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The Machine

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This essay is an epilog to Gerald Raunig's book Tausend Maschinen, *to be published in German language in early 2008 (cf. http://www.turia.at/titel/raunig_m.html).*

It is to Gerald Raunig's great credit that his work reintroduces the concept of the machine as defined by Deleuze and Guattari; he examines it against the background of Marxist tradition, which has been articulated most innovatively in post-operaism. Gerald's work shows the possible intersections and continuities, however, it also points to discontinuities between these two theories which have evolved at markedly different periods.

I would just like to review some aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of machines here to show how it can help us to define contemporary capitalism. The ways in which this machine theory and post-operaist theory converge, as well as how they differ, should then become apparent. If we adopt Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, we can state clearly that capitalism is neither a "mode of production" nor is it a system. Rather it is a series of devices for machinic enslavement and, at the same time, an series of devices for social subjection. These devices are machines but, as Gerald

makes clear, following Deleuze and Guattari's line of argument, machines do not depend on *techne*. The technological machine is only one instance of machinism. There are also technical, aesthetic, economic, social, etc. machines.

One can be 'enslaved' or 'subjected' to a machine (whether it be technical, social, communicational, etc.) We are enslaved to a machine when we are a cog in the wheels, one of the constituent parts enabling the machine to function. We are subjected to the machine when, constituted as its users, we are defined purely by the actions that use of the machine demands. Subjection operates at the molar level of the individual (its social dimension, the roles, functions, representations and affections). Enslavement on the other hand operates at the molecular (or pre-individual or infrasocial) level (affects, sensations, desires, those relationships not yet individuated or assigned to a subject). I will try to illustrate the features that characterize these devices of enslavement and subjection, by examining how they function in the television "machine".

Subject constitution through communication and language

> "Who would still dare to claim true ownership of his anger nowadays, when so many take it upon themselves to tell him how he feels – indeed, they know better than he himself does?!"[1]
>
> Robert Musil

The capitalist system, through the operation of social subjection, creates and allocates roles and functions; it provides us with a subjectivity and assigns to us a specific process of individuation (via categories such as identity, sex, profession, nationality, etc.). On

the one hand, subjection causes us to individuate; it constitutes us as subjects, determined by the specific demands of power. On the other, it attaches each individual to an identity which is a "known quantity", fixed and immutable.

How does television produce subjection? What role do language and communication play in this process?

The subject-function in communication and language is in no way natural: on the contrary, it has to be constructed and imposed. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the subject is neither a precondition of language nor is it the cause of a statement. Deleuze argues that we as subjects are not what generate the statements in each of us; they are produced by something entirely different, by "multiplicities, masses and packs, peoples and tribes: all collective arrangements which are within us and for which we are vehicles, without knowing precisely what those arrangements are." These are what make us speak, and they are the true drivers of our statements. There is no subject, only collective arrangements of enunciation which produce statements. "The statement is always collective, even when it appears to be expressed by a unique, solitary individual such as the artist."[2]

From these collective arrangements, from the multiplicity of roles which constitute us and for which we are vehicles, the televisual machine extracts a subject which apprehends and indeed feels itself to be the *absolute* and *individual* cause and origin of its expressions, its words and its affects. Television functions through the use of a small number of established, codified statements, statements of the dominant reality; it also uses a series of prefabricated modes of expression. It then claims to transform these statements and expressions into the statements and expressions of individual subjects themselves. How does it go about doing this?

Television succeeds in presenting statements that conform to the dominant reality of capitalism as though they were the statements of individuals, by constructing a machine that *interprets* their words and their expression; it also puts in place a machine of *subjectivation* that operates by creating a double of the subject. It encourages you to speak as the subject of enunciation (*sujet d'énonciation*), as though you were the cause and the origin of statements. At the same time, as the subject of the statement (*sujet d'énoncé*), you are spoken by this same machine of communication. If you are interviewed on television (whether in a literary discussion programme or a chat show or even on reality TV, where you talk about your experiences), you are set up as a subject of enunciation ("You the viewer or you the esteemed guest, who are making television"). You are then subjected to an machine of interpretation with several constituent parts. First of all, you become dominated by a non-discursive machine designed to interpret, select and standardize – and this is before you have even begun to speak.

Following developments in the language sciences from linguistics to pragmatics, television takes on all the elements, linguistic and non-linguistic, of enunciation. It does not operate solely on the basis of a few ready-made statements, but also through the selection of a certain lexicon, a certain intonation, a certain speed of delivery, a certain type of behaviour. It uses a certain rhythm, certain gestures, a certain mode of dress, a certain colour scheme, a certain setting for your interview, a certain framing of the image, etc. As soon as you open your mouth, you become the object of the journalist's discursive interpretation, the journalist who, assisted by the expert and the scholar, measures the gap which may still exist between your enunciation, your subjectivation, your meaning and the dominant statements, subjectivation and meanings.

At the end of the interview, you are the subject of the statement, an effect of the semiotics of the machine of communication, believing itself to be a subject of enunciation, feeling itself to be the absolute, individual cause and origin of statements, whereas in reality it is the result of a machinery, no more than the end point in the process. Your words are folded over statements and modes of expression *which are imposed on you and expected of you*. Beneath the folds of your mental reality lies the dominant reality. Without being aware of it, you have slipped into the statements and expressions of the machine of communication. On television, you are always in danger of being trapped in the dominant meanings and subjectivations, no matter what you say or do. You speak, but you run the risk of saying nothing of what really matters to you. All the enunciative devices in our democratic societies -- surveys, marketing, elections, political and union representation, etc. -- represent more or less sophisticated variations on this division of the subject whereby the subject of enunciation must be reflected in the subject of the statement. As a voter, you are called upon to give your views as a subject of enunciation, but you are simultaneously spoken as the subject of the statement since your freedom of expression amounts to nothing more than a choice from among possible options which have already been codified and standardized. The election, like surveys, marketing, and political and union representation, presupposes a consensus on issues on which you haven't actually been consulted. The more you express yourself and speak and the more you interact with the machine of communication, the more you abandon what you actually wanted to say, because the communicational devices disconnect you from your own collective arrangements of enunciation and draw you into other collective arrangements (television, in this instance).

Subjection is not a matter of ideology. It does not particularly affect signs, languages or communication, because the economy is a powerful machine of subjectivation. Capitalism itself may be defined, not as a "mode of production", but rather as a machine of subjectivation. For Deleuze and Guattari, capital acts as a formidable "point of subjectivation that constitutes all human beings as subjects; but some, the 'capitalists', are subjects of enunciation [...], while others, the 'proletarians', are subjects of the statement, subjected to the technical machines."[3]

The transformation of a salaried employee into "human capital", into an entrepreneur of her/himself, a transformation facilitated by contemporary management techniques, represents the fulfilment of the process of subjectivation and exploitation, since in this case it is the same individual who splits in two. On the one hand, the individual brings the subjectivation process to its pinnacle, because in all these activities s/he involves the "immaterial" and "cognitive" resources of her/his "self", while on the other, s/he inclines towards identification, subjectivation and exploitation, given that s/he is both her/his own master and slave, a capitalist and a proletarian, the subject of enunciation and the subject of the statement.

Machinic enslavement

> "Enslavement in a sense akin to that used in cybernetics: in other words,
> remote control, feedback and opening up to new lines of possibles."
> Félix Guattari

The television-machine also acts as a device of machinic enslavement by investing the basic functionality of perceptual,

sensory, affective, cognitive and linguistic behaviours, and so can work on the most fundamental impulses of human activity and of life itself.

Machinic enslavement consists in mobilizing and modulating the pre-individual, pre-cognitive and pre-verbal components of subjectivity, causing affects, perceptions and sensations as yet unindividuated or unassigned to a subject, etc. to function like the cogs and components in a machine. While subjection concerns social selves or global persons, those highly manipulable, molar, subjective representations, "machinic enslavement connects infrapersonal, infrasocial elements thanks to a molecular economy of desire which is far more difficult to maintain within stratified social relationships", and these are the elements that mobilize individuated subjects. Machinic enslavement is therefore not the same thing as social subjection. If the latter appeals to the molar, individuated dimension of a subjectivity, the former activates its molecular, pre-individual, pre-verbal, pre-social dimension.

In machinic enslavement, we are no longer television users, "subjects" who relate to it as an external object. In machinic enslavement, we are connected to the television and we function as components of the televisual device, as its input/output elements, its simple relays, facilitating and/or blocking the transmission of information, communication and signs. In machinic enslavement, we literally form one single body with the machine. Machinic enslavement operates by making no distinction between the "human" and the non human, between subject and object, sentient and intelligible. Social subjection regards individuals and machines as entirely self-contained entities (the subject and the object) and establishes insurmountable boundaries between them. Machinic enslavement, by contrast, considers individuals and machines as open multiplicities. The individual and the machine are sets of

elements, affects, organs, flux and functions, all of which operate on the same level and which cannot be articulated as binary oppositions: subject/object, human/non-human, sentient/intelligible. The functions, organs, and strengths of man are connected with certain functions, organs and strengths of the technical machine and together they constitute an arrangement.

According to Guattari, there is a "living" aspect, an enunciative capacity, a store of possibles that exist in the machine, which can only be found if one is situated in this machinic dimension. The machine is not just the totality of its parts, all the elements of which it is composed. "It is capable of self-organization, feedback and is self-referential, even in its mechanical state" (p. 71). It has power: the power to set creative processes in motion.

Thus, strange as it might appear to traditional ways of thinking in the West, "subjectivity" finds itself simultaneously on the side of the subject and on the side of the object. Capitalism derives its great power from these two devices, which operate as two sides of the same coin. But it is machinic enslavement which endows capitalism with a sort of omnipotence, since it permeates the roles, functions and meanings by which individuals both recognize each other and are alienated from each other. It is through machinic enslavement that capital succeeds in activating the perceptual functions, the affects, the unconscious behaviours, the pre-verbal, pre-individual dynamic and its intensive, atemporal, aspatial, asignificant components. It is through these mechanisms that capital assumes control of the charge of desire carried by humanity. This aspect of the reality of capitalist "production" remains invisible for the most part. Even the definition of transindividuals doesn't quite capture it; we ought really to talk about transmachinics, about relations operating simultaneously on this side of the social and individual dimension and also beyond it. This

is what Deleuze and Guattari mean when they refer to machinic time, to a machinic added value, to machinic production. In any event, it is on this basis that there is accumulation, production of value and exploitation. This "invisible" side of capitalist production is the most important aspect and is, paradoxically, the aspect which is never taken into consideration when accounting value, the one which eludes measure.

According to Félix Guattari, the degree of machinic enslavement which characterizes human labour (or communication) "is never quantifiable as such" since it is not countable. "On the other hand, subjective subjection, the social alienation inherent in a work station or indeed in any social function is perfectly quantifiable since it is always countable". It is possible to measure a time of presence, a time of social alienation of the subject; but what s/he contributes, at least as a subject, cannot be measured at the machinic level. The visible work of a physicist, the amount of time s/he is socially alienated, the time s/he spends in her/his laboratory can all be measured but the machinic value of the formulae s/he develops cannot. Marx' paradox is that of describing machinic production and of wanting to measure it by subjection, using human temporality (the worker's hours of labour).

The refrain or the production of subjectivity or the abstract machine

The machineries of enslavement and subjectivation impinge on relationships. Their action, according to Foucault's definition of power, is an action on a possible action, an action on "free" individuals, i.e. individuals who still have the virtual ability to act differently. This suggests not only possible failures of subjection, unpredictable outcomes, deviations, ruses, instances of individual

resistance, but also the possibility of independent, autonomous processes of subjectivation. Here we find the third concept of machine, the "abstract machine". We will show how it functions by using the example of the television once again.

When I watch television, I exist at a point where different devices intersect: 1. a device which may be defined as machinic enslavement, represented here by the "perceptual fascination provoked by the screen's luminous animation"[4], a device which can be linked with intensities, temporalities, affects of the body, the brain, of memory, all of which pass through me and which represent my pre-individual, molecular dimension; 2. a relationship of capture with the narrative content which mobilizes my representations, my feelings, my habits as a subject (my molar dimension); 3. a world of conscious and unconscious fantasies inhabiting my daydreams ...

Despite the variety of components of subjection and enslavement, despite the diversity of subjects for expression and substances of linguistic and machinic, discursive and non-discursive enunciation which pass through me, I retain a sense of uniqueness and closure, of completion which derives from what Deleuze and Guattari call a refrain. A "motif" stands out from this set of devices, a refrain which acts as a type of magnetic "attractor". "The different components conserve their heterogeneity, but are nevertheless captured by a refrain"[5] which couples them together.

The refrain refers us back to the techniques by which subjectivity is produced, to Michel Foucault's concept of one's relationship with oneself or "*rapport à soi*". Relationships of power and knowledge become detached from the processes of subjectivation which elude them.

The refrain is necessary to the functioning of the "abstract machine", which despite its name is the most peculiar machine, a machine that is able to function transversally at these different levels and confer on them not just a cognitive or aesthetic substance but above all an existential one. The abstract machine links material and semiotic elements, but it does so from a non-discursive, unnameable, unrepeatable point, because it touches upon the focus of non-discursivity which lies at the heart of discursivity. It operates a subjective transformation by allowing existential thresholds to be crossed.

Guattari describes the "abstract machine" Debussy thus: "It is an enunciation, a gap, a sort of non-discursive focus. There is not only the musical dimension but also the adjacent, plastic, literary, social dimensions (e.g. the *salon*, nationalism), etc. It is therefore a heterogeneous universe with multiple component parts. An enunciating subject stands out from this constellation of universes and worlds and this subject binds all the elements together in a new way."

In the refrain, in the *rapport à soi*, in the production of subjectivity, there is the possibility of unfolding the event, of escaping from the serialized and standardized production of subjectivity. But this possibility must be constructed. We have to create possibles. This is the sense in which Guattari speaks of the "aesthetic paradigm": to construct political, economic and aesthetic devices where this existential transformation can be tested - a politics of experimentation, not representation.

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[1] R. Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften I. Erstes und zweites Buch*, Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt ^{20}2005, S. 150.

[2] G. Deleuze / F. Guattari, *Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure*. Paris: Les èditions de Minuit 1975, p. 149.

[3] G. Deleuze / F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia II*, London: Continuum 1987, p. 457.

[4] cf. (also for the following): F. Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1995, p. 16.

[5] F. Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1995, p. 17.