

Gilles Deleuze

Deleuze & Guattari at Vincennes, 1975-76

Il Senso in Meno, Part 9 - Faciality as the substance of the Signifier, the Two Scapegoats and the Line of Flight

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[Please note that the transcription follows as exactly as possible the discussion in the filmed seminar, and therefore the translation differs at time with the discussion rendered in the subtitles on the YouTube versions]

[3:45:50, start; 4:21:40, end; segment total, 36:50; session total, 1:59:19, from YouTube recording, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1Po2tIgeD4>]

... The signifier with a capital “S” is pure redundancy. It's no longer the redundancy of a sign with respect to another sign, nor of the sign in relation to itself, it is redundancy in its pure state. The Signifier in its pure state is *fort da*. The bobbin game. That one chews on... Why does one chew on it? Because the Signifier in its pure state is so pure that we no longer even know what it is, whether it's in its place when it's not, or not in its place when it is. Very good... perfect.

Now that we know something about it, we can go faster. We saw this on other occasions, that the Signifier wouldn't be anything if it didn't have a substance to stabilize it. And this substance is faciality. This substance is the black hole of the eyes on the white wall. And if the Signifier can establish itself and establish its dichotomies and establish its signs and organize them in binary relationships where the sign refers to another sign, it is only in function of the organization made possible by faciality. And faciality is precisely the mainstay of the Signifier, otherwise there wouldn't be one.

Which is why the champions of the Signifier hide their faces. No, they don't hide their faces exactly, but they appear to say that the Signifier has no real need of their face. But at night they laugh... They're impostors. Who laugh while looking at themselves in the mirror, perfectly aware that by virtue...

[Interruption by a student]

A woman student: *[Inaudible comment]*

Deleuze (*laughing*): Yes, that arrives quite well... [since they know well] that without the face the Signifier would simply merge with the amorphous continuum.

Therefore, the black hole - white wall system is constitutive of the Signifier and of its operations on signs, which are the establishing of binarisms, binary relationships, dichotomies. And what I call dichotomy is this very movement. I'm just making the gesture [*points to the blackboard*] to go faster... What I call binary relationship is this movement, the relation of sign to sign, with the dichotomy being rooted in the Signifier. Here we have the binary distribution of signs.

We're going really quickly now. So, at this level, once again, there's no secret. In the despotic formation or the paranoid regime, you will never find secrets, only publicity. The despot says: “Here is my face, I won't hide my face.” And I've already quoted to you from a text that I find very interesting in this regard. I don't have time to quote it again in its entirety... it's on pages 20-25 of a book by Luc de Heusch, *The Drunken King, Or the Origin of the State* [Le roi ivre ou l'origine de

l'État (*Paris: Gallimard, 1972*); on this specific example, see *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 353]

According to Bantu myth, the myths of the Bantu people... the despotic Bantu emperor eats in public, he doesn't hide his face. But then a disturbing man arrives: the man of the State. The man of the State has no army. I say this to remind those of you who were here two years ago, of things that we touched upon then but didn't develop... In any case, they're still a bit hazy. He doesn't have an army, but he has a police force, a bureaucracy, but no army. He undertakes major public works. He shows his face everywhere, his eyes like black holes. To each of his subjects he says: "I am here."

And now another figure arrives from who knows where: a little guy who has come from the exterior, the man of War. Who will conquer everything and destroy it all. The man of War isn't a paranoiac, nor is he a despot. He's from another race, no better but different. He's something else. He arrives. And in the Bantu myth he doesn't eat in public. He wears a veil, he eats in a tent. We're not supposed to see him. He's the secret. The regime of the secret was invented by the Mongols. Or by this Bantu who was not really a Bantu but... It was invented by the Mongols, meaning the nomads, the guys of the war machine. For them, speaking of State secrets is a nonsense. There is no such thing. The State doesn't need secrets. It's the military machine that needs and invents secrets. It's the warrior chief who eats veiled and who invents them. In this there's no publicity. And meanwhile the despot continually repeats: "Look into my eyes!"

So, well then, we must add that if the Signifier requires the wall and the black hole of the face, it is for all the reasons we have looked at concerning the face. We don't need to go back to that. Sometimes we just have to accept the things we've acquired, you see? After all, it's that all this thing is linked up. We just notice suddenly, as we're thinking that we're heading in one direction, we then stumble upon something else and say, hey, that's fine, we've seen this. So, it's perfect.

Why? What roles does the face play with respect to the signifier? Returning to the distinctions I proposed between index, icon and symbol, the Signifier, which is the most deterritorialized of signs -- since it makes sure that all other signs refer to all other signs -- requires any form whatever of reterritorialization. The face is the form of reterritorialization proper to the Signifier. This is why we have to undo the face. The face is the icon of the Signifier. So, there we have the fifth dimension.

A sixth one [*Pause*], a sixth dimension: there aren't many left. So now the sixth dimension. A new adventure begins in which I'll need another dimension. So, we already have a six-dimensional multiplicity. What is this exactly?

Imagine the following; let's dream a bit. Through his interpretations, the diviner-priest continually recharges the system of signifiante. He prevents the growth of entropy. But it's not enough. The system is nonetheless menaced. Several other related operations are required. It functions but only up to a certain point. It needs something else. The entropy that menaces the system is also a line by means of which the irradiating circular system would escape, escape into the quicksands of the amorphous continuum, tracing death in a shallow stream. The system's line of flight has to be blocked. And this is something that no diviner with his interpretations can do. The line of flight has to be barred. Which is why it can only exist as a broken, dotted line. So, what can be done?

In Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, there's a marvellous page where he says that the body of the condemned man is like the inverted, symmetrical image of the body of the king. The torture victim's body is the symmetrically inverted image of the king's body. We can also say that it is the symmetrically inverted image of the despot's body. Indeed, the condemned or tortured man has above all else lost his face. He hasn't lost the *id*. He has become the man without a face. What does that mean?

To be a torture victim is not the last word. Although in a certain sense it is, since he's going to die... But here the logical chain is very strange. Torture is never the end. In the logical chain, the historico-logical chain, torture is always followed by something else. It comes before expulsion. And Oedipus, to cite him again, begins by blinding himself, meaning that he loses face. And he runs away. He runs away, or rather he is sent away. He is cast out by Creon on the system's line of flight: "Go, get out!"

There exist two goats. In the ritual of the goat, there are always two goats that assure the logical chain, otherwise it couldn't be assured. First of all, there is the goat we call *scapegoat*, which will be killed. But following this, and only following this, is another, much more significant, goat called the *emissary* goat which is chased away along the line of flight. You understand why the system needs two goats... because they must first kill and then chase away. And this is the true logic. To be able to proceed, two goats are required.

Now what is this emissary goat? It is the anti-face... The goat's anus is the inverted image of the despot's gaze. The goat is made to flee along the line of flight. And what does the goat carry with it? It carries everything that has compromised - during periods of ritual, for example - the signifiante of the system, that is, the load of forbidden jumps, and everything that has threatened the signifiante of signs. And everything that has threatened the face... the face of the Signifier. It takes upon itself all these evils. And the goat is cast out into the desert.

So, the last dimension of the system is the presence of a line of flight but one that is afflicted with a negative value. On which the emissary goat will be forced to flee - or we could call it the exile, or the damned, which is an essential cog in the system of signifiante. It's as though everything that threatens signifiante has to be cast out.

Last dimension: in other words, what does it represent, this broken line of flight along which the goat is cast out? We just need to connect up all our dimensions. It represents the following: the line that, through its tenor, exceeds the level of deterritorialization permitted by the system of signifiante, however high or advanced may be this deterritorialization, however far the system of signifiante enters into the deterritorialization. In reality it doesn't go very far. It reterritorializes on the face, it reterritorializes on overcodings, it reterritorializes in every way imaginable.

Therefore, what surpasses its own level of deterritorialization will be as if barred, marked by a negative value, a negative sign. And this is it: the minus sign that marks the ritual of the emissary goat. Or else, this is the ritual of exile.

So, I'm almost done. Perhaps you would you be so kind as to share your thoughts with me on all this. I would say that now at least, [*Deleuze indicates the first schema*] we won't have any problem linking -- this will occur almost in a concrete way -- linking our second figure, the successive linear figure of proceedings, to the first one will happen almost as a matter of course. It won't be difficult because... let's imagine the following story - I'm go back to some themes I quickly threw at you last time -- imagine the following story:

One day a people are forced to leave or abandon their temple, or even to see their temple destroyed. In the case where they have to leave the temple, they carry with them a small ark that is at continual risk of falling... a small fragile ark. Naturally they dream of rebuilding a temple. However, this temple is again and again destroyed at regular intervals. To simplify we can say that they lost their temple.

The whole system of signifiante trembles. Also, for other reasons, but we're telling a story here, the whole system of signifiante risks crumbling to dust. The master Signifier, the eyes, the face,

nothing works any more. Aside from which, this people or this person - we don't yet need to know which of these it concerns - will precipitate onto the line of flight with the ark. Except that... and what is the stroke of genius, the radically new thing here? What will be his momentous words? "Let misfortune befall us." But since we no longer have a temple, we no longer have a scapegoat. *Unless we become our own scapegoat.* Unless we become our own sacrificial lamb. The goat and the lamb are the same thing.

In John of Patmos's *Apocalypse* – yes, John of Patmos... he can't possibly be the other John... In the *Apocalypse* there is the lion, the lion that roars, but we never see this roaring lion. What appears is a lamb. In the system of signifi-ance, the immolated God will take the place of the immolating God. The lamb... even if the lion continues roaring over him, and God knows it's a lion-lamb, but the lion takes the skin of the lamb. We shall be our own lamb, our own goat. We no longer have a temple; we cannot cast out what was menacing the system because we no longer have a system. Therefore, we shall be the ones who take the line of flight. We shall be the goat and the lamb. "Let misfortune befall us."

So, they leave for the desert, the narrow passage. The extraordinary thing here is that the line of flight has now taken on a positive sign. And an astounding abyss opens up between the two systems. The line of flight has become positivity, while in all other despotic formations it was marked by negation, by a negative value. It was the place where what menaced the system was made to take flight. Now a whole group, a whole people sets off on foot in the narrow passage of the desert, having lost their temple, having become their own scapegoat and lamb. And they flee along the line of flight, which for that very reason becomes positive.

From a certain perspective, it's a new step, a new level... a new threshold of deterritorialization has been passed. The deterritorialization of the passional system will be infinitely greater and stronger than the deterritorialization of signifi-ance. So you understand that, beginning from this first dimension of the system, other dimensions multiply.

I'm just saying – because we've had enough of this; I would like to discuss this a little with you -- I will just add that the function of faciality, of the face, cannot be the same here. But I've forgotten to mention something that will complete our framework. Here I don't even need to... anyway, in what way is this as much the system of deception as one of paranoid delusion, a delusion of interpretation? It's both a social formation and a despotic formation. According to – this is almost a practical exercise – according to the characteristic I proposed to you – and you might want to add others, combine them, subtract, underline some – and what you will obtain is a delusion in hospital, a social formation, a system, what kind? A system of groups, of individuals, a system for which we've had proposed the name "system of deception." Why?

Because everything it contains is deception. Everything is deception, trickery, at every level. In the centre, you have the face of the despot. The despot's face, this type of mask that priests manipulate when necessary, making it speak. The impotent despot and so on... Therefore, you have deception at the centre of signifi-ance, and deception in interpretation.

It's well known that the diviner is essentially a trickster. Deception at the level of the jumps. Deception at the level of forbidden jumps, whereby whoever makes a forbidden jump deceives. But deception reigns also at the level of jumps that are completely regulated. My wife has betrayed me so I will pray for a calamity to strike the whole village.

And in a certain sense, this is the way the State apparatus functions. And with it the man of the State, through this widespread deception in which also humble subjects deceive, the despot deceives, everyone deceives. It doesn't mean anything, it's not against the law. Deception really is

an integral part of the functioning, one of the cogs of the system. The same goes for the courtier who stays close to the despot, or for the man of the State -- the despot's functionary -- as for ordinary subjects, and so on, everyone is engaged in deception.

So here, not only should we expect there to be a manner of functioning completely different from that of the face and faciality, but also one that is completely different from that of deception. So, from this point everything will change. But it's quite random. I began from this dimension [*Deleuze indicates the first schema*], but I may as well have begun from another. A new sign is attributed to the line of flight or the line of deterritorialization. Rather than having a negative sign, which is already occupied by the goat, it takes up a positive sign insofar as a whole group... So here we have the abandoned temple, from which the people carry away a packet of signs, a little packet of signs that they will carry with them as they head off into the desert. And there will be a succession of proceedings. One, two, three, four and so on. All of which will be punctuated by pauses. A small packet of homogeneous signs flees along a segmented line. Or it's the figure that's completely different from the previous one.

So, we need to expect, and we will see this after, in what sense the face changes both its figure and function -- which suits us perfectly since we discovered there were two types of face with respect to the question of faciality -- in what sense is this no longer a regime of deception but a different type of regime? What happens in this system?

Let's not forget that we, "modern" people, how can I say, we people of Christian... Greco-Christian background, and I've no idea why we're called that, or more simply we could say those of us who belong to a capitalist system or a certain social formation, we always live in mixed semiotics. Concrete semiotics are always mixed. A piece of this system bumps into a piece of this other system... It's always like that and the contrary, and everything all mixed up. In the mechanisms of banking, to take a random example, we have the system of rotation and circular expansion and at the same time bits of proceedings. And concrete social machines function by means of this mixity not only between the two systems -- since we looked only at two examples of semiotics... But to go on answering your question, there can be infinite numbers of semiotics: 8, 10, 12... we will see...

I can only say that in what we did before, for example, the semiotic that for convenience's sake we called "primitive", the corporeal semiotic of "primitive" peoples, doesn't refer either to this system [*the first schema*] or that [*the second schema*]. It's a very specific type of semiotic, and even when we say "primitive" semiotic, that encompasses semiotics that are completely different from each other. And the nomadic semiotic I just mentioned doesn't equate either with this one [*the second schema*] or that one [*the first schema*]. So, you can never have enough semiotics.

We "moderns" live -- and here, I could cite one of Nietzsche's most wonderful phrases, if only I could remember it [*Laughter*]... I can't, but it was great anyway [*Laughter*]... "*a variegated painting of all that has been thought*" [*In fact, "ye who are pictures of all that hath ever been believed", from Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "The Land of Culture"; see also Nietzsche and Philosophy, V.II, "The Sense of Affirmation"*] And by that, he didn't mean to define us merely as people but as a social formation. "A variegated painting of all that has been thought" -- And this is what we live from. All the old semiotics are fine for us. I think that money, the semiotics of money, has made a syncretism of all the semiotics there have ever been, whether primitive, signifying, passional, nomadic, whatever... So, what do you think? Does that suffice? Have you had enough? [*Laughter, scattered applause, Deleuze chuckles*] ... [*Tape interrupted*] [4:15:15]

[*Although this could suffice for the session, the film recording continues with six minutes of discussion with one of Deleuze's frequent interlocutors, his student Georges Comtesse*]

Georges Comtesse: ... Not at all... the system of this face-substance centre, the face as signifying substance, not only what is at the heart of things – I don't mean *heart* in the sense of provenance [*The camera, moving right, shows Claire Parnet standing and smoking*] but on a given surface, given line of divergence of sense, which is the paranoiac line. I think there is a becoming. In encounters, there is always a very intensive becoming that seems to me the becoming which provokes an excess of signs, almost as the defect of the sign, of this excess of concentric circles... and that has a profound relationship with the becoming-paranoiac. Becoming intense, isn't that... so what is it?

In the case of president Schreber, it's simply a becoming-woman. How great it would be to be a woman who submits to coupling. Paranoid femininity... But already, in all paranoias – and this is the rule of paranoia – right from the beginning no paranoiac can bear a becoming intense or this kind of femininity. Every paranoiac, if he's not a philosopher, if he doesn't recompose a line of reconvergence of sense... every paranoiac, as soon as they experience it, even just for an instant, a fleeting instant... every paranoiac want to arrest this becoming at all costs, “police” the becoming, stop it at all costs and start again for example, from a sign, the sign of sex as it happens, because sex is also a sign – and perhaps it's the sign of becoming intense that makes the jump. At which point there will be a deterritorialization, which won't just be that of the concentric circles or the signs on them that you spoke about. What will be produced in this arrest of becoming as a centre of signifiante, a surface not at all like the one you described... it's not a white surface with black holes, because this seems to me a secondary effect, even if it's true that it is there...

Deleuze: Ah... that's rich...

Comtesse: And there is...

Deleuze: That's rich that you call it a secondary effect!

Comtesse: And there is continually a surface of the arrest of becoming, or of the excess of signs, that I would call... the virginal surface of voluptuousness with a black abyss which does not...

Deleuze: Oh well, shit! Give me a break! [*General laughter*]

Comtesse: ... which does not at all equate....

Deleuze (*standing up*): You'll excuse me, I'll let you finish afterwards, but now you're really having a laugh. You tell us: “Your white wall-black hole system doesn't work”. You tell me, what works for you is a virginal surface with a...

Comtesse: A black abyss...

Deleuze: With a black abyss. [*Deleuze chortles with everyone*] Fine, fine. Given this, I understand what you are saying – no, no, I'll let you continue in a second – in saying, which you add, there's a becoming in paranoid delusion,

Comtesse: Yes!

Deleuze: ... except that, here's the point, it's entirely blocked off...

Comtesse: Exactly!

Deleuze: This isn't... So, here you're providing a confirmation...

Comtesse: Certainly!

Deleuze: And I add to confirm what you are saying that, as you know better than I do, President Schreber's rapport with God occurs through rays, and these rays interest us in terms of the white wall-black hole system, because through binarity, arborescence and binary relationships, they divide the world into a higher and lower sphere. And in its turn, the lower world is divided in two and so on. Everything you said – and this is not a retort to your observation – makes me happy because it absolutely confirms everything we said – it's a benediction for us!

Comtesse: Perhaps there isn't just the landscape-face system but also a mirage-shore type of pictorial splitting...

Deleuze: You're saying *mirage*... now I understand!

Comtesse: I want to continue! I'm saying virginal surface of voluptuousness... You speak about God, for example.

Deleuze: Yes, yes?

Comtesse: Eventually, President Schreber perceives his own voluptuousness as though it were that of God in his virginal surface, which is a surface of the scream...

Deleuze: Now you're bringing us back to castration!

Comtesse: ... a scream. [*Pause, laughter*] I'm not at all bringing it back to that; I'm not at all bring it back to that. I'm saying that you go too fast when you talk about the signifier. I'm just talking about becoming, arrest of becoming, virginal surface of voluptuousness with a black abyss of desire...

Deleuze: I think we can work this out.

Comtesse: It's clear that the virginal surface and the white surface...

Deleuze: I wouldn't call it virginal...

Comtesse: They could be linked...

Deleuze: Okay if you prefer virginal to white, we can agree on that.

Comtesse: Absolutely! Perhaps the line of flight you inserted there flies off on the passionate delusion... Let's take Pierre Rivière. [*Note that Michel Foucault's book on Pierre Rivière appeared in 1973*] With Pierre Rivière, in the beginning there seems to be a binarism. For example, he opposes himself to the father, mortified, humiliated disgusted, and against patriarchal power, which is mortifying, almost vampiric, all that, the infinite indebtedness of the father, its power which provokes his suicide, and so on. It seems there is a binarity there. But in fact, in fact, he is experimenting. Through this pseudo-binarity, he is experimenting with a becoming-woman of the father... [*End of the recording*] [4:21:39]