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Majoritarian

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common to classical metaphysics. What is more is that this vision of death-as-process, or a Nietzschean vision of the ‘eternal return’, emerges out of Deleuze’s philosophy of time: endurance and sustainability.

Life is the affirmation of radical immanence. What gets affirmed is the intensity and acceleration of existential speed characteristic of desire or the expression of *potentia*. The ethics of nomadic subjects asserts the positivity of *potentia* itself. That is to say, the singularity of the forces that compose the specific spatio-temporal grid of immanence composes one’s life. Life is an assemblage, a montage, not a given; it is a set of points in space and time; a quilt of retrieved material. Put simply, for Deleuze what makes one’s life unique is the life project, not a deep-seated essence.

Commenting on the suicides of Primo Levi and Virginia Woolf, Deleuze – who also chose to end his own life – stressed that life can be affirmed by suppressing your own life. This he felt was especially true in the case of failing health or when life is spent in degrading social conditions, both of which seriously cripple one’s power to affirm and endure life with joy. We do need to exercise some caution here, though, because Deleuze is not proposing a Christian affirmation of life geared toward a transcendent enterprise; rather he is suggesting life is not marked by any signifier or proper noun: Deleuze’s vision is of a radically immanent fleshed existence intensively lived.

Deleuze introduces a fundamental distinction between personal and impersonal death. Death is the empty form of time, the perpetual becoming that can be actualised in the present but flows back to the past and seeps into the future. The eternal return of death is ‘virtual’ in that it has the generative capacity to engender the actual. Consequently, death is the ultimate manifestation of the active principle that drives all living matter, namely the power to express the pre-individual or impersonal power of *potentia*. Death is the becoming-imperceptible of the nomadic subject and as such it is part of the cycle of becoming. Yet, death is still interconnected with the ‘outside’ and always on the frontiers of incorporeality.



MAJORITARIAN

Tamsin Lorraine

Deleuze and Guattari describe a majority as a standard like ‘white-man’ or ‘adult-male’ in comparison to which other quantities can be said to be

minoritarian (D&G 1987: 291). Human life in a capitalist society operates on the strata of the organism (various corporeal systems organised into the functioning wholes of biological organisms), 'signifiante' (systems of signifiers and signifieds that interpreters interpret), and subjectification (systems that distribute subjects of enunciation and subjects of the statement – that is, subjects who are speakers, and subjects of what is spoken about). Rather than assume that the subject is somehow prior to the society of which it becomes a member, Deleuze and Guattari take the Foucaultian stance that collective systems of enunciation (these could be compared to Michel Foucault's discursive systems, for example legal discourse) and machinic assemblages (these could be compared to Foucault's nondiscursive systems, for example the bodies, lay-out and behaviours related to the court room) are the condition of the subjects they produce. What counts as meaningful speech is dictated not by an individual subject, but by the systems of 'signifiante' that determine what makes sense in a given situation. What counts as a recognisable subject (to oneself as well as others) is dictated by systems of subjectification that determine a subject's position vis-à-vis others.

Deleuze and Guattari insist it is the 'axioms' of capitalist society that constitute majorities (D&G 1987: 469). The axioms of capitalism are primary statements that are not derivable from other statements and which enter into assemblages of production, circulation and consumption (D&G 1987: 461). The functional elements and relations of capitalism are less specified than in other forms of society, allowing them to be simultaneously realised in a wide variety of domains (D&G 1987: 454). Whether you are the worker or businessman or consumer depends more on the function you are performing and the relations into which you enter, than who or what you are. This gives capitalism a peculiar fluidity. Deterritorialising flows can be mastered through the multiplication or withdrawal of axioms (in the latter case, very few axioms regulate the dominant flows, giving other flows only a derivative status) (D&G 1987: 462). The operative statements of various regions of the social field (statements concerning, for example, school and the student, the prison and the convict, or the political system and the citizen) constitute the majoritarian elements of a denumerable set. The majoritarian standard constituted through these statements specifies recognisable positions on points of the arborescent, mnemonic, molar, structural systems of territorialisation and reterritorialisation through which subjects are sorted and significations make sense (cf. D&G 1987: 295). Systems of signifiante and subjectification sort social meaning and individual subjects into binary categories that remain relatively stable and render 'minor' fluctuations invisible or derivative. Minorities are defined by the gaps that separate them from the

axioms constituting majorities (D&G 1987: 469). These gaps fluctuate in keeping with shifting lines of flight and the metamorphoses of the assemblages involved. Minorities thus constitute ‘fuzzy’ sets that are nondenumerable and nonaxiomisable. Deleuze and Guattari characterise such sets as ‘multiplicities of escape and flux’ (D&G 1987: 470).

From the polyvocal semiotics of the body and its corporeal coordinates, a single substance of expression is produced through the subjection of bodies to discipline by the abstract machine of faciality (a ‘black hole/white wall system’); the fluxes of the organic strata are superseded by the strata of signifi-ance and subjectification (D&G 1987: 181). The ‘white, male, adult, “rational,” etc., in short the average European’ is the ‘central’ point by reference to which binary distributions are organised. All the lines defined by points reproducing or resonating with the central point are part of the arborescent system that constitutes ‘Man’ as a ‘gigantic memory’ (D&G 1987: 293). The majoritarian standard is thus this ‘average’ European constituted throughout the social field in its myriad forms through the systems of signifi-ance and subjectification of various domains.

Connectives

Arborescent schema
Black hole
Deterritorialisation
Foucault

MARX, KARL (1818–83)

Kenneth Surin

Karl Marx does not receive a great deal of explicit attention in the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, though it is clear that the Marxist paradigm is a crucial if tacit framework for many of the conceptions developed in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Especially significant is Marx’s dictum in *The German Ideology* (1932) that ‘the nature of individuals depends on the material conditions determining their production’. Deleuze, of course, interprets this dictum in a distinctive and even ‘post-Marxist’ fashion. The necessity for this (Deleuzian) reconstitution of the Marxist project stems from the crisis of utopia represented by the demise of ‘actually existing socialism’, marked in particular by the events that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 (it should, however,