SOFT SUBVERSIONS

TEXTS AND INTERVIEWS 1977-1985

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ENTERING THE POST-MEDIA ERA

By what means can we hope to accelerate the arrival of what I have called the Post-Media Era? What theoretical and pragmatic conditions can facilitate an awareness of the “reactional” character of the present wave of conservatism, which I don’t believe is a necessary evolution of developed societies?

If “organized minorities” are to become the laboratories of thought and experimentation for future forms of subjectivation, how can they structure themselves, and ally themselves with more traditional forms of organization (parties, unions, leftist groups) to avoid the isolation and repression that threatens them, while at the same time preserving their independence and specific traits? The same question holds true for the risks they run of being co-opted by the state.

Is it possible to envision a proliferation of “minority becomings,” capable of diversifying the factors of subjective autonomy and economic self-management within the social field? Are they, in any case, compatible with modern systems of production and circulation that seem to call for ever more integration and concentration in their decision-making procedures?

Rethinking all the ways that subjectivity is produced requires redefining the unconscious from outside the confining frames of psychoanalysis. The unconscious should no longer be reducible solely in terms of intrapsychic entities or the linguistic signifier,
since it must also engage diverse semiotic and pragmatic dimensions that have to do with a multiplicity of existential territories, machinic systems and incorporeal universes. I called it schizoa
tytic to mark it off from the psychoanalytic unconscious—which, in my opinion, is far too anchored to personological ego formations, transference and identifications, not to mention the way it is irremediably ballasted by fixed and psychogenetic conceptions regarding instinctual objects. Yet I did not intend to tie it down exclusively to psychoses. Rather, I wished to open it to a maximum variety of schizesses, like love, childhood, art, etc. As opposed to Freudian complexes, schizoaanalytic arrangements are the sites of both internal transformations and transferences between preper
donal levels (like those Freud describes in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, for example) and the postpersonal levels that can be globally assigned to the media-driven world, extending the notion of media to every system of communication, displacement and exchange. From this perspective, the unconscious would become “transversalist,” by virtue of the skill with which it traverses the most diverse orders derived from abstract and singular machines, while not clinging to any specific substance of expression, and resisting universals and structuralist mathemes.

Thus, the ego entity, responsible for the essence of the subject and for a person’s real and imaginary actions, is only considered as the more or less transitory intersection of arrangements of enuncia
tion varying in size, nature and duration. (Although not present literally, the same inspiration can be found in animist cartographies of subjectivity.)

Analysis must radically change attempts to solve tensions and conflicts that are already “programmed into” the individuated psyche through transference and interpretation. Rather, it will conceive of and transfer enunciations so as to surmount the ever-increasing societal discrepancies, between (a) representations and modes of
perception and sensibility having to do with the body, sexuality, social, physical and ecological environments, and with diverse figures of alterity and finitude, shaped by technico-scientific mutations, particularly through information, electronics and images; and (b) social and institutional structures, juridical and regulatory systems, state apparatuses, moral, religious and esthetic norms, etc., which, behind an apparent continuity, are really threatened and sapped from the inside out by deterritorializing tensions from preceding molecular registers, causing every evolutionary process to stop short, to become more and more molar, to hold on to the most obsolete forms, even to the detriment of functional efficiency.

Unlike the transcendental subject of philosophical tradition (the-closed-in-on-itself monad that structuralists claim to have opened to alterity solely by virtue of the linguistic signifier), pragmatic enunciative arrangements escape in all directions. Their subjective formations, at the intersections of heterogeneous components, cannot be reduced to a single semiotic entity. For example, the nature of economic subjectivity cannot be equated to aesthetic subjectivity: the quality of the Oedipus complex of a well brought-up little boy from New York’s Upper East Side is going to be entirely different from that of the initiation into the socius of a pivate from a Brazilian favela.

The elucidation of the internal composition of various “arrangements,” and their reciprocal relationships imply two sorts of logic: 1) those relating to discursive ensembles that determine the relationships between fluxes and machinic systems endo-referring to different types of energetico-spatiotemporal coordinates; 2) those relating to non-discursive organless bodies that determine the relationships between existential territories and endo-referring incorporeal universes.

The introduction into analysis of concepts like endo-reference or auto-organization does not imply a departure from the ordinary
fields of scientific rationality, but a break from scientific causalism. For example, one considers that a schizoanalytic map is not “second” in relation to the existential territories it presents; one cannot even say, properly speaking, that they represent them, because it is the map that engenders the territories.

A related question: does not every esthetic production depend in one way or another on this kind of mapping, which doesn’t need any theory of sublimated drives? As soon as unconscious subjectivity is envisaged from the perspective of the heterogeneity of its components, its multiform productivity, its micropolitical intentionality, its tension toward the future instead of its fixations on past stratifications, the focal point of analysis will be systematically displaced from statements and semiotic links toward enunciatory instances. Rather than the analysis of fixed discursive elements, one considers the constituent conditions of the “giver.” There will be no point any more chasing nonsense and paradigmatic ramblings in order to pin them down, like butterflies, on interpretive or structuralist grids. Singularities of desire, those unnameable residues of meaning that psychoanalysts thought they could repertory as part-objects—for years they have gone into such arm-waving ecstasies—will no longer be accepted as the limits of analytical efficiency but will be considered as potential for processual boosts.

For instance, rather than putting emphasis on a symbolic castration lived as post-Oedipian submission, the emphasis will be put on “contingent choices” circumscribing and giving existential consistency to new pragmatic fields. Investigations must give special attention to the singular virtues of semiotic links that support such choices (ritournelles, facial features, becoming-animals, etc.). In parallel to their semiotic functions of signification and designation, they develop an existential function that catalyzes new universes of reference.

Behind the relative non-sense of failed statements, there is no longer a hidden meaning that schizoanalytical pragmatics will force
out into the open, nor some latent drive that it will try to liberate. It will focus on unfolding innumerable incorporeal, indivisible materials that, as the experience of desire has taught us, are capable of carrying us far beyond ourselves and far beyond territorial encirclements, towards unexpected, unheard-of universes of possibility. Consequently, the active a-signifying processes of existential singularity will be substituted for the passive insignificance that is the preferred object of hermeneutics.

These high intensity, non-discursive materials, woven into subjective arrangements, only continue to exist by continually deterritorializing themselves into actual and virtual “projectuality,” and reterritorializing within real and potential strata such that they can be considered as so many ethico-political options. Every site of desire or reason is within reach of our hands, our wills, our individual and collective choices... But, in the capitalistic order of things—that is to say the monotheistic, mono-energy-istic, monosignifying, mono-libidinal, in short, a radically disenchanted order of things—nothing can evolve unless everything else remains in place. Subjective productions (“subjectivities”) are obliged to submit to the axioms of equilibrium, equivalence, constancy, eternity... So, what’s left for us to reach for? How can we hold on to a lust for life, for creation, or find a reason to die for other horizons?

When everything becomes equivalent to everything else, the only things that count are the ugly compulsions for the abstract accumulation of power over people for various kinds of bonds, and the pitiful exaltation of specular prestige. Under such gloomy conditions, singularity and finitude are necessarily considered scandalous, while “incarnation” and death are experienced as sins rather than part of the rhythms of life and the cosmos. I am not advocating a return to Oriental wisdom, which can carry with it the worst sorts of resignation. Nor a rejection of capitalism’s great equivalents—energy, libido, information—without cautiously or
carefully experimenting with alternatives. Even capital can be reconverted into a dependable instrument of economic writing. All it takes is reinventing its usage, not in a dogmatic and programmatic manner, but through the creation of other "existential chemistries," open to all the recompositions and transmutations of these "singularity salts" whose secret arts and analysis can deliver up.

Analysis again. But where? How? Well, everywhere possible. Where unskirtable contradictions come to the surface. Where disturbing breaches of meaning trip us up amidst daily banalities, impossible yet perfectly viable loves, all kinds of constructivist passions that mine the edifices of morbid rationality... It can be individual, for those who tend to lead their lives as if it were a work of art; dual in all possible ways, including, why not, a psychoanalytic couch, as long as it has been dusted off; multiple, through group, network, institutional, and collective practices; and finally, micropolitical by virtue of other social practices, other forms of auto-valorizations and militant actions, leading, through a systematic decentering of social desire, to soft subversions and imperceptible revolutions that will eventually change the face of the world, making it happier. Let's face it: it is long overdue.