Claire Colebrook

Deleuze and the Meaning of Life

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Contents

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Introduction

The Problem of Vitalism: Active/Passive

Vitalism in its narrow sense might be identified with a handful of relatively recent names: Henri Bergson, Raymond Ruyer, William James; and a broader tendency in twentieth-century thought to criticize the ways in which systems, such as language or logic, have their origin in animating life but then come to operate independently of the thought and sense that is their condition of emergence. This modern version of vitalism would be a re-articulation and complication of an age-old problem of the relation between *praxis* and *techne*, between a living body whose movement furthers its own life, and a perverse extension of those technical movements into systems that *ought* to be enhancing but that may also develop an alienating, monstrous and autonomous life of their own. Vitalism is at once the most recent of problems, concerned with how we explain life's capacity *not* to flourish, not to maximize its potential, and also an essentially regressive problem: for the very concept of a life that might fall into alienation threatens to take a whole series of developments and technologies and place them as secondary or parasitic to an original and generating fecundity that we regard as belied or lost by technical extensions. Such technical extensions and alienations need not be confined to the relation between man and machine but are often diagnosed within man himself. Vitalism is not just the problem of the human being's relation to life (whether or not he is alienated from the order of the living), for it also concerns the structure of the human being itself and the relation among its powers.

Henri Bergson criticized the intellect's capacity to manage the world through concepts that reduce difference for the sake of efficiency, a capacity that then becomes life-denying when the intellect turns these necessary reifying manoeuvres on itself (Bergson 1931). William James, similarly, thought that concepts were originally formed to further our living being

but could, once they fell into unthinking over-use, become deadening structures that precluded us from feeling life in its complex intensity:

> No abstract concept can be a valid substitute for concrete reality except with reference to a particular interest in the conceiver. The interest of theoretic rationality, the relief of identification, is but one of a thousand purposes. When others rear their heads, it must pack up its little bundle and retire till its turn recurs. (James 1896, 70)

Raymond Ruyer, reacting against cybernetics and other forms of mechanistic determination of the living being, insisted on the distinction between the logic we impose on an event after its completion, and the original orientation which might have taken any number of paths precisely because it was not ordered from one part to another but operates with a meaningful sense of the whole (Ruyer 1954). James, Ruyer and Bergson did not simply advocate a return to living origins and a retreat from all forms of articulation; on the contrary, they were all concerned with the ways in which a short-term attention to speed – developing *techne* for efficiency – would ultimately lead to an absence of any real future. It is because the organism wishes to master itself and its world – to move quickly through its world without stalling to consider all the complexities and differences – that it will develop concepts and means for speeding up motion, even if these same concepts will ultimately render it close to immobile:

> Our reason, incorrigibly presumptuous, imagines itself possessed, by right of birth or by right of conquest, innate or acquired, of all the essential elements of the knowledge of truth. Even where it confesses that it does not know the object presented to it, it believes that its ignorance consists only in not knowing which one of its time-honoured categories suits the new object. In what drawer, ready to open, shall we put it? In what garment, already cut, shall we clothe it? Is it this, or that, or the other thing? And 'this,' and 'that,' and 'the other thing' are always already something already conceived, already known. The idea that for a new object we might have to create a new concept, perhaps a new method of thinking, is deeply repugnant to us. The history of philosophy is there, however, and shows us the eternal conflict of systems, the impossibility of satisfactorily getting the real into the ready-made garments of our ready-made concepts, the necessity of making to measure. But, rather than go to this extremity, our reason prefers to announce once for all, with a proud modesty, that it has to do only with the relative, and that the

> absolute is not in its province. This preliminary declaration enables it to apply its habitual method of thought without any scruple, and thus under pretense that it does not touch the absolute, to make absolute judgments upon everything . . . this belief is natural to the human intellect, always engaged as it is in determining under what former heading it shall catalogue any new object; and it may be said that, in a certain sense, we are all born Platonists. (Bergson 1913, 48–9)

Ruyer's insistence on 'absolute survey', Bergson's emphasis on durations beyond those of organic efficiency, and James's insistence on the duty to believe: all of these vitalist imperatives are not simply laments regarding the living body's fall into mechanism. They do not return the living body to its original contact with life but suggest that it is the organism's attention to self-maintenance that ultimately leads to a form of rigid and life-denying self-enclosure.

The organism can only live if it surpasses itself, for it is precisely its enslavement to its own survival that precludes it from having a future. It is here that we need to mark the distinction between a contemporary vitalism that is overwhelmingly organic and committed to *meaning* and a wilder vitalism that considers life beyond the membrane of the organism. To chart this distinction we can note that the work of Gilles Deleuze has been read both as a way of tying theory and philosophy back to living systems *and* as a way of finally taking thought beyond the borders of the organism. Current attention to various notions of 'extended mind' (Logan 2007;[1] Clark 2008[2]), embodied mind,[3] the global brain, autopoiesis and living systems – along with a turn back to phenomenology and a Heidegger of 'being-in-the-world'[4] – are explicitly critical of the ways in which intellectual and cognitive procedures preclude us from realizing that in the beginning life is essentially practical; there is no world in general, only the world as it is *meant* by this or that living being, a being who is nothing more than its capacities to adapt to its milieu. Against such an attention to the bounded organism and the meaning it makes of its world, Deleuze drew on a vitalist tradition that put sense before and beyond meaning, and before and beyond the organism. Whereas meaning has come to be defined as the world as it is given in terms of an organism's capacities or perception (where perceptions are governed by the agent's interests), sense is impersonal, neutral, sterile and inorganic. Indeed, there are organisms – or systems of relatively stable relations – because of sense, which is the potentiality for relations that exceeds and transcends any lived meaning. There is not an originally bounded body coupled to a world that is always a world given as lived

and meant; the organism is only possible because of events of sense – or pre-personal and nomadic singularities. It is true that a body and world are coupled and effected through certain relations, such as eating, moving, retreating, marking and communication; an organism is this bordered structure of actions in relation to possible perturbances, or what might be referred to as a range of affordances.[5] But an organism is only possible because of the pure sense of events; it is because of a pure event, not yet actualized in any body, that the border forms between an inside and an outside (Simondon 1989). It is this inorganic and disembodied sense that makes a range of action is possible (Ruyer 1954), enabling a distinction between explosive force and matter to be differentiated: 'it is probable that life tended at the beginning to compass at one and the same time both the manufacture of the explosive and the explosion by which it is utilized' (Bergson 1913, 115).

In *Logic of Sense* Deleuze criticized Husserlian phenomenology for explaining genesis and subjects from the lived, when what needs to be grasped is the power of the lived – what it is *to live* – before and beyond living beings. Organisms are possible because they actualize or incarnate sense, and sense is a pure potentiality. Deleuze cites the event of a battle as an exemplary incorporeal event. In any one battle a body can take its actual part in the play of forces that unfold in chronological time, but it is also possible to think of the sense of battle as such: that there is a warring of forces, such that a battle is never located in any body or at any point, and that any specific battle is only possible because there is a potentiality for warring forces (a physical possibility) and the *sense* of battle that enables that warring of forces to take place as an identifiable event, a unity that subsists and insists.

We can understand the current and self-proclaimed turn to vitalism in two senses: first, as a continuation of a tradition going back as far as Plato that would be critical of any external or transcendent norm imposed upon life. This perennial vitalism would always be critical of a simply accepted and unquestioned privileged model or figure, whether that be the Idea in Plato (which can function both as a tool for resisting the simple acceptance of terms *and* as yet one more term that allows thinking to remain within its own limits) or, as in Henri Bergson, the assertion of the dynamism of spirit over the seductive inertia of matter. Second, and with a greater degree of complexity, there would be a vitalism of a quite specific and narrow nature that would consist of positing, in addition to life as it is given, some mysterious extra principle or mystical life force – an irreducible spirituality that would be required to explain the complexity of the world as it is. When

vitalism is used as a pejorative it is usually this second (often mystical, anti-materialist and anti-scientific sense) that is operative. For the most part this book is about vitalism in the first sense. This is vitalism not as a posited substance or force, but vitalism as a problem, or imperative that appears to have mobilized philosophical, theoretical and literary contretemps. That is, following Nietzsche we might ask what the strange nature of life is such that it posits a world other than life, a world that accuses life?[6] At the same time, and again following Nietzsche, if such a thought of a world other than the lived is possible, what does this tell us about the living? In this second sense, vitalism returns already formed models and normative images back to their generating source, but at the same time confronts a potential for self-annihilation within generating life 'itself'.

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari argue for a tradition of passive vitalism (beginning with Leibniz and extending to Ruyer) which counters the dominant tradition of vitalism, which runs from Kant to Claude Bernard:

> Vitalism has always had two possible interpretations: that of an Idea that acts, but is not – that acts therefore only from the point of view of an external cerebral knowledge (from Kant to Claude Bernard); or that of a force that is but does not act – that is therefore a pure internal awareness (from Leibniz to Ruyer). If the second interpretation seems to us to be imperative it is because the contraction that preserves is always in a state of detachment in relation to action or even to movement and appears as a pure contemplation without knowledge. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 213)

A number of manoeuvres are executed in this paragraph from this relatively late work of Deleuze and Guattari's corpus. A terrain is laid out that is at once historical and tactical, with proper names listed to mark out two possibilities for thinking. The status of binary oppositions and philosophical history is complex in Deleuze and Guattari's work. If it is possible to grant proper names to these two ways of thinking about life – Kant/Bernard on the one hand, Leibniz/Ruyer on the other – then this opens a series of problems, rather than an easy way of dismissing a certain strand in the history of philosophy, or of establishing a properly Deleuzian genealogy.

First, Deleuze and Guattari appear to be quite capable, in one and the same corpus, if not one and the same sentence, of violating the principle of non-contradiction. In *What is Philosophy?* they place architecture and monument as the first of the arts, and as an originary mode of bodily

individuation, while in *A Thousand Plateaus* they insist on the secondary and diverting nature of monument, focusing instead on music and chromaticism (along with metallurgy, strangely enough) as the proper phenomenon from which to intuit life as such. So if Kant is contrasted unfavourably with Leibniz in *What is Philosophy?* and *Difference and Repetition,* he is nevertheless the means through which Deleuze and Guattari produce *Anti-Oedipus*, with its primary method being an interrogation of the syntheses that organize the logic of life, and the paralogisms that lead thought to betray its own powers of organization. Kant is both the opening of thought to its own internal fractures and the thinker who pre-supposed good will and a common sense. Monument is at once the beginning of all art, in its power to allow matters to stand alone, and the very antithesis of art which should properly be a process of variation and a putting into play of matter's dynamic potentialities. Perhaps Deleuze and Guattari's most important divided loyalty is directed to the human species: the human is the primary delusion of transcendence, the grounding substance that gives the illusion of a being that subtends becoming; the human is also, however, that strange bearer of a brain that will create images not only of living beings but of life as such, time in its pure state and perhaps – one day – thought without an image. We can, therefore, create oppositions in such a manner that the potential to think will be confronted with its own internal contradictions: Kant *or* Leibniz, a materialism of intensities *or* an affirmation of sense as an incorporeal surface, an attention to universal history *or* the intuition of time in its pure state, a criticism of Oedipal man in favour of becoming *or* a privileging of the power of absolute survey that reaches its zenith in the conceptual creations of philosophy, vitalism and imperceptibility *or* the machines of cinema.

At first glance such seeming contradictions or tensions might indicate a split in the Deleuzian or Deleuzo-Guattarian corpus, and it is no accident that readings, extensions and appropriations of Deleuze have been divided between those, such as DeLanda and Protevi who find a materialist methodology of bodies in his work and others, ranging from the dismissive readings of Alain Badiou and Peter Hallward to the positive focus on universals and the virtual in writers like Olkowski, Williams and Lecercle. Such bifurcating paths from a body of work are not new either in the history of philosophy or the history of texts in general; there is an analytic Kant and Husserl grounded in formalism and logic, and a 'continental' version of the same proper names, focusing on Husserl's opening of transcendental questions beyond the human, or the Kantian sublime that takes philosophy beyond theory to what can be felt but not cognized. Where Deleuze's work is different

is in his own confrontation with these two tendencies, which are not accidental qualities of a body of work that might otherwise have been expressed in a coherent and unified manner. Deleuze's philosophy of life is necessarily, avowedly and manifestly composed along a line of internal incoherence: philosophy *must,* if it is philosophical, think difference, even if difference is that which cannot be thought. Such an impossibility is not confined to philosophy and has to do with the very positivity of life.

A living being, as a *being*, must have its own membrane or border and a milieu; but as living must also be open to a life that can never be reduced to any single *form.* A living philosopher must at once work within a history of proper names, clichés, concepts and figures, while at the same time – if they are to think – recognize something like a problem that has enabled and exceeded any body of work that has given it expression. The use of proper names cannot, then, be negotiated by lining up those in error against those who have grasped life as it properly is, just as it makes little sense to simply affirm idealism against materialism, linguistic conditions against literalism, or the affirmation of vital forces against a primary occultation, dissembling or distance. Instead one needs to consider what a living being is such that it is caught in such oppositions. An active vitalism has been the proper mode of traditional philosophy: a tracing back of any system, position, dogma or truth claim to the conditions of its genesis, never accepting a truth without also grasping its coming into being. A passive vitalism, by contrast, is a hyper-philosophy or *theory* (if we take theory to be an acceptance of the distance or relation that necessarily accompanies any perception or looking). While accepting that all positions, figures and forms must have emerged from life, passive vitalism also confronts a malevolence, stupidity, self-mutilation and opacity that thought can never incorporate or master.

A philosophical treatment of an opposition, intractability or – in Kant's terms – amphiboly does not simply assert itself but also accounts for the logic of its opponent. The transcendental gesture is empowered not only by asserting itself but also identifying and delimiting the reason of its seeming antagonist. By contrast, a passive vitalism is at one and the same time committed to intuiting the emergence of the milieu in which thought takes place while also confronting the thousand other plateaus that parse life through a different logic. The working hypothesis of this book is that the very idea of passive vitalism presents us with a new way of approaching what it is to think. For vitalism is at once an imperative to account for the dynamic emergence of forms, ideas, sense and structures, while the acknowledgment of passivity requires an attention to that which cannot be generated from within thought itself. This doubleness is expressed through Deleuze

and Deleuze and Guattari's writings in a number of fractures: every proper name deployed is at once a path to true thinking and a symptom. This is apparent when Deleuze targets certain philosophical figures as capturing a blockage or inertia in thinking: Kant's commitment to good will and propriety, Hegel's privileging of the negative and irony over humour and positive difference, Freud's Oedipalization of desire, and Derrida's failure to go beyond writing as a transcendental condition. These very figures also – and precisely where they seem to have lacked vitality and fallen into inertia – disclose the power of thought's self-fracturing.

Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* is a Kantian critique complete with three syntheses: legitimate and illegitimate uses of the transcendental syntheses, paralogisms, and a narrated passage from posited conditions of social machines to a practical imperative to couple vitalism with experience, rather than the received model of death. The same critical mobilization applies to Hegel and Freud, whose articulation of the problems of difference and desire are precisely the means by which Deleuze and Guattari will recognize the limits of philosophy. We might pause, then, to approach a way of thinking about a philosopher in general through Deleuze's use of 'isms'. In his book on Francis Bacon, Deleuze describes 'Cézannism' as a problem: how might the painter, after Cézanne, confront the relation between figure and ground? An 'ism' allows a problem to be generated from a proper name, for if we want to understand an event we do not – following Aristotle – ask what that being is for, or what it does; we aim to intuit the problem to which it was a response. When Deleuze wrote *Bergsonism* it was less a manifesto and more an opening up of the problem that a philosopher of the past presents to the present: how can there be a dissecting intuition of experience's clumsy composites that is also an attempt to consider *one* life from which different tendencies spring forth. It was precisely where Bergson appeared to have stopped thinking – in his dismissal of cinema as an improper image of a mechanistic thinking – that Deleuze would become truly post-Bergsonian. As I will argue later, it was in Bergson's three most distinctive ideas – the criticism of thought as an image-machine, his problematization of intensive quantities, and his trajectory towards spiritualism – that Deleuzian opposition was at its most creative. So, we might say provisionally that when Deleuze cites a proper name it is not so much to invoke a system or body of truths as to regain a problem, a difference or distinction. This is in accord with passive vitalism: every idea, figure, proper name or event is strangely doubled, at once evidence of an expression of life and yet, in its very formation, also a path taken (an actualization) at the expense of other potentials.

Bergson regarded the intellect, with its camera-like tendency to picture the world in discrete and manageable units, as symptomatic of a double tendency in life. In order to make its way in the world, and to extend beyond the range of animal instinct that would achieve its ends by the quickest means possible (Bergson 1913, 120), the intellect must diminish the degree to which it attends to difference and complexity: 'Consciousness in man is pre-eminently intellect. It might have been – it ought, so it seems, to have been also – intuition. Intuition and intellect represent two opposite directions of the work of consciousness: intuition goes in the very direction of life, intellect goes in the inverse direction, and thus finds itself naturally in accord with matter. A complete and perfect humanity would be that in which these two forms of conscious activity should attain their full development. '. . . In the humanity of which we are a part, intuition is, in fact, almost completely sacrificed to intellect' (Bergson 1913, 267). By reducing the world to an extended matter of calculable units – where all potentiality is already given – the intellect can at once achieve *more* than instinct by extending its range beyond the present towards a vast, quantified, predictable and managed future, while also reifying its own tendencies by reducing mind to nothing more than a machine for ordering differences of degree. The intellect comes to regard itself as a quantifiable and manipulable entity, and therefore imagines its perception of the world as a series of snapshots that it must tie together in order to form a continuous reality. Against this idea of mind as cinematic machine, Bergson will insist upon a perception which, prior to the bifurcation between intellect and instinct, had not yet determined the world in advance through some proto-machinic technology of fixed concepts, discrete units and comparable quantities. Indeed, in order for mind to discover its proper power, it needs to return, in a vitalist manner, to the very power *to quantify, to conceptualize or to reify* that now impedes its further creative evolution.

If mind is now a calculating power that perceives the world as so many discrete and manipulable substances, this is because perception has the potential to extend itself beyond being affected and can, through the creation of concepts, determine the world in advance according to its own interests. For Bergson it is not the case that there is a simple and crude distinction between concept-creating minds on the one hand and then immediately affected animals on the other. Rather, it is the tendency in life towards the creation of concepts that accounts for the emergence of mind; there are minds because there are concepts, and there can be concepts because in plants, animals and humans life directs itself towards selecting some pathways rather than others. It is that same tendency for selection

that will allow for mind to become something other than mere intellect. The human is an effect of the creative process of mind, not its ground. In perceiving the present world in terms of already formed and determined categories, mind creates itself as a reduction of the world to a stable and unchanging matter, while constituting itself as something like an instrument or camera. Why mind's perception of itself as an image-machine is so unfortunate, for Bergson, is that it precludes the extension of the power of conceptualization and imaging beyond the camera form. Rather than taking snapshots of reality, and rather than regarding the mind as a machine for images that encounters a field to be envisioned, mind might be able to be affected by the durations of a world not reducible to fixed quantities. This would require mind not to be a thing encountering other things, but a power for affectation so subtle and discriminating that it not only abandoned the sense of itself as static camera, but also expanded its creativity to produce a concept for each affectation, each event, each pulsation of difference.

The criticism of mind as camera does not occur in Bergson's corpus as an infelicitous metaphor that might be remedied by a more sympathetic account of modern machinery, for what Bergson objects to is not the rudimentary nature of the cinematic machine but the idea of mind as machinic per se, as possessed of a system that determines in advance how it will encounter the world, while also determining the world in terms of an imposed duration. Deleuze does seem to grant this criticism some scope in *Difference and Repetition* and elsewhere when he insists on opening thinking to powers of difference beyond the concept and when he appeals to an analogical language that would not only encounter the world's intensities but would somehow allow those durations to be expressed in works of art. But it is precisely the problem that led Bergson to oppose the camera that also leads Deleuze to continually employ the notion of the machine (including the camera), and this for several reasons.

If it is the case, as Bergson had noted, that mind's capacity to think of itself as a camera follows from the very creative power that the camera metaphor belies, then we cannot simply dismiss mind's technological or machinic capacity. Bergson himself is not arguing for a retreat to a power of perception before the creation of the intellect (in distinction from the animal); rather, the very power that enabled the world to reduce the world to discrete units, and to imagine the mind as one thing among other things, needs to move from technological making (in terms of a stable and predictive system) to a form of creation liberated from production. If mind could think without regard for what it might store, quantify and maximize then its

affectations would be more subtle and its sense of itself less stultifying. Deleuze accepts the structure of this problem and the strange doubleness it brings in train. It is one and the same *problem* that leads Bergson to reject, and Deleuze to select, the appropriate figure of mind as machine.

For Bergson, mind cannot be considered as a machine because mind is not a thing; it is not a snap-shot camera that pictures the world or, at least, it should not be reduced to that capacity. Insofar as mind is a living power or creative tendency – a capacity to create images in relation to what is not itself – mind has a higher degree of plasticity than any isolable or predicable object. It is this difference of degree which, if pushed beyond the figure of mind as machine, would open to a difference in kind: the intellect would not be a more efficient form of energy-gaining than instinct, for it would abandon the logic of efficiency and quantities and become an intuitive power capable of discerning subtleties and differences regardless of their value in an already given economy of life-management.

All life, according to Bergson and to Deleuze after him, can be considered as a form of perception or 'imaging' where there is not one being that apprehends or represents another being, but two vectors of creativity where one potential for differentiation encounters another and from that potential forms a relatively stable tendency or manner. The intellect is on the one hand a deterritorialization of the organism, for it creates a series of concepts, quantifications, units and measures – including a uniform clock time and a number system – that will allow it to extend its range of action and movement beyond the immediate present, and beyond its own life. On the other hand, the organism is also a *re*territorialization that folds back upon itself, quantifies and measures itself. For Bergson, the study of mind has followed the logic of the physical sciences rather than taking its lead from an understanding of the life from which physics was generated. Recent anti-Cartesian approaches to the mind and certain ways of reading Deleuze have intensified this criticism of the reification of mind and have suggested a return or retrieval of the dynamism from which mind and world emerged. Deleuze (2004c) and Deleuze and Guattari (1994), by contrast, use the concept of machine to move towards a 'higher deterritorialization', which would not be a displacement of the physical machine and technology in order to regain an original creativity but a more radical, extreme and (most importantly) non-organic extension. Deleuze and Guattari accept Bergson's criticism that the creation of a conceptual apparatus or machine will have the effect of de-humanizing and possibly dissolving the tendencies of the intellect beyond the human form, but they embrace this possibility positively, and this leads them to see the de-humanizing, de-spiritualizing and

non-organic machine not as the *proper* extension of life but as a 'power of the false' or an impropriety that is at once vital, even if it problematizes the very idea of life and life's ownness.

For Bergson the technology of the intellect, its capacity to create concepts, numbers, systems and clock-time, creates a range of liberation from the organism's immediate economy. It is through the intellect that the sensory-motor apparatus can be freed from the immediacy of need, and can expend unprofitable energy in the short term – creating everything from tools to concepts – in order to become more efficient, at least at the level of energy-gathering, in the longer term. For Bergson the intellect's proper realization would occur with its self-surpassing: the very means deployed by life to become more efficient would be released from the economy and logic of efficiency. Mind could create concepts so nuanced that it would be able to intuit other durations, beyond that of its own organic time, and thereby open human organic time to a spirituality beyond need and acquisition. Here, then, the intellect becomes hyper- or super-human, extending the tendency that differentiated it from animal instinct beyond increased efficiency.

For the most part the actualization of life's potentiality covers over or disguises the very creativity, difference or desire that makes life possible; certain events that are thoroughly contingent *and seemingly opposed to life* nevertheless enable an intuition of life itself. Capitalism, for example, might not only have never taken the full and explicit form that it has today, it is also a tendency that social machines have generally found means to resist or 'ward off'. However, when capitalism is finally actualized it allows us to read all previous social machines according to their true logic of desire, and this is so even if capitalism is also more perverse, life-denying and monstrous than any previous social machine. The same applies in this history of knowledge to the differential calculus, which is at once an event within systems of mathematics and grounded in certain problems, at the same time as – beyond mathematics – it discloses something of the logic of life in general. That logic is the logic of the differential: a potentiality only discloses its most profound power when it encounters a counter-tendency of perversion, corruption, dissimulation and *non-actualization*. We will examine the powers of capitalism and differential calculus more fully later, but for now we can say that it is only when the power of imaging alienates itself or frees itself from the organism and sensory motor apparatus that one can recognize that life, precisely insofar as it is organic and embodied, possesses a tendency towards disorganization (becoming a body without organs) and dis-embodiment (become a virtual power liberated from any

body whatever). That is to say, life has a power of creativity as organization that relies essentially on disorder and death. That power is revealed at those moments when life appears to be countered by an opposing and life-denying opposite: technology, capitalism, quantification.

Such an account might appear at first to be Hegelian: it is only when life or spirit loses itself and alienates itself that it can realize itself as a power for becoming-other or for self-negation; it may then return to itself, having recognized all *seeming negativity* as the condition for any positivity. But it is precisely the role that Deleuze gives to the camera, to machines, and to art more generally, that allows us to discern a distinction from such a form of Hegelianism (even if we acknowledge that Deleuze is not simply opposed to, or other than, Hegel's logic of the negative).[7] As a comment on Deleuze (2004c) and Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) corpus we can note that at all those moments when the logic of 'life itself' is approached it is the work of art that provides the privileged example: this is not because some modes of existence are deemed to be exemplary, or deemed to be life in its proper actualization. On the contrary, it is the impropriety or inappropriability that marks the work of art as evidence of life's power for non-actualization. Consider the contrast with Hegel, for whom the work of art that appears as a concrete form should, once spirit recognizes itself as that which can differ from itself and actualize itself, wither away; spirit will no longer require actualized and external manifestations, becoming a power unto itself released from alienation.[8] This also applies to the Hegelian logic of the state which will, at the end of history, not be experienced as imposed on my rational life but will appear as reason's ultimate expression. In this regard current models of a thoroughly immanent community with no end or model outside humanity's own self-making power are thoroughly Hegelian. Deleuze regards the externalized or deterritorialized extensions of life as irreducible, as having a potentiality for creating further relations that cannot be returned, recognized or mastered, such that we might refer to his philosophy as a form of Hegelianism without sublation.

Once we accept an essential production of a difference that does not *extend* a power but creates a counter-power that cannot be incorporated, then life is fractured from within. This is primarily what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'higher deterritorialization' – not extension of a tendency by degrees, but the furthering of a power to create a difference in kind. Language may, as current evolutionary psychology and cognitive archaeology insist, have its origin in furthering the organism's equilibrium.[9] But language may also develop as a *techne* and evolve into a machine in its own right, such that one might ask just what organic benefit there is to most

of the linguistic noise – from avant-garde poetry to twittering – that surrounds us. While there has been a series of attempts to liberate art from instrumental reason and function, this has usually taken the form of an active vitalism: human beings fall into a machinic efficiency, and it is art that awakens them yet once more to their concept-forming or world-forming power. Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'higher deterritorialization' operates in the other direction, making art less inhuman, more machinic. It is when the material of art – the intensities of paint itself, sound vibrations, spatial relations – are distanced to the maximum degree from the human sensory motor apparatuses that something like a life itself (beyond the organism) can be released. Art is not, then, a form of externalization that allows life or spirit to recognize itself as an expressive power; on the contrary, as the example of the camera demonstrates, machines operate according to a logic of counter-actualization, and this is no less true of the machine of the desiring human body as it is of works of art. If the organs of the body actualize pure potentials of what it is 'to see' or 'to encounter light', then machines can release the organic potential from the body. The eye is already a seeing-machine. If the eye is, in part, an organ of the body this is insofar as it acts as an extending *techne* or supplement: an addition that allows the organism to maintain its bounded, self-maintaining and autopoietic unity (Noë 2005). But such an extension, or deterritorialization, is possible only if a potentiality is split or diverges from itself. The organic eye of the sensory motor apparatus can only proceed and be efficient with a high degree of *not* seeing, both in terms of editing out input and of fabricating or fabulating what is not perceived. The eye does not simply receive input (for it edits and supplements, such that it is always a brain–eye, and then a brain–hand–eye that will see the world in terms of possible actions and motilities). The eye's potential for extending the organism relies also on a certain diminution, as the organism is oriented towards efficiency and self-maintenance. The eye is a technology. As an efficient organ folded around the practice-oriented organism the eye determines, in advance, the quality and quantity of its encounters, and would require something like a violent threshold to be crossed if its logic were to be significantly recalibrated.

One might say, provisionally, that such a violation is what Deleuze tries to find in the work of art, but this requires considering a second sense of *techne*, not as an efficient and system-oriented extension, but as a system tending towards detachment from the origin in Simondon's sense. For Simondon there are two tendencies in technological development. One extends the original function – so that one might entirely rework the design

of an object as long as it fulfilled the same purpose: there is little material or machinic relation between a personal transistor radio and an MP3 player even though they both allow listening to music while running; the other tendency is that of a machinic autonomy, released from function. It is here that cinema – only in its perversion or corruption, or in its ideal genetic element – releases the second sense of *techne* as desiring machine rather than social machine, as an element of unbinding, splitting or dissolution rather than order, equilibrium and actualization. Cinema both extends the eye – as in forms of documentary or realism that expand the organism's range of possible action through greater knowledge and familiarity – and also destroys the eye as organ: this occurs when the potential for the eye is detached from an organic time of possibility, tending towards a counter-actualizing time of potentiality. There is, in both *Anti-Oedipus*'s account of the genesis of capitalism, and in Deleuze's two cinema volumes, a narrative or a temporal trajectory which is at once irreversibly linear and creative and disclosive of a technical or machinic potentiality that will fracture the organism's active vitalism of self-maintenance. Cinema has its own development or forward movement, eventually freeing the linking of images from the mapping of movement. Capitalism, also, is always a power for free exchange without ground or centre, but that potentiality for relations takes time to liberate itself from the structures of the social and human organism, and especially from its final oedipal mode of subjection to structure per se. It is because modern oedipal capitalism no longer has an explicit centre or foundation that 'man' becomes a private being who no longer subjects himself to anything other than the pure fact *that there must be law,* rather than a specified subjection to a transcendent power. It is precisely in modern capitalism, though, that cinema and social machines find the potential for higher deterritorialization. Once cinema takes money as its object – as in the films of Fellini depicting the unmade film that runs out of capital – then both money and the cinematic image are presented at their most abstract and essential. Cinema is possible because of a free entering-into-relation of images, just as capitalism is possible because of a free entering-into-relation of powers: and yet both had been precluded from realizing their abstract essence in the modern axiomatic, where all relations are quantified as relations of exchange between labour and capital. Both capitalism and cinema have histories but at a certain point in their chronological trajectory they disclose something about time as such, about time as the unfolding of differential powers, or time as the pure event of relations among images.

In the case of cinema or the art object we can cite two examples. Much has already been written about the transition from the movement-image to

the time-image,[10] and the privileged examples of the time-crystal's irrational cut. What has been less attended to is the logic or life of this transition. When cinema arrives at its essence with the time-image – or when images are no longer the replication or tracking of objects that take time to move but, instead, double the present with potentialities that could not inhabit the same chronological moment – how do we account for this evolution or development of a technical apparatus and its relation to the organic eye of the human body? Deleuze's vitalism at once recognizes, following Bergson and Ruyer, a form of *creative* evolution in which mutations and changes are not merely statistical but possess a certain tendency. To consider life as *desire*, as Deleuze does, at once installs change and transformation in life, while also accounting for the ways in which change – though not determined by any final form – nevertheless occurs as an engagement with milieu, or a positive production of relations in which a desiring potential that undergoes an encounter (or is affected by another power) will vary according to its range of potentiality. In the case of the eye and the camera we can say that a potentiality for a certain organization of light, or the encounter with light as visual data, is one manner or style in which life can approach a certain milieu, and this explains the evolution of the eye in various unrelated lines of evolution. Insofar as this development occurs as a response of a certain organism's relation to a milieu or, more accurately, occurs as a way of creating a relation between seeing body and seen world (occurs as a fold or production of an in-between), then the eye is at once that which directs an organism beyond itself, while also allowing for the organism's ongoing self-maintenance and boundedness. The eye as problem-solving machine, that enables an organism to orient itself in space by light, also has to diminish the eye's singular power (the power to see as such) in accord with the organism's other capacities.

As we have already noted, the eye sees both by editing out information and supplementing a visual field. But such subtraction and organization goes further; the era of computer games has taught us a great deal about hand-eye co-ordination, the necessity for long-distance driving has taught us about the capacity for the eye to see and negotiate a terrain while also – were we forced to recount where we had just been – not really seeing. Decades of television production and consumption, also dovetailing with other technologies such as video games, have worked to create new temporalities of the eye–brain, such that certain speeds and intensities of stimulus are now required to maintain engagement.[11] The eye has both a creative tendency – or exists as what Deleuze refers to as a desiring machine, as a potentiality to enter into relations regardless of the maintenance of

organized life – at the same time as the eye is produced as an organ in the social machine. Not only does the eye develop alongside the organized body as part of a functioning social machine, it also takes part in what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the privatization of the organs. The eye in its *collective* form takes part in modes of festive cruelty, so that in rituals of tattooing, scarring or branding every eye of the onlooker feels the cut into the flesh, acting as a territory or social body. When the eye is privatized it takes on the mode of viewing from the point of view of the bounded and isolated individual, no longer *feeling* as part of its own life the infractions on other bodies. Instead the eye becomes a detached observing organ, intensifying the border between self and other.

Nowhere is this better described than in Jean-Paul Sartre's theory of the gaze: if I look at an object that is merely 'in itself' and remains what it is regardless of any look directed towards it, 'I' realize that I am nothing other than that which sees – *not* the thing, nothing. If, however, I am regarded by an other, then I become a thing in their visual field. As Lacanian psychoanalysis was later to make explicit, the split between the 'I' of the subject of speech (or the viewing subject for whom the world is an object) and the 'ego' taken as an image is entirely bound up with an oedipalized and privatized desire. The world of images is the sign of some ultimate reality whose truth is forever denied: I view this world of things but never The Thing. And this location of the subject-who-looks as nothing more than a gap, hole or negation of reality in itself, presupposes both that one becomes other when one is looked at, and that there must be an ultimate Other who is master of the real that is forever denied and deferred. In its early forms, and for the most part, cinema is coupled with the privatized and oedipalized eye-machine. This was made more than apparent in Laura Mulvey's classic essay on the visual field and narrative cinema, where the look of the camera produces a point of view where the seen/scene body is set before the viewing subject who becomes nothing more than an objectifying master. In Deleuze and Guattari's broader genealogy of Oedipus, the privatization of the organs detaches a speaking/hearing/eating/touching human organism from a world that is so much quantifiable, reified and consumable matter.

The privatization of the eye in late capitalism also seems to run alongside what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a transition from the regime of the signifier – in which the viewed world is the sign of some ultimate reality – to the passional regime. Our relation to visual images is no longer that of captivated spectators in thrall to a narrative logic, being urged on by images whose sense unfolds in dramas, imagined personalities, fantasized heroes or even desired objects that will promise us fulfilment. Movie theatres had

already folded the visual scene around passive purchasing viewers whose increasing sense of private consumption is achieved first through dimmed cinemas: a closing in of the visual field that is intensified in the living room experiences of television and then further in the individual screens of MP3 players, video games and laptops. The eye increasingly becomes a site of passional attachment in itself: if in the primitive social machine the eye operates haptically, feeling the cut in the flesh in collective scarring rituals, the eye of modernity becomes a *reading* eye centred on man as an organism who views the world as so much calculable material. The reading eye is coupled with the counting, mastering and instrumental hand that now becomes a series of digits (so much so that there is a digital media and aesthetic well before the advent of electronics). But it is in postmodernity that the eye neither feels collectively (haptically), nor reads the world digitally (as equivalent units) but is dominated by passion and affect.[12] The visual as such becomes a scene of intensely privatized passions: spending more and more of our time in front of individual screens, with the content also becoming increasingly privatized. And as Judith Butler (2005) notes, following Laplanche, the eye (now) sees its world and the image of its own ego-self as if from the point of view of an other whose desire would grant the truth of its being. I am a self only if I am recognized by an other. In this passional regime the self is created, located and privatized less by submission to a system of signifiers through which it articulates its desire than by relation to the face of an other whose desire is essentially hidden. The eye is becoming less an eye that reads in order to speak and move and more of an eye of passions and affects. If the signifier places us in a position of reading, such that the world of objects stands as a sign for some reality in itself, or the face of others stands as a sign for a desire that must be decoded, then the passional regime is no longer one of reading: we are now mesmerized, halted from reading by being captivated by the passional regime of the other. More and more the visual field is dominated by faces, faces that are *not* heads as body parts, but functions of the late privatized human organism. Political fields are now reduced to faces, with the diffusion of terrorism being figured through the faces of Saddam Hussein and then Bin Laden. The figuring of viral networks also devolves upon faces: in the threatened pandemic of the H1N1 virus much was made in the media of the face of the first Mexican child to have succumbed to the flu. The same applies to the 2008–9 financial collapses, which were all given media form through the faces of scandalously acquisitive CEOs. The face is less a sign to be read, than a halting of reading and relations in a mode of spellbound fascination.

If, as Deleuze and Guattari (1977) argue, the first of the organs to be privatized is the anus, with flows of shit becoming so much waste to be hidden, disposed of and regarded as lacking all life and sense, then it is not only clear how the later equation between money and shit becomes possible (money as mere stuff to circulate in order to acquire what really has value); it also makes sense to see visual stimuli as shifting from collectively experienced events of a territory, where all the bodies move to the same beat and view the same scene, towards isolated data that is nothing more than sensation. Action films, often modelled on video games, become increasingly less oriented to narrative and character, relying more upon screen displays of explosions, intense light and rapid movements. Music videos, now played more on individual laptop screens, mobile phones and portable players, are sequences of visual sensations rather than representations of performances. Even in the still plot-oriented domains of television series, such as those that focus on forensic and medical visual technologies (for example *CSI*, *House, Bones, NCIS* or *Numbers*) a point of view is created that is no longer that of a possible subject. The camera that invades a human body to represent a virus attacking an organ or a bullet lodged in a bone is no longer an imagined or virtual subject but comes close to Deleuze and Guattari's imagined scientific partial observers that isolate functions. Such scenes, displays and viewpoints, when they are not scientific but displayed for the delight of viewing as such, evidence the ways in which a human organ such as the eye becomes at once territorialized and deterritorialized in the same temporal trajectory. Such cultural phenomena place the privatized eye, whose gaze is captured by the management of biological life, within the social machine of bio-politics; at the same time these detachments of the visual from a field of reading deterritorialize the eye by presenting it with pure intensities; often the gaze of the camera that tracks the blood, bone and viscera of living bodies will present filmed flesh as expressive matter, as a screen of colour, movement and light.

This should give us pause and warn us against regarding the historical tendency towards the organism's privatization in a moral or post-lapsarian sense. As in Deleuze and Guattari's history of capitalism, desiring life bears *both* the tendency to fold itself into organized territories that diminish a potential's range, *and* a counter-tendency to detach itself from organic life in order to create ramified potentialities. Capital's liberation of flows from closed functions and orders is at once an expansion of the range of desire at the same time as it takes the very medium through which increasing connections and potentials proliferate – capital – as a means for precluding a radical deterritorialization. The same could be said for the power and

possibility of Deleuze's own philosophy; as many critics have lamented, his language of counter-actualizations, flows, deterritorialization and immanence appears to consecrate, rather than set itself outside, capitalism. But this is just the point: for far from seeing capitalism as a lapse that befell a life that would otherwise bear an integrity to exist without alienation and dispersion, Deleuze's vitalism – as passive – lodges the tendency towards difference and the splitting of any potentiality at the heart of life. There can only be an organized and bounded body (an organism) because of a relative stabilisation of non-organic powers; the ongoing life of the organism requires both territorialization and deterritorialization. The concept of the machine functions to describe a life that is at one and the same time a capacity for connection, integration, system and meaning (if we take meaning to be a field of coded and ordered functions) *and* a tendency towards connections that would open the territory to thresholds that de-form its original system. In the case of the eye, as an organ of the body, it is both territorialized according to the organism's spatial and social milieu, extending or deterritorializing itself through visual technologies that expand the organism's range of movement and power; at the same time, those extending technologies (such as the camera) that intensified privatization by allowing the eye to be captivated and mesmerized by spectacles from which it was separated, also have the capacity to liberate the eye from organization, moving towards the 'body without organs'.

Thus cinema, which at once seems to capture the mechanistic nature of the eye as a tool of the intellect oriented to fixing the world into so much immobile matter for manipulation and re-organization, is the same machine that will allow (for Deleuze, but not Bergson) a life of the image beyond the life of spirit. It is for this reason that Deleuze argues that the cinematic camera is an *organ,* and that Bergson's alignment of the cinematic camera with the natural perception of the intellect allows us to re-think the complex relation between life and essence. Phenomenology had wanted to mark a distinction between the eye and point of view of the human subject, and the point of view of the camera, and it wanted to do so because it regarded all perception as ultimately referable back to a subject whose finite point of view unfolds an infinite world in a series of images that are synthesized and oriented towards an ongoing presence that must be given perspectivally. By contrast Bergson criticized *both* the cinema *and* the natural intellect for taking discrete snapshots of a moving and enduring world, a world that would then have to be pieced together to form a whole, a whole that was (mistakenly) taken to be a sum of units. For Deleuze, it is Bergson's criticism of the camera as a false model of a picturing intellect

that opens an entirely new relation between machine and life. Even though Bergson has mistaken the real potential of the cinematic apparatus – which is not like the located point of view of observing man – his reasons for subordinating natural perception *and* the camera that would be its false model has to do with his commitment to a time that goes beyond the located observer. Such a time would only be given through a perceptual machine that was liberated from a sensory motor apparatus.

Deleuze's reading of Bergson's theory of the relation between machine and life is not simply a correction of a previous philosopher in the face of subsequent technical developments. Instead, Deleuze suggests a curious relation between a philosopher's capacity to think about time and life, and the technical apparatuses that enable us to consider the brain and organism as a type of machine. This has a twofold significance: there is a potential for the production of machines (such as the human organism) that will localize and synthesize images, but that potential is coupled with another tendency for thinking about the relation among machines. Philosophy is a machine that creates images of thought, of how thinking is possible, but it does so only through coupling with other machines: the eye, the brain, the camera, the window, the screen, the wax tablet, the mirror, the computer. Those machines in turn are also coupled with or traversed by a history of philosophical images and personae, such that any encounter with a machine may also be an encounter with a proper name: to read Bergson requires looking at certain images of the camera along with certain images of thought, just as reading Freud requires an examination of thermodynamic mechanisms, writing pads, and oedipal social machines. It is this coupling of thought with machines that also allows us to re-think what it means to re-read an author from the history of philosophy. Rather than assume that philosophical texts need to be evaluated according to the greater or lesser degree of accuracy they attain in picturing the mind, the world or the relation between the two, Deleuze will look at a philosopher's body of work as something like a brain/camera: a creation of a machine that produces an image of a relation between inside and outside. How does a philosophical corpus produce an image of itself, and the whole of life that it imagines?

This gives us a new sense of what it is to be committed to vitalism, and then to see vitalism as properly passive. Vitalism in its Deleuzian mode allows us to regard philosophical texts, like works of art, as productions (or machines) that enable life to produce images and relations. Such a vitalism is passive, not only because vitality is not a force that flows through and synthesizes matter (for there is no matter apart from a dynamic, connecting

and 'machinic' power); but also because there is a primacy of affectation, such that one would read any philosophy as an apprehension of an infinite or open life of which it is an expression. To read a past philosopher is less a case of intuiting some activating spirit beneath the letter than it is of reading their work as a monad: as one way in which the infinite is folded around a power of conceptualization. The reason why it is appropriate to regard Bergson as a properly cinematic philosopher has less to do with what Bergson really wanted to say, and more to do with the essence of the Bergsonian problem. If 'Bergson' is taken not as a subject of enunciation but as 'Bergsonism' – a problem of the encounter between perception as such (liberated from the intellect) and the images *of* that perception (encountered first in the history of philosophy, then in various machinic metaphors) – then it is the cinematic camera and its formal techniques that release the essence of Bergsonism. That essence is not an end that unfolds through time; for essences are those problems that create time in a particular style, manner or rhythm. Essence is not a proper form that exists potentially to be realized in actual life; the actual life of chronological time is only possible because of problems that inaugurate creative trajectories. Essences are problems, so that while the cinematic camera can be said to be Bergsonian insofar as it releases images from the sensory-motor apparatus of the human organism and allows for a decentred perception, it is also possible that other machines and encounters might have created the same release of the Bergson problem from its impasse in the simple condemnation of the cinematic eye. Just as Deleuze's passive vitalism takes the form of a split consciousness that views all phenomena both from their constituted 'surface' that presents itself in the actual world and from the prior problem of which that actuality was but one response, so all reading takes a body of work as at once a name in a philosophical field of other names (Bergson versus Husserl, Ruyer versus Bernard, Kant versus Leibniz), *and* as a name that is itself a population of problems and images.

An author or proper name is already a canvas or plane populated by other proper names (so that Bergson is already a response to Kantianism, Eisenstein and Platonism, just as Francis Bacon is a response to Cézanne); every author is also coupled with machines (the camera, the animal, the human organism, the window, the mirror, the poem). Sometimes images of thought are composites of these, so that one of the stories that dominate contemporary accounts of mind is that we have fallen into viewing the mind as a computer because we are all too Cartesian. For Bergson, we confuse the mind with a camera because we confuse the mind of spirit with the brain in the body (a confusion distributed among a whole series of proper names).

Deleuze's challenge is to embrace this population of images, names and figures and not merely to reconfigure that plane, as any philosophy must do, but also – somehow – to think of that plane as such. This requires seeing life at once as that which *is* this field of images: philosophy is not an image *of life*, for life just is the production of images, some of which are philosophical, some artistic, some scientific; it also requires finding a philosophy capable of thinking this imaging power.

Deleuze's bet or strategy is that this would be a cinematic philosophy, which again returns us to a passive vitalism. For it is not the case that machines in the narrow (non-human) sense are extensions of the human body that may, if their modus of efficiency becomes too great, alienate the human from its proper power. The idea that *techne* is a supplement that always ought to remain subordinate to, and fruitfully extend, its originating organism is one of the central moralisms of modern vitalism. Vitalism in its active moral mode would demand a return or re-appropriation of all technical systems *back* to their originating and meaningful origin. It is possible to read Bergson in this way: in the beginning is the pure event of difference and creative force, bifurcating into various paths, arriving at the intellect as a machine for the sake of the efficiency and self-maintenance of the organism, and then falling into systems of rigid quantification and reification as the intellect turns back upon itself and mistakes itself for one more thing in the world. Redemption from this fall into inertia could occur only with spirit surpassing its capacity to master the world; it would be able to do this only by arriving at an intuition of itself as spirit liberated from any closed form. Such an account also has its Jamesian and Husserlian variants: William James (1955) described the vitalist project as a turning back from constituted language to reawaken the constituting power and perception from which language emerged as a (once dynamic) response. Husserl also regarded technical systems such as logic, mathematics, geometry and concepts as having their original source in a founding intuition. If he disagreed with *Lebensphilosophie* it was because it was deemed to be insufficiently vitalist: one needed to trace acts of constitution back not merely to living beings but to the transcendental life that made the perception of any single life possible.

Current returns to the phenomenological tradition, whether that be Husserl, Heidegger or Merleau Ponty, have maintained this activist, vitalist and anti-Cartesian imperative: as subjective and meaning-productive life falls into ready-made systems, the task is to regain the sense of the founding intuition, of humanity as a dynamic, self-productive and engaged organism oriented towards a world.[13] Vitalism in this mode is active, for it does not

simply accept any constituted system, language or structure but demands that such technical productions be recognized *as produced* and as having their origin and sense in a necessarily pre-supposed subject who could not be grasped as a thing within the world precisely because such a creative power is always above and beyond any of its creations. On such an account we could read Bergson's criticism of the camera as a criticism of a technology that, like the intellect, begins as a tendency to create greater complexity and living creativity but then stalls the very processes of difference that were its original *raison d'être*. And we could read Deleuze, in turn, as a later, hyper-vitalist, who not only revives Bergsonian creativity against phenomenology's location of 'the lived' in the subject, but who also went beyond Bergson's invocation of spirit and intuition to privilege a light or difference as such that could only be belied or immobilized by one of its actualized productions (Hallward 1997).

Even further, we could regard Deleuze's aesthetic decisions and preferences as grounded in a modernist aesthetic of impersonality, de-reification and de-familiarization that would valorize the destruction of conventions, closed forms and semantic content in favour of a 'text' that would require the active retrieval or production of sense by the reader (who would no longer be a passive consumer). Even when Deleuze cites authors other than Woolf, Lawrence, Joyce, Mallarmé, Artaud or Proust he defines literature in general either as a rhizome, a way of making language 'stutter' or as a counter-actualization; all such process would be liberations from a closed book or the work of literature as a text that ought to be read and interpreted according to its content. Not surprisingly, then, Deleuze could be situated in a *straight historical line* running from Duns Scotus, through Spinoza, to Nietzsche and Bergson in which life is increasingly liberated from any proper form or essence, its essence being nothing other than the event of its own self-formation. Such readings of Deleuze are not uncommon, and range from the highly critical Alain Badiou (1999a) for whom Deleuze relies upon a 'One' that precedes all multiplicities, to more sober pro-Deleuzian readings that regard his philosophy as essentially in-appropriable by the tired old critical methods of academia (Lambert 2007), as well as anti-'idealist' or anti-'linguistic' social-science appropriations that embrace Deleuze as the thinker who finally allowed us to consider life and matter as nothing more than its effected relations (DeLanda 2004). What such readings indicate is a resistance to an eternal and near-Platonic potential in reading Deleuze.

Let us at least entertain the possibility that *neither* Badiou's criticism of Deleuze as a neo-Platonist committed to an infinite One beyond difference

nor the celebrations of Deleuze as a materialist of dynamic systems can exhaust a corpus that also includes an affirmation of an incorporeal, ideal, eternal and immobile event of sense. Before exploring that dimension of Deleuze's thought, a dimension that would allow us to make sense of 'passive vitalism', it is worth considering how Deleuze (as a corpus) has produced a plane of problems that are perhaps not those that would follow from 'Deleuzism'. We might accept the productive gambit of Deleuze's own philosophical style whereby all figures, including artists, philosophers and ways of considering matter are split from within – one side turned to the actual field in which they are located, another side that considers figures as they would be for all time, as singular powers with the potential to open any time to the untimely. Plato, for example, would at once be the figure responsible for a history of Platonism, in which all the events of this world would be but pale shadows of a higher, transcendent and properly real world. To be a Platonist, on such a picture, would be to accept the problem of this world's unreality and unknowability, to direct knowledge elsewhere and to always consider life as something to be judged and found wanting. When Badiou accuses Deleuze of a Platonist vitalism he places this Plato – the Plato of the history of philosophy who needed to be overturned by a modernity increasingly turned to actuality – alongside a Deleuze who, in turn, needs to be displaced by a Badiou who will abandon a One or given infinite that exceeds this world's actual multiplicities. When Badiou (1999b) describes himself as a Platonist he thereby depends upon a distinction between the *problem* of Plato (which is also Badiou's problem of a truth that could not be reduced to relative forces within the world) and a Platonism that simply asserts some ineffable infinite beyond the finite. The good Plato of Badiou (the Plato of the problem of pure truth) needs to be set off against the bad Platonism of Deleuze, a Platonism that posits the infinite One as positive but unreachable by thought.

What Badiou attacks in Deleuze (and the 'poetic' tradition of philosophy of which Deleuze is supposedly a part) is a self-emasculation of philosophy. Rather than recognize that philosophy cannot state ultimate truths, precisely because truth is not some grounding ultimate infinite One, philosophy has been seduced by figures that are really poetic, really ways of figuring a world that, rigorously, or when stated in terms of *being* can only be considered as a multiplicity: *nothing more*. The objectionable quality of Deleuze's vitalism is, for Badiou, precisely its passivity, or its invocation and suggestion of that which exists and insists beyond the subject. Those who would defend Deleuze against such a spiritualizing or Platonizing reading accept Badiou's axiology – that thinking and philosophy ought not to be

deluded into mystical or poetic figures that it cannot discharge – but present Deleuze as just the philosopher who would release us from such idealist imprisonment. This reading of Deleuze would also be in tune with a broader turn towards vitalism and affect that goes beyond his work. The story goes something like this: for centuries we have suffered from transcendence, ranging from our subjection to Platonic forms and then to the Cartesian subject. This latter illusion is the most pernicious of all, for we regard ourselves as entities, comparable to computational machines for which the world is so much manipulable matter. Deleuze, however, releases us from this subjection to systems and transcendence and does so through an affirmation of 'life'. Deleuze may need to be corrected here and there, either if he strays too far from living organisms, or if he is interpreted as being too transcendentalist, too elitist, too French or too modernist, but the spirit of Deleuzism is vitalist in a sense that *unites* Badiou's anti-Deleuzism and the vitalist, affective or post-linguistic 'turn'. For what must be expunged is a passive acceptance of a force that cannot be interrogated and placed within the command of action and praxis. And yet it is just this aspect of a force that transcends any of its actualizations, and that does violence to thought, that is at the heart of Deleuze philosophy of immanence. For even though Deleuze will insist on an immanent philosophy that does not situate the given within some transcendent term (such as man, the subject, nature or 'life' considered as the enclosed globe of the ecosystem), he will nevertheless allow the immanent and given to open beyond itself to that which cannot be grasped within the given.

Vitalism is, of course, far too flabby a word to work as a critical tool unless we start to specify its possible divergent senses, and it is just this internal bifurcation that is indicated in Deleuze and Guattari's two traditions of vitalism, one of which would be active and another passive. The active/passive binary is also rather blunt, for it would seem to bring into play the very opposition of subject/object or living/non-living that the very problem of the vital order ought to question. Bergson and Freud, for example, did not begin from a bounded organism that was active or passive, but described the emergence of the organic from an economy of forces of explosive expenditure in relation to forces of inertia and quiescence. Deleuze, as I have already suggested, reads all proper names as at once bounded figures offering a series of claims regarding life (proper names as bodies) but also as vectors or weapons that can shatter the terrain of names that allows 'us' to read the past as a series of images or propositions. Bergson is not only the figure who came and doubted the life of the cinematic idea and turned back to a properly creative and fluid life, he was also the scene of an entirely

different problematic that raised the possibility of an imaging released from *any living being*.

There is an active vitalism, then, that wishes to trace all events back to their originating genesis. Such a vitalism must rely on a moral and temporal distinction between active and passive: in the beginning is the creative act that institutes differences and that is subsequently belied when those differences are taken to be *the* logic from which creativity flows. But there is another vitalism. Here, Deleuze's Platonism follows from a different Plato: not the Plato of the history of philosophy, but a Plato that can be found in a perverse and untimely manner, a Plato that Plato himself seemed unable to actualize. And this non-actualization, immobility or inertia that did not unfold and flourish in the history of philosophy – this strangely passive element that one can barely find *stated* or *asserted* in Plato – also releases another Deleuze and another Bergson.

In reading Bergson, Deleuze argues that the association of the cinematic camera (as a series of immobile images pieced together to form movement) with a natural perception that has rigidified itself into false models needs to be corrected by noting that the problem of an author's work is often, if not always, concealed and belated; to read a body of work from the past one needs to attend less to its manifest statements, its opening programme and its concluding valuations, and more to the relations – enduring relations – that it opens. So, while there is one 'side' of Bergson that places the camera alongside the natural and frozen perception of the intellect, another side looks at how this coupling opens up an entirely new problem – creating a new 'whole' or 'plane' in which we are able to consider an image-machine, images, the eye and the screen as a new whole or new duration: a new way of not only thinking about temporality but also a new style of temporality. For it is with the camera that the image detaches itself from organic life (a tendency already indicated in the eye that had become an immobilizing machine but that becomes distinct when the camera surpasses this capacity and takes snapshots of motion itself). What the human eye attached to the organism did not realize on its own is achieved by a machine that extends the eye's self-displacement beyond its own tendencies. The cinematic camera does assemble images, but those images are not of frozen and immobilized sections. Instead the camera captures time as movement.

Even though Deleuze will, then, read an untimely Plato (who enabled the thought of pure predicates that could not be exhausted by the actual world) and an untimely Bergson (who will require machines to take humanity beyond its organic form), Deleuze also relies on a history of ideas in which such untimely potentials finally erupt. A certain historical mapping is

crucial to Deleuze's Bergsonism. Ancient conceptions of time regarded time as the medium within which moving bodies arrived at ideal forms; and this sense of time as the medium of movement was accompanied by an understanding of life as the actualization of forms, with 'biological' change being grounded on living forms as deviations from, or realizations of, ideal types. By contrast, for modern science time is not a medium within which forms are actualized (where such a time would have privileged moments when ideals were approached most closely); instead time is composed of moments, none of which is privileged. This does not preclude certain moments from possessing a singularity, so that a trajectory of movement would incrementally cross a threshold that altered the nature of movement: an animal moving up a very steep terrain bearing a great weight might collapse at a certain point, a face engaging in passionate dialogue might, after increasing degrees of intensity, express a new mode of relation – a submission or dominance that alters the manner and possibility of dialogue together. The key point for Deleuze in relation to Bergson is twofold: he reads Bergson's relation to models of thinking according to a problem, which is also an essence, that can only really come to light if we place Bergson's corpus and the camera in a wider field of vital life, a life that encompasses both the human organism and the machine. Second, the machine attains a degree of deterritorialization that allows for a new mode of life, a time or duration that extends beyond the organism. This leads then to Deleuze's second major critical response to Bergson; in addition to resituating the camera as a perception machine within a new duration (and thereby regarding cinema less as a fallen model of thinking than a potential for thought to become different from its organic possibilities), Deleuze also argues that one can consider life in terms of intensive quantities. This argument is hinted at in the cinema books, is mentioned explicitly in *Difference and Repetition* and is crucial to the re-thinking of the relation between vitalism and mechanism that concludes *Anti-Oedipus*.

Chapter One

Brain, System, Model: The Affective Turn

Today's neurological or systems paradigm is in many ways both an answer to the vitalist imperative par excellence and its overturning. On the one hand, current work on the brain's plasticity, along with a series of invectives against the Cartesian model of mind as an isolated entity, have served to emancipate the thinking of life from any model of the living being. The bounded organism, the embodied mind, or the active and 'synaptic' self, it is argued, do not exist in order to relate to the world, for the organism *is its ongoing relations*. There are not living beings who relate, nor beings that are blessed with life, nor even a matter that is somehow at a certain point of evolution blessed with a principle of life. Rather, in the beginning is a dynamism and plasticity, a potentiality for entering into relation *from which* something like a living being is generated. The brain's plasticity can at once serve as a model for a life that has no privileged models, at the same time as the brain needs to be demoted from a privileged position of 'mind'. The brain is a figure or image that intervenes in the history of ideas to enable a rethinking of the very notion of an idea: it is no longer the case that there is a brute material world that then requires meaning or some form of sense and system to be added by thought. On the contrary, one could see meaning as the property of living systems, from which the brain would be a sophisticated derivation.

If we regard even the simplest of living systems, such as a single celled organism, as being bounded by its range of responses to its possible perturbances, then we would say that there is no 'outside' world in general, only an outside given for this or that responsive living system. The meaning or sense of the world would not be a specifically human nor even mind-based quality; minds only experience sense and meaning because they, like all living systems, are bounded by the possible responses, encounters, stimuli and selections of their own milieu. The landmark statement of this position was given by Maturana and Varela:

> A cognitive system is a system whose organization defines a domain of interactions in which it can act with relevance to the maintenance of

> itself, and the process of cognition is the actual (inductive) acting or behaving in this domain. Living systems are cognitive systems, and living as a process is a process of cognition. This statement is valid for all organisms, with and without a nervous system. (Maturana and Varela 1980, 13)

The turn to the brain or mindfulness is not, then, an elevation of cognition or ideas, for ideas and knowledge need to be regarded as specialized events within a broader extended or global brain of which the human animal would be an instance.

This affective, vital turn (Clough and O'Malley Halley 2007; Thrift 2006), or the sense of a new era following on from the decade of the brain, appears initially as a revolution in a history of Western thought dominated by man as the centre of knowledge, an overthrow of the privileging of ideas and language as the medium through which the world can be known and sensed. And certainly the insistent narration of counter-Cartesianism, counter-linguisticism and anti-humanism proclaims that the turn to life is a release from assumed norms and models in favour of a genesis or emergence that has no principle outside that of plasticity or relationality in general.

What I would suggest, though, is that the proclaimed vital break with rigidified models forms part of a repetitive logic in the history of ideas and the way in which ideas are narrated historically; there has always been a positing of a life or proper ground from which the bounded form emerges. Further, the oscillating relation between a dynamic, open, connective and fluid potentiality and a stable, closed, self-referring and bounded body is the problem of the organism as such, both at the level of existence (or life) and the level of figure (or 'life'). The organism is a problem: for the organism's very being as a bordered, determined and bounded life occurs as the outcome of managing and responding to its own milieu (those processes to which it is able to respond). Further, that this border or membrane that marks a living being from its lived world can, in the case of Cartesian man, mistake itself for a stable and centred entity, and not a process, is the problem of the thinking organism as such.

If it is the case that life is properly understood as relational, distributed, embodied, dynamic, autopoietic and only relatively closed (Rose 1997; Thompson 2007), how is it that one specific system – the brain – falls into the illusion of regarding itself as a determining, disembodied and representing centre? How is it that one of life's embedded dynamic processes (which is perhaps the process of life par excellence if we understand the world in general as mindful, or a global brain) forgets its very nature?

Nature, here, is itself the organic problem: for if nature is properly understood as an open and dynamic whole, how did the violation of nature in the form of Cartesian man manage to emerge as a being that forgets its own emergence? Vitalism understands this passage of detachment and return in a manner that is quite distinct from Hegelianism, although it is nevertheless dialectical. It is not the case, as in Hegelianism, that 'life itself' as mere material being, is insufficient, requiring the diremption and distance of consciousness in order to understand itself as nothing more than this process of negative difference. Rather, life itself without a centred and distancing consciousness is not only perfectly sufficient; it becomes distorted and counter-productive with the addition of the separated and separating intellect. If Descartes did not exist we would have had to invent him, for how else could we explain mind's pernicious representation of itself as an isolated substance:

> It is crucial to realize that this chasm is a philosophical construction built on sedimented and problematic ways of thinking going back to Descartes. We need to look more closely at this Cartesian legacy, for it remains a powerful force in many contemporary treatments of the problem of consciousness. (Thompson 2007, 225)
>
> This is Descartes' error: the abyssal separation between mind and body. (Damasio 1995)
>
> The second attempt to preserve something from the Cartesian tradition . . . is the effort, within recent philosophy of language, to specify 'how language hooks onto the world', thus creating an analogue of the Cartesian problem of how thought hooks onto the world. An attempt to use the notions of reference of terms and truth of sentences to aid in understanding the matters which troubled Descartes seems doomed to failure. (Rorty 1981, 211–12)
>
> We are now in a position to sum up the incredible legacy of Descartes' unique pastiche of common metaphors and folk theories. He has left us with a theory of mind and thought so influential that its main tenets are still widely held and have barely begun to be re-evaluated. Much of it is still taught with reverence. (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 408)
>
> Might it not be more fruitful to think of brains as controllers for embodied activity? That small shift in perspective has large implications for how we construct a science of the mind. It demands, in fact, a sweeping reform

> in our whole way of thinking about intelligent behaviour. It requires us to abandon the idea (common since Descartes) of the mental as a realm distinct from the realm of the body; to abandon the idea of neat dividing lines between perception, cognition, and action; to abandon the idea of an executive center where the brain carries out high-level reasoning; and most of all, to abandon research methods that artificially divorce thought from embodied action-taking. (Clark 1997, xii–xiii)

> . . . this division of mind and matter was also something of a scientific debacle. Separating the material and the mental into ontologically distinct realms raised the white flag early in the mind-body debate: science abandoned the challenge of explaining how the components of the physical world found expression in the mental world. And thus was Cartesian dualism born. Today, three and a half centuries later, his belief endures. (Schwartz and Begley 2003, 33)

The vitalist turn away from Cartesianism or linguisticism can be characterized through three general features: a rejection of any centre, model or privileged term from which relations would follow (decentring); a refusal to posit any principle outside life that would govern living systems (immanence); and a demotion of cognition or information-based forms of relation to do with calculation in favour of relations that are always determined by specific powers and not some matter in general (affectivity) (Hayles 2005). The last feature of affectivity is perhaps the most difficult to delimit, despite its recent celebration and privileging. Affectivity is a way of thinking of life without a recourse to meaning: before there are concepts and sign systems there are non-conscious bodily responses that enable a being to make its way in the world, and to form primary differentiations from which meaning (as systematized and repeatable) will be possible. But affectivity has also been mobilized, depending on the theoretical starting point, to insist on the primacy of meaning: there is never a world as such, 'out there', only a world *for* this or that affected organism. Insofar as I live the world only as it affects me, and only as I am capable of being perturbed by, and respondent to, such affects, then the world is always a meaningful world, never mere data or qualia that I must then render significant.

Decentring, immanence and affectivity: these three features have all been claimed as revolutionary and emancipating features of the present, and as ways in which we can be released, variously, from the strictures of Western, computational, Cartesian, rationalizing, masculinist and disembodied ideologies and paradigms. But is this really so?

Consider the aim of decentring knowledge, or of liberating thinking from some brain or mind that would then have to picture or represent some alien world. The idea that knowledge proceeds from a fixed point within the world, or that knowledge ought to be centred on some privileged and distinct foundation, might appear to be justified by either Platonism or monotheism. But if we consider Platonism in even a slightly complex form, then what is rejected in Plato's routing of the sophists is both a knowledge centred on a knower (for we know only insofar as we journey and dialogue beyond ourselves towards ideas), and a knowledge that has a single centre. There may be an elevation of philosophy, the theoretical life, and *the good*, over the chaos of everyday material existence; but for every sense in which such a move serves to centre knowledge (on the Ideas) it is equally decentring, away from the human knower, away from any single or graspable origin towards an emanation or a flowing forth of life from a ground that has no being other than an ongoing creativity, production and multiplication.

Beyond explicit appeals to the life sciences and paradigms of living systems philosophy, there has been a broader turn to immanence which, like the tradition of vitalism in the narrow sense, rejects the notion of any radically transcendent order that would give the law to life from without. In the more avowedly vitalist philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, this connection between a philosophical tradition of immanence and an attention to contemporary theories of living systems is made explicit. The problem of life and the vital order, for Deleuze and Guattari, is less a question of knowledge and more a question of writing and negotiation: on the one hand every living phenomenon faces in two directions, towards ordering and stratification, and towards creative dispersion or productive chaos. Their proclaimed vitalism is less one of overturning a rigid Cartesianism (or some other error) than it is the creation of a pragmatics that deals with every living paradigm as at once active and passive, true and false, living and non-living.

As an example we can take their own reflections on writing and theorizing. Without some degree of order and distinction writing, and living, do not occur: one makes distinctions, marks out a territory, forms a border or line that opens up a zone. On the other hand, that process of writing can proceed only with a judicial infusion of chaos. The problem of this Deleuzo-Guattarian pragmatism or vitalism is passive in an important sense. An active vitalism or pragmatism has two features. First, there is a force or principle (a subject) that infuses and lives through matter; as a mode of pragmatism, this active vitalism is therefore attendant to forms of self-maintenance and boundary formation. How does a living system maintain itself, and further

the potentials that are its own principles and that brought it into being? Second, such a vitalism and pragmatism entails a certain mode of nominalist essentialism: there are not pre-existing essences or forms that enter into actuality, for each being is nothing more than what it has, contingently, come to be. Arriving at a relatively stable state, it then maintains itself according to its own internal principles of self-maintenance or autopoiesis. It is nothing other than its activity, and is therefore defined according to its potentiality, and not according to whether it meets criteria that are not its own.

Deleuze and Guattari's passive vitalism bears a different relation to essentialism and to pragmatism. Deleuze insists that there are pure predicates or potentialities that subsist or insist beyond any bounded or identifiable being's activity; if a being is formed and acts in such a way that it forms a relatively stable and identifiable state, this has less to do with its own self-maintaining striving than its does with certain Ideas or qualities that it actualizes but that also exceed any single actualization. These pre-personal singularities are, in a radical sense, Platonic. Deleuze's reversal of Platonism is not a refusal of any Ideas or potentialities that would lie beyond experience or the lived, just as his philosophy of life and immanence is not a way of domesticating or returning transcendence to the domain of consciousness. Rather, for Deleuze, what Plato uncovered were pure potentials or powers of individuation that could not be reduced to what can be known, lived, represented or considered within the already actualized range of possibilities. This is what marks Deleuze's vitalism as passive and is why he and Guattari cite both Leibniz and Ruyer as authors who allow us to think of vitalism in this radically inhuman manner.

Ruyer argues that an individual being takes on the form that it does only because in addition to its own time and point of view there is both a position of 'absolute survey' – or the point of view of life as such, of which the organism's own sensed viewpoint is a fragment – and 'transcendental forms' that orient becoming (Ruyer 1952). Leibniz, in contrast to Kant (who grounded synthesis and the order of the world on the harmonizing faculties of the subject) placed the order of the world in a calculus that not even God could disturb. This world is the actualization of a maximum of diversity and difference, a perfect accord between the proliferation of differences and relations of harmony and concord among those differential powers. The vital order exceeds life as it is, which is a way of saying that life, or the vital, beyond the lived, possesses a reality beyond organisms, experience, subjects and – most importantly – thought.

According to Deleuze it is Aristotle (who is so often appealed to *against Plato* as the philosopher of life) who reduces the Ideas and forms to the

proper potentiality of a being, and then regards such forms as that which can be known by the being (man) who grasps first principles (Deleuze 2004a, 71–2). The powers of difference, and the powers of the false, are reduced to representation. If, against Aristotle and the model of judgement, forms or potentialities could *not* be reduced to representation and 'the lived' then there would be capacities for alteration – essences – that had a being above and beyond any actuality, even if they only appear through actuality. This is what Deleuze will find in Plato; if one side of Plato is turned towards establishing identity, there is nevertheless another side that resists generalization and the reduction of potentialities to the only apparent stability of this lived world:

> The task of modern philosophy has been defined: to overturn Platonism. That this overturning should conserve many Platonic characteristics is not only inevitable but desirable. It is true that Platonism already represents the subordination of difference to the powers of the One, the Analogous, the Similar and even the Negative. It is like an animal in the process of being tamed, whose final resistant movements bear witness better than they would in a state of freedom to a nature soon to be lost: the Heraclitan world still growls in Platonism. With Plato the issue is still in doubt: mediation has not yet found its ready-made movement. The Idea is not yet the concept of an object which submits the world to the requirements of representation, but rather a brute presence which can be invoked in the world only in function of that which is not 'representable' in things. The Idea has therefore not yet chosen to relate difference to the identity of a concept in general: it has not given up hope of finding a pure concept of difference in itself. (Deleuze 2004a, 71)

Such an appeal to a secret Platonism that would discern a power, Idea, eternity or 'brute presence' *beyond* the world, meaning, mediation or the object goes directly against the current return of the world to the living meaning-making organism. Deleuze is enabling a form of essentialism, but essences are precisely not that which remains the same through variation, but that which produces variation in any apparent sameness. It is the essence or Idea of revolution, for example, that prevents us from simply accepting the French revolution as an adequate capturing of what revolution might be; there is a capacity for creative revolution not exhausted in all the actual revolutions known and lived to date. Deleuze and Guattari's contrast between an active and passive vitalism also allows us to distinguish between modes of essentialism. Essences are not established by intuiting the sameness

and ongoing identity of actualized worldly beings; essences are powers that constantly disturb and vary existing beings. Writing on Proust, Deleuze comments:

> It is not the subject that explains essence, rather it is essence that constitutes subjectivity. It is not the individuals that constitute the world, but the worlds enveloped, the essences that constitute the individuals . . . Essence is not only individual, it individualizes. (Deleuze 2003, 43)

The 'life' to which Deleuze and Guattari's passive vitalism appeals is not mind or consciousness's own power that it retrieves and recognizes, nor a higher unity of which mind is a momentarily distinct fragment. The passivity of their vitalism lies in their essentialism and in their recognition and affirmation (in *What is Philosophy?*) of concepts beyond the individual intellect, of affects and percepts beyond the organism, and of partial observers not grounded in any living eye.

By contrast, vitalism in its active form, along with the pragmatism that accompanies it, is opposed to any form of radical essentialism. Kant had already objected to Platonism that essences could not simply be posited or found in some transcendent realm beyond the subject; to suggest this would be to passify philosophy, rendering it both immature and irresponsible. If, Kant argued, we only find in experience the very categories that we have imposed upon it, then both life and the essential forms it seems to present are really our own. In terms of Kantian ethics this both means that there is a radical distinction between theory and practice: I can *know* only what is given to me, and always in terms of the categories through which I grasp the given; I can *act* only as if – in the absence of knowing any other subject – all other subjects would will as a law that which I am willing. And it is this dimension of *not* knowing the other that maintains its force in a contemporary pragmatism that for all its claims of anti-foundationalism remains a form of subjectivism. Richard Rorty, for example, claims that the practical domain cannot be grounded upon knowledge. Quite the reverse: even knowledge, now, is grounded on the practical, or what it allows 'us' to do. More importantly still, it is our nature as organisms that allows us not to be enslaved to reference or the truth of the world:

> The line between mechanism and something categorically distinct from mechanism comes when organisms develop social practices that permit those organisms to consider the relative advantages and disadvantages of alternative description of things. Mechanism stops, and freedom begins,

> at the point where we go metalinguistic – the point at which we can discuss which words best describe a given situation. Knowledge and freedom are coeval. (Rorty 2007, 114)

But this knowledge that yields freedom is not knowledge of the world, nor of others, but solely of the communication medium (language) through which world and others are imagined. Because others are unknowable – in the strict sense, but knowable if we reduce knowledge to ongoing imagination – it is also the case that my relations to the practical domain are, as in Kant, discursive. I am never in a direct or immediate relation to the world and others, for the relation I bear towards the world is structured in advance by the categories or vocabularies that make relation possible. Here, though he differs elsewhere, Rorty approves of Habermas. For both, there should not be a passification before transcendent reason or (especially for Habermas) some notion of literature that would not be conversational:

> To replace subject-centered reason with communicative rationality is to see truth as what is likely to emerge from free and imaginative conversation. It is to think of knowledge as the achievement of consensus rather than a mental state that enjoys a closer relation to reality than does opinion.
>
> To agree with Habermas that reason is communicative and dialogical rather than subject-centered and monological is to substitute responsibility to other human beings for responsibility to a non-human standard. (Rorty 2007, 77)

Today we face the possibility of these two vitalisms. There is a vitalism that aims to take knowledge, relations, living beings and systems back to the *meaning* of life. Here there is no life in general, only life as it is for this or that embodied being whose world is always *its* world, lived as its own, in terms of its capacities and therefore as always already meaningful. There is another vitalism that would come from detaching Deleuze from any simple notion of life as grounded in living beings, and this is a vitalism of sense. Sense is that orientation or potential that allows for the genesis of bodies but that always, if extended, would destroy the bordered organism. This distinction between sense and meaning is not a purely academic concern, nor a recent concern. It strikes both at the heart of how we consider the future and how mired we are in a mythic and narcissistic past.

Consider the first model, the model of meaning: there is no life, matter, world or reality in general, devoid of sense. Instead, the world is always a world *for* this or that living being. And this being does not know or represent its world, for it is always already in the world. This is, of course, a Heideggerian motif, and much has been done lately to invoke this being-in-the-world against a series of scientific and technical disenchantments. But well before Heidegger criticized the notion of a mind that would somehow have to picture or find an outside world, there had been a long theological and poetic tradition that was critical of the mind that is complete unto itself and only relates subsequently to its world. Aristotelian ethics is grounded in the notion that we come into the world as social and political beings; who we are is a consequence of the relations and stories we have undergone. The world is not blank data to be manipulated, but always a world given to me in terms of social meanings and relations. It is not surprising, then, that Aristotle is often turned back to in the face of attempts to *ground* ethics, knowledge or praxis in contrast with some more abstract or universal logic.[1] And it was just this aspect of Aristotle's thinking – his criticism of Plato's location of sense outside the judging human mind – that Deleuze regarded as one of philosophy's great false turns. Are we really thinking, Deleuze asked, if we begin from the model of the bounded organism, the sensory-motor apparatus whose world is folded around it in terms of its own survival? Should we not, rather, be thinking of those pure potentialities or incorporeal events that are actualized in organisms?

But if one side of philosophy has been turned to life as inherently meaningful, and to a world that is always the world *for* some outwardly-oriented and practically engaged body, there has been another strand of philosophy oriented to pure sense: not logic as it is for me, but logic as such, not truth as it is decided upon by communities, but pure truth. It is that second philosophy that would be directed not at the life of the bounded living body, but life as such. It is this hyper-vitalism that Deleuze sees as always having been flirted with only to have failed; for the attempt to think the forces of the living is always betrayed by returning to the figure of the man of good sense and common sense.

Thus the vital imperative is divided between two gestures and two figures: on the one hand the bounded organism whose world is always *its* world (a world of meaning); and on the other hand a pure thinking that is not limited by any determination, limit or fixity other than the pure imperative *to live*. On the one hand the comforts of self-enclosed meaning and on the other the dream of pure and unimpeded becoming.

These two vitalisms are not simply philosophical tendencies but mark the problem of the living being as such. The living body cannot be a self-enclosed world unto itself but must be open to the needs of life. In terms of the species, living beings cannot simply act for self-maintenance and continuity but must in some way become other than themselves in order to have a future. Such is the logic of evolutionary adaptation. However, if the living being is too open then it no longer possesses a discernible identity. A virus is nothing other than the introduction of mutations into other living beings, and has no life of its own. A virus is therefore so alive – so lacking in boundaries and limits – that it does not count as a living being; it is nothing more than an event that occurs to *the* living.

This problem of bounded life was what Sartre referred to as the impossible human desire to be God: one does not want to be nothing, and yet one does not want to be limited or bounded in any way:

> Is not God a being who is what he is – in that he is all positivity and the foundation of the world – and at the same time a being who is not what he is and who is what he is not – in that he is self-consciousness and the necessary foundation of himself? The being of human reality is suffering because it rises in being as perpetually haunted by a totality which it is without being able to be it, precisely because it could not attain the in-itself without losing itself as for-itself. Human reality is therefore by nature an unhappy consciousness with no possibility of surpassing its unhappy state. (Sartre 2001, 66)

One wants to be a being 'in itself', to have an identity, to be able to say that one is, and yet one also wants to be so purely free as to be undetermined, to have all potentialities available. In more organic terms, Freud expressed this in terms of the curious relation the organism bears to death. On the one hand the organism strives to maintain itself, always to retain a pool of equilibrium and constancy, and in so doing it will ward off excessive stimulus from without, enclosing itself in its own walled ego. On the other hand, that ego-bounded self-enclosure also seeks to surpass and overcome itself, to arrive at annihilation as such – to reach what Freud elsewhere referred to as the 'oceanic feeling'.

> At one time or another, by some operation of force which still completely baffles conjecture, the properties of life were awakened in lifeless matter. Perhaps the process was a prototype resembling that other one which later in a certain stratum of living matter gave rise to consciousness.

> The tension then aroused in the previously inanimate matter strove to attain equilibrium; the first instinct was present, that to return to lifelessness. The living substance at that time had death within easy reach; there was probably only a short course of life to run, the direction of which was determined by the chemical structure of the young organism. So through a long period of time the living substance may have been constantly created anew, and easily extinguished, until decisive external influences altered in such a way as to compel the still surviving substance to ever greater deviations from the original path of life, and to ever more complicated and circuitous routes to the attainment of the goal of death. (Freud 1922, 47–8)

For Bergson, this twin tendency of deviation from the shortest path towards equilibrium and the drive to complete energy expenditure is figured in the different speeds and economies of the intellect and spirit; the former strives to render the organism efficient, calculating the outside world in terms of its own interests. Spirit, by contrast, abandons that captivation and imprisonment in the sensory-motor apparatus's enjoyments and conceives of an impersonal joy whose future may be beyond that of the living being and its kind.

> . . . philosophy of intuition will be a negation of science, will be sooner or later swept away by science, if it does not resolve to see the life of the body just where it really is, on the road that leads to the life of the spirit. But it will then no longer have to do with definite living beings. Life as a whole, from the initial impulsion that thrust it into the world, will appear as a wave which rises, and which is opposed by the descending movement of matter. On the greater part of its surface, at different heights, the current is converted by matter into a vortex. At one point alone it passes freely, dragging with it the obstacle which will weigh on its progress but will not stop it. At this point is humanity; it is our privileged situation. (Bergson 1913, 268–9)

Both Bergson and Freud (1922, 31), for all their differences, speak of the relation between life and consciousness as one of 'thrust' and 'crust': of a drive of force that both produces and yet destroys its own border: 'It is the deep-seated self rushing up to the surface. It is the outer crust bursting, suddenly giving way to an irresistible thrust' (Bergson 1913, 169). If consciousness emerges from life it is also at odds with life; it is a delay or equilibrium that is also a pushing forward to destruction. Given this genealogy – which is the genealogy of the organism, *and* of a history of philosophy lured by the figure of the organism oscillating between closure and dissolution – is it any surprise that we have two Deleuzes, both lodged at the heart of the problem

of capital and annihilation? For capital is at once a system of relations productive of a closed interconnected pseudo-organic whole at the same time as capital is also destructive of any boundary or limit that would impede its expansive exchange. On the one hand there is the Deleuze who seems to offer a before or a beyond of theory: against the textualism or linguisticism of a body of thought that will only consider the world as it is inscribed and mediated, Deleuze appears to offer a way of thinking the emergence of systems from living bodies. And it is this positing of life before writing and systems in their now global form that seems to place Deleuze as the vitalist philosopher who will return logic and cognition to affect and the body. On the other hand there is the Deleuze who argues that capitalism needs to be extended beyond its axioms, that we need to create a body without organs, that incorporeal, eternal and impersonal events preside over lived meaning, and that the future of life needs to be liberated from the body and connected with silicon.

Deleuze is, therefore, at once the great vitalist and counter-vitalist philosopher of our time. His philosophy is a tireless tirade against the grounding of thought on living beings and the return of seemingly anarchic systems (such as capitalism) back to their original conditions. He will not see capitalism as an alienation of praxis from the living body, whereby the technologies that were intended to render social living more efficient ultimately enslave living bodies; on the contrary, capitalism is still too organic. Capitalist social formations may have liberated themselves from external or transcendent bodies or norms, but are now grounded on internal axioms. The entering into relation of forces has not yet become a truly differential calculus, in which powers – such as the power of the human body and the power of silicon – might produce new forms and creative lines that are not determined in advance by an already given measure. Commenting on Foucault, who wanted to take language away from the man of speech to an impersonal literature, Deleuze suggests that we also take life away from the organism:

> We must take quite literally the idea that man is a face drawn in the sand between two tides: he is a composition appearing only between two others, a classical past that never knew him, and a future that will no longer know him. There is no occasion either for rejoice or for weeping. Is it not commonplace nowadays to say that the forces of man have already entered into a relation with the forces of information technology and their third-generation machines which together create something other than man, indivisible 'man-machine' systems? Is this a union with silicon instead of carbon? (Deleuze 1988b, 89)

Only if the potentials that make capitalism possible are extended, rather than returned to their organic origin, do we really confront the problem of life and the future. Today, when the possibility of the annihilation of organic life is now becoming increasingly imaginable, if not certain, the question needs to be posed: do we proceed with a vitalism that assumes that life will always be the life of the living being who strives to maintain itself, *or,* do we ask how life created certain organisms capable of destroying their milieu and their own conditions of possibility? If something like the extinction of life is possible today is this not because of the potentiality of the living, of forces that act demonically, without regard for the meaning, value, worth and maintenance of the organism?

It is in this regard that Deleuze's counter-vitalism is also a hyper-vitalism. Once we consider the potentials from which living beings emerged – before the formation of bounded organisms, egos, self-interested subjects and upright citizens – we will then be confronted with the forces of the future. As long as we take the organism as our starting point, then the problems that confront us today, including the certainty that the organism has no future, will remain mired in the narcissistic captivation that regards the world only in terms of the viability of our own sensory-motor apparatus.

Chapter Two

Vitalism and Theoria

For all its breadth, then, one could define traditional active vitalism as a commitment to an original animating act that is in accord with the furthering of life, along with a criticism of systems of art, knowledge and politics that forget or erase this active genesis and accept systems as simply given. From a vitalist point of view, in the beginning is, and should be, the creative and self-productive act; any reification, forgetting or repression of that animating life needs to be overcome. Politics should be returned to the domain of bodies speaking together and forming the political; knowledge should be understood as having been constituted in response to life; and art or aesthetics would be one of the ways in which spirit might once again see and revive the creative power that forms systems but then becomes belied by systems.

If vitalism is given its explicit and intense form in Bergson's criticism of the reductive and reifying intellect, in James's doctrine that truth is originally responsive and to do with acting in the world, and with Ruyer's hostility to cybernetics and mechanism, vitalism is also *the* dominant motif in Western philosophy in general. This is so much the case that the two demons who have often been targeted by vitalism – Plato, for his separation of the idea and the good from the domain of political action, and Descartes for his separation of mind as substance from the rest of the embodied world – can also be read as being motivated by a mode of vitalist imperative. Descartes, after all, sought to return to the subject as the ground of knowledge and representation; his subjectivism is a reaction against the acceptance of transcendent truths not ultimately verifiable by experience. This is so much the case that in the twentieth century Husserl will criticize Descartes for not being sufficiently Cartesian; Descartes may have doubted the world but he left the subject as a 'tag end of the world' not seeing that the worldly subject was itself effected from transcendental subjective syntheses that were pure act rather than given substance (Husserl 1960, 24). If Plato has been criticized for positing a world of ideas to which thought would

simply be enslaved, and this against the performative force and mastery of the sophists, his philosophy also put forward the importance of justification and active persuasion against mere acceptance. By locating Ideas in an eternal realm, outside the war of competing voices and bodies, Plato also enabled the thought of a knowledge and intuition that would grasp the forms from which life emerges. Neo-Platonist mysticism will therefore efface the worldly embodied self but do so to attain an experience and knowledge more intense and profound than that of merely given things. What Plato attacked was any system of mere *doxa* that would circulate in an unthinking manner and not be grounded on true intuition.

Platonism's routing of the sophists can be seen as an act of counter-vitalism: repressing the activity of speech and the force of rhetorical agonistics for the sake of 'a' single eternal truth given in advance. But Plato can also be defended, against the sophists, for having returned speech to sense, to a meaning that can be grounded in an originating intuition. The fact that one could both attack and defend Plato on vitalist grounds, seeing the Ideas and the good either as the sources from which all sense flows and which ought to govern a polity that is otherwise given over to the death of mere noise *or* seeing the Ideas as repressions of active and genuinely political debate, tells us something about vitalism and something about the history of philosophy. Perhaps it is impossible *not* to be a vitalist: how could one, after all, affirm the value and power of the non-living? Vitalism is not one ethic among others but the way in which ethics is established: always on the basis of life. In terms of the history of philosophy we could note that previous philosophies are often dismissed precisely because they are mere systems, too readily accepting of received ideas without interrogating the genesis of their posited truths.

It was in this regard that Jacques Derrida saw Edmund Husserl as the metaphysician *par excellence* and as fulfilling the completion of philosophy's trajectory. Philosophy has always been the critique of received wisdom, of the merely true, in favour of justified true belief: intuiting the truth *as true* in an original and self-founded seeing (Derrida 2001, 200). If Plato thought that original intuition could be achieved by turning the soul away from projected shadows towards the source of light that allows those shadows to appear, then Husserl went further. Heidegger, after Husserl, suggested that the Platonic turn from shadows to light, from revealed to source of revealing, indicated something of truth's dynamic process of coming into presence, but that this revelatory dynamism had fallen into becoming a mere 'logic' or correct method that human beings ought to obey (Heidegger 1998, 177). Heidegger, like Husserl, was critical of simply accepting the

natural world as so much presented substance and was instead concerned to draw attention to the genesis of that nature. This genesis for Heidegger was historical; in the beginning the Greek world had a sense of things emerging into presence through a perception that would express itself in saying. For Husserl a historical genesis, or the setting of presentations into a language that would maintain itself through time, presupposed a subjective genesis: a subject intuiting in the here and now that which would be true for any subject whatever, for all spaces and for all time. Husserl therefore accounted for the emergence of sense, or what Derrida referred to as the opening to infinity (Derrida 1979, 6). Truth emerges in an act of intuition that is at once within this historical living world but that is also capable of intuiting in the present what would be true for any possible present, seeing the eternal and infinite in the here and now.

Derrida accepted this imperative of philosophical responsibility – one cannot simply adopt a system without interrogating its genesis – but also recognized the impossibility of that imperative. Any intuition or return to the origin or genesis is contaminated by the structuring effects – seen most narrowly in language – which that origin has effected. We are always already in a state of constitutive forgetting; our thinking life, the very animation of pure self-present experience, is structured by death. There is always something non-living in the living. No living body is author of itself. As a body, as a bounded form that maintains itself as the same through time, the living is always in relation to what is not itself, even if this internal otherness is the relation a body bears to itself in order to feel itself as a bounded body.

> Which means that God did not die at a given moment of history, but that God is Dead because he is the name of Death itself, the name of the death within me and the name of that which, *having stolen me from my birth,* has penetrated my life. As God-Death is difference within life, he has never ceased to die, that is to say, to live . . . Only life without difference, life without death will vanquish death and God. But it will do so by negating itself as life, within death, and by becoming God himself. God, thus, is Death: infinite Life . . . (Derrida 2001, 421)

Derrida has, therefore, argued for a constitutive link among auto-affection, hetero-affection and auto-immunity. A body is itself, or is this same living body experiencing its own living present, only if it feels or affects itself, and is in command of its ongoing self-creation. But that relation to oneself must pass through some form of exterior, whether that is the language through which I hear myself speak – a language that can never be

fully mine – or whether that is the image I take in of myself as a bounded visual whole, an image that reflects back to me the identity that I then take to be uniquely mine. A body, then, must strengthen its identity or border through some minimal reflection of the external or non-self onto itself.

To be fully, completely and absolutely oneself would be to be no self at all. Or, as Jean-Paul Sartre argued in *Being and Nothingness,* the desire to be being-in-itself (fully determined and bounded with a complete identity that requires no further fulfilment) and being-for-itself (a being that creates itself from itself, with no determination from outside) is a desire to be God, an impossible desire that we (we humans) nevertheless sustain. For Derrida the necessary auto-immunity, or minimal otherness, that sustains any living body, can be read in the structure of the history of philosophy and philosophy *as history.* In his reading of Husserl, Derrida shows that Husserl recognized that philosophy was only possible as living history; meaning emerges from an event of intuition but can only *live on* if it is inscribed in some technical system. Plato, Descartes, Kant, Husserl have sense today, can *make sense,* only if their living thought takes on the body of a text that can (and should) be re-read and re-animated. But the very condition for a living philosophical history is death: if Husserl's works can be re-read and re-lived it is because his works are inscribed; they can also therefore be circulated and repeated in a dull, empty and lifeless manner, distorted and also destroyed.

Nowhere is this more evident than in today's shift from philosophy to theory. Writers like Derrida and Deleuze are no longer confined within the arid and technical limits of the discipline of philosophy; their works are read by architects, literary theorists, journalists, filmmakers and novelists. But it is just that very dynamism and extension of the living word that is also the original work's death; it is precisely because theory has so much life, being read and re-read in a thousand different contexts, that the living breath of the original author cannot possibly dominate or survive. A philosophical work, as a bounded body or corpus, is essentially historical: it has life if it can go though time and maintain itself, living on and speaking into the future; but that living on is achieved through death, with the animating thought being sustainable only through some system of signs or traces that must already be other than some pure self-present and singular animating intent. Kant survives most strongly in philosophy precisely because one can be a Kantian without having read Kant; it is the passing over of animating intent into anonymity and potential perversion that consecrates a work as original and originating.

So, if Plato can be read at once as maintaining and annihilating the animating life of philosophical speech, one could say this about any text in

general. All claims to speak for the truth of life *as such*, to return the mere noise of systems to their animating origin, must on the one hand appeal to an originating spirit, while on the other hand any appeal to life in itself, to what life properly is, substitutes a static generality – a concept – for the pure and singular event of the living. Derrida was perhaps *the* philosopher who confronted this impossibility of grasping a pure life or singularity beyond the concept, and *the* philosopher who insisted that there could be no such thing as an absolutely living concept. If a concept works as a concept, if it means anything at all, then it has a force and repeatability beyond its initial articulation; it has to function, potentially, in the absence of its animating intent (Derrida 1988, 123). Derrida insisted over and over again on a death in life: experience of the living present, *as present and as alive*, is possible only through death. Something like writing, tracing, anticipation of absence, auto-immunity or hetero-affection must have torn the living present from itself so that it can relate to itself, have a sense of itself and *live* as this bounded being. Commenting on Freud's adoption of the magic writing pad as a figure for the workings of consciousness, Derrida discloses a new relation between consciousness and the death of the machine. The mechanical – relations that are external to each other, not self-synthesizing and self-commanding – is not added on to consciousness after the event. There is not a fully present organic mind that must then effect relations, for there are mindless relations from which consciousness is effected. This precludes us from 'naturalizing deconstruction' (Roden 2005) or from seeing Derrida's comments on Freud as a way of reducing synaptic breaches to a form of natural writing: for *writing is not nature but death*. If death is that which remains in itself without relation, affectation, synthesis – or an aiming for comprehension and communication – then writing is death, but so is the very condition of the mind.

> That the machine does not run by itself means something else: a mechanism without its own energy. The machine is dead. It is death. Not because we risk death in playing with machines, but because the origin of machines is the relation to death. (Derrida 2001, 285)

It was telling then that against Foucault's supposed criticism of Descartes for having subjected a world in which madness proliferated and in which reason has not yet become a single, detached and over-arching system to a world of one reasoning subject, Derrida suggested that there could be no other logic. If one wants to write about the chaos of otherness, and especially if one wishes to write a *history*, then one cannot but reduce what is

other to some generality of the same; there cannot be a *history* of true madness, a madness of genuine non-meaning and unworkability, precisely because to write and historicize is to introduce a generality and stability at odds with any supposed pure and singular life. Derrida does not only target Foucault's failure to realize that one cannot not be Cartesian – for insofar as one thinks, reasons, writes or historicizes one has already distanced oneself from the mere flux of the given – he also defends this necessity of Cartesian hyperbole:

> . . . the philosophical act can no longer be in memory of Cartesianism, if to be Cartesian, as Descartes himself doubtless understood it, is to attempt to be Cartesian. That is to say, as I at least tried to demonstrate, to-attempt-to-say-the-demonic-hyperbole from whose heights thought is announced to itself, *frightens* itself, and *reassures* itself against being annihilated or wrecked in madness or in death. At its *height*, hyperbole, the absolute opening, the uneconomic expenditure, is always reembraced by an economy and overcome by economy. The relationship between reason, madness and death is an economy, a structure of deferral whose irreducible originality must be respected. This attempt-to-say-the-demonic-hyperbole is not an attempt among others; it is not an attempt which would occasionally and eventually be completed by the saying of it, or by its object, the direct object of a wilful subjectivity. (Derrida 2001, 74–5)

It is just that potentiality for certain concepts, such as reason, to exist and insist beyond any of their actualized instances that marks what Derrida has referred to as the tie between deconstruction and justice. Deconstruction *is* justice because it will always detach a power of concepts – a textual power to exert a force beyond life and the living – from the usage of concepts. In this regard Derrida is perhaps a lone voice against a knee-jerk vitalism that is now more prevalent than ever. We can discern this vitalism in three contemporary motifs: an insistent, tireless and bitter anti-Cartesianism that accuses Descartes of separating thought from embodied life; a joyous 'return' to living systems, autopoietic bodies, embodied brains, affect and the feeling of what happens; and a redemptive departure from the supposedly overly linguistic and textual strictures of 'theory' to a phenomenology of the lived.

Anti-Cartesianism, and vitalist anti-Cartesianism in particular, goes back to Descartes's own day, with the lifeless horrors of his mechanistic philosophy being countered by the assertion of a spirit that infuses matter, giving

it a form and dynamism irreducible to the calculable reactions among parts (Rogers 1996, 218; Israel 2001, 52). But anti-Cartesianism also has a specifically twentieth-century trajectory: Heidegger saw Cartesian subjectivism as the fulfilment of a metaphysical tendency to ground the unfolding of existence on some already present term. Richard Rorty, in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature,* conducted a typically pragmatist critique of Cartesianism (Rorty 2009, 50; 124). By establishing the mind as the site where the truths of the world are mirrored we consider truth to be accuracy of representation, and consider truth alongside other modes of private certainty that can be ascertained without reference to contexts, actions and dialogue with others. Since Rorty, anti-Cartesianism has intensified to a fevered pitch particularly with the new models of embodied mind that have come out of neuroscience and cognitive science. In *Descartes' Error* the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio insists that the self is primarily affective, beginning as a body maintaining itself through processes of self-regulation and networks of response and feedback. It is the feeling of these emotions – the feeling of what happens – that constitutes the self. In cognitive science Maturana and Varela have challenged the Cartesian paradigm of a mind that processes information about an objective world that is given as so much data. They argue that knowledge is essentially embodied, and follows from the nature of living systems. A bounded organism maintains itself in a state of relative stability, engaging with the outside world in terms of the range of possible responses it needs to make in order to adjust and maintain itself.

Maturana and Varela refer to their work as biological *phenomenology*, opposed to the Cartesian turn to mechanism (which in turn followed the failure to find a vital force):

> . . . the more biologists looked for the explicit formulation of one or other of these special organizing forces, the more they were disappointed by finding only what they could find anywhere else in the physical world: molecules, potentials and blind material interactions governed by aimless physical laws. Thence, under the pressure of unavoidable experience and the definite thrust of Cartesian thought a different outlook emerged, and mechanism gradually gained the biological world by insisting that the only factors operating in the organization of living systems were physical factors, and that no non-material vital organizing force was necessary. (Maturana and Varela 1980, 74)

Elsewhere they draw upon the more philosophical anti-Cartesian notion of being-in-the-world: there are not subjects who come to know a world, for in

the beginning is the openness to a world with the living body being nothing more than its potential responsiveness to a milieu that is always its own, and given in terms of meaning (Maturana and Varela 1987). From that commitment to autopoiesis and being-in-the-world, Varela has gone on to link the embodied, active and world-oriented mind to a primary ethical know-how, with this in turn allowing us to shift from Cartesian subjects to a Buddhist sense of attunement:

> Cognitive science is waking up to the full importance of the realization that perception does not consist in the recovery of a pre-given world, but rather in the perceptual guidance of action in a world that is inseparable from our sensorimotor capacities, and that 'higher' cognitive structures also emerge from recurrent patterns of conceptually guided action. Thus cognition consists not of representations but of *embodied action*. Thus we can say that the world we know is not pre-given; it is, rather, *enacted* through our history of structural coupling, and the temporal hinges that articulate enaction are rooted in the number of alternative microworlds that are activated in every situation. These alternatives are the source of both common sense and creativity in cognition.
>
> Thus it seems more and more compelling to look at knowledge – to understand understanding – in a manner that can only be called post-Cartesian: that is, knowledge appears more and more as being built from small domains composed of microworlds and microidentities. (Varela 1999, 17–18)

In turn, philosophers have taken up Maturana and Varela's work, using it to counter a Cartesian philosophy of mind, and have then proceeded to re-read and retrieve phenomenology in terms of living systems and embodied cognition. In this retrieval of phenomenology, after phenomenology, there is a distinct separation of a good (vital) Husserl, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, from a pernicious (overly textual) post-Derridean phenomenology. This archival re-writing and canonization is presented explicitly in *Naturalizing Phenomenology*, where they chart their own project as neither the substance dualism of Descartes, nor the appeal to a life force that marks vitalism (Petitot, Varela, Pachoud and Roy 1999, 47–8). Like so many anti-Cartesian returns to phenomenology, the project is figured as one of unification, mending, rejoining or retrieving. The editorial opening chapter is entitled 'Beyond the Gap', resonating with other rift-mending titles that tie philosophy to cognitive science in order to restore unity. These

include Andy Clark's *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again* or Michael Wheeler's *Reconstructing the Cognitive World,* or Owen Flanagan's *The Really Hard Problem* – which points out of course that the problem of mind is a Western problem that can be happily exited by turning to Buddhism. There is a good philosophy and phenomenology of mending, restoring or placing the mind back *in life,* and this must be set against a pernicious intellectualism, theoretical distancing or mystical not-knowing: 'I think that Buddhism broadly construed contains a remarkably sophisticated metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and philosophy of mind – the best, across the board, among classical philosophical traditions. But my overall naturalistic philosophical convictions lead me to want to tame what I consider implausible in Buddhism from a naturalist perspective' (Flanagan 2007, 235).

On the one hand, then, there is a reaction against a Cartesianism that sets mind against world; on the other hand, it is assumed that once Cartesianism is diagnosed the mind can simply will itself to close, bridge or restore the dualist rift, *and* that it can do so by taking up Buddhism as though it were a convenient *techne*. But if the world really is the interconnected organism or web that it is claimed, then would not Cartesianism *and* Buddhism have embedded themselves into bodies and their evolving and evolved potentials? Would not philosophical traditions be both the outcome of, and catalysts for, ways of comportment, perception, feeling and thinking? This much is suggested by both Bergson and Deleuze, both of whom regard the separated intellect as at once an evolved form explicable in terms of life's potentialities, and as a tendency that can be surpassed not by return, restoration or retrieval but by radical deterritorialization. This has two consequences: philosophy is not a *techne*, not a method or tool added on to mind that might be assessed for correctness and then adopted or abandoned. If a philosophy is *possible* – including Platonism, Cartesianism, Kantianism, Freudianism or any other seemingly malevolent deviation from living thought's 'natural' mode – then this must disclose thought's possibility. If one sees any of these movements as creating a blockage, such as the false problem of how mind relates to the world, then both Bergson and Deleuze will suggest a creative (not restorative) response. Deleuze insists repeatedly in his book on Bergson that the philosopher will take a muddled composite, such as the notion of free will. The problem of freedom will do nothing more than create confusion as long as the will is seen as a thing within the world to which we then want to add the attribute of freedom. What we need to do is push the problem *further*: free will is not an event within space that opens up more possibilities, so that one might look back and say that

although I chose one path I could have chosen another. Considered in this way freedom is a diminution, or path taken within a world of several existing paths. But if freedom is considered more radically, not as a thing within the world that is *less* real – as only one of the paths laid out before us – but as more real. Freedom adds to the world: in addition to what is already actual there is a capacity to create another line of life. By making the concept of freedom *more extreme*, separating it from its confused and composite form, one arrives at a pluralism that is also a monism. One does not restore, bridge, unify or retrieve in philosophy; concepts cut into the actual world and create pure modes: what it is *to think, to be just, to live* – that does not presuppose some existing thinking, living and already moral being. Second, this means that reading a philosopher requires not asking what in their thought answers best to the world we have; reading is not a question of accuracy, correctness or copying. Reading is the opening of potentiality. This leads to the second point regarding philosophy and genealogy. Today's returns to phenomenology, 'after theory', have been largely acts of re-territorialization – retrieving a naturalized Merleau-Ponty or Husserl to amend the extremism of Derrida (and the split between continental and analytic philosophy), or going back to the organic vitalism of Bergson to repair the machinic emphases in Deleuze and Guattari. But by what right does one decide that certain aspects of a corpus ought not to be read? Deleuze confronts this ethic of reading and life with the notion of 'isms'. One can read a philosopher according to an image of thought – how well does Kant's theory of mind answer to the living brain[1] – or one can open a corpus according to *what it does*. Are there new problems in the past works of art, philosophy and science that might release thinking from its already given organic images? Only if we read the entire past with a sense of the eternal – of potentials for thinking that remain and insist, and are not lived – may we have a future that is not the continuation of the same dull round.

In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari insist on reading the history of philosophy *not* according to one model of mind, which various philosophers would more or less accurately reflect, but with a sense of how philosophy's created concepts bring certain conceptual personae in train (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 11). The Kantian categorical imperative whereby the subject's experience of itself in time precludes knowledge of the 'I' who synthesizes time follows from a certain posing of problems: no longer a Cartesian doubt but a plane of distinction between determined time and the I who determines. Such an approach contrasts radically with contemporary attempts to naturalize Kantianism or bring his philosophical

concepts into line with theories of evolutionary life, such as Marc D. Hauser's *Moral Minds* (2007). Hauser ties the empirical fact that all humans have evolved to follow laws with the Kantian formal imperative *that there be law, even if no content of law is given*. The difference between this evolutionary approach which moves from a theory of life to philosophical sense and Deleuze and Guattari's vitalism is, again, that the latter is passive. Philosophy does not exist as a supplement or extension to biological life. Rather, it possesses its own timeline and imperative by virtue of the concepts it creates: 'The greatness of philosophy is measured by the nature of events to which its concepts summon us or that it enables us to release in concepts' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 34). Kant can be read, from the point of view of science and functions, as one way in which we make sense of humanity's general submission to laws: there is no specific law given, but there is a universal recognition that there be morality in general. Formalism can be seen as one of the ways in which the organism makes sense of itself. Philosophically, though, concepts are not forms through which a body turns back upon and knows itself; they possess a power of violence and estrangement *and* ideal intensities and singularities. This is a pragmatic question: is philosophy a mode of self-knowledge and understanding that might supplement, and be supplemented by, theories of life? To follow this path would appear at first as a way of saving and legitimating philosophy, such that a reading of Hume, Husserl, Heidegger or Kant could exist alongside scientific theories of mind and life. But there would be two objections: should one really be bothered reading Heidegger or Kant if one's primary focus is knowledge of the organism? Further, does not the history of philosophy with its own concepts, figures, images, timelines and personifications possess an incorporeal power irreducible to its reflection or comprehension of material life? On the other hand, then, we may need to refigure pragmatism: philosophy may be a way of life, and may be better considered in terms of what it does rather than its mimetic accuracy. But this cannot be a pragmatism of the human organism. It would not be a question of beginning from man and then asking what mode of philosophy serves his interests, for philosophy bears different powers of survival and is evidence of a power of *living on* that is not that of the living being. Attempts to save philosophy by naturalizing its grounds – reading Kant in terms of the universal evolutionary tendency to morality, or reading Platonic aesthetics in terms of neuroscience's discovery of general principles of artistic enjoyment – not only domesticate philosophy and reduce its power, they also rule out of play the inhuman and trans-temporal force opened by philosophical concepts. Is reading best thought of as consumption for self-maintenance, assimilating texts to the

image we already have of ourselves, or as an encounter with a power *not* already our own that might open new images of thought?

This brings us back to all the attempts to return to phenomenology (the lived, experience, the embodied mind) after an era of theory that was deemed to be overly textual, inhuman or apolitical (where politics is assumed to be of the polity, of bodies in common). If there is a Husserl who focused on perception, genesis and the lived body (a Husserl who gave birth to the Merleau-Ponty of the flesh) there is another Husserl who did not simply return logic and geometry back to their animating intent but was also concerned with the survival of such knowledges beyond the living. Husserl was insistently opposed to *Lebensphilosophie* or the attempt to return truth – which must have a force beyond its genesis – to life. Heidegger also concerned himself, after *Being and Time*, with forms of 'saying' that were detached from their origin, that did *not* continue to live and, precisely in that poetic separation, could not be returned back to some animating life. If there is a Heidegger that is easily appropriated by projects of artificial life, embodied mind and cognitive science – a Heidegger of Being-in-the-world opposed to metaphysical separation and abstraction – there is another Heidegger who recognized that the lapse into Cartesianism was no accident. Heidegger described the story of a Descartes who came and doubted and thereby created the subject as a 'bad novel'. What really needed to be thought was not this isolated invention of a concept so much as why it is that Being would be disclosed in this manner of a presence that grounds all appearance (Heidegger 1978, 274). *This* Heidegger insisted that if it is possible for an event to befall 'consciousness', Being, life or *Dasein* then this needs to be considered as essential to what life-consciousness-*Dasein*-Being *is*.

Thus there would be two ways in which one might track our contemporary loss of life. On the one hand we could simply attribute a malevolent, misguided and life-denying force to some external power: capitalism, technology, Cartesianism, theory, language, logic or images would all be dangerous supplements, added on to life and capable of deflecting its proper potentiality. Certain concepts, too, could be diagnosed as improper and life-denying false turns. The concept of disembodied mind or the violent dominating tendency of technology would be forces opposed to life that, today, we ought simply to overcome. And we could find the space of this overcoming either in the body itself (before its lapse into cognitivism, theory or intellectualism) or in other cultures (Buddhism, the non-West, new ecological movements) or in other philosophies, such as systems theory, phenomenology or affect-oriented post-theory versions of Deleuzism.

On the other hand, we could consider what Jacques Derrida, following Heidegger, referred to as a necessary possibility (Bennington and Derrida 1993, 51). If it is possible for an event to occur then it is less than rigorous to consider that event as simply external, parasitic, deviant or inessential. Essence would need to be rethought: the essence of a being is not simply its *proper potentiality,* or that which allows it to remain the same, for essence – what something is – would include its potentiality *not to be itself.*

In Heidegger's own work, and as early as *Being and Time,* there is something revelatory in non-revelation, something essential in the inessential, something unthinking, hidden and inert in 'being's' capacity to disclose itself (and hide itself) in thinking and life. In *Being and Time* it is precisely when being-in-the-world breaks down that I not only become aware that this world has been given to me in terms of my finite potential and decided projects; I am also exposed to the *Angst* that follows from realizing that potentiality is not exhausted by this already given world into which I am thrown. I could read this moment of breakdown as one of radical freedom; suddenly, with a loss of meaning, or with the exposure to a world that appears as no longer held together by future-oriented circumspection, I am placed in the realm of decision. This would not be a decision between possibilities so much as a scene of radical undecidability, in which the falling apart of a determined milieu would bring me face to face with the fact of freedom. There is nothing that binds me essentially to this specified milieu of meaning; there is a potentiality for being's unfolding *beyond* the world as it is given to me in sense. Confrontation with the detachment of being from meaning, milieu, world, 'mineness' and exposure to undecidability may yield a form of hyper-humanism and hyper-vitalism. When this world that I experience in terms of what I can do, and in terms of others who appear before me in terms of common projects and capacities – when this world breaks down I am liberated from already determined structures and relations and confronted with the pure event of potentiality as such. Life is no longer given as meaningful, but presents me with the pure decision or event before all meaning, calculation, sense and determination: I am not placed in an absolutely undetermined or infinite realm of pure decision, for I am still a finite being 'thrown' into a world that is irreducible to any single decision. This is not a point of undifferentiated or absolute indeterminacy, nor pure freedom; but it is an event of radical rupture or opening which allows one to live life before, beyond or outside 'the lived'.

This way of thinking the *breakdown* of meaning was already suggested before Heidegger in Edmund Husserl's world annihilation experiment, in which Husserl suggested that even though conscious life begins as already

oriented to a world of things (so much so that it readily takes itself to be a form of thing) it was possible nevertheless to imagine the complete absence of the world and yet retain a (radically altered) ongoing transcendental subjectivity:

> It is . . . quite conceivable that experience, because of conflict, might dissolve into illusion not only in detail, and that it might not be the case, as it is de facto, that every illusion manifests a deeper truth and that every conflict, in the place where it occurs, is precisely what is demanded by more inclusive contextures in order to preserve the total harmony; in our experiencing it is conceivable that there might be a host of irreconcilable conflicts not just for us but in themselves, that experience might suddenly show itself to be refractory to the demand that it carry on its positing of physical things harmoniously, that its context might lose its fixed regular organizations of adumbrations, apprehensions, and appearances – in short, that there might no longer be any world . . . *while the being of consciousness,* of any stream of mental processes whatever. *Would indeed be necessarily modified by an annihilation of the world of physical things its own existence would not be touched.* (Husserl 1982, 109–10)

Such a thought experiment would return us to the pure life of consciousness that could not be identified with man, humanity, the individual, the Cartesian ego or any other form of meaningful and posited living being. The problem with such a distinction – the life of subjectivity before and beyond *the subject* – has exercised the post-phenomenological tradition ever since. It is this problem of the degree to which life can be thought in the absence of man which is at once the most urgent question of our time and an evasion of our time. Insofar as we face extinction of the species, or the annihilation of the human milieu by the human race, the problem of life and its existence beyond man appears to be precisely what we ought to consider if we are to approach living on in a radically altered form (a form that would, for example, need to abandon its anthropocentric assumptions, values and practices of consumption). If this problem is, however, considered to be a *philosophical* problem – where philosophy is domesticated within human cognition – then far from allowing us to face the violence of our journey towards self-extinction, it merely provides one more way for philosophy and knowledge to live on. When Husserl asked us to consider transcendental experience that would not yet be that of a subject living in the world, he was at once experimenting with the anthropomorphic limits of our capacity to think of life, at the same time as he was saving

philosophy: if we could imagine experience as such, not the experience of this or that rational animal in a milieu, then there would always be a space for pure philosophy beyond the range of the human and life sciences. And we might extend this to note the urgent, yet redemptive, tone today of ecological ethics; it is the insistence on the universe as an organism or web of life that allows us to retain anthropomorphism, for the world is still the milieu of our life *and* life itself is presented as active, creative and self-furthering:

> . . . the universe is not a lifeless, soulless aggregate of inert chunks of matter, rather it resembles a living organism. Life is not a random accident, and the basic drives of the human psyche include far more than the drive for sex and self-gratification. Matter, life and mind are consistent elements within an overall process of great complexity yet coherent and harmonious design. Space and time are united as the dynamic background of the universe. Matter is vanishing as a fundamental feature of reality, retreating before energy, and continuous fields are replacing discrete particles as the basic elements of an energy-bathed and information-filled universe. The reality we call universe is a seamless whole, evolving over eons of cosmic time and producing conditions where life, and then mind and consciousness, can emerge. (Laszlo 2008, 52)

If we attribute mindfulness, life and the status of the organism to the world as a global brain, we at once acknowledge that we need to go beyond the sense of ourselves as living bodies located in a world that is a mere container; at the same time we also attribute *active* life, relation, embeddedness, organic order and sympathy to a world that has nevertheless produced a species – the human – that appears to have acted against the supposedly essential principles of life (sympathy, connectedness, harmony). Mind may be a capacity for relation, care, fellow-feeling and attunement but it is just as evident that there exist tendencies for inertia, non-relation, non-actualization or, in Deleuze's word's, malevolence, violence and stupidity:

> Cowardice, cruelty, baseness and stupidity are not simply corporeal capacities or traits of character or society: they are structures of thought as such. The transcendental landscape comes to life: places for the tyrant, the slave and the imbecile must be found within it – without the place resembling the figure who occupies it, and without the transcendental ever being traced from the empirical figures which it makes possible. (Deleuze 2004a, 189)

Husserl's world annihilation experiment that asked us to imagine conscious life in the absence of man and his world perhaps has its closest contemporary counterpart in Quentin Meillassoux's concept of the ancestral statement (Meillassoux 2008). According to Meillassoux it is possible and philosophically respectable to speak about the emergence of life, including conscious life. Meillassoux is in part reacting vehemently against a phenomenology that would always consider the world in terms of the lived. Meillassoux's named culprit is the Kantian Copernican turn: an insistence that we cannot know things in themselves, for we only experience things in relation, *as given*. Meillassoux's break with Kantian conditions of experience; and the post-Kantian refusal to speak of things independent of their givenness to us has, however, been preceded by a more radical strand of phenomenology.

It is true that Kant accounted for the origin of the lived world from the categories of subjective experience, and then placed things in themselves outside the range of knowledge (even if they had to be presupposed), but phenomenology's response to this was that Kant had therefore failed to account for the origin of the world as such (Fink 1970). The *problem* for phenomenology is not simply the dismissal of anything that would lie outside the range of the subject, reducing the world to the lived; on the contrary, the genuine problem as it was articulated by Husserl was to liberate experience from the assumptions of a subject (considered as some privileged substance) who then experiences a world. This was the problem of not beginning from meaning but accounting for the genesis of meaning.

It was this problem that Deleuze identified in his encounter with Husserl. For Deleuze, Husserl would never be able to account for the genesis of sense precisely because he always remained too close to the assumptions of *meaning*: the assumption that the world would be there, synthesized, for an experiencing consciousness. That assumption shifted the genuine problem of sense – which for Deleuze was the problem of the distribution of potentials from which acts of meaning would then be possible – into the domain of the subject. The problem cannot be considered in its truly problematic character – that is, in its capacity to think of life beyond the meaning 'we' make of it – as long as the living body of a subject oriented to meaning is pre-supposed:

> . . . the problem, far from indicating a subjective and provisional state of empirical knowledge, refers on the contrary to an ideational objectivity or to a structure constitutive of sense which grounds both knowledge and

> the known, the proposition and its correlates. The relation between the problem and its conditions defines sense as the truth of the problem as such. It may happen that the conditions remain insufficiently determined or, on the other hand, that they are determined in such a manner that the problem may turn out to be a false problem. As for the determination of conditions, it implies, on the one hand, a nomad distribution in which singularities are distributed (*Topos*); on the other hand it implies a time of decomposition whereby this space is divided into subspaces. Each one of these subspaces is progressively defined by the adjunction of new points ensuring the progressive and complete determination of the domain under consideration (*Aion*). There is always a space which condenses and precipitates singularities, just as there is always a time which progressively completes the event through fragments of future and past events. Thus there is always a spatio-temporal self-determination of the problem, in the sequence of which the problem advances, making up for the deficiencies and thwarting the excess of its own conditions. It is at this point that truth becomes sense and productivity. Solutions are engendered at precisely the same time that the problem determines *itself*. This is why people often believe that the solution does not allow the problem to subsist, and that it assigns to it retrospectively the status of a subjective moment which is necessarily transcended as soon as the solution is found. The opposite, though, is the case. By means of an appropriate process the problem is determined in space and time and, as it is determined, it determines the solutions in which it persists. The synthesis of the problem with its conditions engenders propositions, their dimensions and their correlates. (Deleuze 2004c, 139)

This relation between problem and solution allows for a different way of thinking about life and the vital order. Life as it exists in its actual form is not the ground for all questioning and sense; rather there is something like a problem of life to which this world would be but one solution. One might then, from that thought, ask what other – inhuman, possibly non-carbon based – life-forms might be possible? This notion has practical import, as Simon Conway Morris's *Life's Solution* (2003) indicates. Human organisms may not be inevitable *but* the path to living forms is a response to a problem that is not exhausted in the outcome. The intelligence of life is not, as Daniel Dennett suggests, 'substrate neutral' (Dennett 1996, 360). Rather, from the actual properties of life as it exists, one might ask what other paths to life might have unfolded. This is not teleology – seeing evolution as inevitably leading to the present – but it does give *some* sense to a tendency to

preformism: if there were to be living forms then they would have to possess a certain consistency, not necessarily *this* consistency, but also not any mechanistically random aggregate. There is a truth to epigenesis, for problems are not simple unfoldings of a pre-given form but have to respond to or 'become' what they encounter; but the response is not merely statistical, it produces qualities depending on the potentialities of life:

> . . . insofar as preformism exceeds simple metric variations, it tends to be aligned with an epigenesis to the extent epigenesis is forced to hold to a kind of virtual or potential preformation. The essential is elsewhere; basically two conceptions share the common trait of conceiving the organism as a fold, an originary folding or creasing (and biology has never rejected this determination of living matter, as shown nowadays with the fundamental pleating of globular protein) . . .
>
> If Heideggerian terms can be used, we can say that the fold of epigenesis is an *Einfalt,* or that it is the differentiation of an undifferentiated, but that the fold from preformation is a *Zwiefalt,* not a fold in two – since every fold can only be thus – but a 'fold-of-two', an *entre-deux,* something 'between' in the sense that a difference is being differentiated. From this point of view we cannot be sure that preformism does not have a future. (Deleuze 1993, 10)

Life in its actual existence is therefore doubled by problems: the organism has the form that it does in response to a general problem that exceeds it. Faced with extinction or the annihilation of its milieu, the human organism can either retreat to the insistence that its world is always the world for the meaning-generating and meaning-bound organism, and can continue to maintain a highly normative mage of dynamic, self-furthering, interconnected and sympathetic life. *Or,* one might ask: what is life such that it generates capacities for self-annihilation, malevolence, inertia *and* theoretical detachment? One might have to take account, then, not only of all those unthinking and demonic forces of life, but also the capacity to think and create beyond the limits of actual living forms. This position of the ideational autonomy of problems is maintained in *What is Philosophy?* where Deleuze and Guattari distinguish philosophy and its concepts from communication and everyday practice; the former are intensive and operate in a form of absolute survey, marking out a relation among powers quite distinct from the actualized and lived world. By considering problems as irreducible to the subject Deleuze

and Guattari at once defend the domain of philosophy, distinguishing it from science, art and opinion; but they also challenge one of the current defences of philosophy as being grounded in meaning and life (if life is considered to be embodied, meaningful, and human life). Is it any surprise, one might ask, that just as the human species is faced with its own destruction and a future beyond the realms of its traditionally narrative imagination, there is a resurgence of insistence on philosophy as a practice for sustaining a *meaningful* life (with this occurring alongside no less compensatory assertions of life as dynamic, interconnected, self-maintaining, fruitful and organic).[2] If one considers philosophy as a practice, a form of therapy, a way of allowing the organism to make its way in the world in terms of its own meaning, or as one of the ways in which the various practices and relations of the life-world are reflected upon, then one abandons the violent intrusion of problems. It is just this violent force of problems that might open the human organic imaginary to other timelines. Consider the current pseudo-problem of climate change, considered – as it is – predominantly from the point of view of the organism. (I say it is a pseudo-problem precisely because the way in which it is posed as a problem – how do we live on? How do we manage our resources? – takes place in the very logic that led to milieu-annihilation.) The vocabulary of mitigation, sustainability, cap and trade, renewable resources, along with traditionally narrative concepts such as 'drought' all relate to the globe as the milieu for our own survival. As such, then, the questions posed to the ecosystem, despite their attempt to imagine other generations and even other species, are posed from the point of view of organic life. What do 'we' need to do to survive? A problem in its ideational power – let us take the extreme case of the problem of sense, or the problem of how there could be a domain of truth such as the mathematical – opens up an impersonal, inhuman and inorganic time. Life, the lived, the human and meaning would no longer be horizons beyond which thinking would not go and *ethics* would not be localized in sympathy. In keeping with the Stoic tradition, problems would pose the challenge of thinking beyond one's duration and immediate fellow feeling.

In the current appeals to Heidegger the *problem* has been dismissed: there simply is no life or consciousness outside the lived, embodied and meaningful engagement of being-in-the-world (Wrathall and Malpas 2000). Husserl's hyper-Cartesianism, which accepted Descartes's detachment of subjectivity from extended matter but criticized the positing of the subject as another substance, bifurcated into two critical post-phenomenological possibilities.

One could, following Sartre's *Transcendence of the Ego,* insist that consciousness is not a thing, and cannot be known or grasped as anything other than a relation to what it is not. Such an account would be critical of any positing of mind as a thing within the world, and would instead attend to the self as nothing more than its ongoing relation to the world. One can see the first strand of this anti-Cartesian anti-subjectivism in the recent work on cognition, where selfhood is nothing more than a system of engagements, negotiations, relations and ongoing adaptive procedures. From Richard Rorty's pragmatism, which (however alarmingly) invokes Heidegger, Derrida and the phenomenological criticism of a reality in itself, to recent work that entwines Husserl with cognitive science, there has been an emphasis placed on relations and adaptive activity liberated from terms and foundations. What has to be overcome is any sense of the subject as outside act and praxis. The subject is action. There is no subject as substance – such is the Cartesian error – for there is only action, from which a subjected is posited *ex post facto.*

The second strand, focused more on what the subject is not – not a thing, not a part of the world, not a substance – focuses on the subject as an event, as a rupture with already given relations. The subject is negation of the given rather than self-creation through performance and interaction. Sartre considered consciousness to be freedom, and in this respect he was following Kant, for whom the experienced subject within the world would necessarily be at odds with the synthetic capacities that constituted the world as an object. But whereas Kant was confident that one could act, practically, as if one were not bound up with the world as a series of posited objects, and whereas a form of liberal anti-foundationalism accepted that the self could be considered as nothing more than a procedure, Sartre was aware of the impossibility of living authentically as *not a thing, as nothingness.* Not only is there a constant lure of living as though one were being-in-itself, as though one were a complete and fully actualized form – seduced as one is by the things of this world with which we too readily identify; this desire is coupled with a drive to be a pure being for-itself, determined by nothing other than one's will to exist. This impossible desire, as we have already noted, is a desire to be God: at once absolutely free and undetermined *and* absolutely complete and self-sufficient. This contradiction can be discerned as far back as Aristotle's reflections on human life: to be complete, the self must not be enclosed within its own bounds but must also extend to friends, social recognition, honour, concern and a regard for the future; but in addition to not remaining self-enclosed one also must be sufficient, not enslaved to

contingency, worldly goods that might perish or wants that might not be attained or sustained (Mackay 2005).

Both Aristotle and Sartre stressed, in quite different ways, the specifically human nature of transcendence. Whereas merely nutritive souls bear a relation to the world and do so in order to maintain themselves, human beings have both this nutritive and perceptive relation to the world as well as a rational capacity to discern their position in these relations: a capacity that allows human beings to give an end to themselves in terms of how they narrate, value and define their own lives (Irwin 1990). Both of these demands of the self – that it at once be self-defining or autopoietic but not self-enclosed or detached from a fluid relationality – have characterized philosophy's late-twentieth-century turning away from its supposed logical and cognitive focus to art and literature. For once the self is considered, not as a thing to be known but as a work to be made and viewed, one overcomes the paradigm of knowledge and moves towards an ethics of praxis. Art, then, would be a way of taking philosophy away from its role as a mere discipline and transforming it into an art of life. Aristotelian ethics, today, insists upon a model of humans as communicating, social and political animals: beings that do not need to establish, justify or submit to society precisely because to be human is to be defined in relation to others. (For Alasdair MacIntyre the very existence of social contract theory as a problem is testimony to the atrophying of the proper social relations that would allow ethics to make sense.) Aristotelianism is frequently an explicit anti-Cartesianism, and often an anti-modernism. There was a time – supposedly – when we understood ourselves as part of a social, communicating and dynamically adaptive whole, but with the loss of the world as a meaningful place and the submission to capitalist rationalism the 'self' has become nothing more than a ghost or fiction whose genuine being becomes impossible to discern. MacIntyre (1981, 238) cites Jane Austen as the last of the novelists with a profound sense of the self as a dialogic being, at once formed through others while always capable of negotiating and transforming itself in those relations. Other philosophers will be less bleak about abandoning the tradition of literature as early as the eighteenth century. Martha Nussbaum regards Charles Dickens as offering valuable exploration and opportunity for sympathy in the exercise of forming a meaningful life; and she will also see Henry James, with his attention to perception and the openness of experience not (as it was for MacIntyre) as the reduction of selves to mere *objets d'art* but as journeys of fellow feeling and emotive engagement (Nussbaum 1992, 8; 84).

Despite their differences as to what counts as an instance of good literature, the criteria are similar: selves are not substances that enter into relation, for individuals are characters formed in relation to other characters. In addition to an attention to social relations as organic wholes, Aristotelian ethics has also stressed the self's capacity to define *itself*, to form one's life as a narrative whole. Not surprisingly, this philosophical argument has also grounded itself in fiction. Rather than read the novels of the present, though, it is Jane Austen (for her sense of social organicism) or Dickens (for his sense of character) that has attracted attention. The novel at once presents the individual and their journey through a world, at the same time as it defines that individual in terms of their social encounters. By appealing to the novel, and the pre-modernist novel, as a medium for self-fashioning and sympathy, contemporary ethical theory remains implicitly critical of modern social forms that place relations and networks beyond individual understanding and management, and also of the various artistic modes of disenchantment and disgust that seek to alienate rather than elicit sympathy.

The existence of neo-Aristotelianism, its criticism of any form of ethics that is not practical and communal, its appeal to the novel as an art-form for self-formation and therapy, tells us something about the problem of the self and its relation to its own (and philosophy's history). Why, we might ask, is philosophy attacking its own history: not simply addressing this or that error but targeting something like the philosophical imperative – pure truth, logic, abstraction – and seeing that illicit imperative as properly overcome through art? Why also, when it does turn to art, does philosophy read art as *better philosophy* rather than as art itself? Austen is a great novelist, supposedly, because of her sense of character formation through social relations, James a great novelist because of his pragmatic awareness of the world as unfolded through action and perception, Dickens a worthy member of the canon because of his capacity to place different types of character in ethically demanding narratives.

Those movements in art history that have reacted against art's humanizing or comforting tendencies – just as philosophy has attacked its journey towards increasingly arid intellectualism – do not appear to be worthy of philosophical attention. For it is just those features of art that philosophy has used to find its own life once more – sympathy, character, narrative engagement, meaning – that art has (at least since the twentieth century) set out to destroy. If there is a Henry James who answers to the philosopher's desire to consider selves as open to the world, as perceptively sensitive and as gifted readers of others, there is another Henry James who set that very

seductive notion of the self as a problematic object within his fiction. One could argue that the denouement of *The Turn of the Screw* occurs when the governess suspects that the children she has viewed all along as beautifully innocent aesthetic wholes are actually dissimulating performers. The young boy who was figured (by the narrating governess) as the very model of living self-enclosure is revealed to have been manipulating appearance with a sense of social relations and their complexity beyond the governess's propriety. The narrative plays with the very lures of narrative and the tendency to be captivated by character and seduced by the beauty of moral wholeness. And this is true not only of framed narratives in general, which are always in some regard distanced from their enunciation, but art in general. One does not have to essentialize or dehistoricize art to note that once a text is read as art – set apart as an object, detached from the author's living voice – it can always be read as a disembodied voice, as a pure 'said' without underlying or grounding intentionality. James was not simply writing one more story or adding one more tale to the canon, for he was also taking part in a history of fiction that has turned against its own alluring powers of narrative captivation. Just as twentieth-century theory suggested that a genuine move in the philosophical game could only be undertaken by a total rewriting of the rules – and this because there was something life-denying in the philosophical endeavour as such – so art has also turned against what it diagnosed to be its own base (and organic) instincts. Art ought not to be consumption, passification, identification, mere enjoyment or diversion, for all such activities would appear to be nothing more than ways in which the self as organism maintains itself in its happy complacency. If there has been a philosophical reaction against a Cartesian subjectivism that resulted in an overly logic mastery of the world for the sake of a life reduced to mere technical manipulation, this has been coupled with art's reaction against an aesthetics in which the art object would be produced for easy enjoyment.

If philosophy (and often neuroscience and cognitive science) today seek to find in art precisely what art has tried to banish from itself – art's capacity to maintain organic equilibrium – we might also ask whether a philosophy that is trying to become more like this art of yesteryear is not also losing its own life. In both cases – the privileging of art that serves self-fashioning, the philosophy that furthers life – it is the life of the human organism that is assumed to be the normative basis for life in general. If Gilles Deleuze also sought to overcome some of philosophy's rigidities and to do so through encounters with modes of thought that had taken place in art and the sciences, he did so by looking not at philosophy's over-reaching (as overly

abstract, overly intellectual) but at its self-domestication and impoverishment by all too readily following normative images of life – the man of good sense and common sense. Deleuze's vitalism aims not to return art and philosophy to the living self but to follow those moments indicated in the history of art, science and philosophy where the organism begins to intuit a life beyond its borders.

Chapter Three

Inorganic Art

Despite the different evaluations of various authors – with Henry James marking both the fall of ethics into aestheticism and an opening the world of perception to a sympathetic ethics – Nussbaum and MacIntyre share the assumption that the reading of literature in its proper mode ought to contribute to self-formation. In this regard their work intersects both with Kantian attempts to see literature, and art generally, as an exercise in self-reflection on its way to active self-constitution, and with contemporary neuroscience's appeal to art as a form of cognitive priming. Kantian ethics will argue that for the most part we live our world, and our own selves, as already synthesized; art, however, has the capacity to return us to a *sense* of that forming synthesizing power. An artwork is beautiful not because it falls under a concept or representation but because its elements are such that they are particularly conducive to our capacity to form concepts. An artwork is sublime if, in its failure to be comprehended under the law of a concept, it nevertheless allows us to feel that concept-forming power in its striving. Far from this being a humanist assumption confined to the past of Romanticism, the Kantian sublime (along with references to aesthetic theory from Plato to Merleau-Ponty) has allowed contemporary neuroscience to locate the experience of art within a broader theory of the self-furthering and organic nature of perception:

> The sublime, then, is an experience of part and whole in time and space. In its temporal manifestation, it is the compresence of the personal now with an eternal present, or the vulnerability of linear time embedded in the deep cyclicity of change. In its spatial manifestation, it is the immersion of the individual self in the immensity of nature or an individual oneness in an impersonal many. That is, it is the contemplation of an individual time and place in the temporal whole that surrounds it, from which it arises, to which it returns. (Brown 1999, 159–60)

It is just this activating power of the artwork that ties art to ethics; the already synthesized, formed and meaningful world that is lived as already there and conceptualized is opened, once more, to the dynamic processes of synthesis. If Aristotelian ethics draw us back to the formed self, in its processes of communal self-formation, Kantian ethics focuses less on the artwork's *presentation* of communal self-fashioning and more on the formal power of art itself to elicit a feeling of our formative powers. What ties these Aristotelian and Kantian ethical approaches to the artwork to contemporary neuroscience's use of the artwork as example is an underlying active vitalist premise: the world we live is a synthesized, conceptualized and formed world, and it is in the work of art that, once again, we see these forms in their formation. Art returns us to the genesis of the world; the world that appears naturally completed and self-evident becomes, through artistic reflection, *our* world, the product of disclosure and synthesis completed by a subject who is nothing other than this forming power:

> Because all perception is motivated by categories of utility (Newton 1996) and because both the left and right frontal parietal areas must be activated by lower, emotional brain areas (anterior cingulated, hypothalamus, hippocampus and amygdale), we first tend to see abstract concepts, not the specific details of what is there. We see the sinister nature of a smile without noticing the details that tell us it is sinister (Wertz, 1987); we notice the disorder in a room without noticing that a particular crooked picture frame is what makes it look disorderly (Merleau-Ponty 1942, 173). And when we have projected our despised attributes onto 'scapegoats', we see the scapegoats as uglier and more despicable than they really are (Needleman 1968). So to think that we first see, and then develop abstract concepts out of our perceptions is to put the cart before the horse.
>
> By teaching us the differences and the real relationship between concepts and percepts – the ways in which the former tend to prefigure the latter – artists enable us to get beyond our pre-conceptual categories and to discover, if only to a limited extent, what it is like to see the world 'as if for the first time'. When we see the way our categories contaminate what we see, we are also forced to consider what the object might look like if the categories had not prejudiced us to see it as we did. (Ellis 1999, 169)

There is then a vitalist assumption regarding aesthetic value; art is good if it activates the subject's forming powers. Such a premise would be a way of distinguishing high art from popular culture, with the former being good

in its challenging of worn-out categories and the latter being nothing more than a way of lulling consuming selves into inactivity. But it would also be a way of disparaging art that was too avant-garde in its distance from the activities of self-formation and self-recognition. Habermas argues that art ought to be 'world disclosive' and criticizes the avant-garde for reacting against reason. Reason only appears as narrow and tyrannical if we accept an instrumentalist concept of reason – the very reason attacked by a philosophy influenced by the avant-garde; reason in its proper form is communicative and active, not based on the imposition of logic but ongoing, adaptive and life-enabling legitimation (Habermas 1987, 122). Philosophy appears to turn to art to return itself to life – for it is through art that the philosopher overcomes Cartesian intellectualism in order to show the ways in which we experience the world affectively, non-cognitively and in terms of metaphor. But it is always a highly normative understanding of art that is brought into play: an art that shores up the self's autopoietic capacities and that itself, as artwork, is also autopoietic. The artwork must not only enable the viewer to feel their own self-forming power, the work of art itself appears as a play of balanced form. Both the artwork and the viewer are not mere things that one struggles to encounter or enliven; they are, instead, properly understood as dynamic and essentially relational wholes that are in a constant process of re-formation, always maintaining identity in motion. The normative image of the artwork is tied closely to the normative image of the self, and both are premised on a norm of organic life: the proper self is a well-formed whole in which there is not an imposed or centred form so much as a dynamic interaction of constantly re-engaged parts, all contributing to the ongoing coherence of a well-bounded unity.

In recent work in neuroscience art is drawn upon as an example of the brain's plasticity and activity. When we see the ways in which artworks activate the brain's forming powers we can explain both the enjoyment of art and its function. Here, as in the philosophical-ethical approaches that tie art, and especially narrative, to self-formation, art is deemed to be conducive to the organism's self-maintenance, and to play a role in the production of the world as meaningful. In a special issue of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* devoted to art, the leading figure in the field, V. S. Ramachandran, gives a series of aesthetic principles that explain both why art is enjoyable and how this enjoyment serves the ends of cognitive development (Ramachandran and Hirstein 1999). The approach is far from being simply reductive; art does not merely picture the world, and the cognitive development that art serves is not one in which the mind's activities can be reduced to the gathering of data.

Ramachandran's work, in keeping with the past decade or more of popular neuroscience and cognitive science, aims to take the brain beyond a simple processing computer or data machine. He refers to an 'emerging' mind in which 'mental' functions, such as language use and concepts, are possible because of the body's actions in the world (Ramachandran 2003). If I use a tool to complete a task, and that task in turn is part of a larger project, then this already gives me a structure that would enable me to form a grammar: a subject with a predicate, and a direct and indirect object. Similarly, our attribution of other minds would possibly have been prompted by a readiness to anticipate the action of an approaching body.

In terms of the qualities of artwork, Ramachandran explains devices such as metaphor by beginning from noticed pathologies – such as synaesthesia, where a patient 'hears' a certain sound as yellow. According to Ramachandran we can explain this cross-modal wiring by looking at the brain's neural mapping, where the capacity to perceive colour and sound are adjacent. From here he draws a conclusion about art and about art's relation to purposive life. Artists who come up with apt metaphors – 'my love is like a red red rose' – are possibly close to being synaesthetes, and their work resonates with our own brains because we, too, are near-synaesthetes. He demonstrates this by showing two abstract characters: a character with spiky outlines and a character with curved outlines. One of the characters is called 'booboo' and the other is called 'kiki'. When asked which names belong to which characters audience participants invariably label the spiky character 'kiki' and the curved character 'booboo'; everyday ties between what we see and what we say are in part cross-modal. The signifier is not arbitrary and language is not a structure that mind imposes on the world, for mind and language emerge through ever more complex events of interaction and the creation of relations. Our occasional explicit moments of cross-modal firing – when a synaesthete hears a trumpet as red, or when a poet coins a metaphor that we recognize to be immediately apt – evidence something about the mind and brain more generally: we do not have isolated neural skills but interacting networks. Synaesthesia, Ramachandran suggests, has survived in the brain's evolution because capacities for metaphor and astute likeness are useful, enabling us to make sense of our world. When we look at other features of the arts – ranging from 'peak shift' where a desired quality, such as curved hips in a female form is exaggerated, to the 'peekaboo' effect, where we enjoy discerning visual patterns in what appear at first to be chaotic dots – they all intensify capacities of the brain to give form to its world. Such capacities need to be taken beyond the Cartesian model of simply processing data, for the brain forms its world and does

so according to its ongoing activities of survival (and imagination is crucial here).

Work on neuroscience and the arts creates a bridge that allows the brain to be taken beyond the role of computational representation (for the brain works affectively, creatively, adaptively). Art is exemplary for displaying the brain's activity in giving and forming a world. Art is not adornment or 'icing' in a brain-world relation that is informational. Art evidences the most basic functions that *then* allow for formalized functions such as an abstract language, information gathering and scientific and quantified functions. Science, in these recent forays into the imagination, and narrative and aesthetic enjoyment, appears to be giving art its due, and in doing so it appears to be repeating an often-cited anti-science argument that came from the arts. The proper form of human life is one that is creative, dynamically engaged with the world and aware of its own vital powers; perception ought not to be considered as a mere picturing, and language should be anything but straightforward labelling. One need only think, here, of New Criticism's defence of the autonomy of poetic language. Everyday language is efficient and enables management of the world in terms of fixed categories, but when poetry uses language in an unfamiliar manner we are aware again of language *as language* – not as a simple label that allows us to manipulate a world whose sense is unproblematic, but as an active, transforming and paradoxical power that can alert us once again to the strangeness and wonder of our relation to existence. The language of the sciences is a dead and unthinking language, and poetry exists by right in its capacity to awake us from our literalist slumbers.

We can recognize here a naïve Rousseau-ism that would place the emotive and self-expressive outburst before the syntax of logic, a Romantic belief in a song of the self that could be held close to the immediacy of the body, a language that emerges continuously from the spontaneity of the cry (Downing 1995). We happily forget the many ways that Paul de Man questioned this reading of Rousseau. Rousseau was already all too aware that this supposed expressive origin of the passionate and musical outburst was produced *as originary* only in its loss (de Man 1982). Today work on language and the brain assumes that language begins as poetic and affective, and only subsequently becomes abstracted into formal and logic discourse. Robin Dunbar (1996) has gone so far as to argue that in the beginning is gossip as a form of verbal grooming; it matters less *what* is said than that there is saying; it is the exchange of sounds as such that creates bonds among bodies. It is from this initially aural bonding that something like language, society and then scientific sophistication may develop.

Steven Mithen, in what appears to be a resurgence of the Rousseau hypothesis that language emerges from the emotional cry, places music before language. Initially humans, like animals, exchange sounds or refrains that establish relations; grammar, syntax and communication follow sonorous networks that begin with melodious, rhythmic and affective exchanges. All those features that we now locate in the arts were not *added on* to communication but were communal and probably pre-human practices that enabled the social and neural network that subsequently enabled language and cognition in their narrower senses:

> Recall that 'Hmmmmm' stands for Holistic, manipulative, multi-modal, musical, and mimetic. This was the type of communication system used by the immediate ancestors of *Homo Sapiens* in Africa, although in a form less highly evolved than among the Neanderthals in Europe. We need to understand how the 'Hmmmmm' used by the African *Homo Sapiens* ancestors provided the evolutionary basis for language. (Mithen 2006, 253)

If we want to understand the brain today, or the mind in life, we need both to recognize the primarily creative, affective, musical, poetic and non-formalized exchanges from which modern cognition emerged *and* see the ways in which this originally poetic self still forms the basis for ethical, intellectual and semantic neural activity. Art, with its uses of metaphor, narrative, intensification of perception and pattern-recognition, is both an indication of our everyday ways of making sense of the world – for art is not a privileged domain added onto cognition but the basis from which an intellectual comportment might be abstracted – and also in some ways a cognitive and ethical treadmill. Art engages our emotions, sympathies, facial and spatial recognition capacities and enables us to proceed through the less complex, and often too formalized world of everyday speech and action.

There is, then, a vitalist assumption in the contemporary interdisciplinary engagement between arts and science. If the Cartesian attitude to mind and science reduced the world to so much quantifiable matter, the seeming autonomy of the aesthetic or the institutionalization of 'art for art's sake' only gave further indication of a rationalized world that no longer had a sense of how art emerges from an originally poetic relation to the world. Science can only achieve its ends if it overcomes its narrow intellectualism and embraces the embodied mind, the shared life-world, the affective and emotional ground of all experience, and the intertwining of human knowledge with a world of purposive and interconnected life.

It might seem at first glance that the work of Gilles Deleuze and the broader terrain of 'French Theory' would be compatible with this attack on Cartesian intellectualism, disciplinary distinctions and disembodied abstraction. Deleuze is, after all, often regarded as *the* thinker who takes us beyond the linguistic paradigm to consider bodies, affects and prescriptural social formations and who also champions the intuitionism of a Bergson who maintained a vitalist objection to formalized languages. Deleuze not only tied philosophy to the arts of cinema, literature, painting and music, his work with Guattari and his early *Difference and Repetition* relied heavily upon arguments from mathematics, linguistics, anthropology, genetics, evolutionary biology and history. But even without the encyclopaedic and multiple-voiced projects of *A Thousand Plateaus* one could argue that one of the broad gestures of French post-structuralism was a doing-away with the distinction between philosophy and literature, and that this dissolution came out of a vaguely Nietzschean tendency to regard all knowledge practices as expressions of life, power, desire or force (Habermas 1987, 185; Rorty 1982, 94). One could also argue, to the contrary, that the supposedly extreme textualism of a Jacques Derrida should not have been read as reducing philosophy to a mode of literary writing but as an attention to a 'writing in general' or process of tracing and difference that marks the philosophical text as much as it does the literary work and supposedly immediate 'lived' experience

Richard Rorty, in a positive vein, suggests that the value of writers like Derrida and Foucault (after Nietzsche) is that they no longer try to establish any criteria of truth or validity for philosophical texts beyond the new and edifying conversations they enable. In a similar interpretation, but for critical ends, both Terry Eagleton and Jurgen Habermas have been condemnatory of the post-Nietzschean abandonment of rigorous knowledge claims based on material life (Eagleton) or the shared practices of the lifeworld (Habermas 1987). Derrida, supposedly in line with a general 'postmodernism', no longer maintains a process of reason outside practices of writing. This can be a good thing if, like Rorty, one regards the notions of reason, the lifeworld or rigorous philosophy as disengagements from a pragmatic understanding of disciplines as justifiable only insofar as they help us to live. The collapse of philosophy into literature is lamentable if, like Habermas or Eagleton, one wishes to ground what we say, know and think in some horizon of sense and purpose from which all knowledge practices emerge (Habermas) or through reference to conditions of material production (Eagleton 1996). What is *not* questioned in these attempts to see philosophy, once again, as a form of life or life practice is the value of

a potential in thinking that is not that of the living body. French theory is deemed to be good if it takes philosophy away from abstraction and disengagement from life, pernicious if it becomes a form of textualism that has lost touch with the lifeworld.

Now it might seem that if any of the French theorists could be accused of such a form of textualism it would be Derrida, and one might want to respond to Rorty's enlistment of Derrida (the good Derrida of writing and not of speculation), that Derrida did not want philosophy to become 'a kind of writing' if writing just referred to a world in which there was 'nothing outside our vocabularies', no stepping outside the world as it is lived and conversed (Rorty 1989). Indeed, one of the features of Derrida's philosophy was that if there is such a thing as lived experience it is only possible through death: the experience of the 'now' *as now,* or of myself as present, is enabled by processes of tracing or marking time that can never be owned or mastered by the self-present subject; such processes operate in a demonic manner beyond any living form and take the form of an 'anarchic' or 'untamed' genesis (Derrida 2001, 196). If it is possible for a text to circulate, be copied, be distorted, destroyed and corrupted in the absence of a living author or reader, then this is not a narrow textual case that one could place outside the living sense of embodied life (Derrida 1989, 94). A body – animal or human – can maintain itself, or live on as itself, only through some process of death and non-being: if a body were fully alive, thoroughly oriented to the present, not impeded by anything other than its life-furthering relation to the world, then its very being would be unsustainable. A body exists only through processes of auto-immunity, detaching itself – as a self – from pure openness to the world; it can experience itself in its ipseity only by marking itself off from what it is not, through hetero-affection, or becoming other than itself in order to affect itself. Such processes of self-binding rely on what the self is not and, more importantly, on the non-living. One could say that the living word or sense of a human being can survive only if it takes on a body (such as the written word) that will survive beyond the person's life. I can only live *this present, this now, here, as itself* – as having being or sense – if the 'now' is lived not only in its pure immediacy but as it would be, for another, or for me at some other moment than the pure present.

From this impossibility of a pure present that would not be already marked or traced out through what cannot be lived or experienced as present, one can make two comments on Derrida's importance for thinking about vitalism. First, vitalism will have been the most necessary and impossible gesture of philosophy. Philosophy is the refusal of mere opinion and

received *doxa*, and a return to justification; but there can never be a moment of absolute and pure comprehension where the truth of the present is lived as such without any textual, formalized or received mediating system. While one cannot simply accept logic, mathematics, formal systems or structures without interrogating their genesis, there can be no grasp of that origin that is not already secondary, not already (at least in part) dead. Second, what needs to be thought today is not life and vitality in the face of an encroaching techno-scientific or Cartesian mastery of the planet, but the potentiality of the non-living: both those powers of philosophy that open up to that which cannot be grounded in the lived, and those broader textual capacities that operate in a demonic fashion beyond purposive, organic and bounded life.

So much for Derrida, whose thought has too readily been consigned to an era of 'theory' (by which one might mean an abstraction or textualism at odds with life). As an aside I would suggest that a radically counter-vitalist Derrida concerned with a necessary violence, anarchic genesis and inhuman force – a Derrida who refused Levinas's notion that one might be open to an other before and beyond the deathly violence of a mediating system outside the face-to-face – needs to be read against a Derrida consigned either to a textualism we have overcome, or to an ethics of open futurity. For both these domesticating manoeuvres – of reducing life to textual mediation or finding an ethics that follows from the fact that we lack any determination – were the targets of Derrida's counter-vitalism. As long as we see the world as given through structures, we could always return to those structuring conditions and grasp the sense of our own emergence. As long as we see ethics as enabled by the fact that there is a purely open human spirit liberated from all existing determinations, we repress those traces, movements and communications that infect life but are never lived, that enable presence but are never presented, that form a border between life and death but are neither living nor dead.

But where does this leave Deleuze, whose work was both explicitly critical of Derrida's attention to writing and transcendental conditions, and whose defence of Bergson would seem to affirm a capacity to intuit life itself, before and beyond mediation, the signifier, concepts and relations? I would suggest that a weak reading of Deleuze would place him either after Derrida, or in opposition to Derrida: either as taking Derrida's criticism of philosophical mastery further, to the point where one could see the ways in which systems of text and writing structure life beyond human intent, or as a vitalist affirmer of one pure life in opposition to the systems through which life is read. A stronger reading would see Derrida and Deleuze as

occupied, in different ways, with the problem of philosophy's strange, antithetical and yet necessary relation to life (Lawlor 2006). Both Derrida and Deleuze discerned a certain vitalist imperative as the driving force of philosophy: if philosophy has any force it is insofar as it works against opinion, already constituted systems, received ideas and – most importantly – the man of common sense. For Deleuze and Guattari this would mean that philosophy would be oriented towards immanence (as opposed to priests who would simply assume transcendence), even if philosophy would always fall back on transcendence, on halting the infinite movement of thought by grounding it upon a concept (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 47). However, it is precisely in opposing itself to the dead weight of mere tradition, to the inertia of received ideas, to a dull repetition and to the fall of thinking into automatism that philosophy's appeals to proper life bring it up against a radically inhuman impossibility. For Derrida we might say that this has always been philosophy's transcendental gesture of retrieving thought's originary ground beyond any empirical or received figure, and it is a gesture that Derrida maintains *in part* in his own work when he suggests a justice or democracy 'to come' that would not be able to be given in any actual or present instance. For Deleuze there is at once a resistance to seeing philosophy as tied to such a promissory or deferred structure, for he insists both on the creation of concepts that will refigure the very orientation of thought and on the task of thinking time in its pure state, liberated from the figures of common sense. At the same time, while resisting a notion of philosophy as critical and as being able to do no more than solicit or inhabit a system of inherited figures, Deleuze will direct his philosophy to a *being* of the sensible that is at once incapable of being sensed (if sense is that neutral impassive potentiality of the singular and ideal) and yet can only be sensed (insofar as we inevitably grasp sensibility through the orientation of sense) (Deleuze 2004a, 296).

For both philosophers, Deleuze and Derrida, this tortuous relationship between philosophy's vitalist imperative and its failure to answer that imperative without falling into the complacency of common sense is unfolded in the problem of genesis. Without the problem of a properly transcendental genesis, philosophy would be sociology, historicism, psychologism or a mere literalism. For Derrida, philosophy must be genesis: philosophy opens as a justification of originating sense beyond already received and constituted systems. (This 'opening to infinity' or 'hyperbolic' gesture has various ways of being 'announced' but it cannot be silenced: the minute one claims to remain within a structure or within a given one has already delimited the world and thereby indicated the thought of

its surpassing.) Derrida will argue that philosophy will always be an empiricism – a striving to grasp truth as a given presence:

> . . . the profundity of the empiricist intention must be recognized beneath the naïveté of certain of its historical expressions. It is the *dream* of a purely heterological thought at its source. A *pure* thought of *pure* difference. (Derrida 2001, 189)

But this immediately yields a counter-empiricism, for pure truth must persist in its force above and beyond any merely given actuality: 'Empiricism is its philosophical name, its metaphysical pretension or modesty. We say the *dream* because it must vanish *at daybreak,* as soon as language awakens' (Derrida 2001, 189). The thought of any 'beyond' or pure truth is always already marked by the empirical figures from which philosophy's transcendentalism would like to distance itself. All philosophy can do, then, is speak of a genesis, beyond given structures, through some structure or figure that would operate in a double register. This ventriloquism would be a counter-vitalism, an awareness that as soon as one speaks one has already distanced oneself from *life itself* or *time-itself*. And yet at the same time, through terms such as trace, *écriture*, text and supplement Derrida is granting life, force, vitality and creative power to that which lies beyond living bodies. Concepts such as the 'transcendental' or 'justice' function at once to open structures and systems at the same time as they are already effects of a certain structuring that they cannot themselves master. There is something demonic in this neither organic nor inorganic, neither living nor dead power of texts.

As long as we have a simple binary between life and death, between the breath of the living body and the external system of writing, then philosophy would always be living a slow death: always required to take place in textual systems that it cannot keep close to its animating intent. But if texts themselves mutate, repeat, circulate and communicate in a semi-autonomous fashion – via what Derrida (1998) refers to as a *mal d'archive* – then we might say, with Deleuze and Guattari, that we need to think the death drive not in a thermodynamic sense (as a return to degree zero) but in an experimental sense:

> The experience of death is the most common of occurrences in the unconscious, precisely because it occurs in life and for life, in every passage or becoming, in every intensity as passage or becoming. It is in the very nature of every intensity to invest within itself the zero intensity starting from which it is produced, in one moment, a that which grows or

> diminishes according to an infinity of degrees . . . insofar as death is what is felt in every feeling, what never ceases and never finishes happening in every becoming – in the becoming-another-sex, the becoming-god, the becoming-a-race, etc., forming zones of intensity on the body without organs. Every intensity controls within its own life the experience of death and envelops it. (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 330)

How do these non-living forces take the supposedly living body beyond its organic capacities?

While Derrida has been insistent that one cannot grasp life itself, time itself or being itself outside of the concepts that necessarily belie the same radical force that those concepts indicate (Derrida 1982, 61), Deleuze has been critical of what he saw to be a highly 'bourgeois' tendency to allow thought to remain with the impasse of 'on the one hand . . . and on the other hand' (Deleuze 2004a, 282). In Derrida's essay on Heidegger's criticism of the way in which time had always been reduced to vulgar concepts, Derrida makes one of his few references to Bergson. There can *only* be a vulgar concept of time, for as soon as one is working with *concepts* or meaning one has already rendered time as some general, repeatable sense and not – as Bergson would have it – a force that disrupts the generalizing tendencies of the intellect (Derrida 1982, 60). Concepts must render any non-conceptual singularity into a 'vulgar' generality, even if – as concepts – they also intimate what lies beyond the general. As long as time is thought of conceptually it will be reduced to that which can be repeated, recognized and generalized; but a concept is never exhausted in these general uses and will always be capable of further articulations. Concepts are double-faced: at once reducing the complexity of life to a generality, but also indicating *beyond the living* that which is 'to come'. Derrida repeats this manoeuvre in his essays on Foucault, Levinas and Husserl, focusing on the concepts of madness, the other and the present.

Foucault wishes to retrieve an absence of work, a radical disorder that has not yet been generalized as a 'madness' pathologized by a surveying reason. But because Foucault names this not yet conceptualized night *before* reason as madness, and because he accounts for its existence before it was gathered and conceptualized in modernity, Derrida insists that Foucault himself is relying (and must rely) on the same universalizing gestures and Cartesian mastery that he would oppose (Derrida 2001, 40). Insofar as one speaks and refers to what is other than reason one has already relied upon the structures of meaning and the historical temporality that must place a radical madness outside itself. History and meaning will always be reason: the supposedly

radical singularity of madness in its multiple complexities could never speak unless it were to take up a voice of sense and concepts that would locate it in time as a recognizable and identifiable being. Deleuze, by contrast, criticizes Foucault not for aiming to speak for and retrieve the other of reason but for remaining too Kantian (Deleuze 2006, 117). Foucault remained within powers as constituted in relation and only went as far as thinking of literature as a form of writing liberated from the all too human function of language. Deleuze and Guattari argue that a further step needs to be taken, beyond powers (as they are thought in relation) to the desire that produces relations:

> Our only points of disagreement with Foucault are the following: (1) to us the assemblages seem fundamentally to be assemblages not of power but of desire (desire is always assembled), and power seems to be a stratified dimension of the assemblage; (2) the diagram and the abstract machine have lines of flight that are primary, which are not phenomena of resistance or counterattack in an assemblage, but cutting edges of creation and deterritorialization. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 531)

This would bring us not only to a writing taken beyond the man of language it would also disclose something like a life beyond the organism, signalled perhaps in the power of silicon. For Derrida, though, Foucault's inability to think madness beyond *madness as it has always been for reason,* is not an individual failure but concerns the impossible structure of reason as such, which can only intern its others in its own voice and only imagine liberation in concepts and structures that will always be violent.

In the same manner, for Derrida, Levinas's attempt to think an otherness that would not be reduced to the meaningful, conceptualized and structured relation between persons (with all the philosophical and political heritage concepts of personhood bring in tow), *must fail.* If we are to grant the other any relation whatsoever, if we are to think outside the violence of our own self-enclosing subjectivity, then only the (necessarily violent) *concept* of the other can, in its lesser violence, open us towards an other *who can never be purely other.* Derrida's concept of the concept is not purely philosophical, for he insists that concepts only work if they open contexts: there can be a face-to-face encounter, in which you and I speak, only if what we say can also be articulated in an other context. The condition of meaning is therefore at once determination and undecidability: what I say must be submitted to a determining system that is beyond the singularity of any private sense, and insofar as I intend, mean or refer to any sense (however

'privately') I have already submitted to some determining form. But this determination is never exhaustive and in each repetition and re-articulation is open to new determinations and senses.

This structure of the concept forms the ground and the target for Derrida's counter-vitalist ethic. No ethics or politics could be grounded on life, precisely because 'life' is already given through structures and systems that have broken with any putative or originating immediacy. The idea that certain concepts would provide the living and vital ground for conceptuality – the idea that one might return to life, time, presence, or spirit – must repress the fact that these supposedly originating concepts are themselves, as concepts, never able to function as pure grounds. Even so, *as concepts,* the very structure that would preclude us from getting to the sense of life itself or time in its pure state is precisely what carries us forward to, and beyond, a future that cannot be reduced to the sense of the present. And this is because there is no sense of *the* present. The very structure of sense – to say that something *is* – already posits something that transcends the experience I have, and that could and would be there for any subject whatever. In this respect Derrida relies on the phenomenology of intentionality to disrupt phenomenology. The very present that I live here and now as having a being that could be fulfilled by further experiences is at once the full presence that enables metaphysics, at the same time as it renders metaphysics impossible.

Derrida will not regard metaphysics, or the striving for a full and immediate presence, as some accident that befell Western thought – a lapse that we might simply overcome by turning away from Cartesianism to Buddhism, Heideggerianism or the lived body. The structure of experience, of life, is intentional. I live any here and now, as mine and as present, only because my experience is intentional: aiming beyond me to a world that is lived as transcending the simple 'now' of any moment. It is this intended present – the presence of the present – that would exist and insist beyond opinion, appearance, the evanescent and the merely sensible. To say that something is or has being is to posit it as transcendent to consciousness or the mere now of appearing.

Derrida is therefore faithful to Husserl's commitment that one should not posit or assume a reality behind what appears, for what appears is precisely that which already transcends the mere now to be there for the future. Derrida will argue that in this respect phenomenology fulfils metaphysics: metaphysics has always aimed to intuit the absolute present of the present, but has done so through a series of terms outside consciousness (matter, Ideas, life). By arguing that presence is just that which is given in

consciousness, and that consciousness is already a sense of the present as opening to an infinite future, Husserl will allow metaphysics to be nothing other than consciousness's discovery of its own truth. Consciousness is now no longer the life of this or that physical individual, but the life of meaning, the life that is experienced and given through a history of sense that can always return to and re-live its origin.

For Derrida it is just this fidelity to originary and originating life, just this vital presence at the heart of phenomenology as fulfilment of metaphysics, that will also undermine 'the lived'. In the very gesture of returning from constituted systems to the experience that must have justified their inauguration there is an anarchic genesis that already exceeds any lived. To return to the experience of, say, the first geometer, who would have lived his present space as it would be for any subject whatever, is to acknowledge that this supposedly first present already opened itself to a future, and was already marked by an anticipation it could not command. The most living of living presents, a present that would live itself in its pure now as if for all time, is already beyond itself, anticipating and relying upon its own anticipated death:

> The impossibility of resting in the simple maintenance [nowness] of a Living Present, the sole and absolutely absolute origin of the De Facto *and* the De Jure, of Being *and* Sense, but always other in its self-identity; the inability to live enclosed in the innocent undividedness [*indivision*] of the primordial Absolute, because the Absolute is *present* only in being *deferred-delayed* [*different*] without respite, this impotence and this impossibility are given in a primordial and pure consciousness of Difference. Such a *consciousness,* with its strange style of unity, must be able to be restored to its own light. Without such a consciousness, without its own proper dehiscence, nothing would appear.
>
> The primordial Difference of the absolute Origin, which can and indefinitely must both retain and announce its pure concrete form with a priori security: i.e., the beyond or the this-side which gives sense to all empirical genus and all factual profusion, that is perhaps what has always been said under the concept of '*transcendental,*' through the enigmatic history of its displacements. Difference would be transcendental. The pure and interminable disquietude of thought, of trying to 'reduce' Difference by going beyond factual infinity toward the infinity of its sense and value, i.e. while maintaining Difference – that disquietude would be transcendental. (Derrida 1989, 153)

Derrida marks out metaphysics as a necessary vitalism that must undo itself, and this because life itself, life in general that is not reducible to any single or located life, is possible only through death, only through 'a' life (located and concrete) giving itself meaning and sense and submitting itself to the passage of history and re-reading. A *concept* of life is already at once not any specific life, not this or that lived life, and therefore both more than life and no longer life as such. On the one hand this seems to set Derrida in opposition to a history of the metaphysics of presence, where anything that cannot be presented, lived, brought to consciousness and held *within* the concept is seen to be parasitic and derivative. The errors of writing, *techne*, violence and corruption would traditionally be secondary to a life that in its proper form would surge forth from itself, master itself and live on in a history where sense and meaning survive without loss. Here Derrida would seem to be akin to Deleuze who also criticized the norms of good sense and common sense, norms that relied both on a world that would answer to the demands of representation and a thinking subject whose activities all converged on a unified object domain whose powers could all be determined and reduced to what could be mastered by the intellect.

But if Derrida set the structures of the concept, presence and metaphysics against themselves, arguing that concepts would always bear a force that exceeded the present, Deleuze expressed a faith in the creation of new concepts, in forces of life beyond conceptuality and structures of inscription, and in the imperative to think time in its pure state. One could, as Derrida suggested, place Deleuze within the metaphysics of presence (Derrida 2005, 137). Here, Deleuze would not be an ally in undermining metaphysics' commitment to originating life and a pure genesis that could once again experience itself anew. On the contrary, Deleuze would be the most theological of writers, if we take theology – as Derrida does – as ontotheology, as the commitment to being as that which gives forth from itself, sustains itself and offers itself without loss, and that in all of its variations remains close to itself.

There are certainly points in Deleuze's corpus where such a reading would suggest itself. Deleuze would not only be a vitalist, committed to one life that even in its moments of seeming death is ultimately creating itself anew; his vitalism would be mystical and even theological. We can begin with a series of motifs that would support such a reading: expressionism (both in Spinoza and Leibniz), a commitment to time in its pure state, the eternal, creation and life. All these motifs have, in accord with Deleuze and Guattari's declared tactic of stratification, 'two sides'. One of those sides would place Deleuze squarely within the theological vitalism targeted by

Derrida, and would also align Deleuze closely with the contemporary vitalism that affirms an embodied and extended mind, a life of meaning and interlinking systems and a global brain that exists as one vast interconnected web beyond the self-enclosure of Cartesian man.

In terms of placing Deleuze critically within a tradition of onto-theology that grounds all difference, relation and force in one self-affecting life, it would be best to begin with his book on Leibniz, where Deleuze writes affirmatively of the monad's self-enjoyment and also concludes with a series of positive references to Whitehead. While Deleuze's reading of Leibniz affirms the truth of perspectivalism, such that there is a truth in all the ways in which the world is unfolded from each distinct monad, it is also the case that each monad's song of the earth is, for all its distinction and individuation, the song of this one world. Here we should note two features. First, there is an importance attached to the musical metaphor, which is not a metaphor strictly speaking. Deleuze will insist on the genesis of sound from sensation. The song of the earth *is* a song because before there is metaphor – or the referral of one term through another – there is song as such, the sonorous and expressive matter that is life itself: 'The plant sings of the glory of God, and while being filled all the more with itself it contemplates and intensely contracts the elements whence it proceeds. It feels in this prehension the *self-enjoyment* of its own becoming' (Deleuze 2006, 89). Life is not some ineffable presence that is then re-presented; life just is all these expressions that pour forth in sound (and other gestures, such that one could call all forms of perception-response a mode of 'refrain'). Before metaphor, or one figure standing for another, or one set of signs – the signs of the system of music – standing for another – the relations of the world are musical; each affected monad's world is just the song it sings, the variation it plays on the ground bass of life. Speaking through Leibniz, Deleuze writes:

> A concert is being performed tonight. It is the event. Vibrations of sound disperse, periodic movements go through space with their harmonics or submultiples. The sounds have inner qualities of height, intensity and timbre. The sources of the sounds, instrumental or vocal, are not content only to send the sounds out: each one perceives its own, and perceives the others while perceiving its own. These are active perceptions that are expressed among each other, or else prehensions that are prehending one another . . .
>
> The origins of the sounds are monads or prehensions that are filled with joy in themselves, with an intense satisfaction, as they fill up with their

> perceptions and move from one perception to another. And the notes of the scale are eternal objects, pure Virtualities that are actualized in the origins, but also pure Possibilities that are attained in vibrations or flux. (Deleuze 2006, 91)

Second, there is a crucial affirmation of each monad's relation to the whole. There is nothing that is not in some minimal or confused way in relation to (or a dim perception of) the infinite and open whole. Strangely, this follows from the fact that 'monads have no windows'. It is not the case that there are beings that then look outside and grasp some aspect of their world or environment; a being is what it is because it is already an expression of every aspect of the whole. Far from looking out to gain some degree of knowledge of the world, each monad just is its unfolding of the world in its infinity, but an infinity unfolded in just this individual manner: 'Point of view signifies the selection that each monad exerts on the whole world that it is including, so as to extract accords from one part of the line of infinite inflection that makes up the world' (Deleuze 2006, 151).

Expressionism also has its Spinozist form that Deleuze will explicitly prefer to that of Leibniz. If for Leibniz the world is nothing more than every monad expressing its variation on one harmonious and infinitely varied whole, for Spinoza there is one substance – univocity – that expresses itself now as thought, now as matter and in all the different modes that make up the world. If Spinoza has become fashionable of late, against Descartes, it is precisely because there is no longer mind as a separate substance, for mind is just the 'feeling of what happens' at the level of matter. If we were to align Deleuze's Spinozism with this contemporary resurgence of anti-Cartesianism then we could conclude that there is a widespread embrace of a life beyond the mind, the recognition of mind as an emergent property; and this recognition would then entail an imperative to return concepts, abstractions and cultural productions to an ultimate ground of human and extra-human life. The same purposive striving of self-maintenance expresses itself as much in human bodies (with their creations of equations and cathedrals) as it does in the simplest of life forms. The virtual would be an extension of the actual *and* (as in Spinoza's account of the notions) just the way in which one substance not only exists in terms of its spatial connections but also creates a non-material feel of what lies beyond its own body.

Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt render this notion in political terms: there should not be a state imposed upon material bodies and their labour, for bodies have the capacity to express themselves directly and actively in a

virtual whole that is at one with their very being, and *not* some detached or transcendent representation:

> Perhaps we need to reinvent the notion of the materialist teleology that Spinoza proclaimed at the dawn of modernity when he claimed that the prophet produces its own people. Perhaps along with Spinoza we should recognize prophetic desire as irresistible, and all the more powerful the more it becomes identified with the multitude. It is not at all clear that this prophetic function can effectively address our political needs and sustain a potential manifesto of the postmodern revolution against Empire, but certain analogies and paradoxical coincidences do seem striking. For example, whereas Machiavelli proposes that the project of constructing a new society from below requires 'arms' and 'money' and insists that we must look for them outside, Spinoza responds: Don't we already possess them? Don't the necessary weapons reside precisely within the creative and prophetic power of the multitude? Perhaps we, too, locating ourselves within the revolutionary desire of postmodernity can respond, 'Don't we already possess "arms" and "money"?' The kind of money that Machiavelli insists is necessary may in fact reside in the productivity of the multitude, the immediate actor of biopolitical production and reproduction. The kind of arms in question may be contained in the potential of the multitude to sabotage and destroy with its own productive force the parasitic order of postmodern command.
>
> Today a manifesto, a political discourse, should aspire to fulfill a Spinozist prophetic function, the function of an immanent desire that organizes the multitude. There is not finally here any determinism or utopia: this is rather a radical counterpower, ontologically grounded not in any 'vide pour le futut' but on the actual activity of the multitude, its creation, production, and power – a materialist teleology. (Hardt and Negri 2001, 65–6)

The imagination is not an alienation or distinct creation from our material being; it is materiality in its expressive virtual attribute. Mind is not a distinct substance but how the material body has a feeling of itself in its wholeness and relations. In Damasio's terms, my heart is beating and does so in response to the sugars, fats, hormones, exertions and organization of my entire body. That network of relations in space and matter can also be felt as extreme fatigue of myself as a whole; and if that fatigue of my body leads in turn to a sense of others and the world as not worthy of my care and

attention, then we could say that it is one and the same world that is expressed in the physical heartbeat, the mood of fatigue and the world of despair or boredom.

Deleuze's Spinozism adds another dimension to the virtual, for the virtual is an expression of bodies and their productive relations but also has a being of its own. There are many different ways in which Deleuze affirms the distinct positivity of the virtual depending on the particular writing project and style with which he is engaged. In general there is one key distinction between Deleuze's vital reality of the virtual and current acknowledgments that life cannot be reduced to actuality: Deleuze's virtual cannot be reduced to a theory of emergent properties. We could say, for example, that mind emerges as a definite quality from increasingly complex interactions of matter, and that it is possible for one type of reality – the simple mechanical or chemical interaction of parts – to reach a point of complexity where there are new modes of interaction. Language for example could begin as material – a body grunts with effort – but those sounds (of effort, joy, pain, sadness) start to form relations among themselves and then operate as a semi-autonomous system becoming increasingly complex, abstract and capable in turn of producing new layers of emergence. The extended world of actions and reactions that takes place in a time and space that can be measured by clock time may be doubled by the passions that feel those relations, and then in turn by a language of emotions, and then abstractions of logic, geometry and moral theory.

Deleuze differs from this by insisting that while sense or the virtual exists only as unfolded in bodies and actual time and space, it has an insistence and problematic being that exceeds the actual and makes it possible. This is probably the most difficult aspect of Deleuze's thought but it has great significance for where we are today. One way of understanding the problem of sense (with its own time, being and power) is to say that while it is true that language emerged from material interactions, those material interactions were only possible because of something like the problem or idea of language – the virtuality of language. Bodies can be bodies only if there is the possibility for forces and powers to enter into relation to produce certain quantities; when language occurs explicitly as a system of signs, in which each term has reality only in relation and in which any relation between terms already refers beyond itself, what is disclosed is not that we only know the world through language but that something like the idea, sense or genetic power of language was there all along, virtually. This means also that the idea exceeds language, that one might be able to imagine the virtual potential to enter into relation to produce new systems and

quantities that in turn open further relations and further systems. This Idea would be that of difference as such, never existing outside all the differences it produces, never being exhausted by any event of difference in time, and therefore possessing a reality that exists eternally.

In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze refers to a 'sterile' dimension that does not only further and extend bodily life into feeling but takes on a power of its own. He explains this by distinguishing his own affirmation of sense and events from Leibniz's theological world of harmonious compossibility. Leibniz is important for the theory of sense, events and singularities because he created the concept of alogical compatibilities and incompatibles. Thus it is logically incompatible to have A and not-A, but there is no logical problem with, say, a world in which Adam sinned and Caesar did not cross the Rubicon, just as there is no logical disjunction between a world in which there is sexual difference but no families, genders or even stable personal sexual identities. However, these series are *incompossible or divergent* because the world we have is one in which Adam sinned and Caesar crossed the Rubicon, and one in which sexual difference is coded through families, genders and personal identity. The world unfolded in this way, and because – for Leibniz – every event is part of an infinite and interconnected whole we could not change one individual (the Adam who sinned) without altering the whole. There is thus a disjunction presided over by the God's-eye view of the world: a being who perceives the infinite, with all events and predicates unfolding from one series, knows that it is one and the same world in which Adam sinned, Caesar crossed the Rubicon and so on. Such convergence, harmony and compossibility would be necessary in a world of material relations, causes and depths. Disjunction would be exclusive: one could not have A and not-A. There would be only one matter and its relations. The incorporeal surface of sense, however, creates a divergent series of incompossible potential, one of pure predicates and a non-chronological time. At the level of sense it is possible to affirm A and not-A. At its simplest level one can note that there can be a sense to words like a 'square circle'; these are not devoid of sense for they can be thought. Or, against Leibniz's notion of a world in which only one series could have unfolded, sense allows for a counter-actualization of events. Yes, there is this world as it happened to have been actualized, but there are all those other worlds, floating at the surface for all time that were not actualized but that can be affirmed at the level of thought. Thought is, then, not logic or denotation – nor is the real reducible to this world and its material instantiation. If one takes the point of view of the self, a synthesizing point looking out on one world that is its own and that is rendered through meaning and reference, then, yes, there is an

impossibility of having disjunctive predicates; one must be this or that: 'Incompatibility is born only with individuals, persons, and worlds in which events are actualized, but not between events themselves or between their *a-cosmic, impersonal,* and *pre-individual* singularities (Deleuze 1990, 177). Sense opens up a virtual world of events and singularities that are not actualized in incompatible series:

> . . . the situation is altogether different at the surface where only infinitive events are deployed; each one communicates with the other through the positive characters of its distance and by the affirmative character of the disjunction. The self merges with the very disjunction which it liberates and places outside of itself the divergent series as so many impersonal and pre-individual singularities. Counter-actualization is already infinitive distance instead of infinite identity. Everything happens through the resonance of disparates, point of view on a point of view, displacement of perspective, differentiation of difference, and not through the identity of contraries. It is true that the form of the self ordinarily guarantees the connection of a series; that the form of the world guarantees the convergence of continuous series which can be extended; and that the form of God, as Kant had clearly seen, guarantees disjunction in its exclusive or limitative sense. But when disjunction accedes to the principle which gives to it a synthetic and affirmative value, the self, the world, and God share in a common death, to the advantage of divergent series as such, overflowing now every exclusion, every conjunction, and every connection . . . If the self is the principle of manifestation, in relation to the proposition, the world is the principle of denotation, and God the principle of signification. But sense expressed as an event is of an entirely different nature: it emanates from nonsense as from the always displaced paradoxical instance and from the eternally decentered ex-centric center. It is a pure sign whose coherence excludes merely, and yet supremely, the coherence of the self, world and God. (Deleuze 1990, 175–6)

If there is one way of reading Spinoza in terms of a contemporary vitalism that would see everything as being generated dynamically from relations among bodies, this is a vitalism that would then justify an ethics whereby any seemingly independent or detached powers ought to be understood and negotiated according to their emergence. However, for Deleuze, while the body expresses itself in ideas, expression really does create what is not the body itself. Body would be one (actualized) attribute of substance (with its own potentialities or what bodies can do); but there would also

be an equally real virtual dimension. One cannot reduce the virtual to a mere epiphenomenon or extension. It exists and insists in its own right, as an incorporeal power with its own eventuality. It is a surface dimension, sterile, incorporeal and – unlike extended bodies – does not preclude both the affirmation and negation of what, in the actual world of unfolded series, would be mutually exclusive. At the level of *sense,* for example, it is possible for one and the same event – let us not say the same person – to affirm life, to be pro-choice, pro-euthanasia, opposed to biopolitical management, in favour of the rights of indigenous peoples, critical of the very discourse of rights, be actively advocating gay and lesbian awareness and tolerance, be sceptical of the culture of sexual identity . . . and so on. Expression is not the mirror or double or supervening feeling of the actual; it has a power and causality of its own, even if the same extended world is expressed now in the language of rights, now in a historicist refusal of rights discourse, now in an artistic medium that repudiates the efficacy of concepts, and so on.

In order to distinguish the Deleuzian, non-anti-Cartesian, mode of expressionism from the many uses made of Spinoza today we can consider the work of art. Works of art are at once relations among matters, including the human and animal bodies that manipulate material, the matters touched upon, the archives that have created patterns that are seen by the working artist in their acts of transformation, and then the galleries, copying devices, imaging screens and viewer bodies that allow that work of art to circulate as an extended object. When a canvas is copied, digitalized, uploaded, downloaded, refigured and re-viewed this can all be explained at the level of actual material bodies. If we have a certain feeling, a love of Mahler, then this would be an expression of all those interacting bodies – the orchestra's composers, players, recording devices, iPods, ear-training and neuronal wiring – that can then be felt as a love of Mahler that does not have a spatial or temporal location. I could still be said to love Mahler, even when I am not listening to the Titan symphony on my iPod, even when in the entire actual world no Mahler is being played or thought about. That would both be because love of Mahler is the immaterial felt response to all those collisions of bodies, and is virtual because it has a reality and force even when (however unlikely) the actual world happens to have no instance of 'loving Mahler' at a specific point in time. This was the problem of potentiality going back to Aristotle: we can say that someone is a flute-player, even when they are not playing the flute; (and as Agamben notes, we can say – perhaps most profoundly – that we become aware of human potentiality when it is not actualized, when the death camp victim does not speak [Agamben 1999, 216]). The love of Mahler is a potentiality that can be actualized in

material events such as purchasing records, turning on radios, practising an orchestral part, or searching for downloads on the internet.

But is this all the virtual is? What would make the virtual, as a possibility that exists and has reality even when it is not actualized, different if we thought about a distinction between possibility and potentiality? Here, we can begin to open two ways of reading vitalism and the virtual. If the virtual is just the immaterial feeling of what happens then we really do have a vitalism in which there is one expressive substance that accounts for all felt qualities; the way to understand a quality is to consider its dynamic genesis from the relations among bodies. The contemporary emphasis on emergence, evolution, the neural underpinnings of art and the *extensions* of embodied desires into linguistic and technical systems evidences just such a vitalism. This is not to say that such approaches do not recognize the complexity and power of art or culture. For that feeling that follows from listening to Mahler will prompt my body to do certain things, such as buy other symphonies, and those purchases will in turn recreate just what counts as my singular love of music and the responses my body goes through when feeling that love. This is not to reduce the reality of love to physical qualities, for it also has an incorporeal reality that is as distinct from other affects as the physical being of an orchestra playing Mahler is from a factory producing synthesizers. And it is also the case that there are other immaterial expressions and forces of that physical event of the Mahler symphony, and that the totality of these may simply never be able to be grasped by the sort of meticulous exactitude we can devote to physical quantities. One reason for this distinction between exactitude in the physical world and the vagueness of the immaterial affects that express that world could just be the complexity of the latter. But Deleuze, like Bergson, suggests another reason to do with the very reality of the virtual and its distinctly different temporality. The world expressed by the love of Mahler, and one could even say the *possibility* for loving Mahler, exists in time. There has to have been a composer, a history of music, a recording and performance culture and then my specific attachment, and this produces a love that is present and real (virtual) even when there is no actual body loving Mahler right now. Deleuze, however, grants incorporeal events a different temporality that is a time of pure potentiality. There could only be the possibility of me loving Mahler if there is something like the pure potentiality of what it is 'to listen'. One could imagine material worlds in which sound was not produced by sound waves discerned by aural body parts, so that same potentiality – as a pure virtual quality – would be actualized quite differently. It might seem as if this is just a question of increasing abstraction, but Deleuze grants the

virtual a different time and this has quite specific consequences for the ethics and politics of vitalism, for there are now potentialities that are not merely abstracted or generalized from relations among bodies. Rather, these relations of bodies – this orchestra, my listening – are actualizations of a pure potentiality 'to listen'. When Deleuze and Guattari insist on the untimely nature of philosophy this is just their point: this is not to say that philosophy is some unconditioned universal that would necessarily arise, but it is to say that when it does occur it has a different order of conditions from that of other forms of spatio-temporal material creations and chronological order. A philosopher's concept may follow another in time – the Kantian transcendental subject following the Cartesian cogito – but there is also another stratigraphic time (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 58). Every philosopher who creates a concept of what it is *to think* refigures all the concepts of the history of philosophy, allowing new modes of reading, thinking and feeling all that has previously been created: 'human history and the history of philosophy do not have the same rhythm' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 103).

This means that understanding what Mahler is can take two forms, extensive and intensive. Extensively one can place Mahler in the history of Western tonality and orchestral music, charting the innovations of the symphonic form and chord progressions, the various performance practices, and influences and effects which locate Mahler in music history. To do so is of course to place Mahler within historical life, a life in which humans are not just labouring animals but also cultural producers, creating networks of exchange of art forms and objects. It would be a mistake to say that the virtual dimension of Mahler's work is not only all the performances and interpretations that could happen, because such futural possibilities are fully material and actual. Everything in this world here and now already includes the capacities for future bodies, instruments and recording apparatuses to make further instances of Mahler's symphonies. One might also, if one is a neuroscientist or cognitive archaeologist, look at the affective matters of Mahler's work, arguing that we enjoy and respond to such music not only because the social exchange of sound is adaptively advantageous for cultural development, but also because such originally adaptive systems (such as music) can then take on an evolutionary trajectory of their own. That is, music might begin as one of the ways in which the individual organism relates to other bodies, exchanging sounds to create social and neural networks, and to produce affective responses conducive to the body's self-maintenance. Once music or sound exchange is established as a practice grounded in human and animal bodies and their relations, it too forms a

system of relations that can emerge to develop complexity in its own right. This could then occur in the absence of the bodies, strivings and purposes from which music has its genesis. Computer programmes can not only generate music in the style of this or that composer but also introduce variants that, in turn, create further complexity and capacity for variation. Every student of composition knows that there are certain ways in which a progression can complete itself, and this has to do both with all the chord sequences that have actually been produced and the (never fully actualized) possibilities that could count for legitimate instances of further creation.

The strongest way to understand the virtual is in its eternal and real dimension, as that which is a positive surplus to the being that we live and know as actual and that can yet be considered to be neutral, sterile, impassive, eternal, impersonal and transcendental. This is important precisely because the virtual is not only the immaterial – all the *possible* performances of a symphony, or all the possible variants of the symphonic form – it is also the eternal: Mahler and symphonic music occur in time because there is a power of creative difference as such, discernible now in music's transformation with instrumentation technologies, now in contemporary synthesizers and their capacity to remix and reconfigure tones, timbres, speeds and harmonics. What difference would it make to place this strong, strangely non-organic virtuality into the mix of contemporary thought?

For Deleuze and Guattari's thinking it has two clear consequences. Politically, if capitalism occurs today as a possibility, a possibility that always haunted all previous social machines and accounted for their distinct form, then this is because in addition to actual capitalism and its possibilities – speculation, money markets, wage labour, futures – there is the virtual power of an entering into relations of forces to produce relations and quantities. It is this radically deterritorialized capitalism, liberated from the axioms of actual capitalism that reduce exchange to exchange between labour and money, that both enabled earlier social modes (even if they limited it) and will enable new forms of the future. A strong concept of the virtual does not criticize capitalism by taking sociality back to its animating condition, returning the socius to living labour, but releases a power that has not even been seen to be possible, and that would not be the proper being of 'man' or 'humanity':

> But what saves modern philosophy is that it is no more the friend of capitalism than ancient philosophy was the friend of the city. Philosophy takes

> the relative deterritorialization of capital to the absolute; it makes it pass over the plane of immanence as movement of the infinite and suppresses it as internal limit, *turns it back against itself so as to summon forth a new earth, a new people*. But in this way it arrives at the nonpropositional form of the concept in which communication, exchange, consensus, and opinion vanish entirely. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 99)

Second, in terms of language: Deleuze will not see language as some system to which life is subjected – the despotism of the signifier – as though outside the structures of signifying systems there were nothing other than the dark oedipal night of the undifferentiated. Nor, however, will Deleuze simply regard language as an extension of bodily relations. Language is possible because matters already have the virtual power of releasing pure expressive elements, sonorous qualities or pure predicates. Throughout his entire corpus and with his work with Guattari, Deleuze sees language in the narrow sense – the system of linguistic signifiers – as possible both because at the level of matter there has already been a detachment of sonorous qualities, such that any language has a form of expression and form of content, and a substance of expression and substance of content. Language is not the imposition of difference on an otherwise undifferentiated world, but the interaction of formed matters, with each matter having its own tendencies for differentiation. While a reconfiguration of human bodies and buildings (form of content) is in part constrained by its materiality (substance of content), such that there are ranges within which bodies and buildings can form relations – various ways, for example, that societies will organize discipline and punishment – these reconfigurations will interact with forms of expression (whether one refers to those bodies in criminal, religious, militaristic or medical terminology), and with the substance of expression (whether that coding takes the form of the human voice, computer data, written documents):

> If in a social field we distinguish the set of corporeal modifications and the set of incorporeal modifications and the set of incorporeal transformations, we are presented, despite the variety in each of the sets, with two formalizations, one of *content,* the other of *expression*. For content is not opposed to form but has its own formalization: the hand-tool pole, or the lesson of things. It is, however, opposed to expression, in as much as expression also has its own formalization; the face-language pole, the lesson of signs. Precisely because content, like expression, has a form of its own, one can never assign the form of expression the function of

> simply representing, describing, or averring a corresponding content: there is neither correspondence nor conformity. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 85–6)

The key point in terms of the relation between life (and the meaning we make of it) is that for Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari, one cannot begin from the bounded organism and then consider the sense that it makes of its world; such a point of view begins from a constituted body and does not explain how that body emerges from a potentiality for orientation – a sense – that enables both bodies and meaning systems: 'There is a primacy of the machinic assemblage of bodies over tools and goods, a primacy of the collective assemblage of enunciation over language and words' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 90). There are two mistakes we can make with language. The first is to see language as a seamless emergence from the needs of the organism, such that the organism *is* just a meaningful relation to its own world, with language as a formalization of those meanings. The second, now so widely rejected that its opposite threatens to becomes a new dogma,[1] is a form of linguistic imperialism: the idea that meaning, difference, order and the very possibility of being a subject emerge with language as a single and total system.

Against this Deleuze and Guattari write a genealogy of the emergence of writing systems, and examine various regimes of signs that are irreducible to each other. If it appears, with late modernity, that the system of signifiers orders a world that outside of signification would lack any real being, then this is less due to an intellectual error than to a particular modality of the human organism. In *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari not only historicize the contemporary despotism of the signifier, or the illusion that the subject is constituted through submission to the system of the symbolic order, they also tie this to the organization of the body and the privatization of the organs – to a certain relation between the eye that sees, the eye that reads, the flesh that feels pain, and the relation of those organs to the contemporary familial scene where the child lives its relation to history in an oedipal setting. It is not simply the case that linguistic construction (or even the notion of 'the' Cartesian subject who represents his world) is incorrect. To understand the modern phenomenon of 'the' subject, even the subject effected through the system of signifiers for whom life will always be nothing other than the 'beyond' of language, we need to see that such a subject has its condition of possibility in certain tendencies of organic life. If we ask how bodies evolve to become speaking men of reason then we no longer see capitalism as an accident that befell

an otherwise praxis-oriented body, seeking only its ongoing survival through the world and others. Nor do we see language as a necessarily alienating break (or castration) from a pre-linguistic plenitude. Language is possible because the organism never exists as such: a body is nothing without the formation of a relation among potentials. The body is a territorialization or linking up of organs in relation: not only is the seeing eye transformed as the brain learns to read, and the hearing ear altered in relation to sounds that it must recoil from in peril or listen to for sense; it is also the case that these organs, in turn, are the result of interacting potentialities that are located in a field of sense. The eye evolves as a response to light, the ear in response to sound waves.

The body, then, does not relate to its world *through* meaning, but has already been formed because there is something like the potentiality of sense. Capitalism is possible – as a reduction of labouring bodies to nothing more than units of quantified production – because bodies are already what they are through exchange and relation. And the same applies to language: it is possible for something like the system of signifiers to emerge because of the very nature of life *and sense*. There can be a system of material sounds that expresses what a speaker wishes to say about a world that is denoted only because of the *surface* of sense, an incorporeal potentiality to create relations among sounds on the one hand and bodies referred to on the other. Before there are bounded organisms that structure a system of potentials into a system of relations there are just these singular powers: 'to eat', 'to see', 'to speak', 'to live', 'to die'. Such potentials only exist in their actualization in specific bodies, but they have a sense that insists and subsists beyond those bodies. The organism evolves as a response to these problems, and when something like a language expresses 'dying', 'eating', 'speaking' or 'living' it at once denotes and represents what is going on with material bodies, but it is also possible – *as sense* – because there is a surface that is neither the body itself, nor the idea expressed. This surface of sense lies between the nature of bodies and their relations, and the languages that express those relations. A body exists as it does because it answered problems: the human body is one mode of organic life, one response to the sense or problem of relating powers to each other, and it is that sense that also enables language.

What needs to be understood is how this general potentiality of sense and events – to which bodies and languages are responses – comes to be understood as 'a' system of signification imposed on an undifferentiated reality. If language is possible because the world is already the incarnation of an articulated sense, how is it that language comes to appear as a totality of

signifiers, and how does the human organism come to experience itself as 'the subject'? What began as a polyvocal regime of exchanged sounds, marks, rhythms, gestures and forces becomes 'flattened' onto the voice: and this is because of a certain reconfiguration of the organism. The modern oedipal family places the individual in relation to a world that is now reduced to the privacy of an entire history and geography given through the figure of the father. This creates a distinct 'organology'. The body is not opened out to all the forces of the earth but faces the private familial scene in which all the cultures and races of the earth are read through oedipal figures. Every affect, figure, scene, voice, body, animal or motif is now translated through the voice of the father who stands for the law as such, the symbolic order, beyond which is the undifferentiated pre-oedipal abyss: 'The system of subordination or signification has replaced the system of connotation. To the extent that graphism is flattened onto the voice – the graphism that, not so long ago, was inscribed flush with the body – body representation subordinates itself to word representation: sister and mother are the voice's signifieds' (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 209).

Deleuze and Guattari's genealogy and schizoanalysis are not ways of returning this shrivelled and miserable scene to some more proper and originating life. Rather, by looking at the historical and organic emergence of the oedipal subject who must articulate his demands through the signifying system, Deleuze and Guattari can argue for an even further deterritorialization, a higher deterritorialization. Language would not be taken back to the bodily cry, or the motif seared on flesh, but would be taken beyond the system of signifiers through which 'man' speaks. This is where literature would be important for Deleuze and Guattari: not because a literary use of language reawakens 'us' to the creative power of the voice that has become reified in everyday clichéd signs, but because literature detaches language from voice, body, usage and meaning and allows for something like a neutral and sterile sense.

Language can be understood as a system of signifiers that imposes itself on an undifferentiated chaos or void only if the human organism is now nothing more than a being oriented to speaking to others, who in turn are nothing other than speaking beings located in a world that has no sense in itself. And this retreat of systems of signs into the locus of signifying man, in turn, is possible because of the history of the labouring human organism. Deleuze and Guattari insist that it is possible to write a universal history that will not only explain how we arrived, in modernity, at the subject of capitalism who understands himself as nothing more than a speaking labouring power. This is not because capitalism and our oedipal submission

to language are inevitable, but because once they do occur in history it is possible to recognize a potentiality or sense of life as such, from which any possible history would have unfolded. There is a logic to life as such that will be disclosed both in capitalism and in the concept of language as a system of signification, even if both those phenomena stop short of the higher deterritorialization that allows for an intuition of life as such. This logic, in contrast to traditional vitalisms, does not posit a life force that flows through and organizes matter; instead there is something in the power of matter that will enable the understanding of living systems in general.

Deleuze argues for a pure differential calculus: the entering into relation of two powers of difference, and that encounter produces a quantity: 'If Ideas are the differentials of thought, there is a differential calculus corresponding to each Idea, an alphabet of what it means to think' (Deleuze 2004a, 229). That quantity can in turn enter into relations, creating ever greater relations of complexity. The key difference between this idea and that of systems theory in general is the transcendental attention to genesis: if a system can come into formation then one should not assume matter's tendency to self-organize and produce relations. On the contrary, there can only be organization and relation, or the production of even the simplest systems, if there is a power of creative difference. And it is this transcendental differential power – a power that is warded off or limited by systems – that can begin to be discerned in modern capitalism and the understanding of signs as a system of signifiers. Pre-capitalist formations will all assume that relations are limited or defined through some privileged unity: the territory or multiplicity of bodies is *deterritorialized* by some privileged or exempted body. The labouring bodies of the socius are engaged in production, but it is the despot who does not produce, and who simply consumes, wastes, and enjoys that gives that social machine both a transcendent body that it will then take as its origin – the despot as embodying the force of the earth – and a site of overcoding, such that all action is referred beyond itself to its position in the polity. The entering of bodies and powers into relation does not occur as such but is bounded by a body – the despot, the king, capital – that defines all differential relations. In capitalism it is no longer the case that some external body seems to stand for the law of life as such (such as the body of the king as God's anointed); instead, life itself generates its own differential relations of exchange. It is because man is a labouring animal that he enters into the division of labour and communication: speech and production are effects of a certain idea of 'life', where life just is the submission of the human organism to its species being.

It is this historical shift whereby the value of life is no longer given meaning from without – either through religious significance, or conceptions of man as a political being for whom biological existence is secondary – that Foucault referred to as 'biopolitics'. To a great extent Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari accept this reading of history and the increasing burden placed upon *life itself* to generate the seeming validity and logic of social systems. But there is an important distinction that places Deleuze's, and Deleuze and Guattari's, work beyond a grounding of philosophy on life itself on the one hand and a simple critique of biopolitics on the other. This path that is charted between a vitalism of life itself and a critique of the very idea of life is given in three moments: in the conclusion of *Anti-Oedipus* where Deleuze and Guattari mark out a position between vitalism and mechanism, in Deleuze's commentary on Foucault where Deleuze suggests that life needs to be deterritorialized beyond carbon-based forms, and in the curious relation of Deleuze and Guattari's work to systems theory. All these moves are connected, for what Deleuze and Guattari ultimately work against is the identification of life with the living body or the organism.

Chapter Four

Inorganic Vitalism

The standard opposition between vitalism and mechanism associates the inorganic with death. Either there is a bounded, organicist whole, in which each event and power is in a productive relation with every other – a system of *meaning* (where what something *is* is determined by its relation to the whole) – or there is mere non-relation, chaos and a death. Death, here, is mere mechanism, the loss of autopoiesis, or absence of the capacity for self-organization. Against this opposition between living organism and death Deleuze will release events, powers and potentials from bodies and individuals, referring to impersonal, pre-individual singularities. In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari draw upon the death drive to overturn the simple opposition between the vitality of the organism and the death of mere mechanism: rather than see life (as Freud's thermodynamic model will do) as a bounded pool of energy in relation to disorder, Deleuze and Guattari refer to death as an experience. This would not be a *model* of death where the well-formed body is opposed to death, but death as a degree zero of intensities. All those powers that make up a body – to eat, to see, to speak, to sing, to dance, to hear, to suffer, to wound – could be detached from the organic composition and pushed to their minimal thresholds. At what point does a language in all its permutations and inflections lose sense and communicability? At what point does sound, in its musical assemblage, become so distorted or deflected from tonality to become noise? At what point does a quantity lose its quality?

Writing on Foucault, Deleuze notes that of Foucault's three forms of 'life, labour and language', it is only the latter that Foucault genuinely confronts with the future. In *The Order of Things,* where Foucault first notes the invention of the concept of 'life' in the eighteenth century, he shows the ways in which a fold is created between man and his world: it is because man is a living being that he labours, working on his environment and with others. His history and being are bound up with a trajectory of productive relations that determine his consciousness; he can read his own being as

the outcome of empirical material relations – the need for a living body to produce – but he only knows himself as effected from such conditions, never as he would be 'in himself'. 'Man' is the effect of a ground that is at once empirical – the need to work, to speak – but also transcendental. There is no speech in general, polity in general, proper life in general – only living speaking man as given through some empirical determination. Language, therefore, is not simply the medium through which man represents his world; as a speaking being man is caught up with the linguistic systems that both constitute his consciousness and can never be rendered fully transparent. Whereas in classical thought language is the means through which the world is represented, in modernity man's being as a living animal is constituted through the density of language.

In the background of *The Order of Things* is what Foucault (1993) will refer to as logophobia: language has either been seen as the expression of the world, or the medium through which the world is ordered, or the way in which man unfolds himself historically in relation to those with whom he was to work and live. What has not, and cannot, be thought is language's own being:

> There is nothing now, either in our knowledge or our reflection, that still recalls even the memory of that being. Nothing, except perhaps literature – and even then in a fashion more allusive and diagonal than direct. It may be said in a sense that 'literature', as it was constituted and so designated on the threshold of the modern age, manifests, at a time when it was least expected, the reappearance, of the living being of language. (Foucault 2002, 48)

This 'living being' is not the life *of* the living being, and the force of language cannot be contained within man as a self-producing animal. In the era of biopolitics, which Foucault will theorize explicitly in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality,* language can now be explained on the basis of the imperatives of man as a biological being: language emerges from the imperatives of living and labouring, as one of the complex systems grounded on organic being. Today, with all the research endeavours devoted to the emergence of language from increasing levels of technical complexity, with the organism bound to the world through meaning – always viewing what is other than itself in terms of its own range of vital responses – Foucault's critique of biopolitics needs to be detached from the more widespread uptake of the term. Foucault's target was the reduction of language to yet one more manifestation of life: just as man is required to develop tools and

systems of labour, so he will also form a grammar, syntax and vocabulary. This will allow him to maintain himself and his milieu in a relatively stable form. Today, theories of systems that account for language emergence on the basis of the organism's self-maintenance are continuations of this reduction of all forms of complexity and relations to the level of the organism. What is occluded is the autonomy of linguistic systems or more broadly, what Deleuze and Guattari will refer to as deterritorialization: the potential for powers or relations to detach themselves from their origin (particularly when the origin is not a single power of life as manifestation but a power of the multiple or the false, a power of differentiation).

If one considers the widespread use of the term biopolitics today, especially as that term was taken up by writers like Giorgio Agamben *against* Foucault, a remarkable retreat from Foucault's positions becomes apparent. What Foucault tried to achieve, both with the theorization of contemporary biopolitics and with the genealogy of the concept of 'life' in *The Order of Things,* was a twofold manoeuvre: there has always been a resistance to thinking the positivity of language, or – if one expands this insight as Deleuze will do – a resistance to thinking relations and productivity distinct from organisms and intentionality. In *The Order of Things* Foucault will say that there have been varying ways in which a relation is established between the known and the unknown – always across a surface or plane, the being of which is neither inside nor outside and which cannot be thought. Whether human beings are aspects of some divine cosmos whose signs can be read, whether they are placed within a rational cosmos whose order can be calculated in terms of a single logic, or whether there is something like 'life' whose temporal unfolding accounts for the emergence of systems: all these modes of thought *include* difference and relations within some comprehensive, and comprehendible, whole. What cannot be thought is what Foucault elsewhere referred to as madness: an unworking or a generation of relations without order, and without *life* – without a purposiveness, striving or intentionality that would ground relations in meaning. In the historical narrative of *The Order of Things* it is precisely when the logic of life seems to account for the distinctions among language, labour and human communication that the being of language once more begins to shine. This resurgence recalls a pre-Platonic experience of language as a force or power that in itself creates a dazzling mastery, rather than being the means through which rational mastery maintains itself. Language is not the means through which partners in dialogue negotiate power; there is a power of language as such, a force or density, and it is from here – from force – that selves are effected.

Later, when Foucault will turn to examine the practices through which subjects are formed, this should not be read as a retreat from his early Nietzschean emphasis on forces that could not be grounded in the normalization of the human body and its healthy communications. What Foucault strives to think – in his concepts of power, or language, or an ethics of experimentation – is just this anonymity or murmur of forces beyond the mind of man and his intentionality. When (as in Agamben) biopolitics is no longer taken to be a specifically modern phenomenon, and a claim is made that there is something like an 'anthropological machine' that will always and necessarily work to distinguish man as a political (self-deciding) being from man as a bounded animal (coupled to a specific world), then life once again becomes a primarily organic figure. For all Agamben's criticism of biopolitics, the emphasis on 'the open' and the 'anthropological machine' situates life as the enigmatic ground *from which* man, as that being who has no proper world, is distinguished:

1. Anthropogenesis is what results from the caesura and articulation between man and animal. This caesura passes first of all within man.
2. Ontology, or first philosophy, is not an innocuous academic discipline, but in every sense the fundamental operation in which anthropogenesis, the becoming human of the living being, is realized. From the beginning metaphysics is taken up in this strategy: it concerns precisely that meta that completes and preserves the overcoming of animal *physis* in the direction of human history. This overcoming is not an event that has been completed once and for all, but an occurrence that is always under way, that every time and in each individual decides between the human and the animal, between nature and history, between life and death.
3. Being, world and the open are not, however, something other with respect to animal environment and life; they are nothing but the interruption and capture of the living being's relationship with its disinhibitor. The open is nothing but a grasping of the animal not-open. Man suspends his animality and, in this way, opens a 'free and empty' zone in which life is captured and a-bandoned in a zone of exception. (Agamben 1998, 79)

Agamben's criticism of modern biopolitics is that far from this distinction and labour of the anthropological machine intensifying as man finds himself faced with the open, 'man' loses distinction and becomes one more means in a world oriented to biological efficiency and management. There is now no longer what there once was for the Greeks, a domain of making

or *poiesis* that was not determined in advance as the willing of man as a subject. (His critique contrasts directly with that of Deleuze and Guattari, for whom philosophy – far from working to create man from the animal – reaches its potential in releasing itself from the human to become-animal.)

For Agamben it is art that once more can reveal a productivity or potentiality of man that is not bound up with his biological being, and that opens his world beyond the milieu of its merely biological meaning. The same applies to those who follow Agamben in locating biopolitics as the Western political mode of normalization, and as the feature that intensifies in modernity: life has always functioned as some form of proper ground or ultimate subject, and has always been used to adjudicate man as a moral being. For Robert Esposito, like Agamben, it is in art – ranging from images of the crucifixion to Francis Bacon's heads – that one can perceive a weight and decay of flesh that is not attached to the flourishing organism (Esposito 2008, 168–9). This recalcitrant flesh exposes a potentiality beyond that of man as a productive and normal being who in turn is coupled to a well-functioning polity.

Where these critical theories of biopolitics differ from Foucault is in their intensified Heideggerianism. Heidegger was already critical of any grounding of existence on bios (Heidegger 1991, 114), and also argued that language – especially poetic language – could once again expose us to the opening up or disclosure of the living, rather than assume the norm of the living being as a ground (Heidegger 1971). It appears at first as though Foucault too follows this move in his celebration of the shining of language, where language is no longer that through which man represents or unfolds his world but where the word's own density and positivity appears in its singularity. Despite similar criticisms of man, biologism and the reduction of language to a representing medium, it is the small difference between Foucault and Heidegger that opens up a space for thought. Heidegger's criticism of Descartes and subjectivism is based on a reading of history in which there is a forgetting of the original sense of logos. In the beginning is a productive saying, not a subject who represents a world, but an encounter in which both 'man' and the space in which he dwells are unfolded through a speaking together, through a seeing that discloses itself in a 'saying'. This saying or *legein* – this activity in which both the being who speaks and what is said are unveiled – becomes, over time, a 'logic', while logic becomes the correct means through which *humanitas* will order his world: the human and the humanities become grounded on a correct and normalizing method. With Descartes it is not only this prior logic that is taken as the *ratio* of the world, determining all being in advance, it is the

experiencing being himself who becomes a subject. From *hypokeimenon* or that which is spoken about, one moves by translation into the Latin *subjectum* or ground, which then becomes the 'subject' (Heidegger 1968). For Heidegger that increasing loss of a genuine and relational saying only intensifies with Nietzsche, for whom 'will' now comes to stand as that ultimate ground of life. What is lost in this metaphysics of the will, or in Nietzsche's affinity with bios, is the disclosure, genesis or coming into presence of the grounding term (Heidegger 1977). For Heidegger that process of unveiling or revealing can be retrieved through a reflection on *poiesis*, for language uncoupled from a determining logic will not be a simple name we attach to a world already revealed as so much living matter. Language would open a site of revealing, unfolding, dwelling or home from which all grounds would be thinkable.

Foucault's criticism of the bio-political and his appeal to the literary language of the nineteenth century has a different inflection. Literary language does not retrieve a forgetting, nor does it bring thinking closer to its condition of unfolding. On the contrary, throughout his corpus Foucault detaches seeing from saying, such that there is an order and logic of visibilities – all the orientations and technologies of the body and its relation to viewing apparatuses in the hospital, prison, courtroom and school – and an order of statements. These intersect but they also have a density and positivity such that one cannot be reduced to the other. There is not 'a' living being who makes sense of the world he sees through the language he speaks. Rather there are (at least) two 'diagrams', of seeing and saying, with 'man' effected at a particular historical juncture where representation becomes the medium through which he manages his environment and his own material being.

In his work on Foucault, Deleuze regards this splitting of diagrams between what is seen and what is said as crucial for imagining the potential transition from man to the post-Nietzschean 'superman'. In *The Order of Things* Foucault theorizes a transition from pre-Kantian thought (where man's capacity to think is just a lesser version of the divine intellect) to modernity's analytic of finitude (where thought must, necessarily, be finite in relation to that which is given to it). But Foucault halts at the limit of the Kantianism, indicating that it is literary language which can free that thought of finitude from life: for we need not see language as that system to which man submits because he must speak and labour with others. Language has its own density and order that cannot be reduced to the unfolding of man as a historical organism who has the capacity to reflect upon but never fully coincide with his conditions. Deleuze asks us to take

'quite literally' Foucault's claim that man is a face drawn in the sand between two tides (Deleuze 2006, 74): to take such an idea literally would require us to think of humanity as inscribed, or marked out between modes of forces, between seeing and saying. At a certain moment there is a subject who speaks in order to accurately represent the world he views, but such a connection is contingent. In classical thought, according to Foucault, human beings possess the same form of knowing as the divine infinite intellect but do so to a lesser degree; the human is a fragment of infinity. Man experiences the infinite but without the clarity or distinction of a God of unbounded reason. In modernity finitude is constitutive and accounts for the specific fold of man: his reason and knowing are essentially finite, for man can only know the world as it is represented through the relational categories that make his world possible. Life, labour and language constitute the modes through which this finitude is thought. If it is possible, as Foucault imagines, to think of language not only as the means through which man relates to an always represented world but as a power in its own right, then Deleuze argues that the same can be true of life. It, too, could be thought beyond 'man' and the fold between the finite and the infinite (Deleuze 2006, 77). One would arrive at an unlimited finity: forces that are actualized only in relation, but are never exhausted by any one relation.

The criticism and genealogy of the 'despotism' of the signifier in *Anti-Oedipus* would therefore be tied to the larger problem of overcoming a certain logic of finitude, a logic whereby the relations through which the world is given are explained from man's organic being and his necessary subjection to mediating systems. When language in its narrowest sense occurs, as a system of linguistic signifiers, this is when all other forms of signs have become subordinate to, or overcoded by, the linguistic event of meaning. Initially human bodies are organized not as bounded individuals who live their relation to the world *through meaning*; before the bounded body there is a 'festive cruelty' of forces that implies the triple independence of the articulated voice, the graphic hand, and the 'appreciative eye' (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 189). This is not the punishment of an individual by a transcendent power (and certainly not the self-subjection of man to the system of signification), but a play of powers not yet localized. Genealogy, after Nietzsche, requires looking back at the transmutation of such cruelly repressive forces through repression. Here, it is not man who represses his anti-social energies, for it is man the individual who must answer to a higher ideal of himself. The figure of man is directly repressive of all those violent forces that can *not* be humanized, stabilized or placed within the memory of historical narrative: 'Man must constitute himself

through the intense germinal influx, the great biocosmic memory that threatens to deluge every attempt at collectivity . . . All the stupidity and arbitrariness of the laws, all the pain of the initiations, the whole perverse apparatus of repression and education, the red-hot irons, and the atrocious procedures that have only this meaning; *to breed* man, to mark him in his flesh, to render him capable of alliance, to form him within the debtor-creditor relation, which on both sides turns out to be a matter of memory – a memory straining toward the future' (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 190). It is possible to suggest that today, when narratives regarding the smooth emergence of morality and language abound, such projects are not too literal – not referring naively to a lost origin – but that they *are not literal enough*. They stop at man, asking how 'we' became moral or linguistic animals, not entertaining the thought that the figure of the human – the figure of this historical self-narrating animal – itself was inscribed and marked out in a manner that was thoroughly devoid of whatever today stands for humanity. Those forces that were once not yet reterritorialized on the subject can, if we look to the future, be extended beyond man as organism. It is this monstrous, perverse, inhuman and malevolent potential of forces that will distinguish Deleuze's philosophy of life from all those other projects that would ground relations upon life as purposive and organic:

> . . . schizoanalysis attains a nonfigurative and nonsymbolic unconscious, a pure abstract figural dimension ('abstract' in the sense of abstract painting), flows-schizzes or real-desire, apprehended below the minimum conditions of identity . . . psychoanalysis has not yet made its pictorial revolution . . . our choices in matters of love are at the crossroads of 'vibrations', which is to say that they express conjunctions of flows that cross through a society, entering and leaving it, linking it up with other societies, ancient or contemporary, remote or vanished, dead or yet to be born. Africas and Orients, always following the underground thread of the libido. Not geohistorical figures or statues, although our apprenticeship is more readily accomplished with these figures, with books, histories, and reproductions, than with our mommy. But flows and codes of socius that do not portray anything, that merely *designate* zones of libidinal intensity on the body without organs, and that are emitted, captured, intercepted, by the being that we are determined to love, like a point-sign, a singular point in the entire network of the intensive body that responds to History, that vibrates with it. (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 351–2)

In the beginning is a plane of consistency – powers that would connect to produce spaces and qualities. Both capitalism and language express this plane in an *almost* purely abstract manner: capitalism is as close as social machines have come to realizing a system where there is nothing other than encounters of powers (although these encounters are always measured through the differential of exchange and not released as such). Language, especially when understood as nothing other than a system of signifiers without positive terms, appears almost as pure relation, although here again these systems of relation are grounded on the speaking subject: language is seen as the system to which we submit and which produces us as subjects. Deleuze and Guattari's genealogy is therefore a seeming vitalism that charts the genesis and emergence of two modern systems – the systems of signifiers and capitalism – from a differential power of life that cannot be identified or fully actualized in any one system but is always in excess of, and a power greater than, any of its expressions. But the life from which such systems of exchange emerge is not, as in traditional vitalisms, a force that is expressed either as organic or as the organism's proper potentiality.

In its organicist mode vitalism is opposed to both death and systematicity. There is a strict opposition between the organism, whose parts are defined only in relation to the whole – a whole that gives sense and order to its parts – and a purely technical system composed of units. Contemporary vitalisms make this point quite explicitly, particularly in relation to cognition. The problem with Cartesianism, they argue, is its tendency to think of thought as pure calculation, or to consider perception as the reception of data, whereas all the body's thoughts, perceptions and movements are *meaningful*: all movements are aspects of a totality in which what is seen, thought or done occurs in a context of the living being's purposive striving:

> Physics does not catalog the existence of organisms or environments. For physics, there are only atoms and processes operating subatomically: you can't do biology from within physics. To do biology, we need the resources to take up a nonmechanistic attitude to the organism as an environmentally embedded unity. When we do that . . . we also secure the (at least) primitive mentality of the organisms. The problem of mind is that of the problem of life. What biology brings into focus is the living being, but where we discern life, we have everything we need to discern mind. (Noë 2009, 41)

This distinction between the mindful, world-oriented meaningful organism opposed to a system of forces with no overall determining order or

sense has always determined capitalism as an extrinsic evil. Life is supposedly properly organic, with everything occurring for the sake of an apprehended and purposive whole; capitalism corrupts this bounded totality by allowing the operation of meaningless elements and an anarchic exchange not governed by any sense of the whole. Whereas goodness has always been defined as the actualization, through time, of a being's proper form, evil is inertia, non-relation or chaos. Vitalism will therefore reject the pure quantities of meaningless systems, and will set the organicist wholeness of self-maintenance, autopoiesis and equilibrium in opposition to a force that has no reference to a proper or governing body.

Such an opposition between vitalism and mechanism is at once a normative privileging of the bounded organism over other forms of life and movement, at the same time as it is eminently theological: life is defined in terms of a striving towards actualization and fulfilment. For Deleuze and Guattari, by contrast, vitality is not opposed to death and systematicity; there is a profound inorganic life that can be intuited once death is considered not as a model (as the dissolution of the organism's wholeness) but as an experience.

Chapter Five

Digital Death

For Deleuze and Guattari there is a drive to death, a counter-organic drive that is fully vital. Indeed, it is only when life is no longer bound to the organism's proper functioning (only when, for example, one could detach seeing, thinking or touch from their composite form in the well-formed body) that one arrives both at life itself, and at philosophy's proper domain. Vital forces do not spring forth from bodies and then become belied or perverted by systems; rather, there is a potentiality for systems – what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as desiring machines, or what might more generally be spoken of as 'technicity' – and it is that potentiality that both allows for and is limited by social machines. Capitalism and language take the potentiality for systematicity beyond bounded systems, both the bounded organism and the social machine of capital and language.

This freeing of the potential for differential relations from transcendent bodies stalls, however, in the modern oedipalism of the subject. There is no longer a despotic body outside exchange that will impede and ward off the tendency to capitalism. But this deterritorialization is reterritorialized on oedipal subjectivity. Not only does the subject experience the lack of law, sense or foundation as castration: it is precisely through the absence of God, foundation or authority that the subject becomes self-subjecting. This structure is apparent, even today, in both cultural studies and, more surprisingly, in many of the supposedly vitalist returns to life. Consider, for example, Judith Butler's widely influential account of subjectivity as subjection. I have no being other than that which is achieved through performance, and performance is always the performance *of* some identity that is given to me by the heterosexual matrix. I become a subject by submission to norms that are *not* mine, and only have a sense of 'mineness' in that gap or distance between existing norms and an always unstable performance (Butler 2005, 23). The symbolic order occurs as an event of imposition and submission; and there is no law or foundation outside an ongoing, but always (in part) failed, subjection (Butler 1993, 13). The structure of

subjectivity is essentially mournful, for in taking on the being that is granted to me by subjection to the symbolic order I must at once be other than, or have abandoned, those other potentialities that can be experienced only as lost (Butler 1999, 74). From Butler's early seemingly linguistic emphasis on performatives and the symbolic order to later attentions to the visibility of the face, her work remains focused on the bounded organism: for whether one is constituted through subjection to the heterosexual matrix, or through submission to the address of the other, it is nevertheless a dyadic relation between (constituted, effected) self and intruding otherness – a relation of negation.

Further, Butler insists that it is this relation of subjection to an other (whose desire remains unknown and enigmatic) that will position the subject as always already attached to a signifying order. One's being is just this predicament (or joy) of being given over to an unreadable otherness, an other who is never given as a presence:

> It makes sense to assume this primary susceptibility to the action and the face of the other, the full ambivalence of an unwanted address, is what constitutes our exposure to injury *and* our responsibility for the Other. This susceptibility is an ethical resource precisely because it establishes our vulnerability or exposure to what Levinas calls 'wounds and outrages'. (Butler 2005, 91)

Several concrete political and cultural consequences follow from this model of oedipal subjectivity: a model that regards relations as traumatic, intrusive, submissive or *susceptible*.

Butler's work, for all its sophistication, is exemplary of a widespread vitalist imperative that whatever the subject *is*, it is other than reified or normalized images. Whereas Butler insists that there is no subject who precedes the performance of norms; the subject is a retroactive effect, posited as that which must have been there *to perform*. Her work differs, in this respect, from a popular resistance to any form of ideal that is not of the self's own making. Popular feminist debates regarding body images, for example, are critical of imposed ideals, insisting that one ought to strive for real beauty. There ought to be no model, image or ideal of the self other than what one already is, or what one might readily become. Against this one might compare Deleuze's vitalism of disembodied potentialities: there are ideas or events that are then actualized in bodies. Organisms are possible because they concretely embody potentialities – the power to eat, to see, to move, to think – that could have been actualized differently, *and* that can even be *counter-actualized*. If a philosopher takes thinking away from already

constituted norms, such as those of logic, and asks how logic is possible or how thinking can take on a form of consistency, then he might take thought (and logic) further than the figure of 'man and world' or 'organism and meaning'. If one is a film maker or artist one might pose the problem of seeing as such, what a form of visuality might be when it is detached from the survival and equilibrium-oriented strategies of the organism.

This might provide a new way of approaching our supposedly new visual, digital and media culture. It is often lamented that 'we' are losing our capacities to read in terms of syntax, abstract language and logic, and this is because we are now mesmerized and infantilized by a visual culture of the image (Greenfield 2008). Our critical capacities atrophy as the domain of images, in turn, becomes increasingly restrictive and normalizing. In turn, such a visual culture is deemed to be directly pernicious to the organism.

Nowhere is this mode of argument more evident than in identity politics and the war on images. Various forms of media have been deemed to be guilty of attacking the human body's self-maintenance by virtue of an imposition of unattainable or inhuman images (Wykes and Gunter 2005). What is called for – as in the UK government's 2000 summit on body images – is a more realistic and attainable dissemination of bodily figures. Or, as in various supposedly sophisticated and 'philosophical' approaches to the new media, a number of writers have sought to return the domain of images to the living body. Mark Hansen, as already noted, has criticized Deleuze and Guattari's departure from Bergson's attention to the organism's conditions of living, and has then used this general return of process to living systems to affirm modes of digital art that rely on audience and lived experience.

One possible diagnosis of the disease of images leads to a policing of the visual field, deemed now to be too dead and distanced in relation to living bodies. As a once-dominant mode of feminism would demand, images of beauty and femininity ought to bear a closer relation to actual bodies: size zero models, air-brushed photographs, surgically enhanced celebrity figures all present women with unattainable ideals. Society's ideals or norms are becoming increasingly and intensively detached from the normal. Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth* was at one and the same time a culmination of a tradition of feminism and politics that attacked the dead and deadening stereotype, and an opening to a new era of a war on rigid normativity. Wolf was critical of beauty ideals that presented women with goals they could only achieve, if at all, through a denial of their proper potential:

> The beauty myth tells a story: The quality called 'beauty' objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it. This embodiment is an imperative for women and not for men, which situation is necessary and

> natural because it is biological, sexual, and evolutionary: Strong men battle for beautiful women, and beautiful women are more reproductively successful. Women's beauty must correlate to their fertility, and since this system is based on sexual selection, it is inevitable and changeless.
>
> None of this is true. 'Beauty' is a currency system like the gold standard. Like any economy it is determined by politics, and in the modern age in the West it is the last best belief system that keeps male dominance intact. In assigning value to women in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for resources that men have appropriated for themselves.
>
> 'Beauty' is not universal or changeless, though the West pretends that all ideals of female beauty stem from one Platonic ideal woman. (Wolf 1997, 12)

Platonism, again, occurs as a symptom; and yet it might be worth asking whether a more Platonic Platonism might open up the field of this problem. Should we be restoring the value of beauty to each individual body and its own sense of worth, or grounding beauty in real women and attainable ideals? Would such attempts at return to, and retrieval of, actuality not exacerbate just what is counted as a proper body? Since Wolf published *The Beauty Myth* two tendencies have unfolded. The first is an increasing acceptance of evolutionary psychological approaches to sex and gender, ranging from the popular *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* to neuroscience's affirmation that a viewer would regard a female form as beautiful if it accentuated those visual features (hips, breasts) that signal femininity (Spivey 2006, 81). A seeming counter-tendency lies in the increased suspicion of imposed images, for there are now anxieties not only regarding racial and sexual stereotypes; the brain itself is becoming mesmerized by the intensity of visual culture, moving towards the immediate gratification of visual stimulus and away from syntax, reading and connectivity (Wolf 2007). But both these tendencies follow from a commitment to the (albeit contrary) norm of life; life must not be diminished by any power other than its own (alien images, technology) and yet life must develop and flourish (become a reading, connecting, outward moving brain).

Wolf's feminism was just one aspect of a more widespread attack on images, figures or ideals that were not the living body's own. And this would include even Judith Butler's insistence that the heterosexual matrix requires an original abandonment, forever mourned, of all those potentialities not

recognized when one must answer to the recognized norms of being man *or* woman.[1] Popular culture today has not only sustained the vitalist individualist affirmation of the living body; it has also placed the notion of the properly self-making individual body at the heart of capitalist marketing. One ought to love the skin one is in, abandon any notion of happiness that would require becoming other than what one already is, and instead arrive at a sense of self that is thoroughly in accord with one's own capacities. (Even some of the most extreme popular 'makeover' television programs present bodily transformation as a re-discovery of the self, returning to the body one has only temporarily lost or distorted.)

Such seemingly naïve appeals to the living, authentic, fluid and proximate self are precisely what the phenomenological and anti-Cartesian tradition of philosophy sought to displace. Husserl and Heidegger regarded the natural man of psychology as a failure of thinking, as one of the ways in which one substituted an actualized object for a more complex genesis that could not be identified with any object within life. Today, however, it is just this phenomenological tradition, or a supposed return to phenomenology, that has enabled all the anti-humanist gestures of post-structuralism and a radically inhuman phenomenology to be displaced by a comforting return to the organism. Phenomenology, like any move in philosophy and theory, always harbours a vitalist potential, a capacity to be understood from the point of view of the living body. Husserl's and Heidegger's criticisms of Descartes were not, as in today's versions of anti-Cartesianism, that Descartes's ego was overly intellectual and disembodied, but that *res cogitans* was depicted as a body, substance or part of the world. The syntheses or unfoldings from which the Cartesian subject emerged could either be regarded as radically inhuman and other than any conception of organic life *or* as grounded in the lived body. It is this latter active vitalist path that has become increasingly dominant. Heidegger and Husserl are now deployed not only to criticize Cartesianism in the name of the human organism, but also to repair the damage inflicted on the organism's primacy by the post-phenomenology of writers like Deleuze and Derrida. (And both Deleuze and Derrida have their organicist vitalist proponents.[2]) So, while phenomenology harbours the capacity to take the understanding of syntheses beyond the bounded organism (and in a direction contrary to the contemporary affirmation of the identity politics that would refuse all images that are not the self's own and not in line with its current actuality), today's critiques of Cartesianism return life to the lived human body now seen as an enriched rather than undermined subject.

It might appear that there is a critical distinction between the everyday affirmation of humanity threatened by the domain of alienated digital media and the celebratory theorists of digital media, but this is not the case. The popular and identity-based attacks on visual culture as a tyranny of images have their seeming opposite in the celebration and embrace of new technologies and new media by philosophers and cultural theorists. Mark Hansen has insisted – despite the seemingly disembodied quality of digital technologies – that it is ultimately the organism and lived experience that ought to provide the critical foundation for evaluating and understanding new media. Hansen explicitly criticizes Deleuze and Guattari for departing from Bergson's vitalism of the organism, 'their dismissal of the organism as a molar form that negatively limits life' (Hansen 2000a, 5): whereas Bergson considered differences and processes always from the point of view of the living body, Deleuze and Guattari talk about desiring machines in general, with the organism being a contraction or relative point of stability. They do not consider the materiality of *techne* in their celebration of desire (Hansen 2000a, 188). Hansen then extends this moral privileging of the lived organism or materiality to a way of evaluating digital art and theories of the digital. Writing on the work of Bill Viola, Hansen argues that digital installations and artworks bring to the foreground the specific and individual experiences and perceptions of audiences (Hansen 2004a).

> The subject is the residue of this transductive confrontation; far from being produced through a second-order receptivity, from the process whereby a human being takes its own desubjectification *as content,* subjectivity happens when a human being is brought face-to-face with its own constitutive incompleteness and when this encounter, this passivity in the face of oneself, becomes a source of pleasure or enthrallment. As the residue of shame in this sense, subjectivity simply is the condition of being consigned to life as something that cannot be assumed. Isn't this, after all, why we feel most alive at those moments when we are least contained, least sovereign over ourselves, and why such vital feeling is often thoroughly saturated with, indeed inseparable from, a residue of shame? (Hansen 2004a, 40)

Like Butler's turn to Levinas and the face-to-face, Hansen – like so many less critical opponents of a disembodied and affectless media – wants to return *techne* and image to the subjective encounter. And this is so even if, as Deleuze and Guattari noted, it is mesmerization by such anthropomorphizing and organic images that precludes a thinking of forces: 'A mortuary

axiomatic. One might then believe in liberated desires, but ones that, like cadavers, feed on images. Death is not desired, but what is desired is dead, already dead, dead images' (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 337). It is possible for Hansen at once to criticize Deleuze and Guattari for not taking technology seriously – not seeing the autonomy and materiality of *techne* – *and* to lament Deleuze and Guattari's inattention to the organism; this is possible not because of an isolated inconsistency or change of heart, but because the relation between the vital order and technology must always shift its moral grounds: at once *techne must be* an extension of the lived, just as the subject must be given through the face-to-face. But technology must also have its own materiality, and subjectivity must be seen as dynamic and created, not an inert given. In a continuing (but seemingly contradictory) vein, Hansen attacks those theorists of time and technology who would grant a semi-autonomous process to technological evolution: time is always, he insists, grounded on lived experience and lived bodies with technical objects – such as those markers of time and memory aids of writing – being dependent on the original synthesis of the human subject (Hansen 2004b, 24).

Now, it might seem that we have here a critical opposition: on the one hand a popular and explicitly political hatred of technologies of the image (where stereotypes are seen as violations of one's individual difference) and on the other hand a supposedly sophisticated and philosophical valorization of the new reign of images on the basis that finally art is able to be responsive and in accord with the viewer's own lived time. But this seeming opposition conceals a deeper infantilist and organicist refusal of any image or ideal that is not in accord with one's actual or lived individuality.

If we return to Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between an active and passive vitalism we can see the way in which such an approach to vitalism allows us to think beyond the contemporary moralism of the subject. From the point of view of an active vitalism, life is properly the life of the living organism and all forces and relations ought to be referred back to the living being for their *raison d'être* and be evaluated according to the degree to which they further or alienate the organism's individual sense of life. A passive vitalism allows for the consideration of forces beyond the norms, bounds and lived meanings of the organism – and beyond the image, whether that be the proper image of the face-to-face or the alienating image of the imposed norm. It would not, therefore, be a question of evaluating images, theories or art works on the basis of their proximity to the lived; it would not be a question of judging images according to their attainability or similarity to what is recognized or recognizable. What needs to be

rethought is not the nature and content of images – are images of women and beauty realistic, and are our ideas of *techne* sufficiently human? – but the *relation to images*. Should ideals and images be referred back to the lived body, or – as images and ideals – are such creations capable of taking life beyond the self-understanding of the organism?

Instead of regarding beauty ideals as too distant from actual bodies, one might take the opposite path. Take a rather dull and clichéd image of contemporary beauty: the size zero model. Rather than see this ideal as impossible to actualize, or as too different from everyday bodies, one could argue that such images are too close to actuality, not *ideals* so much as poor generalizations that fail to achieve the sense or event of beauty. One might also say that the problem of new media is not its distance and difference from life – its alienating inhumanity – but that nothing has really occurred with digital technologies to perturb the limits of the organism. The iPod extends the privacy of enjoyment and its manufacture, allowing more often than not for the translation and extension of preceding technologies; marketing strategies – such as iTunes – are exercised by the ways in which such products might be geared to new markets and new commodities. Of course, as the copyright problems of digital media suggest, such technologies not only threaten concepts of authorship and artwork, they also threaten to destroy the very concept of the digital.

If we think of the digital as the formation of countable units from continuous potentialities, potentialities that produce variable quantities when they enter into relation, then it is possible to see the development of digital media and technology as disclosing a radically analogical force that would obliterate the primacy of the identifiable as such. Against the opposition between embodied life and articulated digit, between the lived body and the systems of *techne* it uses to extend its own actuality, one might consider what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the machine – which would be outside the distinction between vitalism and mechanism or between analogue and digital. Here, one might criticize *both* those who attack digital media for its difference from the living empowered human body and those who would hail digital media as an enabling and properly lived medium for human realization. For what a passive vitalism of the pre-digital analogue might open up is a capacity to think inorganic durations and syntheses.

In his book on Francis Bacon, and in his work with Guattari, Deleuze makes a distinction between the analogue and the digital, seeing the latter as proceeding from a normalized human body or from more general processes of coding (Deleuze 2004b, 79). Before the emergence of explicitly digital media there is already a digital aesthetic, where the eye and hand are

coupled in such a way that the eye sees the world in terms of manipulable 'digits' – the world counted on the hand for the sake of an eye that masters its milieu. Perspectival, representational, mimetic and empathetic modes of aesthetics survey the world as always the world *for* this viewing and mobilized organism, an organism of coordinated organs. This has particular importance for the modern 'reading' eye of the culture of the signifier; marks, lines and cuts are not seen as such but are taken to be signs of a voice that emanates from a body of judging man.

When Deleuze and Guattari criticize Derrida's placing of writing as originary and quasi-transcendental it is not because *écriture* is too abstract and does not capture writing's dependence on living systems but because writing is not abstract enough. Writing, they insist, needs to be thought of as a barbarian 'graphism' that is independent of the voice. Derrida is quite right to note that there is no pure voice, in itself, that is then re-presented or broken by a system of written signs; if 'writing in general' refers to difference as such, then Derrida's criticism of delimiting writing to written signs is apposite. But, Deleuze and Guattari insist, a true history of writing needs to think how the link between the voice that speaks and the hand that writes comes to stand for writing in general (and this requires a political analysis of how various matters of difference voice-hand-graph came to be aligned with speech-writing); it requires acknowledging the political and intensive difference of the primacy of the voice:

> For there is indeed a break that changes everything in the world of representation, between this writing in the narrow sense and writing in the broad sense – that is, between two completely different orders of inscription: a graphism that leaves the voice dominant by being independent of the voice while connecting with it, and a graphism that dominates or supplants the voice by depending on it in various ways and by subordinating itself to the voice. The primitive territorial sign is self-validating; it is a position of desire in a state of multiple connections. It is not a sign of a sign nor a desire of desire. It knows nothing of linear subordination and its reciprocity: neither pictogram nor ideogram, it is rhythm and not form, zigzag and not line, artifact and not idea, production and not expression. (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 203)

Derrida always insisted that terms such as trace and *écriture* could not be confined to writing in the narrow sense, and that all those features usually restricted to language and script (such as its capacity to function beyond intention and the living body) also structured voice, intentionality and life,

all of which were dependent on a force of disarticulation, difference or disinterrance. Deleuze and Guattari, however, challenge the way in which Derrida passes from this necessity of an original difference that has no localizable origin to a writing that cannot be placed as posterior to voice and body. Voice, gesture, body, cry, sonorous intensity: in Derrida's reading of the usual theories of the origin of language and writing such terms function as nostalgic and impossible origins that would place some proper foundation before the system of writing. In Deleuze and Guattari these same terms are not privileged and authentic origins effaced and betrayed by a supposedly inhuman writing, for they are more inhuman, less anthropological, less organic than writing:

> Everything in the system is active, en-acted (*agi*), or reacting; everything is a matter of use and function. So that when one considers the whole of territorial representation, one is struck by the complexity of the networks with which it covers the socius: the chain of territorial signs is continually jumping from one element to another; radiating in all directions; emitting detachments wherever there are flows to be selected; including disjunctions; consuming remains; extracting surplus values; connecting words, bodies, and sufferings, and formulas, things, and affects: connoting voices, graphic traces, and eyes, always in a polyvocal usage – *a way of jumping* that cannot be contained within an order of meaning, still less within a signifier . . .
>
> Then there occurs a crushing of the magic triangle: the voice no longer sings but dictates, decrees; the graphy no longer dances, it ceases to animate bodies, but is set into writing on tablets, stones, and books; the eye sets itself to reading. (Writing does not entail but implies a kind of blindness, a loss of vision *and* of the ability to appraise; it is now the eye that suffers, it also acquires other functions.) (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 204–5)

There is a voice that is other than speech, a sound or intensity that is not the expression of a self or body and that occurs extra-organically as a rhythm or pulsation from which something like a social body or territory would emerge. There are bodily movements and collective dances that occur not as the entering into relation of individuals to form a community, but as physical pulsations from which something like a social machine is formed. To say that in the beginning are 'desiring machines' is to place force before organism, to see the body itself, and voice itself, as compositions of differentials entering into relation to form certain qualities. This differential

beginning does not coincide with the historical emergence of human understanding; nor can it be located simply in chronological sequence before or after writing.

One would not place what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'the intense germinal influx' or what Deleuze refers to more abstractly as 'the spatium' (the field across which intensities pass to produce qualities that take up some space) in the same duration of organisms. If the time of *Chronos* is the time of bodies, a time that has a before and after, and is marked according to the lived possibilities of a body, then the time of *Aion* harbours both directions of a potentiality 'at once'. It is true, then, as Derrida notes, that the supposedly living voice that is prior to the distance and disarticulation of the *techne* of writing is already marked by spacing that cannot be returned to the proper intention of 'man' or subjectivity. But what is required is thinking the differential becoming that opens a certain mode of the lived body, that reduces the problem of signs and relations to the human organism who is subjected to the system of signification: 'in place of a polyvocal graphism flush with the real, a biunivocalization forming the transcendent dimension that gives rise to linearity' (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 206).

Deleuze and Guattari will insist that one should not think the origin of writing in terms of a difference in general. Their histories are empirical histories that will examine degrees of formalization; and their histories are also universal, for once a high degree of formalization does occur (as in the signifier) it is possible to read a tendency towards deterritorialization in all systems. Their work is made possible, not by a return to life, but by recognizing the capitalist, oedipal and signifying trends of postmodernity: trends they aim to extend and deterritorialize radically. Writing as a structure of signifiers was preceded by marks and traces that bore some systematicity or territorialization but could not yet form a marking in general that stood for all other traces. The terms through which we think such necessary difference are profoundly historical, for it is only after the advent of the oedipal capitalist man of the signifier that one can then see all history as differential in a sense that is more abstract than capitalism. Capitalism as a potentiality – the pure entering-into-of-relations without foundation – is realized and impeded by capitalism as a social form which will always ground relations and fields on the axiom of money's relation to labour (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 249). Similarly, language as a potentiality or language at its most abstract is realized and impeded by the concept of the signifier, which at once sees system as liberated from positive terms while nevertheless failing to see differential potentials or tendencies that are not those of imposed and transcendent or lawful orders. It is here, then, that one might distinguish

between Derrida's counter-vitalism which precludes any thought of a power or potentiality that is not that of pure relationality without positivity, and Deleuze and Guattari's passive vitalism which will aim to intuit positive potentialities – voice, animality, the sonorous, sensation, expressive matters.

This is what will account for Deleuze's claims for intuition as a method that will separate composites (Deleuze 1988a) and that will be able to discern in capitalism the distinction between desiring machines of pure productive force and social machines that organize those forces into a field or territory. It will also account for Deleuze's claim for an analogical language, which would be anathema to a Derrida for whom language or expression as such must always already be marked by a digital rupture, must always be disarticulated and punctuated. In *The Logic of Sensation* Deleuze describes this striving for an analogical language, a language that would not be bound to the already marked out territories of our given systems through Francis Bacon's art of ground and figure:

> Analogical language would be a language of relations, which consists of expressive movements, paralinguistic signs, breaths and screams, and so on. One can question whether or not this is a language properly speaking. But there is no doubt, for example, that Artaud's theater elevated scream-breaths to the state of language. More generally, painting elevates colors and lines to the state of language, and it is an analogical language. One might even wonder if painting has not always been the analogical language par excellence. When we speak of analogical language in animals, we do not consider their possible songs, which belong to a different moment; rather we are essentially concerned with cries, variable colors, and lines (attitudes, postures). (Deleuze 2004b, 79–80)

There are many moments in Deleuze's and Deleuze and Guattari's work where one might appear to be in the presence of a classically modernist vitalist aesthetic, an assumption that would be confirmed by their repeated invocation of high modernist artists in music, literature and the painting. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari refer to the way in which artists tear a hole in the fabric of order to retrieve chaos. This is akin, it seems, to a series of modernism's own accounts of art and the artist as distanced from the reified order of disembodied voices, inhuman machines and technological and commodified objects. The artist returns to the dead, the opening of culture, gives blood to the voices of the past and emerges with language not as a natural system of representation but as an active and willed event; one experiences the word not as that which is said but as a primal 'saying'.

Ezra Pound's *Cantos* repeated the founding texts of Western culture, including the putatively oldest book of *The Odyssey* where the poet descends into Hades in order to allow the voices of the past to speak again in a manner that will give life, once again, to a present that has fallen into so much automatic and clichéd repetition. And Pound was not alone in refiguring the journey and retrieval from Hades as a way out of the death of the reified present. Perhaps, though, there is a passive and inhuman element in this seemingly active and vitalist humanist modernism that would seek to return to the past in order to animate the present. Virginia Woolf's programme of capturing the 'moment' in writing is both a retrieval of living mind *and* a recognition of the autonomy and distinction of a pure present or pure time that is not that of the self. Joyce's stream of consciousness is both an extension of the aim to find a style adequate to experience and a realization that experience is composed of fragments of text, noise and mark. (Derrida [1989] also read this double tendency in Joyce's modernism, which was both a style that could encompass all the voices of the earth and a composition of radically untranslatable traces.) Even Pound's fascist and anti-Semitic revulsion against money, the capitalism of usury, passive consumption rather than production, and mechanized aesthetic industries opened the social field to forces beyond praxis. Pound's reaction against the bourgeois man of common sense had two sides, one of which was high art's disdain for everyday unthinking consumption while the other was an opening of art beyond the humanity of good sense to a certain unreadability and plural fracture. Where Pound's aesthetic became cancerous was in its circling back onto a single element or differential, the relation between wealth and aesthetic production. The artist and the fall of art into journalism, manufacture and market speculation became the one differential that governed Pound's rebellion, even though his figure of the anti-bourgeois artist was not in the service of man as a living organism. Art, for Pound and many modernists, was not praxis or the extension of living and enabling action,[3] but a detached and partial object. It is possible to read Pound's theory of the Chinese ideogram as a rather clichéd vitalist modernist gesture: there is a concrete perception of an object that is then translated into a visual figure which then bears a continual relation to the experienced object. There is another way in which this might be read, which is to regard Pound's work as adopting a form of line that would detach itself from voice. If one places Pound's Chinese translations alongside the early *Cantos* that return to the opening of Western poetry in Sappho or Homer then they appear to aim at a retrieval of an original animating act. If, however, one reads them forward into the later *Cantos* that generate something like a poetics of script or line

then it is possible to read modernism's fields of colour, sound and line not so much as a returning of technical systems to the eye, the ear and the hand but releasing those potentialities from the mobilizing organism.

Deleuze's reading of modernism seems also to harbour this double potentiality: gesturing to some return to an opening genesis while also referring to a counter-actualization that would extend a tendency's becoming beyond any of its constituted forms into a not yet realized future. This is where we might return to his notion of analogical language in the visual arts. In *The Logic of Sense* Deleuze (following Worringer) refers to the 'northern line' in gothic art which places Bacon's project in the history of art while also drawing out a trans-temporal dimension:

> We are no longer directed toward the purely optical. On the contrary, the tactile once again assumes its pure activity; it is restored to the hand and given a speed, a violence and a life that the eye can barely follow. Worringer has described this 'northern line', which goes to infinity by continually changing direction, perpetually twisting, splitting, and breaking off from itself; or else by turning back on itself in a violent peripheral or whirling movement. Barbarian art goes beyond organic representation in two ways, either through the mass of the body in movement, or through the speed and changing direction of the flat line: it is a life, but the most bizarre and intense kind of life, a *nonorganic* vitality. (Deleuze 2004b, 90)

Acknowledging that painting, like any practice, is historical, Deleuze argues that before the painter approaches a canvas his field is populated with figures; any work of art repeats the history of art by defiguring those figures – taking all the accepted manners and techniques and placing them into variation. Here something like the northern line, or what Deleuze and Guattari elsewhere refer to as the feminine or abstract line, becomes possible. This is not a line that would divide one space from another across an already constituted field, nor a line placed inside a frame or canvas that would mark out a figure representing some given object. Rather, this line produces a space or field through its movement; it is why we can see a canvas as 'a' Bacon even if it does not present one of Bacon's standard screaming popes or decaying bodies of flesh:

> This line is without origin since it always begins off the painting, which only holds it by the middle; it is without coordinates, because it melds with a plane of consistency upon which it floats and that it creates; it is without localizable connection, because it has lost not only its representative

> function but any function of outlining a form of any kind – by this token the line has become abstract, truly abstract and mutant, a visual block . . . (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 298)

The analogical language that Deleuze explores in relation to Bacon's work is not chronologically prior to the languages of art history. Deleuze does take up a number of art historians' historical periodizations, such as the notion of the northern line (theorized in relation to gothic art and its tendency to develop its lines beyond the form of structures), the concept of the baroque (where a placing into variation takes matter in its mannered form to release an expressive quality in material itself), the three concepts of haptic, manual and digital aesthetics (where the haptic is initially theorized as a vision of close range where the eye 'feels' the movement of the hand across the canvas, or the cut into stone), and the transition from abstraction to empathy (where early art masters its field by the imposition of geometric forms, while later art presents organized bodies whose sympathies can be imaginatively felt). Such periodizing events, like capitalism and despotism, do occur historically but, also like capitalism and despotism, are events of sense that hover above any actual time.

Deleuze and Guattari see the potential of capitalism or free and deterritorialized exchange as a mastered element in all social machines, while capitalism also harbours archaic despotism in its submissive relation to 'the signifier', and to the oedipal structure of repression. Art, too, has its archaisms and problems, the former being the way in which problems have been actualized, such that they can always be repeated, with the latter being an artist's given range of variability that can be extended beyond actuality. Bacon's work is at once historical in an empirical chronological sense, taking up Cézanne's problem of the relation between paint, canvas, ground and figure; at the same time it opens up the problem of figure as such by taking line beyond either abstraction or empathy, beyond either the imposition of an impersonal and formal geometry or the production of organic forms that allow the viewer to relate to what is presented emotively.

Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's often-quoted celebration of 'affect' is neither abstractly formal and universal, nor emotively located in specific bodies and times; rather, affects or percepts are capacities of bodies released from bodies. Bacon's screaming popes are not representations of a self whose terror we can sympathetically imagine, but present the affect of the scream, what it is *to scream*. Art's creation of affects is not that of chronological time or a purely formal universalism, but a time of *Aion*. Here, an affect that must take place in time is given as 'for all time'. The variations of line

in Bacon's canvasses also have their chronological dimension, as made possible through a relation to art history, and their mode of counter actualization which discloses potentiality as such. To say that Bacon allows us to think the problem of analogical language is not to say that he takes up the history of painting to go back to a time before figures took on their clichéd, technically mastered and recognizable mode. Rather, certain problems in art's history can be repeated to disclose the potentiality for variation from which they emerged. The northern line of the gothic is a problem that defines a historical period of art *and* a potentiality. Here we encounter two modes of repetition and two modes of history that also allow us to think two modes of the relation between analogue and digital. Empirically, one could repeat the past through its actuality: building imitation gothic cathedrals. Or, as 'gothic' literature often seeks to do, one repeats the sense of the event, such that gothic exists as a style of difference, as a variability that injects an inorganic or monstrous excess into the forms of any present. When Francis Bacon takes up the problem of the northern line his artwork at once repeats art history, at the same time as it no longer places a figure in space but allows line to trace out or produce 'a' space that is neither that of pure geometry nor pure affect, neither abstraction nor empathy. Line is that from which forms and bodies emerge.

It is naïve and uncritical to see the analogue as a pure and continuous feeling or bodily proximity that is then submitted to the quantification of the digital, a digital that will always be an imposition on organic and vital life. There is, however, an inorganic mode of the analogue that is not a return to a quality before its digital quantification, but a move from digital quantities or actual units to pure quantities, quantities that are not quantities *of* this or that substance so much as intensive forces that enter into differential relations to produce fields or spaces that can then be articulated into digits: 'We are not at all arguing for an aesthetics of qualities, as if the pure quality (colour, sound, etc.) held the secret of a becoming without measure . . . The quality must be considered from the standpoint of the becoming that grasps it, instead of becoming being considered from the standpoint of intrinsic qualities having the value of archetypes or phylogenetic memories (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 306). Line in this abstract sense is analogical because it is neither a line that divides or crosses a space (as in formalism or geometry liberated from all matter), nor a line that takes matter as its medium to express or represent organic forms (such as the lines of perspective, portraiture or signification); the line itself is matter as expression, matter's capacity to produce quantities. This is why the line can be visual, literary or musical: it is not matter submitted to articulation,

not a flow submitted to distinction, but paint itself displaying its potentiality to disclose light and visual fields, sound's variability producing sonorous matters, or script's incisive or tracing power to mark out something like readability in general. There is not, then, an organic life that must submit itself to some technical and repeatable medium in order to extend and master itself. On the contrary, there is a technical or machinic potentiality that enables organic life; the matters of organic evolution emerge from the encounters among differentials or chemical elements that, in turn, emerge from the potentiality of differential relations as such.

That differential relation may be discovered in human history, both in the artworks that release matter's variability and in the sciences that articulate an abstract differential calculus. Abstraction in its fullest sense takes the differential that is articulated in art and science beyond its chronological and discipline-specific forms and strives to create a concept of difference as such: what it is to differ, what line or articulation would be in and for itself. This might sound as though, once again (in Hegelian manner), it would be philosophy that would provide the proper realization or conceptualization of a differential that could only be given material expression in art or functional instantiation in mathematics. Things are not so simple, for both art and science are lines of depersonalization or dehumanization occurring within life that allow for the thought of life as such, the differential as such. It is not only that one must go through the material history of human art to arrive at a concept of matter's expressive differential capacities, nor pass through science's history of mathematics and geometrical formalization to arrive at a differential calculus that philosophy could then conceptualize eternally and ahistorically. Philosophy's concepts are historical in a profound technical sense, a sense that undercuts the vitalism that would allow life in its human form to arrive (at the end) at a full intuition of its own conditions.

Philosophy's concepts are chronological in a trivial and extensive sense, with the Kantian subject occurring after the Cartesian cogito, and with Descartes reacting against scholasticism. But there is a more profound technical or machinic historicity that is intensive: once Kant forms the concept of the transcendental (itself drawing on the planes created through Hume's and Descartes's philosophies), it is not only possible to re-read and rethink the entire history of philosophy, art and science from this new possibility for thinking, new potentialities are opened for the future. After Kant, German Romanticism enables literary possibilities, creating affects and relations among images that produce new incorporeal events that are irreducible to bodies but will also orient bodies to create new events in art, science and

philosophy. It is not only that concrete technologies and empirical histories provide the condition for the thought of the eternal sense of events; life is 'in itself' technological: an impersonal, open and inorganic entering into relation of forces that cannot be understood or governed according to the ends, time or world of the organism.

Technology in the narrow digital and chronological sense – the technology that supplements and extends organic life – is only possible because of a more profound and transcendental technicity that accounts for organic emergence. There can be bounded organisms and relatively closed systems, not because life tends towards the enclosed forms of the living body but because – as the philosophy that emerges from human bodies discloses – there is a potentiality for quantities or matters that may take the form of bodies but may also operate in an inorganic, monstrous and unbounded manner.

The cinematic camera, as Deleuze noted, begins its technological life by replicating the syntheses of the human eye–brain, creating temporal images that are thoroughly in accord with our body's capacity to understand time through moving objects. But the cinematic apparatus eventually produces its own syntheses, at odds with that of the human eye–brain. If one extends this ethic of *techne* further, one could say that Deleuze reverses the standard vitalist imperative of taking forces and powers back to their genesis in order to evaluate their *telos*. The organism that would be the supposed subject and intentional origin of forces is an effect of impersonal potentials, and it is precisely the technical object that can expose the power of potentials to act beyond the organism's capacities. For an *active* vitalism it is both the case that the origin governs the proper trajectory, and that any monstrous deviation from the origin ought to be judged as beyond proper life. For a passive vitalism it is not the case that subjects or organisms govern or adjudicate the play of forces, for individuals are the effects of individuating forces, forces whose powers of difference are not exhausted by the actual bodies that perceive them.

Could we not say then that another approach to visual culture is enabled, one in which we do not lament the degree to which the powers of simulation and distortion detach themselves from lived bodies? Is it really the case that visual culture, digital media and new technologies are alienating (or liberating if understood as the capacity for living bodies to regain the media that had been reified by cultural industries)? Are the technologies of digital culture not rather disappointing in their tendency to allow the organism to remain coiled around its own folded and mastered world? The private screens of our MP4 players display human bodies whose actuality we can

fantasize or imagine as an enhanced version of our own, while the music we listen to is the same old diatonic melody of equal temperament digitally remastered so that we can carry around our own private theatre. Is the problem of so many moralized domains of images – beauty, advertising, pornography – not that they are unrealistic and dehumanizing, but that they are all too actual all too human: far too close to the actual, unimaginative, repetitive, recognizable, easily-read, and all too comforting in their seeming variation of an always human and readable organicism?

This allows us to think another critical approach to the beauty myth, the tyranny of images, the rigidity of stereotypes and other supposed alienations of *techne*. Images and simulations have the technical capacity to release forces from the equilibrium of the organism, so that there can be a level of sense beyond the actual.

Both in theories of the new media that aim to make sense of images through bodies and in popular culture's suspicion of any image that is not in accord with actual bodies, we can note a war on any ideals that are at odds with the organism's desire for self-recognition. Such a war on disjunctive normativity – norms that cannot simply be added to how I already am – might also be seen to characterize what has come to be known as 'theory'. Judith Butler, whose work was often targeted for being both overly theoretical and distanced from the actuality of real women (Nussbaum 2000), nevertheless places the primacy of the act of performance before the reified norm, even if that founding act is not that of the subject but of the address:

> Where there is an 'I' who utters and speaks and thereby produces an effect in discourse, there is first a discourse which precedes and enables that 'I' and forms in language the constraining trajectory of its will. Thus there is no 'I' who stands *behind* discourse and executes its vision or will *through* discourse. On the contrary, the 'I' only comes into being through being called, named, interpellated, to use the Althusserian term, and this discursive constitution takes place prior to the 'I'; it is the transitive invocation of the 'I'. Indeed, I can only say 'I' to the extent that I have been first addressed, and that address has mobilized my place in speech. (Butler 1993, 225)

Butler insists that the subject is not a body who acts; for the subject is an effect of an action that then imagines some bodily and natural doer behind the deed. Butler's approach to theory is avowedly political and activist: only if we demystify the body, nature, subjects and forces – regarding them all as effected through events of performance – will we then be liberated (through

destabilization) from the heterosexual matrix. But it is precisely this *political privileging of performance*, or of the act before the reified individual, that produces an infantile paralysis. There simply must not be anything other than the act or doer; those effected norms, images and matrices are negative but necessary effects of a stabilizing process, a stabilization occurring through process that negates process. There is never any true, real or essential event other than that of the act. Our only relation to the image is one of active negation: in my very submission to a norm that is not me I will produce a difference.

The first concrete point we might make, then, in relation to Butler's positing of the subject as effected through performativity is that it is paralysing and infantile to regard the subject as a relation to an otherness to which it is subjected. Paralysing: I am nothing other than an event of subjection that necessarily fails and in failing introduces an instability. Infantile: any forces or powers other than those of my own event of performativity are judged to be subjecting. On the one hand I am nothing other than the failed performance of normative and normalizing images; on the other hand, that failure can never be grasped in itself but only given in its non-being.

Another path is opened if we consider vital forces beyond performance, act and individuals. What needs to be achieved are not better, proper or more realistic images, but a non-organic relation to the image. An image could be seen, from the point of view of an organicist vitalism, as an image for me, possibly an ideal of what I ought to be. Or, *as image* the image expresses a power which it does not exhaust even if powers exist only as actualized in images.

Recent attacks on Cartesianism that affirm the primacy of living systems and bounded organisms are insistent that what is perceived or received is always given in terms of the body's mapping of its world, its possibilities and its range of meaning. But need this be the limit of how thinking might relate to the image? Is this the limit of life? Would it not be at least worth exploring whether *after Cartesianism* we might aim to think beyond the body as an extended substance receiving the world only in terms of its bounded actuality? An image can be experienced as such, not as a proper body or imperative.

Chapter Six

The Vital Order after Theory

What would it mean to be opposed to vitalism? The current turns in theory (and even perhaps, the death, end, afterward or 'post' of theory) suggest that it is now, in our turn to life, that we can recover from a form of thinking that has detached us from our true living and creating potential. If the work of Gilles Deleuze has had any market value it has been as an apparent way out of the linguistic and constructivist models, where life is mediated by sign systems, towards an account of the genesis, emergence and creation of life, a life that can be thought and written about beyond the sense it has for a subject. Just as the advent of theory was coupled with a series of conversion narratives, where we looked back on our naïve past to recognize a present turn to critical reflexivity,[1] so the current reflections on knowledge practices give an account of a redemptive intervention (where we can now turn to life, vitality, matter or embodiment) *and* a mourning of diremption (a recognition that we somehow made the mistake of regarding life as made possible only through language or structure). If 'Cartesianism' functions in the history of philosophy as the false turn whereby we took embodied mind to be an inert substance detached from the world, so 'theory' is often overcome by turning to history, politics, affect or bodies. 'Theory', today, bears within itself the mark of its own failure: it was because we were too narrowly textual that theory met an end, but there can now be a 'theory after theory' that maintains critical rigor while also allowing for history, politics and life. Such a possibility marked the new historicism – new because it incorporated theory, while remaining critical of the pure abstractions that would characterize theory per se:

> One of the recurrent criticisms of the new historicism is that it is insufficiently theorized. The criticism is certainly just, and yet it seems curiously out of touch with the simultaneous fascination with theory and resistance to it that has shaped from the start our whole attempt to rethink the practice of literary and cultural studies. We speculated about first principles and

> respected the firmer theoretical commitments of other members of our discussion group, but both of us were and remain deeply skeptical of the notion that we should formulate an abstract system and then apply it to literary works. We doubt that it is possible to construct such a system independent of our own time and place and of the particular objects by which we are interested, and we doubt too that any powerful work we might do would begin with such an attempt. (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2001, 2)

We could consider the micro-narrative of 'I was once entranced by deconstruction and high theory but have now turned (via Deleuze) to living systems' as an allegory whereby we pass from an originally open, active, creative and responsive mode of relating to the world, fall into some rigid system where the reified intellect imposes its measure upon the world, and then realize the error of our ways and retrieve an original relation to life, now all the wiser for having realized the tendencies of the reductive limits of reified cognition. As already noted, perhaps the most dominant form of this narrative, and one that has a great deal of force at present, is the lapse into Cartesianism: current diagnoses of the state of play in philosophy, neuroscience, and everyday thinking lament the ways in which, following 'Descartes' error' we mistake the mind for a distinct substance, and then imagine knowledge as some mode of picturing or information processing. But the same diagnoses have been applied to theory and its supposed textualism. Terry Eagleton's *After Theory,* for example, wants to place language within the organism's capacity for open-ended world-engagement:

> There is no need to imagine, as many anti-essentialists do, that natures need be eternally fixed. The most dramatic example we have of a nature which is perpetually remaking itself is human nature. The champions of transgression are right at least to this extent: that it is in our nature to go beyond ourselves. Because we are the kind of labouring, linguistic, sociable animals that we are, it is in our nature to give birth to culture, which is always changeable, diverse and open-ended. So it is easy to mistake the peculiar kind of nature for no nature at all. (Eagleton 2004, 119)

But the idea of a living being that is originally and properly dynamically engaged with the world, and that then succumbs to the illusion of knowledge as calculation is a common motif that marks out a series of historical reversals, conversions and diagnoses. Plato, Descartes, Kant, logic, technology, new media: all have been targeted as causes of a systematization and

mechanization that are at odds with, and impede, life. Platonism is frequently regarded as a break with forms of philosophy, politics and citizenship that were originally discursive and dynamic; with Plato knowledge becomes mathematical and determined by transcendent criteria (Vernant 1991, 164). Cartesianism establishes 'the subject' as a point of certainty that allows all encountered matter to be determined in advance as calculable; in doing so the complex intensity of life is reduced to quantity. As stated before, anti-Cartesian vitalism is contemporaneous with Descartes himself, but the classic twentieth-century mode is exemplified by Ryle in 1949:

> There is a doctrine about the nature and place of minds which is so prevalent among theorists and even among laymen that it deserves to be described as the official theory. Most philosophers, psychologists and religious teachers subscribe, with minor reservations, to its main articles and, although they admit certain theoretical difficulties in it, they tend to assume that these can be overcome without serious modifications being made to the architecture of the theory. (Ryle 2002, 11)

There are, of course, other narratives of the fall: Kantian ethics establishes universal principles and consistency as the only path to morality, thereby precluding a responsive, pragmatic and context-sensitive understanding of otherness and events. Analytic philosophy places ordinary language, or logical analysis, at the heart of proper knowing and as a consequence philosophy ceases to be the 'way of life', or therapeutic practice that it had been at its inception. While capitalism has always been a potential tendency in social formations it is contemporary monopoly capitalism with its high speeds, deployment of images and global reach that is deemed to be the ultimate negation of life. All these lapses have been regarded as unfortunate forms of self-imprisonment, sometimes explained by thought's drive for mastery, at other times simply accepted as accidents that we can now overcome through a return to philosophy as a way of life. Perhaps this is nowhere more evident than in the return to meaning within philosophy, and the insistence that whatever else it is philosophy has value only if it gives life meaning – an idea that releases philosophy from the specialism and technical skills of academia, returning it to the populace (Grayling 2001; De Botton 2001).

However else we understand the current appeals or 'turns' to life, including new theories of the body, matter, vitalism, living systems, emergence or naturalism, all plead for the urgency of a return after some form of temporal incision, which could be either historical ('we were once world-oriented

Aristotelians but fell into Cartesianism') or pseudo-evolutionary ('it is in the organism's or early science's interests to understand life mechanistically, and so we were deluded by a vulgar materialism'). The diagnosed point of detachment is located at various historical turns: Plato's routing of the sophists for the sake of transcendent ideas, Cartesian modernity's isolation of the subject as a distinct and world-representing substance, the twentieth-century's linguistic turn that imprisoned life within a rigid grid or matrix, and even more recently, cognitive science's paradigm of the mind as computer. There is at once a general mood of diagnosis regarding the ways in which life, bodies or polities have been seduced by reified models. At the same time, what is frequently lamented is a pathological relation to norms, so that the problem with Platonism, Cartesianism, Kantianism or various other supposedly pernicious models is that life is submitted to an external and enigmatic normativity, rather than norms being actively generated from life. In its contemporary form this idea can take the form of an attack on theory: so seduced were we by notions of text and language that we forgot the emergence and genesis of language from living systems. More commonly it is simply assumed that *any* external or transcendent image is necessarily an alienation of life's primarily active and processual nature. The self, properly, is nothing other than act or performance; if we think of ourselves as subjects, substances or as having a proper nature then we have fallen into a passive acquiescence of external criteria.

Even though there is a criticism of external, transcendent or imposed norms – norms that are placed beyond life rather than deduced from life – this expulsion of normativity is premised upon a highly normative understanding of life. Life is assumed to be active, self-furthering, expansive, dynamic and able. Indeed, it is precisely the attack on normativity in general that yields a concept of life as *properly* dynamic, open, self-creative and productive of relations. The life to which we return after theory, after intellectualism, after Kantianism or transcendentalism is defined morally as a generative, productive and efflorescent life, a life in which politics *ought to* flow from the dynamism of bodies. What is at stake in the affective or vitalist turn, then, is not a dispute regarding the norms towards which life relates, but a dispute regarding the logic and temporality of normativity. Life ought to be submitted to no norm other than itself, which is to say that life ought to avoid submission; and this because life will function as that which simply is, has no outside and therefore cannot legitimately be related to anything other than itself. What is up for debate in the turn to life is not this or that political model – democracy or not – but the relation one bears towards models. Democracy, as a consequence, becomes not one more model or

political value among others, but the mode of politics that follows once any notion of a proper or pre-given model is eliminated. Politics occurs not through the striving towards some ideal of humanity or proper life, but when humanity is nothing other than a capacity to give itself its own law; humanity becomes the (post-theological but highly theological) figure for self-relating and autopoietic life. Relations are not imposed upon life from without. Rather, life generates its own relations: there ought not to be models or norms towards which life ought to strive, for it is the nature of life – as such – to have no model other than its own internal striving.

There is, then, in this concept of homeostatic, bounded and autopoietic life a highly normative critique of passive normativity: insofar as I am properly alive I ought to be governed by no norm beyond that of life itself. Now, despite the widespread uses and enlistment of Deleuze for such a criticism of normativity in the name of immanence, Deleuze's immanence and Deleuze's reversal of Platonism have quite another sense. First, Deleuze does not simply endorse the notion of a life that is without tendencies or inflections; indeed, he is perhaps one of the most stringent philosophers of essence, where essence is a pure predicate that can be actualized, but never exhausted, by material and 'lived' existence. Second, when Deleuze makes explicit reference to vitalism he appeals to writers like Leibniz and Ruyer, both of whom offered a *passive* vitalism. Life does not strive to maintain and produce itself but is inflected and directed by powers from without. Third, far from being in tune with the widespread turn to living systems, where political and social bodies can be explained and justified according to some general model of self-creative production and self-maintenance, Deleuze's philosophy is directed against models of organic closure and equilibrium. For Deleuze, if there is something to be learned from living systems it is that they incarnate pure predicates or potentials that, if carried to their limit, would destroy bounded organisms. Deleuze is perhaps the one philosophical resource we might turn to today to question the seemingly self-evident and all encompassing value of life.

Chapter Seven

On Becoming

If a certain image of life has now become dominant – if life is accepted as a prima facie good, and as the foundational virtue in a world without foundations – this is because there has been a widespread and highly normative expulsion of any quality, event or substance that would be resistant to becoming. It might appear that Deleuze was *the* philosopher of becoming, *the* philosopher of life, *the* philosopher of immanence. But all these terms need to be qualified if Deleuze's philosophy is to have any force; in many ways Deleuze used these unremarkable and overused concepts in a way that worked against their traditional force.

Becoming is perhaps the most normative of notions: is it possible to think of a single philosopher who advocated that everything should remain just as it is without alteration? The ethics of becoming lies at the heart of the Christian monotheist tradition, in which God is the pure act of existence that brings any determined essence into actuality but who Himself is unimpeded by any determination. The overturning of Christianity in enlightenment discourse is a secularization of this ethics and aesthetics of becoming; 'freedom from imposed tutelage' allows the self to be nothing more than the event of its own becoming. Today, in identity politics, one ought to be nothing other than one's own single, active and decided mode; there should certainly not be stereotypes, images or genres to which one is subjected. Deleuze's concepts of becoming-woman or becoming-animal, and especially becoming-imperceptible, attach becoming to something other than the originating force. (One might contrast here Derrida's 'democracy to come', which takes a noun and then opens it out by attaching it to a verb, and Deleuze's 'becoming-animal' which orients the verb to a noun, even if that noun is not this or that specified animal: not, *the* animal.) Reacting against a notion of realization or actualization simpliciter, Deleuze's attached becomings open a living organism or system, *not* to a self-creation without limit or determination, but to something that is different, distinct, and that will inflect or deflect any creative force from simply realizing itself.

A force is a capacity for relation and does not determine relations from itself. In some sense it is quite appropriate to define Deleuze as a vitalist and a philosopher of life, but this is only if his vitalism is qualified to the point where it is almost an inversion of all that vitalism has come to represent.[1] Far from affirming some force that animates an otherwise inert matter, or an inner principle that directs matter, Deleuze's various philosophical projects begin with forces that do not bear a direction or end within themselves but nevertheless have differential tendencies. A force is its range of possible encounters with other forces. 'Life' or 'vitalism' are words used by Deleuze not to posit a force *from which* differences flow; his method of intuition takes actualized forces and the world of differentiated matters and then produces a genealogy of their 'ideal genetic element'. In his essay 'Immanence: A Life' Deleuze refers to '*a*' life, rather than life in general. In this late essay this single life or spark is singular: *a* life that may or may not exist, that comes into being and passes away and that needs to be distinguished from all the general predicates that allow us to name and locate an individual in time. It is not surprising that to define 'a' life, rather than life in general, Deleuze uses a literary character:

> What is immanence? A Life . . . No one has described what a life is better than Charles Dickens, if we take the indefinite article as an index of the transcendental. A disreputable man, a rogue, held in contempt by everyone, is found as he lies dying. Suddenly, those taking care of him manifest an eagerness, respect, even love, for his slightest sign of life. Everybody bustles about to save him, to the point where, in his deepest coma, this wicked man himself senses something soft and sweet penetrating him. But to the degree that he comes back to life, his saviours turn colder, and he becomes once again mean and crude. Between his life and his death, there is a moment that is only that of a life playing with death. The life of the individual gives way to an impersonal and yet singular life that releases a pure event freed from the accidents of internal and external life, that is, from the subjectivity and objectivity of what happens: a 'Homo tantum' with whom everyone empathizes and who attains a sort of beatitude. It is a haecceity no longer of individuation but of singularization: a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil, for it was only the subject who incarnated in the midst of things that made it good or bad. The life of such individuality fades away in favour of the singular life immanent to a man who no longer has a name, though he can be mistaken for no other. A singular essence, a life . . . (Deleuze 2001, 28–9)

Characters in novels capture a singular encounter of forces, and can often pass into medical or everyday parlance to express composites of features or syndromes. Sade's and Masoch's characters and scenes allowed a symptomatology of a new mode of living, while Shakespeare's Falstaff or Dickens's Gradgrind and Twain's Huck Finn have produced manners and styles of existing that cannot easily be described outside their proper names. But when Deleuze refers to the spark of life of Dickens's character Riderhood from *Bleak House* he is gesturing to the other side of literary character. On the one hand an individual is a composite of forces, a nexus of objects, histories and other characters. Riderhood is a venal, manipulative purveyor of corpses, coupled with the water that flows through Dickens's *Bleak House,* a novel that is dominated by images of recalcitrant matter – water, dust, legal papers, mud and money (for money in *Bleak House* is at once strangely virtual and rigidly inert, an empty circulating object of speculation and a fetishized thing that lures and mesmerizes). On the other hand, and this is the point of Deleuze's reference to Riderhood in 'Immanence: A Life', every composite of forces that makes up an individual and that can be marked by a proper name is just one instance among others of life; it is always 'a' life that has a fragile, contingent and singular existence. From within Dickens's narrative, with its diagnosis of characters in relation to the sympathy and charity that are impeded by the legal system, Riderhood is a symptom of all that the novel opposes to life. Even in this most evil of characters, even in this failed father who survives through deceit and by profiting from death, there is 'a' life; and it is this spark or singularity that indicates something of life's indifference to the very moral schemes and actualized worlds through which we comprehend individuals.

When Deleuze refers to 'a' life, then, life is not a grounding concept that would allow us to evaluate a character for even here – even in Dickens, whose novels place characters in clearly diagnostic and moralizing relations – there is some spark or force that indicates the differentials from which any imagined moral world and literary character is composed. Deleuze's passive vitalism is distinguished by this reference to 'a' life, not a life in general that underlies actual beings and that then allows for an ethics or politics *of life*. It needs to be distinguished from early anti-Cartesian vitalisms that posit a single driving force, precisely because it is without drive; it is actualized in encounters and events – this or that being or character whose existence is contingent. It also needs to be distinguished from what I refer to as the contemporary turn to life, or the contemporary vitalism of living systems: the idea that we can only understand ethics, aesthetics or technological evolution by referring back to organisms and their management of their milieu.

Vitalism in its contemporary mode therefore works in two opposite directions. The tradition that Deleuze and Guattari invoke is opposed to the organism as subject or substance that would govern differential relations; their concept of 'life' refers not to an ultimate principle of survival, self-maintenance and continuity but to a disrupting and destructive range of forces. The other tradition of vitalism posits 'life' as a mystical and unifying principle. It is this second vitalism of meaning and the organism that, despite first appearances, dominates today. The turn to naturalism in philosophy, to bodies and affect in theory, to the embodied, emotional and extended mind in neuroscience: all of these manoeuvres begin the study of forces from the body and its world, and all understand 'life' in a traditionally vitalist sense as oriented towards survival, self-maintenance, equilibrium, homeostasis and autopoiesis.

The concept of vitalism operates, we might say, extensively and intensively. Intensively, we can understand 'life' and 'vitalism' as *concepts,* as tools or strategies we might use in order to think, and in order not simply to maintain ourselves as we are in actuality, but to think the genesis of that actuality: what must life be such that human thinking organisms have emerged, and what might this monstrous life generate in the future? Extensively, one can define life on the basis of the living and the lived; one can survey bodies and living systems and generalize about their logic, and then affirm that logic as what ought to be the case. If a body or living system is that which maintains itself as a relative stability in relation to forces that it always defines from its own point of view, then it follows that one ought to affirm those processes and events that maximize self-maintenance and living systems. This logic is what Foucault referred to as bio-politics, whereby some general ground is posited as the logic of the living being, and then that logic is used as a rationale for an ethics and politics with no foundation other than that of man as a self-making, self-managing animal. This is why, perhaps, Foucault also claims that morality is no longer possible. Whereas a positive conception of good and bad derived from a moral code that affirmed itself in its natural propriety, we now only have ethics – not the privileging of this or that set of norms or this or that mode of life, but a general scheme of reflection whereby man is nothing other than the act of turning back upon his own being (Foucault 2002, 357).

When Foucault claimed that up until the eighteenth century the 'concept of life' (139) did not exist, and when a series of writers following Foucault criticized an increasingly intense bio-politics, it appeared that 'life' in its modern conceptualization was different from the earlier attention to living bodies, 'man', systems of resemblance or logics of classification. But the way

in which biopolitics has come to circulate in theory is double-edged. Whereas Foucault presented the term audaciously, suggesting that we might be able to approach politics in a manner that would not refer questions back to the norm of a life that could be known and that would explain human emergence, contemporary theories of biopolitics are less ambitious in their distancing endeavours.

Giorgio Agamben (1998), as we noted earlier, criticized Foucault's location of the problem of life within modernity and argued that 'man's' negative relation to his bare life of animality – a life that simply is as opposed to a life that forms itself as other than merely living – constitutes the political as such. If contemporary politics is to be criticized it is not because its ways of thinking and questioning are premised on this substance of life but because it fails to see that man is more than bare life. He is not simply that living substance capable of being known, managed and manipulated according to organic norms, for politics is not just the self-mastery of human living substance (taken as an end) but is also the opening up to potentialities that have no pre-given end. Robert Esposito similarly criticizes current biopolitical modes of politics for the ways in which they pass directly from theories of the flourishing organism and healthy social body (and the needs both bodies have to immunize themselves from external infraction), not to a criticism of the model of life but to an immanent vital normativity. Life itself, if considered beyond the unquestioning calculation of rigid bureaucratic schemas, presents its own powers and potentialities that are not exhausted by the model of man as a labouring and productive machine. Michael Hardt and Antono Negri, even more than Agamben or Esposito, form the concepts of 'living labour' and of the multitude to create a politics of immanent and thoroughly *human* life, '*homohomo,* humanity squared' (72):

> The subjectivity of living labour reveals, simply and directly in the struggle over the sense of language and technology, that when one speaks of a collective means of the constitution of a new world, one is speaking of the connection between the power of life and its political organization. The political, the social, the economic, and the vital here all dwell together. They are entirely related and completely interchangeable. The practices of the multitude invest this complex and unitary horizon – a horizon that is at once ontological and historical. Here is where the biopolitical fabric opens to the constitutive, constituent power. (Hardt and Negri 2001, 406)

Their politics of immanence is at once critical of the norms of capitalist production that render man into a calculable unit of global markets and

calculations; at the same time they take labour and production, liberated from the transcendent logics of capitalist economics, as the only path to returning life to its proper power. Their response is not to consider life and its potentialities beyond the bounds and milieus of the human organism but to formulate a self-creative humanity, for whom labour is not a means towards the production of stored goods so much as a mode of ongoing, dynamic and self-adjusting communality.

The concept of biopolitics therefore possesses a critical edge insofar as it is directed against an ever-increasing political attention to the health, sustainability and control of populations through human sciences, while it is also used by writers like Esposito, Agamben and Hardt and Negri to consider life as possessing vital norms – directives for ethics and politics that are not those of quantifying capitalism. While such imperatives of vitality are not necessarily humanist, insofar as they are critical of the concept of bourgeois man, they nevertheless privilege all the figures that have marked the human from the inhuman: self-production, free and unimpeded self-determination, and distinction from any already given end.

One could respond to the seemingly modern problem of the biopolitical focus on life – where a distinction is made between managed life and a life that springs forth from itself – by noting the ways in which there has always been an ethical and aesthetic privileging of that which flourishes, realizes itself, comes to fruition and multiplies. Many of the criticisms directed against the biopolitic administration and reduction of life frequently draw upon this traditional and theological valorization of the living. What cannot be accepted or incorporated is a detached and unactualized potentiality, a force that does not come to fruition and that disturbs and destroys living forms.

Whereas the current turn to life, both in its philosophical and non-academic modes, focuses primarily on the bounded organism's maintenance of equilibrium and on processes of creation, interconnection and productive synthesis, Deleuze regards such living and synthesized forms as possible only because of a more profound potential for destruction and considers the attention to completed forms as a failure of the intellect. Deleuze's seeming celebration of life and immanence needs to be contrasted, then, with an understanding of life aligned with the 'lived' or with that which is capable of being brought to presence, just as his philosophy of immanence refuses a transcendence that can be known and conceptualized and used to ground the given, even though it will frequently refer to pure predicates that transcend living forms. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari combine a disarticulated Kantianism with a recognition that, at least at the level of opinion, there is a truth to the now dominant notion that the brain

folds the world around the organized body in terms of the lived: 'our bodily organs that do not perceive the present without imposing on it a conformity with the past. This is all that we ask for in order to make an opinion for ourselves' (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 202). At the level of art, science and philosophy – at the level of thinking that might take hold of the brain *beyond its capacities that serve the organ* – there is a capacity for survey. Following Ruyer, this survey is neither a perception going from part to part (mechanism), nor a grasp of the whole in terms of the perceiving organism, but a survey *as such*: sensation in itself (art); concepts of infinite speed (in the philosophy that is not a generalization from this extended world); or functions (in science) that take hold of the infinite by narrowing to a limited variable:

> If the mental objects of philosophy, art, and science (that is to say, vital ideas) have a place, it will be in the deepest of the synaptic fissures, in the hiatuses, intervals, and meantimes of a nonobjectifiable brain, in a place where to go in search of them will be to create . . . That is to say, thought, even in the form it actively assumes in science, does not depend upon a brain made up of organic connections and integrations: according to phenomenology, thought depends on man's relations with the world – with which the brain is necessarily in agreement because it is drawn from the world and reactions from man, including their uncertainties and failures. 'Man thinks, not the brain'; but this ascent of phenomenology beyond the brain toward a Being-in-the-world, through a double criticism of mechanism and dynamism, hardly gets us out of the sphere of opinions. It leads us only to an *Urdoxa* posited as original opinion, or meaning of meanings . . . It is the brain that thinks and not man – the latter being only a cerebral crystallization . . . Philosophy, art and science are not the mental objects of an objectified brain but the three aspects under which the brain becomes subject. Thought-brain . . . It is not a brain behind the brain but, first of all, a state of survey, without distance, at ground level, a self-survey that no chasm, fold or hiatus escapes . . . a *form in itself* that does not refer to any external point of view, any more than the retina or striated area of the cortex refers to another retina or cortical area; it is an absolute consistent form that surveys *itself* independently of any supplementary dimension, which does not appeal therefore to any transcendence . . . (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 210)

At once a part of the world like any other, the brain is also that body part capable of higher deterritorialization: the brain is, for Deleuze and

Guattari, a strange interface that allows for some intuition – in this material world – of the powers of matter that are not yet actualized. It is perhaps the brain, which can be figured (as it often is today) as a productive unity or as an open whole, that allows us to consider the untimely nature of Deleuze and Guattari's thought. It is the brain that has been highly significant in the return to a phenomenology of lived experience, away from the once-dominant preoccupation in theory and philosophy with language and disembodied systems. Reference to the extended, global or embodied brain may at first appear to be a deflection from anthropomorphism and philosophy of mind, and yet what is retained is ultimately an organicism: a self-maintaining, autopoietic whole, in which every term is in accord with (and conducive to the maintenance of) every other. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari explicitly refer to the problem of the brain, of how a part of the world manages to rise to a point of absolute survey or a sense of an infinite.

Their earlier reference to a vitalism of Ruyer should caution us against an anthropomorphic reading of the brain and its sense of the infinite; life operates not by moving from perceived part to part but with a sense of the whole according to which it is oriented. Transcendent norms orient a living being towards a sense of the world that is *not* given; such norms are never the organism's own and propel its life beyond its own command or perception. On the one hand, then, Deleuze and Guattari's work could be seen to be utterly timely: just as theory and philosophy are retreating from language-centred models back to the lived body and embodied mind, so Deleuze and Guattari's thought, with its attention to real genesis, becomes more popular than the seemingly textual nature of earlier movements of deconstruction, social constructivism and language philosophy. All the notions that were effectively banished from the world of theory – the emergence of language, the genesis of cognition, the grounding of metaphors and figures in the organism's needs and capacities – are now legitimated, partly because of the decade of brain research in the 1990s but also because Deleuze and Guattari's theory of social machines insisted that writing and inscriptive systems could be accounted for historically.

Deleuze's name is frequently mentioned alongside the work of Maturana and Varela, even though the latter's theories of embodied cognition focused primarily – as the name suggests – on the *body*. For Maturana and Varela and those who took up their work, the body was not some entity within the world blessed with a picturing brain. The brain is less a centralized command centre orchestrating the body than it is a responsive, adaptive and dynamic locus that is coupled to a world that is always a world lived in terms

of the embodied brain's capacities. The brain, one might say, is not so much organized or organizing as it is *a brain with organs*; the brain serves, today, to privilege an image of interconnected and coordinated life. The turn to the embodied, adaptive, extended and affective brain is a direct and explicit refusal of mind as a distinct and detached power. The general anti-Cartesianism of the present is not just the expulsion of 'Descartes' error'; it is also a privileging of the interconnected, the relational, the communicative and the dynamic over the detached, inert, sterile and unproductive, and a new form of organicism.

If earlier modes of organicism were naively vitalist, insisting that the bounded living body (or the cosmos) was infused with a distinct synthesizing spirit, today's embrace of the 'global brain' or the model of living systems, posits an immanent vitality. Living systems are effected through emergent relations, such that life is not some principle flowing through an otherwise inert matter, but is a property dependent on relations. Just as the brain can no longer be seen as a distinct 'mental' substance that governs the body – for the brain is a dynamic network operating in relation to other networks, such as the body and its surrounding milieu – so the vital order can no longer be located in any specific force or substance but in the peculiar couplings that emerge at a certain point of complexity.

It is not surprising, then, that a certain neurological or synaptic paradigm has come to function not only as a new norm and model, but as a norm and model that presents itself as a final liberation from normativity and modelling. The synaptic or neurological paradigm enables a newer relation to metaphors and models than that of traditional political theory. Whereas the likening of a body politic to an organism has a long history, and can range from asserting the need for a domination of the unruly body by the brain or the dependence and mutual governance of all body parts on each other, the neurological or synaptic mode of relations functions neither as a metaphor – where social relations can be likened to synaptic networks – nor as a model, where we can pass from understanding neurological relations to an understanding of living relations in general. Rather, in works as diverse as those of Deleuze and Guattari and Catherine Malabou[2] to Humberto Maturano and Franco Varela, the very idea of living systems as capable of being captured by privileged metaphor or model is challenged by way of an appeal to *relationality as such*. It is because life has no norm, model, substance or rationale other than its capacity for connectivity that the neurological paradigm is a counter-paradigm.

Even so, one can approach this counter-organicism of living systems from two directions. For Maturana and Varela, any consideration of a living

organism always occurs from the point of view of a living organism. It is possible for a body to have a perception of other bodies and their relations to their milieu, just as it is also possible for a body to perceive itself perceiving, but when it does so it does not establish some pure point of theory or intuition, for it does so from its own milieu – this time a milieu of reflection. Niklas Luhmann (1993) regards deconstruction as typical of this awareness of the paradox of a system that thinks about systematicity: no system is closed, for it can always be perceived as a system, but such a critical manoeuvre to place oneself in a position of observation in relation to a living system occurs through the system's own living and systemic relations, which could be perceived and reflected upon in turn, but never arriving at some moment of self-coincidence and self-mastery. Both Luhmann's work and many other theories taking up the embodied cognition approaches of Maturana and Varela are modified forms of organicism. Although it is no longer a human or mind-centred body that is assumed as the norm of life but a body whose boundedness is produced through ongoing and decentred interaction, it is nevertheless always affirmed that the limits of thinking are given from the limits of the organism's range of possible affordance. An organism is just its responses to those aspects of the milieu that perturb its stability, and its milieu is always the milieu of this or that active and self-bounding being.

Whereas traditional organicist models were explicitly models – such that one being or mode of relations was taken to be normative – systems theory, or the synaptic model, appears to liberate itself from the body. Models of emergence regard the whole to be a contingent outcome, and regard each aspect of that whole not as a part or organ, but as a function or operation. There is no closed or bounded form from which one might either explain, judge or derive relations: so it is not the case that there is either a transcendent cause (such as God as harmonizing principle of reason) or an immanent causality (where the organism bears a form that it ought to maintain and that might define and govern relations in advance). Indeed, it is just this distinction between life as norm/model and life as potentiality for relations that might allow us to begin to mark a further distinction between vitalism in general and organicism. Strictly speaking, vitalism in its narrowest sense can be defined as the commitment to some form of life force or vital spirit that exists above and beyond matter and its relations. Vitalism, as argued earlier in this book, is definitively and often avowedly opposed to mechanism, or the reduction of all life to the interaction of parts. Reacting against Descartes's definition of the world, and body, as *res extensa*, seventeenth-century vitalists posited an inspiring force that infused matter and precluded the mathematical disenchantment of the world.

In contemporary debates a similar vitalist/mechanist opposition still has force. Daniel Dennett (2004) has insisted that the complexity of systems, and even the event of freedom, can be explained from the interaction of material parts, such that life and freedom not only evolve but can be said to be 'substrate neutral'. By contrast, while not going so far as to suggest that matter is inflected or inspired by spirit, a number of writers have asserted the dynamism and inherent creativity of matter, such that living systems are more than structures. The matter of bodies has inherent tendencies or propensities. Some of these writers are avowedly indebted to Deleuze; so that from a commitment to Deleuze's understanding that life is creative and productive other movements in contemporary thought – including the systems theory of Maturana and Varela – are deemed to be the best way of thinking a future beyond human and Cartesian self-enclosure. But such a happy transition from Deleuzism to contemporary moves in science and systems theory, or from systems theory back to an inclusion of Deleuze, risk missing the untimely element in Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's thought. This is the element in their thought that does not dismiss Cartesianism or organicism as simple errors but recognizes the organism's tendency to territorialize or reterritorialize all relations around the image of its own illusory unity; it is also the element that does not simply affirm life in its creative and productive dimension but recognizes its inorganic or monstrous powers. Perhaps this accounts for a perverse Cartesianism in their thought that does not react against Descartes because he dehumanized life by rendering man into a ghostly disembodied subject, but because *res cogitans* was too much like a living body.

It is possible, then, to oppose Deleuze and Guattari's work to the current trends of the embodied, extended and global brain. Far from attributing mindfulness or responsiveness and plastic adaptivity to all life (far from taking the model of the brain as self-creating mind and including all life and systems in this ideal of autopoiesis), Deleuze and Guattari write of a viral power in life that takes the form of a variability without self-reference, without meaning.

The various pictures of the Gaia hypothesis, the global brain and – more explicitly – recent theories of embodied cognition and extended mind, tend to repeat the assumptions and normative commitments of pre-scientific modes of vitalism and organicism. What is retained of organicism is a refusal to consider any detached, inert, inactive or destructively non-relational force. (The very idea of inert force might appear to be contradictory, but it is just the thought of this demonic power that Freud referred to in the notion of the death drive, and that Deleuze and Guattari refigured in their

own embrace of a positive experience of death.) Further, what is retained of vitalism, even while there is no longer a vital force distinct from matter, is a vitalist ethics: ways of knowing and acting ought not operate as detached technical systems but should be adaptive, responsive and open to a milieu that is not represented objectively but felt affectively. We can see the ways in which current paradigms of life, both in their explicit reactions against Cartesianism and scientific detachment, and in their positive commitments to a life that is extended beyond the bounds of man or the subject, repeat traditional and often theological motifs. Consider one of the foremost theorists of *techne* and the post-human, N. Katherine Hayles, whose assessment of robotics and artificial intelligence concludes that the technical couplings of humans with machines will enable the future to be fully open and chosen:

> The crucial point suggested by my analysis is simply this: our future will be what we collectively make it . . . What it means to be human finally is not so much about intelligent machines as it is about how to create just societies in a transnational global world that may include in its purview carbon and silicon citizens. (Hayles 2005, 19)

The global brain, despite its location of cognition and vital striving beyond the human organism, focuses primarily on life's capacity for increasing connectivity and complexity. The theory of the extended mind appears at first to demote the powers of the brain in order to take seriously the supplements of technology that allow all forms of inscription and recording to play a role in mind, but in so doing the brain – as the name suggests – is now extended to include its terrain: everything becomes a potential inclusion of mind. The Gaia hypothesis, too, is ostensibly a humbling of the human organism's seeming autonomy and capacity for self-management, but it also figures the extra-human world as one all-encompassing and interconnected web of life:

1. The most important property of Gaia is the tendency to keep constant conditions for all terrestrial life. Provided that we have not seriously interfered with her state of homeostasis, this tendency should be as predominant now as it was before man's arrival on the scene.
2. Gaia has vital organs at the core, as well as expendable or redundant ones on the periphery. What we do to our planet may depend greatly on where we do it.

3. Gaian responses to changes for the worse must obey the rules of cybernetics, where the time constant and the loop gain are important factors. Thus the regulation of oxygen has a time constant measured in thousands of years. Such slow processes give the least warning of undesirable trends. By the time it is realized that all is not well and action is taken, inertial drag will bring things to a worse state before an equally slow improvement can take place.

> For the first of these characteristics we have assumed that the Gaian world evolves through natural selection, its goal being the maintenance of conditions favourable for all life in all circumstances, including variations in output from the sun and from the plant's own interior. We have in addition made the assumption that from its origin the human species has been as much a part of Gaia as have all other species and that like them it has acted unconsciously in the process of planetary homeostasis. (Lovelock 2000, 119)

The milieus that all these theories embrace take on all the qualities of mindfulness, organic boundedness, self-relation and homeostasis that had characterized the ideal human subject. Why might one object to this?

These turns towards a global, extended, embodied and dynamic brain are, avowedly, reactions against a perceived history of Cartesianism in which a distinct and disembodied mind dominates a detached and lifeless material world. They already acknowledge that in addition to the scientific differences of these new paradigms, there are also certain ethical, figural or *aesthetic* commitments attached to these new ways of considering the relation between mind and world, or the attribution of mindfulness in general to the world. The perceived problem with the pre-Gaia or Cartesian models is not so much their falsity, for such centred, mathematical and linear models are deemed to be appropriate for certain practices and phenomena; rather, the problem of a primarily cognitive and information-gathering approach to the world is its limitation, its inability to consider those processes that extend beyond the narrow range of the human subject and the instrumental and voluntarist domination of matter. But perhaps the widespread and intensifying anti-Cartesianism that has become the new dogma of theory has its own exclusions. Not only is no account given of how – if life is assumed to be properly dynamic and creative – the rigid and centred Cartesian paradigm emerged; one might also note that what has taken place is a reversal, rather than a deconstruction, of the relation between the human subject and the material world.

Rather than attributing mindfulness to nature, and rather than seeing what was once the detached human mind as already part of a dynamic nature, perhaps the figure of mind, and the very concept of the subject, needs to be interrogated rather than extended. Rather than consign the detached and centred modes of cognition to a fallen past, and rather than regarding the mindful, dynamic and interconnected global brain as a new world redeemed from a nightmare of instrumental reason, we should ask whether attributing life and consciousness to the entire planet really is as revolutionary as it claims to be.

The turn to affect, vitality, mindfulness[3] and embodiment is, ostensibly and avowedly, a reaction against a history of Western subjectivism. By its very definition this turn or revolution is a turning back to a life that is considered to be the proper (and lost) original foundation of a cognition that has fallen into a misrecognition of itself. Despite the fact that Deleuze and Guattari are frequently associated with this movement of embodied cognition and the affective turn, *and* despite the fact that their work is opposed to the supposedly textualist or linguistic emphases of deconstruction and other forms of 'theory', their criticism of the ways in which the human organism has increasingly become bound to the bourgeois figure of the subject can benefit from being read alongside (rather than opposed to) writers like Derrida and Lacan. Deleuze and Guattari do not simply reject the Lacanian notion that modern life is dominated by 'the subject', who lives his life subjected to the system of signification, and who then imagines a life beyond that system as an undifferentiated chaos. Nor do they suggest that it is simply a question of pointing out the error of the subject's misrecognition of himself as a detached and autonomous being. Like Lacan, they accept that the subject is seduced by the image or figure of his bounded body, a figure that then allows him to imagine himself as a centred being capable of mastering a world that might be known sufficiently if only one could grasp the truth of signification. What they contest is how one responds to this recognition of an essential misrecognition: the answer for Deleuze and Guattari lies in the curious political history of organic misrecognition.

Whereas Lacanian psychoanalysis diagnoses the human body's capacity to recognize itself in the alluring figure of organic unity and then regards the Oedipus complex as the way in which the subject accounts for his seeming subjection to what is not reducible to his organic boundedness, Deleuze and Guattari write a genealogy of this structure. Prior to the oedipal family (and its myth that *the subject* is the locus of sense and meaning, beyond which lies psychosis and the great night of indifference) they trace the paths of various social machines. Not only do pre-modern social machines

also have their own ways of coding life and establishing some unbounded body beyond the organism – whether that be the mythic earth, or the divine body of the king – there is no question that one could simply decide to do away with the myth of the centred individual subject. On the contrary, it is not by way of a return to life or a return to a proper dynamism that one might arrive at a less neurotic mode of existence. Only by extending the potential of modern subjectivism and capitalism to its highest power does one, possibly, release life from its inherent and necessary capacity to reify itself.

Life, in Deleuze and Guattari, is not some outside or beyond that has been strangled and belied by subjectivism; subjectivism and the neurotic modern psyche are not accidents. It follows then that Cartesianism cannot simply be opposed to an extended, embodied, global and dynamic life: for life necessarily branches out into its organic bounded forms, and into the body without organs that those organisms presuppose. Every social formation creates its own body without organs, its own way in which it lives disarticulation. In modern subjectivism the other of the bourgeois man of self-maintenance and reason is the system of capital, which is both the ground from which man emerges as *homo faber* and the system that, if extended beyond man's reason, would threaten his self-making unity. Thus it is no surprise that capitalism harbours at once a good (organic) image of itself alongside the malevolent image of its own nightmarish unleashing. A good capitalism takes the form of bounded, free and meaningful exchange; bodies enter into relation in order to extend and maximize their proper potential. It is, however, when capitalism detaches itself from meaningful exchange to become a free circulation of force, without orientation to production, life, bodies or living labour that it becomes a force unto itself, a death drive or pure machine.

Capitalism in its benign and organic form has always been in accord with a vitalist ethic, just as vitalism has always been a form of capitalist anti-capitalism. Exchange and production are, ideally, in the service of embodied, self-conscious and meaningful life. When exchange and technology become detached from their original and animating ground they react against life, creating reified spectral and life-impeding chaos. Psychoanalysis, for Deleuze and Guattari, both radicalizes and partakes of this capitalist moralism. By imagining the subject as essentially effected through a submission to system beyond which would lie the undifferentiated chaos of psychosis, Freud opened and closed the path beyond oedipalism. It is possible, as Lacan does, to read the Oedipus complex as the organism's way of dealing with the impossibility of its position. In order to be a living and speaking being

I must imagine myself as an 'I', figured through the image of the well-bounded ego; but if that is so I must also imagine that which is beyond the organizing system as an impossible outside. The aim of analysis is not to restore the ego to a proper relation to the unbounded life from which it has become detached but to embrace one's radical separation, to abandon the thought of a reunification or of an ultimate knowledge of what lies beyond one's constitutive distinction. (As expressed by Badiou [2006], the infinite does not exist as some substance or whole from which we have been separated; in the beginning are the actual multiples that we live as having existence, and beyond that is nothing but the void. The *subject* is not a thing to be known but only a disjunction between existing multiples and another figuration of the multiple that can be formulated only with a facing out into the void, facing up to the recognition that there is no Other.)

The relation between Deleuze and Lacan is not opposition but extension and problematization. If we accept that the oedipal familial structure produces self-enclosed individuals who imagine themselves as subjected to a system of signification (and prohibited from knowing life in itself as some undifferentiated beyond), then we need to trace the genealogy of this machine, charting its evolution from other ways in which bodies have been organized. The oedipal triangle of mother–father–child is not, as Lacan had read it, the necessary imaginary frame through which we live our essential subjection to the symbolic: rather, there were regimes of signification that were not organized through submission to the signifier. (The modern vitalist ethic that affirms that in the beginning is the dynamic flux of life that falls into systemic articulation and then loses all relation to its original genesis is oedipal in just this sense; it cannot imagine forms of differentiation that are not those of a binary relation between undifferentiated life and a differentiating imposed system.)

Deleuze and Guattari's history of the intense germinal influx posits other modes of differentiation or territorialization. Prior to the location of 'the' law in a system of signification there were despotic social machines where various interacting codes – vocal, visual, gestural, tonal – each bore a relative autonomy. It is the external terrorizing despot who, in viewing and enjoying the violent scene of the social networks that he plunders, creates an external point of reference for all these codes, a deterritorialization. And prior to that despotic form of social ordering, primitive social machines had operated with a polyvocality that had not yet privatized 'the' signifier into some structure or point of subjection to 'the' law of difference that tyrannizes us all in advance and constitutes something like 'the' human condition. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari challenge the vitalist assumption

of modern oedipal man: the assumption of a desire that is essentially inchoate, undifferentiated and spiritual and that then becomes alienated from itself in social relations. On the contrary, desire just is the force that differentiates, creates relations, bifurcates and multiplies – *not* in one flowing life that can only be alienated in codes, but in life that is always productive of more and more signs.

Deleuze and Guattari will see capitalism as this differentiating potentiality of life – that life is nothing outside of the differentials among forces – brought to its extreme social limit. What they seek to achieve is an intuition of its anti-social limit. Capitalism no longer has any transcendent body that governs its social machine; there is no law of the king, the despot, or even what man ought to be. Capitalism is cynicism and the absence of any imposed code. What it does, though, is turn the differential into a social axiom, such that while money itself signifies nothing, money is the governing of differentials. All relations among powers, such as the relation between labouring bodies and what they consume, are decoded through money. If, however, one confronted the differential as such, or the ways in which powers enter into relation beyond the decoding axioms of capital, one would have intuited life itself. This 'life itself' is not some ground, nor some pure undifferentiated flux, nor even a pre-linguistic One. It is certainly not the striving of organisms for self-maintenance against death.

Deleuze and Guattari place death within *the differential intensity that is life* once life is thought beyond the figure of the bounded organism. Their crucial working opposition is not between life and death but between the organism that is surrounded by death (by non-activity, inertia and a dissolution that it must ward off), and the organism that experiments with death as zero intensity:

> The experience of death is the most common of occurrences in the unconscious, precisely because it occurs in life and for life, in every passage or becoming, in every intensity as passage or becoming. It is in the very nature of every intensity to invest within itself the zero intensity starting from which it is produced, in one moment, as that which grows or diminishes according to an infinity of degrees . . . death is what is felt in every feeling, in what never ceases and never finishes happening in every becoming . . . Every intensity controls within its own life the experience of death and envelops it. (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 330)

Deleuze and Guattari conclude *Anti-Oedipus* by opening a path beyond an opposition between vitalism and mechanism, a way which requires a

rethinking of death as a model. In capitalism the organism is figured as that which maintains exchange, order and equilibrium; outside that bounded system of relations lie the non-being of chaos, non-relation and death as disorder. There is, then, a thermodynamic model whereby the vital and self-organizing living body is opposed to the deathly chaos of unbounded force. Deleuze and Guattari pose the problem not of the organism's order opposed to death, but the life/death of the organism posed in relation to other forces. What if the body that is nothing more than its negotiation of its world through signification were to experiment with intensities? The world would not be determined in advance as an extended and quantified object domain – so many bodies and matters as substance for the relations of speech and labour – but as a plane of intensive multiplicities. Consider the relations one might bear to the signifier, not as the system of units through which one articulates one's desires, but as sound forces that have been articulated by being placed in a differential relation with conceptual and semantic forces. Could one liberate sound from the spectrum of phonemes, semantics from the system of grammar, place concepts in relation to visual forces? How much differential variation would have to occur in the approach to zero?

Would the capacity to conceptualize, once freed from the modern man of communication of good sense, still yield something like a concept? Would the capacity for concepts, encountering a visual multiplicity like the canvases of Francis Bacon, produce terms such as 'figure' that would operate as concepts, beyond the scene of Bacon's visual intensities? What we see in Deleuze and Guattari's experimental philosophical method is their attempt to liberate life and thought from already constituted relations and extended quantities, but not by appealing to some pure life before all differentiation. Life, as organized, bounded, and structured in terms of relations among differential powers, encounters the dissolution of death: how much introduction of noise into music would still yield something that might be heard as a music to come, how much misrecognition, ill will, stupidity and malevolence could one introduce into the upright subject of communication in order to open rather than destroy thinking?

In political terms, then, Deleuze and Guattari do not appeal to a productive multitude whose labour is constitutive of a social body that then alienates the living potentiality of man as a world-constituting power. The multitude does not exist, nor can it be created through some collective political will or reanimation of the socius. On the contrary, Deleuze and Guattari's people 'to come' is missing. Theirs is not a becoming in general – the becoming of the polity from itself with no end other than itself – but a becoming in

relation. The concept of becoming-animal does not appeal to animals or 'the' animal as some form of life other than humanity but creates another differential: what would thinking be if it were detached from the organized body of self-constituting man and placed in relation to other differentials? These differentials include 'becoming-imperceptible' or the thought of *not* being, not maintaining oneself, experimenting not with an annihilation and return to anti-self-consciousness but with minima and the approximation to zero.

Rather than turning back to life, it is the course away from various processes of social organization towards the confrontation of the machine of the socius as such that is at once the trajectory of capitalism *and* the goal of Deleuze and Guattari's project. All social machines 'ward off' capitalism: all relations among bodies are enabled by the organization of work and production, and impede the pure function of differential relations. *Some* form of the state, some external or transcendent body, codes the various relations of difference. In capitalism that coding does not occur with some external body, but operates within exchange itself. For Deleuze and Guattari capitalism as a social form does not occur as some accidental technical system imposed on an otherwise self-sufficient life; capitalism is only possible because of the differential logic of life itself. It is not the case that there are self-sustaining organisms or benevolent social wholes that unfortunately become alienated through capitalism; the organism and the socius are forms of organization that require a necessary repression of difference. The living body organizes itself around its coordinated organs; the social body organizes itself according to the stabilized functions of the whole. In capitalism those processes of organization are no longer figured through some external body but occur through relations of difference.

Here, we can mark a key difference between Deleuze and Guattari's genealogy of living forms (including the social form) and other vitalist arguments. Vitalism in general appeals to a life force or spirit that infuses otherwise inert matter; such a vitalism would be *active,* setting an immaterial and purely subjective spirit in opposition to mechanism. Deleuze and Guattari indicate that this mode of vitalism extends from Kant to Bernard, and while close readings of Kant might dispute this characterization, the tradition of Romanticism that posits a spirit that can only be known through matter but is always distinct from matter unfolds from this opposition to mechanism. Vitalism as defined by Bergson, Ruyer and the Leibniz to whom Deleuze and Guattari are avowedly indebted, is passive precisely because spirit does not activate and inspire matter; matter itself is creative force and difference. There is no matter as such, in itself, that then differentiates

itself. In the beginning is the differential relation, with extended matter being a consequence of some relation among forces, some play of quantities.

Whereas Kant posits the subject as some transcendental force that synthesizes the material and physical field, organizing a world in terms of time and space, Leibniz's monadology has each substance unfold its own relation to the whole from its own point of view. Each monad is nothing other than its singular point of view on a world composed of an infinity of other monads. The unity of the whole is not created from some external synthesizing point of view; rather, the resulting harmony is something like a contrapuntal orchestral work; for the monad does not synthesize its world actively but is the expression – according to its powers of expression – of the whole of which it is an essential component. In terms of capitalism and social organization, Deleuze and Guattari extend this monadology to argue that social wholes are outcomes of relations, or processes of territorialization. In capitalism the differential relation among powers – say, the power of a labouring body, the material forces of the earth it engages, the speaking and affective powers of other bodies, and the various powers of social machines (prisons, medical practices, schools) – is not yet perceived as the differential relation as such, for it is now coded through capital, which will measure those differentials in terms of the productivity of the whole.

The critical force of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy lies not in turning back to the one flowing life from which social systems emerged, but in moving *forward* from the existence of capital as a release of relations from an external code. Once capitalism occurs as an actual social system it is then possible to think differential relations as such. Capitalism allows us to discern that there is no social order other than that which is effected from relations; but whereas capitalism considers those relations always to be relations of exchange, in which measure reduces forces to some functional equivalent, relations can also be thought in dysfunctional modes. Here, two forces would enter into relation in order to produce disjunction and disequilibrium. Such dysfunctional or monstrous relations would allow us to consider the force of the terms becoming-woman, becoming-animal and becoming-imperceptible.

Becoming is not the flowing forth of life from itself, as an unimpeded and self-creating actualization: becoming occurs in a relation of minimal deflection or difference. A force is a certain quantity that, in relation to another quantity, produces a singular becoming. The human organism is the consequence of a large number of these differential relations, evolving from relations among proteins and the synthesizing potentials of genetic codes, with these in turn being effected through relations to other forms of

synthesis, into organs. Any social system or organism emerges from such relations, and this means that the social whole or the organism is not some higher order entity responsible for the form or ordering of relations but is nothing more than the feeling that follows from a sum of such relations. In order to realize the higher deterritorialization that would allow differential relations to be thought or lived beyond the efficiency of capitalism there would need to be a refiguring of the human organism.

As we have seen, Deleuze and Guattari, in *Anti-Oedipus,* place their own approach beyond the distinction between vitalism and mechanism, and they do so by attacking the persistent organicism – or fantasy of the bounded organism – that finally takes the form of the modern subject (and the accompanying Oedipus complex). Organicism is an enclosed vitalism: whereas traditional vitalism regards matter as inert and posits an immaterial force that infuses an otherwise lifeless substance, organicism places the force of life in the relations of the whole. In its contemporary mode organicism appears in many theories of living systems and emergence: life occurs neither at the level of matter itself, nor as some principle in itself, but in organizational wholes. This has two consequences: there is no world or life in itself, only the world as it is for this or that bounded whole (and this means that life is intertwined with meaning, for life occurs when a relatively closed form can manage its world for itself in terms of its unique operations); second, life is essentially and necessarily bounded. Life occurs with operational closure, when some minimal system is established that allows for a relation between an ongoing relative stability, and a milieu in terms of which that stability organizes itself. It follows then that viruses are excluded from life,[4] while certain forms of *techne* can be regarded as extensions of life.

In terms of the three ideas of vitalism, organicism and mechanism (with the latter being increasingly targeted today as the great Cartesian error under which Western thought has laboured) we can discern three contemporary movements that remain committed to life in the form of the bounded, autopoietic, self-maintaining organism: Maturana and Varela's model of living systems, Andy Clark's anti-Cartesian positing of an extended mind, and the Gaia hypothesis.

Chapter Eight

Living Systems, Extended Minds, Gaia

Living Systems

As already noted, Maturana and Varela present their work on living systems as anti-Cartesian, anti-representational and systemic. Rather than beginning from some understanding of the bounded organism, the aim of their work is to explain the emergence of systems, but always to do so with the 'tree of life' in mind. If we simply accept that there are living and bounded organisms, then we also have to explain how such organisms manage and interact with their environment. By the time Maturana and Varela came to address this question, this problem had also received a great deal of philosophical and post-philosophical attention.

What distinguishes Freud's and Bergson's accounts of the genesis of the living being's unity is the attention to the imbrication of self-imagining in ways that differ markedly from system theory's understanding of a body's capacities for exit and re-entry or for perceiving its own relation to a milieu while creating another perceiver–perceived relation. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud did not simply accept the bounds of the organism, its needs, and the requirement that those needs be met by some external milieu. Instead, beginning with a model of energy he asked how some border or 'crust' formed between a relative interior and exterior. Bergson, also, in both *Creative Evolution* and *Time and Free Will,* began with an explosive force in which initially there was no distinction between the force of explosive difference and the medium exploded. Bergson was explicitly critical of thermodynamic models because the law of a constant quantity of energy pre-supposed the quantification of energy or force according to a stable unit. Bergson disagreed with this distribution of force according to a measure and was instead concerned with the emergence of the capacity *to measure. Creative Evolution* charted the emergence of the intellect that reduces the differential forces it encounters into equivalent and comparable units capable of being manipulated and managed through a sequence of time.

The intellect can maintain itself only if the quality or singular nature of each event of force is not heeded.

At first it seems we might oppose Freud and Bergson in this respect: Freud accepted a pool of energy or quantity that required distribution and relative stability to form a temporary bounded whole; it was this constitutive cathexis that would eventually move towards dissolution. Bergson, by contrast, reacted against such thermodynamic models and saw the forward thrust of creative and explosive difference as productive rather than dispersive. Much would seem to depend, in thinking of the relation between Bergson and Freud, on the nature of force, energy or difference. And it seems that this difference between Freud and Bergson would play itself out in the following question: is there a differential force that destroys bounded wholes in order to expand and produce greater complexity (Bergson) or is that differential force not so much creative as deathly, a repetitive and demonic power that works against a bounded organism's sense of its own trajectory and time?

Both writers accepted that the organism's 'crust' was formed against a counter 'thrust' of difference. In this regard, neither accepted that the organism was a point of stability in relation to a milieu that was known only insofar as it perturbed the organism's range of affordance. Instead the formation of the ego's border was at once something that needed to be accounted for *against* the force of life as a radically dissolving or differential power, against a life that was not opposed to death but that proceeded only through a constant and unremitting self-destruction. At the same time, the ego for both Freud and Bergson was an illusory and self-emasculating internalization of an external figure. For Freud it is the image of the bounded organism that allows the conflicting, disturbed, distributed and tumultuous play of forces to be perceived as localized in some single whole; the ego is a lure that allows the chaotic relation among forces to be 'lived' as a unified and self-recognizing whole. The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego. Bergson, too, regarded the intellect as beginning with an economic function: expending energy in order to reduce its outside world into so much calculable matter, but thereby allowing a greater creativity in the production of technical systems. Like Freud who saw the contemporary practical organization of energy as reaching a point of counter-efficiency (with civilization in general as neurotic), Bergson regarded the intellect's will to mastery as responsible for reducing the image of all life to the model of inert matter. As a consequence Bergson saw the destruction of the image of the organism as crucial to re-engaging the explosive power of life: only if mind no longer regards itself as a constant, extended and self-same whole

can it have some sense of its powers of freedom. Freud, and Lacan after him, saw analysis as a similar exercise in productive self-destruction; only if the ego can allow some play of energy or force beyond the rigid captivation and spell of self-seduction will something like life begin to occur.

Today's attention to the primacy of the organism and meaning is, therefore, an intensification of a general neurosis (in psychoanalytic terms) or self-captivation of the intellect by its own organic image (in Bergson's terms). Consider, for example, the widespread appeals made to the tradition of phenomenology, where there is no world other than the world that is given to me in terms of my capacities, and no 'me' other than the ongoing self-created image or feeling of my organism as a self-maintaining system. Not only does the human organism, with its reduction of the world to a milieu for its own survival, come to stand for humanity in general (where one might want to ask about other modes of bodily human life not imagined according to this model of the bounded whole defined against Cartesian detachment and abstraction), life in general – as living system – is now thoroughly anthropomorphized.

Consider, once again, Maturana and Varela's living system that does not represent an outside world. For the vital body there is no outside as such, only life as given to this bordered system that experiences all that is not itself in terms of its own being and potential. In opposing their theory of living systems and embodied cognition to Cartesian representationalism Maturana and Varela present their work as the correction of an error, focusing less on the organism's image of itself (which is deemed to be secondary and parasitic) than on an original world-engagement or openness. Such a being-in-the-world is simply opposed to dead-end forms of cognitivism that aim to explain the world from a disembodied or general point of view. A living system is just its responses to its environment, and there is no world as such independent of its meaning for this or that living body. In presenting their work as an extension of Heidegger's anti-Cartesianism Maturana and Varela have enabled philosophers, in turn, to re-negotiate the terrain of twentieth-century thought allowing Heidegger a place in a living systems approach. These mutual acts of consecration allow science to be inflected by a philosophy of meaning and being-in-the-world while philosophy in turn can receive ballast from the sciences, each discipline tempering its disciplinary extremities. What is lost in this happy coupling is twofold: the power of philosophy to think as such beyond the comforts of the feeling body, and the power of science as such to consider functions and relations from posited viewpoints that are not that of the lived. Although such a hermeneutics of science and a science of hermeneutics would appear

to be compatible with Heidegger (and against both Freud's and Bergson's speculations on the logic of life as such), one might say that a certain Heidegger has been (symptomatically) resisted.

Despite Heidegger's own claims that the animal is 'poor in world' – which would suggest that world, at least for Heidegger, is more than the range of responses to which a living system is open – Heidegger is now mobilized to repair the rift between mind and world. Not only does this use of Heidegger ignore Heidegger's own highly complex reading of Descartes, it relies upon creating a binary in which certain aspects of phenomenology (such as the emphasis on the world as always constituted through meaning and the embodied self's worldly orientation) are saved while others (such as the capacity for consciousness or *Dasein* to become detached from its world to experience the sheer anxiety *that there is world*) are conveniently ignored. One could also say that Heidegger recognized that once technology occurred as a historical event – as the domination of forces in advance by a semi-autonomous system – this would open thinking to an originary technicity that rendered any world possible. Before man as organism perceives and masters his world there is a 'putting forth' from which both logic and technology in their narrow senses would emerge.

Neither Husserl nor Heidegger simply dismissed the Cartesian subject as an error that could be overcome by turning back to the truth of living systems upon which any sense of subject and world is founded. Husserl insisted that all responsible philosophy would need to begin with the Cartesian question: not accepting the world as so much given substance but ought to interrogate the genesis of the world. This could only be achieved through a hyper-Cartesianism in which the subject is not the one thing in the world left over after doubt has placed everything in question. The subject is properly disclosed as the transcendental synthesis from which any world originates; it would be an error to explain the world on the basis of living systems precisely because the very idea of a living system is only possible after the constitutive meaning-making of consciousness.

One would need to begin by marking a distinction between living systems theories that confine themselves to arguing that the world is always a world of meaning, always given for this or that organism and its capacities, and those aspects of phenomenology that were vehemently opposed to any form of philosophy of 'life'.[1] For Husserl one could not explain the truths of the world – such as logic, mathematics or the transcendental norms that would be true of any subjectivity whatever – *from life,* for life was always lived in this or that manner according to its specific historical and cultural unfolding. And neither history nor culture could be grasped as ultimate horizons

because historical and cultural milieus must presuppose the life of a synthesizing subject or consciousness. Heidegger, too, had his disagreements with the use of 'bios' as an ultimate founding term; like any such single term used to found existence, 'life' presents an already constituted term as an always-present foundation and therefore fails to question how any such term is itself constituted. For both Husserl and Heidegger, in the beginning is not the presence of living systems from which one might explain meaning, but an original opening of sense.

In many ways the current deployment of Husserl and Heidegger in contemporary theories of life and embodied cognition is a regression into the unthinking vitalisms that phenomenology had so insistently attacked. Life cannot act as some ultimate founding term because it is always possible to ask how any such life is disclosed or posited. Thus there are two paths from phenomenology, the first of which is to abandon all hope of grounding and foundationalism and simply to accept that life is only known as it is lived, and that there is no world other than the world given through meaning. One would need to retain all those aspects of Husserl and Heidegger that were directed against a history of metaphysics that had aimed to ground our experience of the world on some ultimate presence, and would then jettison any residual metaphysical yearnings to grant transcendental subjectivity or *Dasein* some privileged role in this move of 'ungrounding'. Alternatively, the post-structuralist development of phenomenology would acknowledge both that 'life' is itself a term disclosed from within life, and that the attempt to go beyond foundationalism nevertheless continues to produce one more founding term, whether that be Husserl's 'transcendental subjectivity' that ought not be confused with a being-in-the-world, or Heidegger's '*Dasein*' that ought not to be identified with 'man'.

Derrida's response to this problem of the relation between life itself and the sense 'we' make of that life was to assert, against both Heidegger and vitalism, that there could not be a proper relation to time and life; life could only be conceptualized in a manner that would necessarily render it general, mediated, never singular and – to that extent – 'lifeless' (Derrida 1982, 20). Deleuze by contrast thought that one could think beyond the lived, beyond this or that living system, beyond the closed form of the organism, to the powers of difference that demand to be thought, even if it is in the nature of thinking to reduce life to some given and constituted term.

However we negotiate between Derrida and Deleuze, or between a sense that it is impossible to escape the submission of life to some conceptual sense on the one hand and the imperative to think beyond extended

conceptual systems on the other, it is symptomatic that the current return to life retreats from the abyssal implications of the more radical aspects of phenomenology and does so by grounding phenomenology on a life that is always that of the organism and its world of sense.

Extended Minds

In addition to the living systems approach that has focused on the ways in which life is always lived from the point of view of the self-maintaining organism – an approach that defines itself against the detached mind of Cartesian *res cogitans* – the mind has also been defined not only as always in relation to its world but also as extended throughout that world. The title of Andy Clark's *Being There: Putting Brain, Body and World Together Again* tells us a great deal; there was once a unity that can now be repaired. And this process of overcoming Cartesian, analytic, philosophical separation is achieved by recognizing that consciousness operates not as some isolated informational centre that processes information from the world, but as an ongoing adaptive and extended phenomenon in which all those items that appear to be supplements added on to consciousness are consciousness itself. For there is no mind that then makes its way in the world and takes on various forms of technology, such as writing, gestures, mnemonics and computer programs; the mind just is this web of interacting feedback loops. The 'extended mind' thesis is not a demotion of mind in the face of effective technology, nor a domestication of technology by a mind that extends and encompasses the world it extends and masters. Rather, *techne* and mind are symbiotic and mutually enhancing. Consider Clark's two often-cited examples: the first of a body that becomes one with its *techne*, the second of a *techne* that adapts effortlessly to the mind it supplements.

Clark looks at the ways in which the brain can take any number of prosthetic extensions into its own space: the Melbourne performance artist Stelarc attaches prostheses to his limbs and then becomes adept at the movements of these extended appendages to the point where they take on a graceful fluidity (Clark 2003, 190). Clark cites a series of entertaining experiments where less artistic subjects are lured into feeling that various aspects of their body have taken on a new dimension. A subject has his nose tapped while viewing the same rhythm being tapped on an extended proboscis; eventually he comes to feel that his nose is a foot long. The neuroscientists V. S. Ramachandran and Blakeslee (1998) have also made clinical use of this capacity of the brain to refigure its body's dimensions;

if patients suffering from phantom pain in one limb can, by a play of mirrors, view their still functioning limb in the place of the amputated appendage they can once again 'feel' their lost limb moving and thereby be released from the pain of a frozen body part. What this demonstrates, as in Clark, is the brain's plasticity; if phantom limbs demonstrate that the body is always a lived body, experienced in terms of its potentials rather than matter, then the cures of body-image through counter-image show that 'we' can also teach our brains a new corporeal map.

Clark does not only list a large number of ways in which the brain can take on a new body morphology and then live and feel this extended body as its own; he also looks at the ways technology adapts to the desiring body. When Amazon.com lists recommendations on your home page it is not reading your mind; rather, it is taking your list of already completed actions (purchases) and creating an increasingly refined list of future purchases on the basis of other persons' choices. Your Amazon recommendations are extensions of your mind, as they operate from already completed patterns and preferences, enabling you to find out, via the screen, what it is that you must want. At first glance Clark's refusal to isolate the mind from its technical supplements appears to be a highly practical and easy to understand version of deconstruction's argument for the original technicity of all life. There is not a self-sufficient life, in itself, that then becomes alienated in external systems, for there could be no 'mind itself' without, say, the possibilities of memory and retention that bear all the features of writing and technical systems, well before such systems appear in the narrow sense. It is not the case, as Derrida also insists, that there is something like a self-present experience of life and time that then falls into the articulations of language. All the features that we associate with language as *techne* – its capacity to operate as the same through time and detached from its originating and animating sense – already structure self-present experience. For an experience to be self-present, to have a sense of itself *as* this or that singular event, it must already have marked that which is repeatable, the potentiality for iteration that would then make an explicitly external writing in the narrow sense possible.

Although Clark makes reference to Heidegger and the notion of consciousness not as self-enclosed but as 'being-there' and 'being-in-the-world', his thesis of the *extended* mind is a way of excluding the more radical implications of the inherent technicity in experience. Clark repeatedly insists that the mind is fully adaptable and extendable, not alienated by its technical supplements and prosthesis; if someone asks me the time and I say 'yes' and then look at my watch I do so because that watch is part of my mind's way of

making its way through the world. But this easy extension means that technical prostheses are always present at hand and always reducible to some original and life-serving motility. There is an original purposive and self-furthering body, not yet disturbed from its activity by a reified consciousness, and all its technical achievements remain as present, life-enhancing and thoroughly adaptive enhancements. Although Clark provides a welcome corrective to naively vitalist denunciations of all that exceeds the body as forms of technical alienation, he nevertheless sustains a notion of the body as properly encompassing and enhanced by all its extensions. In this regard Clark's thesis, like a lot of more explicitly Heideggerian appeals to being-in-the-world, is a retreat from the more radical potentials of phenomenology, in which consciousness is already alienated from itself, in the very structure of mind as such, before it is extended explicitly in technical systems.

One does not need to go as far as Heidegger's meditations on poiesis in which the sense and history of our world is always something uncannily enigmatic, or Derrida's insistence that experience is already 'textual' in its structure, precisely because to experience any present as here and now, in its singularity, is already to have placed it in some form of relation to a retained past and an anticipated future. Husserl's argument regarding the phenomenology of internal time consciousness placed transcendence at the heart of immanence. Although Husserl thought that philosophical responsibility lay in returning technical systems, such as logic, geometry and mathematics, to their original animating sense, he acknowledged that knowledge as meaning and history always relied on a sedimented history that could not be encompassed by any single individual. He also revealed that consciousness 'itself' was never at one with itself, always already invaded by a non-presence, an anticipated future fulfilment of any here and now that could, in essence, never arrive. To live the world as present is to live it as extending beyond my experience of it here and now, to live it as there for others, in a pre-supposed 'we' that is never given or actualized as such.

The theories of extended mind, or mind as thoroughly at home in its various technical supplements and prostheses, may appear to be in tune with Deleuze's theory of life as machinic and in opposition to the seeming textualism of deconstruction. If Derrida's philosophy is a radicalization of phenomenology's attention to 'the lived' in his insistence that a present can only be lived if it is already structured by some relation to an anticipated absence, Deleuze would seem to have allowed a way to think bodies and desires themselves as already machinic, as already productive of difference and relation, and therefore not being structured by an ineradicable and

unthinkable alterity or 'anarchic genesis' that cannot be thought. Certainly, Deleuze and Guattari reject the logic of the signifier, and regard Derrida as too readily universalizing the modern structure of consciousness. They point to pre-modern regimes of signs that were not yet single systems of writing but allowed for degrees of formalization; they also focus more readily on active concept creation by philosophers, rather than the necessary inhabitation and solicitation of conceptual systems from within. But despite these seeming divergences their work provides an even more stringent counterfoil to hypotheses like the extended mind that happily see mind as a purposive and self-maintaining force that extends itself into the body and from there into its own lived world.

First, 'the lived' is a contraction or territorialization of powers that exceed the organism; Deleuze and Guattari's Body Without Organs is an attempt to think powers and potentials that take the desiring machines of life *beyond extension*. This is evident in all their work: in their politics that is opposed to extending recognition and relies instead on considering all those events that occur beyond the individual and its desire for self-maintenance, and in their insistence on the work of art that is not a defamiliarization in the service of bringing us back to the animating life of all languages, but is a 'higher deterritorialization'. Art can realize the pure predicates of the sensible world – sonorous and visual matters released from their organizing and semantic connections to the organism of good sense and communication. In this respect their argument moves in the opposite direction from the extension of mind; they do not regard the human organism's milieu as a furthering of the organized body. Following Simondon and their own analysis of animal, human and technical territories they argue not only for transduction, whereby the relations among powers can create lines of development that are both symbiotic and monstrous, but also for lines of flight whereby the extension of a tendency beyond a threshold releases a power from its capture and creates an incalculable and inorganic becoming. Such a becoming is no longer explicable from the point of view of the organism; it overturns the standard privileging of becoming as self-development or unfolding.

Gaia

The Gaia hypothesis is avowedly opposed to the anthropomorphic subjectivism that has governed humanist forms of vitalism and organicism. Not only do proponents of the Gaia view of the world consider life beyond the

human perception of time and milieu, they also locate life, perception and activity at the bacterial level. On the one hand, then, Gaia presents a radical challenge to many of the long-standing normative attachments to life. No longer located within bounded organisms, the life that is theorized by writers like Lovelock and Margulis and Sagan harbours a force that takes scientific and philosophical speculation beyond its logics of self-maintenance and phenomenology. Gaia acknowledges lines of life and time beyond man and also opens to the possibility of the values of inorganic life. On the other hand, Gaia is also (as its name indicates) a hyper-organicism. All those features that elevated and marked out the supremacy of the human organism – including a capacity for self-renewal and sympathetic relationality – now characterize life in general. Indeed one might say that 'man' has never been valorized as an isolated and self-serving being within the world but has always, ideally, been a man of the world, attuned to his milieu. In this sense Gaia continues to affirm life as creative, productive and relational. Once life is considered as environment, even an environment indifferent to man, one loses sight of the more radical indifference that would characterize just those forms of technicity and monstrosity that mark the limits of life as it is conventionally defined. An environment is always, after all, a surround that environs this or that mode of life. The use of the figure of Gaia, beyond Lovelock's own work, is also symptomatic of, once again, a theological aesthetics of the living being. Drawing upon the image of the goddess who is at once a fully active and responsive whole, a perfect movement in perfect repose, Prigogine and Stengers affirm a new alliance between man and nature. This is not, as the title indicates, a deconstruction of the constitutive relation of human perception and natural affinity. It is a reterritorialization: whereas man had been defined as the being who creates himself from a ground that has no essence other than that of self-conscious self-relation, with nature as his sympathetic medium, it is now nature as a whole that generates its own internal responsiveness. It follows that man, then, ought to follow the ethic of this life, feeling and attuning himself to these relations rather than imposing them from without.

The difference between Deleuze and Guattari's passive vitalism and the active vitalism of organicism and subjectivism lies in the peculiar separation of singularities that can only begin to be thought once one considers the potentials of art, science and philosophy beyond man and the human brain. Whereas Gaia is critical of the anthropomorphic prejudice which confines thought and sympathy to the brain or organism it nevertheless extends the attributes of mindfulness and sympathy to the pre-organic, which is always

to some extent proto-organic – blessed with a tendency to connectivity that would ultimately explain and redeem the organism.

The celebration of the contemporary living organism that is not an isolated substance representing an outside world, and that is not the centre of a universe because the universe just is all its composing viewpoints, affections, apprehensions and becomings, recalls both a God who has no essence other than his existence (and cannot be confined to any bounded or determined form) and the good Christian body that does not remain caught within itself, captured by its mere physicality, but is oriented towards what it might become.

Conclusion

If the vitalist or affective turn, or the joyous sense of living in a world 'after' the rigid linguisticism and hyper-intellectualism of theory has licensed a return to unthinking and nostalgic moral images of life, the same might be said for the associated celebration of immanence. In its simplest and often most avowedly political form the demand for an ethics of immanence is a shrill refusal or denial of any power that is not the organism's or polity's own. In Deleuze's and Deleuze and Guattari's imperative to think the plane of immanence there is a concomitant awareness of the necessary, difficult and inhuman recidivism of transcendence. Philosophy cannot simply decide to begin from ground zero; nor can the living being become so open and receptive to its milieu that it would not inflect, pervert or fold its passions around its own life. Immanence is an ongoing struggle, and the aims of becoming-imperceptible, seeing the world anew or becoming-child are given force and power just through the resistances they encounter. The artist's canvas that is never blank, the writer's language that is never his own, the philosopher's assumption of thought, figures and concepts: all these intrusions that preclude life from thinking itself in some pure self-regarding fold create the crowd and swarm of voices and refrains that preclude rest. Yes, Deleuze's philosophy is one of immanence, but it is never the immanence of life but of 'a' life – a fleeting and fragile perception that at once gets caught up in territories and recognition, only to break down again when life is blessed with enough violent power to overcome self-maintenance.

Although 'immanence' has become the recent unquestioned good of theory and continental philosophy there are still some who would argue for the value of transcendence and would do so against a postmodernism diagnosed as mindlessly relativist and emasculated by its celebration of difference. As an example we might consider, today, Alain Badiou's twinned criticisms of vitalism and vital immanence. For Badiou it is irresponsible and ultimately not a proper act of philosophy to name some principle beyond actual matters, a principle such as Deleuze's virtual 'One' that

would allow us to consider a Being or life that is irreducible to any of the decided forms that we know in actual existence. Not only does Badiou rail against such a mystical, pseudo-Platonic and poetic invocation of some living force beyond actuality (some force that would allow us, as Deleuze does, to see actual beings as contractions of a more intense and complex potentiality that is life itself in all its infinite variation); Badiou also seems to offer one of the very few avowedly anti-vitalist and anti-immanent philosophies that would also regard the transcendence of the subject as a virtue. In that regard it is useful to consider just how extreme one needs to be in order to be opposed to the current mantra that celebrates life, decentring, immanence and meaning.

First, working against the notion that the world is only a world *for* some organism for whom there is a milieu of possible perturbance and response, Badiou insists that far from mathematics being a lamentable disenchantment of a properly affecting and dynamic universe, mathematics – or the approach to being as nothing more than a multiplicity devoid of sense – is the proper truth of ontology. Second, it follows that while there is a world of immanence, where one can understand the truth of a situation only by understanding a specific context, its terms and relations and the bodies for whom these truths are articulated, there is for Badiou a potential structure of the subject who is radically transcendent: not a part of this lived, enumerated and embodied existence but a creation of a void or gap in actuality. Such a radically transcendent subject cannot be seen to have emerged from life or living systems, for it occurs as an event that breaks with systems. Such a subject can also not be named without returning it to the banality and meaning of life: a life from which truth occurs as the subtraction or opening of a negation. Now, two things need to be noted here. First, it is the distinction and singularity of Badiou's position – his insistence that there is nothing one can say about being as such, his insistence that truth occurs as negation or subtraction, and that the subject is not a being within the world but the event of a rupture – that indicates just how far one has to go to affirm values other than those of immanence, meaning and decentring. Badiou does appeal to a history of previous philosophers, such as Descartes, who would not place the subject as part of living nature, but Badiou has to radicalize this tradition by depriving the subject of any substance whatsoever. Badiou is therefore distinguished, it appears, from the history of Western thought precisely because he is one of the few voices to suggest that there are values other than life, that the proper subject of ethics is not an embodied, engaged and other-directed social being, and that the truth of being lies in the pure formality of mathematics.

What Badiou's polemic suggests is that the current vital, affective or embodied cognition movements are, far from being radical breaks with Western thought and metaphysics, extensions of long-held and commonsensical notions that it would take a figure as implausible as Badiou to oppose. But I do not want to suggest that just because the proclaimed revolutionary newness of the turn to vital systems is not as new as all that this somehow renders it less valid, or that it does not contain some significant differences from its past articulations. On the contrary, what I want to question is the insistently redemptive, revolutionary and Manichean narrative that would accompany any 'turn' that sets itself so starkly against a foe as diffuse as Western thought, modernity or cognition. Not only does the stark nature of Badiou's position suggest that one has to go some way to mark out a position that is anti-vitalist, anti-immanentist and affirmative of the subject's radical transcendence, it is also possible to see Badiou's own philosophy as itself directed against the same symptoms targeted by the vitalist affective turn.

Badiou, in keeping with his avowed Cartesianism and Platonism, does not want to accept any already given system of truth; nor, more importantly, does he want to define the subject of philosophy as a substance within the world. Indeed, his emphasis on truth as an *event* proceeds from a dismissal of any already actualized, accepted, dormant and not fully thought system. Badiou's philosophy is radically dynamic: neither truth procedures, nor the philosophy that takes hold of them to consider how truths are possible, should be confused with determined, given and static terms. The truth of love occurs, not when someone answers to my desired list of predicates, but when there is a decision of commitment, or an opening to an other body, whose relation to me is not one of natural knowledge. This aspect of love – that it is an opening of my perceived and actual world to what is not already given – not only concurs with a figure that places human love beyond the determinism and mechanism of bodily life, it also celebrates just what the vital and affective turn would also seem to seek: a way to think relations that is not reducible to the simple addition of two terms. Similarly, political events occur for Badiou not when one is simply included in an already numerated set – when, for example, I would regard women as just as rational as men – but when the very enumeration of the political is challenged radically: we do not just include women within the political but refigure what it means to be a political participant. What counts as a member of the polity changes. An *event*, then, might be seen to be the vitalist gesture par excellence: set outside accepted, received, atrophied and no longer dynamic norms and figures, the truth event *as an event* occurs as a

radical break or rupture that cannot be explained mechanistically, physically, deterministically or according to any already given norm or definition. Again, I point this out not to be miserably underwhelmed by Badiou's (or anyone else's) claims for newness. The terms that are so widely proclaimed as *different* from an unremitting history of Cartesian, rigid, centred and computationalist thought are in fact already embedded in the West's own imagery and figures of what counts as good and proper thinking life.

Any new vitalism, any criticism of vitalism or any attempt to think the vital and the living in a new manner would be better served by confronting the seemingly self-evident goodness of dynamic life in opposition to what has *always been deemed to be evil*: that which is merely actual, remains in itself, undergoes no change or affect, and is devoid of sense, relation and potentiality. If vitalism has any sense it is always in opposition to the horrors of mechanism, and if mechanism is self-evidently inadequate, life-denying and stultifying, with very few genuine supporters, this is because mechanism reduces the living to the non-living, the flow of time to the static unit, the productive and relational to the self-same. When vitalism is criticized it is because it accepts the premises of mechanism – that matter simply is, in itself and devoid of intrinsic tendencies towards relations – and then adds some vital principle to redeem or elevate material life to some more acceptable and scientifically workable alternative. While there may be some scientific merit or point in current disputes about the possibility of determining living forms from matter alone, and while developments in non-linear equations and biological chemistry have contributed genuinely distinct and significant alterations in the understanding of life, it is the transition to a new ethics and aesthetics of life that concerns me here.

Vitalism, as a return to life, has always been a counter-theoretical gesture, or a rejection of abstracted and distanced systems in favour of the generative force from which such systems emerge. But such gestures of counter theory or a return to life require that the criticized distance from life be delimited and attributed to a pernicious power. Today, for example, the turn to life and away from 'theory' is often made *against* Derrida (who functions as a synecdoche for 'high' theory) in favour of Deleuze. And Deleuze, in turn, can be read and remedied for still being contaminated by the abstractions and linguisticism of the very theory for which he would be a cure. Diseased modes of thought are variously labelled and diagnosed: a Platonism or transcendence that established norms above and beyond life, a Cartesianism that opposed man as a representing animal to a mechanized nature, a technology that (ranging from simple systems to the structures of language) determines and quantifies the world in advance, and a whole

other series of reifications, relativisms, structuralisms, subjectivisms and intellectualisms that sacrifice the dynamism and fluidity of life for the sake of mastery.

This allows us to return to Bergson's postulate that there must have been, at some point prior to the diverging tendencies of instinct and intelligence, a force for difference that was not the force *of* some living being responding to something other than itself, encountered as an obstacle. For without this postulate of force as such, a creative power that is neither attributable to some prior agent, nor distinct from a matter upon which it acts, one could not account for the ways in which the intellect belies its own living being. The history that Bergson will chart of life's own tendencies will show that seeming opposites – especially mind and matter – are at once indications of this explosive force for difference at the same time as each term will always be haunted by the other tendency from which it has never fully liberated itself. This is what sets the Bergson/Ruyer/Deleuze trajectory of vitalism in contrast with what I have referred to as the new vitalism, or contemporary vitalism (a vitalism that presents itself as a 'return' to living systems and embodied minds after the fall into Cartesianism). Bergson's account of life begins not with the organism, but seeks to account for how something like an organism – a bounded, active and individuated form – comes into being from a life that is assumed to be, originally, inorganic.

In this respect Bergson's narrative of the genesis of living forms is a form of realist transcendentalism as, we might also say, was Freud's in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. That is, it is a transcendentalism in that it begins from the living being whom we encounter today, with particular attention to that strange Cartesian animal 'man', who appears to be at one and the same time a being of this material world and yet who suffers from all sorts of illusions and strivings that render him also at odds with the very milieu that is his home. The transcendentalism is realist precisely because it posits an initial reality that is neither a condition for meaning – so it does not begin with the question of how there is something like a meaningful ordered world – nor a subjective condition; the life that we know and live now is not traced back to a knowing and living being, for it is precisely those two phenomena of knowing and living that are being questioned. The conditions sought by this transcendentalism are not logical, but real. That is, we do not begin from the world as known or the world of sense and then ask what type of being must be pre-supposed in order for this known, lived world to have been synthesized. Rather than beginning from sense, or the *world* of sense as meaning and 'the lived' both Bergson and Freud will begin from a 'worldless' potential for sense and sensation. The word 'life' would stand as a

marker for some process, not yet attributable to a bounded body or relation, that might explain how there comes to be sensation and sense: how does a border or being emerge that feels itself to be other than a living order? What makes this enquiry transcendental is that it is not, like many of the current theories of the origin a life, a theory regarding the material, chemical and temporal complexities required to explain life as we know it (a life that includes humans, animals, fossils, geological formations, climates and solar systems). Instead, as a transcendental enquiry, Bergson, Freud and Ruyer begin from the living being as it appears, but rather than trace back the conditions to conditions of knowledge or sense – how could this being come to be known, or come to know? – they ask about the curious status of the *living being*. As a *being*, how do we account for this bounded, individual? What is the nature of life such that it allows for the emergence of processes that can take up a relation to life, processes that form *living* beings? This is at once a philosophical/phenomenological question insofar as it concerns the emergence of sense or relations: it is a question posed to the very possibility of questioning, even if that questioning does not take an animal or human form. How can something like a relation between a living being and 'life' emerge, where 'life' is not yet the phenomenologist's or Kantian's world of sense but something closer to an 'outside' or a *sense* of what is other than the being's own membrane?

Literal theories of the emergence of life also focus on the formation of a membrane or border between the living being and milieu, but while these theories are materialist in their discussion of the chemical composition of what would be required for the emergence of organic processes, Bergson, Ruyer, Freud, Simondon and later theorists of living systems concentrate on the production of form. This is not the form of this or that being – in the sense in which form is imposed upon matter. On the contrary, the very concept or positing of matter as that which awaits form is suspended; for it is the idea of the very possibility of formation that is in question. If we do not assume a basic matter that requires a form from without, we could account for life (as, say, Daniel Dennett would do today) through chance interactions and random variations; this would be to presuppose matter as something like a realm of chaotic interactions that bears the possibility to produce points of relative stability. For Dennett there is nothing in matter itself, nothing chemically or vitally specific, that explains the resulting order we witness today. But Dennett nevertheless – in his very suggestion that one might account for life from a position that is 'substrate neutral' – has to presuppose a certain mode of matter: a matter that is capable of mechanical and quantitative interaction and that has no tendencies or modes of motion

that could not be replicated by inorganic systems. Dennett's materialism, in its very attempt to liberate inquiry from metaphysical assumptions, harbours the very mode of metaphysics against which traditional vitalisms and finalisms were always defined. If one begins from the assumption of a matter that in itself bears no tendency towards the production of relations, then one either accounts for relations through contingent collisions or one posits an external life-force, spirit or principle that infuses matter to give order. The vitalism of Bergson and Ruyer is transcendental precisely in its refusal to begin either from a matter assumed to be a quantity of force bearing the capacity for random rearrangement, or from the already formed living being for whom the world presents a meaning. That is, the question is not that of the passage from the passivity of mere matter to the active comprehension of matter by a knowing subject, but the very possibility of the border between active and passive. How can something like a passion, an affect, or a 'happening to' occur? This question needs to be considered carefully if it is to be a properly transcendental beginning that does not already presuppose a normative image of life.

The importance of the notion of affect in Deleuze's reading of Bergson, and the importance of the concept of sense in *The Logic of Sense* and in the work of Ruyer lies not in returning our understanding of life to living beings, but – on the contrary – distinguishing between those systems that are directly effected by causal relay and proximity and those that are able to produce an indetermination, or what Ruyer refers to as utopia: a sense or end that is not yet placed or specified (Ruyer 1950). Affect, in Bergson, occurs with a delay in response: a body is perturbed or stimulated but not stimulated to act in this or that definite manner. Ruyer, also, distinguishes between conditional stimulus and absolute stimulus, with the former being characteristic of various systems of feedback and homeostasis (working to retain or achieve a certain state) while the latter can, if need be, allow a living system to form an entirely new assemblage (Ruyer 1954). A thermometer can regulate between its own state and received inputs, but only a living system could alter the very mode of relation between inside and outside. For both Bergson's notion of affect and Ruyer's notion of sense one does not remain within the point of view of the system that relates an inside to an outside, one does not extend the linguistic animal who views the world in terms of concepts to include the embodied animal that senses the world through feelings. Bergson's 'spirit' or Ruyer's 'absolute survey' are concepts in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of philosophical creations: by linking up certain potentials – to think, to have a sense of the whole, to perceive as such – they create life beyond the bounded body.

What is in question is not the relation of body to world but the opening of relations as such. Bergson therefore posits a speculative moment before relations: there must have been a force that was not yet a force existing between two bodies, but force as such *from which* something like points of perception or capacities to be affected emerged. Such a force would not be matter as extended substance, distributed in space and capable of being related only by a perceiving subject who could perceive one space alongside another; nor would this force be a subject as nothing more than a capacity to synthesize relations. Ruyer also places sense or this capacity for utopia before or beyond subject/object relations. And the key to both Bergson's invocation of affect as the opening of indetermination and Ruyer's concept of sense as the domain in which bodies are neither mechanically caused nor placed in a distanced position of judgement is the Cartesian subject. If we begin from this appearance or illusion of a subject set over and against a mechanistic and extended world we are forced to admit as its condition a concept of life that would be neither organic nor mechanistic: neither a world of simple interacting elements, nor a world that exists only for those bounded bodies for whom it is meaningful. In order for something like Cartesian man to be lived there must be a capacity for sense: for Ruyer any statement or claim regarding the subject's relation to the world – whether that be a claim from freedom or determinism – demonstrates that there is a sense of the world. This cannot be attributed *to* a subject, for this would involve an infinite regress. The subject who explains the world as a relation between subjects and objects would create a subject position, and this in turn could be accounted for only by positing a subject who explains and so on.

Instead, Ruyer suggests an autosubjectivity *without distance,* that can be attributed to all living beings – such as the dog whose injured leg will require him to find another way of hobbling to reach his dinner; this animal is not possessed of a cogito that represents the world, but nevertheless enjoys a feeling or orientation that is located not in his body (for it is when the body breaks down that this orientation must take over and re-invent) nor in a specified goal (for the injured animal might have to consider another path or mode to staying alive, such as conserving energy through non-movement). Similar conclusions can be drawn from contemporary cases in neurology where the function of a damaged part of the brain can be renewed through new networks, suggesting that the matter of the body has an orientation distinct from its organic actuality.

Bergson too will explain the bifurcation of intelligence and instinct following a certain liberation of the animal. A plant is, unlike Bergson's

originally posited explosive force that has no difference between inside and outside, already a relation between energy taken in and energy expended. A plant absorbs light and moisture – receives force from without – and remains as it is with the minimal expenditure required to remain alive. An animal acts in relation to stimulus, not simply absorbing that which it receives but expending a degree of force – say, running for miles to find and consume the stored energy of the plant. It is this economic relation among forces, concerned with delays and increasing relations towards what is not present, that for Bergson creates a greater and greater zone of indetermination, and for Ruyer a greater and greater openness of sense. This means that we can neither assume a simple continuity between human and animal, nor a metaphysical separation (Lawlor 2007). The intellect can only be understood by considering its failure: both those moments of lesser expenditure when the body of the organism does not think and merely acts instinctively, and – in its Cartesian moments – when it fails to recognize that the seeming detachment from bodily relays and causation can only be accounted for via a rupture with the body. For life is neither a field of matter distributed *partes extra partes* that then enters into relations in order to produce systems, nor a principle outside matter, whether that be the Cartesian representing subject, a life force or a God of emanation. (Ruyer will retain some aspects of Plato's demiurge, but this will not be as an agent outside life precisely because life is not that which requires an external principle of formation; it is self-formation, a matter that 'manners' itself, that feels or enjoys itself and in so doing – from this absolute survey *without* distance – can then imagine, sense or present various relative distances and systems.)

If life as such needs to be considered neither as given objectivity nor representing subjectivity but as a threshold that is given in various dynamic forms in all living beings and not just the human, why can we not simply dismiss Descartes's error as an unfortunate lapse in thinking? It is only when we experience the illusion of the subject as such and *as illusion* that we recognize the power of the intellect that, for Bergson, produces itself in the manner of the reified images it takes of things. It is only, for Ruyer, when we confront the dilemmas of the Cartesian subject – is the mind free from the world of determination or itself determined? – that we realize that this image as such (of the subject as a being distanced from the world) testifies to life's power to create the *sense* of distances. One could add to Bergson's notion of indetermination and Ruyer's insistence on sense a series of other twentieth-century anti-Cartesian vitalisms that need to be distinguished from the twenty-first century's wave of anti-Cartesianisms. Writers like

Bergson, Ruyer and Freud regarded the appearance and experience of the Cartesian subject as a positive illusion, testifying to life's power to create images of its own orientation. It is only when man, in an act of inflated self-regard and mythic autonomy, figures himself as a uniquely living being detached from the mechanism of mere life, that we are capable of re-figuring this life – all life, human and inhuman – as genuinely vital. That is, it is only when vitality injures itself by producing limited and paralysing images of itself that it can recognize itself as an imaging power. For Bergson it is when animal instinct, which can delay itself in expending energy to find external forms of energy, delays itself even further that we witness a bifurcation of instinct and intellect – the latter creating various forms of technology (including the creation of language and concepts) that will allow the life that surrounds it to be reduced to quantifiable and inert matter. It is through this process of increasing quantification, including the mind's own tendency to take itself for one mass of matter among others, subject to the very laws it invented, that we also arrive at the release of the intellect from its own life-deadening logic. For Ruyer, also, it is only with the false problems and projects of Cartesianism, including the aims of modern cybernetics and *Gestaltpsychologie,* that one arrives at the impossibility of figuring the mind as a thing within the world of things: the solution is not to elevate mind, man or spirit even higher above mere life, but to recognize life itself as that which possesses a capacity for sense, imaging, relation, utopianism and self-enjoyment – and non-relation, inertia and death.

It would seem, at first, that Freud with his emphasis on the death drive, the talking cure and the oedipal triangle would run counter to the passive vitalist tradition invoked by Deleuze and Guattari. But not only does *Anti-Oedipus* imagine another psychoanalysis beyond the family, and another death drive beyond the organism, Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* itself begins with the image of unity and the bordered organism as a myth: both the myth of an originally double-sexed individual articulated and dismissed in Plato's *Symposium* to solve the problem of the desire for beauty, and Freud's own myth of an original organism: 'Let us imagine the living organism in the simplest possible form as an undifferentiated vesicle of sensitive substance: then its surface, exposed as it is to the outer world, is by its very position differentiated and serves as an organ for receiving stimuli' (Freud 1922, 29). What makes Freud's account speculative is, like Bergson, his positing of what *must have been given* such that today we are presented with a state of wide-spread neurosis: a civilization and its individuals who suffer from their own self-imposed isolation, overly divorced from the life that they must master. Freud also tries to account for the production of

a relation between inside and outside, between a boundedness or enclosure and a dissipation to zero. If Bergson begins with a force that must once have combined both a power for differentiation and that which is differentiated – for only such a unity can explain the life we live today and its competing tendencies – Freud begins with an energy that is at once conservative and self-maintaining, and dissipative and undirected. That is, presented as we are with that paradoxical entity of the living being who is at once, as a *being,* somehow differentiated from 'life' and yet as a *living* being compelled to come into relation with life, we cannot begin with a bounded individual. Instead we have to deduce the very possibility of this strange boundary, a boundary that must at once maintain itself against the onslaught of life, and yet admit enough life or stimulus in order to manage its ongoing survival. This bounded life is not necessarily a subject of trauma, but it is only after trauma – after the self has experienced what is other than itself as an alien infraction – that it can have a sense of life beyond trauma.

It is from this post-traumatic, post-alienated and post-reified point of view that we can both overcome a seeming dualism between Freudian/negative approaches to life, and the ostensibly positive non-organic vitalisms of Bergson, Ruyer and Deleuze. The latter are insistent that as long as one begins enquiry from the point of view of the bounded organism, the world will appear as so much external, senseless and alien matter; we would be precluded from understanding the mind that also views itself as a thing among things. The former Freudian approaches begin from the fact of subjection, from the organism's sense of its distinction from its milieu.

Deleuze's and Guattari's criticism of Freudian psychoanalysis in *Anti-Oedipus* is, however, not a dismissal of the oedipal scene as mere error; rather, psychoanalysis describes modern existence all too well but fails to account for the enclosed family scene in terms of desire – and desire's tendency to form such territories. Both capitalism and psychoanalysis, in their reduction of desire to calculable units, and their recognition of desire as so much circulating quantity, are at once extreme events of misrecognition and also revelations of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the properly abstract essence of desire. The problem with both the familial scene of bourgeois man and with his subjection to a world of quantified values is – for Deleuze and Guattari, and for Bergson and Ruyer – not that 'man' and 'money' are empty abstractions that miss the richness of life, but that such terms are not abstract enough. Desire, for Deleuze and Guattari, is neither the desire *of man,* nor a quantifiable force that can be adequately represented in terms of submission to the system of labour for the sake of profit

or property; on the contrary, desire is only given through differentials. Forces enter into relation – such as the body's desire for sustenance coupled with that same body's muscular fatigue – and only through this play of relations does something like a body-system and a desire *for* some end emerge. Whereas the history of human bodies has been overcoded, so that differentials are quantified through some external term, ranging from the law of the earth, to God, to the norms of 'humanity', capitalism releases desire from such transcendent terms and allows desire to be represented as a differential.

For both Freud and Marx the organism sacrifices or alienates itself for the sake of managing its own being; desire is delayed, organized, systematized and all because immediate expenditure would preclude development, would preclude the self-formation or self-distancing that allows man to work upon himself. Neurosis for Freud and alienation for Marx reach critical and unsustainable levels when the deferrals that were undertaken to form and develop life take on a life of their own. A similar logic is noted by Bergson and Ruyer. For Bergson the language that the intellect forms in order to render its way in the world becomes, with increasing efficiency, a logic that reduces mind itself to a mechanistic and determined entity; and Ruyer will criticize cybernetics for taking the models that the mind has invented in order to characterize mind as such. If Freud and Marx suggest a return of such logic to man, Bergson, Ruyer and Deleuze and Guattari will insist that man as a desiring and labouring organism is insufficiently abstract, and that life can only be intuited by considering force *before or beyond* the relation between the organism and its world. Even so, it is the diremption of modern man – and all the false problems, neuroses, alienations and illusions that he brings in train – that allows this non-organic, abstract, ideal, spiritual or properly machinic and differential life to be intuited.

The Cartesian subject for Bergson and Ruyer, and the self-enclosed ego whose behaviour is marked by parapraxes for Freud, become significant and justifiable points of departure for the beginning of a vitalism without a subject precisely because of their incomplete and self-contradictory nature. They are necessary illusions in leading the way to an intuition of life as essentially and necessarily productive of its own misrecognition. Here is the sequence of reasoning: we are presented with something like an ego, an intellect, a 'man' who considers himself to be akin to a calculating machine and who regards himself as part of a world that is similarly calculable. According to Ruyer and Bergson this figure of reason is internally

contradictory: if we accept its premises then the very experience of man as rational animal becomes inexplicable. For both Ruyer and Bergson the problem largely devolves around questions of the formation of observation: if the world were explicable according to linear and mechanistic principles of cause and effect, and if there were something like 'matter' devoid of all tendencies to order, then how would the being who posits or views this order come into existence? How is it possible for there to be a *theory* of matter; how does something like the experience of a correct and true account of matter come into being? Neither Ruyer, nor Bergson, nor Deleuze will place an observer outside matter to account for the experience of a separate point of view or sense of the world; instead, they will argue for a plane or domain of sense – life's tendency towards indetermination or variation – that can then, when felt, create something like a possibility of survey. It is not the case that the subject precedes and grounds statements or experiences a distance from the actual world; rather, life produces differences and it is the feeling of that variation that allows something like an orientation *or* sense of the world to emerge.

For both Ruyer and Bergson this is best understood from the problem of the experience of the relation between order and disorder or sense and non-sense. The simplest example, used by both Ruyer and Bergson, is the perception of disorder, a state that is usually understood to be the absence of order. But it is just this non-fit between perception and perceived that opens up a positive domain of sense: for the order that is *not* perceived is what allows me to view the scene before me as disordered. The actual domain of objects simply is what it is; in order to view it as lacking order I have to add first an ideal order, and then perceive the scene in terms of that which is not present. In Deleuze's terms, sense is the sterile, neutral and incorporeal domain added to bodies and mixtures. The same applies to sense in its linguistic domain. As Ruyer insists, any proposition regarding the mechanistic determination of the world – either 'I affirm that the world is determined' or 'I affirm that I am free' – regardless of whether it is true or false, inhabits a domain of sense. That we can affirm, deny, doubt or negate a posited actuality demonstrates that in addition to the material present, there is also an ideal, trans-spatial, axiological dimension; this is our orientation or comportment towards the actual and it is this sense – which is abstract – that is occluded once we pay attention only to the statistical results of the present field, and not the potentialities from which that field has been actualized.

For Ruyer, what renders such a vitalism passive is that the ideals, themes, senses, axiological planes, or 'absolute survey' are not those of an organism

or mind. On the contrary, mind is the intersection of the actual world with the domain of potentiality; it is the acting body, oriented by the brain's circuits of feeling and sense-making, that is 'enveloped' by an axiological field: a body that feels hunger knows it must eat, and will engage the psycho-physical apparatus to that end, but that simple finalism is in turn enveloped by ideals or themes beyond the organism. For the short-term goal of sustaining oneself will not proceed from point A to B but will consider a range of possible means; and this fulfilled goal, in turn, will be part of a life that itself has an orientation or ideal that is not the individual's own, and is neither simply given in its past, nor presented as its unavoidable (future) end. For Ruyer the ideal, axiological, thematic field that envelops life is trans-spatial and irreducible to the series of past, present and future. Bergson, also, distinguishes between the possible – which would be determined from the present as what may or may not occur or have occurred – and the potentiality of the virtual which has *more* being than the actual: any state of affairs or organized body is the actualization of life's potentiality, a potentiality to create and differ that can be witnessed both in the bodies it effects and in the experience those bodies have of sense or the virtual. One way in which such an experience is given is in the impossibly contradictory and aporetic self-enclosure of the Cartesian intellect. It is only possible to have the image of a mind as a distinct substance, set over and against a world that may or may not be mechanistically determined, if there can be a sense of the world: not just the proximity of material elements but a feeling, self-enjoyment or zone of indetermination where the actual world is haunted by what is not yet presented. For Bergson this indetermination already accounts for the different temporalities of the animal and the plant, the former being oriented beyond its current state to external sources of energy and therefore requiring movement across space to attain what is not yet given; for Ruyer it is not only animal life, but the brain and the embryo that intersect with an abstract, ideal and trans-spatial domain. Any form of development or actualization of material possibilities in time and space is merely one way among others for achieving an end that, while being attainable through any number of paths, nevertheless gives spatio-temporal life its orientation.

It is the experience of the intellect for Bergson, the Cartesian subject for Ruyer, or the neurotic ego in Freud – the experience of mind set over and against a world that does not yet make sense – that leads to the inescapable admission of a domain of sense beyond man as an organism. Deleuze and Guattari will render this logic fully explicit in *Anti-Oedipus*; it is once we have arrived at oedipal man, who has thrown off all external and transcendent

laws, and has recognized himself as the origin of law and judgement, that we realize *both* that there is no end or foundation beyond this immanent life, *and* that life will nevertheless produce images – such as the image of desiring man and his subjection to system – that open life beyond any of its already actualized ends. It is precisely in its moments of extreme isolation, impoverishment and detachment from life that 'man' recognizes life as a power to create distorting, truncated, illogical and sterile images. Freud's death drive, when considered from the point of view of the organism, appears as a senseless and malevolent repetition of a destructive force that runs counter to life's logic of binding and creation. Considered from a point of view beyond the organism, the death drive – like Deleuze's often invoked forces of malevolence, stupidity and falsehood – can be considered as a power of creation and variation that destroys closed forms. It is only possible to arrive at the self-enclosed organism oriented towards logic, equilibrium, minimal effort, survival and *meaning* (where we take this word to refer to the world's mapped out and recognizable forms) if one has reduced a domain of disequilibrium and sense. Order is a contraction or selection from a disorder or chaos that possesses more being than the actualized and present world; meaning, or the experience of what is perceived *as* this or that recognizable object from the organism's own point of view, requires sense: there is not only a world composed of parts or matter distributed in space, but a capacity to feel or perceive the relations of such a field. The condition for the Cartesian subject who undertakes doubt in order to arrive at the minimal truth of the extended world is, before any positive statement regarding what is or is not, something like the sense of 'a' world.

For Ruyer and Bergson it is not sufficient simply to deny the validity of Cartesianism and then refer back to a fuller conception of the subject, for this both precludes accounting for how the Cartesian illusion of autonomous mind emerged, *and* merely posits something like mind or synthesis in general – a transcendental subjectivity – without explaining the experience of the world as mechanistic, as devoid of life, as determinable. And the same can be said for the post-Husserlian tradition that runs from Heidegger to Derrida: Heidegger will insist that inauthenticity, or the capacity for *Dasein* to regard itself as a being among beings and present in a world of presented entities, is evidence that we always already have a world, that we are for the most part taken up with a world with which we are concerned. The inauthentic is not an accident in the sense of an additional quality added to what we properly are, for there is no proper substance of man. For Bergson the Cartesian illusion whereby the perceiving power experiences

itself as a perceivable object can only be accounted for by acknowledging that life – whatever that may be – must not only have a potentiality for sense and perception (a capacity for the creation of dynamic relations), but also a tendency towards the reification of images.

This is why, I would suggest, we need to rethink the ways in which we make sense of philosophical positions and orientations. One of the ways in which the tradition of vitalism might be read is as a corrective to, or reaction against, mechanism; and if it were to be read this way one could assess its validity or justifiability. One could argue that Cartesianism, mechanism, idealism, organicism and a series of other 'isms' were accidents that befell the thinking body, accidents that can be remedied through a correct and properly corresponding theory of life. However, if we take the idea of the domain of sense seriously – that is, if we start to consider what it means or how it is possible to hold a theory, *any theory* – then we need to consider both the consistency of the theory, and its capacity to account for those points of view, ideas, senses or statements to which it is opposed. If we pursue this path then we recognize the positive, surplus and essential nature of illusion and falsity.

What is an organism such that it can form an account of itself that is at odds with its own being? A simple anti-Cartesianism would, in the manner of the contemporary modern vitalisms, argue that incorrect, distorting, paradoxical and unsustainable models of life need to be dismissed and negated, regarded as distinct from life in its proper expressions. But the tradition that Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a passive vitalism allows us to consider the senses and images that deflect the organism from itself. Deleuze affirms the powers of the false, stupidity, malevolence, misrecognition, counter-actualization and higher deterritorialization. One needs to ask whether this preference is epistemological – giving an account of life that concurs with observation – or pragmatic, in its capacity to create a richer sense of life. This question is best answered by reconsidering the relation between the fidelity of knowledge and the efficacy of pragmatics. If it is the case that all those phenomena that have been traditionally attributed to mind and its active synthesizing powers are better thought of as transcendental – having a force beyond the organism and its striving for self-maintenance – then all the distinctions of philosophy need to be rethought, including the very way in which we make or consider distinctions.

The distinction between truth as ideal/eternal/absolute and truth as pragmatic only appears as a binary or opposition with a limited and organic conception of the intellect. Traditionally we can oppose external modes of

verification with pragmatic consistency; and this is only possible because of a distinction between subject and object. On a simple model of pragmatism 'we' adopt the view of the world that best enhances our life, and it is not surprising that pragmatism and vitalism have an intertwining philosophical genealogy, both being critical of the notion of a mind that pictures or represents an alien world, and both insisting on the dynamism of mind-world relations. But at least in its current form, and despite its insistent anti-Cartesianism, pragmatism remains a form of subjectivism in its location of knowledge, sense and meaning within the human organism. If the early pragmatism of William James, whose work intersected with Bergson's, had a spiritualist dimension and a commitment to the duty to believe, this opening up of the self to a milieu that is neither the matter managed by science nor the conventions and contexts of human action is no longer present in the contemporary pragmatism of Richard Rorty. Indeed, whereas the anti-Cartesianism of James was critical of the enclosure of mind within the human organism, and – like the focus on perception by Whitehead, Ruyer and Bergson – aimed to take life beyond judgement and cognition to forms of experience that were non-localizable, Rorty's pragmatism is an anti-foundationalism that aims to remain *within* the limits of the sayable. This is what leads him to define his position as postmodern bourgeois liberal humanism; for he insists that pragmatism follows from a renunciation of the drive to 'eff' the ineffable, and is also opposed to all forms of metaphysical speculation beyond what can be exchanged in conversation. For Rorty this also amounts to abandoning the tradition of epistemology, of establishing a correct account of the world; pragmatism negotiates criteria from within, and its mode of immanence is immanent *to* the forms of conversations that 'we' share.

William James's pragmatism, like the vitalism of Bergson and the neofinalism of Ruyer, was oriented less to the immanence of conversation than to the destruction of the bounds of the human. And where vitalism went beyond a pragmatism of conversations and internal justification was precisely in its insistence that the sense of what lies beyond the organism, though given through feeling, intuition and intimation, was transcendent to human perception. If Bergson's method of intuition and his insistence on the creativity of evolution serves life, this is not the life of the human being; on the contrary, it is through the split tendencies revealed by vitalism that one arrives at a pragmatism or mode of justification that is neither that of a picturing and corresponding correctness *nor* a reduction of knowledge practices to the subject's categories and limits. If pragmatic and epistemological concerns seem to be opposed, as they are for Rorty, this is because

one distinguishes – in a manner that is post-Kantian – between a world as it is in itself, and the world as it is given for 'us'. If we abandon as absurd or impossible the notion of a world in itself, then we are left with the world as it is for us; to be is to be perceived, and a pragmatism grounded in human perception or discourse therefore opposes itself to any putative transcendence. To consider knowledge insofar as it serves life or insofar as it is meaningful is, from a post-Kantian point of view, to consider knowledge within the limits of discourse and relations. By contrast, if life is extended beyond the organism, if perception is not only a power that exceeds the human but a power that exceeds the organism, then one no longer divides knowledge of life from enhancement or expansion from life. Indeed, expansion of *human* life, and perhaps expansion of knowledge in the narrow sense, would be at odds with a profound communication with life that is also an extension of life's potentiality beyond all organic limits.

The intellect testifies to a necessary and perhaps insurmountable fracturing not *of life* but *as life itself*: life as fracture. To live is, not as dialectics would have it, to create a difference or distinction in order that the differing force may recognize itself as nothing other than a power to depart from and then return to itself, after difference, as having been – as above and beyond any of its manifestations. On the contrary, as Bergson's metaphor of explosion suggests, in the beginning is a blind unbounded dispersion of force with time occurring as the various fragments of difference take on now one, now another, economy of forming 'a' quantity. That metaphor of explosion would benefit from further examination in light of today's contemporary discourses on the origin of life and the disagreements that surround different modes of explosive origin, ranging from the big bang to the postulate of the requirement of some extra-terrestrial event to begin the bio-chemistry of life on earth. Such theorized beginnings consider what writers like Freud and Bergson were considering in abstraction: how does something like a being that goes through time emerge, how does a border between the living and non-living form itself? Indeed, does it form itself, with one matter bearing enough power of difference to create a complexity eventually productive of self-ordering systems or do we have to posit something like a disruptive event, an intrusion or disturbance that will require a form of binding? Looking back at Bergson and Freud, or even at Deleuze and Guattari's distinction between Kant and Leibniz, we can mark out just this style of opposition: between a differential force that disperses itself and forms a multiplicity of irreducible points (Leibniz) and a binding or synthesizing origin that can only posit what is other than itself from the transcendental foundation of its own ordering (Kant). Further, we could

see such an oscillation between thinking difference itself as the origin of life, and difference as lived in contemporary discourses on life. On the one hand there is a widespread and legitimate scientific exploration of the emergence of life as such, but such an exploration is accompanied with a no less intense insistence of life as always already meaningful – that life is never given as such but always *a* life for this or that living being. Such differences of approach, or differences of discipline or style, are – to go back to the distinction between epistemology and pragmatism, or between Deleuze and Guattari's active and passive traditions of vitalism – neither choices nor options that could be verified or justified without begging the question. One of the ways we can view this distinction between epistemology and pragmatism is between a striving to know the world as it is in itself, opposed to a resignation that all we can do is establish the best relation possible to the world as it is for us. But it is just this distinction that a passive vitalism – which ought to be considered as an impossible conjunction – should problematize.

What if it were the case that we could imagine the vital – life – as that strange series of processes that creates the relation of knowledge as *one* way in which the organism forms a border or membrane between itself and a world, but also creates other modes of relation – including animal instinct, the perception modes of plants, and non-organic (including technical) relations? To ask this question is already to open a certain point of view, for we would have to take Deleuze and Guattari's charting of a passive vitalist trajectory as itself an event of bordering and creation: not a perception of the philosophical terrain that might simply be rendered as more or less correct, but the production of a position of survey in which we recognize the creation of the present through concepts, and the placing of knowledge in relation to philosophical figures. That is, it is by raising this question of passivity and vitalism that we ask also about how we are affected by knowledge. What sort of living being asks about what it is to know, about what knowing does, about the borders between the being who knows and the world that marks out the limits of the knowable? For Ruyer it was the possibility of this question that characterized his peculiar mode of neo-vitalism: any theoretical opposition, such as that between strict mechanistic determinism and a pure and free idealism, evidences a capacity for survey. The living being is both its world and the sense of that world, both its bounded existence and the sense of that boundedness. Cartesianism is therefore true and not true. The intellect does indeed master the world as so much quantifiable matter, and creates the observing organism as one thing among a world of things. But once one considers the picture of this Cartesian

relation – a mind in the world that represents the world in images – one realizes that we have taken one image as the source and ground of all other images, without accounting for how this image of all imaging is itself possible.

We might say then that there can be only one philosophy: that of a passive vitalism, but that such a philosophy must also include all philosophy. Philosophy must be passivity, never the assertion of some point of view or dogma from an already accepted term; and if one refuses to accept any foundation, norm or image from which one begins philosophizing, then one can only begin with the event of imaging as such. At the same time philosophy must be a vitalism, an awareness that its questions are always articulated from this life in which we find ourselves, and that all possible philosophical articulations – from idealism and linguisticism to spiritualism and nihilism – have to be accounted for as ways in which this life has expressed itself.

When Deleuze and Guattari hail a tradition of passive vitalism that runs from Leibniz to Ruyer, they create a line of thought, a way of mapping and sensing a certain play of the world. Their proclamation is both epistemological in its commitment to passive vitalism as a point of view that can account for thinking in all its forms, and pragmatic in its commitment to the expanded creative power of conceptualization that a thought of life as affectivity will enable. Theory, as distinct from philosophy, starts to open questions beyond the philosophical subject to the modes of life from which such a subjectivity might emerge. In its clearest form this is captured in Ruyer's notion of 'absolute survey'. Ruyer locates this capacity in life as such, where any sense of the world or any living being could only maintain itself with goals and desires, and with a plasticity to re-mould those desires in its ongoing encounters. The *concept* of absolute survey comes to the fore only when philosophy, also making its way in the world, is confronted with its own impasses, stupidities and contradictions.

Notes

Introduction

[1] 'Language is both a system of communication and an informatics tool. Language is a dynamic living organism which is constantly growing and evolving. Not only does spoken language grow in terms of its increased semantics and new syntactical forms, it also evolves into new forms of presentation and expression' (Logan 2007, 156).

[2] '. . . the human organism is linked with an external entity in a two-way interaction, creating a *coupled system* that can be seen as a cognitive system in its own right. All the components in the system play an active causal role, and they jointly govern behaviour in the same sort of way that cognition usually does' (Clark 2008, 222).

[3] 'Since all the movements of the organism are always conditioned by external influences, one can, if one wishes, readily treat behaviour as an effect of the milieu. But in the same way, since all the stimulations which the organism receives have in turn been possible only by its preceding movements which have culminated in exposing the receptor organ to external influences, one could also say that *behaviour is the first cause of all the stimulations.*

Thus the form of the excitant is *created by* the organism itself, by its proper manner of offering itself to actions from the outside' (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1992, 174).

[4] 'According to Heidegger, an involvement is not a stand-alone structure. Each forms part of a system – a network of referential significance' (Michael Wheeler, *Reconstructing the Cognitive World,* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005, 145).

[5] Drawing on the work of James Gibson, Manuel DeLanda links the concepts of capacity and affordance. An intrinsic property is what characterizes an entity in traditional ontology but an 'affordance' occurs only in relation, and is symmetrical: 'Affordances . . . involve both capacities to affect and be affected. For example, a hole in the ground affords a fleeing animal a place to hide, but such an animal could also dig its own hole, thus affecting or changing the ground itself' (*Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, London: Continuum, 2004, 73). DeLanda sets himself in opposition to phenomenological or constructivist philosophies that would regard the world itself as a mere site of inscription, and regards the concept of affordance *as relational,* and therefore is enabling us to think of assemblages, rather than mind or language imposing its meaning on matter. However, it is the strongly materialist nature of DeLanda's position, or more specifically his definition of matter as physical, that remains bound to working systems, assemblages, networks and the virtual as a capacity for relations that I would question. There

is also a capacity for the non-relational, the inert, or the material – not as that which enters into systems but as that which refuses inclusion.

[6] Writing on the work of Georges Canguilhem, Monica Greco argues: 'Thus, while vitalist theories remain scientifically inadequate and philosophically naïve, they are nevertheless directly *relevant* to the problem of life. The oscillation that characterizes biological thought, of which the alternative between vitalism and mechanism is but one expression, is the symptom of a form of knowledge marked by a paradox: the science of life is, itself, a manifestation of the activity of the living, a manifestation of its own subject matter. Once it is understood performatively, as resistance and excess with respect to the remit of positive knowledge, vitalism therefore appears valid – not in the sense of a valid *representation* of life, but in the sense of a valid *representative*. In other words, and to reiterate: it is not as an account of life that vitalism appears viable; rather, it is as a symptom of the specificity of life that its recurrence should be understood' (Greco 2005, 18).

[7] Catherine Malabou, 'Who's Afraid of Hegelian Wolves?' in Paul Patton (ed.), *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, 114–38.

[8] Both Fredric Jameson and Theodor Adorno maintain this sense of art as an indication of a certain blockage or alienation of thinking, and indication of what cannot be brought to full consciousness but must be maintained – *as concrete form* – in the absence of a full coherence or resolution of consciousness's relation to matter. Deleuze regards art not as a symptom or sign of irresolution in thinking, but as a mode of thinking in affects and percepts – with its own history – alongside thinking in concepts.

[9] 'Language, therefore, meshes neatly with the other features of the cognitive niche. The zoologically unusual features of Homo sapiens can be explained parsimoniously by the idea that humans have evolved an ability to encode information about the causal structure of the world and to share it among themselves. Our hyper-sociality comes about because information is a particularly good commodity of exchange that makes it worth people's while to hang out together. Our long childhood and extensive biparental investment are the ingredients of an apprenticeship: before we go out in the world, we spend a lot of time learning what the people around us have figured out. And because of the greater pay-off for investment in children, fathers, and not just mothers, have an incentive to invest in their children. This leads to changes in sexuality and to social arrangements (such as marriage and families) that connect men to their children and to the mothers of those children (Pinker 2003, 29).

[10] Rodowick (1997), Pisters (2003), Marrati (2008).

[11] Susan Greenfield (2008) has argued that new digital visual technologies, focusing on speed of response and intensity, are altering eye–brain organization, allowing the self of sustained narrative, syntax, grammar and identity to become increasingly disarticulated. The effect of this new eye–brain complex has also altered mode of reading.

[12] In a landmark essay Brian Massumi noted the dominance of affect in contemporary politics. The success of Ronald Reagan did not lie at the level of ideology or content – such that his message appealed wildly – nor at the level of emotion, where viewers and votives responded to certain sentiments (that were consciously felt and invoked verbally or symbolically). Rather it was Reagan's visual and

auditory vagueness, a certain variability at the level of form that allowed his speaking body to be happily accepted by voters. Brian Massumi, 'The Autonomy of Affect', in Paul Patton (ed.), *Deleuze: A Critical Reader,* Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, 217–39.

[13] Gallagher (2005, 120); Thompson (2007, 66); Wheeler (2005, 17); Clark (1997, xvii) and Hansen (2004a, 298).

Chapter One

[1] The classic statement of this position is Alistair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* (1981), but the idea of an Aristotelian world of the polity – a human world in common, disclosed through speaking together – has a current vogue in the re-reading of Hannah Arendt (and the polity in common opposed to Platonic models), and in Giorgio Agamben's insistence – indebted to Arendt – on the political open (disclosed by a 'man' who is nothing other than his constant self-creating labour of creation against his animal others): 'Thought is form-of-life, life that cannot be segregated from its form; and anywhere the intimacy of this inseparable life appears, in the materiality of corporeal processes and of habitual ways of life no less than in theory, there and only there is there thought. And it is this thought, this form-of-life, that, abandoning naked life to "Man" and to the "Citizen", who clothe it temporarily and represent it with their "rights", must become the guiding concept and the unitary centre of the coming politics' (Agamben 2000, 101–2).

Chapter Two

[1] In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari insist on reading the history of philosophy *not* according to one model of mind, which various philosophers would more or less accurately reflect, but with a sense of how philosophy's created concepts bring certain conceptual personae in train (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). The Kantian categorical imperative whereby the subject's experience of itself in time precludes knowledge of the 'I' who synthesizes time follows from a certain posing of problems: no longer a Cartesian doubt but a plane of distinction between determined time and the I who determines. Such an approach contrasts radically with contemporary attempts to naturalize Kant or bring his work into line with theories of evolutionary life, such as Marc D. Hauser's *Moral Minds* (2007). Hauser ties the empirical fact that all humans have evolved to follow laws with the Kantian formal imperative *that there be law, even if no content of law is given*. The difference between this evolutionary approach which moves from a theory of life to philosophical sense and Deleuze and Guattari's vitalism is, again, that the latter is passive. Philosophy does not exist as a supplement or extension to biological life. Rather, it possesses its own timeline and imperative by virtue of the concepts its creates. Kant can be read, from the point of view of science and functions, as one way in which we make sense of

humanity's general submission to laws: there is no specific law given, but there is a universal recognition that there be morality in general. Formalism can be seen as one of the ways in which the organism makes sense of itself. Philosophically, though, concepts are not forms through which a body turns back upon and knows itself; they possess a power of violence and estrangement *and* ideal intensities and singularities.

[2] A critical study, such as Julian Baggini's semi-popular *What's It all About* (2005), happily debunks grand notions of the meaning of life, but nevertheless accepts that life may be made meaningful at a personal level through values. Terry Eagleton's *The Meaning of Life* (2008) laments the fact that traditional everyday practices that granted meaning, such as family and faith, now fail to do so because of increasing privatization; they are not so much lived now as merely symbolic (Eagleton 2008, 22). In general, the turn to the 'meaning of life' has operated to save philosophy and religion, which no longer bear a relation to transcendent truth but become human practices for coping with an otherwise arid life (Cottingham 2003).

Chapter Three

[1] In 2001 Merlin Donald drew upon the work of Damasio and Maturana and Varela to argue against what he referred to as the approach by a then-dominant group of 'Hardliners'. These 'Hardliners' included writers like Churchland, Dennett and Fodor who did not consider the role of either organism or meaning in the phenomenon of consciousness. Donald presented his work as a radical break and defence with the attempt to eliminate the role of consciousness as a meaning-making, organizing and integrating power: 'The entity that clinicians call consciousness constructs and maintains the larger course that a system takes over its lifetime. It is a surveillance system, a metacognitive governor that reviews the general state of the organism, maintains a fix on p space and time and formulates the mental models that give meaning and self-referential resonances to experience' (Donald 2002, 70).

Chapter Five

[1] Deleuze and Guattari appear also to criticize what they refer to as the exclusive use of the disjunctive synthesis, that one must be man *or* woman, oedipalized *or* psychotic. Their response to this illegitimate use of disjunction is to affirm its inclusive and transcendental form, where one might be male or female or straight or lesbian. Such terms are not referred to actual bodies, but are potentialities always in play. Whereas Butler regards the answering to the structure of normativity, being recognized *or* falling into non-being, and only criticizes the narrowness of our current symbolic order, Deleuze and Guattari refuse such an overall (and for them oedipal) exclusive choice between being identified and falling into

abjection. Their schizoanalysis is critical of the affirmation of the primacy of the psyche, the assumed value of being recognized *as someone, as a self,* and instead suggests that it is possible to live potentialities inclusively, to be male and female and straight and bisexual and gay and opposed to defining oneself sexually. 0n such an account it would be possible to be a feminist without being attached to the concept of woman, to be a nationalist critical of national identity, and – most importantly – to be critical of the present symbolic order of identities without being in mourning with regard to all those potentialities that one must supposedly necessarily negate

[2] Hybrid figures, such as Merleau-Ponty, whose concept of 'flesh' could be read as an appeal to organic life or as a suggestion that flesh has a potentiality beyond bodies (Esposito 2008) are read in terms of the lived body and then developed to extend those aspects of Heidegger and Husserl that maintain the primacy of the body (Busch and Gallagher 1992, 89).

[3] Giorgio Agamben criticizes this aspect of modernity whereby the original relation between the praxis/practical and world producing activity of 'man' is severed and the modern artwork becomes nothing more than a 'ready made', an object whose sense does not lie in the world but can only be coupled with the single and fetishized proper name of an artist; one no longer views a communicative act that opens out into poiesis, so much as 'a Warhol' or 'a Kuhns'.

If we now look at contemporary art, we notice the need for a unitary status has become so strong that, at least in its most significant forms, it appears to be based precisely on an intentional confusion and perversion of the two spheres of *poiesis*. The need for authenticity in technical production and that for reproducibility of artistic creation have given birth to two hybrid forms, the 'ready-made' and pop art, which lay bare the split inherent in man's poietic activity (Agamben 1999, 63).

Deleuze and Guattari, by contrast, place the ready-made at the origin of art, and regard it as inhuman. The animal becomes the organism that it is through assembling materials into some form of field; the bird that takes matters of colour and places them to form a territory then enables a whole further series of relations to other animal bodies: art begins with the ready made (Deleuze and Guattai 1994, 183–4). Further, proper names are not, for Deleuze and Guattari, narrowings of a once collective and human potentiality into the privileging of personal signatures. On the contrary, the proper name releases an ideal quality from the human hand–eye–voice composite. It is true that we have words in art such as Lawrentian prose, Dickensian horror, Beckettian absurdity, just as we have proper names in philosophy such as Kantian formalism or Cartesian subjectivity, while in science we have the Heisenberg principle and Cartesian coordinates. This use of proper names not only allows us to release a quality from the actual, so that we would recognize 'a' Turner canvas or 'a' Pinter dialogue even if we had not encountered the specific work before, and even if it were a forgery. A poor forgery is often too actual, so that there is no question of mistaking the Bach compositions required of music theory students for a real Bach, while a forgery that injects some possible variation (the sort of deviation from the rules used by the composer himself) is more likely to pass as an original.

Chapter Six

[1] The template for such a narrative mode is Terry Eagleton's influential *Literary Theory: A Guide,* concluding with the moral of the story he has charted from new Criticism and Leavis to Structuralism and Marxism: 'Any reader who has been expectantly waiting for a Marxist *theory* has obviously not been reading this book with due attention' (Eagleton 1996, 178, emphasis added).

Chapter Seven

[1] Both Keith Ansell-Pearson and Eric Alliez offer examples of a vitalism that is not that of the organism (Ansell-Pearson 1999; Alliez 2005).

[2] Malabou's (2008) outstanding study makes an astute distinction between flexibility and plasticity: the former is in accord with management discourse and the general denial of inhuman forces; the latter bears an explosive power that challenges anthropocentrism and mind-centred approaches.

[3] '. . . the human attempt to make meaning and sense of things is akin to a performance executed ideally with style, grace, feeling, and a certain amount of mindfulness' (Flanagan 2007, 16).

[4] '. . . a virus does not meet the autopoietic criteria. It does not produce from within itself its own protein coat or nucleic acids' (Thompson 2007, 123).

Chapter Eight

[1] Two notable and outstanding developments of a philosophy of non-meaning away from phenomenology include Graham Harman's *Guerilla Metaphysics* (2005) and Ray Brassier's *Nihil Unbound* (2007).

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Index