

The Unconscious of the Unconscious (of the Unconscious)

Félix Guattari and “Regaining Contact with the Real”

Hanjo Berressem

0. Avant-Coup: How to Do Things with Things

‘What is Therapy?’, ‘What are Things?’¹ Both of these terms are crucial in the shift from Lacanian psychoanalysis to Félix Guattari’s schizoanalysis that I will trace in this essay. Concerning ‘therapy’, while the perimeter of the psychoanalytic talking cure is drawn closely around individual patients and the divan-chair arrangement, schizoanalysis widens this therapeutic perimeter to include the larger social and natural milieu, creating a resonance between the cure of individual patients and what Martin Heidegger calls *cura* as ‘care for the world’ [*Sorge um die Welt*]. The term ‘sculpture in the expanded field’ that Rosalind Krauss used in 1979 to describe land art might be modulated to formulate this difference.² Psychoanalysis is to modern sculpture what schizoanalysis is to land art. Or, more pointedly, schizoanalysis is ‘psychoanalysis in the expanded field’. Concerning ‘things’, while things are crucially important in the theory of Lacanian psychoanalysis, the only things he uses in the therapeutic setting are words, or, more specifically, signifiers as the things language consists of. Guattari, in contrast, integrates technical monitoring and recording devices into the therapeutic scene as one element in his overall expansion of the therapeutic field.

Both Lacan’s notion of things and Guattari’s integration imply comprehensive re-conceptualizations and re-evaluations of things that are framed by the philosophical distinction between the thing in itself and the phenomenal Thing for us. Similar re-interpretations also lie at the center of the recent philosophical schools

1 In the following, ‘Thing’ will denote the Kantian ‘Thing in itself’ and the Lacanian ‘Thing’. For all other contexts, I will shift between the more general ‘thing’ and ‘object’, the latter highlighting its materiality and function as what Martin Heidegger calls ‘tool’ [*Werkzeug*]. In analogy, the ‘Real’ will denote the Lacanian Real and the ‘World’ the ‘World in itself’. For all other contexts, I will use the ‘real’, and the ‘world’.

2 Rosalind Krauss: Sculpture in the Expanded Field. In: *October* Vol. 8 (1979), 30–44.

of Object-Oriented Ontology and Speculative Realism, both of which conceptualize the former as an obscure object of speculation that is in many aspects the philosophical version of Jacques Lacan's obscure object of desire. Like Lacan, both focus on the relation between language and the ontologically enigmatic essence of a thing, rather than on what a thing does: *On "How 'to do Things' with Words," rather than "How 'to do Things' with Things".*

Lacan, who calls the world of Things in themselves 'the Real', is interested in man's psychic reality, in which the Real is always already mediated by the modes of our perception and by the laws of language through which we attempt to represent it. As the Lacanian unconscious is 'structured like a language' and Things in themselves are *après-coup [nachträglich]*, Lacan can ignore what they do. It is enough for him to know that we do not know. For Guattari, who is interested in man's overall lived reality, the unconscious is, like the world and the Real, 'structured like a machine' and at the same time *après-coup* and *avant-coup [vorgängig]*. Or, perhaps better, the World in itself and the Real are now. They are produced anew at every moment. As a cure of unviable and a careful curation of viable modes of living, schizoanalysis aims to 'regain contact with the Real' and find opportune moments to administer it: *Cura and Kairos*.

Although Guattari, who was a student of Lacan, uses Lacan's terminology, he completely redefines the Real by conceptualizing the relation between the world of "the given" and that of its creatures as "the giving"³ no longer as *representational*, but as an *expressionism* between two aspects of the same world: the abstract World in itself and the world as an assemblage of its concrete creatures. While this puts a lot of pressure on what exactly 'same' and 'creatures' means, Guattari's introduction of an "expressive function"⁴ between the world and its creatures and his insertion of the world for itself between the World in itself and the phenomenal world for us breaks up some of the representational impasses between the 'in itself' and the 'for us'. As Guattari describes it quite beautifully, in the shift from the World in itself to the world for itself, the expressive function not only "secretes a surplus value of code"⁵ but also creates a "conjunction between being-there, closed on itself and proto-alterity, which links together the things of the world and life"⁶ on an infinite number of ontological levels:

3 Félix Guattari: *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*. Transl. Andrew Goffey. London: Bloomsbury 2013, 19. Gilles Deleuze also considers the relation between the Thing in itself and the thing for us as two aspects of the same thing, when he diffracts givenness into 'the given' and 'the given-as-given'.

4 Guattari: *Cartographies*, 133.

5 Guattari: *Cartographies*, 133, my emphasis.

6 Guattari: *Cartographies*, 135. "Forms of life", Bruno Latour would say.

It is a question here of all the expressive matters open to the facets of mutation and creation: genetic, ethological, semiotic codes, semiologies and the ensemble of situations in which a 'constructivist' Expression is grafted onto material – phonic, scriptural, organic – chains, by starting to play the double game of being-for-itself what it is, through the modular relations that articulate it, and of being-for-something-else, elsewhere and after, as a function of a variety of memorial and probabilistic pro-positions.⁷

In this expanded, far-from-Saussurean expressionism, which involves not only arbitrary signs but all kinds of "signaletic matter",⁸ the overall problematic shifts. The fact that both human and non-human creatures have no direct perceptual and conceptual access to the obscure autonomy of the essence of Things in themselves is a given that does not imply that the Real is nothing but an object of speculation. It is also the given field of productive processes and things, whose manipulation, administration and creation are expressions of this productive Real through and by its creatures. – But I am getting ahead of myself. Only so much for now: For Guattari, the World in itself continues to refuse to be represented by its creatures, but it expresses itself through them and in them: *expressionism and pragmatism in therapy*.

What schizoanalysis ultimately aims at is to understand how things work in order to administer them. Although it has often been read, in the spirit of the 60s counterculture, as denoting an anarchic celebration of clinical schizophrenia and of the figure of the schizo(phrenic), it denotes in actual fact quite the opposite. Reaching back, beyond the term's psychoanalytic connotations, to its original meaning of 'to cut' [*schizein*], schizoanalysis is a very sober and level-headed analysis of the cuts [*schizzes*] and flows [*roés*] that define, on a very abstract level, the productive operations of an everywhere concrete machinic world. Of its circuit board, one might say. The most comprehensive of these 'abstract machines' is the "plane of Nature" which "continually makes and unmakes [...] assemblages, employing every artifice".⁹

The method of analyzing this machinic world, 'schizoanalytic metamodeling',¹⁰ is a "discipline for reading other modelling systems" and an "instrument for deciphering modelling systems in diverse domains".¹¹ Metamodeling is a form of meta-

7 Guattari: *Cartographies*, 134.

8 Guattari: *Cartographies*, 40.

9 Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* 2. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2005, 258.

10 For more on the term, see Guattari: *Cartographies*, 17; Félix Guattari: Institutional Practice and Politics: An Interview by Jacques Pain. In: Gary Genosko (ed.): *The Guattari Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell 1996, 121–138, 133; Janell Watson: Schizoanalysis as Metamodeling. In: *fibreculture: #12 Models, Metamodels and Contemporary Media*, n.p. (<https://twelve.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-077-schizoanalysis-as-metamodeling/>; 28.05.2023).

11 Guattari: *Cartographies*, 17.

engineering, one might say. A conceptual tool to analyze the abstract diagrams of the concrete circuit boards of different abstract machines: *the more abstract, the more concrete*.

As it operates in-between a multiplicity of models and domains, schizoanalytic metamodelling cannot remain within clearly defined conceptual and discursive confines. Deleuze and Guattari use so many scientific and artistic models as themselves productive rather than as mere examples because they consider them as domains that are, like philosophy, “casting a net over chaos”¹² and thus, although they are formally distinct, as complementary to philosophy: *philosophy creates concepts, science functions and art monuments*.¹³

Crucially, according to Guattari’s expressionism, metamodelings differ from second-order observations that “simply apprehend” a scene “from the outside”.¹⁴ Like philosophical events, artistic monuments, scientific functions and technical devices in therapeutic situations, metamodels are active agents that modify the milieus they enter and the models they decipher. Operating in the often infinitesimally small differences and distances between these models, they identify “transversal passages between problems of different kinds”¹⁵ and create connections both within the milieu of models and within the milieus these models model.

Within a therapeutic situation, for instance, letting patients create a visual diagram of their daily routines and movements by tracking and recording them with a video camera, and by integrating that model into a tableau of other models created within the therapy, such as those created by audio recording conversations between patients and therapist that can be played back to the patients or typewritten logs that they can peruse, creates, in the overlap of these diverse modeling systems, a meta-model that shows connections between the diverse domains of the patients’ allover problematics.

Within Guattari’s expressionist logic, however, even to conceive of things as modeling agents within the therapeutic scene is not enough because “the elements captured in the scene do not only interact (as systems theorists imprudently declare), they also “enter into existential agglomeration” and allow for the scene to “soak [...] up a certain type of scattered, deterritorialized being-there”.¹⁶ Creating a therapeutic alignment between patients and the video camera allows the therapist – who is not only professionally but also existentially part of the therapy – to

¹² Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari: *What is Philosophy?* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson/Graham Burchell. New York: Columbia University Press 1996, 167.

¹³ Deleuze/Guattari: *What is Philosophy?*, 199: “With its concepts, philosophy brings forth events. Art erects monuments with its sensations. Science constructs states of affairs with its functions.”

¹⁴ Guattari: *Cartographies*, 184.

¹⁵ Guattari: *Cartographies*, 17.

¹⁶ Guattari: *Cartographies*, 184.

become aware of specific aspects of the patients' situation, such as an obsessive creation of strict territories and routines. The process of recording also allows the patient to become aware of these obsessions and leads to a process of deterritorialization that opens these routines up to being once more 'open to change'.¹⁷ Even more, however, the interaction with media such as cameras, microphones or typewriters can, on both unconscious and conscious levels, allow the patients to once more express themselves creatively within their milieu and to establish healthier, more viable connections to and within that milieu: *media therapy*.

1. Overture: Tape Recorders

This said, let me tell the story of three very concrete things and their use in different therapeutic milieus. The things in question are three tape recorders. The first of these is operated by a young Guattari during a therapeutic session at the experimental psychiatric clinic "La Borde" outside of Paris in 1958, the second by the American composer Alvin Lucier in his piece "I Am Sitting in a Room", which was first performed in New York's Guggenheim Museum in 1970. Both of these are part of projects that aim to 'regain contact with the Real' by way of smoothing out a stuttering speech. While it is a psychic stutter with Guattari's patient, Lucier's stutter is physical.¹⁸

"I am Sitting in a Room", which I use in this paper mainly as a conceptual soundtrack that you can easily find on YouTube and play in the background while you read this paper, starts with Lucier sitting on stage, recording himself speaking the following text:

I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed. What you will hear, then, are the natural resonant frequencies of the room articu-

¹⁷ In *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* Guattari defines deterritorializations quite literally as adaptations to a change in the milieu by modifying one's movements.

¹⁸ Unlike the stutter Guattari and Deleuze talk about in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, which has the power to disrupt a major language from within, this stutter keeps one from expressing oneself fluidly in a complex milieu.

lated by speech. I regard this activity not so much as a demonstration of a physical fact, but more as a way to smooth out any irregularities my speech might have.¹⁹

The third tape recorder is operated by a member of the audience who interrupts Lacan during an impromptu session of his Seminar, held on the 4th of June 1970 on the steps of the Panthéon in Paris.²⁰ “What is that?” Lacan scoffs when he notices that someone is recording him without his permission: “Now would you shut that thing or I will give it a kick. Turn that thing off now and get the hell out of here!”²¹ Lacan is venting about people who pirate his voice: “[I]t’s considered amusing in Paris to have little meetings in the evening with ‘there will be a tape of Lacan’”²², he notes.

2. Tape Recording the Real

To set the stage for my argument, let me start with Lacan’s tape recorder, which belongs to a group of technical objects he calls *lathouses*, such as spectrometers, oscilloscopes, microscopes, barometers, but also cameras and microphones. Lacan introduces the term, which is a portmanteau word that contracts the Greek *lathos* (false) and *ousia* (substance),²³ during a discussion of the inherent falsehood of scientific truth.²⁴ The ‘falsehood’ of *lathouses* is twofold. Ontically, they differ from natural ob-

19 Alvin Lucier: *Chambers: Scores by Alvin Lucier, Interviews with the composer by Douglas Simon*. Midletown: Wesleyan University Press 1980, 30f. For a more comprehensive reading of Lucier’s piece see my *Eigenvalue. Book 2: Contemplating Media in Art [Sound | Image | Sense]*. London: Bloomsbury 2018, 5–31.

20 This tape recorder owes its presence in my paper to Ben Tyrer’s contribution to the workshop this publication emerged from, also published in this collection.

21 Jacques Lacan: *Analyticon: Vincennes – Impromptu Number 2: Wednesday 4 June 1970*. In: *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis (Book XVII)*. Transl. Russell Grigg. New York: Norton 2007, 236. I will rely on the less edited, textually more inclusive version of *Seminar XVII* provided by Cormac Gallagher, 236f. <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Book-17-Psychoanalysis-upside-down-the-reverse-side-of-psychoanalysis.pdf> (26.05.2023)

22 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 237.

23 This reading is proposed by Sarah E. Hassan: *Les Gadgets*. In: *Acheronta. Revista de Psicoanálisis y Cultura* #7, 1998, n.p.. Hassan also notes other references to gadgets in *Encore* (171) and in *Troisième*. I find her etymology the most convincing. In *The Psychoanalysis of Artificial Intelligence*. New York: Palgrave 2021 (originally published in Isabel Millar: *Black Mirror: From Lacan’s Lathouse to Miller’s Speaking Body*. In: *Psychoanalytische Perspectieven. Nothing Less Than The Object a* 36/2 (2018), 187–205), Isabel Millar notes that *lathouse* is “a neologism combining the French ‘vent’ for wind, alluding to the breath from the lungs; ‘venthouse’ suction cap; and the Greek word *ousia* for Being” (53).

24 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 234: “Notice that I could have called it *lathousies*. That would have gone better with *ousia*, it is open to all sorts of ambiguity”.

jects in that they are man-made and thus artificial, ‘second-order’ objects. Epistemologically, as objects in which “science [is] in some way objectified”,²⁵ they participate in a logic according to which scientific truths are invariably false in that they pertain in essence to what Lacan calls the Symbolic, the field of formalization, rather than to the Real.

Historically, as “[t]he *lathouses* [sic!] has absolutely no reason to put a limit on its multiplication”,²⁶ the modern world “is increasingly populated by *lathouses*”.²⁷ In the increasing technologization of science, they are part of the ever widening sphere of scientific revelations, which Lacan calls, coining another portmanteau neologism, this time developed from the Greek *aletheia*, the “*alethosphere*”.²⁸

Lacan conceptualizes *lathouses* from within a logic that considers any form of ‘contact with the Real’ as phantasmatic. “To tell the truth,” Lacan notes, somewhat cheekily, “it is only when it is false that knowledge is preoccupied with truth”.²⁹ Throughout his work, and on all media-platforms, Lacan stresses the impossibility of a ‘real’ truth. In *Radiophonie*, “[t]he first [symbolic] body makes the second [body] from incorporating itself there”.³⁰ In *Ecrits*, “[i]n the symbolic order nothing exists except upon an assumed foundation of absence. Nothing exists except insofar as it does not exist”.³¹ In *Television*, “I always speak the truth. Not the whole truth, because there’s no way, to say it all. Saying it all is literally impossible: [...] words fail. Yet it’s through this very impossibility that the truth holds onto the real”.³² In short, as he notes in *Seminar XVII*, in reference to Martin Heidegger’s notion of the truth as veiled, science constitutes truth only as *Verborgenheit*: “The Real is the impossible”.³³ Up until *Seminar XXV*, *The Moment to Conclude*, Lacan will maintain that “[t]he difference between the representation and the object is something capital”.³⁴

25 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 220.

26 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 234.

27 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 234.

28 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 233.

29 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 22.

30 Jacques Lacan: *Radiophonie. Scilicet 2/3*. Paris: Seuil 1970, 55–99, 56: “On voit que parler de corps n'est pas, quand il s'agit du *symbolique*, une métaphore. Car le dit 'corps' [symbolique] se trouve, pour le corps pris au sens naïf, déterminant: le premier [*le corps symbolique*] fait le second [*le corps au sens naïf*] de s'y incorporer”.

31 Jacques Lacan: *Écrits*. Trans. Bruce Fink in collaboration with H. Fink/R. Grigg. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 2007, 327.

32 Jacques Lacan: *Television*, Trans. Denis Hollier/Rosalind Krauss/Annette Michelson. Ed. Joan Copjec. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1990, 8.

33 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 159.

34 Jacques Lacan: *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXV: The Moment to Conclude 1977–1978*, Tuesday 9 May 1978, 5. <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Book-25-The-Moment-to-Conclude.pdf>, p. 5 (26.06.2023).

Although a *lathouse* is often considered as what one might call an ‘object supposed to know’ in that it promises to unveil a ‘real’ truth, Lacan notes that “things are such, that it makes us think that it has something in its belly”,³⁵ but then stresses that this belly is empty. “[Y]ou must not tease the *lathouse* too much. To engage oneself in it is always to guarantee [...] the impossible, in that this relationship is effectively real”.³⁶ In other words, do not ask of science and its *lathouses* to lead you to a knowledge about or a truth of the Real. There is the impossible Real on the one hand, and there is science, as an inevitably false, fully formalized symbolic system, on the other.

The real function of *lathouses* is to reveal to science what Bruno Latour calls actants, such as microbes or viruses, that were formerly imperceptible to the human senses, and as such widen the *alethosphere*.³⁷ As Lacan notes in his *Seminar XVII*, “the characteristic of our science is not that it introduced a better and more extensive knowledge of the world, but that it made emerge into the world things that did not exist in it in any way at the level of our perception”³⁸

Lacan’s examples of such newly perceptible things are light- or soundwaves. In a world fully permeated by science, “the world which was presumed to have always been ours is now populated, in the very place where we are, by a considerable and intersecting number of what are called waves without you having the least suspicion of it”.³⁹ This is why a phenomenological world-view is a-scientific: “Hertzian or other waves, no phenomenology of perception has ever given us the slightest idea of them and it would certainly never have led us to them”.⁴⁰

The role technologically enhanced senses play in science, then, is to make things perceptible to us that were formerly imperceptible. For Lacan, however, it is ultimately the world of numbers and mathematical formalization that holds and defines science, not the senses, even if they are enhanced by *lathouses*. “*Sensus* is only there by way of what can be counted, and the fact of counting dissolves it rapidly”.⁴¹ Lacan’s use of the word ‘dissolve’ implies that acts of science cause a perceptual Real – the world of Things, that is – to evaporate in mathematical formalizations. To use a psychoanalytic terminology borrowed from physics, the Real is sublimated. While “what is involved in our *sensus* at the level of the ear or of the eye, for example, ends up with

35 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 23.

36 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 23.

37 For the shift from scientific object to scientific concept, see Bruno Latour/Steve Woolgar: *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. Princeton: Princeton UP 1986; as well as Bruno Latour: *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge: Harvard UP 1999.

38 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 229.

39 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 230.

40 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 233.

41 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 230.

an enumeration of vibrations”,⁴² it is only when these naïvely perceived vibrations are isolated as agents within the world’s overall field of operation when they are captured by technical devices and then transferred into numerical values within specific scales or grids – ‘Hertz’, for instance, measures electromagnetic waves – that sensed vibrations become properly scientific concepts: “it is thanks to this operation of number that we well and truly set about producing vibrations that had nothing to do either with our senses or with our perception”⁴³ As Deleuze and Guattari noted, science creates, or better ‘is’ functional: *in both senses of the word*.

In fact, in their shift from *phenomenon* to *noumenon*, Things are immaterialized to such a degree that one can no longer even name them other than by way of their negative, somewhat like *a-letheia* is the negative of *lethe*. As Lacan declares, “[t]he space in which the creations of science are deployed can henceforth only be qualified as unsubstance (*insubstance*), as a-thing (*l’achose* with an apostrophe) a fact that entirely changes the sense of our materialism”.⁴⁴ According to this a-corporeal materialism, “[f]orm, substance, content – call it what you will – this myth is what scientific thinking must detach itself from”:⁴⁵ *The Thing in itself as ‘a-thing’, as the ‘object a’*.

One might read this statement as one of the seeds for Alain Badiou’s transposition of Lacan’s psychoanalytic set theory into his philosophical set theory, as well as for his student Quentin Meillassoux’s speculative realist argument about ancestrality in *After Finitude*. All three are interested in the relation between thought and Things in themselves, which all three consider as ontologically out of human reach except by way of a recourse to mathematics.

Lacan’s use of a further neologism to describe the field of a properly scientific truth shows his conceptual rigor. Lacan notes that there is indeed a sufficient truth on the level of the Real, which is provided by ‘its’ operations and perceptions. On this level, which he calls *operception*, the world is what it is, and it does what it does. This real, operative truth, however, does not percolate up to the level of human beings, and certainly not to that of science: “we suppose that what I call formalised truth already has sufficiently the status of truth at the level at which it operates, at which it *operçoit* [*operceives*]. But for the operated on, for what wanders about, the truth is not unveiled at all”.⁴⁶

42 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 230.

43 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 230.

44 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 231. Lacan uses “*l’achose*” in *Envers de la Psychanalyse: Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan*. Texte Établi par Jacques-Alain Miller. Paris: Éditions du Seuil and “*l’Achose*” in *Litterature*, first published in *Litterature* #3 (1971), re-published in *Ornicar?* #41 (1987), 5–13. Translated by Jack W. Stone. Note the echo of the “*object petit a*” in the term.

45 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 231.

46 The term ‘*operçoit*’ is the nearest Lacan comes to Guattari’s signaletic matter and the expressive function. Guattari, however, does not differentiate categorically between higher and lower forms of life. Guattari: *Cartographies*, 136: “We will start from the principle that if a

For Lacan, there is a fundamental gap between the World in itself and its physical operations – Deleuze and Guattari's 'abstract machine' – and the psychic reality of its 'higher' creatures. Between biology and philosophy. Between the voice as a biological actant, and symbolic, formalized speech, for instance: "The proof of this is that the human voice, with its effect of supporting your perineum [...] in no way unveils its truth".⁴⁷ For the human being, the question of truth does not lie in how the world operates, that is, but in how this operation is formalized. On that background, science is formalized thought, supported by "*lathouses*"⁴⁸ as media that reveal actants and their *operceptions*. Unlike Latour, who follows in great detail the slow sublimation of these real actants into scientific truths, Lacan stresses that, according to the logic of *Nachträglichkeit*, the real actants that are revealed at the end of their sublimation come in actual fact after and are immanent to formalized thought. Science literally creates its objects. It comes before and constructs the Real as and within a 'Symbolic that lacks the Real'. Meilloux follows this temporality when he notes that "it is not ancestrality that precedes givenness, but that which is given in the present [our way of encountering the givenness of the world] which retrojects a *seemingly* ancestral past".⁴⁹

To define the Thing, Lacan transposes the biological notion of a "vacuole"⁵⁰ into "the hole proper to enjoyment"⁵¹, a prohibited space "that prohibition at the centre that constitutes, in short, what is nearest to us, while at the same time being outside us"⁵² [*cet interdit au centre*], its most exterior interior, which Lacan calls "*extime*"⁵³, noting once again that it is "created for us [...] at the center of the signifiers"⁵⁴ where "the o-object plays this role with respect to the vacuole. In other words it is what tickles *das Ding* from the inside".⁵⁵

knowledge of forms and their interactions 'finally' happens one day, with the appearance of life, it is because in one way or another and doubtless according to very different modalities, it already exists at other ontological levels".

47 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 234.

48 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 234.

49 Quentin Meilloux: *After Finitude. An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. Trans. Ray Brassier. London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic 2017, 16.

50 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 150: "But if in a monocellular organism [...] communication were organized schematically around the vacuole, and concerned the function of the vacuole as such, we could, in fact, have a schematic form of what concerns us in the representation". Later, this vacuole would become the topological twist that turns a circle into a moebius-band.

51 Jacques Lacan: *Le Séminaire, d'un_Autre_a_l'autre. Livre XVI*, 202. https://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/THE-SEMINAR-OF-JACQUES-LACAN-XVI_d_un_Autre_a_l_autre.pdf (28.05.2023)

52 Lacan: *Séminaire XVI*, 198.

53 Lacan: *Séminaire XVI*, 198.

54 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 150 and 198.

55 Lacan: *Seminar XVI*, 205.

This lack of the Real creates not only a conceptual twist in the Symbolic that is reminiscent of Gödel's realization that "in every formalised field of truth, there are truths that cannot be proved",⁵⁶ it also inauguates the logic of a separation between the speaking subject [*Ich*], 'its' perception and the *operception* of the 'in itself' [*Es*].

What I perceive (*perçois*), in a supposedly original way, must in effect be replaced by an *operçoit*. It is in as far as science refers only to an articulation which is only taken from the signifying order that it is constructed out of something of which *nothing existed beforehand*.⁵⁷

Lacan's overall lesson is that one must remember the lack of the Real in scientific knowledge. "What is important is to know what happens when one really puts oneself into relationship with the *lathouse* as such".⁵⁸ One must remain critical of their, and truth's supposed reach into the Real, that is. "[I]n order to be in the position of *lathouse* it is really necessary to have circumscribed it as impossible".⁵⁹ *Truth emerges ex nihilo: From an empty set, Badiou would say.*

While Lacan's scientific ontology and epistemology link *lathouses* to the lack of the Real in the Symbolic, his psychoanalytic logic links them, and with them the fields of truth and knowledge, to the field of desire, in particular to their fetishization and to their use as objects of compensation, which he develops within the formalized logic of the rotation of the four discourses.⁶⁰ In their function as 'objects a' [*l'a-chose*], *lathouses* become gadgets:

And these tiny objects little a that you will encounter when you leave, there on the footpath at the corner of every street, behind every window, in this abundance of these objects designed to be the cause of your desire, insofar as it is now science that governs it.⁶¹

In a world in which our relation to reality is increasingly mediated through a technosphere that is saturated by a belief and trust in science, and an adherent fascination with technological objects, *lathouses* become both master signifiers and gadgets. They become objects of a desire that is itself deeply technological, fetishized embodiments of a belief in science as the guarantee of a 'true', Real knowledge and a truth of the Real. In this compensatory, phantasmatic function, the enjoyment [*jouissance*]

56 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 235.

57 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 232, my italics.

58 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 234.

59 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 235.

60 See Hub Zwart: Estimate. Technologies and Techno-Cultural Discontent: A Lacanian Analysis of Pervasive Gadgets. In: *Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology* 21/1 (2017), 24–55.

61 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 234.

promised by such gadgets is not false in a Lacanian sense, it is merely “fraudulent” because “it gives one a false sense that the core of one’s being is something knowable”.⁶² It represses the lack of the Real and believes in the fake, fraudulent explanatory powers of *lathouses* rather than in the truth that scientific truths are always already false.

At this point, psychoanalysis and philosophy diverge. Meillassoux fully subscribes to the temporality of the *après-coup*, but in his argument for the given contingency of Things, these Things shift from the psychoanalytic to the philosophical. While the lack of the Lacanian Thing inaugurates the internal logic of psychoanalysis, Meillassoux’s Thing inaugurates the logical necessity of contingency as the true ground of all Things. In other words, he becomes Derridean: *He Takes his Chances, or better, his Contingencies*.

At this point, let me circle back to the beginning of this story. As Lacan experiences himself in 1970 during the impromptu session of his Seminar, one of the more lugubrious and despicable uses of the technical gadget of a tape recorder is to record and disseminate somebody’s speech without respecting the difference between a live discussion and a carefully edited text. Thus allowed for the dissemination not of a false knowledge but of a ‘false in the sense of fraudulent false knowledge’ into the *alethosphere*. “The alethosphere can be recorded. If you have a little microphone here you are connected to the alethosphere”,⁶³ Lacan notes. If this microphone is attached to a tape recorder, and the tape recorder is in the false hands, a fraudulent false knowledge will be attributed to Lacan in the *alethosphere*. As Lacan does not tire of noting, as his work is programmatically situated between speaking and writing, it should never be published as unedited speech: “And if everyone has the right, in effect, to record, everyone has not the right to publish what I might want to say here. And this is what was going to happen once again!”⁶⁴

So far Lacan’s story, in which later readers have tended to see *lathouses* and their function in the *alethosphere* as premonitions of what has been called our current *capitalosphere* or, by Jason W. Moore, the *capitalocene*, a term that is central in Donna Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. *Après-coup*, one might say, *lathouses* have always already been harbingers of the dystopia of today’s techno-fetishist and techno-capitalist world:

In Lacan’s new ultra-modern myth, there is no heavenly sphere, naturally; it has been demolished. All that remains of the world beyond the subject is the ‘alethosphere’, which is a kind of high-tech heaven, a laicized or ‘disenchanted’ space

62 Joan Copjec: May '68. The Emotional Month. In: Slavoj Žižek (ed.): *Lacan: The Silent Partners*. London: Verso 2006, 88–114, 109.

63 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 233.

64 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 237.

filled none the less with every techno-scientific marvel imaginable: space probes and orbiters, telecommunications and telebanking systems, and so on. The subject is now a 'terminal' subject, plugged into various circuitries, suited with wearable computers and fitted with artificial, remotely monitored and controlled organs, implants.⁶⁵

Like Joan Copjec, Slavoj Žižek relates *lathouses* to the *capitalosphere* by going back to Lacan's observation that *lathouse* rhymes with *ventouse*, which in turn evokes the voice as *object a*. To Lacan's observation that "[t]here is wind in it, lots of wind, the wind of the human voice",⁶⁶ Žižek adds that "it also echoes *vente*, sale".⁶⁷

In this first part of my story, then, *lathouses* have degenerated from being vital elements in an ontology and epistemology of science, to fraudulent gadgets that provide a phantasmatic gratification of desire that allows for a master signifier – the discourse of the master aligned with that of the university as well as the emergent discourse of capitalism – to extend its control into the very fabric of our bodies and desires. The result is a mix of phantasmatic denial, free-floating anxiety and the growing dominance of the discourse of the hysterical. From all of this, only the discourse of analysis can save both us and the *lathouses*. In this discourse, which demands an "initial sublimation"⁶⁸, gadgets can become once more true *objects a*; objects of desire that function as substitutes for an original lost Thing. As Lacan notes, "the most general formula" of sublimation "is the following: it raises an object [...] to the dignity of the Thing".⁶⁹

3. Cure by Tape Recorder

Despite his conceptual interest in Things and objects, there is, as I noted, no place and no function for technical devices or other objects in the practice of Lacanian psychoanalysis. They never enter the analytic scene, which remains, with the exception that sessions can have varying lengths, within the strict confines of the psychoanalytic perimeter. Both in analytic theory and practice, Things are present only in their absence.

In contrast, the La Borde clinic in which Guattari worked for much of his life was a testing ground for a project that involved the milieu and its objects in the cure, and aimed to open up the symbolic machine to all the other machines that operate

65 Copjec: Month, 96.

66 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 234.

67 Slavoj Žižek: *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*. London: Verso 2014, 281.

68 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 160.

69 Lacan: *Seminar XVII*, 112.

in and as the world. Why not open up the psychoanalytic milieu, which consisted of two equally hierarchical sites – the divan-chair and the patient-doctor arrangement – to the multiplicity of these machines? In fact, La Borde was conceptually constructed in such a way as to make it possible for doctors and patients to live a more communal, non-hierarchical life. This de-hierarchization was brought about by the famous grid (*le grille*), a roster that allowed for the rotation of tasks that broke up the hierarchy between doctors and patients. In the passage “‘Framing’ the deregulation” of “La Grille”, a talk Guattari held on 29 January 1987, he describes it as a “crossroads [*carrefour*]”,⁷⁰ a “hypercomplex operator”⁷¹ that functions as “a sort of instrument to regulate the necessary institutional deregulation”.⁷²

This both conceptually and practically deregulated milieu allowed to no longer follow the psychoanalytic agenda to uncover a patient’s unconscious, but to literally construct a patient’s unconscious in a more connective and transversal manner. If it is defined as the imperceptible, to construct the unconscious means to make imperceptible levels of operation perceptible and then to operationalize them therapeutically. Within the deregulated infrastructures and architectures of the La Borde assemblage, the patients’ unconscious was constructed via situationist creations, such as theatrical productions by the patients, but also via technological and other devices, *lathouses* that were integral to the administration of specific therapeutic situations.

The idea behind this sculpting and curating of the given infrastructures and environments was to undo psychic cramps and stutters and thus to facilitate more graceful and elastic movements. In ecological terms, to let the patients quite literally take walks within an open, both conceptually and practically deregulated and less hierarchical therapeutic assemblage that is situated within a similarly less hierarchical ‘machine to live in’. Let them use things to help them produce and express their unconscious: *media ecology*.

What allows to compare and contrast Lacan’s, Guattari’s and Lucier’s approaches to Things and to the Real is that for all of them, the tape recorder is a *lathouse* in the sense of a “new ‘unnatural’” device⁷³ that is part of the *alethosphere* and that captures desire. In Lacan for the worse, in Guattari and Lucier for the better. While Lacan invariably highlights the gap between the Symbolic and the Real, Guattari and Lucier attempt to make it as small as possible: *asymptotic ecology*.

While Lacan’s tale ends in a techno-capitalist dystopia, for Guattari and Lucier, who are both open to the promises and potentialities of new technologies, the tape recorder heralds the possibility of deterritorializing blocked existential milieus and

⁷⁰ Guattari, Félix: ‘La “Grille”’, in: *Chimères* 34, Autumn 1998, 1–14, 11.

⁷¹ Guattari: ‘La “Grille”’, 10.

⁷² Guattari: ‘La “Grille”’, 4.

⁷³ Žižek: *Absolute Recoil*, 281.

of a renewed contact with a real world that is not considered as impossible, but as itself a source of potentiality. It is as such that it enters the analytic and therapeutic scene.

Guattari uses the expression “to regain contact with the Real”, or, in the French original “reprendre contact avec le réel”⁷⁴ in “Monograph on R.A”, a short text quoted by Henning Schmidgen in a footnote of his indispensable study *Das Unbewußte der Maschinen: Konzeptionen des Psychischen bei Guattari, Deleuze und Lacan*.⁷⁵ The English translation of the sentence is “to regain contact with reality”,⁷⁶ in German it is given as “wieder Kontakt zur Wirklichkeit aufzunehmen”.⁷⁷ ‘Le réel’, ‘reality’, ‘Wirklichkeit’, three aspects of the world of ‘things’. The Lacanian Real, psychic reality [*psychische Realität*] and a reality made up of things that do work [*Werk, wirken*] and have effects [*Wirkung*]: *terminological diffraction*.

Schmidgen throws the differences between psycho- and schizoanalysis into clear relief when he notes that for Lacan, therapy is not at all about regaining contact with the Real, but, as I have argued above, about “raising the direct contact with the Real into symbolic mediations”.⁷⁸ For Lacan, the Real is a lack that initializes the movements of desire within psychic reality, but is itself thinkable only under the sign of the phantasm, or of the loss of subjectivity as in moments of trauma or psychosis. In terms of psychic reality, the Real, as the field of what Giorgio Agamben calls ‘bare life’ and Lacan simply ‘*la vie*’, is an empty, zero set.

As the primal repressed, the Real is the unconscious of Lacan’s unconscious. It follows that Guattari and Deleuze’s unconscious, which is the imperceptible ‘reality of things’ [*Wirklichkeit*] of the overall milieu in which both humans and non-humans act out their existence and express singular aspects of that milieu, is the unconscious of Lacan’s unconscious. As Deleuze and Guattari note in *Anti-Oedipus*, not without irony, “we do not deny that there is an Oedipal sexuality, an Oedipal heterosexuality

74 Félix Guattari: Monographie sur R.A. In: *Psychanalyse et transversalité. Essais d’analyse institutionnelle*. Paris: Maspero 1972, 18–22, 18.

75 Henning Schmidgen: *Das Unbewußte der Maschinen: Konzeptionen des Psychischen bei Guattari, Deleuze und Lacan*. Fink: München 1997, 94, fn. 5.

76 Félix Guattari: Monograph on R.A. In: *Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Texts and Interviews 1955–1971*. Trans. Ames Hodges. New York: Semiotext(e) 2015, 36–41, 36.

77 Schmidgen: *Maschinen*, 92. The original German source is Félix Guattari: *Psychotherapie, Politik und die Aufgaben der institutionellen Analyse*. Trans. Grete Osterwald. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp 1976, 107–112, 107.

78 Schmidgen: *Maschinen*, 94, fn. 5: “Mit Lacan müßte aber genau umgekehrt gesagt werden, daß es in der Therapie darum geht, den (psychotischen) Kontakt zum Realen wieder in symbolische Vermittlungen aufzuheben.”

and homosexuality, an Oedipal castration. [...] We deny that these are the production of the unconscious".⁷⁹

One might hear in this quote an echo of Lacan's *lathouses* in their role as mediators between the Real and science. While Lacan puts scientific formalizations over and above these mediations, they play a vital role in schizoanalysis, whose unconscious is precisely a 'real', perceptual unconscious that operates within a given situation on levels that are imperceptible to the human senses and that *lathouses* can make conscious. On the background of and against Lacan's discussion of Hertzian waves, one might say that the currency of such an unconscious are indeed sine waves rather than waves of Lacanian desire, that its pathologies are measured in Hertz, and that its Freud and Lacan are Joseph Fourier, Hermann von Helmholtz and Walter Benjamin, who argues that the 'optical unconscious' can be made perceptible, and thus conscious, by way of the supra-sensual manipulation of reality through the *lathouses* of film and photography, such as the camera, which "introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses",⁸⁰ or nitrate film, through which "we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis".⁸¹

In fact, Guattari goes even a step further than Benjamin, in that he considers the power of *lathouses* to not only lie in discovering imperceptible realities, but also in bringing about and shaping these realities. In schizoanalytic metamodeling, as a situationist curation of situations and milieus, things act as agents in the production

79 Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari: *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Robert Hurley/Mark Seem/Helen R. Lane. New York: Viking 1977, 74.

80 Walter Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. In: *Illuminations*. New York: Schocken Books 1969, 217–251, 237.

81 Walter Benjamin: Small History of Photography. In: *One-Way Street and Other Writings*. London: NLB 1979, 240–257, 243. One might think back to Freud's 'facilitations' in his 1895 text *The Project for a Scientific Psychology (The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. 1*. London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis 1950: 281–391), forward to the recordings of brainwaves in contemporary neurology, or sideways to Rainer Maria Rilke's *Ur-Geräusch* from 1919 in which he describes a form of acoustic recording that 'sounds' almost like a composition by Lucier: "The coronal suture of the skull (this would first have to be investigated) has – let us assume – a certain similarity to the closely wavy line which the needle of a phonograph engraves on the receiving, rotating cylinder of the apparatus. What if one changed the needle and directed it on its return journey along a tracing which was not derived from the graphic translation of a sound, but existed of itself naturally – well: to put it plainly, along the coronal suture, for example. What would happen? A sound would necessarily result, a series of sounds, music ... Feelings – which? Incredulity, timidity, fear, awe – which of all the feelings here possible prevents me from suggesting a name for the primal sound which would then make its appearance in the world ..." (Rainer Maria Rilke: *Selected Works Vol. 1, Prose*. Tr. Craig Houston, New York: New Direction Books 1967, 53)

of sustainable schizoeologies, for instance as catalysts in processes of unblocking and elasticizing situations. (In case you are reading this essay with Lucier's piece in the background, you should at this point be listening to Lucier's increasingly unblocked and elasticized voice.)

Guattari's unconscious is reminiscent of Michel Serres' informational, acoustic unconscious, which consists of a recursive series of black boxes, each of which contains not-yet integrated or differentiated, and therefore literally imperceptible, unconscious and 'indifferent' – as in 'not differentiated' – levels of operation. This fractal unconscious

recedes into the depths; there are as many unconsciousnesses in the system as there are integration levels. [...] Each level of information functions as an unconscious for the global level bordering it [...]. What remains unknown and unconscious is, at the chain's furthermost limit, the din of energy transformations: [...] a set of pure signals or aleatory movements. These packages of chance are filtered, level after level, by the subtle transformer constituted by the organism [...]. In this sense the traditional view of the unconscious would seem to be the final black box, the clearest box for us since it has its own language in the full sense.⁸²

To maintain that each respective medial plateau is imperceptible for the formal plateau above it implies, in terms of media studies, that each medium is unconscious for the higher plateau of formation. It is on this conceptual background that the unconscious is, quite literally and simply, the unperceived. Against the notion that media work best when they are unconscious and thus noiseless, Guattari maintains that both the art of art and the art of life lie in aligning the unconscious and conscious levels, and that as many imperceptible levels as possible should be made perceptible.

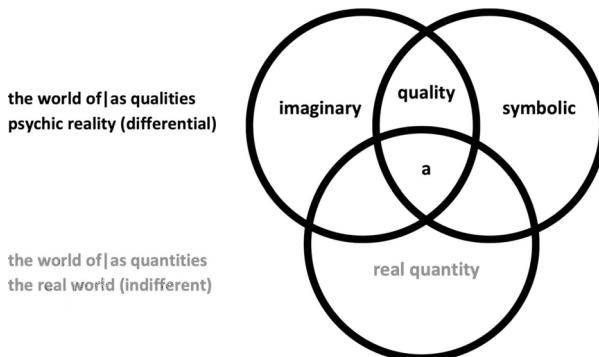
It is from within this logic that schizoanalysis aims at a non-phantasmatic, non-psychotic and non-traumatic contact with a machinic real, with specific situations or milieus that do not produce "individual statements" but that are part of "statement-producing machinic assemblages".⁸³ These assemblages, which Alfred North Whitehead calls 'occasions' and Guattari 'consistencies', are both material and immaterial, or, to use alternative terminologies, both extensive and intensive, both physical and psychic: *both quantitative and qualitative*.

Lacan maintains a clear separation between an unspeakable physics and the psyche; between an indifferent, Real World of and as *quantities* and the differential, imaginary and symbolic world of and as *qualities* (Fig. 1).

82 Michel Serres: *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*. Eds. Josué V. Harari/David F. Bell. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP 1982, 80, my modified translation.

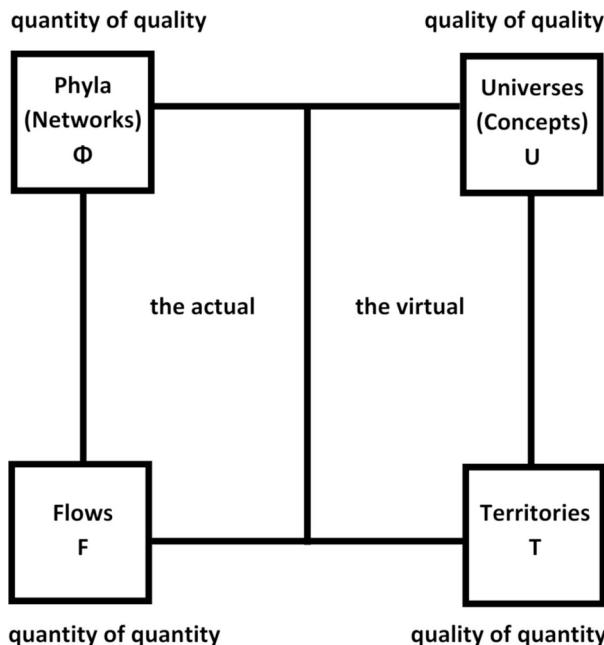
83 Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 36.

Fig. 1: Diagram of Lacan's Borromean knot in relation to the realms of quality and quantity.



© Hanjo Berressem

Fig. 2: Adapted diagram from Guattari: Schizoanalytic Cartographies.



© Hanjo Berressem

In contrast, Guattari chiastically folds the actual and the virtual worlds onto each other (Fig. 2). Flows denote the ‘quantity of quantity’, Networks the ‘quality of quantity’, Territories the ‘quantity of quality’ and Concepts the ‘quality of quality’. The actual and the virtual are equally ‘real’. As Guattari maintains, “the real is the artificial and not (as Lacan says) the impossible”.⁸⁴ It is “the construction of the unconscious as artificial real and not the contemplation of the impossible real”.⁸⁵

4. Steps to an Unconscious of Sound: Tapes

With this difference in mind, let me again return to the tape recorders. According to the schizoanalytic metamodelization of situations, Guattari’s tape recorder is a *lathouse* that is an inherent part of a given situation, whose acoustic unconscious it facilitates to produce, much like the tape recorder in Lucier’s piece or the polaroid camera in the series of images of Mary Lucier’s “Polaroid Projection Series”, which transposes her husband’s acoustic de|generations into optical de|generations in order to produce an optical unconscious.⁸⁶

As with Lucier, the tape recorder’s both deterritorialized and deterritorializing ‘being-there’ facilitates a smoothing out or unblocking of a given situation, a reconnection to the milieu and its operation. In the original situation described by Guattari in “Monograph on R. A.”, this catalytic function, which at this point in Guattari’s text is still indebted to Lacan’s mirror stage, subsequently travels from the tape recorder first to Guattari, and then to the patient himself.⁸⁷

In both Lucier and Guattari, therefore, celluloid tape does not only record, but in actual fact helps produce a real unconscious within an overall milieu or situation considered not as a system of representation, but, more importantly, as an existential agglomeration. In this metamodeling, schizoanalysis might be considered as a therapeutic version of a Fourier analysis, which breaks up complex sounds into single acoustic frequencies. In Guattari, however, this analysis proceeds from within the dynamics of the existential circuits and it affects them directly – as if one were to think of Lucier’s tape recorder as performing a series of nonhuman Fourier analyses

84 Félix Guattari: *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*. New York: Semiotext(e) 2006, 149.

85 Guattari: *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*, 31.

86 As Mary Lucier notes, she created, for “I am Sitting in a Room”, “a series of Polaroid images that had been transformed and degraded in a process similar to his recorded voice. Transferred to slides, these images were timed to his audio tape and projected along with the sound in a twenty-three-minute presentation” (<https://bombmagazine.org/articles/mary-lucier; 28.05.2023>).

87 Guattari: *Monograph*, 40: “After a certain time, the tape recorder had conditioned the situation of our dialog to the point that I almost did not need to turn it on. I abandoned it and in its place, I wrote down the things he said that I found interesting in a notebook.”

of the overall sonic milieu, and as bringing about, through this very operation, the smoothing out of Lucier's stutter. Lucier's series of acoustic de|generations echoes quite literally schizoanalytic ecosophy in that it rescues the multiplicity of frequencies from their reduction to anthropocentric harmonies and meanings. It releases music into a much more general ecology of the non-human acoustic world, bringing about a regeneration of the real sound of the world 'articulated by the degeneration of speech': *the production of the unconscious of speech*.

The children's game that Guattari and Deleuze describe in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* is defined by a similar de|generations into unconscious levels or plateaus. As with Lucier and Serres, in this game a word or a phrase is repeated so often that its meaning evaporates and only the vibration of its sonorous beauty remains. The luminous senselessness of its frequencies, which is a vibrant, intensive materialism *avant la lettre*, causes again a schizoecological unblocking. Kafka "tells us how, as a child, he repeated one of his father's expressions in order to make it take flight on a line of non-sense".⁸⁸ A *caveat*, though: *Non-sense is not delirium. It is unconscious*.

5. Ecotherapy: Schizoanalysis as Ecoanalysis

When Guattari and Deleuze stress in *A Thousand Plateaus* that schizoanalytic meta-modelings, as "experimentation[s] in contact with the real", are actively involved in "construct[ing] the unconscious",⁸⁹ this productive aspect of schizoanalysis might be considered as 'object-oriented', but it differs fundamentally from both Object-Oriented Ontology and Speculative Realism, as neither of these aims to regain contact with an 'objective' real that both consider as an object of speculation rather than as a machinic assemblage. On a conceptual map, therefore, Deleuze and Guattari are at quite a distance from Harman and Meillassoux. Although both projects are philosophically fascinating, and although it seems that there is some allure between Meillassoux's notion of the "*determinate condition*"⁹⁰ of chaos and of contingency, and Guattari's notion of the planes of immanence and consistency, this is a *fata morgana*. Symptomatically, Meillassoux does not relate chaos and contingency back, as Guattari would, to scientific concepts such as sensitivity to initial conditions, strange at-

⁸⁸ Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari: *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Trans. Dana Polan. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1986, 21.

⁸⁹ Deleuze/Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 12. See also Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari: *Capitalisme et schizophrénie: Mille Plateaux*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit 1980, 20: "Si la carte s'oppose au calque, c'est qu'elle est tout entière tournée vers une expérimentation en prise sur le réel. La carte ne reproduit pas un inconscient fermé sur lui-même, elle le construit."

⁹⁰ Meillassoux: *After Finitude*, 101.

tractors or non-linear systems but, via Badiou's Lacanianism, to "Cantor's revolutionary set-theory"⁹¹: *the closer, the more distant*.

For Meilllassoux, set theory allows, by way of the transfinite, to ring in the end of the age of reason and necessity: "Everything is possible, anything can happen – except something that is necessary, because it is the contingency of the entity that is necessary, not the entity".⁹² It also allows to "rigorously distinguish[...] contingency from chance".⁹³ Perhaps, however, Meilllassoux's distinction is too rigorous. In science, chance denotes the full potentiality of change residing in every moment or event, while contingency denotes the historically generated path and the path-dependency of a system that is open to chance, its systemic memory in the sense of its route through a milieu to what are, in the present, its initial conditions. It is, one might say, the deterministic and systemic part within the notion of a deterministic chaos. The parameter that measures the impact of the actualization of virtual potentials not on future potentials, but on future actualizations: *chance is abstract and unlimited, contingency concrete and limited*.

While in science, the two are complementary aspects of a physical process, Meilllassoux relates them to two modes of Being. Although he takes up the aspects of the abstract and the concrete, in their transposition into philosophy, their operation is no longer complementary but different. "Being as chance" is not only abstract but "without gravitas" and it denotes the "gratuity" and "vanity of a game" in which "everything, even the improbable, is predictable". Contingency, in contrast, which "refers back to the Latin *contingere*, meaning 'to touch, to befall', which is to say, that which happens, but which happens enough to happen to us" is not only concrete, but serious and grave in that it stresses the moment of the "end of play". Although Meilllassoux's project is not as political, Badiou's revolutionary event shines through his prose at this point. When "novelty grabs us by the throat, then no more calculation and no more play – it is time to be serious"⁹⁴: *One of René Thom's catastrophes, perhaps*.

It is somewhat incongruous, then, that in his translation of science into philosophy, Meilllassoux would, unlike science, give up chance and champion contingency. But be that as it may:

what is most fundamental in all this – and this was already one of the guiding intuitions of *Being and Event* – is the idea that the most powerful conception of the incalculable and unpredictable event is provided by a thinking that *continues to be* mathematical – rather than one which is artistic, poetic, or religious.⁹⁵

91 Meilllassoux: *After Finitude*, 103.

92 Meilllassoux: *After Finitude*, 65.

93 Meilllassoux: *After Finitude*, 104.

94 Meilllassoux: *After Finitude*, 108.

95 Meilllassoux: *After Finitude*, 108.

He might have added, 'or physical'. No complementarity here, despite his subsequent *The Number and the Siren: A Decipherment of Mallarmé's Coup de Dés*.⁹⁶ Unlike Roy Baskhar's critical realism, Meillassoux's argument about ancestrality and givenness is without much cash value for a Guattarian, pragmatist theory of things.

In other words, both Meillassoux and Harman's projects remain much too internal to philosophy proper and fail to hook up to the many non-philosophical machines Guattari is interested in. Neither Lacan's speculative realist psychoanalysis, nor the speculative realist science after Erwin Schrödinger, Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, all of which are complementary and ancestral to Meillassoux's speculative realism, are in its purview. Similarly, Harman's notion of allure, which might be transposed onto a scientific level as similar to the notion of 'elective affinities', remains much too philosophical to be of much ecosophical value.

Symptomatically, Meillassoux's 'great outdoors' denotes the 'in itself' as a cosmic vacuum rather than as an expanded field. For Badiou and Meillassoux, things come into existence *ex nihilo* in the sense of Lacan's Real considered as a mathematical zero set. While the fascination with the vacuum, whether it denotes a mathematical, cosmic or a philosophical emptiness, separates Guattari's schizoanalysis from Badiou, Meillassoux, Harman and 'nihilist' scholars such as Eugene Thacker, its being-in-the-field aligns it more closely with neo-materialist theories. Guattari is ancestral to both Donna Haraway's and Jane Bennett's neo-materialisms, and the more conceptual and complex but less pragmatist positions of Karen Barad's agential realism and Thomas Nail's process ontology. While both have a somewhat troubled relation to Deleuze and do not reference Guattari, they are closest to him, although both blackbox the expressionist aspects of the given|giving and lean, in their non-standard readings of Bohr and Lucretius respectively, more towards ontological states of superposition and pure process than Guattari. In general, one might say that except in the work of Jane Bennett, Guattari makes up the perceptual unconscious of neo-materialisms. In ecosophic spirit, Guattari is closest to Isabelle Stengers, Michel Serres, and through Serres, who is his mentor, to Bruno Latour, and, to a lesser degree, to Timothy Morton and Levi Bryant, whose deconstructivisms relate them back to Harman, Meillassoux and Barad.

Its ecosophic spirit is also why, despite the fact that many commentators say so, schizoanalysis does not promote a return to the anonymous, schizophrenic multiplicity of what Guattari calls the pure plane of immanence understood as a plane of "zero consistency"⁹⁷ and "zero" memory.⁹⁸ Rather, in analogy to 'white noise' or 'white light', this 'white plane' is, like Serres' plane of aleatory movements, a plane

96 Quentin Meillassoux: *The Number and the Siren: A Decipherment of Mallarmé's Coup de Dés*. Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic/Sequence Press 2012.

97 Guattari: *Cartographies*, 106.

98 Guattari: *Cartographies*, 11.

of infinite potentiality. It is, one might say, the unconscious of the unconscious of the unconscious. It is a chaotic plane of pure chance without contingency that operates even below Meillassoux's contingency of Things because it moves too fast for Things to coagulate and gain consistency on it. At the same time, it generates Things that operate, however, on what Guattari and Deleuze call planes of consistency and planes of composition, although they do not stop partaking of the chaos of the plane of immanence. Meillassoux is concerned with the contingent character of consistencies that emerge from that plane, from within which schizoanalysis metamodels the construction of planes of consistency and planes of composition. The plane of immanence is the most unconscious plane in that it is fully molecular. A plane of infinite potentiality: *not a zero set but an infinite set*.

6. Coda

While psychoanalysis triangulates psychic reality, schizoanalysis is a situationist curation of the multiplicity of relations between both material and immaterial assemblages. Between concrete assemblages and the abstract world at large. This is why Deleuze and Guattari's three cardinal virtues are "imperceptibility, indiscernibility, and impersonality".⁹⁹ Each implies the opening up of a consistency to 'its' milieu and to the medium at large. The perspective-points of this mutual resonating response are "the (anorganic) imperceptible, the (asignifying) indiscernible, and the (asubjective) impersonal".¹⁰⁰ In other words, while 'therapy of things' denotes a strategy within schizoanalysis to help smooth out specific stutters, it also denotes, when it is considered as an ecoanalysis or ecotherapy, an overall program to therapeutically model the world in order to create sustainable milieus. To connect once more with "the singularities and mutations of our era".¹⁰¹

From this perspective, a 'Therapy of Things' becomes a shorthand for a 'Therapy of the world'. As Guattari notes in *Chaosmosis*, this therapy should follow, like the world itself, a logic of "deterritorialising complexification"¹⁰² and an adherent ethics of "processuality [...] and resingularisation".¹⁰³ A curation of the world's situations. To use another art-historical reference, such an expanded therapy is a therapy of a consistency's allover immanence in an infinitely expanded field that includes not only the non-human environment, but all aspects of the milieu, or the world, from

99 Deleuze/Guattari: *Thousand Plateaus*, 280.

100 Deleuze/Guattari: *Thousand Plateaus*, 279.

101 Félix Guattari: *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana UP 1995, 106.

102 Guattari: *Chaosmosis*, 19.

103 Guattari: *Chaosmosis*, 29.

the chemical to the social and the mental. It shows the consistency of schizoanalysis that it considers the latter realm as composed not of individual thoughts, but as itself an expanded field of a distributed thought: 'a' thought "with 'n' dimensions where everything starts to think at the same time, individuals as well as groups, the 'chemical' as well as the 'chromosomal' or the biosphere".¹⁰⁴ Like the subject itself, this ontologically dispersed thought congeals only at certain times into a consistent thought. A world in which individual thoughts are in actual fact communal thoughts that have become someone's property. If a psychoanalytic ethics asks the subject to be true to its desires, a schizoanalytic ethics asks the subject to be true to the operations of the world as a living machine. How to produce, from within the "infinite determinability"¹⁰⁵ and potentiality of the white plane of immanence, concrete, diffracted, schizoeocological planes of consistency or 'planes of creatures'? To express the world by becoming part of it in the way that a fish, for example, "worlds with the lines of a rock, sand, and plants, becoming imperceptible"?¹⁰⁶ In Lucier's terms, to 'world' the individual voice and to let that immersion in the world smooth out his stutter? The musical challenge is to create viable musical milieus that treat the landscape of frequencies as a real-time reservoir of potential sounds. To use white noise in the same way film uses white light as the real-time reservoir of light. The aim is not dissolution into the chaotic plane of immanence. Not a return to the infamous body without organs, but rather, as Guattari shows very concretely in the more accessible *The Three Ecologies*, the careful and sober micropolitical metamodelling and administration of arrested, stuttering situations: *therapy as a smoothing out*.

What figure of thought can help to think 'regaining contact' with a 'non-anthropocentric real'? In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze proposes that of a "unilateral ['one-sided'] distinction"¹⁰⁷ [*einseitige Unterscheidung*]. Let me end with Deleuze's conceptual *kōan*, which sounds a bit as if Deleuze had transposed the *kōan* of 'the sound of one hand clapping' into what might be called an ecophilosophy. Read into the context of the world and 'its' creatures:

Instead of something distinguished from something else [a two-sided distinction between creature and world], imagine something which distinguishes itself [the creature as distinguishing itself from the world] – and yet that from which it distinguishes itself [the world] does not distinguish itself from it [that creature].¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Félix Guattari: *The Machinic Unconscious: Essays in Schizoanalysis*. Trans. Taylor Adkins. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) 2011, 127.

¹⁰⁵ Guattari: *Cartographies*, 103.

¹⁰⁶ Deleuze/Guattari: *Thousand Plateaus*, 280.

¹⁰⁷ Gilles Deleuze: *Difference and Repetition*. Trans. Paul Patton. London: Athlone 1994, 28.

¹⁰⁸ Deleuze: *Difference and Repetition*, 28.

Like Lucier's voice, which articulates the most unconscious layers of the world's sonorous spectra – its 'eigenmusic' or 'eigensound' – through an expressive resonance rather than through representation, schizo- or ecoanalysis is not in reference with its milieu (as in 'representational'), but in resonance with it (as in 'expressive'). As Guattari never stops noting, schizoanalysis is an experimentation that "will never limit itself to an interpretation of 'givens'; it will take a much more fundamental interest in the 'Giving', in the Assemblages that promote the concatenation of affects of sense and pragmatic effects".¹⁰⁹ It curates things (*les choses*) not only through words (*les mots*) but through situationist interventions and productions (*les actes*).

¹⁰⁹ Guattari: *Cartographies*, 19.

