

Gilles Deleuze

On A Thousand Plateaus II, 1976-1977

Lecture #1 – February 15, 1977

Transcript: WebDeleuze; modified by Charles J. Stivale

Translation: Billy Dean Goehring

I'm going to spend a session consolidating things and going over our reading list. All semester, we've been trying to distinguish two different forms of segmentarity, or two types of multiplicity. There are seven avenues we might take: one is biography. The second approach, or the second context: organization. Third, centralization; fourth, *signifiance*; fifth, sociability; sixth, subjectivation; seventh, plan(n)ing.¹

First: biography. The idea was that what matters about someone's life, whether we're talking about an individual or a group, is a particular set of things we could think of as a cartography. A cartography is made up of lines. We, in other words, are made of lines, and these lines vary from individual to individual, from group to group, or perhaps there are some parts they share in common. We were trying to figure out what this linear composition implied. I'd like to draw our attention to the interference between these different headings. Already, these lines touch on what I referred to as the plane of consistency, or the plane of composition. They're lines on a plane, and this plane has to be drawn up at the same time as the lines. But what are these composing lines? Again, they're not points; we've given up the idea that we could ever pin down any points. We were contrasting between drawing lines and making points.

Last year, I turned to a very particular slice of literature: the novella, or short story. We had set out to do a morphological study—which we didn't actually do, but we could have compared the morphology of a short story and the morphology of a tale. The subject came up in the context of animal-becomings. So much to say, everything's tangled together. Or even the morphology of the novel. I felt that the morphology of the short story was exemplary because short stories are all about drawing lines. As far as our reading list goes, we picked up Fitzgerald as a particularly pertinent example. It's easy to see how Fitzgerald's short stories always involve at least two lines, maybe three, maybe more, and we were attempting to describe them. We had a rigid segmentary line, which was broken up and which distributed into binaries: young/poor/unskilled, etc., a rigid segmentary line where you could situate—not exclusively, but as one figure among others—the couple, with its binary machine, its own binary. So, a rigid segmentary line, distinguished by its meaningful cut-off points—*here*, “I was rich,” or *there*, “my marriage was going well”—organized as binaries, the quintessential binary being that of the couple.²

And then, beneath that, we found a much more subtle line, one that is supple or fine, or one that's molecular—not one that's broken up into cut-off points, but a line of cracks, tiny cracks that don't line up with these cuts or breaks. The micro-cracks of molecular segmentarity. And we found a different sort of figure on the molecular segmentary line from that of the couple, whether

as a binary machine or as part of a binary machine—this figure was far more troubling. It was the *double*.

And then we found a line we hadn't expected. It's funny. A line which is neither a cut nor a crack, but more like a line of flight, a rupture, whose form is ultimately neither the couple nor the double but the *stowaway* [*le clandestin*]. This third line, which we hadn't anticipated, was a pleasant surprise nonetheless, since it accounted for something that had been bothering us, namely, the ambiguity surrounding supple segmentarity, or molecular segmentarity. Supple segmentarity basically keeps waffling between being a rigid line and being a line of flight. When it swings toward being a rigid line, it tends to harden; when it swings toward being a line of flight, it verges on not even being segmentary anymore; it takes on a new guise.

We had arrived at two practical ways of understanding planes: either as a “plane of organization”³ or as a plane of consistency, immanence, or composition—which in no way the same practical understanding of the word, “plane.” Once again, we have two poles, and we can see that our segmentarities or our multiplicities oscillate; they can tend toward one sort of plane just as easily as toward the other sort of plane, and it ends up getting really complicated. Even in the life of a group or an individual, the moment where the plane is solidified, swings from one pole to the other—this wobbling back and forth, then, can explain quite a bit. Thus, a life is made up of lines. You have to find your lines, lines that don't exist beforehand; they aren't pre-established. The goal for any real analysis is to work out this cartography.

When, in the context of discussing the plane of consistency, we start talking about longitude and latitude, these clearly refer to lines drawn on this plane of consistency. Longitude and latitude are ideas that refer to a whole cartography. Our real analysis won't get off the ground so long as we remain in the realm of representation; insofar as we're still dealing with the feelings or sentiments that go through somebody, we only start getting somewhere when we start drawing abstract lines, with their corresponding segmentarity, their divides, their cracks, their ruptures. If someone starts playing the piano, or someone comes to love an animal or hate one, both our loves and our hates ought to be distributed along lines—and not figurative lines. Truly, as I see it, the analysis has to be carried out as a genuine cartography.

And what's a dead end? If you look at psychoanalysis today, my impression is that they brush up against this question all the time. They brush up against the problem of lines and cartography, and they keep missing it. Going back to Freud: what's the deal with Little Hans? You can't say it's family trouble. His father and mother do intervene, but only to close off segments, to block him. What's missing is a cartography, which is what Freud himself is constantly doing, when he claims that Hans's problem, first and foremost, is how to get him out of the apartment. A kid's problem, winning the outdoors—it's a question of cartography, a question of lines. What happens? Hans's problem is how to beat the building, how to leave his apartment and sleep with the girl who lives below or above him. And then, *cut*—he's caught by his parents. He was sketching out his line, and *bang*—rigid segmentarity.⁴

Second, there's a girl who lives across the street: little Hans's cartography starts to take shape—the apartment, the building, the café across the street. He has to cross the street. His mother goes so far as to tell him that, if he leaves the apartment, he won't come back. And then there's the whole business with the horse, with the becoming-horse of little Hans. But that scene takes place in the street. The horse is pulling a heavy load and falters, tries to get up, and is whipped. It's a beautiful moment, right out of Dostoyevsky, right out of Nietzsche (before his big meltdown), right out of Nijinsky (before his big meltdown). It isn't a fantasy: a horse falls in the street, a horse is whipped. It's about both the street as a line to be won and the dangers of winning it, and a becoming-animal caught in the middle of it all. Little Hans gets blocked from all sides.

In order to seal up these lines of flight, to assert a rigid segmentarity, to cut things off whenever he sketches out a line—what does it take? Two things: an instance of power, the family, and an abstract machine, psychoanalysis. Basically, the parents take action, they've had enough; they hand over to an abstract machine, represented by Dr. Freud. In a completely different context, we've run into the power apparatus – abstract machine duo. Whenever there's an apparatus of power, there's an abstract machine; whenever there's an abstract machine, there's an apparatus of power. Maybe not, maybe not—it could be that there are very different sorts of abstract machines. But it appears that some abstract machines appeal to power apparatuses, like, *power apparatus, please take me as an abstract machine*. And why should abstract machines appeal to power apparatuses?

So, that's my first point regarding segmentarity. Novellas appear to essentially come down to these lines intersecting and crisscrossing over one's life.

Student: What makes double the opposite of the couple?

Deleuze: At this point, what I'd really like is for you to answer your own question. If what I've said has resonated with you, you have as much of an idea as I do. The couple, as I see it, is the binary machine of conjugality, which involves meaningful slices using a rigid sort of segmentarity. With the double, it's not a question of whether they're the same or something else; instead, it seems to me that it comes down to cracks, a supple segmentarity. The double is always more or less an approximate label for the process of becoming, insofar as we're trying to contrast between history and becoming.

A person's history isn't the same as their becoming. The double, for example, is a man's becoming-woman, or a man's becoming-animal. By no means is the double one's reflection—I'm bound to form a double as I become something, and becomings are always something fundamentally minoritarian. A minority always has a becoming. It might even be that the same person is both part of a couple and part of a double, the same person simply serving very different functions on either line. What's more, on the second line, they aren't a person at all.

What do stowaways [*le clandestin*] have to do with lines of flight? What makes them hidden? It's because they are imperceptible. They are becoming-imperceptible. Ultimately, every becoming-

animal results in becoming-imperceptible. Just what is this clandestinity? It's certainly not that it's a secret; secrets fall squarely under rigid segmentarity. Being a stowaway is ultimately the same thing as a becoming-molecular; it's when it's no longer about any one person, when it's no longer personological. When do we reach the point where we stop saying, as Virginia Woolf puts it, "I am this, I am that"? What's really secret is when there's nothing left to hide.

You are like everybody else... You can't even call it the form of a secret without content; the secret is there, totally laid out, and yet it's imperceptible. When the person is sufficiently undone, and with sufficient care, such that I can say: never again will I say that "I am this, I am that." You see how that ties back to our whole business with the plane of composition and affects, what we were trying to suggest was the difference between an affect and a sentiment or feeling. What's going on with these very special types of individuality, individualities that are perfectly individuated, only without any subjectivity? The individuality of "a day," "a spring," a "five o'clock in the evening," and so on.⁵

Student: [Inaudible remarks, regarding planes]

Deleuze: The secret fluctuates between this plane, where everything is visible. But then you wonder, what makes it a secret? Since what becomes visible, what becomes perceptible on this plane, is precisely what is imperceptible on the other plane.

Richard Pinhas: As we discussed last week, my problem has to do with expression. There was a sentence that really resonated with me: "what a terrible five o'clock in the evening." We all have our terrible five o'clock in the evenings, but what takes place on the plane of composition, or on the imperceptible plane, are events, however small they may be, a quick word, whatever it might be. And ultimately, I think that what's significant about the plane of consistency, what produces events, perhaps in a particular "time," I wanted to know if, for you, the plane of consistency or composition, if the visible and perceptible outcome will be a series of events or resonances of events.

Deleuze: That's great, since it saves me the trouble of recapping. I don't see life as possible without molar sets. Again, at no point was I trying to say: get rid of rigid segmentarity, you'll be happy—by no means; we'd all die. The body's organism, or its organization, is a molar organization, and it goes without saying that the claim isn't that you'll be better off if you throw out your organism. Like we were saying, it comes back to our plane of consistency, the relationship between the plane of composition and death. You'll be dead, and that's that. Basically, it's the problem of overdosing, and then that's it.

Student: [Inaudible remarks]

Deleuze: We're talking about something totally concrete. There are no abstract intensities. The question is whether an intensity works for someone, and whether they can bear it. An intensity is bad, profoundly bad, when it exceeds the power of the person experiencing it—bad, even when

it's the most beautiful thing. An intensity is always related to other intensities. An intensity is bad when it exceeds its corresponding capacity, i.e., the capacity to be affected. A low intensity can sometimes ruin someone. A person's plane of consistency or composition is constituted by the intensities they're capable of withstanding. If the intensity isn't their thing, they're screwed—either they monkey or clown around, or they screw themselves. Cartography means knowing what your own line is. Let's circle back to our two different concepts of planes.

Imagine a world made up of particles along a plane, particles traversing a plane. These particles—so far, it's like I'm telling a story—these particles are grouped based on movement, on ratios of motion and rest, or—what amounts to the same thing—ratios of speed and slowness. They're purported to belong to an individual—I'm not saying a subject, or a person—inasmuch as they maintain a certain ratio of speed and slowness, or a certain ratio of motion and rest. If the proportion of motion and slowness changes, they shift to another individual. That's my first point.

I call a body's longitude the sets of particles that belong to it based on its particular ratio of motion and rest, speed and slowness. If an individual is characterized by a highly complex ratio of motion and rest, whereby infinite particles are attributed to it, we might also say that these ratios correspond to levels of capacity, or capacities. What capacity? A level of capacity corresponding to a certain degree of speed and slowness, a certain degree of motion and rest—these degrees of power are literally the capacity to be affected. As opposed to before, this time it's no longer about the ratio of motion and rest between extended particles, which defines a longitude. It's much more a question of intensive parts: the affects someone is capable of, in correlation with the parts that make them up, following ratios of speed and slowness. So, the body's latitude is my name for this capacity to be affected. Notice I'm not talking about forms or subjects. An individual is neither a form nor a subject; something is individuated when we can determine its longitude and latitude, longitude meaning its ratios of motion and rest, speed and slowness, which provide its composing particles, its parts of parts—while on the other hand, all I'm looking at are latitudes, the affects filling out the level of capacity, the capacity to be affected, for individuals previously determined based on their longitude.

So, all bodies would have both a longitude and a latitude. What exactly is going on here? It works for us the same way Spinoza suggests looking at the world. It's how he sees the world. He tells us that all bodies are infinitely composed of infinite parts, which are what he calls the simplest bodies. Why is it that, with these simple bodies, a particular infinite set belongs to one individual rather than another? He says that these simple bodies, these particles, always have a certain ratio of motion and rest, speed and slowness, and that this ratio is characteristic of an individual. Thus, an individual isn't defined by its form, be it a biological form, an essential form—any sense of the word, “form.” What defines an individual is a more or less compound relationship, i.e., a series of ratios, of motion and rest, speed and slowness, whereby infinite parts fall under it.

Ultimately, each individual is a collective; every individual is a swarm. Really, this is basic physics. On the other hand, an individual is a capacity to be affected. Thus, it isn't defined by

any form, nor by any subject. What is a horse? You could say that a horse is, on the one hand, a form and, on the other, a subject. It's easy to find that sort of approach to defining a horse. Form would be the set of defining characteristics labeled either specific, generic, or accidental characteristics; naturalists define a horse specifically. On the other hand, it's a subject, i.e., *this* horse, with the whole traditional approach.

Again, the whole history of modern philosophy comes down to changing the relationship between subject and form. Well, that's one way of thinking: you can say "I see a form" and "I see a subject," and there's a complementarity between the form that informs substance or the subject. What we're suggesting is completely different: first of all, a horse is not a form, but a set = x particles. " $= x$ " isn't enough, so what characterizes this set? A certain ratio of motion and rest, speed and slowness. I'm not talking about a form when I say: an infinite number of particles subject to ratios of motion and rest, of speed and slowness—and on the other hand, [when] I claim that it's a capacity to be affected, that it's a horse-capacity, I'm not referring to any subjectivity.

Enter Spinoza's great question: it's not about describing what the form of a body is; it's a matter of asking, "What can a body do?" That's his fundamental question: "What can a body do?"⁶ All the better that it's still incredibly concrete. But he buries it. With his approach to exposition, there's always a first principle; for Spinoza, famously, it's that there's but one substance. When someone says that, concretely, you can immediately see what that means, how it conflicts with religion. It isn't an innocent proposition. You can't really know a philosopher based on their first principle, only by their fifth or sixth. Then, Spinoza asks: what can a body do? It won't really tell me anything if you say that a body has such and such forms and functions. You have to tell me what that body is capable of. You might say that's the same thing! No, it's not. In the end, it probably all bleeds together; one's capacity always corresponds to one's organs and functions, but everything changes if I say that my organs and functions are only there to fulfill my capacity to be affected, or when I say that what first defines me is my capacity to be affected. Then we can talk about organs and functions.

Or it's the other way around, which is very different, and I say that, given its organs and functions, this is what the animal is capable of. It seems like these can be reconciled, but in fact, it's not the logic that matters: the people focused on the organs and functions of animals have never worried about affects, and those looking at affects remain rather indifferent to organs and functions—so much so that they had to coin a new word to describe what they were working on. They called it ethology. It's not the study of an animal's way of life; it's much more the study of what affects it's capable of. Spinoza calls his book *The Ethics*—not morality. Ethics, ethology. What can a body do, which means, what can it handle?

I therefore call the longitude of a body the set ratio of speed and slowness between the infinite parts composing said body, parts which only belong to the body based on these ratios of speed and slowness, motion and rest. It's the same individual so long as the overall ratio of motion and rest, speed and slowness, remains. What does becoming-animal mean? It doesn't mean an

imitation, though we have to imitate because there has to be something we can fall back on. Becoming-horse? Becoming-dog? What does becoming-beetle mean, for Kafka? It's not just when we start imitating. Can I, given a body's particular latitude and particular longitude, bring my component parts into a ratio of motion and rest, speed and slowness, corresponding to that of a horse—and, following that, are the affects that flood me horse-affects, or not? That's how we defined the plane of consistency or composition: these latitudes with their becomings, their transitions, passing from one longitude to another, passing from one latitude to another. Let his body assume a new longitude and latitude, and Captain Ahab ends up dead, too. He dies upon his plane of consistency, his oceanic plane. On the plane of consistency or composition, there are only degrees of speed and slowness, on the one hand, which define longitudes, and on the other, affects or intensive parts which define latitudes. There's neither form nor subject. Affects are always becoming.

Student: [Inaudible, question regarding time as being a plane of consistency]

Deleuze: Why not, but measured time is one of segmentarity, a time of molar entities. If you're saying that the plane of consistency is time, it's a time where there's no impulse to cut or measure it.

Pinhas: That's exactly what Robert was getting at. What happens with the plane of composition? First of all, it's created based on what's laid out [*ses agencements*], and at the same time as what's laid out; there is no abstract plane of composition apart from its different arrangements. Really, it is strictly contemporaneous with its arrangements; it's produced at the same time. And it's both arrangements [*agencements*] and encounters. There will be encounters with, basically, molecules on the one hand and becomings on the other. What seems to be predominant, and you can really see it with music, is that there are different flow speeds that can resonate—you can see it in a very physical way, but that's too technical to get into right now—but you realize that the resonance of sounds, the resonance of harmonics, is brought about by differences in speed. That's one way of looking at it, at least.

And ultimately, what comes from these differences in speed isn't time—there isn't a time for the plane of composition, or any equivalence between the plane of composition and time—but, on the contrary, when it comes to the plane of composition itself, [what results is] the creation of multiple temporalities flowing at different speeds. I emphasize the multiplicity of different temporal planes, each with lines of effectuation, of events that resonate, that differ from line to line, and to lump it all together into a single Time would be similar to what Einstein did with time, i.e., a spatialization of time, or something analogous. And here, I'd argue that time is determined by affects and by compositions of affects. For example, you come in here on a Tuesday morning and find a blonde girl with blue eyes, which determines a particular time.

Deleuze: A plane of composition or consistency never exists ahead of time. It comes about at the same time as a group of individuals or individuations actually sketch it out. It's a plane of absolute immanence, immanence meaning immanent to the degrees of speed and slowness, to motion and rest, to the capacity to be affected that construct it, step by step. Literally, it's built

brick by brick. The form it takes is anything but a Euclidean space that exists prior to the shapes that occupy it. It's a completely different type of space, formed proximity [*voisinage*] by proximity, and that's why it can snap at any [*audio unclear*]. It's when we understand the plane from the other end that we can see it as existing beforehand, with people or groups evolving on it.

Our starting point is the distinction between the two planes, since if we're defining the plane of consistency or composition with a latitude and longitude, and if the bodies on it are defined only by their latitude and longitude, I'd argue that the only variables to consider are speed, slowness, affect, and the capacity to be affected. And in a way, everything is both collective and individual because every ratio of motion and rest, every ratio of speed and slowness, is always perfectly capable of being individuated: such-and-such speed, this much speed—any affect can be individuated. We need a word to help keep us from confusing it for a subject's individuality. "Haeceity." Literally, it means "thisness," being "this," having a certain capacity. He was just now saying that it was time—that's true, if what we mean by time is the sort of liberated time that John Cage has in mind.

Pinhas: Instead of a sequence (of notes) that can be measured in linear or diachronic time, we get a sort of movement that makes a trail, and my sense is that the diagram Cage ends up with is there to produce different, or differential, performance times, opening times, non-limiting times, with landmarks perhaps.

Deleuze: When describing the role of the conductor, Cage talks about a stopwatch at variable speeds, objecting to how classical conductors act as a stopwatch with one uniform speed.⁷ Since the same movement in a work can be played at completely different speeds; Cage even accounts for the stopwatch stopping.

Pinhas: Just a quick note. Regarding the plane of composition or the diagram Cage sets out, at no point is there a predetermining or predominant dimension that can thus serve as a stratifying axis. Nothing is more important than anything else, whether it's composition, writing, performance, or the speed of the performance. Everything is possible all at once, and we still haven't defined the diagram, but the time hasn't come... What Cage is worried about isn't ever a question of writing surfaces.

Deleuze: It's obvious that there isn't any past or future on the plane of consistency—there is becoming. It's very different. We're looking for resonances of words. On the plane of composition, there is neither future nor past because, ultimately, there is no history; there is only geography.

Student: We ought to talk about what's in between, what's in the middle.

Deleuze: Well, let's talk about it. On the plane of composition, all we have at the moment are speeds and slownesses, and affects. No form. No subject. At the same time, these groups of affects, these ratios of speed and slowness, are fully individuated. The way they're individuated

in a way completely different from how subjects are individuated—we referred to them as haecceities. They are haecceities. These degrees of speed and slowness moving into each other, changing through, if need be, through areas of interference or over a hole, a hole of silence—on a plane of consistency, you have holes, you have silences, interferences—at any rate, there are latitude/longitude assemblages [*agencements*] in the background.

And among a body's haecceities, its longitudes and latitudes, some haecceities in particular are means for transmission; affects are carried through a medium. There's a particular sort of haecceity where it isn't just longitudes and latitudes, but the factors or the relationships between longitudes and latitudes, the medium conducive for their transformation. As a result, the plane of consistency will accumulate more and more winters, springs, summers, days, which are themselves haecceities: *that* spring, *that* day. Bodies have the same sort of individuality as a day, a season, an hour.

There's absolutely nothing that develops in [Paul] Morand's writing; it's a genuine plane of consistency, like a fixed plane, with word-particles spinning off at different speeds. That's what I call sobriety. What I call the minor use of language is when there's no more development, no more organization; there is composition, on a fixed plane, with relative speeds and differential speeds.⁸

Changing gears, isn't that also the case for a social sphere? Of course, there's a plane of organization for the social sphere, but isn't it also immanently shot through with a plane of consistency or composition? Different things happen simultaneously on either plane—what has one shape and form on the plane of organization takes on a completely different shape and form on the plane of consistency. And you can't even say that one is good and the other bad.

You can't do anything without involving molar sets. There would be no MLF were it not for the things happening on another plane, a social plane of immanence; the MLF is sometimes well-positioned to highlight a completely different sort of phenomena, or microphenomena, processes that I'll call "becomings," becoming-woman—granted, women have a becoming-woman just as much as men do. It's all part of the plane of consistency, right, and both happen simultaneously. There's a constant tension: some things from the plane of consistency can't be digested on the other plane; some things from the plane of organization can't be digested *vice versa*. There's a power balance between both planes.

The plane of consistency doesn't put just anything into its arrangements [*agencements*]; that's not to say that forms and subjects don't exist! Again, it'll come back to bite you if you overlook forms and subjects; neglecting the organization of one's organization, of one's organism, means death. All we're saying is that it doesn't belong to that plane. In place of subjects or forms on the plane of composition, there are holes, interferences, voids; what you do find are latitudes, longitudes, affects, experiments. You can't give up the subject, or interpretation—it just isn't part of the plane of consistency.

For an individual, it isn't a plane that exists beforehand; it's formed locally, bit by bit, one piece at a time. And it may well be that it isn't the same individual, i.e., the same haecceity. It might be one haecceity at one end and a different one at the other; either they don't line up, and there's a gap between them, or they do line up, and their different speeds are compounded together. Their different speeds form a compound, affects either circulate or are transformed, but then it's a local formation. Riemannian space is one that's formed locally; it's formed via local sections, and that's just how the plane of consistency is formed. And if there are risks with the plane of consistency, it's for two reasons: first, it will be catastrophic if the plane of consistency shatters the other plane, but it will also be a disaster for reasons of its own. Namely, that a whole series of connections won't come together, that its local construction won't go on long enough. In any case, that's all you'll find on this kind of plane: speed, slowness, motion, rest, haecceities, affects. The second you run into something else, you'll know you're dealing with a mix, that something from the other plane has crept in. [End of text]

Notes

¹ Following Brian Massumi's decision to translate *planification* as "plan(n)ing" and *planificateur* as "plan(e) maker," in order to preserve both "plan" and "plane" senses of *plan* in French. Also following Massumi's decision to leave *signifiance* untranslated. See Massumi's notes in *ATP*, xvi-xix.

² This analysis appears in Plateau 8 of *A Thousand Plateaus*, "1874 – Three Novellas, or 'What happened?'"

³ *Plan d'organisation* is also a French equivalent for "body plan" or "Bauplan" in biology.

⁴ For a discussion of lines in this context, see *ATP*, pp. 256-260, 262-265.

⁵ Regarding individuation, see *ATP*, pp. 261-263.

⁶ See *ATP*, pp. 256-258.

⁷ See, for example, John Cage, *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (New York: Henmar, 1960). The conductor is meant to convert "clock-time to effective time," moving their arms like the hands of a clock in order to indicate changes in speed.

⁸ Deleuze and Guattari refer to Morand's *Monsieur Zéro* along these lines in *ATP*, p. 279.