

On the production of subjectivity

My professional activities in the field of psychotherapy, like my political and cultural engagements, have led me increasingly to put the emphasis on subjectivity as the product of individuals, groups and institutions.

Considering subjectivity from the point of view of its production does not imply any return to traditional systems of binary determination — material infrastructure/ideological superstructure. The various semiotic registers that combine to engender subjectivity do not maintain obligatory hierarchical relations fixed for all time. Sometimes, for example, economic semiotisation becomes dependent on collective psychological factors — look at the sensitivity of the stock exchange to fluctuations of opinion. Subjectivity is in fact plural and polyphonic — to use Mikhaïl Bakhtin's expression. It recognises no dominant or determinant instance guiding all other forms according to a univocal causality.

At least three types of problem prompt us to enlarge the definition of subjectivity beyond the classical opposition between individual subject and society, and in so doing, revise the models of the unconscious currently in circulation: the irruption of

subjective factors at the forefront of current events, the massive development of machinic productions of subjectivity and, finally, the recent prominence of ethological and ecological perspectives on human subjectivity.

Subjective factors have always held an important place in the course of history. But it seems that with the global diffusion of the mass media they are beginning to play a dominant role. We will only give a few brief examples here. The immense movement unleashed by the Chinese students at Tiananmen Square obviously had as its goal the slogans of political democratisation. But it is equally certain that the contagious affective charges it bore far surpassed simple ideological demands. A whole lifestyle, collective ethic and conception of social relations (derived largely from Western images) were set into motion. And in the long run tanks won't be able to stop it! As in Hungary or Poland, collective existential mutation will have the last word! All the same, large movements of subjectivation don't necessarily develop in the direction of emancipation. The massive subjective revolution which has been developing among the Iranian people for more than ten years is focused on religious archaisms and generally conservative social attitudes — particularly with regard to the position of women (this is a sensitive issue in France, because of the events in the Maghreb and the repercussions of these repressive attitudes to women in the area of immigration).

In the Eastern bloc, the fall of the Iron Curtain didn't happen as the result of armed insurrection but through the crystallisation of an immense collective desire annihilating the mental substrate of the post-Stalin totalitarian system. This is a phenomenon of extreme complexity, since it intermingles emancipatory aspirations with retrogressive, conservative — even fascist — drives of a nationalistic, ethnic and religious nature. In this upheaval, how will the populations of central

Europe and the Eastern bloc overcome the bitter deception the capitalist West has reserved for them until now? History will tell us — admittedly a History full of unpleasant surprises but, why not — about a subsequent renewal of social struggles! By contrast, how murderous the Gulf War will have been! One could almost speak of genocide, since this war led to the extermination of many more Iraqis (counting all ethnic groups) than there were victims of the bombs dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. With the passage of time it seems clear that what was at stake was an attempt to bring the Arab populations to heel and reclaim world opinion: it had to be demonstrated that the Yankee way of subjectivation could be imposed by the combined power of the media and arms.

Generally, one can say that contemporary history is increasingly dominated by rising demands for subjective singularity — quarrels over language, autonomist demands, issues of nationalism and of the nation, which, in total ambiguity, express on the one hand an aspiration for national liberation, but also manifest themselves in what I would call conservative reterritorialisations of subjectivity. A certain universal representation of subjectivity, incarnated by capitalist colonialism in both East and West, has gone bankrupt — although it's not yet possible to fully measure the scale of such a failure. Today, as everyone knows, the growth of nationalism and fundamentalism in Arab and Muslim countries may have incalculable consequences not only on international relations, but on the subjective economies of hundreds of millions of individuals. It's the whole problematic of disarray as well as the mounting demands of the Third World, the countries of the South, which are thus stamped with an agonising question mark.

As things stand, sociology, economic science, political science and legal studies appear poorly equipped to account for

this mixture of archaic attachments to cultural traditions that nonetheless aspire to the technological and scientific modernity characterising the contemporary subjective cocktail. Traditional psychoanalysis, for its part, is hardly better placed to confront these problems, due to its habit of reducing social facts to psychological mechanisms. In such conditions it appears opportune to forge a more transversalist conception of subjectivity, one which would permit us to understand both its idiosyncratic territorialised couplings (Existential Territories) and its opening onto value systems (Incorporeal Universes) with their social and cultural implications.

Should we keep the semiotic productions of the mass media, informatics, telematics and robotics separate from psychological subjectivity? I don't think so. Just as social machines can be grouped under the general title of Collective Equipment, technological machines of information and communication operate at the heart of human subjectivity, not only within its memory and intelligence, but within its sensibility, affects and unconscious fantasms. Recognition of these machinic dimensions of subjectivation leads us to insist, in our attempt at redefinition, on the heterogeneity of the components leading to the production of subjectivity. Thus one finds in it: 1. Signifying semiological components which appear in the family, education, the environment, religion, art, sport ... 2. Elements constructed by the media industry, the cinema, etc., 3. A-signifying semiological dimensions that trigger informational sign machines, and that function in parallel or independently of the fact that they produce and convey significations and denotations, and thus escape from strictly linguistic axiomatics. The different currents of structuralism have given neither autonomy nor specificity to this a-signifying regime, although authors like Julia Kristeva or Jacques Derrida have shed some light on the relative autonomy of this sort of component. But in general, the a-signifying econo-

my of language has been reduced to what I call sign machines, to the linguistic, signification economy of language. This tendency is particularly clear with Roland Barthes who equates the elements of language and narrative segments with figures of Expression, and thus confers on linguistic semiology a primacy over all other semiotics. It was a grave error on the part of the structuralist school to try to put everything connected with the psyche under the control of the linguistic signifier! Technological transformations oblige us to be aware of both universalising and reductionist homogenisations of subjectivity and of a heterogenetic tendency, that is to say, of a reinforcement of the heterogeneity and singularisation of its components. Thus "computer-aided design" leads to the production of images opening on to unprecedented plastic Universes — I am thinking, for example, of Matta's work with the graphic palette — or to the solution of mathematical problems which would have been quite unimaginable a few years ago. But then again, we should be on guard against progressivist illusions or visions which are systematically pessimistic. The machinic production of subjectivity can work for the better or for the worse. There exists an anti-modernist attitude which involves a massive rejection of technological innovation, particularly as it concerns the information revolution. It's impossible to judge such a machinic evolution either positively or negatively; everything depends on its articulation within collective assemblages of enunciation. At best there is the creation, or invention, of new Universes of reference; at the worst there is the deadening influence of the mass media to which millions of individuals are currently condemned. Technological developments together with social experimentation in these new domains are perhaps capable of leading us out of the current period of oppression and into a post-media era characterised by the reappropriation and resingularisation of the use of media. (Access to data-banks, video

libraries, interactivity between participants, etc.)

The same movement towards a polyphonic and heterogenetic comprehension of subjectivity leads us to consider certain aspects of contemporary research into ethology and ecology. Daniel Stern, in *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*,¹ has notably explored the pre-verbal subjective formations of infants. He shows that these are not at all a matter of “stages” in the Freudian sense, but of levels of subjectivation which maintain themselves in parallel throughout life. He thus rejects the overrated psychogenesis of Freudian complexes, which have been presented as the structural “Universals” of subjectivity. Furthermore, he emphasises the inherently trans-subjective character of an infant’s early experiences, which do not dissociate the feeling of self from the feeling of the other. A dialectic between “sharable affects” and “non-sharable affects” thus structures the emergent phases of subjectivity. A nascent subjectivity, which we will continually find in dreams, *délire*, creative exaltation, or the feeling of love...

Social ecology and mental ecology have found privileged sites of exploration in the experiences of institutional psychotherapy. I am obviously thinking of the clinic at La Borde, where I have worked for a long time; everything there is set up so that psychotic patients live in a climate of activity and assume responsibility, not only with the goal of developing an ambience of communication, but also in order to create local centres for collective subjectivation. Thus it’s not simply a matter of remodelling a patient’s subjectivity — as it existed before a psychotic crisis — but of a production *sui generis*. For example, certain psychotic patients, coming from poor agricultural backgrounds, will be invited to take up plastic arts, drama, video, music, etc., whereas until then, these universes had been unknown to them. On the other hand, bureaucrats and intel-

lectuals will find themselves attracted to material work, in the kitchen, garden, pottery, horse riding club. The important thing here is not only the confrontation with a new material of expression, but the constitution of complexes of subjectivation: multiple exchanges between individual-group-machine. These complexes actually offer people diverse possibilities for recomposing their existential corporeality, to get out of their repetitive impasses and, in a certain way, to resingularise themselves. Grafts of transference operate in this way, not issuing from ready-made dimensions of subjectivity crystallised into structural complexes, but from a creation which itself indicates a kind of aesthetic paradigm. One creates new modalities of subjectivity in the same way that an artist creates new forms from the palette. In such a context, the most heterogeneous components may work towards a patient's positive evolution: relations with architectural space; economic relations; the co-management by patient and carer of the different vectors of treatment; taking advantage of all occasions opening onto the outside world; a processual exploitation of event-centred "singularities" — everything which can contribute to the creation of an authentic relation with the other. To each of these components of the caring institution there corresponds a necessary practice. We are not confronted with a subjectivity given as in-itself, but with processes of the realisation of autonomy, or of autopoiesis (in a somewhat different sense from the one Francisco Varela gives this term²).

Let us now examine an example of the use of the psyche's ethological and ecological resources in the domain of family psychotherapy. We are borrowing this example from a movement which, around Mony Elkaim, is attempting to free itself from the grip of systemic theories that circulate in Anglo-Saxon countries and in Italy.³ Here also the inventiveness of treat-

ment distances us from scientific paradigms and brings us closer to an ethico-aesthetic paradigm. Therapists get involved, take risks and put their own fantasms into operation, creating a paradoxical climate of existential authenticity accompanied by a playful freedom and simulacra. Family therapy produces subjectivity in the most artificial way imaginable. This can be observed during training sessions, when the therapists improvise psychodramatic scenes. Here, the scene implies a layering of enunciation: a vision of oneself as concrete embodiment; a subject of enunciation which doubles the subject of the statement and the distribution of roles; a collective management of the game; an interlocution with observers commenting on the scene; and finally, video which through *feedback* restores the totality of these superposed levels. This type of performance favours the relinquishment of a "realist" attitude which would apprehend the lived scenes as actually embodied in family structures. This multi-faceted theatrical aspect allows us to grasp the artificial and creative character of the production of subjectivity. It should be emphasised that the video is always within sight of the therapists. Even when the camera is switched off, they develop the habit of observing certain semi-otic manifestations which would escape normal observation. The ludic face-to-face encounter with patients and the acceptance of singularities developed in this sort of therapy distinguishes it from the attitude of the traditional psychoanalyst with an averted gaze, and even from classical psychodrama.

Whether one considers contemporary history, machinic semi-otic productions, the ethology of infancy, or social and mental ecology, we witness the same questioning of subjective individuation, which certainly survives, but is wrought by collective assemblages of enunciation. At this stage, the provisional definition of subjectivity I would like to propose as the most encom-

passing would be: “The ensemble of conditions which render possible the emergence of individual and/or collective instances as self-referential existential Territories, adjacent, or in a delimiting-relation, to an alterity that is itself subjective.” We know that in certain social and semiological contexts, subjectivity becomes individualised; persons, taken as responsible for themselves, situate themselves within relations of alterity governed by familial habits, local customs, juridical laws, etc. In other conditions, subjectivity is collective — which does not, however, mean that it becomes exclusively social. The term “collective” should be understood in the sense of a multiplicity that deploys itself as much beyond the individual, on the side of the socius, as before the person, on the side of preverbal intensities, indicating a logic of affects rather than a logic of delimited sets.

The conditions of production sketched out in this redefinition thus together imply: human inter-subjective instances manifested by language; suggestive and identificatory examples from ethology; institutional interactions of different natures; machinic apparatuses (for example, those involving computer technology); incorporeal Universes of reference such as those relative to music and the plastic arts. This non-human pre-personal part of subjectivity is crucial since it is from this that its heterogenesis can develop. It would be to misjudge Deleuze and Foucault — who emphasised the non-human part of subjectivity — to suspect them of taking anti-humanist positions! That’s not the issue. Rather, it’s a question of being aware of the existence of machines of subjectivation which don’t simply work within the “the faculties of the soul,” interpersonal relations or intra-familial complexes. Subjectivity does not only produce itself through the psychogenetic stages of psychoanalysis or the “mathemes” of the Unconscious, but also in the large-scale social machines of language and the mass media— which cannot be described as human. A certain bal-

ance still needs to be struck between structuralist discoveries — which are certainly not unimportant — and their pragmatic application, so as not to flounder in the social abandon of post-modernism.

With his concept of the Unconscious Freud postulated the existence of a hidden continent of the psyche, where instinctual, affective and cognitive options in large part would be played out. Today we can't dissociate the theories of the Unconscious from the psychoanalytic, psychotherapeutic, institutional and literary practices which make reference to it. The Unconscious has become an institution, "Collective Equipment" understood in a broadest sense. One finds oneself rigged out with an unconscious the moment one dreams, délire, forgets or makes a slip of the tongue ... Freudian discoveries — which I prefer to call inventions — have undoubtedly enriched the ways we can approach the psyche. I am certainly not speaking pejoratively of invention! In the same way that Christians invented a new form of subjectivation (courtly chivalry and romanticism, a new love, a new nature) and Bolshevism a new sense of class, the various Freudian sects have secreted new ways of experiencing — or even of producing — hysteria, infantile neurosis, psychosis, family conflict, the reading of myths, etc. The Freudian Unconscious has itself evolved in the course of its history: it has lost the seething richness and disquieting atheism of its origins and, in its structuralist version, has been recentered on the analysis of the self, its adaptation to society, and its conformity with a signifying order.

My perspective involves shifting the human and social sciences from scientific paradigms towards ethico-aesthetic paradigms. It's no longer a question of determining whether the Freudian Unconscious or the Lacanian Unconscious provide scientific

answers to the problems of the psyche. From now on these models, along with the others, will only be considered in terms of the production of subjectivity — inseparable as much from the technical and institutional apparatuses which promote it as from their impact on psychiatry, university teaching or the mass media ... In a more general way, one has to admit that every individual and social group conveys its own system of modelising subjectivity; that is, a certain cartography — composed of cognitive references as well as mythical, ritual and symptomatological references — with which it positions itself in relation to its affects and anguishes, and attempts to manage its inhibitions and drives.

Psychoanalytic treatment confronts us with a multiplicity of cartographies: that of the analyst and analysand, and of the family, the neighbourhood, etc. It is the interaction of these cartographies that will provide regimes to the different assemblages of subjectivation. None of them, whether fantasmatic, delirious or theoretical, can be said to express an objective knowledge of the psyche. All of them are important insofar as they support a certain context, a certain framework, an existential armature of the subjective situation. Our question here is not simply of a speculative order, but is posed in very practical ways: how appropriate are concepts of the Unconscious, offered to us on the psychoanalytic "market," to actual conditions of the production of subjectivity? Should they be transformed, should new ones be invented? This question of modelisation (more exactly of psychological metamodelisation) leads to an evaluation of the usefulness of these cartographic instruments — these concepts from psychoanalysis, systems theory, etc. Do we use them as a grid for an exclusive universal reading, with scientific claims, or as partial instruments, in combination with others, the ultimate criterion being of a functional order? What processes unfold in a consciousness affected by the

shock of the unexpected? How can a mode of thought, a capacity to apprehend, be modified when the surrounding world itself is in the throes of change? How are the representations of an exterior world changed when it is itself in the process of changing? The Freudian Unconscious is inseparable from a society attached to its past, to its phallogocentric traditions and subjective invariants. Contemporary upheavals undoubtedly call for a modelisation turned more towards the future and the emergence of new social and aesthetic practices. The devaluation of the meaning of life provokes the fragmentation of the self-image: its representations become confused and contradictory. Faced with these upheavals the best attitude would be to envisage the work of cartography and psychological modelisation in a dialectical relation with the individuals and groups concerned; the crucial thing is to move in the direction of co-management in the production of subjectivity, to distrust suggestion and the attitudes of authority which occupy such a large place in psychoanalysis, in spite of the fact that it claims to have escaped them.

A long time ago I renounced the Conscious-Unconscious dualism of the Freudian topoi and all the Manichean oppositions correlative to Oedipal triangulation and to the castration complex. I opted for an Unconscious superposing multiple strata of subjectivation, heterogeneous strata of variable extension and consistency. Thus a more "schizo" Unconscious, one liberated from familial shackles, turned more towards actual praxis than towards fixations on, and regressions to, the past. An Unconscious of Flux and of abstract machines rather than an Unconscious of structure and language. I don't, however, consider my "schizoanalytic cartographies"⁴ to be scientific theories. Just as an artist borrows from his precursors and contemporaries the traits which suit him, I invite those who read me to take or reject my concepts freely. The important thing is not the

final result but the fact that the multicomponential cartographic method can co-exist with the process of subjectivation, and that a reappropriation, an autopoiesis, of the means of production of subjectivity can be made possible.

Of course, I am not equating either psychosis to the work of art or the psychoanalyst to the artist! I am only emphasising that the existential registers concerned here involve a dimension of autonomy of an aesthetic order. We are faced with an important ethical choice: either we objectify, reify, “scientifise” subjectivity, or, on the contrary, we try to grasp it in the dimension of its processual creativity. Kant established that the judgement of taste involved subjectivity and its relation to the other in a certain attitude of “disinterestedness.”⁵ But it is not enough to designate the categories of disinterestedness and freedom as the essential dimension of the unconscious aesthetic without clarifying their active mode of insertion into the psyche. How do certain semiotic segments achieve their autonomy, start to work for themselves and to secrete new fields of reference? It is from such a rupture that an existential singularisation correlative to the genesis of new coefficients of freedom will become possible. This detachment of an ethico-aesthetic “partial object” from the field of dominant significations corresponds both to the promotion of a mutant desire and to the achievement of a certain disinterestedness. Here I would like to establish a bridge between the concept of a partial object (object “a” as theorised by Lacan) that marks the autonomisation of the components of unconscious subjectivity, and the subjective autonomisation relative to the aesthetic object. At this point we rediscover a problematic highlighted by Mikhail Bakhtin in his first theoretical essay⁶ of 1924: the function of enunciative appropriation of aesthetic form by the autonomisation of cognitive or ethical content and the realisation of this content in an aesthetic object — what I will call a partial enunciator. I am

attempting to draw the psychoanalytic partial object that is adjacent to the body — the point of coupling of the drive — towards a partial enunciation. The expansion of the notion of partial object, to which Lacan contributed with the inclusion of the gaze and the voice in the object “a”, needs to be followed up. This entails expanding the category to cover the full range of nuclei of subjective autonomisation relative to group subjects, and to instances of the production of subjectivity (machinic, ecological, architectural, religious, etc.). Bakhtin described a transference of subjectivation operating between the author and the contemplator of a work of art — the “spectator” in Marcel Duchamp’s sense. According to Bakhtin, in this movement the “consumer” in some way becomes co-creator; the aesthetic form only achieving this result through the device of an isolating or separating function of such a kind that the expressive material becomes formally creative. The content of the work of art detaches itself from its connotations that are as much cognitive as aesthetic: “isolation or detachment relates not to the material, not to the work as thing, but to its significance, to its content, which is freed from certain necessary connections with the unity of nature and the unity of the ethical event of being.”⁷ There is thus a certain type of fragmentation of content that “takes possession of the author” to engender a certain mode of aesthetic enunciation. In music, for example, as Bakhtin emphasises, isolation and invention cannot be axiologically related to the material: “It is not the sound of acoustics that is isolated, and not the mathematical number of the compositional order that is made up. What is detached and fictively irreversible is the event of striving, the axiological tension, which actualises itself thanks to that without any impediment, and becomes consummated.”⁸ In the domain of poetry, in order to detach itself, autonomise itself, culminate itself, creative subjectivity will tend to seize upon:

1. the sonority of the word, its musical aspect;
2. its material significations with their nuances and variants;
3. its verbal connections;
4. its emotional, intonational and volitional aspects;
5. the feeling of verbal activity in the active generation of a signifying sound, including motor elements of articulation, gesture, mime; the feeling of a movement in which the whole organism together with the activity and soul of the word are swept along in their concrete unity.

And it is this last aspect, declares Bakhtin, that encompasses all the others.⁹

These penetrating analyses can lead to an extension of our approach to partial subjectivation. Equally, we find with Bakhtin the idea of irreversibility of the aesthetic object and implicitly the idea of autopoiesis — notions truly necessary to the analysis of Unconscious formations, pedagogy, psychiatry, and more generally to a social field devastated by capitalist subjectivity. Thus it is not only in the context of music and poetry that we see the work of such fragments detached from content, fragments which I place in the category of “existential refrains.” The polyphony of modes of subjectivation actually corresponds to a multiplicity of ways of “keeping time.” Other rhythmic are thus led to crystallise existential assemblages, which they embody and singularise.

The simplest examples of refrains delimiting existential Territories can be found in the ethology of numerous bird species. Certain specific song sequences serve to seduce a sexual partner, warn off intruders, or announce the arrival of predators.¹⁰ Each time this involves marking out a well-defined functional space. In archaic societies, it is through rhythms, chants, dances, masks, marks on the body, ground and totems, on ritual occasions and with mythical references, that other kinds of collective existential Territories are circumscribed.¹¹ One finds

these sorts of refrains in Greek Antiquity with the “nomes” that constituted, in a way, the “signature tunes” the banners and seals for professional associations. But we all familiar with such crossings of subjective thresholds triggered by a catalysing temporal module that plunges us into sadness or indeed, into an ambience of gaiety and excitement. What we are aiming at with this concept of refrain aren’t just massive affects, but hyper-complex refrains, catalysing the emergence of incorporeal Universes such as those of music or mathematics, and crystallising the most deterritorialised existential Territories. This type of transversalist refrain evades strict spatio-temporal delimitation. With it, time ceases to be exterior in order to become an intensive nucleus [*foyer*] of temporalisation. From this perspective, universal time appears to be no more than a hypothetical projection, a time of generalised equivalence, a “flattened” capitalistic time; what is important are these partial modules of temporalisation, operating in diverse domains (biological, ethological, socio-cultural, machinic, cosmic...), and out of which complex refrains constitute highly relative existential synchronies.

To illustrate this mode of production of polyphonic subjectivity, where a complex refrain plays a dominant role, consider the example of televisual consumption. When I watch television, I exist at the intersection: 1. of a perceptual fascination provoked by the screen’s luminous animation which borders on the hypnotic,¹² 2. of a captive relation with the narrative content of the program, associated with a lateral awareness of surrounding events (water boiling on the stove, a child’s cry, the telephone...), 3. of a world of fantasms occupying my daydreams. My feeling of personal identity is thus pulled in different directions. How can I maintain a relative sense of unicity, despite the diversity of components of subjectivation that pass through me? It’s a question of the refrain that fixes me in front

of the screen, henceforth constituted as a projective existential node. My identity has become that of the speaker, the person who speaks from the television. Like Bakhtin, I would say that the refrain is not based on elements of form, material or ordinary signification, but on the detachment of an existential "motif" (or leitmotiv) which installs itself like an "attractor" within a sensible and significational chaos. The different components conserve their heterogeneity, but are nevertheless captured by a refrain which couples them to the existential Territory of my self. In the case of neurotic identity, sometimes the refrain develops into a "hardened" representation, for example, an obsessive ritual. If for any reason this machine of subjectivation is threatened, the whole personality may implode; this occurs in psychosis where the partial components move off on delirious, hallucinatory lines.... The paradoxical concept of a complex refrain will enable us, in psychoanalytic treatment, to refer an interpretive event, no longer to Universals or mathemes, nor to preestablished structures of subjectivity, but rather to what I call a constellation of Universes. This does not involve Universes of reference in general, but incorporeal domains of entities we detect at the same time that we produce them, and which appear to have been always there, from the moment we engender them. Here is the real paradox of these Universes: they are given in the creative moment, like a hecceity freed from discursive time — nuclei of eternity lodged between instants. What's more, over and above the elements of the situation (familial, sexual, conflictual), they involve accounting for the projection of all the lines of virtuality opening up from the event of their appearance. Take a simple example: a patient in the course of treatment remains stuck on a problem, going around in circles, and coming up against a wall. One day he says, without giving it much thought: "I've been thinking of taking up driving lessons again, I haven't dri-

ven for years"; or, "I feel like learning word processing." A remark of this kind may remain unnoticed in a traditional conception of analysis. However, this kind of singularity can become a key, activating a complex refrain, which will not only modify the immediate behaviour of the patient, but open up new fields of virtuality for him: the renewal of contact with long lost acquaintances, revisiting old haunts, regaining self-confidence.... In this, a rigid neutrality or non-intervention would be negative; it's sometimes necessary to jump at the opportunity, to approve, to run the risk of being wrong, to give it a go, to say, "yes, perhaps this experience is important." Respond to the event as the potential bearer of new constellations of Universes of reference. This is why I have opted for pragmatic interventions orientated towards the construction of subjectivities, towards the production of fields of virtualities which wouldn't simply be polarised by a symbolic hermeneutic centered on childhood.

In this conception of analysis, time is not something to be endured; it is activated, orientated, the object of qualitative change. Analysis is no longer the transference interpretation of symptoms as a function of a preexisting, latent content, but the invention of new catalytic nuclei capable of bifurcating existence. A singularity, a rupture of sense, a cut, a fragmentation, the detachment of a semiotic content — in a dadaist or surrealist manner — can originate mutant nuclei of subjectivation. Just as chemistry has to purify complex mixtures to extract atomic and homogeneous molecular matter, thus creating an infinite scale of chemical entities that have no prior existence, the same is true in the "extraction" and "separation" of aesthetic subjectivities or partial objects, in the psychoanalytic sense, that make an immense complexification of subjectivity possible — harmonies, polyphonies, counterpoints, rhythms

and existential orchestrations, until now unheard and unknown. An essentially precarious, deterritorialising complexification, constantly threatened by a reterritorialising subsidence; above all in the contemporary context where the primacy of information fluxes that are machinically engendered threaten to lead to a generalised dissolution of old existential Territorialities. In the early phases of industrial society the “demonic” still continued to flower, but since then mystery has become a rarer and rarer commodity. One need only evoke the desperate quest of Witkiewicz to grasp an ultimate “strangeness of being” which literally appeared to slip between his fingers. In these conditions, the task of the poetic function, in an enlarged sense, is to recompose artificially rarefied, resingularised Universes of subjectivation. For them, it's not a matter of transmitting messages, investing images as aids to identification, patterns of behaviour as props for modelisation procedures, but of catalysing existential operators capable of acquiring consistence and persistence.

This poetic-existential catalysis that we find at work in the midst of scriptural, vocal, musical or plastic discursivities engages quasi-synchronously the enunciative crystallisation of the creator, the interpreter and the admirer of the work of art, like analyst and patient. Its efficiency lies in its capacity to promote active, processual ruptures within semiotically structured, signification and denotative networks, where it will put emergent subjectivity to work, in Daniel Stern's sense. When it is effectively triggered in a given enunciative area — that is, situated in a historical and geo-political perspective — such an analytico-poetic function establishes itself as a mutant nucleus of auto-referentiality and auto-valorisation. This is why we must always consider it in two ways: 1. as a molecular rupture, an imperceptible bifurcation capable of overthrowing

the framework of dominant redundancies, the organisation of the “already classified” or, if one prefers, the classical order. 2. in the way that it selects certain segments of these very chains of redundancy, to confer on them the a-signifying existential function I have just evoked, thereby “refraining” them and producing virulent, partial fragments of enunciation operating as “shifters” of subjectivation. The quality of the base material matters little here, as one can see in repetitive music or Butoh dance, which, as Marcel Duchamp would have wished, are turned entirely towards “the spectator.” What does matter is the mutant rhythmic impetus of a temporalisation able to hold together the heterogeneous components of a new existential edifice.

Beyond the poetic function, the question of the apparatuses of subjectivation presents itself. And, more precisely, what must characterise them so that they abandon seriality — in Sartre’s sense — and enter into processes of singularisation which restore to existence what we might call its auto-essentialisation. With the fading antagonisms of the Cold War, we enter a period when serious threats, posed by our productivist society to the human species, appear more distinctly. Our survival on this planet is not only threatened by environmental damage but by a degeneration in the fabric of social solidarity and in the modes of psychical life, which must literally be re-invented. The refoundation of politics will have to pass through the aesthetic and analytical dimensions implied in the three ecologies — the environment, the socius and the psyche. We cannot conceive of solutions to the poisoning of the atmosphere and to global warming due to the greenhouse effect, or to the problem of population control, without a mutation of mentality, without promoting a new art of living in society. We cannot conceive of international discipline in this domain without solving the problem of hunger and hyperinflation in the Third World. We cannot conceive of a collective recomposition of the

socius, correlative to a resingularisation of subjectivity, without a new way of conceiving political and economic democracies that respect cultural differences — without multiple molecular revolutions. We cannot hope for an amelioration in the living conditions of the human species without a considerable effort to improve the feminine condition. The entire division of labour, its modes of valorisation and finalities need to be rethought. Production for the sake of production — the obsession with the rate of growth, whether in the capitalist market or in planned economies — leads to monstrous absurdities. The only acceptable finality of human activity is the production of a subjectivity that is auto-enriching its relation to the world in a continuous fashion. The productive apparatuses of subjectivity can exist at the level of megapoles as easily as at the level of an individual's language games. And to learn the intimate workings of this production, these ruptures of meaning that are auto-foundational of existence — poetry today might have more to teach us than economic science, the human sciences and psychoanalysis combined.

That contemporary social transformations happen on a large scale by a relatively progressive mutation of subjectivity, or in the moderately conservative fashion one sees in the Eastern bloc, or in the clearly reactionary, indeed neo-fascistic manner in the Middle East, and that, at the same time, such changes can take place on a molecular level, microphysical in Foucault's sense, in political activity, in analytic treatment, in establishing an apparatus changing the life of the neighbourhood, the way a school or psychiatric institution functions — the synergy of these two processes calls for a departure from structuralist reductionism and a refoundation of the problematic of subjectivity. A partial subjectivity — pre-personal, polyphonic, collective and machinic. Fundamentally, the question of enunciation gets decentered in relation to that of human

individuation. Enunciation becomes correlative not only to the emergence of a logic of non-discursive intensities, but equally to a pathic incorporation-agglomeration of these vectors of partial subjectivity. Thus it involves rejecting the habitually universalising claims of psychological modelisation. The so-called scientific content of psychoanalytic or systemic theories (as well as mythological or religious modelising, or even the mythological models of systematic *délire*...) are essentially valuable for their existentialising function, that is, for the production of subjectivity. In these conditions, theoretical activity is reorientated towards a metamodelisation capable of taking into account the diversity of modelising systems. In particular it involves situating the concrete incidence of capitalistic subjectivity (the subjectivity of generalised equivalence) within the context of the continued development of the mass media, Collective Equipment and the information revolution — a subjectivity which seems likely to blot out, with its greyness, the faintest traces and last recesses of the planet's mysteries.

So we are proposing to decentre the question of the subject onto the question of subjectivity. Traditionally, the subject was conceived as the ultimate essence of individuation, as a pure, empty, prereflexive apprehension of the world, a nucleus of sensibility, of expressivity — the unifier of states of consciousness. With subjectivity we place the emphasis instead on the founding instance of intentionality. This involves taking the relation between subject and object by the middle and foregrounding the expressive instance (or the interpretant of the Peircean triad). Hereafter, this is where the question of Content will reside. Content participates in subjectivity by giving consistency to the ontological quality of Expression. It is in this reversibility of Content and Expression where what I call the existentialising function resides. Thus, we will start with the primacy of enunciative

substance over the couplet of Expression and Content.

I believe I've found a valid alternative to the structuralism inspired by Saussure, one that relies on the Expression/Content distinction formulated by Hjelmslev,¹³ that is to say, based precisely on the potential reversibility of Expression and Content. Going beyond Hjelmslev, I intend to consider a multiplicity of expressive instances, whether they be of the order of Expression or Content. Rather than playing on the Expression/Content opposition which, with Hjelmslev, still repeats Saussure's signifier/signified couplet, this would involve putting a multiplicity of components of Expression, or substances of Expression in parallel, in polyphony. There is a difficulty in that Hjelmslev himself used the category of substance in a tripartite division between matter, substance and form relating on one hand to Expression and on the other to Content. With Hjelmslev, the connection between Expression and Content is realised at the level of the form of Expression and form of Content, which he identified with each other. This common and commuting form is a bit strange but it represents, in my opinion, a brilliant intuition, posing the question of the existence of a formal machine, transversal to every modality of Expression and Content. There is then, a bridge, a transversality between on one side the machine of phonemic and syntagmatic discursivity of Expression proper to language, and on the other, the division of semantic unities of Content (for example, the way classification of colours or animal categories is established). I call this common form a deterritorialised machine, an abstract machine. The notion of an abstract semiotic machine isn't new: we find it in Chomsky who postulates its existence at the root of language. But this concept, this Expression/Content opposition — as well as the Chomskian concept of the abstract machine — remained too bound up with language. For our part, we would

like to resituate semiology within the scope of an expanded, machinic conception which would free us from a simple linguistic opposition between Expression/Content, and allow us to integrate into enunciative assemblages an indefinite number of substances of Expression, such as biological codings or organisational forms belonging to the socius. From this perspective, the question of enunciative substance should also be outside the framework of Hjelmslev's tripartite division, matter-substance-form (form casting itself "like a net" over matter, thereby engendering the substance of Expression and Content). It would involve shattering the concept of substance in a pluralistic manner, and would promote the category of substance of Expression not only in semiology and semiotics, but in domains that are extra-linguistic, non-human, biological, technological, aesthetic, etc. The problem of the enunciative assemblage would then no longer be specific to a semiotic register but would traverse an ensemble of heterogeneous expressive materials. Thus a transversality between enunciative substances which can be, on one hand, linguistic, but on the other, of a machinic order, developing from "non-semiotically formed matter," to use another of Hjelmslev's expressions. Machinic subjectivity, the machinic assemblage of enunciation, agglomerates these different partial enunciations and installs itself, as it were, before and alongside the subject-object relation. It has, moreover, a collective character, it is multi-componential, a machinic multiplicity. Finally, it includes incorporeal dimensions, which perhaps constitutes its most problematic aspect, and one that Noam Chomsky only touches on in his attempt to make use of the Medieval concept of Universals.

Expressive, linguistic and non-linguistic substances install themselves at the junction of discursive chains (belonging to a finite, preformed world, the world of the Lacanian Other) and incorporeal registers with infinite, creationist virtualities

(which have nothing to do with Lacanian “mathemes”). It is in this zone of intersection that subject and object fuse and establish their foundations. It concerns a given that phenomenologists have addressed when they demonstrate that intentionality is inseparable from its object and involves a “before” in the discursive, subject-object relation. Some psychologists have focused on the relations of empathy and transitivity in infancy and psychosis. Lacan, in his early works, when still influenced by phenomenology, evoked the importance of this type of phenomenon. Generally, one can say that psychoanalysis is born at this point of object-subject fusion that we see at work in suggestion, hypnosis and hysteria. It is an attempt at reading subjective transitivity that is at the origin of Freudian theory and practice. Moreover, anthropologists, since the era of Lévi-Bruhl, Prieziuski, etc., have shown that in archaic societies, there was what they call “participation,” a collective subjectivity investing a certain type of object, and putting itself in the position of an existential group nucleus. In studies on new forms of art (like Deleuze's on cinema) we will see, for example, movement-images and time-images constituting the seeds of the production of subjectivity. We are not in the presence of a passively representative image, but of a vector of subjectivation. We are actually confronted by a non-discursive, pathic knowledge, which presents itself as a subjectivity that one actively meets, an absorbant subjectivity given immediately in all its complexity. We can trace this intuition to Bergson, who shed light on the non-discursive experience of duration by opposing it to a time cut up into present, past and future, according to spatial schemas. It is true that this pathic subjectivity, before the subject-object relation, continues to self-actualise through energetico-spatio-temporal coordinates, in the world of language and through multiple mediations; but what allows us to grasp the force involved in the production of sub-

jectivity is the apprehension through it of a pseudo-discursivity, a detournement of discursivity, which installs itself at the foundation of the subject-object relation, in a subjective pseudo-mediation.

This pathic subjectivation, at the root of all modes of subjectivation, is overshadowed in rationalist, capitalistic subjectivity which tends to systematically circumvent it. Science is constructed by bracketing these factors of subjectivation, which achieve Expression only when certain discursive links are put outside of signification. Freudianism, although impregnated with scientism, can, in its early stages, be characterised as a rebellion against a positivist reductionism which tended to do without these pathic dimensions. In Freudianism the symptom, the lapsus or joke are conceived as detached objects allowing a mode of subjectivity, which has lost its consistency, to find the path to a "coming into existence." The symptom through its own repetitiveness functions like an existential refrain. The paradox resides in the fact that pathic subjectivity tends to be constantly evacuated from relations of discursivity, although discursive operators are essentially based on it. The existential function of assemblages of enunciation consists in this utilisation of links of discursivity to establish a system of repetition, of intensive insistence, polarised between a territorialised existential Territory and deterritorialised incorporeal Universes — two metapsychological functions we can describe as onto-genetic. The Universes of referential value confer their own texture on machines of Expression articulated in machinic Phylums. Complex refrains, beyond the simple refrains of territorialisation, restates the singular consistency of these Universes. (For example, the pathic apprehension of harmonic resonances based on the diatonic scale deploys the "foundation" of consistency of polyphonic music, just as in another context the apprehension of the possible concatenation of numbers and

algorithms deploys the foundation of mathematical idealities.) The abstract machinic consistency which is thus conferred on assemblages of enunciation resides in the layering and ordering of partial levels of existential territorialisation. What's more, the complex refrain functions as an interface between actualised registers of discursivity and non-discursive Universes of virtuality. It is the most deterritorialised aspect of the refrain, its dimension of incorporeal Universes of value which takes control of the most territorialised strata. It does this through a movement of deterritorialisation that develops fields of the possible, tensions in value, relations of heterogeneity, of alterity, of becoming other. The difference between these Universes of value and Platonic Ideas is that the former do not have a fixed character. They involve constellations of Universes, within which a component can affirm itself over others and modify the initial referential configuration and dominant mode of valorisation. (For example, we can see throughout the course of Antiquity the primacy of a military machine based on metal weapons affirming itself over the despotic State machine, the writing machine, the religious machine, etc.) The crystallisation of such constellations can be "overtaken" during the course of historical discursivity, but never wiped out since it is an irreversible rupture in the incorporeal memory of collective subjectivity. Thus we are situated totally outside the vision of a Being moving unchanged through the universal history of ontological formations. There are singular incorporeal constellations which belong to natural and human history and at the same time escape them by a thousand lines of flight. The moment mathematical Universes started to appear, it is no longer possible to act as though the abstract machines which support them had not always existed everywhere and for all time and as though they do not project themselves onto future possibles. We can no longer act as though polyphonic music

had not been invented for the rest of time, both past and future. Such is the first stratum of ontological consistency of this function of existential subjectivation, which is situated within the perspective of a certain axiological creationism.

The second is the embodiment of these values in the irreversibility of the being-there of existential Territories, which confer their character of autopoiesis and singularity on to the zones of subjectivation. In the logic of discursive ensembles which dictates the domains of Fluxes and machinic Phylums, there is always a separation between the poles of subject and object. The truth of a proposition answers to the law of the excluded middle; each object appears in a relationship of binary opposition with a "foundation." Whereas in pathic logic, there is no extrinsic global reference that can be circumscribed. The object relation is destabilised, and the functions of subjectivation are put into question. An incorporeal universe is not supported by coordinates embedded in the world, but by ordinates, by an intensive ordination coupled for better or worse to these existential Territories. Territories which claim to encompass, in a single movement, the sum of everyday existence but which are in fact only based on derisory refrains, indexing if not their vacuity then at least the degree zero of their ontological intensity: thus Territories never given as object but always as intensive repetition, as piercing existential affirmation. And I repeat, this operation is effected through the borrowing of semiotic links, detached and diverted from their signifying and coding tasks. Here, an expressive instance is based on a matter-form relation, which extracts complex forms from a chaotic material.

The logic of discursive sets finds a kind of desperate fulfilment in Capital, the Signifier, and Being with a capital B. Capital is the referent for the generalised equivalence between labour and goods; the Signifier the capitalistic referent for semi-

ological expression, the great reducer of ontological polyvocality. The true, the good, the beautiful are “normalising” categories for processes which escape the logic of circumscribed sets. They are empty referents, they create a void, they install transcendence in the relations of representation. To choose Capital, the Signifier or Being, is to participate in a similar ethicopolitical option. Capital smashes all other modes of valorisation. The Signifier silences the infinite virtualities of minor languages and partial expressions. Being is like an imprisonment which blinds us to the richness and multivalence of Universes of value which, nevertheless, proliferate under our noses. There is an ethical choice in favour of the richness of the possible, an ethics and politics of the virtual that decorporealises and deterritorialises contingency, linear causality and the pressure of circumstances and significations which besiege us. It is a choice for processuality, irreversibility and resingularisation. On a small scale, this redeployment can turn itself into the mode of entrapment, of impoverishment, indeed of catastrophe in neurosis. It can take up reactive religious references. It can annihilate itself in alcohol, drugs, television, an endless daily grind. But it can also make use of other procedures that are more collective, more social, more political ...

In order to question dualist oppositions, such as Being-being or Subject-Object, and systems of Manichean bipolar valorisations, I have proposed the concept of ontological intensity. It implies an ethico-aesthetic engagement with the enunciative assemblage, both in actual and virtual registers. But another element of the metamodelisation proposed here resides in the collective character of machinic multiplicities. There is no personological totalisation of the different components of Expression, or the self-enclosed totalisation of Universes of reference, either in the sciences, the arts or in society. There is an

agglomeration of heterogeneous factors of subjectivation. Machinic segments refer to a detotalised, deterritorialised mecanosphere, to an infinite play of interface. There is no Being already installed throughout temporality. This questioning of dual, binary relations (Being-being, or Conscious-Unconscious) implies a questioning of semiotic linearity — which always seems to be beyond question. Pathic expression is not placed in a relation of discursive succession in order to situate the object on the basis of a clearly delimited referent. Here we are in a register of co-existence, of crystallisation of intensity. Time does not exist as an empty container (a conception which remains at the root of Einsteinian thought). The relations of temporalisation are essentially those of machinic synchrony. There is a deployment of axiological ordinates, without the constitution of a referent exterior to this deployment. Here we are before the relation of “extensionalising” linearity, between an object and its representative mediation within an abstract machinic complex.

Will we say of the incorporeal and virtual part of assemblages of enunciation that it is *in voce* according to a “terminist,” nominalist viewpoint, which makes semiotic entities the tributaries of a pure subjectivity; or will we say that they are *in re* within the framework of a realist conception of the world, subjectivity being only an illusory artefact? But maybe it's necessary to affirm both these positions concurrently: the domain of virtual intensities establishing itself prior to distinctions being made between the semiotic machine, the referred object and the enunciative subject. It's from a failure to see that machinic segments are autopoietic and ontogenetic that one endlessly makes universalist reductions to the Signifier and to scientific rationality. Machinic interfaces are heterogenetic; they summon the alterity of the points of view we might have on them and, as a consequence, on the systems of metamodelling which allow us to account, in one way or another, for the

fundamentally inaccessible character of their autopoietic nuclei. We need to free ourselves from a solitary reference to technological machines and expand the concept of machine so as to situate the machine's adjacency to incorporeal Universes of reference. Note that the categories of metamodelisation proposed here — Fluxes, machinic Phylums, existential Territories, incorporeal Universes — are only of interest because they come in fours and allow us to break free of tertiary descriptions which always end up falling back into dualisms. The fourth term stands for an *n*th term: it is the opening onto multiplicity. What distinguishes metamodelisation from modelisation is the way it uses terms to develop possible openings onto the virtual and onto creative processuality.

- 1 Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, Basic Books, New York, 1985. See later pp.65-6.
- 2 Francisco Varela, *Autonomie et Connaissance*, Le Seuil, Paris, 1989. [This is a revised French edition of *Principles of Biological Autonomy*, North Holland Press, New York, 1979.]
- 3 Mony Elkaim, *If You Love Me, Don't Love Me*, Basic Books, New York, 1990.
- 4 Félix Guattari, *Cartographies schizoanalytiques*, Galilée, Paris, 1989.
- 5 "Of all these three kinds of delight (in the agreeable, the beautiful, and the good), that of taste in the beautiful may be said to be the one and only disinterested and free delight; for, with it, no interest, whether of sense or reason extorts approval." Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1982, p.49.
- 6 Mikhaïl Bakhtin, "Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art," in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M.M.Bakhtin*, edited by Michael Hoquist and Vadim Liapunov, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1990.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p.306.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p.307.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p.307.

- 10 Félix Guattari, *L'Inconscient machinique*, Recherche, Paris, 1979.
- 11 See the role of dreams in the mythical cartographies of Australian Aborigines. Barbara Glocewski, *Les Rêveurs du désert*, Plon, Paris, 1989.
- 12 For a re-examination of hypnosis and suggestion, see Léon Chertok and Isabelle Stengers, *A Critique of Psychoanalytic Reason: Hypnosis as a Scientific Problem from Lavoisier to Lacan*, trans. Martha N Evans, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1992.
- 13 Louis Hjelmslev, *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language*, trans. Francis J. Whitfield, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1969); *Language: an introduction*, Wisconsin University Press, Madison, 1970; *Essais linguistiques*, Minuit, Paris, 1971; *Nouveaux Essais*, PUF, Paris, 1985.