

## ***Life After Death: the Concept of New Vitality in Schizoanalysis***

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### **Abstract**

The article is devoted to the analysis of the essence of life in the conception of schizoanalysis by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in the context of modern philosophy's attempts to go beyond the human. On the example of two opposing anthropologies – psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic – the author shows two ontologies of life, correlated with Aristotelian hylomorphism – life of form and life of matter. Building on Freud's later theory of the death drive, it is demonstrated that psychoanalytic thought is a product of Western Aristotelian-Christian culture, in which to be alive means to be “shaped”. In contrast with this view, Deleuze and Guattari propose a new ontology of vitality that goes beyond hylomorphism, in which life is given to “formless” matter. This new lens leads to a rethinking of man's position in the world, placing him on a par with non-human forms of life such as animals, plants, slime, bacteria and even, beyond that, with metal. The author concludes by outlining some philosophical prospects made possible by overcoming anthropocentrism through this recognition of other weird, life.

In the context of critiques of anthropocentrism, contemporary philosophy seeks to find new ways to imagine what it means to be human which don't center our species to the detriment of the rest of the world. In *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari present their joint project of schizoanalysis as an alternative to rigid and violent psychoanalysis, and, in doing so, offer one such way of transcending anthropocentrism. Schizoanalysis can be discussed in different contexts – as psychoanalytic, Marxist, political, aesthetic, or ethical theory. We propose to consider it primarily as a philosophical-anthropological theory. Such a view reveals Deleuze's and Guattari's *project of a new anthropology* based on an ontology of man different from the classical philosophical tradition.

In Western philosophy man has been long considered consistent with the Aristotelian hylomorphic model – as a union of matter and form, body and soul. The soul is the entelechy of the body, it gives it form and motion. Matter is passive, it only has potency, actualising itself through the soul. According to the hylomorphic principle, matter and form are inseparable and have no substantial expression: just as vision cannot exist apart from the eye, the soul is inconceivable apart from the body. However, in one circumstance Aristotle violates this principle: there exists a special part of the

soul – Nous, world mind, immovable and eternal source of the rational part of the soul, capable of separating itself from its material carrier: “When separated it is alone just what it is, and this above is immortal and eternal” (Aristotle 1991: 54). Thus the soul has a privileged position in relation to the body: it is eternal, and since truth in ancient Greece was understood as something eternal and immutable, the soul is endowed with the quality of truth. Human truth is not in the body, but in the soul. This attitude can be traced through medieval scholasticism, where the soul, unlike the body as the receptacle of base instincts, was thought to be the divine part of man, and in modern times, which elevated the human mind over the feelings rooted in the animal body. Thus, if we turn to the history of philosophy, we can soon discover that philosophers were not interested in man in his entirety, but only partially – as a receptacle of the soul, consciousness, mind – in short, only as a form. As a consequence of this attitude, ever since the dawn of New Age epistemology, man has been reduced to the notion of the subject as a bearer of consciousness and cognitive activity.

Deleuze and Guattari discussions of the subject find it well on its way from the integrated subject addressed by Kant to the divided subject central to Freudian thought. Whereas in Kant's philosophy the subject placed in the center of the cognitive process was thought to be simple and rational, S. Freud, and following him Jacques Lacan, called into question such a self-subject revealing that his consciousness is in many respects a product of the unconscious beyond his control. Deleuze and Guattari followed Freud in weakening the subject, but pressed it to its conclusion and rejected the notion altogether, replacing it with “subjectivity” and emphasizing its procedural rather than essential character. This radical gesture also required the rejection of psychoanalysis, which had the Kantian rational subject at its center, albeit under interrogation. Psychoanalysis, based on New Age discourse, aimed at restoring the lost integrity of the subject: at the heart of the analytic process lies the intention to bring the dark unconscious to light and place it under the control of the conscious. That is why Freud, wishing to structure the unconscious, does so according to a clear linear logic: there are oral, anal, and phallic stages of psychosexual development, failures in which lead to the formation of neurotic character structures. There is also a universal plot of the individual's mental life – the Oedipus Complex. Oedipus sets up a symbolic order: here is mother, here is father, and here is me, and relations in this family triangle develop according to a predetermined scenario. However, Deleuze and Guattari remark that such an effort to regulate the unconscious, to subject it to rational logic, is itself neurotic because neurosis, following Freud's own classification, is the desire of the conscious to supplant the unconscious. Thus, the psychoanalyst finds himself in the position of the neurotic.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, in order to escape the oppression of rationality exercised by psychoanalysis, it is necessary to overcome the Oedipus Complex not in the Freudian sense but by stepping outside it, as in reality it is not the hidden content

of the unconscious, but a type of compulsion imposed by psychoanalysts. In the preface to *Anti-Oedipus*, Foucault will call this book “a book on ethics” (Deleuze; Guattari 1977: xiii) and the fight against fascism in a broad sense: fascism as everyday behavior, expressed in our love of power and the various forms of domination over us, whether it is the domination of a policeman, a teacher or a psychoanalyst. In an even broader sense, it is about liberation from domination in any form, and in particular from the Oedipal.

Oedipus is a form-forming figure: like a sculptor, he strips away the superfluous from the unconscious and gives it the necessary outline, in other words, he creates a stable subject. But while psychoanalysis centers on the subject as a permanent *structure*, schizoanalysis centers on subjectivity as a continual *process* – the process of desiring-production. Desire is understood here not as individualistic – to emphasise its impersonal nature the authors talk about its machine character – but as a kind of vital energy, an ontological force that constructs the world. This desire has nothing in common with the Oedipus Complex, where it is teleological (because it is strictly channeled and directed towards the figure of the mother or father) and deficient (because it is funded by scarcity). On the contrary, it is aimless and redundant: it is a productive force, a machine that sets in motion the process of the production of reality. The unconscious, at the heart of which is desiring-production, is structured neither linearly like Freud's nor linguistically like Lacan's; it is not structured in any way. It is not a structure but a process, not a centered tree with a strict hierarchy, but a rhizome dispersed by the flows of desire in all directions. Therefore, from a schizoanalytic perspective, man is heterogeneous: he is not a single entity, but an aggregate of many – many molecules that make up the body, each of which is charged with desire.

If the neurotic displaces the unconscious by creating Oedipus in order to hold on to his integrity, the opposite figure, the psychotic, displaces consciousness, undermining it in order to disintegrate into the multitude. If the neurotic wishes to strengthen his subjectivity, the psychotic longs to lose it, to become the pure object of the unconscious, to experience it overwhelming and engulfing him like an oceanic wave. However, both strategies are problematically grounded in the Oedipal: the neurotic is positively attached to the form, while the psychotic is negatively attached, through its negation. The form is constitutive for both:

It would be inaccurate to maintain an Oedipal interpretation for the neuroses, and to reserve an extra-oedipal explanation for the psychoses. There are not two groups, there is no difference in nature between neuroses and psychoses. For in any case desiring-production is the cause, the ultimate cause of both the psychotic subversions that shatter Oedipus or overwhelm it, and of the neurotic reverberations that constitute it. (Deleuze; Guattari 1977: 126-127)

The true liberation of the unconscious from the constructs of the mind, however, lies in going beyond Oedipus – into the realm of schizophrenia. Deleuze and Guattari speak of schizophrenia not as a clinical diagnosis but as a process of desire production – the vital activity of the individual presented as a desire machine, unconsciously realizing its desires. The neurotic urge to stabilise and fix the form leads to breakdowns in this process, the psychotic urge to lose the form leads to deviations from it, since “the resistance to Oedipus, the return to the body without organs was still an artificial sphere, O asylum!” (Deleuze; Guattari 1977: 363).

Overcoming neurosis and psychosis as forms of alienation from reality is possible through the dismantling of all the stable constructions of the mind on which it rests. Stability of constructions is given by solid bodies having a form. Therefore, it is necessary to melt these bodies so that they become a fluid mass, a formless matter. This means entering into the pure process of schizophrenia, a flow free of stable forms. Thus becoming schizophrenic involves the death of the ego:

That is why we speak of an Oedipal-narcissistic machine, at the end of which the ego encounters its own death, as the zero term of a pure abolition that has haunted oedipalized desire from the start, and that is identified now, at the end, as Thanatos. 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 – Oedipus is a race for death. (Deleuze; Guattari 1977: 359)

Deleuze and Guattari speak of death as an anthropological transcendence. If classical philosophy thinks of man as a transcendent animal, schizoanalysis proposes taking another transcending step and going beyond the human, beyond the ego. The death of the ego does not mean the death of the human, but a new experience of life – the experience of becoming non-individualized matter-flow, obtained through “decapitation”. One does not die after decapitation. When the head leaves its place, it triggers the dissolution of the hierarchy: the chains holding the organs in place break up and the head sets off on its free journey through the body freed from the violence of the forms.

Yet for man in western culture, a fundamentally hylomorphic model, non-individual life does not exist: *to be alive means to be “formed”*. All other forms of life are perceived as death, a total loss of self. This Aristotelian attitude can be seen within Freud's philosophy, in particular in his theory of the urge to death. According to his thought, man's becoming takes place between two poles, the life and death drives, Eros and Thanatos. If Eros is oriented towards development and complication of the individual, Thanatos is oriented towards regression and simplification: the death impulse is the urge of every living organism to return to the previous stage of development, in the desire to become inorganic matter, as “inanimate things existed before living ones” (Freud 1961: 32). Phenomenologically the urge to death means the urge to rest as inanimate matter in a state of complete rest.

Freud demonstrates the mechanism of this desire for rest using the image of the “undifferentiated vesicle of a substance” (Freud 1961: 20), the elementary living particle symbolizing the human psyche. This vesicle perceives the world as a threat:

This little fragment of living substance is suspended in the middle of an external world charged with the most powerful energies; and it would be killed by the stimulation emanating from these if it were not provided with a protective shield against stimuli. (Freud 1961: 21)

However, it has protection against stimulus provided by the surface of the vesicle, its “cortical layer” – the dead part of the organic matter which does not let the destructive forces of the outside world inwards. This shell must be intact: the closure of the vesicle ensures its safety. Thus, the Freudian subject is separated from and opposed to the world.

Deleuze and Guattari refer to a similar image, that of a circle, to describe the subjectivation process. At the center of this circle are the machines of desire-absolute vitality, the intensity of pure production that works redundantly, without any purpose or reason-and on its surface is the body without organs, a zero intensity that is anti-functional and wants to stop all production processes. The process of subjectification unfolds between two dichotomous poles: the pure intensity of the machine-organ and the zero intensity of the body without organs. These poles are interdependent: just as the surface of an atom cannot exist without a nucleus, the surface of a body without organs forms a unit with the charged machines of desire. The forces of attraction and repulsion act between the center and the surface, generating states of varying intensity. The subject appears on the surface of the circle as an effect, a “recorder”, of the intensities through which it passes. It is transpositional because it does not represent the whole circle but only a part of it, appearing here and there:

It is a strange subject, however, with no fixed identity, wandering about over the body without organs, but always remaining peripheral to the desiring-machines, being defined by the share of the product it takes for itself, garnering here, there, and everywhere a reward in the form of a becoming or an avatar, being born of the states that it consumes and being reborn with each new state. (Deleuze; Guattari 1977: 16)

Unlike the Freudian subject which is self-identical and closed off from the outside world, the schizoanalytic fluid subject is neither closed nor separated from the world. If we continue with the Freudian metaphor of vials, he is like Leonid Lipavsky's “bubble”:

Life appears as the following picture. A semiliquid inorganic mass, in which fermentation takes place, tensions and knots of forces come and go. It surges with bubbles, which, adapting, change their shape, stretch out, split into a multitude of

stirring threads, into whole chains of bubbles. All of them grow, tug, tear off, and these torn off parts continue their movements as if nothing had happened and stretch out and grow again. (Lipavsky 1994: 84-85)

According to Lipavsky, there are at least two ways to live: “our way” and “not our way”. Thus, a dead man, a lunatic, an idiot are alive, but the form of their life is fatal for us. If the sleepwalker would not appear in one row with the dead man, then one may think that to live not our way means not humanly in the most literal sense of this word: cellular, parasitic, bacterial, all that lives in the human body. But the sleepwalker is not a bacterium or a dead man: his heart beats in his chest, his lungs are filled with oxygen and he has a completely human appearance. He does not live our way because he leads a “formless” irrational life, he becomes a pure stream, a flow of matter. In this sense, the sleepwalker is no different from the slime bug, bedbug, clothes louse, worm, and other scary creatures – scary because they are “almost liquid”. Paradoxically, the subhuman, to which Lipavsky attributes all body fluids (mucus, blood, saliva, bacteria, viruses, worms, mites, bedbugs), appears closer to man than his neighbor, right inside him. These hideous life forms provoke both horror and contempt: the animate nature of this swarming, impersonal mass seems unnatural.

If the Freudian man has a defense against external influences, but “towards the inside there can be no such shield” (Freud 1961: 23). Freud understood the inner world, from which these forces originate, as primarily a psychic world: surplus unspent energy presses on the psychic apparatus from within, seeking an exit to the outside. But it can also be interpreted literally – as a totality of different kinds of fluids and “almost liquid” beings hiding under our skin. As soon as we get a small cut on our skin, this flow of life erupts and spreads outward in all directions, penetrating into objects and vaporizing. Blood embodies the image of unfocused impersonal life, which “oscillates between certainty and indeterminacy, impersonality and individuation” (Lipavsky 1994: 82).

Matter is man's main fear and object of desire: the urge to death is the unconscious desire to return to a state of absolute inorganic materiality. But while Freud thinks of inorganic matter as dead, Deleuze and Guattari speak of it as a special form of life:

The prodigious idea of *Nonorganic Life* – the very same idea Worringer considered the barbarian idea par excellence – was the invention, the intuition of metallurgy. Metal is neither a thing nor an organism, but a *body* without organs. (Deleuze 2005: 411)

If for Lipavsky matter is predominantly liquid, for Deleuze and Guattari it is a flow in which the solid and the liquid ceaselessly turn into each other. Metal has a similar shape-shifting quality. Metal is rhizomatic: it is capable of being reborn again and again in different forms, both hard and fluid. It lies deep in the Earth and at the same time

pervades its entire surface: “Even the waters, the grasses, the forests and the beasts are inhabited by salts or mineral elements”. Man is neither a solidified metallic form nor a molten metal capable of taking any shape but a metalworker and smith. “The metallurgist” of Deleuze and Guattari is not one who forces metal to follow his will, but one who himself follows the metal:

Rather, artisans are those who follow the matter-flow as pure productivity: therefore in mineral form, and not in vegetable or animal form. They are not of the land, or of the soil, but of the subsoil. Because metal is the pure productivity of matter, those who follow metal are producers of objects par excellence. (Deleuze 2005: 411-412)

If the man of the earth is a man standing on it and cultivating it as an object, the man of the subsoil is immersed in the earth, he acts as part of it. To the agriculturist he appears dead, buried. However, in the subsoil, Deleuze and Guattari say, it is possible to live, but to live not in our own way. It is not a state of absolute fusion with the world in which the animal resides. If every animal, as Georges Bataille wrote, is in a world “like water in water” (Bataille 1989: 19), then man is like metal in matter. He is not dissolved but distributed as the productive force of matter:

It's not a question of being this or that sort of human, but of becoming inhuman, of a universal animal becoming – not seeing yourself as some dumb animal, but unraveling your body's human organization, exploring this or that zone of bodily intensity, with everyone discovering their own particular zones, and the groups, populations, species that inhabit them. (Deleuze 1995: 11)

The anthropological project proposed by Deleuze and Guattari seems, at first glance, to be negative, since it implies the deconstruction of forms. In reality, however, it does not aim at deconstruction, but at overcoming forms: if in the first case we are talking about negative dependence on form, in the second case we are talking about liberation from dependence on form. A person should not cling to the form, as a neurotic does, nor undermine it, as a psychotic does, but build themselves into a being in which form is not substantiated: I am ready to become any form and to reject it at any moment in order to immerse myself in the elements again. The schizophrenic can take any form, because he is independent of it, he does not care about it. His intention is to break through to vitality, to join the element as the beginning of being, where form can be a stage on the way to this joining, but not the final point. This requires entering the mode of gameplay without rules: the schizoanalytic subject is constantly playing, but it is not clear what it is playing at.

Thus, in order to emerge from the anthropological and ecological crises to which man's selfish behavior has led, he needs to build his identity on new foundations: not by opposing himself to other forms of life, but by inserting himself into the same world alongside them. It is necessary to undermine the organism and become a body without

organs, from which absolutely any structure may arise at random, thus equalizing the status of all entities, from bacteria or mucus to plant or man. It is this gesture that will enable man to overcome the anthropocentrism still prevalent in philosophy.

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