

## The ecosophic object

Geopolitical configurations are changing at a great pace whilst the Universes of technoscience, biology, computer technology, telematics and the media further destabilise our mental coordinates on a daily basis. The suffering of the Third World, demographic cancer, the monstrous growth and degradation of the urban fabric, the insidious destruction of the biosphere by pollution and the incapacity of the system to reconstruct a social economy adapted to the new technologies — all of this ought to lead to the mobilisation of minds, sensibilities and wills. But the acceleration of a history, which might lead us to ruin, is masked by the sensationalist (in fact banalising and infantilising) imagery that the media concoct from current events.

The ecological crisis can be traced to a more general crisis of the social, political and existential. The problem involves a type of revolution of mentalities whereby they cease investing in a certain kind of development, based on a productivism that has lost all human finality. Thus the issue returns with insistence: how do we change mentalities, how do we reinvent social practices that would give back to humanity — if it ever had it — a sense of responsibility, not only for its own survival,

but equally for the future of all life on the planet, for animal and vegetable species, likewise for incorporeal species such as music, the arts, cinema, the relation with time, love and compassion for others, the feeling of fusion at the heart of cosmos?

It is certainly worthwhile reconstituting collective means of communication and action appropriate to a historical situation which has radically devalued old ideologies, social practices and traditional politics. In this respect, we should note that it is entirely possible that the new communication technologies will contribute to a renewal of similar means of elaboration and intervention. But it is not these, as such, that will trigger creative sparks, that will engender pockets of awareness capable of deploying constructive perspectives. New collective assemblages of enunciation are beginning to form an identity out of fragmentary ventures, at times risky initiatives, trial and error experiments; different ways of seeing and of making the world, different ways of being and of bringing to light modalities of being will open up, be irrigated and enrich one another. It is less a question of having access to novel cognitive spheres than of apprehending and creating, in pathic modes, mutant existential virtualities.

To recognise subjective factors in History and the leap of ethical liberty involved in advancing a genuine virtual ecology in no way implies withdrawal into oneself (as in transcendental meditation) or a renunciation of political engagement. It requires, on the contrary, a refoundation of political praxis.

Since the end of the Eighteenth century, the impact of science and technology on developed societies has been accompanied by an ideological, social and political bipolarisation between progressive currents — often Jacobinist in their understanding of the State — and conservative currents advocating a fixation on traditional values. It was in the name of the Enlightenment,

liberty, progress, then of the emancipation of the workers, that a left-right axis was established as a kind of basic reference.

Today, the social-democracies have been converted if not to liberalism then at least to the primacy of the market economy, whilst the generalised collapse of the international communist movement has left a gaping hole in one of the extremes of this bipolarity. In these conditions, should we imagine that the bipolarity ought to disappear, as the slogan of some ecologists would have it: "neither left, nor right"? Wouldn't it be the social itself which will be effaced, like an illusion, as certain adherents of post-modernism have affirmed? As opposed to these positions, I consider that progressivist polarisation ought to be reconstituted through more complex schemas, according to less Jacobinist modalities, more federalist, more dissensual, in relation to which the different mixtures of conservatism, centrism, even neo-fascism, would be repositioned. The traditional party formations are too enmeshed with the different wheels of the State for systems of parliamentary democracy to disappear overnight. And this despite their obvious loss of credibility, expressed by a growing disaffection of the electorate, as well as by a flagrant lack of conviction on the part of those citizens who do continue to vote. Political, social and economic stakes are increasingly rare in electoral battles — which most of the time are no more than large mass media manoeuvres. A certain form of "politics for politicians" seems destined to be eclipsed by a new type of social practice better suited both to issues of a very local nature and to the global problems of our era.

The masses of the Eastern bloc threw themselves into a kind of collective chaosmosis in order to free themselves from totalitarianism, to live differently — fascinated as they were by Western models. But it is becoming increasingly evident that the failure of "socialism" is also an indirect failure of the allegedly liberal

regimes which lived in hot or cold symbiosis with it for decades. Failure in the sense that Integrated World Capitalism — though it has managed to guarantee sustained economic growth in most of its citadels (at the cost, it's true, of considerable ecological devastation and ferocious segregation) — is not only incapable of releasing Third World countries from their impoverishment, but also because it has nothing to offer other than very partial answers to the huge problems assailing the Eastern bloc and the USSR, thus exacerbating the bloody inter-ethnic ordeals from which there currently appears to be no way out.

An expanded ecological consciousness going far beyond the electoral influence of the “Greens” should in principle lead to putting the ideology of production for the sake of production back into question, that is, production centred on profit in the capitalist context of cost structure and debilitating consumerism. The objective would no longer be to simply take control of State power in place of the reigning bourgeoisie and bureaucracy, but to determine with precision what one intends to put in their place. In this respect, it seems to me that two complementary thematics should come to the forefront in future debates on the recomposition of a progressivist cartography:

- the redefinition of the State, or rather of State functions which are in reality multiple, heterogeneous and often contradictory;
- the deconstruction of the concept of the market and the recentering of economic activities on the production of subjectivity.

Bureaucratisation, sclerosis, the slide of State machines towards totalitarianism do not only concern the Eastern bloc but also Western democracies and Third World countries. The withering away of State power, once advocated by Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin, is more relevant than ever. The com-

unist movement brought discredit on itself — and to a lesser extent so did the social-democrats — for having been incapable of struggling effectively against the ravages of State control in every domain; the parties laying claim to these ideologies having become themselves, with the passage of time, appendages of State apparatuses. Nationalistic questions are re-emerging in the worst subjective conditions (nationalism, uniformity, racial hatred...) since no appropriate federalist response has been advanced as an alternative to an abstract and fictitious internationalism.

The neo-liberal myth of the world market has acquired incredible powers of suggestion over the last few years. According to this myth, no sooner does an economic ensemble submit to its law than its problems dissolve as if by magic. The African States which haven't been able to enter this market are condemned to vegetate economically and to beg for international assistance. A State like Brazil, where resistance by the oppressed continues, is destabilised in its relation to the world economy and by hyper-inflation; while countries like Chile and Argentina, which are subject to the monetarist controls of the IMF, have only been able to tame inflation and stabilise their finances by plunging 80% of their populations into unimagable misery.

In fact, a hegemonic world market does not exist, but only sector-based markets corresponding to so many power formations. The financial market, the oil market, the real estate market, the armaments market, the drug market, the NGO market, etc., have neither the same structure nor the same ontological texture. They only adjust to one another through the relations of forces established between the power formations which sustain them. Today a new ecological power formation is appearing under our noses and, consecutively, a new ecological industry is in the process of making a place for itself within

other capitalist markets. The systems of heterogenetic valorisation — which counterbalance capitalist homogenesis rather than passively contesting the ravages of the world market — have to put in place their own power formations which will affirm themselves within new relations of forces. Artistic assemblages, for example, will have to organise themselves so as not to be delivered, bound hand and foot, to a financial market itself in symbiosis with the drug market. The education market cannot remain absolutely dependent on the State market. Markets valorising a new quality of urban life and post-mass media communication will have to be invented. Exploding the hegemony of the capitalist valorisation of the world market consists in giving consistency to the Universes of value of social assemblages and existential Territories which situate themselves, in a manner of speaking, against the implosive evolution we are witnessing.

In order to counteract reductionist approaches to subjectivity, we have proposed an analysis of complexity starting with an ecosophic object with four dimensions:

- material, energetic and semiotic Fluxes;
- concrete and abstract machinic Phylums;
- virtual Universes of value;
- finite existential Territories.

The ecosystemic approach of Fluxes still represents an indispensable awareness of the cybernetic interaction and feedback involved with living organisms and social structures. But it is as much a matter of establishing a transversalist bridge between the ensemble of ontological strata which, each in their own way, are characterised by specific figures of chaosmosis. Here one is thinking of the visibilised and actualised strata of material and energetic Fluxes, of the strata of organic life, of those of the Socius, of the mecanosphere, but also of the incor-

poréal Universes of music, of mathematical idealities, of Becomings of desire.... Transversality never given as "already there," but always to be conquered through a pragmatics of existence. Within each of these strata, each of these Becomings and Universes what is put into question is a certain metabolism of the infinite, a threat of transcendence, a politics of immanence. And, each one of them will require schizoanalytic and ecosophic cartographies which will demand that partial components of enunciation be brought to light where they exist but are unrecognised and where scientism, dogmatism and technocracy prevent their emergence. Thus chaosmosis does not presuppose an invariant composition of the four ontological dimensions of Fluxes, Territories, Universes and machinic Phylums. It has no pre-established schemas, as is the case with the universal figures of catastrophe in René Thom's theory. Its cartographic representation forms part of a process of existential production involving territorialised components of finitude, irreversible embodiment, processual singularity and the engendering of Universes of virtuality which are not directly locatable within extrinsic discursive coordinates. They come to being through an ontological heterogenesis and affirm themselves within the world of significations as a rupture of sense and existential reiteration. The positionality of these refrains in the ordinary world will be effected, for example, as a derivative and a-signifying function of mythical, literary, fantasmatic and ... theoretical narrativity.

The theoretical discourses of Marxism and Freudianism which claimed to be solidly constructed on scientific diagrammatics only found their social affirmation to the extent that they themselves catalysed such nuclei of partial subjectivation. Our own attempt at meta-modelling enunciation, based on existential Territories and incorporeal Universes obviously cannot avoid the impossibility of its direct objective representation.

Simply, our theoretical refrain would be more deterritorialised than current representations of the Unconscious, structure, system.... Grasping the non-discursive dimension of enunciation and the necessary articulation between complexity and chaos led us to advance the concept of a pre-objectal entity as an element in the ontological texture, transversal to Fluxes, machinic Phylums, Universes of value and existential Territories — the being [*l'être*] before being [*être*] now conceived from a multicomponential and intensive perspective. The entity animated by infinite velocity dissolves the categories of time and space and consequently even the notion of speed. From the intensity of its slowing down the categories of the object, of the delimited set and of partial subjectivation can be deduced. The chaosmic fold of deterritorialisation and the autopoietic fold of enunciation, with their interface of existential grasping and transmonadism, implant at the heart of the object-subject relation — and before any instance of representation — a creative processuality, an ontological responsibility which binds liberty and its ethical vertigo at the heart of ecosystemic necessities.<sup>1</sup>

To speak of machines rather than drives, Fluxes rather than libido, existential Territories rather than the instances of the self and of transference, incorporeal Universes rather than unconscious complexes and sublimation, chaosmic entities rather than signifiers — fitting ontological dimensions together in a circular manner rather than dividing the world up into infrastructure and superstructure — may not simply be a matter of vocabulary! Conceptual tools open and close fields of the possible, they catalyse Universes of virtuality. Their pragmatic fallout is often unforeseeable, distant and different. Who knows what will be taken up by others, for other uses, or what bifurcations they will lead to!

The activity of cartography and ecosophic metamodelisation, where being becomes the ultimate object of a heterogenesis under the aegis of a new aesthetic paradigm, should be at the same time more modest and more audacious than the conceptual productions to which the University has accustomed us. More modest in renouncing any pretension to durability or eternal scientific authority, and more audacious in taking sides in the extraordinary sprint currently occurring between machinic mutations and their subjective "capitalisation." Engagement in innovative social, aesthetic and analytical practices is thus correlative to crossing the threshold of intensity of speculative imagination, coming not only from specialised theoreticians, but also from assemblages of enunciation confronted with the chaosmic transversality proper to the complexity of ecosophic objects. And opening up ethico-political options that relate as much to the microscopic aspects of the psyche and socius as to the global destiny of the biosphere and mecosphere from now on calls for a permanent reappraisal of the ontological foundations of existing modes of valorisation in every domain.

This cartographic activity can incarnate itself in multiple ways. A distorted foreshadowing is presented to us by the psychoanalytic or family therapy session, the reunions of institutional analysis, professional networking, socio-professional or neighbourhood collectives.... The common characteristic of all these practices appears to be verbal expression. Today the psyche, the couple, the family, neighbourhood life, the school, the relation with time and space, with animal life, sounds, plastic forms — everything has to be put back into the position of being spoken. Yet the ecosophic (or schizoanalytic) approach is not confined to the level of verbal expression alone. Of course Speech remains an essential medium, but it's not the only one; everything which short-circuits signification chains,

postures, facial traits, spatial dispositions, rhythms, a-signifying semiotic productions (relating, for example, to monetary exchange), machinic sign productions, can be implicated in this type of analytical assemblage. Speech itself — and I could never overemphasise this — only intervenes here inasmuch as it acts as a support for existential refrains.

The primary purpose of ecosophic cartography is thus not to signify and communicate but to produce assemblages of enunciation capable of capturing the points of singularity of a situation. In this perspective, meetings of a political or cultural character will have the vocation of becoming analytical and, inversely, psychoanalytical work will have to gain a foothold in multiple micropolitical registers. Like the symptom for Freudianism, the rupture of sense, the dissensus, becomes a privileged primary material. "Personal problems" should be able to irrupt on the private or public scene of ecosophic enunciation. In this respect, it is striking to notice how the French ecological movement, in its diverse components, has shown itself to be incapable of dealing with basic issues. It is completely dedicated to a discourse of an environmental or political nature. If you ask ecologists what they intend to do to help the homeless in their suburb, they generally reply that it's not their responsibility. If you ask them how they intend to free themselves from a certain dogmatism and the practices of small groups, many of them will recognise that the question is well-founded, but are quite unable to suggest any solutions! When in truth their problem today is not how to keep themselves at an equal distance from the left and the right, but how to contribute to the reinvention of progressivist polarity, how to rebuild politics on different bases, how to rearticulate transversally the public and the private, the social, the environmental and the mental. In order to move in this direction, new types of dialogue, of analysis, of organisation will have to be tested; per-

haps at first on a small scale then later on a larger one. If the ecological movement in France today, which appears to have so much promise, fails to engage with this problem of recomposing militant situations (in an entirely new sense, that is to say, of collective assemblages of subjectivation) then it will certainly lose the capital of confidence invested in it, and the technical and associative aspects of ecology will be recuperated by the traditional parties, State power and eco-business. To my mind, the ecological movement should concern itself, as a matter of priority, with its own social and mental ecology.

In France, certain intellectual leaders were traditionally invested with the mission of guiding opinion. Happily this period seems to be over. After having experienced the reign of the intellectuals of transcendence — the prophets of existentialism, “organic” intellectuals (in Gramsci’s sense) of the great militant era, then, closer to us, the preachers of the “moral generation” — perhaps we will now have to come to terms with an immanence of collective intellectuality, one that penetrates the world of teachers, social workers, and technical milieux of every description. Too often the promotion of leading intellectuals by the media and publishing houses has had the effect of inhibiting the inventiveness of collective Assemblages of intellectuality which in no way benefit from such a system of representation. Intellectual and artistic creativity, like new social practices, have to conquer a democratic affirmation which preserves their specificity and right to singularity. This being the case, intellectuals and artists have got nothing to teach anyone. To return to an image that I proposed a long time ago, they produce toolkits composed of concepts, percepts and affects, which diverse publics will use at their convenience. As for morality, it has to be admitted that a pedagogy of values does not exist. The Universes of the beautiful, the true and the good are inseparable from territorialised practices of expres-

sion. Values only have universal significance to the extent that they are supported by the Territories of practice, experience, of intensive power that transversalise them. It is because values are not fixed in a heaven of transcendent Ideas that they can just as easily implode, attaching themselves to catastrophic chaosmic stases. Le Pen has become a dominant object of the collective libido — either to elect or reject him — due to his skill in attracting media attention but principally because of the weakening of the existential Territories of subjectivity of what is called the left — the progressive loss of its heterogenetic values relating to its internationalism, antiracism, solidarity, innovative social practices.... Be that as it may, intellectuals should no longer be asked to erect themselves as master thinkers or providers of moral lessons, but to work, even in the most extreme solitude, at putting into circulation tools for transversality.

Artistic cartographies have always been an essential element of the framework of every society. But since becoming the work of specialised corporate bodies, they may have appeared to be side issues, a supplement of the soul, a fragile superstructure whose death is regularly announced. And yet from the grottoes of Lascaux to Soho taking in the dawn of the cathedrals, they have never stopped being a vital element in the crystallisation of individual and collective subjectivities.

Fabricated in the socius, art, however, is only sustained by itself. This is because each work produced possesses a double finality: to insert itself into a social network which will either appropriate or reject it, and to celebrate, once again, the Universe of art as such, precisely because it is always in danger of collapsing.

What confers it with this perennial possibility of eclipse is its function of rupturing with forms and significations circulating

trivially in the social field. The artist — and more generally aesthetic perception — detach and deterritorialise a segment of the real in such a way as to make it play the role of a partial enunciator. Art confers a function of sense and alterity to a subset of the perceived world. The consequence of this quasi-animistic speech effect of a work of art is that the subjectivity of the artist and the “consumer” is reshaped. In short, it is a matter of rarefying an enunciation which has too great a tendency to become entangled in an identificatory seriality which infantilises and annihilates it. The work of art, for those who use it, is an activity of unframing, of rupturing sense, of baroque proliferation or extreme impoverishment, which leads to a recreation and a reinvention of the subject itself. A new existential support will oscillate on the work of art, based on a double register of reterritorialisation (refrain function) and resingularisation. The event of its encounter can irreversibly date the course of an existence and generate fields of the possible “far from the equilibria” of everyday life.

Viewed from the angle of this existential function — namely, in rupture with signification and denotation — ordinary aesthetic categorisations lose a large part of their relevance. Reference to “free figuration,” “abstraction,” or “conceptualism” hardly matters! What is important is to know if a work leads effectively to a mutant production of enunciation. The focus of artistic activity always remains a surplus-value of subjectivity or, in other terms, the bringing to light of a negentropy at the heart of the banality of the environment — the consistency of subjectivity only being maintained by self-renewal through a minimal, individual or collective, resingularisation.

The growth in artistic consumption we have witnessed in recent years should be placed, nevertheless, in relation to the

increasing uniformity of the life of individuals in the urban context. It should be emphasised that the quasi-vitaminic function of this artistic consumption is not univocal. It can move in a direction parallel to uniformisation, or play the role of an operator in the bifurcation of subjectivity (this ambivalence is particularly evident in the influence of rock culture). This is the dilemma every artist has to confront: “to go with the flow,” as advocated, for example, by the Transavantgarde and the apostles of postmodernism, or to work for the renewal of aesthetic practices relayed by other innovative segments of the Socius, at the risk of encountering incomprehension and of being isolated by the majority of people.

Of course, it's not at all clear how one can claim to hold creative singularity and potential social mutations together. And it has to be admitted that the contemporary Socius hardly lends itself to experimentation with this kind of aesthetic and ethico-political transversality. It nonetheless remains the case that the immense crisis sweeping the planet — chronic unemployment, ecological devastation, deregulation of modes of valorisation, uniquely based on profit or State assistance — open the field up to a different deployment of aesthetic components. It doesn't simply involve occupying the free time of the unemployed and “marginalised” in community centres! In fact it is the very productions of science, technology and social relations which will drift towards aesthetic paradigms. It's enough to refer to the latest book by Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers where they evoke the necessity of introducing into physics a “narrative element” as indispensable to a genuine conception of evolution.<sup>2</sup>

Today our societies have their backs up against the wall; to survive they will have to develop research, innovation and creation still further — the very dimensions which imply an awareness of the strictly aesthetic techniques of rupture and suture. Something is detached and starts to work for itself, just

as it can work for you if you can “agglomerate” yourself to such a process. Such questioning concerns every institutional domain, for example, the school. How do you make a class operate like a work of art? What are the possible paths to its singularisation, the source of a “purchase on existence” for the children who compose it?<sup>3</sup> And on the register of what I once called “molecular revolutions,” the Third World conceals treasures which deserve to be explored.<sup>4</sup>

A systematic rejection of subjectivity in the name of a mythical scientific objectivity continues to reign in the University. In the heyday of structuralism the subject was methodically excluded from its own multiple and heterogeneous material of expression. It is time to re-examine machinic productions of images, signs of artificial intelligence, etc., as new materials of subjectivity. In the Middle Ages, art and technique found refuge in the monasteries and convents which had managed to survive. Perhaps artists today constitute the final lines along which primordial existential questions are folded. How are the new fields of the possible going to be fitted out? How are sounds and forms going to be arranged so that the subjectivity adjacent to them remains in movement, and really alive?

The future of contemporary subjectivity is not to live indefinitely under the regime of self-withdrawal, of mass mediatic infantilisation, of ignorance of difference and alterity — both on the human and the cosmic register. Its modes of subjectivation will get out of their homogenetic “entrapment” only if creative objectives appear within their reach. What is at stake here is the finality of the ensemble of human activities. Beyond material and political demands, what emerges is an aspiration for individual and collective reappropriation of the production of subjectivity. In this way the ontological heterogenesis of value becomes the focus of political concerns which at present

lack the site, the immediate relation, the environment, the reconstitution of the social fabric and existential impact of art.... And at the end of a slow recomposition of assemblages of subjectivation, the chaosmic explorations of an ecosophy — articulating between them scientific, political, environmental and mental ecologies — ought to be able to claim to replace the old ideologies which abusively sectorised the social, the private and the civil, and which were fundamentally incapable of establishing transversal junctions between the political, the ethical and the aesthetic.

It should, however, be clear that we are in no way advocating an aesthetisation of the Socius, for after all, promoting a new aesthetic paradigm involves overthrowing current forms of art as much as those of social life! I hold out my hand to the future. My approach will be marked by mechanical confidence or creative uncertainty, according to whether I consider everything to be worked out in advance or everything to be there for the taking — that the world can be rebuilt from other Universes of value and that other existential Territories should be constructed towards this end. The immense ordeals which the planet is going through — such as the suffocation of its atmosphere — involve changes in production, ways of living and axes of value. The demographic explosion which will, in a few decades, see the population of Latin America multiply by three and that of Africa by five<sup>5</sup> does not proceed from an inexorable biological malediction. The key factors in it are economic (that is, they relate to power) and in the final analysis are subjective — cultural, social and mass mediatic. The future of the Third World rests primarily on its capacity to recapture its own processes of subjectivation in the context of a social fabric in the process of desertification. (In Brazil, for example, Wild West capitalism, savage gang and police violence coexist with interesting attempts by the Workers' Party movement at

recomposing social and urbanistic practices.)

Among the fogs and miasmas which obscure our *fin de millénaire*, the question of subjectivity is now returning as a leitmotiv. It is not a natural given any more than air or water. How do we produce it, capture it, enrich it, and permanently reinvent it in a way that renders it compatible with Universes of mutant value? How do we work for its liberation, that is, for its resingularisation? Psychoanalysis, institutional analysis, film, literature, poetry, innovative pedagogies, town planning and architecture — all the disciplines will have to combine their creativity to ward off the ordeals of barbarism, the mental implosion and chaosmic spasms looming on the horizon, and transform them into riches and unforeseen pleasures, the promises of which, for all that, are all too tangible.

- 1 On the ethical obligation towards a "progeny", cf. Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984.
- 2 "For mankind today, the 'Big Bang' and the evolution of the Universe are part of the world in the same way as in prior times, the myths of origin," in *Entre le temps et l'éternité*, Fayard, 1988, p.65.
- 3 Among the many works on institutional pedagogy, see René Lafitte, *Une journée dans une classe coopérative: le désir retrouvé*, Syros, Paris, 1985.
- 4 On the networks of solidarity subsisting amongst those "defeated" by modernity in the Third World: Serge Latouche, *La Planète des naufragés. Essai sur l'après-développement*, La Découverte, 1991.
- 5 Jacques Vallin (de l'INED), *Transversales Science/Culture*, Number 9, June, 1991. (29 rue Marsoulan, 75012 Paris). *La population mondiale, la population française*, La Découverte, Paris, 1991.

**The author:**

Félix Guattari was a psychoanalyst, philosopher and ecologist, well-known for his collaborative works with Gilles Deleuze (*Anti-Oedipus*, *A Thousand Plateaus*, *What is Philosophy*) – considered by many to be among the most significant philosophical texts of the past 50 years. To date, little of his own work has been translated into English (*Molecular Revolution*, 1975). Active in his younger years as a Left wing militant and later as an ecologist, his prime focus was the innovative psychiatric clinic at La Borde, which he established and where he worked until his death in 1992.

**The translators:**

Paul Bains is a research academic working in a transdisciplinary field of philosophy and science. He is currently translating a collection of essays by Isabelle Stengers. Julian Pefanis teaches at The University of Sydney. He is author of *Heterology and the Postmodern*, and has translated works by Pierre Clastres, Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard.