

Gilles Deleuze – The Deleuze Seminars (deleuze.cla.purdue.edu), summaries: Charles J. Stivale

On A Thousand Plateaus I (RAI-3 Recordings)

[All dates approximate, except session ATP I.7]

**Session I.1 (in 3 parts)
November 18, 1975**

This session corresponds to the YouTube recording, *Deleuze su molteplicità molare et molteplicità molecolare*, containing segments from three successive Tuesday sessions. The Part I opening is remarkable for providing visual evidence of the extraordinarily cramped space in which Deleuze worked at Vincennes, where he acknowledges Guattari's presence who does not intervene in the recording. After reviewing previous topics discussed, Deleuze introduces variables of molecular multiplicities that Deleuze lists: bridges; a network; the borderline (*bordure*); threshold or door; fiber; and the plane of consistency or rhizosphere. Deleuze steps back to consider multiplicities of a primarily molar nature and their characteristics, and he points out that within the molar schema, all kinds of other phenomena intervene and perturb the molar multiplicities. These constitute forms of mixing that Deleuze outlines, and in contrast to the centralized molar multiplicity, Deleuze develops a network of linkages each time with a black hole that is both receiver and emitter of each element, of each black hole. Deleuze then focuses on the molecular multiplicities defined through their dimensions, specifically their maximal dimension that is the borderline, with reference to work by René Thom and examples from Melville, Virginia Woolfe, Henry Miller, and Lovecraft. As the recording shifts, Deleuze develops the importance of gangs in terms of the molar aggregate organization, with a centralized leader, but also points to molecular aspects of the gang organize that shift back into the molar aggregate, on one hand, the phenomena of the borderline or flight, on the other, a shift back to a centralized leadership and organizing function. A third, very brief fragment commences in mid-quotation from Lovecraft (located in *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 251) with Deleuze discussing the possibility of numerous dimensions possessed by molecular multiplicities, with reference to Woolfe's *The Waves* and Kafka "Josephine the Singer". These examples allow Deleuze to connect, in the fragment's final minutes, with the simultaneity of two asymmetrical becomings that he calls a block of becoming.

**ATP I -2 (Il Senso in Meno 1)
December 5, 1975**

In a dual lecture including both Deleuze and Guattari, the authors introduce different terms developed, notably, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, plateaus 4 and 5 (on linguistics and semiotics). This session's continuity is unfortunately marred by numerous filming breaks causing frequent jumps in the flow of ideas. With reference to work by Pierre Clastres, he emphasizes how one is rendered compatible for enunciation within the system as a whole, i.e. types of state-controlled societies and citizenship, but not necessarily within more marginalized groups, but in either case, specific formations of territorialities are involved. He proposes a rhizomatic system without black holes and yielding a semiotic polyvocality, allowing multiple expressive elements (verbal,

bodily, dance, sexual), hence not informatics based but diagrammatic. Deleuze discusses in greater detail the first system, focusing particularly on different senses of “black holes” (e.g., in astronomy), to which he associates the eyes but also consciousness and memories, and then returns to the question of language-power relations and how different models have limited discussing the question, notably ideological, certain forms of linguistics. Deleuze suggests that a different conception of power is required, but one can understand language as a particular formalization of expression whose function is to transmit orders in society. Deleuze shifts position to draw a schema of three heads (information, noise, redundancy), an orders-command schema, concluding that this first system inscribes itself on a semiotic wall, that of signifi-ance, from which poets and writers attempt to flee. To this redundancy of frequency, he contrasts a redundancy of resonance, that he links to linguists’ use (notably, Émile Benveniste) of the term “shifter”, e.g., redundancy of the personal pronoun. This difference (to resonance) entails distinctions between the subject of enunciation and the subject of the enunciated, which Deleuze asserts are redundancies creating a vortex, a true hole.

ATP I.3 (Il Senso in Meno 2)
December 16, 1975

Guattari begins by discussing the scene in Proust’s *Swann’s Way* with Swann deepening his understanding of the composition by the fictional composer, Vinteuil, (cf. *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 185-187) and emphasizes how certain elements of the musical phrase stand out with certain musical signs becoming deterritorialized. He then shows how Swann appreciates Vinteuil’s creation without falling into a black hole but rather taking it within him as material presence, and how the musical phrase reorganizes the subjectivity of the people around Swann in the salon. Deleuze discusses the black hole into which Swann’s life collapses, the love-passion black hole, linked to Swann’s interest in painting and to the redundancy of faces, shifts linked to the musical line inspired by Vinteuil’s phrase. Responding to students’ comments, Deleuze emphasizes how these shifts are situated within the social territoriality of the Verdurin salon, but the session is disrupted by disagreements between different students, and despite an attempt by Georges Comtesse to bring the discussion back to Proust and faciality, another student (tentatively identified as Éric Alliez) completely disrupts the session by introducing a scattershot political tirade, which eventually evolves into a shouting match between him and other students.

ATP I.4 (Il Senso in Meno 3)
January 13, 1976 (Part I)

Deleuze starts by responding to a student about different levels of faciality and admits that faciality comes undone as much to the advantage of *becoming-animal* as to that of *musical lines*, between which there are relations. To another student’s query, Deleuze suggests how a becoming-animal can be caught up in a becoming-ascetic, and how different becomings may all be caught in a line that is an abstract machine. Returning to faciality, Deleuze briefly considers the gaze and subjectivity as developed, first, by Lacan, and then by Sartre, then shifts to Guattari’s previous discussion of relations between faciality and power, specifically the role and function of the face in power apparatuses. Deleuze then shifts briefly to passionate power and its form of faciality, then to the topic of the maternal face, then to the celebrity face, and then proposes to consider how these different forms of faciality might pertain to apparatuses of

power, all with different functions. Having established the earlier mode of faciality, Deleuze returns to contemporary faciality as a key element of power apparatuses, entailing an overcoding, sexuality being particularly overcoded by the face, but also by apparatuses of power. Student discussion briefly prevents Deleuze from continuing, but he returns to discussion of the face, notably the significance of the despot's face as frontal face projected on a white wall, creating specific modes of signification, allowing one to fall asleep to the image. Then, a second such figure is two faces facing each other, which Deleuze relates to his previous discussion of Tristan-Isolde and plunging into the black hole (of passion). Moving beyond these, Deleuze considers a third phase, the face turning away, invented by God in the history of the Jewish people, the tale of the double turning away, and concludes with Deleuze concludes with a third image seen while falling asleep: whereas the earlier ones organized traits of faciality, the third frees up these traits which transform into other traits and even escape into landscapity.

**ATP I.5 (Il Senso in Meno 4)
January 13, 1976 (Part II)**

This very brief recording continues the previous session's discussion of white wall and black holes, with Deleuze pursuing a rhizomatic method of starting a novel from the middle (the Kafka or ant method), contrasting this to the habit of beginning at the end, for example, with the chivalric novel where a character is deterritorialized and wanders, a line of the novel that Deleuze see running from Chrétien de Troyes to Beckett. Examining the novel of courtly love, linking this line to Dostoyevsky, Kafka as well as Beckett, Deleuze contrasts this errant line to the epic or dramatic tale of a hero. Deleuze then proposes "proof" of his argument with a facial representation (in a book he circulates) of a demon face from Ethiopia, with black holes for eyes, of the Negus, with faciality understood at once as the substance of the signifier and as the attribute of subjectivity. In contrast to these examples, Deleuze proposes Henry Miller's works as an attempt to break through the wall through a becoming-masochist and becoming-animal, and after an intervention by Georges Comtesse on courtly love, Guattari intervenes, in some ways to respond to Comtesse, to discuss the contrast between deterritorializing movement provoked by the semiotic collapse with relation to the face and the need to reconstitute artificial points of reterritorialization (faces, couple relations, identities, among others). Guattari suggests that in order to pass these semiotics through the worst despotism of territorialized systems, a tabula rasa is necessary of all the old territorialized semiotic components which will be swept into a new system of semiotic power that functions through informational overcoding. A recording interruption leads to Deleuze speaking very briefly of Kleist and the programmed life, and then taking one student's comments as the session abruptly ends.

**ATP I.6 (Il Senso in Meno 5)
January 20, 1976**

In a brief session without Guattari, Deleuze continues to develop details regarding faciality, specifically as linked to American psychology, noting the white screen or wall of the dream, with facialization implying operations that presuppose the white wall and black holes. Rejecting different approaches to this concept (genetic, phenomenological, partial-object analysis, and structural), Deleuze focuses on bodily intensive movements, or movements of

deterritorialization, considering an anatomical explanation of this concept, e.g., the hand as the agent of a movement of deterritorialization with measured speeds. The hand's complement is the tool-object, a first-level assemblage; the mouth as a second level agent with extruding lips as deterritorialized mouth; the breast another level as deterritorialized mammary gland. Deleuze then proposes several theorems of deterritorialization, emphasizing that territoriality, deterritorialization and reterritorialization constitute three notions that are not reducible to each other. These theorems lead Deleuze to consider power apparatuses needing both face and landscape, i.e., those forces maintaining attachment to a white wall or cause a plunge into a black hole. The most deterritorialized movements on which everything artificially reterritorializes then result in overcoding whatever has lost its code, i.e., the animal body or human corporeality. These are then reterritorialized, hence overcoded, but not to be confused with so-called "primitives", i.e. nomadic or sedentary peoples, with no need for faciality or attendant power apparatuses. This recording ends with Deleuze indicating that their abstract machines are different, e.g. dance and gesture.

ATP I.7 (Il Senso in Meno 6) February 3, 1976

The tenor of Deleuze's opening remarks during the segment's first minutes, as well as his clothing and the drawing that dominates the blackboard – the fourth, four-cornered drawing reproduced in *A Thousand Plateaus* (p. 183) --, all suggest that this opening segment is the end of a missing session (possibly January 27, 1976). The brief subsequent session (to minute 29) is the sole session for which a date is certain, February 3, 1976, stated by an Iranian student during the session. Having concludes the opening fragment with a review of the previous sessions' topics, notably, the *rhizome* in opposition to the tree, a *theory of redundancy*, the problem of *faciality*, Deleuze commences the February 3 with discussion the face-power assemblage, hoping that others will discuss the close-ups role for the face and in cinema. He mentions facial tics and verbal slippages and links these to the face's constant binary choices, instigating dichotomies and assigning places, but then defers to Guattari who addresses the ways in which a machine of faciality helps establish decoded flows in capitalist flows, in contrast to territorialized assemblages of enunciation within primitive societies where faciality functions differently. Guattari returns to the four-eyed machine drawing (developed in the previous session), describing the face as a kind of oscillograph establishing what is allowed and what is forbidden through shifting corporeal attitudes and semiotics. Following a recording interruption, the discussion opens to student interventions, notably a student (identified as Éric) dominating the exchanges, but an Iranian student succeeds in announcing details of an important demonstration occurring that very day, to which Deleuze lends his support with plans to cut the session short., to allow students time to reach the demonstration, also mentioning a general assembly at Vincennes the next day.

ATP I.8 (Il Senso in Meno 7) February 24, 1976

Before closing the "chapter of faciality" as well as discussing two types of delirium, Deleuze proposes that they address the close-up, the purpose being to apply to it the "rhizome method" more systematically. Referring to Josef von Sternberg's memoirs, Deleuze develops several

general propositions about the close-up, and then he compares the pair of effects, lightening or resorting to shadows – to the white wall-black hole system. As for close-ups of things other than the face, Deleuze asserts (with reference to Eisenstein on D.W. Griffith's cinema) that such close-ups occur provided that the thing in question is caught up in a process of facialization. Deleuze then undertakes to define the close-up by considering different cinematographic means, e.g., a mobile camera approaching a character or object, or a reverse process, close-up as a scale of intensity, and with various references, Deleuze joins the two functions of the close-up to two types of faciality, the despotic face and the passionate face, but also notes mixed uses of types of close-ups. At this point, following a recording interruption, a 37-minute debate ensues among the participants regarding the unacceptably crowded conditions in the classroom. A notable moment is Deleuze's concise argument favoring the smaller, more crowded space (for greater possibilities of student exchange) over the available amphitheater space (entailing greater distance from the students and less opportunity for exchanges). Deleuze attempts to bring discussion to a close by mediating between the opposing sides, mainly to remove the space-wasting tables henceforth, but also to remain in the current space, but at one point, he seems ready to abandon the session, noting how badly things are going, and he also admits to feeling ill. Finally, with no agreement reached besides Deleuze's proposal, the session continues for another 30 minutes, with Deleuze considering two forms of delirium, specifically paranoid delusions (or delusions of interpretation) and passionate delusions (or grievance delusions). He fleshes out these distinctions with numerous references, modern, classical and biblical, and he concludes the session by proposing that they continue to examine the two systems, the one irradiating, despotic, frontal faced, based on trickery and deceit; the other linear, passionate, diverted faces, based on betrayal.

ATP 9 (II Senso in Meno 8)
March 2, 1976 (Part I)

The extensive discussion here (as in the previous session) develops material included in *A Thousand Plateaus*, notably plateau 5, on sign systems in relation to territoriality. The session focuses for approximately 36 minutes on an emotional debate among the students, as well as with comments from Deleuze and Guattari, about whether one student in particular -- a woman who hurled an unsubstantiated accusation (possibly about plagiarism) at Deleuze -- should be forced to leave the class. Once this matter is resolved, Deleuze continues for another 35 minutes in this part (II Senso in Meno 8) and 36 minutes in the next (II Senso in Meno 9). Deleuze refers to the need for drawings (cf. *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 135-137), the first pertaining to a "center of signifiante" from which signs are distributed across concentric circles and from which, in the outside circle, emerges a line of flight. Deleuze then develops a second, passionate schema, that proceeds through circular irradiation from a point of subjectivation. Based on these opposed schemas, Deleuze considers, first, how the schemas might be connected, even on an abstract plane, and second, what these schemas refer to. Whereas the first schema corresponds to paranoid delusion and to the despotic social formation, the second schema corresponds to a passionate delirium developed in early psychiatry and to flight from a despotic system. Then, following the aforementioned debate, Deleuze continues by considering binarisms and their link to the exercise of a certain type of power and dominant language in contrast to polyvocality of bodies, to which he links the two systems outlined earlier. Deleuze opts for Peirce's terminology of signs (index, icon, symbol) to designate territorial movements and to create networks of signs on a kind of

continuum. Calling this continuum on which everything occurs a first characteristic, Deleuze locates a second one in the system's circularity, corresponding to the second schema. Thus distinguishing paranoia and interpretation, the latter allowing signification to be recharged from within, Deleuze concludes provisionally that humanity's two maladies are signification and interpretation.

**ATP 10 (Il Senso in Meno 9)
March 2, 1976 (Part II)**

The successive segments of this same session show the previous discussion regarding modes of signifying as related to faciality with Deleuze in the process of creating a multidimensional multiplicity, currently the fifth dimension. This binary relationship is, in fact, the movement from sign to sign, and Deleuze cites a tale about the despotic formation from Luc de Heusch [*The Drunken King, Or the Origin of the State; Le roi ivre ou l'origine de l'État* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972)], a myth of the Bantu people, thereby providing an example of how the face serves to establish the Signifier or also is the form of reterritorialization proper to the Signifier. Shifting to a sixth dimension, Deleuze asserts that the paranoid or despotic system needs to block lines of flight from escaping the circular system, and he refers to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* regarding the tortured man who above all loses his face, i.e., through his expulsion. Thus, the sixth dimension is the presence of a line of flight with negative value, and hence everything that threatens this system's signification is cast out. With the six dimensions of the paranoid or despotic system in place (two dimensions during this session), Deleuze proposes to link this schema to the second figure, the one with successive linear steps. In contrast to the despotic formation's system of deception, the passion functions entirely differently, with a packet of signs fleeing along the segmented line. Deleuze insists that so-called "primitive" semiotics as well as nomadic semiotics do not equate with either of the schemas he has outlined, thus referring to the mix of semiotics that has occurred. To Georges Comtesse's challenge to Deleuze's model of the face-substance center, Deleuze reacts with considerable scorn since Comtesse has simply changed the terms, all the more evident when he agrees with each of Deleuze's points. When Comtesse attempts to distinguish his position further, Deleuze simply agrees with him, and the film ends with Comtesse holding forth alone at the back of the classroom with Deleuze listening calmly and smiling.