is the plane on which stratifications emerge. In fact, the strata are nothing other

⁵⁷⁴ ATP 16

⁵⁷⁵ These two terms are interchangeable in *A Thousand Plateaus* and often appear together: “...the plane of consistency or immanence...” ATP 297 and 313. See also Young, Genosko, & Watson, 2013, 239. The French word *plan* can be translated as either plane, or as plan.

than “thickenings on a plane of consistency”, which does not rely on the strata but “is everywhere, always primary and always immanent.”⁵⁷⁶ Deterritorializations are also drawn on this plane. Given the fact that the process of stratification operates by giving form to the substance of both content and expression, we might think that the plane of consistency would be composed of a completely unformed mass, but Deleuze and Guattari claim that it is “in no way an undifferentiated aggregate of unformed matters, but neither is it a chaos of formed matters of every kind.”⁵⁷⁷ Instead, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the plane of consistency “*constructs continuums of intensity*: it creates continuity for intensities that it extracts from distinct forms and substances.”⁵⁷⁸ As a field of intensities, the concept of the plane of consistency plays a similar role to that of the depths in *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*, as well as the intensive field of desiring-production in *Anti-Oedipus*. In both volumes of the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series the plane of consistency is also the site of the direct investment of desire.⁵⁷⁹ One difference is that in *A Thousand Plateaus*, given the application of the rhizomatic image of thought, Deleuze and Guattari are able to offer more insight into the various different processes that happen on this plane. Specifically, and as we have already seen, Deleuze and Guattari are able to define the plane of consistency as a “[c]ontinuum of intensities” consisting of a pre-signifying semiotic matter “of particles or signs-particles”, and produced by a “conjunction of deterritorialized flows”.⁵⁸⁰ Deleuze and Guattari name these characteristics as “the three factors proper to the plane of consistency.”⁵⁸¹

The plane of consistency is said to account for all the dimensions of all the multiplicities drawn on it. Deleuze and Guattari write that “multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all of their dimensions: we will therefore speak of a *plane of consistency* of multiplicities, even though the dimensions

⁵⁷⁶ ATP 78

⁵⁷⁷ ATP 78

⁵⁷⁸ ATP 78

⁵⁷⁹ ATP 170, 183-184, 313

⁵⁸⁰ ATP 78

⁵⁸¹ ATP 78

of this "plane" increase with the number of connections that are made on it."⁵⁸² This insistence that all multiplicities are drawn on a single plane is a way of accounting for the univocity of being and for the immanence of a philosophy able to think this univocity.⁵⁸³ Deleuze and Guattari's comments concerning the fact that the plane of consistency fills all of its dimensions also show that Deleuze's reading of Riemannian differential geometry remains central to Deleuze and Guattari's updated theory of multiplicities.⁵⁸⁴ In the first chapter of this thesis we saw how Riemann had used differential calculus to develop a geometry that was applicable for all curved and non-curved spaces. As Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition*, this geometry allows us to think "an n-dimensional, continuous, defined multiplicity" immanently.⁵⁸⁵ Deleuze and Guattari hold on to this point when they write in *A Thousand Plateaus* that the multiple must be made, "not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available— always $n - 1$ ".⁵⁸⁶ In these cases, we have no external measure of distance and no static grid of orientation against which to judge the position of a line, so that each new connection must provide its own measure and its own dimension. What this means for Deleuze and Guattari at the point of writing *A Thousand Plateaus* is that any new connection drawn in a multiplicity will bring about a change in the nature of that multiplicity. This alteration of a multiplicity via the making of new connections is what Deleuze and Guattari have been calling an assemblage: "An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections."⁵⁸⁷ This way of conceptualising the assemblage also helps to clarify why it is said that the line of flight is primary in an assemblage, namely because it is only by drawing a line of flight that the necessary interassemblage connection can be made, the

⁵⁸² ATP 9

⁵⁸³ For more on the univocity of being, and Deleuze's refusal of the Oneness of being, see Widder (2001, 437-453).

⁵⁸⁴ Here I refer to Deleuze and Guattari's comments on Riemann's geometry as they appear in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, and in the tenth plateau. Deleuze and Guattari also discuss Riemann's work extensively in the fourteenth plateau, where they pay special attention to the question of fractals, and their fractional number of dimensions.

⁵⁸⁵ DR 230

⁵⁸⁶ ATP 7

⁵⁸⁷ ATP 9

added dimension can be produced, and the assemblage can come into being. In order to explain this reconceptualization of the relationship between the line of flight, the multiplicity, the assemblage, and the plane of consistency, Deleuze and Guattari write the following:

“The line of flight marks: the reality of a finite number of dimensions that the multiplicity effectively fills; the impossibility of a supplementary dimension, unless the multiplicity is transformed by the line of flight; the possibility and necessity of flattening all of the multiplicities on a single plane of consistency or exteriority, regardless of their number of dimensions.”⁵⁸⁸

The fact that Deleuze and Guattari insist on the primacy of the line of flight also helps to explain how they hope to produce a philosophy that can account for the nature of change in general. In short, the theory of multiplicities given above shows that thought can never begin with something static and produce change, but that change is always a prerequisite for what is static. In the terminology of *A Thousand Plateaus*, this is summed up in the comment that all stratifications are nothing other than “thickenings on a plane of consistency.”⁵⁸⁹ It might be the case that lines of flight are defined as “the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis”, but it is also the case that multiplicities are composed of these lines, and are therefore always changing in nature.⁵⁹⁰ Because the variations and dimensions of any multiplicity are immanent to it, “*it amounts to the same thing to say that each multiplicity is already composed of heterogeneous terms in symbiosis, and that a multiplicity is continually transforming itself into a string of other multiplicities, according to its thresholds and doors.*”⁵⁹¹ To put this another way, we can say that because assemblages are only produced when the maximum dimension of a multiplicity is reached, “becoming and multiplicity are the same thing”.⁵⁹² Just as the absolute deterritorialization of the line of

⁵⁸⁸ ATP 10

⁵⁸⁹ ATP 78

⁵⁹⁰ ATP 23

⁵⁹¹ ATP 275

⁵⁹² ATP 275

flight is primary in the assemblage, so change and transformation are primary on the plane of consistency.

In the next section of this chapter we will push our exploration of the nature of the plane of consistency a little further by looking at Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of painting in *A Thousand Plateaus*. However, before moving on, it will be instructive to pause and consider why Deleuze and Guattari claim that philosophers have previously misrecognised the plane of consistency and therefore why the nature of change has remained so elusive to thought. In the tenth plateau, '1730: *Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible...*', Deleuze and Guattari compare "two planes, or two ways of conceptualizing the plane."⁵⁹³ One of which is the plane of consistency that we have just been considering. The other is the "plan(e) of organization or development."⁵⁹⁴ The plane of organisation is that "hidden structure necessary for forms" which the dogmatic image of thought takes as the precondition for good sense in thought. This 'hidden structure' is perhaps most clearly exemplified by Plato's famous analogy between the thinker and the butcher, both of whom are required to work by "dividing things again by classes, where the natural joints are."⁵⁹⁵ What Deleuze and Guattari take issue with is the idea that there are any hidden but necessary 'natural joints' at all. Such an assumption, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is always "inferred" or "concluded from its own effects."⁵⁹⁶ The assumption of an always hidden plane that sits behind reality and provides it with a structure is at the core of arborescent thinking. Deleuze and Guattari say that the plane of organization is both 'teleological' and 'structural' because the apparent design of such a plane – the placement of the joints – "establishes the proportional relations of a structure" and must be posited by "the mind of a god, or in the unconscious of life, of the soul, or of language."⁵⁹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari also use the language of dimensions to argue that the plane of organization introduces transcendence into thought. Once again, Deleuze's previous analysis of

⁵⁹³ ATP 292

⁵⁹⁴ ATP 297

⁵⁹⁵ Plato, 2002, 265e

⁵⁹⁶ ATP 293

⁵⁹⁷ ATP 293

Riemannian geometry will be useful here. Before the advent of Riemannian geometry, it was only possible to work with curved spaces in geometry by representing these spaces in a non-curved space of a higher dimension. As we saw earlier, the problem with this practice is that it must take for granted the existence of a supplementary space used for analysis alone, which must also be assumed to be flat.⁵⁹⁸ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari condemn the dogmatic image of thought on the same grounds, claiming that the plane of organization is always assumed to exist “in a supplementary dimension to that to which it gives rise ($n + 1$).”⁵⁹⁹ The plane of consistency, on the other hand, “is necessarily a plane of immanence” because the rhizomatic thought that thinks with the plane of consistency never allows for the existence of a supplementary dimension and recognises that dimension added to a multiplicity brings about a change in nature.

The purpose of raising this point here, concerning the difference between the plane of consistency and the plane of organisation, is to show how Deleuze and Guattari can claim that the line of flight is not simply an activity of thought. While the arborescent model for thought always embeds its object in an abstract space, where it is cut off from the rest of reality and made static and unchanging, in order to pass judgement upon it, the rhizomatic model for thought thinks with assemblages as they are changing and as they are interacting with other assemblages. What this means is that the concepts that relate to the rhizomatic image of thought, such as deterritorialization, stratification, and the line of flight, do not exist within thought, waiting to be imposed on matter in an act of judgement. Instead, these concepts concern an immanent thought that cannot be detached from that which it thinks. The line of flight is therefore not simply in the head of the subject who thinks it, or in the object about which it is thought, but on the plane of consistency which refuses to separate the subject from the object, and on which there is only a “continuum of intensities”.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁸ Greenberg, 1980, 373-374. See Deleuze’s comments on philosophies that require a “fictitious third dimension” (DR 61).

⁵⁹⁹ ATP 293

⁶⁰⁰ ATP 78

vii) Multilinear systems and the example of linear perspective (again)

Throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari develop their many conceptual inventions through analyses of artistic forms.⁶⁰¹ In the tenth plateau, Deleuze and Guattari elaborate on the dynamics of the plane of consistency and the plane of organisation by discussing the many ways that they operate in both music and in painting. In each case, Deleuze and Guattari aim to differentiate those forms of music, or of painting, that face towards the plane of organisation from those that face towards the plane of consistency. According to their analysis here, the forms of music and of painting that face the plane of organisation are those that form *punctual systems*. Punctual systems are those that create order through the use of vertical and horizontal lines, which create a grid for determining the location of points (i.e. punctual). In these cases, vertical and horizontal lines provide a structure, while diagonals “play the role of connectors between points.”⁶⁰² In these cases: “The line and the diagonal remain totally subordinated to the point because they serve as coordinates for a point or as localizable connections for two points, running from one point to another.”⁶⁰³ Deleuze and Guattari state that these systems are “arborescent, mnemonic, molar, structural; they are systems of territorialization or reterritorialization.”⁶⁰⁴ Punctual systems are also defined as being representational.⁶⁰⁵

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the forms of music and of painting that face towards the plane of consistency are not punctual but multilinear: “Opposed to

⁶⁰¹ Perhaps the most comprehensive example of this comes with their analysis of the form of the novella in the eighth plateau, where the concept of the line of flight plays an integral role. Paul Patton uses Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis of Fitzgerald’s novella to define one outcome of the line of flight as a “kind of shift towards another quality of life” (Patton, 2000, 87).

⁶⁰² ATP 325

⁶⁰³ ATP 326

⁶⁰⁴ ATP 326

⁶⁰⁵ By defining these systems as representational, Deleuze and Guattari are not saying that they are figurative, or that they produce an image of something that they represent, but that they have a systematic way of organising sensation. For Deleuze, artistic forms such as abstract painting escape from figuration, but not from representation (FB 8-12).

the punctual system are linear, or rather multilinear, systems.”⁶⁰⁶ Multilinear systems do not rely on an orientating grid of horizontal and vertical lines, they do not define the location of individual points, and thus they do not subordinate lines to points. In this plateau, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that creativity in the arts is always linked to the development of multilinear systems that oppose the historical imposition of punctual systems. They write: “Free the line, free the diagonal: every musician or painter has this intention.”⁶⁰⁷

However, much like the similar distinction between the arborescent and rhizomatic images of thought, the distinction between punctual and multilinear systems is not simply an opposition. Multilinear systems are never separated from punctual ones, but are like methodologies for undoing the stratified relations between points that punctual systems set up. Punctual systems are not taken as failed attempts at creativity, but as sites, or contexts, waiting to be opened up by an act of creative deformation. In certain cases, artists require a punctual system as the backdrop to their activity. Deleuze and Guattari write that: “One elaborates a punctual system or a didactic representation, but with the aim of making it snap, of sending a tremor through it. A punctual system is most interesting when there is a musician, painter, writer, philosopher to oppose it, who even fabricates it in order to oppose it, like a springboard to jump from.”⁶⁰⁸ Given this relation between punctual and multilinear systems, we are now in a position to explore Deleuze and Guattari’s comments on linear perspective and their analysis of the role of the line of flight in this context. This is what they write:

“There is no falser problem in painting than depth and, in particular, perspective. For perspective is only a historical manner of *occupying* diagonals or transversals, lines of flight in other words, of reterritorializing the moving visual block... But the lines of flight, the transversals, are suitable for many other functions besides this molar function. Lines of flight as perspective lines, far from being made to represent depth, themselves invent the possibility of

⁶⁰⁶ ATP 326

⁶⁰⁷ ATP 326

⁶⁰⁸ ATP 326

such a representation, which occupies them only for an instant, at a given moment. Perspective, and even depth, are the reterritorialization of lines of flight, which alone created painting by carrying it farther.”⁶⁰⁹

First, this quotation suggests that linear perspective, as a technique for dealing with the false problem of depth in painting, should be considered as an archetypal punctual system. It takes the vertical and horizontal axis of the canvas as a grid for determining the location of points, and uses diagonals, or converging lines, to connect these points in an attempt to simulate depth. The second thing that this quotation suggests, however, is that despite the stratifying capacity of linear perspective, it is possible to use this system as a springboard towards the multilinear, and towards the plane of consistency. The shift we can see here from Deleuze’s earlier comments in *Difference and Repetition* concerns the potentials for creativity, or for transformation that lie within linear perspective. Rather than being simply an example of the dangers of representation, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari aim to show how this punctual system can be opposed, namely by recognising the primacy of the line of flight over the perspectival system that captures it. Linear perspective may be a punctual system, which tends towards the plane of organisation, but it is the line of flight – resisting representation and running between indiscernible points – which is also the internal point of escape of linear perspective. It is by following lines of flight that linear perspective can be made into a springboard with which to oppose the representational history of painting.

In the first chapter of this thesis we saw how Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the line of flight relates to the concept of the *ligne de fuite* in the terminology of linear perspective. Briefly put, these are the lines that run between vanishing points and determine the abstract line towards which two parallel planes converge if extended to infinity. However, contrary to this definition, in a translator’s note to the long quotation given above, Massumi adds the following comment: “*lignes de fuite*: here, the lines in a painting moving toward the

⁶⁰⁹ ATP 329

vanishing point, or *point de fuite*.”⁶¹⁰ From our analysis, we now know that this note is incorrect. *Lignes de fuite* are not the lines that converge towards the vanishing point, but are instead the lines that run between the vanishing points. This is important because of what it means for the kind of creativity that Deleuze and Guattari are attempting to call for. If the line of flight were like the line that runs towards the vanishing point, then to follow a line of flight would be a kind of ‘heading off into the distance’, a movement over the horizon. But this is not how the term is used. Rather than being a line that escapes over the horizon, the line of flight *is* the horizon. To draw a new line of flight is therefore an activity of creating a new horizon, or of detaching the horizon from the representational space of the painting. Not of escaping the current organisation of relations by getting outside, or beyond them, but escaping them by reorganising them from within. Deleuze and Guattari write that “Creations are like mutant abstract lines that have detached themselves from the task of representing a world.”⁶¹¹ However, they also clarify that they do not detach themselves from representation by escaping reality, but “precisely because they assemble a new type of reality.”⁶¹² It will be important to keep this form of creative action in mind when we turn to the question of political transformations in the following chapter.

viii) The BwO and the ethics of the line of flight

Drawing lines of flight can lead to absolute deterritorialization on the plane of consistency. But is this a politically expedient, or ethically favourable outcome? Or, more to the point, is it always favourable, and if not, then when is it favourable, and for whom? Despite Deleuze and Guattari’s regular prescriptions to their readers that they should aim to “extend the line of flight to the point where it becomes an abstract machine covering the entire plane of consistency” they also pepper the book with words of caution.⁶¹³ We are told, for example, that absolute deterritorialization may be “overlaid by a

⁶¹⁰ ATP 329

⁶¹¹ ATP 326

⁶¹² ATP 326

⁶¹³ ATP 12

compensatory reterritorialization” that would be more despotic than what was deterritorialized.⁶¹⁴ On top of the possibility of the line of flight turning into a segmentary line, we are also warned that the line of flight is “imbued with such singular despair” relating to the immanent possibility of “a death, a demolition” that it may bring about.⁶¹⁵ In this final section of this chapter, I want to explore some of these dangers by looking at the concept of the Body without Organs (BwO). I will argue here that it is a mistake to assume that it is ethically positive to draw lines of flight. However, by looking at the extent to which Deleuze and Guattari’s work builds on the possibility of a Spinozist ethics, I will argue that, while it is not ethically positive to draw a line of flight, ethics is only possible when an adequate knowledge of causes is attained, and that to reach such a form of knowledge it is vital to think rhizomatically and to map the many lines of flight that are primary in the assemblage under consideration. We will see here that there is nothing inherently ethical about drawing lines of flight, but that a true ethics requires the mapping of such lines.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari used the concept of the BwO to designate the unformed and unorganized state of the body, against which the desiring machines worked to form connections, disjunctions, and conjunctions. We saw in the last chapter how the BwO was given as one end of a continuum, along which bodies become more or less organized. At the other pole of this continuum is the organism. Using the conceptual framework laid out in *A Thousand Plateaus*, we can now say that the BwO plays the role of the plane of consistency specifically for the double articulation and stratification of organic matter. While organisms are created via the selection and formation of an intensive substance of content, which, by way of transduction, results in the formation of an extensive substance of expression, the processes of deterritorialization that cut across these stratifications lead the organism back towards the BwO. Speaking of such cases, Deleuze and Guattari write: “In effect, the body without organs is itself the plane of consistency.”⁶¹⁶ We might think, given the apparently despotic nature of the organization of the body, that

⁶¹⁴ ATP 559

⁶¹⁵ ATP 227

⁶¹⁶ ATP 45

Deleuze and Guattari would take the BwO as a goal – and, indeed, they dedicate a whole plateau to the question, ‘How do you make yourself a Body without Organs?’ – however, this is the section of the book that contains the highest level of caution. We are told that making oneself a BwO is not easy, that “you can botch it”, and that “it can be terrifying, and lead you to your death.”⁶¹⁷

The main technique offered for the deterritorialization of the body is the act of resisting the normal function of the organs. Instead of “seeing with your eyes, breathing with your lungs, swallowing with your mouth,” the aim will be to “walk on your head, sing with your sinuses, see through your skin, breathe with your belly.”⁶¹⁸ This demand might not be quite as impossible as it first sounds, as the aim of disorganizing the body is not simply to use the wrong organs for each task, but to experiment with the possibilities offered by the body. The idea is not to stop breathing through your mouth and start breathing through your belly, but to experiment with the different possibilities of breathing. In Deleuze’s book on the paintings of Francis Bacon, written at the same time as *A Thousand Plateaus* and covering many of the same themes, Deleuze clarifies that in making oneself a BwO the aim is not simply to destroy the organs, but to create “transitory organs”.⁶¹⁹ Taking the act of viewing one of Bacon’s paintings as his primary example, Deleuze explains how the eye “ceases to be organic in order to become a polyvalent and transitory organ” because the possibilities contained in the eye are freed from the prescribed function of feeding visual information to the brain.⁶²⁰ In the act of the encounter with the intensity of the painting, we also feel the painting with organs other than the eye. It affects us in other ways than the purely visual and “gives us eyes all over: in the ear, in the stomach, in the lungs.”⁶²¹ In the previous section on the role of the line of flight in linear perspective, we saw that to escape from the restrictions of the organised space of perspectival painting the aim was not to draw a line that flees over the horizon, but to detach the horizon from its fixed

⁶¹⁷ ATP 166

⁶¹⁸ ATP 167

⁶¹⁹ FB, 48, 49, 50, 51, & 52

⁶²⁰ FB 52

⁶²¹ FB 52

position, in order to put the whole space in variation. Similarly here, in making oneself a BwO the aim is not to escape the body by getting outside of it, but to detach an organ from its fixed function and put it into variation with the other organs of the body.

Understandably, this process is not without its dangers. When speaking of composing the BwO, Deleuze and Guattari write that “[t]here is no assurance that two lines of flight will prove compatible, compossible”, and that as a result of this “[t]here is no assurance that the body without organs will be easy to compose.”⁶²² Drug addicts, sexual fetishists, and anorexics are given as examples of people who have tried to make themselves into a BwO by experimenting with the possibilities of the body, but who have ended up with “[e]mptied bodies instead of full ones”.⁶²³ By detaching one organ from its assumed function and putting it into variation with the other organs, your new internal relations may become unstable or incompatible, you may empty yourself out. In order to avoid falling into the danger of joining this “dreary parade of sucked-dry, catatonicized, vitrified, sewn-up bodies” Deleuze and Guattari council caution.⁶²⁴ It is due to the very nature of experimentation that we cannot know in advance what will happen. This is why Deleuze and Guattari like to quote Spinoza’s famous claim that “nobody as yet has determined the limits of the body’s capabilities: that is, nobody as yet has learned from experience what the body can and cannot do.”⁶²⁵ Experimentation is dangerous and always proceeds in small steps. It is also the case that experimentation is never complete. For this reason the BwO is never simply attained, but is always a limit that one approaches.⁶²⁶ It is a skill that is learned through practice, and in context, rather than in theory. You cannot reach the BwO “by wildly destratifying” because you must “keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn.”⁶²⁷ What this means is that if all of the organizations of the body are dismantled simultaneously, then there

⁶²² ATP 226

⁶²³ ATP 167

⁶²⁴ ATP 167

⁶²⁵ Spinoza, 2002, 280

⁶²⁶ ATP 166

⁶²⁷ ATP 178

will not be any ground on which to base the reorganization of its organs. In one of the most telling passages of the book, given towards the end of the plateau on the BwO, Deleuze and Guattari give the following answer to the question of how to make oneself a body without organs:

“Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO.”⁶²⁸

This quote brings together many of the practical points we have just explored. First, the process always proceeds by experimentation. You do not yet know what your lines of flight are, or what your possibilities of deterritorialization are, so it will take some trial and error to find out. Crucially, throughout this process, you must also keep some of the body organized. Without a small area to come back to after each experimentation, it is more likely that the experiments will fail. This quote is also useful for the way that it ties together some of the themes we have already explored in both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. Just as it was the schizoanalysts’ task in *Anti-Oedipus* to seek out and follow a subject’s lines of flight, to find their desiring machines, and to experiment with their possibilities, here one makes oneself a BwO in much the same way. This quote is also useful because it brings back some of the terminology that was related to the concept of the *refrain*. Specifically, given the practical case of experimenting with the BwO, we can see why the first two stages of the refrain, in which an inside is separated from the outside and becomes a home, are necessary for the third stage of the refrain, in which explorations can be made into the outside. What remains surprising is the fact that, despite the many words of caution in the text, the concept of the line of flight, and the state of absolute deterritorialization that it apparently brings about, are often read as

⁶²⁸ ATP 178

being ultimately desirable.⁶²⁹ This is especially confusing given the fact that Deleuze and Guattari make it explicit that remaining “stratified—organized, signified, subjected— is not the worst that can happen.” Instead, they claim that “the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back down on us heavier than ever.”⁶³⁰ We will return to this danger in the next chapter, when we discuss Deleuze and Guattari’s political pragmatism. However, in order to understand the ethics of the line of flight, and the ethical framework of the whole book, it is important to note here how Deleuze and Guattari’s ethics draws on the work of Spinoza, and to a lesser extent Nietzsche, and how the ethical principles that it develops are distinct from a morality.

In his earlier work, Deleuze had paid much attention to the distinction between morality and ethics.⁶³¹ Through the work of Spinoza, Deleuze had found a methodology for determining what is ethically good or bad, without any need to rely on an additional category distinction between what is good and what is evil. For Spinoza, what is good in the ethical sense for any specific body is just that which increases that body’s capacity to act. If two bodies interact in such a way that they increase each other’s capacity to act, then the interaction is good and it produces the positive affect of joy. If, on the other hand, two bodies interact in such a way that they reduce each other’s capacity to act then the interaction is ethically bad and produces the affect of sadness. These two affects are ultimately distinguished on the basis of their activity or passivity: that which is good and produces joy is active, while that which is bad and produces sadness is passive. What is good and what is bad, according to this simple schema, is not determined by any transcendent moral law, but is discovered on a case-by-case basis depending on the compatibility of bodies and the power contained in them. Consequently, Deleuze writes of Spinoza’s philosophy that in it there is “neither Good nor Evil, there is no moral opposition, but there is an ethical difference.”⁶³² The question of how to

⁶²⁹ Holland, 2013, 56

⁶³⁰ ATP 178

⁶³¹ “This is how good and evil are born: ethical determination, that of good and bad, gives way to moral judgement” (NP 121-122). Also, EP 255-257.

⁶³² EP 261. See also SPP 17-30.

become an ethical individual now becomes something very distinct from any social or religious obligations to follow a particular moral code. Instead, to become ethical requires the development of a special kind of knowledge that will be able to understand the interaction of bodies, that will be able to explain what causes the affects of joy and sadness, and ultimately will allow for the selection of those interactions that will bring about active encounters. Spinoza defines this kind of understanding as the acquisition of “adequate ideas”, and distinguishes it from those ideas that remain “inadequate”.⁶³³ While a full description of Spinoza’s ethics is beyond the reach of this chapter, what is most important here is the thought that while inadequate ideas only relate to effects, adequate ideas enable us to understand causes. Summarizing this point in Spinoza, Deleuze writes that with inadequate ideas “we have knowledge of effects only; or to put it differently, we know only properties of things. Only adequate ideas, as expressive, give us knowledge through causes, or through a thing's essence.”⁶³⁴ Adding in clarification that an adequate idea “*is just an idea that expresses its cause.*”⁶³⁵ What is important for our discussion, and what is carried over into *A Thousand Plateaus*, is the idea that ethical action is not determined by any pre-given, transcendent law, and that to act ethically one must attain knowledge of the kinds of affects produced when bodies interact so that positive and joyous relations can be selected over those that produce the sad passions.

In order to understand the ethical implications of the concept of the line of flight, as it appears in *A Thousand Plateaus*, we must recognize that it is operating within this form of Spinozist ethics. Using distinctly Spinozist terminology, in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari give the following response to the question of how to produce an Ethics: “We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another

⁶³³ For an overview of the relation between ideas and the passions see LeBuffe’s (2009, 188-233). For a discussion of the difference between adequate and inadequate ideas see McAllister (2014).

⁶³⁴ EP 133-134

⁶³⁵ EP 133. For Spinoza, this cause will be God. However, following more closely from Nietzsche’s understanding of the Will to Power as ultimate cause, Deleuze and Guattari will take desire to be the cause in need of expression.

body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body.”⁶³⁶ The rhizomatic model of thought employed in *A Thousand Plateaus* is selected precisely because it is able to map the connections that produce bodies and determine their interactions. While the arborescent image of thought remains at the level of effects, seeing only subjects, objects, and predicates, it is the rhizomatic image of thought that is able to analyze the forces that cause these effects to be produced. In short, it is the rhizomatic model of thought alone that can provide us with *adequate ideas*.

Deleuze and Guattari make such a connection between Spinoza’s ethics and their concept of the BwO that they are happy to ask: “is not Spinoza’s *Ethics* the great book of the BwO?”⁶³⁷ Given this Spinozist context, it is now possible to rephrase the question posed at the beginning of this section: Is it ethically positive to draw lines of flight? Do lines of flight, and the absolute deterritorialization of the body that they bring about, increase that body’s capacity to act? This is not a straightforward question to answer. While deterritorialization does increase the capacities of the body, this relies on the body not becoming emptied of the intensive flows that cross it. As we have seen, the line of flight can lead to death, which inevitably leads to a decrease in the body’s capacity to act. It seems then that it is not necessarily ethically positive to draw lines of flight. However, our discussion of Spinoza’s ethics also allows us to ask different kinds of questions of the line of flight. If it is the case that the distinction between what is good and what is bad is not given by a transcendent moral law, and is therefore unknowable except by experimentation, then it is not meaningful to ask whether lines of flight will be ethical actions in all cases. It is more reasonable to pose the question from the perspective of knowledge. If it is only via the acquisition of adequate ideas that we are able to understand causes, and if it is only through an understanding of causes that ethical actions may be selected, then the question we should ask is: does the concept of the line of flight help us to attain adequate ideas? The answer to this question is much more positive. As primary elements of any

⁶³⁶ ATP 284

⁶³⁷ ATP 170

assemblage, lines of flight are necessary components of the vegetal image of thought. Without this concept at hand, we are unable to understand the dynamics that condition the interaction and production of bodies. While the drawing of lines of flight is not necessarily ethical, the ability to map the various lines of flight that produce our bodies, and the bodies that we are surrounded by, is certainly a necessary conceptual component for acquiring adequate ideas. After providing their instructions for the process of experimentation that is required to make oneself a Body without Organs, Deleuze and Guattari claim that if you follow these instructions you will have “constructed your own little machine, ready when needed to be plugged into other collective machines.”⁶³⁸ What is interesting about this comment is that it is forward-looking. Mapping the lines of flight that surround you, and exploring the deterritorializations that pass through you, may not bring about ethical outcomes in and of themselves, but this process provides you with an understanding of your causes, so that you will be able to proceed by selecting those connections that will increase your capacity to act.

⁶³⁸ ATP 179

Chapter 6 – A Thousand Plateaus 2: *The Line of Flight and Political Pragmatism*

Contents:

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- ii) Linguistic pragmatism
- iii) The four regimes and their lines of flight
- iv) Becoming molecular
- v) Diagrammatics, machinic analysis, and micropolitics
- vi) Abolition, self-conservation and the creation of a refrain
- vii) Institutional Analysis, and the art of drawing lines of flight

i) Introduction

Following the analysis of the conceptual positioning of the concept of the line of flight in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in this chapter I will turn my attention to the theory of political economy put forward in the text, and ask what role the newly defined concept of the line of flight plays in this analysis. Ultimately, I will show that the concept of the line of flight is central to the political pragmatics of experimentation that Deleuze and Guattari advocate in the book, but first I will need to answer some general questions about the theory of political dynamics that this pragmatism is based on. In the first section below, I will show how Deleuze and Guattari's new theory of a general semiotics of content and expression challenges structural accounts of both linguistics and anthropology, and lays out a novel account of the difference between historical forms of political economy in terms of *regimes of signs*, along with their *order-words* and the *incorporeal transformations* that these bring about. In the next section I will give an account of the four different regimes of signs that Deleuze and Guattari discuss in the text and analyse the role that the line of flight plays in each of these four regimes. Third, I will show how this move towards an analysis of the power dynamics of regimes of signs leads Deleuze and Guattari first to a reformulation of the molar/molecular dyad and then on to a reconceptualization of their political analysis as a practice of *diagrammatics*, or *machinic analysis*. After returning to the role that the concept of the refrain plays here, and after making some brief comments on the way in which Deleuze and Guattari draw on the history of Institutional Analysis to guide their political proclamations, I will end the chapter with a final overview in which I explain where the concept of the line of flight fits in the political pragmatics of *A Thousand Plateaus*. By the end of this chapter we should therefore have not only a clear understanding of how the concept of the line of flight functions, but we will also have used it to explore the practical and political consequences of Deleuze and Guattari's major work.

ii) Linguistic Pragmatism

We must begin here by asking how Deleuze and Guattari's theory of stratification – which explains the difference between physical, organic, and linguistic matter as a difference in the mode of stratification of content into expression – impacts on their understanding of the different forms of political economy that they studied in *Anti-Oedipus*. If it is the case that physical, organic, and linguistic matter are all stratifications on the same plane of consistency, and are all combined in assemblages of power, then we should be able to use this framework to explore some fundamental political questions. For example, how does the arrangement of physical land and physical apparatuses of production relate to the arrangement of the organic bodies that it supports? How does an arrangement of organic bodies relate to what is said, and vice versa? How do each of these interact with the arrangement of physical matter? First, it is important to remember that these three stratifications are not organized hierarchically.⁶³⁹ It is not the case that physical stratifications lead to organic and then alloplastic, or linguistic stratification. As Deleuze and Guattari put it: “The different figures of content and expression are not stages. There is no biosphere or noosphere, but everywhere the same Mechanosphere.”⁶⁴⁰ Second, we must remember that in the double articulation of translation that defines the alloplastic strata, content and expression become detached in such a way that the form of expression of the alloplastic strata can take the form of content of any other strata as its object. What this means is that language operates by overcoding physical and organic bodies and rearranging their respective forms of content.

Because of this power of overcoding, it is only linguistic strata that can properly be said to have signs. However, Deleuze and Guattari argue that these signs are not necessarily “endowed with signifiante”.⁶⁴¹ All physical and organic matter has its own semiotic form of expression and has its own sense; what separates linguistic signs from the other strata must then be understood not in terms of what they *mean*, but in what they can *do*. Taking the example of the way that children learn the rules of language in primary school, Deleuze and

⁶³⁹ ATP 65-75

⁶⁴⁰ ATP 77

⁶⁴¹ ATP 73

Guattari argue that the “compulsory education machine does not communicate information”, but instead “imposes upon the child semiotic coordinates possessing all of the dual functions of grammar”, including the ordering distinctions between “masculine-feminine, singular-plural, noun-verb, subject of the statement-subject of enunciation”.⁶⁴² Language takes the form of orders given by the teacher, which overcode the bodies of the students and subsequently determine the set of possible ways that they can interact with physical matter. In a telling comparison, Deleuze and Guattari write that words are not tools, but that “we give children language, pens, and notebooks as we give workers shovels and pickaxes.”⁶⁴³ Just as mining tools organize the body of workers to provide them with a very specific horizon of possibility for acting, the orders of the teacher organize the children into a predetermined set of social practices. Following this practical analysis of the power of language to overcode bodies, Deleuze and Guattari argue that language is fundamentally illocutionary. This means that it operates not by the representative function assumed in theories of signification or communication, but by performative acts, such as those of promising, ordering, decreeing, and commanding. The terminology that Deleuze and Guattari introduce to describe these processes include both ‘order-words’ and ‘incorporeal transformations’. In short, language operates by the issuing of order-words which overcode an assemblage via the double articulation of translation, which brings about an incorporeal transformation in the semiotic relations of the assemblage, and ultimately determines what that assemblage can do. To take another example, when the officiator of a wedding states ‘I now pronounce you man and wife’ he or she brings about an incorporeal transformation in the semiotic relations between the couple. The statements of the officiator intervene in the circulation of order-words, such that the couple are transformed from being engaged to being married, and the powers open to them are also transformed: they can adopt a child, apply for a joint mortgage, or share their material wealth without the intervention of state taxation.

⁶⁴² ATP 84

⁶⁴³ ATP 84

For Deleuze and Guattari, order-words are not simply a particular set of statements given in the imperative, but “the relation of every word or every statement to implicit presuppositions.”⁶⁴⁴ What this statement points out is that incorporeal transformations rely on a particular arrangement of bodies to be effective. In the example above, the priest can only bring about the incorporeal transformation of the wedding given a set of underlying material relations defined by the history of the church. Subsequently, “the meaning and syntax of language can no longer be defined independently of the speech acts they presuppose”, and because of this, “pragmatics becomes the presupposition behind all of the other dimensions” of language.⁶⁴⁵ Deleuze and Guattari’s line of argument here begins with their theory of stratification, it moves from the overcoding nature of language, through an analysis of the pragmatics of that overcoding, to a definition of language that highlights the constantly varying relations between a set of order-words and the arrangement of bodies that these order-words take for granted. They write that “the only possible definition of language is the set of all order-words, implicit presuppositions, or speech acts current in a language at a given moment.”⁶⁴⁶ It is with this definition in mind that we will be able to see how Deleuze and Guattari rework the theory of political economy that they first articulated in *Anti-Oedipus*.

The first thing we notice about this definition of language, and the theory of political economy that it accompanies, is that both are distinctly anti-structuralist. Deleuze and Guattari take great pains to emphasize that a form of content “is not a signified, any more than a form of expression is a signifier” and that this is true “for all of the strata, including those on which language plays a role.”⁶⁴⁷ What this means is that the relation between the form of expression of the alloplastic strata and the form of content of the other strata that it overcodes do not form a series of exclusive disjunctions that determine one-to-one relations between a series of signifiers and a series of signifieds.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁴ ATP 87

⁶⁴⁵ ATP 86

⁶⁴⁶ ATP 87

⁶⁴⁷ ATP 74

⁶⁴⁸ This insight follows directly from Deleuze and Guattari’s arguments in *Anti-Oedipus* concerning the inclusive disjunctions and transversal connections made between the elements of the code of the unconscious.

Subsequently, it is not possible to give an account of the political relations of a society simply by assuming that the structural relations of language offer a representation of these interactions. The most obvious example here comes directly from *Anti-Oedipus*: while the despotic overcoding of the signifier does in fact structure desire into oedipal relations of lack and castration, this organization is contingent on the material forms of the capitalist mode of production. What is more, desire itself always finds a way to escape this form of capture. At this point in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari recast what they had called the transcendental illusions that accompany the illegitimate use of the three syntheses of the unconscious in *Anti-Oedipus* as “the illusion constitutive of man”, which “derives from the overcoding immanent to language itself.”⁶⁴⁹ They speak here of the “imperialist pretensions on behalf of language”, which derive from the mistaken assumption by which we jump directly from the fact that the linguistic strata *can* overcode any of the other strata to the conclusion that it *does in fact* overcode all of the strata.⁶⁵⁰ On the contrary, while order-words may intervene in any state of affairs, this state of affairs must necessarily contain physical and organic articulations of matter that remain outside of the linguistic strata.

Unlike some of Guattari’s claims in *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, and some of Deleuze and Guattari’s claims in *Anti-Oedipus*, what marks out this theory of illocutionary language put forward in *A Thousand Plateaus* is that it no longer subjugates linguistics to a more basic realm of intensive material processes. In previous chapters I showed how, based on Guattari’s Marxist reformulation of Lacanian structuralism, Deleuze and Guattari had begun to map the distinction between the machinic and intensive process of the unconscious and the linguistic structure of conscious thought onto the distinction that Marx formulates between the material base of a society and the legal and cultural superstructure to which it gives rise.⁶⁵¹ However, given their new analysis of the way in which order-words can bring about incorporeal transformations in assemblages composed of physical and organic strata as

⁶⁴⁹ ATP 71

⁶⁵⁰ ATP 70

⁶⁵¹ See the second chapter of this thesis.

well as linguistic ones, Deleuze and Guattari now claim not only that “content and expression are never reducible to signified-signifier”, but that “neither are they reducible to base-superstructure.”⁶⁵² Crucially, this means that one can “no more posit a primacy of content as the determining factor than a primacy of expression as a signifying system.”⁶⁵³ If it is the case that the only difference between physical, organic, and linguistic matter is the form of double articulation by which content relates to expression, then all of these articulations share the same plane of consistency. This means that linguistic expressions are not simply molar statistical aggregates arising from unconscious molecular processes.⁶⁵⁴ In a practical sense, what this means is that organizations of power are “in no way located within a State apparatus but rather are everywhere, effecting formalizations of content and expression, the segments of which they intertwine.”⁶⁵⁵ At the point of writing *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari had defined each of the three major forms of political economy in their systematic analysis in relation to the State. So-called ‘primitive’ societies were said to ward-off the State via a process of coding, ‘despotic’ regimes were said to institute the State via process of overcoding, while ‘capitalist’ societies were supposedly defined by the way that they constantly decoded and recoded social strata in relation to the power of the State. Given the flat plane of consistency which linguistic strata share with the physical and the organic, it will no longer be possible to define each of these modes of political economy purely in terms of their relation to the State, neither will it be possible to see them each as molar products of underlying molecular processes.

According to the theory of content and expression put forward in *A Thousand Plateaus*, each form of political economy is defined not simply by its mode of production, nor by its relation to the State (although these are still important

⁶⁵² ATP 76

⁶⁵³ ATP 76

⁶⁵⁴ Deleuze and Guattari explicitly state that the molar/molecular distinction only corresponds to the expression/content distinction for the physical articulation of induction. In the case of the organic articulation of transduction or the alloplastic articulation of translation molar aggregates may be taken as contents: “The double articulation sometimes coincides with the molecular and the molar, and sometimes not” (ATP 49).

⁶⁵⁵ ATP 76

factors), but by the relative stability of a particular organization of order-words. If any semiotic field, comprising the forms of expression of all contents in a given assemblage, is normally composed of a constant variation of order-words and collective assemblages of enunciation then, to quote from *A Thousand Plateaus*: “To the extent these variables enter at a given moment into determinable relations, the assemblages combine in a *regime of signs*.”⁶⁵⁶ Each regime of signs then is simply a relative stabilization of the dynamic interplay of order-words in a given situation. As Deleuze and Guattari clarify: “We call any specific formalization of expression a regime of signs”, and therefore a “regime of signs constitutes a semiotic system.”⁶⁵⁷ It is important to note here that a regime of signs is not simply a collection of words, even a collection of order-words. Instead, a regime of signs is “a set of statements arising in a social field considered as a stratum.”⁶⁵⁸ According to the theory of the double articulation of content and expression, the physical, the organic, and the alloplastic are each stratifications on the plane of consistency. The world is composed of physical stratifications, organic stratifications, and social stratifications. A form of political economy is nothing other than a form of social stratification, namely an organisation of asymmetric power relations in a society. Here Deleuze and Guattari draw heavily on Foucault’s work in *Discipline and Punish*, which had analysed the particular relation between content and expression in a prison.⁶⁵⁹ As Ronald Bogue notes, it is Foucault’s work that “makes evident that alloplastic stratification not only codes, territorialises, controls, restricts and rigidifies, but also effectuates asymmetrical power relations.”⁶⁶⁰ It is these asymmetrical power relations that become relatively solidified in a regime of signs, and it is these asymmetrical power relations that define a form of political economy. Each of these determinable forms is not defined “in the last instance” by either its content or its expression, but it is determined by the way in which a regime of signs captures the relations of content and expression in a regular and repeatable

⁶⁵⁶ ATP 92

⁶⁵⁷ ATP 123

⁶⁵⁸ ATP 74

⁶⁵⁹ ATP 74-75

⁶⁶⁰ Bogue, 2018, 59

system of relations.⁶⁶¹ In the next section we will see that Deleuze and Guattari discuss four different regimes of signs in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Each of these regimes will have its own, distinct set of power relations and will also have its own use for the concept of the line of flight.

iii) The four regimes and their lines of flight

The four different regimes of signs that Deleuze and Guattari discuss in *A Thousand Plateaus* are each defined by their respective relations to signification. These four are, the presignifying regime, the signifying regime, the countersignifying regime, and the postsignifying regime. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and Deleuze and Guattari explicitly state that there are undoubtedly many others.⁶⁶² Given the fact that these four regimes are not supposed to correspond with a historical progression, and given the central importance of the regime of signification, it will be easiest to begin with a characterization of this regime. The signifying regime of signs refers to any case in which there is a despotic takeover of all linguistic functioning by the role of the signifier. The “simple general formula” by which we may recognise the signifying regime is that here, “every sign refers to another sign, and only to another sign, ad infinitum.”⁶⁶³ Signifying regimes of signs are those in which there is a master signifier of excess and lack and in which all meaning is captured by a constant process of sliding from signifier to signifier in an enclosed semiotic field.

What Deleuze and Guattari are describing here is quite simply structural linguistics, and they make this clear by stating that signifying regimes of signs relate to “the situation Levi-Strauss describes” in his structuralist anthropology.⁶⁶⁴ By describing the signifying regime of signs in these terms, Deleuze and Guattari do not completely jettison structuralism, but give it a

⁶⁶¹ ATP 76

⁶⁶² The plateau in which the regimes are discussed is titled ‘On Several Regimes of Signs’. For more on the selection of the four regimes see Adkins (2015, 83).

⁶⁶³ ATP 124

⁶⁶⁴ ATP 124

designated and delineated space within a much larger theory of semiotics.⁶⁶⁵ Rather than being an absolute condition for meaning, the signifying regime of signs is only instantiated in situations where the social stratification of power is despotic or imperialist. Because of the dynamics of signification, in the signifying regime “the network of signs is infinitely circular” leading to a semiotics based on a “multiplicity of the circles or chains”, in which the centre of the circle becomes an always-implicit centre of power.⁶⁶⁶ According to Deleuze and Guattari, the signifying regime upholds this circular asymmetry of power relations through the use of paranoia. Because of the constant slippage of the signifier, and because every sign will always refer to yet another sign, meaning is constantly held one step out of reach, creating a situation of generalised anxiety. In brief, a signifying regime of signs can be found wherever there is a despotic capture of all semiotic functions, and wherever this despotism operates via a generalized sense of paranoia.

As each regime is nothing other than the semiotic expression of a concrete assemblage, and as every assemblage is partially composed of lines of flight, we can ask how each of the different regimes relates to its lines of flight. Because the signifying regime is a form of capture, in which all semiotic functions are organised in concentric circles around the body of the despot, lines that escape this circular format will pose a great danger to the regime. Deleuze and Guattari write that where a semiotic system is signifying “the system’s line of flight is assigned a negative value, condemned as that which exceeds the signifying regime’s power.”⁶⁶⁷ Put simply, when social relations are all defined in relation to a despot, any social connections that escape the despotic interior and connect with an outside pose a threat to the ultimate power of the ruler and will therefore be deemed intolerable. Because all movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization within a signifying regime are measured in relation to the position of the despot, Deleuze and Guattari also state that the line of flight in signifying regimes is a *relative* line.

⁶⁶⁵ This is similar to the move that Deleuze and Guattari make in *Anti-Oedipus* when they show how signification sits alongside a number of other processes of a-signifying semiotics and a-semiotic encodings.

⁶⁶⁶ ATP 125

⁶⁶⁷ ATP 129-130

The stock example in *A Thousand Plateaus* of a negative and relative line of flight in a signifying regime of signs is that of a scapegoat. A scapegoat escapes the interiority of a despotic society, but only relative to the despot, and this escape is considered a negative casting-out, not a positive exploration of the outside.

In contrast to the signifying regime, the presignifying regime is defined as the expression of a social stratification that actively wards-off the possibility of a despotic and signifying regime taking hold. In presignifying regimes there are multiple forms of expression, including “corporeality, gesturality, rhythm, dance, and rite”, which “coexist heterogeneously with the vocal form.”⁶⁶⁸ This pluralism, or polyvocality, is designed to prevent the power takeover by a despotic form of signification that would reduce all expression to linguistic expression. In presignifying regimes, the different semiotic orders, or different forms of expression, are actively kept separate from one another through the use of ritual and tradition. This process of coding the different forms of expression in a society is key to the presignifying regime. Despite the fact that Deleuze and Guattari refer to this regime as “primitive”, they are keen to note that it does not operate “by ignorance, repression, or foreclosure of the signifier”, but “is animated by a keen presentiment of what is to come”, namely the “already-present threat” of the power of the signifier. One of the ways that the presignifying regime wards-off the possibility of despotism is by making sure that chains of signification can come to an end, rather than becoming infinite and circular.⁶⁶⁹ As a result of this, the presignifying regime is composed of multiple lines of decent that cross one another, stop, or begin again according to the rites of social life. Due to the different forms of social stratification that the signifying and presignifying regimes bring about, they also have different relationships with their respective lines of flight. Much like in the signifying regime, lines of flight that escape the presignifying regime are deemed negative, because they threaten the coding of the different forms of expression that serve to ward-off signification, and thus threaten the collapse

⁶⁶⁸ ATP 130

⁶⁶⁹ Deleuze and Guattari take the example of cannibalism, in which the name that defines the line of decent of the one who is eaten comes to an end.

of the regime. However, unlike in signifying regimes, where all deterritorialization is measured relative to the position of the despot, here the line of flight is an *absolute* line. What this means is that the escape of the line is not an escape from a specified centre, but an escape which cuts across all the multilinear systems of polyvocality used to ward off the emergence of a centre.

It should be obvious by this point that the presentations of the presignifying regime and the signifying regime in *A Thousand Plateaus* are basic reformulations of the primitive and despotic social machines that Deleuze and Guattari discussed in *Anti-Oedipus*. The only real difference between the way that these societies are characterised across the two books is that in *Anti-Oedipus* the central concern was the material apparatus of the State, and the use of signifying language was seen as a secondary effect of the State itself. Here, on the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari reverse the direction of importance: it is signification itself that institutes the State and not the reverse. Following the schema of *Anti-Oedipus*, we might expect there to be only one final regime of signs to act as the correlate of the 'civilized' capitalist form of society discussed in that text. However, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari discuss two more regimes of signs, neither of which correlate directly with capitalism.⁶⁷⁰

The first of these is the countersignifying regime of signs. This regime is defined by its use of a mixed semiotic based on "arithmetic and numeration".⁶⁷¹ While numbers are used in the signifying regime in order to organise the interior space of the State, the countersignifying regime is based on the use of a special kind of number that Deleuze and Guattari call the "numbering number."⁶⁷² What makes this semiotic specific is that it uses number to mark

⁶⁷⁰ While Deleuze and Guattari do not define capitalism as a particular regime of signs, they do define it as the conjunction of three different strata, two of which correlate with the signifying and post-signifying regimes of signs. The third is the organic stratification of the individual person.

⁶⁷¹ ATP 131

⁶⁷² ATP 131. The concept of the numbering number comes from Aristotle and Deleuze first uses it in a text on Bergson, to whom he credits the idea that "difference itself has a number, a virtual number, a numbering number" (DI 34). Deleuze and Guattari develop this concept further in the twelfth plateau, ATP 429-430.

“a mobile and plural distribution, which itself determines functions and relations, which arrives at arrangements rather than totals, distributions rather than collections, which operates more by breaks, transitions, migration, and accumulation than by combining units.”⁶⁷³ It will be easier to understand what Deleuze and Guattari aim to conceptualise here by looking at the form of social stratification that accompanies the countersignifying regime. In contrast to the sedentary nature of the State form defined by the signifying regime, the social form that relates to the countersignifying regime is said to be nomadic.⁶⁷⁴ The animal-raising nomads of the steppe are said to use numerical signs to create an open and distributed space that is in constant variation. To do this they use numerical signs in a way that is “not produced by something outside the system of marking it institutes”.⁶⁷⁵ What this means is that they utilise an ordinal, and not a cardinal, number system in order to define the space that they inhabit as a continuous, rather than a discrete, spatial multiplicity. The countersignifying regime is therefore the expression of a nomadic form of social stratification, defined by its process of *smoothing* space. Under this interpretation, nomadism is not defined as a process of moving through an otherwise fixed space, but of constructing a space that is in constant variation. What is key here, is the recognition that this activity is based on a countersignifying semiotic, in which signs are used to create variable distributions of matter, rather than to represent matter in a fixed, or striated, space.

Deleuze and Guattari give over the twelfth plateau to a detailed description of the functioning of this countersignifying, nomadic semiotic, which they name nomadology. They are particularly interested here in the way in which nomadic social forms utilise their lines of flight to expand their territories. They are also interested in showing what happens when this deterritorializing activity of nomadic societies comes up against the reterritorializing effects of the State. According to the analysis carried out here, Deleuze and Guattari claim that

⁶⁷³ ATP 131

⁶⁷⁴ Deleuze and Guattari are more specific than this: while the presignifying regime relates to nomads of the “hunter” type, the countersignifying regime relates to nomads of the “fearsome, warlike, and animal-raising” type. ATP 131

⁶⁷⁵ ATP 131

nomadic societies operate by assembling their many lines of flight into special assemblages known as ‘war machines’.⁶⁷⁶ War machines do not necessarily have war as their object, but simply operate by overcoming spatial boundaries and creating smooth spaces out of striated space. Only when these war machines come up against the stratifying power of the signifying regime of signs, and the State form that it expresses, do they take war as their object and become destructive.⁶⁷⁷ With their analysis of the war machine, Deleuze and Guattari can show that in countersignifying regimes of signs lines of flight can be understood as positive, in the sense that they are active in creating smooth spaces, but that they can become relative when they are turned against the State, or are appropriated by the State.⁶⁷⁸ Summarising the role played by the line of flight in the countersignifying regime of signs, Deleuze and Guattari write that “the imperial despotic line of flight is replaced by a line of abolition that turns back against the great empires, cuts across them and destroys them, or else conquers them and integrates with them to form a mixed semiotic.”⁶⁷⁹ In this sense, it is not only that countersignifying regimes utilise their lines of flight in a different way, but that they are specifically defined by their uses of lines of flight.

The fourth and final regime of signs that Deleuze and Guattari discuss in *A Thousand Plateaus* is the postsignifying regime. This regime of signs is said to operate by a “passional or subjective” semiotics in which signs operate primarily via processes of subjectification.⁶⁸⁰ The postsignifying regime is said to arise from the signifying regime in the following way: a line of flight escapes from the circular signifying semiotic, however, unlike in the case of the scapegoat, this line is no longer taken to be negative, but instead “receives a positive sign”, and becomes “occupied and followed by a people who find in it their reason for being or destiny.”⁶⁸¹ The most salient example given by

⁶⁷⁶ This term is borrowed from Kleist (ATP 27).

⁶⁷⁷ ATP 460

⁶⁷⁸ Deleuze and Guattari give a detailed description of how war machines are co-opted by the State to create armies: “What we call a military institution, or army, is not at all the war machine in itself, but the form under which it is appropriated by the State” (ATP 461).

⁶⁷⁹ ATP 131

⁶⁸⁰ ATP 134

⁶⁸¹ ATP 134

Deleuze and Guattari of this form of regime is the story of the birth of the Jewish people. Expelled from the despotic State formation of Egypt, Moses accepts this line of flight as his destiny and follows the line into the desert.⁶⁸² The negative line is transformed into a positive line in relation to a people defined by their passion. Describing the way that this acceptance of the line of flight acts as a form of subjectification, Deleuze and Guattari explain the defining experience of the Jewish people in the following way: “It is we who must follow the most deterritorialized line, the line of the scapegoat, but we will change its sign, we will turn it into the positive line of our subjectivity, our Passion, our proceeding or grievance.”⁶⁸³ While Deleuze and Guattari claim that the social stratification of postsignifying regimes is defined by a line of flight, this line is said to be segmented. After the initial break from the signifying regime is affirmed and accepted as a subjectifying trait, the linear proceeding taken up by the society eventually “runs its course, at which point a new proceeding begins.”⁶⁸⁴ Eventually, the postsignifying regime becomes a regularly segmented line of flight that is nothing other than a “*linear and temporal succession of finite proceedings*.”⁶⁸⁵ In the case of the history of the Jewish people, Deleuze and Guattari note that the two stages of the destruction of the Temple form the first two segments of the social formation.⁶⁸⁶

The postsignifying regime of signs is particularly interesting for our study of the role of the line of flight in Deleuze and Guattari’s political philosophy because

⁶⁸² It is unclear here whether societies defined by the postsignifying regime should be considered as nomadic. While they are not sedentary, they do create a form of mobile interiority which preserves the power of the State. By transporting the arc through the desert, the Jewish people maintained their covenant with God and thus upheld the law of interiority which gives the State its power. It would therefore be more accurate to conceptualise postsignifying regimes as a combination of the forces in the signifying and countersignifying regimes, but with an anti-nomadic intention. Perhaps the best way to explain this situation is to say that both presignifying and countersignifying regimes of signs rely on multilinear systems, while both signifying and postsignifying regimes rely on punctual systems. When Deleuze and Guattari state that “[s]mooth or nomad space lies between two striated spaces: that of the forest, with its gravitational verticals, and that of agriculture, with its grids and generalized parallels” (ATP 424), the latter of these striations can be understood as the farmland of the signifying regimes, while the forests can be understood as the wilderness of the postsignifying regimes.

⁶⁸³ ATP 135

⁶⁸⁴ ATP 133

⁶⁸⁵ ATP 133

⁶⁸⁶ The title of the fifth plateau contains two dates, 587 B.C. and 70 A.D., which refer to these two incorporeal transformations.

it is a concrete example of one of the explicit dangers of lines of flight. While lines of flight can be blocked by signifying regimes of signs, and can therefore fail to escape at all, they can also succeed in their attempt to escape, but only to fall into the subsequent danger of segmentation. Deleuze and Guattari refer to the first danger as that of running up against a “white wall”, and they refer to the second danger as that of being sucked into a “black hole”.⁶⁸⁷ The first danger is that of signification and relates to the instantiation of a signifying regime of signs, while the second danger is that of subjectification and relates to the instantiation of a postsignifying regime of signs. One of the clearest examples given in *A Thousand Plateaus* of this second danger is that of the drug addict. While drugs can, theoretically, be used as a line of flight along which the body can escape the despotic organisation to which it is continually subjected, this escape becomes segmented and ultimately gets sucked into the black hole of addiction: “the line of flight... of drugs is constantly being segmentarized under the most rigid of forms, that of dependency, the hit and the dose, the dealer.”⁶⁸⁸ Contrary to what we might have expected, the postsignifying regime of signs is therefore not a viable alternative to the domination of the signifying regime of signs. Both have their own dangers. Ultimately, despite the fact that the postsignifying regime of signs begins with a positive affirmation of a line of flight, it is also defined by the way that it controls this line. In the postsignifying regime the line of flight is positive, and even considered absolute in its full escape from signification, and yet it is constantly segmented and therefore sucked into the black hole of subjectivity.

The four regimes of signs discussed here are given as examples of different ways in which the expression of a linguistic, or alloplastic, stratification of

⁶⁸⁷ These two dangers are explored in some depth in the *Faciality Plateau* (ATP 185). The transformation of the head into a face, and therefore the transformation of the body into a point of signification, is the central power structure that upholds the signifying regime of signs. In signifying regimes of signs the face is always seen from the front as a flat white space on which all signification is inscribed. In the postsignifying regime “[f]aciality undergoes a profound transformation” because “averted faces, in profile, replace the frontal view of the radiant face.” It is this “double turning away that draws the positive line of flight” (ATP 136). The subsequent, authoritarian tendency of the passionate and subjective line of flight is thus defined not by the surface of the white face, but by the black hole of the eye. The different forms of faciality discussed in the seventh plateau can thus be read as the ways in which the signifying and postsignifying regimes interact.

⁶⁸⁸ ATP 314

matter can reformulate the contents of the physical and organic strata with which it forms a concrete assemblage. As each of these regimes is nothing other than the semiotic expression of a concrete assemblage, and as every assemblage is, by definition, partially composed of lines of flight, it is possible to define these four regimes as different ways in which lines of flight are controlled. In both presignifying regimes and signifying regimes, lines of flight are characterised as negative and are systematically blocked because of the way they threaten to bring down the whole social structure of which they are a part. In the case of presignifying regimes, this occurs when a line of flight cuts across the different, polyvocal forms of expression and reduces everything to linguistic signification. In the case of signifying regimes, this occurs when a line of flight escapes the absolute centre and connects with an outside that can challenge the ultimate power of the despot. With countersignifying regimes of signs, lines of flight run into a different set of dangers. They are arranged into a war machine that deterritorializes the land, but this machine can become appropriated by the State, whereupon it takes war as its object and becomes a kind of death machine. Postsignifying regimes are also defined by their relation to a line of flight, which in this instance is made positive. However, as we have seen, this positive line is prone to segmentation, in which the subject defined by the line is sucked into a black hole of abolition. In the next section, we will see how Deleuze and Guattari's positive political project in *A Thousand Plateaus* is not attached to any of these four regimes. Instead, via an analysis of the way that regimes of signs can interact and can transform into one another, Deleuze and Guattari hope to find a way of freeing lines of flight that will not be captured, relativized, or segmented by any of these four regimes.

iv) Becoming molecular

After having completed their analysis of the three modes of double articulation, and after having completed their analysis of the four regimes of signs, Deleuze and Guattari are now in a position to use these categories to describe the contemporary context of power which we inhabit. They name the three "principle strata binding human beings" as "the organism, signifi-ance and

interpretation, and subjectification and subjection.”⁶⁸⁹ The first of these relates to the specific double articulation of organic matter by which the organs of human bodies are arranged into the human organism. The second relates to the way in which the signifying regime of signs raises the signifier to the level of an abstract universal and arranges all linguistic acts in a circle around the face of the despot. The third relates to the post-signifying regime of signs, which makes passionate subjects of us all, each heading towards his or her own black hole. Taken together, these three stratifications, the first of which is organic the second and third of which are alloplastic, “are what separates us from the plane of consistency and the abstract machine, where there is no longer any regime of signs, where the line of flight effectuates its own potential positivity and deterritorialization its absolute power.”⁶⁹⁰ At this point in their work, having named these three strata, Deleuze and Guattari shift their mode of analysis. The methods they have used up until this point have only been able to name these strata, but if we want to understand how they are produced, and how we may be able to escape from them, we will need to begin our whole process of analysis again, from a different perspective. One way to explain the limitations of the technique used so far would be to say that, while our previous analysis has shown the ways in which society has historically tended towards particular planes of organization, we have not yet analyzed the processes of becoming that effectuated these tendencies. Even while Deleuze and Guattari have repeatedly stated that regimes of signs are not related to one another historically, and even while they have maintained that regimes of signs are never completely distinct from one another, the analysis up to this point has treated these regimes *as if they were historical and as if they were distinct*. What we need instead, is to conduct our analysis from the perspective of *becoming*.

Perhaps the clearest way to distinguish becoming from history is based on the observation that historical thinking is a way of relating different events together and ordering them in a series, while thinking with becoming is a way of explaining the production of events. As Deleuze and Guattari put it, “history

⁶⁸⁹ ATP 148

⁶⁹⁰ ATP 148

can think only in terms of relationships (between A and B), not in terms of production (from A to x)."⁶⁹¹ The concept of becoming, first developed by Deleuze in his books on Nietzsche and on Bergson, attempts to grasp the kind of movement that occurs in processes of change. Rather than assuming that becoming is somehow secondary to being, because it only occurs between one being and another, Deleuze and Guattari take becoming to be primary, with any being fulfilling the role of an interruption in the process of becoming.⁶⁹² At the end of the fifth plateau, 'On Several Regimes of Signs', Deleuze and Guattari lay out a four-stage process for the analysis of political power. The first two stages of which take a historical perspective, whereas the latter two take the perspective of becoming. These four stages are the generative, transformational, diagrammatic, and machinic components of any analysis. The generative component involves a practice of tracing, specifically it is the tracing of the different regimes of signs in a concrete, mixed semiotic. Deleuze and Guattari's naming of the four different regimes of signs completed this task. The transformational component traces the lines of flight in each of these regimes of signs to show how they relate to one another and how they can pass into one another. We saw this in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the different kinds of lines of flight that exist in each regime of signs. The two components of analysis that we have not yet touched on are the diagrammatic and the machinic. Because each regime of signs only exists as a stratification of matter into content, expression, substance and form, the diagrammatic component of analysis goes beyond the representation of regimes of signs in their particular expressions, to the continuums of intensity and the tensors that effectuate these stratifications. These continuums of intensity and tensors on the plane of consistency are said to diagram the abstract machines.⁶⁹³ The fourth and final stage of analysis suggested by Deleuze and Guattari is the machinic component of analysis. The machinic component consists in "the

⁶⁹¹ ATP 258

⁶⁹² Becoming is one of the central concepts that connects Deleuze's earlier work to his work with Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. See Deleuze's essay 'Control and Becoming' (N 169-174).

⁶⁹³ For a full description of the role of tensors and flows of intensity in relation to diagrams, see ATP 156. Brent Adkins also gives a clear explication of this stage of political analysis (Adkins, 2015, 92).

study of the assemblages that effectuate abstract machines.”⁶⁹⁴ What this means is that the fourth component looks at how abstract machines produce events.⁶⁹⁵

In a moment, I will turn to the final two stages of this four-part analysis in a little more detail, and explain the role that the concept of the line of flight plays here. However, it will be worth pausing briefly to clarify two things. First, that the difference between the historical approach of the first two stages and the approach of becoming used in the second two stages is aligned with the difference between the molar and the molecular regimes of analysis that we explored in our analysis of *Anti-Oedipus*. Second, that the difference between the first two stages and the second two stages is also said to correspond to the distinction between the quantitative and the qualitative. In previous chapters, we saw how Deleuze and Guattari argued in *Anti-Oedipus* that it was possible to analyze political formations according to two distinct regimes. When taken from the perspective of its molecular elements, any political formation is made up of ahistorical flows of desire. When taken from the perspective of the large statistical molar aggregates that these molecules compose, the same political formation is made up of structures that form a linear history.⁶⁹⁶ In *A Thousand Plateaus* this schema is made more complex by the introduction of the theory of stratification. While the distinction between the molecular and the molar only aligns with the distinction between content and expression in the case of the double articulation of the induction of physical matter, and not in the cases of the transduction and translation of organic and alloplastic matter, it is still the case that on the plane of consistency, on which each of these stratifications is nothing but a coagulation,

⁶⁹⁴ ATP 162

⁶⁹⁵ *A Thousand Plateaus* can be read as a movement through these four stages: the first five plateaus are *generational* because they trace the different regimes and explain how they are produced; plateaus six, seven, and eight then carry out the *transformational* component, using the BwO, faciality, and the three lines of signification to show how regimes of signs can be transformed; plateaus nine, ten and eleven then move to the *diagrammatic* moment and use the concepts of micropolitics, becoming, and the refrain to map the abstract machines; finally, in plateaus twelve, thirteen, and fourteen, Deleuze and Guattari complete the *machinic* analysis by looking at how these abstract machines are effectuated by different assemblages of power, namely the nomads and the State.

⁶⁹⁶ The direction of the flow of time is reversible in the modelling of molecular physics, but is unidirectional in the modelling of thermodynamic systems at a molar scale.

there are only molecular flows. In short, the plane of consistency has no history and thus it is molecular, while each of the three stratifications of matter produces a history and is therefore connected to the molar. With this in mind, we can also see the movement from the generational and transformative components of analysis to the diagrammatic and machinic components as a move from a molar to a molecular analysis. Finally, Deleuze and Guattari are clear in *A Thousand Plateaus* that the molar relates to what is qualitative, what can be sensed, while the molecular relates precisely to the quantitative. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari will say that the diagrammatic and machinic components of analysis must move from an analysis of qualitative elements to their underlying “quanta”.⁶⁹⁷ Echoing their work in *Anti-Oedipus*, they write in *A Thousand Plateaus*: “Beliefs and desires are the basis of every society, because they are flows and as such are “quantifiable”; they are veritable social Quantities, whereas sensations are qualitative and representations are simple resultants.”⁶⁹⁸ To summarize then, we can say that, by concentrating on the three stratifications of matter and the four regimes of signs, the generational and transformative components of political analysis concentrated too much on the molar aggregates of politics and their historical relationships. The diagrammatic and machinic components of analysis, on the other hand, will make the shift from history to becoming, will find the molecular flows of quanta below the qualitative molar aggregates, and will enable us to think becoming.

v) Diagrammatics, machinic analysis, and micropolitics

What does it mean to say that after we have analyzed the different regimes of signs, and after we have looked at how they can be transformed into one another, we must locate their abstract machines? As we have just seen, what distinguishes an abstract machine from the regime of signs is that for an abstract machine there is no distinction between content and expression and no distinction between form and substance. What then can we say about an abstract machine? Deleuze and Guattari state that an abstract machine

⁶⁹⁷ ATP 239

⁶⁹⁸ ATP 241

“operates by *matter*, not by substance; by *function*, not by form.”⁶⁹⁹ What this means is that below the extended representation of a regime of signs, or even a mixed semiotic of multiple regimes of signs, it is possible to find the intensities that produce this extension. Crucially, this site of intensity will make no distinction between bodies and words and is therefore both proto-material and proto-semiotic. Because the abstract machine does not have extensive parts, it is not possible to trace its outline, however, it is possible to *diagram* the productive capacities of its intensities. As Ray Brassier notes, the process of diagramming is a “cognitive operation carried out with a view to effectuating certain practical imperatives under specific material constraints.”⁷⁰⁰ It is “akin to engineering” in that it “lets us see to what extent a line of flight is liberatory *for us*.”⁷⁰¹ What this looks like in practice is a shift towards abstraction.⁷⁰² While regimes of signs cannot be understood as completely detached from the historical context in which they are effectuated, abstract machines have no relation to history and can thus be understood completely in the abstract.

In order to make this stage of the analysis slightly more comprehensible, let us take one example. We saw previously that any regime of signs is defined by its order-words. However, Deleuze and Guattari will also say that the only reason we have for studying linguistics, and for analyzing the circulation of order-words is “to transform the compositions of order into components of passage.”⁷⁰³ Because any assemblage is tetravalent, each order-word has its own degree of deterritorialization. Each word has a “twofold nature” by which it can either order or pass.⁷⁰⁴ While the generational analysis of regimes of signs picks out the ordering components of words within a regime, it is also possible to “push the order-words themselves to the point of deterritorialisation, to the point of becoming musical”⁷⁰⁵ and to find the “passwords beneath order-words.”⁷⁰⁶ What this means is that regimes of signs are

⁶⁹⁹ ATP 156

⁷⁰⁰ Brassier, 2018, 270

⁷⁰¹ Brassier, 2018, 270

⁷⁰² Although, as Adkins notes, here abstraction is used “in the sense opposed to discrete not opposed to concrete” (2015, 92).

⁷⁰³ ATP 122

⁷⁰⁴ ATP 122

⁷⁰⁵ Bell, 2018, 81

⁷⁰⁶ ATP 122

not overcome simply through an analysis of their order words. They are also not overcome by finding ways of transforming one regime of signs into another. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari claim that we must act “not by fleeing, but by making flight act and create”.⁷⁰⁷ We must not only look at the ways in which lines of flight are blocked in regimes of signs, we must also not only look at the ways that lines of flight are relativized or segmented in the transformations between regimes. Instead, we must diagram the lines of flight that work at the level of the abstract machine, we must intervene here and experiment with the possibilities for creation that these lines contain.

The many different kinds of becoming that Deleuze and Guattari study in *A Thousand Plateaus*, such as the becoming-woman and the becoming-animal, are simply various ways of diagramming the abstract machines that effectuate the regimes of signs that we find ourselves within. The process of becoming-woman is not the same as the activity of altering the relation between your extensive parts in order to move from the molar formation of ‘man’ to the molar formation of ‘woman’. Instead, it is about finding the molecular and intensive flows that escape from the binary gender opposition in order to experiment with new possibilities of the body that would not be defined by their relation to the universal category of ‘man’. Ultimately, in order to combat the three principal strata – namely those of the organism, signifiante, and subjectification – Deleuze and Guattari advocate three corresponding processes of becoming, namely becoming-imperceptible, becoming-indiscernible, and becoming-impersonal. The process of becoming-imperceptible is a technique for overcoming the primary activity of the organic mode of stratification, which is the constant regulation of the inside and the outside via processes of transduction.⁷⁰⁸ Becoming-indiscernible works to undercut the signifying regime of signs by detaching signs from their stratum and making them escape from their capture by the face of the despot.⁷⁰⁹ Finally, becoming-impersonal is a process of combatting the subjectifying

⁷⁰⁷ ATP 122

⁷⁰⁸ The example given is the camouflage fish and its capacity to “world” with its environment (ATP 308-309).

⁷⁰⁹ The example given is the Ostragoths, those barbarians who shifted away from the State towards the nomads (ATP 245). See also Adkins (2015, 162).

capacities of the postsignifying regime of signs through the dissolution of the subject into a collective assemblage of enunciation. By analyzing “the relation between the (anorganic) imperceptible, the (asignifying) indiscernible, and the (asubjective) impersonal”, Deleuze and Guattari aim to equip the reader of *A Thousand Plateaus* with the tools to escape from the three principle strata that bind the contemporary lives of humans.⁷¹⁰

This diagrammatic moment of abstraction would, however, be completely useless for any political analysis if it was not accompanied by the final stage of *machinic* analysis. While the diagrammatic component allows us to reach the molecular flows that remain uncaptured by the strata, there would be no reason to find these flows if we were not able to use them to restructure the molar aggregates that we inhabit: “molecular escapes and movements would be nothing if they did not return to the molar organizations to reshuffle their segments, their binary distributions of sexes, classes, and parties.”⁷¹¹ If the first two components of analysis allowed us to analyze the molar formations of the strata that bind us, and if the third component allowed us to diagram the molecular flows of the abstract machine that produces such molar formations, then the fourth, machinic component of analysis allows us to “locate a ‘power center’ at the border between the two”.⁷¹² This power center is defined “by the relative adaptations and conversions it effects between the line and the flow.”⁷¹³ The point that Deleuze and Guattari are making here is that the relationship between molecular flows and molar aggregates is not a natural relationship, neither is it one of representation. The molar aggregates on the strata need to be extracted from the molecular flows by assemblages of power. The two examples that Deleuze and Guattari give of such power centers are financial capital and the Church. Each of these institutions of power manages the formation of molar aggregates by taking up the task of “making the segments correspond to the quanta, of adjusting the segments to the

⁷¹⁰ ATP 308

⁷¹¹ ATP 238-239. The three distributions of sexes, classes, and parties map on to the three principle strata of the organism, signifiante, and subjectification.

⁷¹² ATP 239

⁷¹³ ATP 239

quanta.”⁷¹⁴ It is by locating these power-centers, and intervening in their operation, that it will be possible to extract different molar organizations from the many potentialities of the molecular abstract machines that underpin them.

According to their analysis of such power-centers, Deleuze and Guattari state that every central power has three different aspects or zones. The first of which is its “zone of power”, or its ability to organize a “solid rigid line”, the second of which is its “zone of indiscernibility” by which it is diffused in a micropolitical or molecular context, and the third is its “zone of impotence”, which relates to those flows and quanta that it cannot “control or define”.⁷¹⁵ We have to remember here that these power centers, including the institutions of financial capital and religion, are not omnipotent powers, but are assemblages of power. Just like all other assemblages they are defined as much by their lines of flight as by what they capture. The purpose of the fourth moment of analysis is therefore to experiment with these power-centers to find their zones of impotence. Each of these zones of impotence will be nothing other than an “abstract machine of mutation” operating within the power-center, where it has the power to completely alter the way in which molar segments are arranged out of molecular flows. With this conceptualization of analysis in mind, we can now understand the political analysis that Deleuze and Guattari conducted in *Anti-Oedipus* in new terms. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari aimed to show how the power-center of capitalism is made up of different zones, one of which operates by a process of decoding. This decoding aspect of capital is its zone of impotence which, if properly utilized, could push capitalism beyond the internal limit that it constantly tries to push outside of itself, and ultimately bring about a post-capitalist future. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, on the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari have shifted their point of attack away from capitalism towards the two major regimes of signs that define and constrict contemporary life, namely the signifying and the postsignifying regimes. The analyses that Deleuze and Guattari carry out in plateau twelve and plateau thirteen, of nomadism and of apparatuses of capture respectively, can be read precisely

⁷¹⁴ ATP 240

⁷¹⁵ ATP 249

as attempts to find the zones of impotence within the power-centers that produce these two regimes.⁷¹⁶

It is important to recognize the changing role that the concept of the line of flight plays in the political analysis of power-centers. While it is true that the zones of impotence in each power-center are composed of lines of flight, the concept is being used here in a slightly different way than it was in our previous analysis of the four different regimes of signs. From the perspective of a regime of signs, a line of flight can never be anything other than an escape and can never appear as anything other than a threat from the outside, even if the regime operates precisely by relativizing or by segmenting this threat. The reason that lines of flight held this ephemeral position in our discussion of regimes of signs is that this discussion was still in the generative and transformational stages of analysis and was still treating these regimes from the position of the molar aggregates that they form. In our movement to a diagrammatic and machinic analysis of abstract machines, on the other hand, we are now able to conceptualize lines of flight not only as fleeting escapes, but as integral components of an abstract machine of consistency.

Finally, it is also important to reiterate that this analysis does not simply treat lines of flight as ethically positive or as politically expedient. Speaking of the different kinds of lines drawn by the three different zones of the power-centers, Deleuze and Guattari write: "We cannot say that one of these three lines is bad and another good, by nature and necessarily. The study of the dangers of each line is the object of pragmatics or schizoanalysis."⁷¹⁷ In the previous chapter we saw how lines of flight are not ethically positive in themselves, but that the rhizomatic model of thought, which has brought us to this machinic

⁷¹⁶ One of the major changes that accompanies this shift towards a machinic analysis of power-centres is a recognition that the language of the 'plane of consistency' and the 'plane of organisation' can only take us so far. In their analysis of abstract machines, Deleuze and Guattari will see that these were only "two ways of conceptualizing the plane" (ATP 292) and that the difference is between three different abstract machines: "There are different types of abstract machines that overlap in their operations and qualify the assemblages: *abstract machines of consistency*, singular and mutant, with multiplied connections; *abstract machines of stratification* that surround the plane of consistency with another plane; and *axiomatic or overcoding* and *abstract machines* that perform totalizations, homogenizations, conjunctions of closure" (ATP 566).

⁷¹⁷ ATP 250

analysis of power and has allowed us to conceptualize the line of flight, does have its own ethical value. The analysis of lines of flight allows us to experiment with new possible assemblages of bodies and thus to increase our potential to act, this experimentation is therefore ethical in itself. However, such experimentation is accompanied by its own dangers. Speaking of the different dangers that accompany the three different kinds of lines drawn by the three zones of the power-centers, Deleuze and Guattari identify the most dangerous possibility with the line of flight, which they say is like “a war one risks coming back from defeated, destroyed, after having destroyed everything one could.”⁷¹⁸ Unlike with the other dangers, Deleuze and Guattari are careful to give a clear definition of this danger, which is associated only with the line of flight. They define this danger in the following way: “the line of flight crossing the wall, getting out of the black holes, but instead of connecting with other lines and each time augmenting its valence, *turning to destruction, abolition pure and simple, the passion of abolition.*”⁷¹⁹ In the next section of this chapter I will explore exactly what this danger consists in and will also explain the way in which *A Thousand Plateaus* goes beyond *Anti-Oedipus* in its attempt to find a pragmatic solution to this ultimate danger.

vi) Abolition, self-conservation and the creation of a refrain

The danger of the line of flight “*turning to destruction, abolition pure and simple*” is a very specific kind of danger and it will be useful to differentiate it from some of the other political dangers that Deleuze and Guattari discuss.⁷²⁰ First, it is important to note that this danger is not associated with any of the regimes of signs that we have previously explored. The two social regimes that stratify us to the highest degree, namely the signifying and the post-signifying, or subjectifying regimes, each have their own dangers associated with them: the signifying regime threatens the line of flight with the white wall of signification, and the post-signifying regime directs the line of flight towards a black hole of subjectification. However, the specific danger discussed here is

⁷¹⁸ ATP 253

⁷¹⁹ ATP 253

⁷²⁰ ATP 253

explicitly differentiated from these previous problems. In this case, we have “the line of flight crossing the wall, getting out of the black holes”, only to turn to its own destruction.⁷²¹ Simply put, this is the danger of the line of flight detaching itself completely from all of the regimes of signs, losing its relation to the territorial context of a milieu, and resulting in the dissolution of a life. In these cases, the line of flight does not reach the plane of consistency, but simply produces an undifferentiated abyss. As Deleuze and Guattari put it in relation to the stratification of the body: “You don't reach the BwO, and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying.”⁷²² Similarly, speaking of the way in which the line of flight can be used to blow apart the strata, they counsel restraint: “And how necessary caution is, the art of dosages, since overdose is a danger.”⁷²³ It is important to note here that Deleuze and Guattari’s ability to distinguish this danger relies on their rhizomatic model of thinking and on the shift that we have witnessed from the generative and transformative aspects of analysis to the diagrammatic and machinic aspects. The danger of pure abolition is not faced by the regimes of signs, seen from the perspective of a generative or transformative analysis, instead, it is a danger recognized by the diagrammatic and machinic analysis of the abstract machines that effectuate these regimes of signs. Because of this, it may not be surprising to discover that the discussion of this danger only appears in earnest in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari write that the “schizo is not revolutionary, but the schizophrenic process—in terms of which the schizo is merely the interruption, or the continuation in the void—is the potential for revolution.”⁷²⁴ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, via their diagrammatic analysis of abstract machines of power, Deleuze and Guattari are now able to assess the specific danger of the schizo in abstract terms. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari speak of “the paradox of those emptied and dreary bodies” who had “*emptied themselves of their organs* instead of looking for the point at which they could patiently and momentarily dismantle the organization of the organs we call the organism.”⁷²⁵ This is what happens when you escape

⁷²¹ ATP 253

⁷²² ATP 178

⁷²³ ATP 177

⁷²⁴ AO 374

⁷²⁵ ATP 178

too fast, you do not reach the plane of consistency, but simply the plane of pure abolition.

In response to this problem, Deleuze and Guattari offer two different solutions, the first conservative and the other creative. The conservative response is that in the destratification of the organic strata, you must “keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn”.⁷²⁶ The same caution is required with the two strata of the signifying and post-signifying regimes, where “you have to keep small supplies of signifiacance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it.”⁷²⁷ This comment comes in direct contrast to the destructive and revolutionary tone of *Anti-Oedipus*, where we were told that we must destroy the individuality of the subject at all costs, and that “when engaged in this task no activity will be too malevolent” because schizoanalysis works by “brutally intervening each time the subject strikes up the song of myth.”⁷²⁸ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, however, Deleuze and Guattari have changed their mind: “Staying stratified... is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse.”⁷²⁹ It is important to note here that this shift towards a more cautious pragmatism, in relation to the art of drawing lines of flight, is accompanied by a positive and creative response as well. Quite simply, the positive response to this problem is the creation of the concept of the refrain.

As we saw previously, the concept of the refrain allows Deleuze and Guattari to explain the creation of territorial assemblages, and it is these assemblages that allow us to avoid the specific danger of the line of flight “*turning to destruction, abolition pure and simple.*”⁷³⁰ Neither thought nor action are possible outside of a territorial assemblage, which provides the orientation, or *sense*, for both of these categories.⁷³¹ The construction of a refrain operates

⁷²⁶ ATP 178

⁷²⁷ ATP 178

⁷²⁸ AO 345

⁷²⁹ ATP 178

⁷³⁰ ATP 253

⁷³¹ Deleuze and Guattari do not directly explore the relationship between the line of flight, the refrain, and sense in *A Thousand Plateaus*. However, they give a very considered account of

by finding resonances in chaos and using them to define an inside, or a plot of land. The refrain “jumps from chaos to the beginnings of order in chaos” and is what provides consistency to the plane of consistency.⁷³² Via the repetition of a rhythmic difference, the refrain produces an inside, from which it is possible to experiment. In the most abstract terms, we can say that the project of *A Thousand Plateaus* attempts to provide us with the tools to produce a BwO on the plane of consistency, and that the refrain and the line of flight are two of the central tools in such an endeavor. In one of the most prescriptive remarks in the book, which I quoted at the end of the previous chapter, Deleuze and Guattari give a summary of how one is to carry out such a task:

“This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, *have a small plot of new land at all times*. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO.”⁷³³

This quotation brings together some of the central aspects of Deleuze and Guattari’s political program in *A Thousand Plateaus*. It makes evident that fact that, in any attempt to reach the BwO, caution is required. The practice of experimenting with lines of flight, which leads to the production of a BwO on the plane of consistency, must be balanced by the retention of a residuum of the strata and the production of a territorial assemblage, by way of a refrain. Unfortunately, this prescription is given in purely abstract terms and it is difficult

this relationship in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. Here, in an attempt to outline the difference between a minor and a major literature, but using terms that could equally well be used to define the difference between a subject-group and a subjugated-group, Deleuze and Guattari write that with minor literature: “Of sense there remains only enough to direct the lines of escape” (K 21). Interestingly, given the argument that I make in the next section for the role of the line of flight plays in producing subject-groups, Deleuze and Guattari also note that in these cases there is “no longer a designation of something by means of a proper name” but “the thing no longer forms anything but a sequence of intensive states” (K 21).

⁷³² ATP 343

⁷³³ ATP 178 (my italics)

to know what such a practice would look like in any given, concrete assemblage. In what follows, I will try to give an indication of what such a practice would look like in concrete terms, by situating Deleuze and Guattari's comments within both the political climate in which the book was published, and the working context of Institutional Psychotherapy.

vii) Institutional Analysis, and the art of drawing lines of flight

In his translator's introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi notes that the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series was produced, at least in part, as a response to the "disintegration of the Left into dogmatic 'groupuscules'".⁷³⁴ Deleuze and Guattari were aware that such an "amoeba-like proliferation" of different schools of thought was politically problematic as it resulted in inactivity – each small, leftist cult working for its own ends like a group of miniature Stalinist parties.⁷³⁵ The need to produce a discourse that escaped the dominant regimes of signification and subjectification was palpable, but it was also the case that these escapes were not enough on their own because they had no way of dealing with the danger of abolition that we have just explored. Fleeing from the State and fleeing from capitalism is one thing, but producing a creative, productive, and collaborative practice outside of these regimes is another.⁷³⁶ In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari had put forward a political programme of molecular politics that would connect various minoritarian struggles, each seen as a line of flight from contemporary capitalism, without totalizing them. It is my contention that the concept of the refrain is introduced in *A Thousand Plateaus* specifically to allow for the possibility of constructing the shared territorial assemblage required for such a molecular revolution. The concept of the refrain, designed to combat the specific danger of the complete dissolution of the ground for political action, is therefore not only an abstract

⁷³⁴ ATP 568

⁷³⁵ ATP 568

⁷³⁶ Another way to describe this problem is in relation to *sense*: if a practice becomes totally detached from the orienting context of a social life, then there is no longer any sense to that which a group is fighting for. The dissolution of sense could otherwise be called melancholy, or postmodern malaise, a regular enemy of leftist politics. For more on this problem as it relates to the French context in the second half of the 20th Century, see Mathy (2011).

term that relates to the diagrammatic analyses of abstract machines, but a heavily politicized concept.

In *The Machinic Unconscious*, which contains many of Guattari's first experiments with concepts that would later become central to *A Thousand Plateaus*, the concept of the refrain is provided as a tool for political cohesion. There Guattari argues that "[e]very individual, every group, every nation" is "'equipped' with a basic range of incantatory refrains."⁷³⁷ These refrains are used by political groups to "affirm their social identity, their territory, and their internal cohesion."⁷³⁸ The example that Guattari takes here is also telling. He writes of the trade corporations of ancient Greece who "possessed their own kind of sonorous seal, a short melodic formula called '*nomos*'."⁷³⁹ This passage is particularly interesting because it allows us to link together the largely theoretical project of *A Thousand Plateaus* with Guattari's practical work in Institutional Psychotherapy and Institutional Analysis. To summarize this connection, we could say that every political project requires a refrain to determine the cohesion or consistency of a group. In the specific case of the anti-capitalist struggle that Deleuze and Guattari saw their work as a part of, this refrain should take the form of a *nomos*. Such a *nomos*, or nomadic refrain, is a like a "customary, unwritten law" that is "inseparable from a distribution of space."⁷⁴⁰ The reason that the use of a nomadic refrain is distinctly anti-capitalist is explained by Guattari in *The Machinic Unconscious*. He claims there that capitalistic societies rely on the "pure" separation and specialisation of different activities of production and that it is "the heterogeneous, mixed, the fuzzy, and the dissymmetrical" that challenge this purity.⁷⁴¹ In contrast to this, it is the refrain that provides "the consistency of a fuzzy aggregate".⁷⁴² In order to combat the tendency towards abstraction here, and to bring our analysis back to a concrete political situation, it will be useful to take the publication of *A Thousand Plateaus* as an example of a political act. By using the tools of

⁷³⁷ MU 107

⁷³⁸ MU 107

⁷³⁹ MU 107

⁷⁴⁰ ATP 344

⁷⁴¹ MU 108

⁷⁴² ATP 420

Institutional Analysis to examine the act of writing and publishing this book, we will be able to see what it might mean in practice to draw lines of flight, and we will also be able to see how the use of a refrain can provide the consistency required to stop these lines of flight “turning to destruction” and thus leading to the death of any budding molecular revolution.⁷⁴³

In the second chapter of this thesis we saw how the production of subject-groups was a central activity in the work of Institutional Psychotherapy that Guattari developed at La Borde. We also saw how, outside of the psychiatric hospital, Guattari applied the same process of subject-group formation in political contexts through the discipline of Institutional Analysis. The defining factor of a subject-group, which differentiated it from a subjugated-group, was that its consistency was produced internally, via the relation between its members, rather than being determined by a shared relation with an external factor. At the point of writing *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*, Guattari was clear that subject-groups are able to take up a praxis and are able to speak. In his preparatory work for *A Thousand Plateaus*, however, Guattari will write that it is the *refrain* that produces “the collective and asignifying subject of the enunciation.”⁷⁴⁴ What this means is that it is the resonance produced by the repetition of a rhythmic difference among a group of elements that creates a group and allows it a voice. We also saw in our previous analysis that Guattari aimed to produce the conditions for such a group by increasing the “coefficient of transversality” among its members.⁷⁴⁵ By drawing a transversal, or diagonal line across the different discourses that would otherwise stratify a group into a social hierarchy, Guattari aimed to produce a shared language for a group so that they could work towards a shared goal. What I want to suggest here is that, armed with the framework of Institutional Analysis, along with the two concepts of the line of flight and the refrain, it is possible to read *A Thousand Plateaus* as an attempt to produce a subject-group.

⁷⁴³ ATP 253

⁷⁴⁴ MU 107

⁷⁴⁵ PT 113

A Thousand Plateaus is a book which uses “a complex technical vocabulary drawn from a wide range of disciplines in the sciences, mathematics, and the humanities” and yet Deleuze suggests that one should read it “as you would listen to a record.”⁷⁴⁶ The apparent oddity of trying to read a technical book as if it were a record can come to sound very reasonable if we recognize that the different plateaus in the text do not relate to one another like the chapters of a normal book. Instead of treating each chapter of the book as an argumentative step that builds on the previous chapters and is governed by an external logic which relates them all together, Deleuze and Guattari make it clear that their book, like any other, is “made of variously formed matters”, such that there are “lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight.”⁷⁴⁷ What Deleuze and Guattari do in *A Thousand Plateaus* is threefold: first, they map the lines of flight that escape from any number of discourses; second, through the repetition of differences they produce a refrain that puts each of these lines into resonance with one another; and third, they make these various lines of flight connect to form a transversal line that cuts across all of the various discourses and opens the possibility of the formation of an interdisciplinary subject-group. Let us quickly take each of these three steps in turn. Initially, using the technique of tracing, Deleuze and Guattari carry out a generational and transformative analysis of a whole range of different regimes of speech. In the fields of biology, art, literature, linguistics, politics, and history, among others, Deleuze and Guattari find the powers that are escaping the traditional bounds of the discourse. Next, in order to avoid the possibility that each of these lines of flight could become a line of pure abolition and do nothing but ‘turn in the void’, Deleuze and Guattari shift to a diagrammatic and machinic analysis which uses a technique of mapping. Here Deleuze and Guattari are able to find resonances between the different lines of flight. From the chaos of these various escapes, a refrain provides “the beginnings of order in chaos” in the form of a plane of consistency on which the different lines of flight can meet.⁷⁴⁸ Finally, by connecting these lines of flight on the plane of consistency, a transversal line is produced which connects biologists, artists,

⁷⁴⁶ ATP ix; DII

⁷⁴⁷ ATP 4

⁷⁴⁸ ATP 343

novelists, linguists, political theorists, and historians in a single group. These different disciplinary activities are no longer related to one another negatively, through their opposition or through their shared relation to some higher organizing power. Instead, they relate to one another via an internal resonance and take on the consistency of a subject-group.⁷⁴⁹

In what sense can it be said that this is a political activity? To see how this is not merely an intellectual project, but a practical one, it is enough to recognize that the difference between academic disciplines is not only produced by their different methodologies or their different subject matters, but by the very real fact that they do not speak the same language, and as such they do not speak to one another. This is manifested practically in the physical separation of schools. This is true for different academic groupings just as it is true for different political groups: despite the possibility for fruitful collaboration, groups are stratified by the different languages that they speak and therefore cannot take on the consistency of a subject-group. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari speak of the possibility of finding an “active point of escape where the revolutionary machine, the artistic machine, the scientific machine, and the (schizo) analytic machine become parts and pieces of one another.”⁷⁵⁰ They state here that by putting these different machines in contact with one another it will be possible to produce a “new land”.⁷⁵¹ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari attempt to fulfil this promise via the dual use of the concept of the line of flight and the concept of the refrain. First we must map the lines of flight that escape each of these domains, then we must use the refrain to create a resonance between them. The ‘new land’ that is produced is not intended to be a final, utopian resting point, but is precisely the “small plot of land” that we are told to hold “at all times”, in order to continue experimenting without producing a complete dissolution of the self.⁷⁵²

⁷⁴⁹ One of the things that makes *A Thousand Plateaus* such a complex book is that it is both explains the process by which philosophy can become a project of diagrammatics that works to draw transversal lines that cut across different domains of speech and simultaneously enacts this process. For most of this chapter I have focussed on the way in which the text describes this possibility. Here, I am attempting to show how it enacts it.

⁷⁵⁰ AO 354

⁷⁵¹ AO 354

⁷⁵² ATP 178

Before closing this chapter, I want to make one final point about the art of drawing lines of flight, as it is put forward in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in relation to the way that the concept was used in *Anti-Oedipus*. In chapters three and four of this thesis I argued for a reading of *Anti-Oedipus* in which there are four distinct uses of the concept of the line of flight. Of these four uses, the first two were said to relate to an analysis of desiring-machines and the latter two to an analysis of social machines. The four senses of the line of flight were given as follows: i) Those processes of desire witnessed by the psychoanalyst that refuse to be captured by Oedipus; ii) The lines traced by the legitimate uses of the syntheses of the unconscious, namely the transverse connections and inclusive disjunctions between heterogeneous chains of code that form the multiplicity of desiring-production; iii) The decoded social flows that threaten primitive and despotic regimes of power as an external limit and that are internalised by capitalism; iv) The absolute limit of capitalism that can be reached when the decoded flows released by capital cannot be recaptured and reterritorialized by it. In this case, the first and third uses of the concept of the line of flight both focus on the fact that these lines escape from a given assemblage, seen from a molar standpoint. Whether it is through the analysis of an individual on the psychoanalyst's couch, or the analysis of a particular form of political economy, the line of flight is seen in these cases as something that flees. The second and fourth uses of the line of flight begin from a different perspective. Here, through an analysis of the molecular flows that produce any molar aggregate, the lines of flight are seen as primary and as integral to the constitution of the assemblage under consideration. The uses of the concept of the line of flight in *A Thousand Plateaus* follow a similar trajectory. Deleuze and Guattari begin by mapping the lines of flight that escape from a given assemblage. In the cases of the four regimes of signs under consideration, this mode of analysis involves finding the ways in which each regime relates to that which escapes from it. Presignifying regimes treat lines of flight as absolute and negative, and continually work to block the possibility of these escapes. Signifying regimes take their lines of flight to be negative, but relative, and always assess the danger of such a line in relation to the body, or face, of the despot. Countersignifying regimes use their lines of flight to build a war-

machine that is positive, but still taken as relative in relation to the State against which such a machine would react. Finally, postsignifying regimes lodge themselves directly on a line of flight that is positive and absolute, but proceed to segment that line. In all of these cases, Deleuze and Guattari begin with the molar aggregates of the regime and then explore the lines of flight that escape them. At this stage of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis in *A Thousand Plateaus*, the concept of the line of flight is being used as it was in the first and third sense given in *Anti-Oedipus*. After such an analysis is complete, Deleuze and Guattari make a shift towards a diagrammatic mode of analysis in which they aim to explore the abstract machines that effectuate these regimes of signs. Here, Deleuze and Guattari find that "[f]rom the viewpoint of micropolitics, a society is defined by its lines of flight, which are molecular."⁷⁵³ This is, in many ways, equivalent to the shift from the molar to the molecular moments of their analysis in *Anti-Oedipus*. Here, Deleuze and Guattari discover the "lines of flight that are primary" in an assemblage and constitute its "cutting edges of creation".⁷⁵⁴ It is with this move to the diagrammatic and machinic analysis of regimes of signs that Deleuze and Guattari are able to bring together the many lines of flight they have previously discovered and produce a refrain that puts them into contact with one another. In this way, the many lines of flight form a transversal line that cuts across the different plateaus of the text to open the possibility of a new and revolutionary mode of philosophical analysis taken up by an interdisciplinary subject-group. The perspective that Deleuze and Guattari take here in relation to the line of flight is equivalent to the second and fourth uses of the concept of the line of flight as it appears in *Anti-Oedipus*. The fact that Deleuze and Guattari take these different perspectives across different sections of their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project does not lead them into self-contradiction because each of the perspectives is taken up within a broader pragmatism. The molar analysis and the molecular analysis are both required if we are to think the possibility of change. Following a rhizomatic model of thought leads us through a number of stages of analysis which are related to one another pragmatically, and while the concept of the line of flight is utilized in a different way at each of these stages, it retains a

⁷⁵³ ATP 238

⁷⁵⁴ ATP 585

level of consistency of its own, and is a key element that links each stage of this pragmatism to the next.

Conclusion – One or many lines of flight?

Contents:

- i) Review
- ii) The primacy of lines of flight in assemblages of desire
- iii) One or many lines of flight?

i) Review

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore the individuation of the concept of the line of flight. My aim has been to show the philosophical and political dimensions of the concept, and to gain an understanding of the role it plays in Deleuze and Guattari's intellectual work. To do this, I have followed the development of the concept of the line of flight through a selection of Deleuze and Guattari's texts and have mapped out the connections that it draws between these works.

In this conclusion, I wish to supplement this study in two ways. First, I will offer a close reading of a long footnote that Deleuze and Guattari add to a section of the fifth chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*. In this footnote, Deleuze and Guattari give a concise overview of their own philosophical position by comparing and contrasting it with the work of Foucault. Here they differentiate themselves from Foucault on two points, namely that in place of "power" they understand assemblages as being composed of "desire", and that where Foucault sees "resistance or counterattack in an assemblage" they see "lines of flight that are primary".⁷⁵⁵ An analysis of this footnote will help us to clarify the precise role that the concept of the line of flight plays in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series, and will show how the concept responds to problems that both Deleuze and Guattari had been addressing before their collaborations. For these reasons, this footnote will be taken as a useful point at which to end the substantive work included in this study.

This thesis attempts to map the individuation of the concept of the line of flight: It recognizes that the concept of the line of flight is not the individual result, or final product, of a process of individuation, but a process in itself. As such, the task of mapping the individuation of a concept can never be complete. Therefore, in the final section of this conclusion, I will offer an analysis of those

⁷⁵⁵ ATP 155

fields of individuation which I have not been able to study in any depth in this project. Specifically, I will offer some brief comments on the use of the concept in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* and on its further use in *What is Philosophy?* I hope that this section will serve the dual purpose of contextualizing the work that has been completed in this thesis, while also pointing to possible directions for further research.

ii) The primacy of lines of flight in assemblages of desire

In the fifth chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari clearly state that every assemblage has two sides, one composed of “forms of expression or regimes of signs (semiotic systems)” and the other composed of “forms of content or regimes of bodies (physical systems)”. They also state here that these two sides of an assemblage are “in reciprocal presupposition” and that there must be “something in the assemblage itself that is still more profound than these sides and can account for both”.⁷⁵⁶ As we have already seen, the profound element which carries out this task is what Deleuze and Guattari call an “abstract machine”.⁷⁵⁷ As I noted in the ‘Becoming molecular’ section of Chapter 6 of this thesis, Deleuze and Guattari’s shift at this point of *A Thousand Plateaus* from an analysis of regimes of signs and regimes of bodies to an analysis of the abstract machines that relate them. According to the schema they set up in *A Thousand Plateaus*, this is a move from a *generative* and *transformational* form of analysis to a *diagrammatic* and *machinic* form of analysis. Going back to the distinction first made by Guattari when he read *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense* – discussed in the ‘Machine and structure’ section of Chapter 2 of this thesis – we could say that this is a shift from an analysis of the *structural* relations of expression and the *structural* relations of bodies, to the *machinic* forces that can offer an account of the genesis of both of these structures. The reason I have returned to a discussion of these themes here is that Deleuze and Guattari add a fascinating footnote to this section in which they claim that Foucault’s work goes through a similar

⁷⁵⁶ ATP 155

⁷⁵⁷ ATP 155-156

series of stages. Specifically, Deleuze and Guattari claim that Foucault first distinguishes between contents and expressions within social formations before moving on to a diagrammatic and a machinic analysis of the articulation of these two multiplicities in his bio-political work.⁷⁵⁸ The relevant section of the footnote in question reads as follows:

“Michel Foucault has developed, in successive levels, a theory of statements addressing all of these problems. (1) In *The Archaeology of Knowledge...* Foucault distinguishes two kinds of "multiplicities," of content and of expression, which are not reducible to relations of correspondence or causality, but are in reciprocal presupposition. (2) In *Discipline and Punish...* he looks for an agency capable of accounting for the two imbricated, heterogeneous forms, and finds it in assemblages of power, or micropowers. (3) But these collective assemblages (school, army, factory, hospital, prison, etc.) are only degrees or singularities in an abstract "diagram," which for its part has only matter and function (the unspecified multiplicity of human beings to be controlled). (4) *The History of Sexuality. Vol. I. ...* takes yet another direction since assemblages are no longer related to and contrasted with a diagram, but rather to a "biopolitics of population" as an abstract machine.”⁷⁵⁹

There is not enough space in this conclusion to discuss whether or not Deleuze and Guattari's brief summary of Foucault's complex academic development captures something substantial.⁷⁶⁰ The reason I have turned to this footnote here is that Deleuze and Guattari go on to differentiate themselves from

⁷⁵⁸ Deleuze will reiterate this claim in his book on Foucault, in which the three sections contained under the general header of 'Topology' fulfil the same roles as the three stages noted here, namely 'Strata or Historical Formations', 'Strategies or the Non-stratified', and 'Foldings, or the Inside of Thought' (F 39-100).

⁷⁵⁹ ATP 585

⁷⁶⁰ For a more comprehensive analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's characterization of Foucault, see Dan W Smith's article on the topic (Smith, 2016). Smith broadly agrees with Deleuze and Guattari's characterisation and argues that Foucault is faced with the problem of the primacy of resistance because "he begins with the question of knowledge" and only latterly comes to analyse resistance (2016, 278). According to Smith's argument, Foucault attempts to solve this problem by developing an "active type of resistance" that occurs when power is directed "not against another exercise of power, but against itself" (2016, 268), while Deleuze does not have this problem because "[r]esistance, in a sense, is built into Deleuze's ontology" (2016, 278).

Foucault on two distinct points. The second section of the footnote in question reads as follows:

“Our only points of disagreement with Foucault are the following: (1) to us the assemblages seem fundamentally to be assemblages not of power but of desire (desire is always assembled), and power seems to be a stratified dimension of the assemblage; (2) the diagram and abstract machine have lines of flight that are primary, which are not phenomena of resistance or counterattack in an assemblage, but cutting edges of creation and deterritorialization.”⁷⁶¹

Let us take each of these two points of disagreement in turn. To begin with, we might think that Deleuze and Guattari’s claim that assemblages are composed of desire and not of power is simply a reiteration of one of the central conclusions of *Anti-Oedipus*, namely that the necessary precondition for the genesis of our social reality is the multiplicity of desiring-production. I discussed this argument in the section of Chapter 3 of this thesis titled ‘Positive psychoanalytic task: Defining desiring-production’ and in the section of Chapter 4 titled ‘Molecular processes and molar histories’. However, Deleuze and Guattari’s additional comment that assemblages cannot be composed of power alone because “power seems to be a stratified dimension of the assemblage” can help us to add some complexity to this account.⁷⁶² In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari explore three different stratifications of matter, namely the physical, the organic, and the alloplastic, where the first of these is a result of induction, the second of transduction, and the third of translation. These three stratifications were discussed in the section titled ‘Content, expression, and stratification’ in Chapter 5 of this thesis. When Deleuze and Guattari claim that power is only a stratified dimension of an assemblage essentially composed of desire, they seem to be suggesting that power – understood in the Foucauldian sense of the knowledge-power which pervades all social and political relations – is only operative on the alloplastic

⁷⁶¹ ATP 585. The second point of differentiation given here reiterates an argument Deleuze had previously included in a letter he sent to Foucault in 1977 which aimed to distinguish his own concept of desire from Foucault’s concept of pleasure (Deleuze, 1997).

⁷⁶² Deleuze and Guattari do discuss “very specific assemblages of power” that connect regimes of signs, however these are only one kind of assemblage (ATP 200).

strata.⁷⁶³ While power relations on this stratum will inevitably interact with the physical and organic contents and expressions of the other strata, the genesis of physical and organic assemblages cannot be understood in terms of power alone. For this reason, assemblages must be composed not of power, but of desire, understood as an abstract and machinic collective drive. Desire is therefore the more general term, while power only concerns particular articulations of desire. To put this another way, we can say that discursive power relations rely on the operation of translation. Translation, in turn, can only operate on the alloplastic, or linguistic, strata, where, the “form of expression is independent of substance”.⁷⁶⁴ The central claim in Deleuze and Guattari’s first point of disagreement with Foucault therefore seems to be that, because they see assemblages as being composed of desire, rather than of power, they are able to provide an account of the genesis of physical and organic systems, as well as socio-political ones.⁷⁶⁵

The second point of disagreement that Deleuze and Guattari bring up concerns lines of flight. Here they contrast Foucault’s understanding of resistance with their concept of the line of flight. For Foucault, resistance is a necessary corollary of power. In his *History of Sexuality, Vol 1*, he writes: “Where there is power, there is resistance”, adding that power relationships depend on a “multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network.”⁷⁶⁶ For Foucault, the necessary relation between power and resistance results from the fact that power can only be understood as a conditioning force working on free subjects. He writes that “power relations are possible only insofar as the subjects are

⁷⁶³ We could say that when Deleuze and Guattari speak of ‘power’ in a Foucauldian sense, they are referring to what they elsewhere speak of as ‘capture’ (ATP 468-520). ‘Power’ would then be a name for the ways in which desire is captured by social machines, which stratify desire through the use of translation.

⁷⁶⁴ ATP 70

⁷⁶⁵ My analysis diverges from Smith’s at this point. While he concentrates on the way in which Deleuze’s engagements with Nietzsche’s theory of the drives and Kant’s theory of practical reason lead to the political question of “how any social formation manages to capture” the lines of flight that are constantly escaping, I have chosen to emphasise the fact that it is Deleuze and Guattari’s materialist semiotics that allows them to answer this question by conducting their analysis outside of the realm of ‘knowledge-power’ (Smith, 2016, 279).

⁷⁶⁶ Foucault, 1978, 95; See also Foucault, 1980, 142

free.”⁷⁶⁷ The subject is created through a set of power relations, which it necessarily resists to a certain degree, thus power and resistance are always intertwined. In much of Deleuze and Guattari’s writing on the concept of the line of flight, it may look as if this concept plays a very similar role to that of ‘resistance’ for Foucault. For example, Guattari’s early work on group subjectivity – discussed in the section titled ‘Subject-groups’ in Chapter 2 of this thesis – argues that subjectivity is always produced at a crossroads of power and resistance. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari also show how the four different regimes of signs they have identified in historical power relations can all be defined by the differing relations they take up with their lines of flight. In short, any assemblage necessarily has something that escapes it. Because assemblages are assemblages of desire, whatever the organization of the assemblage, no matter how rigid its molar lines, there will always be lines that escape the assemblage and connect it with its outside. For Foucault, the necessary relation of resistance to power keeps the possibility of socio-political change open at all times, and in a similar way for Deleuze and Guattari, the lines of flight that escape an assemblage maintain the immanent possibility for transformation.

In order to understand Deleuze and Guattari’s claim that lines of flight “are not phenomena of resistance or counterattack” and that they are instead “primary” in an assemblage, we must pay attention to Deleuze and Guattari’s conditioning clause. They do not only state that lines of flight are primary, but that “the diagram and abstract machine” have lines of flight that are primary. Once again, Deleuze and Guattari are making a distinction between *generative* and *transformational* modes of analysis on the one hand, and *diagrammatic* and *machinic* modes of analysis on the other. It is true that when we analyse regimes of signs we see that the molar lines, the molecular lines, and the lines of flight in an assemblage seem to be intertwined and mutually upholding. However, when we move to an analysis of the abstract machines that connect regimes of signs with regimes of bodies, or “semiotic systems” with “physical systems”, we see that lines of flight are not simply coextensive with the other

⁷⁶⁷ Foucault, 1994, 720; quoted in Lynch, 2016, 191

lines, but necessarily precede them.⁷⁶⁸ There are many moments in both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* where Deleuze and Guattari seem ambivalent about the question of the respective priority of the different lines in an assemblage. For example, in the eighth plateau, they discuss “*the respective importance of the lines*” stating that “you can begin with rigid segmentarity, it’s the easiest, it’s pre-given; and then you can look at how and to what extent it is crosscut by a supple segmentarity... then you can look at how the line of flight enters in.”⁷⁶⁹ This is, in effect, what they do in their analysis of the four regimes of signs. First they offer an analysis of the rigid elements of their structure, and then they show how this rigidity relates to that which escapes it. However, they continue in the eighth plateau by writing that “it is also possible to begin with the line of flight: perhaps this is the primary line, with its absolute deterritorialization. It is clear that the line of flight *does not come afterward*; it is there from the beginning.”⁷⁷⁰ The question of the *primacy* of the line of flight therefore seems to involve a question of perceptual semiotics. It is, in effect, both a philosophical and an ethical question regarding how we choose to proceed. While it is possible to give an account of social formations via a description of their consistencies, it is also possible to begin with the cutting edges of deterritorialization. The philosophical problem here is akin to the problem of depth that Deleuze discusses in *Difference and Repetition* – and which I outlined in the section titled ‘Intensity contra linear perspective’ in Chapter 1 of this thesis – where a recognition of the primacy of the dimension of depth, understood as intensive, allows one to recognise how the identity of the here and now are transcendently conditioned by a form of difference that necessarily precedes them. The ethical question concerns the efficacy of different images of thought. As I discussed in the section titled ‘The BwO and the ethics of the line of flight’ in Chapter 5 of this thesis, while it is not necessarily ethical to draw lines of flight, moving from a traditional or ‘dogmatic’ image of thought to a vegetal or rhizomatic image in which lines of

⁷⁶⁸ ATP 155

⁷⁶⁹ ATP 226

⁷⁷⁰ ATP 226

flight are taken to be primary, will allow for a new kind of ethics, based on an understanding of causes.

Deleuze and Guattari's second point of contention with Foucault, as it is put forward in the footnote under consideration, therefore seems to depend on the question of perceptual semiotics. While it is perfectly possible to see lines of flight as necessary corollaries to assemblages of desire, and while it is possible to see resistance as a necessary corollary to power, it is also possible to go one step further, to take up a vegetal image of thought, and to recognise the primacy of lines of flight in the abstract machines that condition regimes of signs and regimes of bodies. With this analysis in mind, we can now return to the four different senses that Deleuze and Guattari attribute to the concept of the line of flight in *Anti-Oedipus* and relate them to the two different perspectives that the pair take on lines of flight in *A Thousand Plateaus*. The first and third senses of the concept of the line of flight that I discussed in my two chapters on *Anti-Oedipus*, in which psychoanalysts and political militants pick out those flows of desire that escape from oedipal relations and capitalist relations respectively, are akin to what Deleuze and Guattari take to be Foucault's concept of resistance. However, the second and fourth senses of the concept of the line of flight in *Anti-Oedipus*, concerning the transverse connections and inclusive disjunctions between heterogeneous chains of code that form the multiplicity of desiring-production and the absolute limit of capitalism that can be reached when the decoded flows released by capital cannot be recaptured and reterritorialized by it, go beyond this apparently Foucauldian perspective by recognizing the fact that "the diagram and abstract machine have lines of flight that are primary, which are not phenomena of resistance or counterattack in an assemblage, but cutting edges of creation and deterritorialization."⁷⁷¹ The footnote I have been discussing is not strictly of interest to us here because of its analysis of Foucault, but because it gives us a clear insight into the importance of the concept of the line of flight for Deleuze and Guattari. Every assemblage contains its own lines of flight and, depending on the mode of analysis you take, these lines of flight are either

⁷⁷¹ ATP 585

mutually intertwined with the other lines, or they are the primary conditions for the genesis and transformation of the assemblage itself. For Deleuze and Guattari's political philosophy, it is their concept of the line of flight which separates them from more traditional approaches to power. By recognising the logical primacy of difference over identity, by recognising the logical primacy of group relations of desire over individual desires, and by developing a vegetal image of thought that allows them to think through the dynamics of the necessary preconditions for any assemblage of power, Deleuze and Guattari are able to show that what they call the Body without Organs is primary in relation to any organisation of the body, that absolute deterritorialization is primary in relation to all other de/reterritorializations, and that lines of flight are primary in relation to either molar lines of rigid segmentarity or molecular lines of supple segmentarity.

iii) One or many lines of flight?

This thesis has concentrated on an analysis of the concept of the line of flight as it appears in the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series. In doing so, it has distinguished a number of different senses in which the concept is used. This analysis is, however, inevitably incomplete and there are a number of other senses in which the concept can be deployed. The two most obvious places to seek out alternative senses of the concept would be the two other full-length philosophical works Deleuze and Guattari completed together, namely *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* and *What is Philosophy?* To close, I would like to look at some of the paths that such an analysis may lead us down.

In their analysis of Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari develop some of the themes from their previous book, especially the possibilities of escaping the oedipal triangle and the state apparatus, while prefiguring some of the themes that will emerge in *A Thousand Plateaus*, especially in their assessment of the relation between content and expression.⁷⁷² The concept of the line of flight emerges

⁷⁷² Bogue, 2003, 75 & 102-108

here specifically in an analysis of Kafka's use of the becoming-animal in his short stories. Here, to escape the family or the bureaucracy of official structures, Kafka's writing machine finds escape routes through animal transformations: "for Kafka, the animal essence is the way out, the line of escape."⁷⁷³ In a passage that beautifully mirrors Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between the schizophrenic and the revolutionary in *Anti-Oedipus* – namely "the difference between the one who escapes, and the one who knows how to make what he is escaping escape"⁷⁷⁴ – in their analysis of his "animal stories" they claim that "Kafka was drawing lines of escape; but he didn't 'flee the world.' Rather, it was the world and its representation that he *made take flight* and that he made follow these lines."⁷⁷⁵ It would be particularly interesting to compare the lines of flight that Deleuze and Guattari discuss as routes towards a becoming-animal in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* and the modes of becoming-minoritarian put forward in *A Thousand Plateaus*. One of Deleuze and Guattari's major literary references for the concept of the line of flight in the latter text is *Soledad Brother* in which George Jackson describes fleeing from the police while looking for a weapon.⁷⁷⁶ Jackson's literary style of resistance is a form of black revolutionary becoming-minoritarian. He describes a very literal line of flight in a text that Deleuze and Guattari treat as an example of minor literature.⁷⁷⁷ By reading Jackson and Kafka alongside one another, the sense of the line of flight as an act of human or animal fleeing, and the connotations of predation that it assumes, could be made more explicit. My analysis of the many uses of the concept of the line of flight in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* has highlighted the position that the concept takes in the pair's philosophical architecture and the possible uses for this concept in escaping from socio-political modes of capture. We could say that these escapes relate primarily to those *allopastic* stratifications that operate by translation, and which produce regimes of signs and regimes of bodies. Through a closer assessment of the modes of becoming-minoritarian

⁷⁷³ K 35

⁷⁷⁴ AO 374

⁷⁷⁵ K 47

⁷⁷⁶ ATP 226; AO 305; Jackson, 1994, 328

⁷⁷⁷ For a brilliant analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's references to Jackson, see Koerner (2011). This paper is also a clear introduction to the concept of the line of flight in relation to the distinction between machine and structure.

that Deleuze and Guattari develop in their book on Kafka and elsewhere, it would also be possible to see how the concept of the line of flight is operative in the escape routes that Deleuze and Guattari identify from the *physical* and the *organic* stratifications that organise our bodies and interrupt the flow of desire on the BwO.

If we take Deleuze at his word, then *Difference and Repetition* is “a liberation of thought from those images which imprison it” – those images collectively known as the ‘dogmatic’ or ‘arborescent’ image – while the *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series is an experiment in which Deleuze and Guattari “invoked a vegetal model of thought.”⁷⁷⁸ Continuing along this trajectory, we can then take Deleuze and Guattari’s final book as an attempt to ask not only what philosophy is, but what philosophy is *now*. That is to say, once the dogmatic image has been torn down, and once the creative process of producing alternative models for thought has begun, what is left for the discipline of philosophy? In answer to this question, and in an attempt to map the connections between philosophy, science and art, Deleuze and Guattari rename their intellectual practice once again, now coining the term ‘geophilosophy’.⁷⁷⁹ Here Deleuze and Guattari attempt to differentiate their methodology of thought from the history of philosophy – both from those thinkers who came before them and from the constitution of philosophy as a *history*.

Instead of thinking of the discipline of philosophy as a series of questions, organised along a historical line of descent running from the ancient Greeks to the present, Deleuze and Guattari claim that philosophy is composed of an assemblage of problems, each of which inhabits the plane of consistency, and each of which produces its own ‘universe’. Each concept is created on the plane of consistency in response to a philosophical problem. Universes are multiple, yet they connect with one another on the plane of consistency. Within this geophilosophical practice, the concept of the line of flight takes on a specific role: “Universes are linked together or separated on their lines of flight,

⁷⁷⁸ DR xvii

⁷⁷⁹ WP 85. See Isabel Stengers’ claims about the authorship of this book (Stengers, 2006).

so that the plane may be single at the same time as universes are irreducibly multiple.”⁷⁸⁰ What this means is that it is lines of flight that allow philosophical problems to relate to one another and ultimately to form a shared plane, which we can call philosophy itself. As each assemblage is defined by its lines of flight, as much as it is defined by its lines of rigid and supple segmentarity, here Deleuze and Guattari define the discipline of philosophy by that which escapes it. In this context, the concept of the line of flight takes on a metaphilosophical as well as a philosophical role. In short, if *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* each provided their own senses of the concept of the line of flight – be they generative, transformational, diagrammatic, or machinic – an analysis of *What is Philosophy?* would allow us to define a further metaphilosophical, or geophilosophical, sense as well.

Despite having to stop short of a full analysis of the concept of the line of flight in all of Deleuze and Guattari’s writings, this thesis has aimed to show both how central the concept is to Deleuze and Guattari’s project and how it develops across the trajectory of their work together. I hope that the analysis that has been completed here may be of some use to those attempting to draw from the fertile ground of Deleuze and Guattari’s collaboration in order to think the possibility of both philosophical and political transformations.

⁷⁸⁰ WP 196. The idea that multiple universes all connect on the same plane of immanence could be read alongside Deleuze’s much earlier claim that “impossibles [belong] to the same world” (DR 65).

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Abbreviations:

English translations of books by either Deleuze, Guattari, or Deleuze and Guattari, are cited using the following abbreviations. Article length publications and French language editions of texts by Deleuze, Guattari, or Deleuze and Guattari are contained in the 'Other texts cited' section below.

Books by Deleuze:

- SPP *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley, (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1988)
- B *Bergsonism*, trans. H Tomlinson & B. Habberjam, (New York: Zone Books, 1991)
- M *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty & Venus in Furs* (with Sacher-Masoch), trans. Jean McNeil, (New York: Zone Books, 1991)
- EP *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin, (New York: Zone Books, 1992)
- N *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995)
- FB *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W Smith, (London: Continuum, 2003)
- DR *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Patton, P. (London: Continuum, 2004)
- LS *Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester & Charles Stivale, (London: Continuum, 2004)
- DI *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004)
- NP *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. H Tomlinson, (London: Continuum, 2006)
- F *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand, (London: Continuum, 2006)
- TF *The Fold*, trans. Tom Conley, (London: Continuum, 2006)
- DII *Dialogues II* (with Claire Parnet), trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007)
- TRM *Two Regimes of Madness Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*, (Paris: Semiotext(e), 2007)

Books by Guattari:

- MR *Molecular revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*, (London: Penguin, 1984)
- CS *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. P Bains & J Pefanis, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)
- TE *The Three Ecologies*, trans I Pindar & P Sutton, (London: Continuum, 2005)
- AOP *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*, trans. Kelina Gotman, (New York: Semiotexte, 2006)
- CY *Chaosophy: Texts and Interviews 1972-1977*, (New York: Semiotexte, 2008)

- MU *The Machinic Unconscious: Essays in Schizoanalysis*, trans. Taylor Adkins, (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011)
- SC *Scizoanalytic Cartographies*, trans. A Goffey, (London: Continuum, 2013)
- PT *Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Texts and Interviews 1955-1971*, trans. Ames Hodges, (New York: Semiotexte, 2015).
- LF *Lines of Flight: For Another World of Possibilities*, translated by Andrew Goffey, (London: Bloomsbury, 2015)

Books by Deleuze and Guattari:

- AO *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane, (London: Continuum, 2012)
- K *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986)
- ATP *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, (London: Continuum, 2004)
- WIP *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill, (London: Verso, 2003)

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