

Gilles Deleuze

On *The Anti-Ædipe III*, 1973-1974

3rd Session, January 21, 1974 [Part 1]

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I would like us to be able to organize our paths of research here in line with the point we have reached. It seems to me that, given what we saw last time, we have three main directions.

The first direction is relative to what we saw last time: we had looked at a matter that we could call *the plane of composition*. This plane of composition was something we sometimes referred to as the plane of consistency, perhaps to place it more in relation with the operation of desire. Thanks to Spinoza, whose thinking was necessary in this regard, we were able to find a kind of compositional plane, a plane of consistency, which was defined by the unity of its materials, or in a certain way – which amounts to the same thing – by the position of univocity. This is a kind of thought that does not pass by way of forms, nor through organs or organisms, a kind of informal thought.

And to say that the plane of consistency is defined by a unity of materials also refers us to a system of variables, and these variables consisted – once we had established that they were the same materials in all assemblages – the variables consisted in the positions and the connections. It was the variation of positions and connections of the materials that constituted the so-called machinic assemblages, machinic assemblages whose common point was that they all realized the plane of consistency according to this or that degree of power.

So we have a first very marked link between the plane of composition or consistency and the machinic assemblages which realized this plane in various ways, according to the position and the connections of the materials in each assemblage. And finally, according to each assemblage, circulations and transformations of affects were produced, a machinic assemblage being like a place of passage, a place of transformation of intensive affects, and these intensive affects corresponded to the degrees of power of each machinic assemblage.

This opens up a research path that will allow us to pose the question of the relation between intensities, intensive affects and forms. What is the relation between intensive quantities and forms, specific forms, categorical forms and generic forms, and so on? How is an intensive thought which does not pass by way of these forms possible? The whole of Scholasticism is traversed by a problem which is of vital importance to it, since it lies at the crossroads of physics and theology. This is the problem they were very conscious of during the whole of the Middle Ages, that of the relation between intensities and forms. In medieval philosophical terms, this problem was known as the latitude and remission of forms. The question is to know if a form is in itself susceptible to intensive variations, that is to say if it enjoys a dimension of latitude. The latitude of forms consisted in the possible variations of a form in terms of its intensities. For example, can one be *more or less* reasonable? Here, we can see how it will be up to us to transform this old problem, and at least we can situate it as an old

classical problem: man being defined for example as a reasonable animal, a reasonable animal as a form composed both of a generic determination: animal, and of a specific difference: reasonable.

To be more or less reasonable. What can it mean when a form is susceptible to a certain latitude? If one can be more or less reasonable, is it that, at a push, there will be a degree zero of being reasonable which will certainly not be the same thing as the way in which an animal is not reasonable. How could they pose this problem of the relationship between intensities and forms? And once again, this runs through all the physics of the Middle Ages, all these attempts to make a science of intensive quantities. We had a kind of mixture that we must take in a very muddled way and that revolved around a kind of thought of degrees of power, of the assemblages into which these degrees of power entered, of a critique of forms, and of the effort... of Spinoza's own effort to think degrees of power independently of forms, functions, species and kinds. All this constitutes a curious philosophy that revolved around thinking immanence or the univocity of being. It all turns around a kind of theory of the machinic assemblages that one tries to pursue.

When we are told about a latitude of forms, before we have even seen what was meant by latitude in the Middle Ages, either we can say... I believe that in the Middle Ages, there were two main positions. There is the position which tells us, among other things, that a form itself can only be perfect, this is all that it has, therefore the notion of reasonable, for example, cannot be considered in terms of more or less. The plus or minus of the intensity, the latitude, that is, the thresholds between which *the play* of form takes place cannot come from the form itself. It can only come from the subject in which this form is realized or to which this form lays claim. *Latitude is not a property of the form itself; it is a property of the subject that receives it.* But there are others who would say that it is the form itself that is susceptible, under certain conditions, to a certain latitude, that is to say, that it plays between certain thresholds. What the two positions at least have in common is a certain subordination of the intensive latitude to the form.

In terms of the business of the egg, we had a very different position. There, it is the forms themselves that are as if subordinated to the intensive variations that determine them. In the question of the egg, the egg is considered as an intensive medium, and it is the thresholds of intensities which determine this or that form. It is as if the subordination between forms and intensities had been reversed. This is very important for us because, after all, it is by no means given that the egg is our past; this is a very dangerous conception, to consider that the egg is our past, since it naturally leads us on the path of regression. Is it not possible, not only from the point of view of embryology, but also from the point of view of the most lived experience, to conceive of the egg as being strictly always contemporary with ourselves, that is to say, that each of us carries our own egg with them, and what we call someone's egg is his or her milieu of experimentation? So the egg is no longer in any way a refuge in the mode of a return to the mother, but is, if you like, the strictly contemporary placenta of ourselves. It is, finally, the milieu of strict contemporaneity. The egg is not at all the form in which I descend from a mother and incidentally from a father. The egg is like the contemporary plasma in relation to which father or mother and child are strictly contemporaneous with each other. The egg, strictly speaking, is the contemporary milieu where one cannot establish succession and in relation to which one cannot establish succession. From this point of view, the egg is really the contemporary intensive matter of any experimentation as such. It is always in the egg that one experiments. This is obviously a conception that always makes the egg our own past.¹

A student: [*Inaudible remarks*].

Deleuze: Here is a text by a contemporary embryologist, who says that "Forms are contingent upon a kinematic dynamism" – it is about the development of the egg – "It is secondary whether or not an orifice forms in the germ. All that counts is the process of immigration itself; what yields an orifice fissure or primitive line is not invagination, but pure chronological and quantitative variations"² – that is, whether an energetic flow reaches a certain threshold or not. There, forms, including organic forms, are really secondary to thresholds of intensities.

Kyрил Ryjik: When was this text written?

Deleuze: About 1930.

Ryjik: That's as far from us as...

Deleuze: Why do you say that?

Ryjik: You're talking in terms of intensities, whereas he's talking as a phenomenologist, an observer. Biochemistry wouldn't work, and where you would have to go back to intensities is in quantum biochemistry, for example, at the level of electronics. It is the structure of proteins that determines the forms.

[WebDeleuze note: *A long polemic ensued*]

Deleuze: I have the impression that this is not at all the same problem. Embryology deals with the way in which the egg develops and differentiates. When the embryologist claims around 1925-1930 that the determination of forms in relation to the development of the egg appeals to distributions of intensities, that is one thing; it does not claim to be molecular biology. To say that molecular biology goes beyond or is called to go beyond this point of view, seems to me to be without foundation. I am not saying that we should be satisfied with the egg as the ultimate unit. I am saying that whatever the state of physics or whatever the state of biology, there is indeed a problem which is the development of the egg as a – let's use any word – a giant molecule, or molar unit. When someone is interested in the development of the egg and in the organization of intensities, to say to him: tell us about quantum physics, that is to say, about the molecular elements which are, if necessary, mixed with this, takes on a whole other dimension.

Ryjik: It's not "if necessary"; you're talking like a finalist. You're looking at the egg as if it were the pole that attracts the intensities.

[WebDeleuze note: *The discussion continues for some time.*]

Deleuze: That was the first direction for me. Second direction...

Georges Comtesse: In your view, is it the conflicting difference between the forces of attraction and repulsion that determines the production of intensities on the egg?

Deleuze: No. Regarding that, I would say that the distributions of intensities on the egg are much more linked to molecular machinic assemblages.

The second direction, one that we have addressed on all the previous occasions, is that machinic assemblages have nothing to do with forms, with separable forms, specific forms or generic forms. Machinic assemblages always problematize units of levels and contents that are completely different. Insofar as machinic assemblages are not representations of something, but transformations of affects, they put into play all kinds of becomings, and for a simple reason: it is that *affect itself is a becoming*, it is an intensive passage. Among the becomings put into play in machinic assemblages, are a becoming-animal and a becoming-molecular. But it is these affects that fill a capacity of being affected, or that circulate within a machinic assemblage, that mark the notion of the becoming-animal. For example, the becoming-horse of little Hans, the notion of becoming-molecular, and all these various becomings occur either in relation to machinic assemblages or involve real movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

It is this whole becoming-animal, becoming-molecular, and the movements of deterritorialization that must be analyzed in terms of a machinic assemblage. And in this respect, we had sketched out a kind of possible program for the becomings-animal. Once again, we had had the presentiment that becomings-animal were not sufficient, that they were perhaps compromises, compromises between forms and intensities, and that beyond becomings-animal, there were still becomings-molecular. We had seen the famous becomings-animal that occurred in Africa. Are there not very profound historical links between certain war customs and becomings-animal, where you have this whole notion of wild-man warriors. Would there also be a relationship between becomings-animal and certain secret societies, for example, secret societies in Africa?

And finally, the third direction. This was that in these machinic assemblages, there always intervened – precisely because any arrangement put in relation units... [*Text interrupted*]

[WebDeleuze note: *A discussion of the notion of program follows*]

... The psychoanalytic operation is an operation of exchange that consists in saying: I will replace your affects with fantasies. When we talk about the psychoanalytic contract, we have to see that, by nature, it is double: there is an external contract which is the visible contract: you give me money and I listen to you; and the invisible contract: you give me your affects for the benefit of a scene of fantasy representation.

Richard Pinhas: There's no real secret about it, since Freud devoted an entire text to explaining that he was exchanging people's lived configurations, emotions and affects for discourse and representative configurations.

Deleuze: Yes, but that doesn't prevent it from arriving at a new stage with Melanie Klein. There, the object of the exchange passes through the fantasy, whereas with Freud, it was not posed like that at all.

A student: I don't really see the distinction between fantasy and representation as long as we consider that the social machine consists in inscribing affects in a generic conceptual language.

Deleuze: We all agree that there is no difference; fantasy is a kind of matrix of representation. [*Text interrupted*]

... The first thing I see is that there is always something left to cover, namely the genesis of affects. This is the way in which the molecular elements affect each other according to the positions and the variable connections that will generate the affects that run through the machinic assemblage. It is even in this way that we will be able to justify the formula: only machines are affective, it is the machines that are affective. They are not representations of something, they are affective and they are programs of affects.

The second thing is that the signs of affect are indeed like indices of representation from which one induces [*indistinct words*]. Here, I am less sure of what I'm saying because if we take up again [*indistinct words*], once again, if we take up the way little Hans defines the horse, what is important for us is not the horse in general, it is the ONE horse that he programmed as part of his machinic assemblage. When he says that he has blinkers, black around his mouth, and what have you, if you separate each thing – because it is still representation, the representation of a street scene, the horse that little Hans saw dragging... but in another way and along another line which would be the affective program of little Hans, it is already something other than a representation, namely *circulations of affects*. Little Hans won't see a horse wearing blinkers, he will instead be affected by what he experiences as the blindness of the horse, the active blindness of the horse as it is caused by man. And here, we are no longer in the domain of representation. If you separate the elements, you will say that each one refers to a representation. But if you establish the circulation in terms of this mystery, you will ask how little Hans makes an affect circulate, how he passes from one affect to another. For example, an essential problem, it seems to me, in little Hans's assemblage is: does the horse bite because it has fallen or for some other reason? What is the affect that is transformed into biting?

If we transform this in terms of fantasies, you see that the answer is the psychoanalytic answer, namely that "making noise with his feet" refers to the primal scene, to the fantasy representation of the primal scene. Previously we said that as far as we were concerned, we didn't give a damn about all that, that the machinic assemblage was completely sexual in itself and had nothing to do with a fantasy. At that point, it is enough to reintroduce the movement of affects in the machinic assemblage so that it becomes the programming of this assemblage where nothing is exactly a representative index anymore, although, at each moment, if you make a cut, at such and such a moment, you reduce things to signs of representation.

So, I believe that it would be necessary to introduce a double point of view because it is true that it is, in the last instance, molecular relations that account for the distribution of affects in a machinic assemblage, while, at another level, it is the machinic assemblage that causes molecular lines, becomings-molecular or at least becomings-animal to take flight. It is in this sense that I ask the question: wouldn't the becoming-animal still be a compromise?

The becoming-animal, however fascinating it may be and whatever it is used for... here I again take up the example of the war machine: in the war machine in general, there is indeed a notion of becoming-animal. I take again the example of the wild-man warrior. And then there is something else, in the war machine there is not only the notion of becoming-animal, there is also a kind of becoming-molecular, like a kind of molecular line. This is at the level of a consistent machine: the war machine. But at the level of the scientific machine and its possible unities with the war machine, the becomings-molecular will perhaps represent a kind of becoming that, in terms of intensities or in terms of deterritorialization, goes much further than the becoming-animal.

We can present things in two ways: either we can say that finally, what happens at the level of machinic assemblages is a kind of intensive continuum. There is an intensive continuum or, instead of there being forms separated from one another, there is a transformation, a passage from one form to another through intensive continuity, which does not prevent us from marking the thresholds of this continuity. For example, I can very well present the relation of becoming-animal and the relation of becoming-molecular in the form of an intensive continuum. Here I take a classic example: the double aspect in science fiction where we have a certain notion of becoming-animal, and the way in which the becoming-animal is relayed by something that goes even further, namely a becoming-molecular. We can say that there is a kind of intensive continuum on which we can stagger the becoming-animal and the becoming-molecular, and there is a passage, a kind of threshold, the crossing of a gradient. If we reintroduce in one way or another the notion of form, however, we will find ourselves back in this business of analogies, homologies and structures.

On the other hand, as long as you stick to the notion of a program, it doesn't bother me. There is an intensive continuum of substance where a threshold is crossed. For example, here I come back to my example: in terms of the question of transplants or eggs, it is quite simple: something that was destined to become the caudal appendage of the newt, for example, is displaced. What does it mean to "shift on an egg"? It means: to graft upon a region of a different intensity. Instead of becoming a caudal appendage, it produces something else; precisely, a threshold has been crossed through migration. Through migration, which is to say that, in the very egg itself, a process of deterritorialization is inscribed, since a part that was normally destined to become such a thing at such a threshold of intensity, will, by means of migration, now produce something else; there is a crossing of a threshold. Here, I can say that the forms are not important, that what determines these forms as a secondary product from the point of view of representation, are purely the migrations. And by migrations I do not at all mean migrations in terms of spatial extension, I mean in terms of changes in intensity.

I would say, on the other hand, that this intensive continuum can be expressed in another way. There are even three ways of expressing it, and these three ways are like three coordinates of a machinic assemblage. We can say that there are no more forms, that instead there is an intensive continuum of substances... [*End of first part; second part missing*]

Notes

¹ Let us note that this sentence seems to contradict the previous statements. Without any recordings, we are unable to verify Deleuze's statement.

² The source of this quotation is Albert Dalcq, *L'œuf et son dynamisme organisateur* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1941), p. 95, quoted in *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 532, note 7. See also *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 164, "The egg is the milieu of pureintensity, spatium not extension, Zero intensity as principle of production. There is a fundamental convergence between science and myth, embryology and mythology, the biological egg and the psychic or cosmic egg: the egg always designates this intensive reality, which is not undifferentiated, but is where things and organs are distinguished solely by gradients, migrations, zones of proximity. The egg is the BwO".