

Individuation of collective memories

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„It is a matter of creating a memory for [wo]man; and man who was constituted by means of active faculty of forgetting (*oubli*), by means of a repression of biological memory, must create an other memory, one that is collective, a memory of words (*paroles*) and no longer a memory of things, a memory of signs and no longer of effects. This organization, which traces its signs directly on the body, constitutes a system of cruelty, a terrible alphabet.

(Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Antioedipus Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Chapter III, 144 my emphasis).

I would like to approach this passage of the *Antioedipus* (AO in the following) in terms of a position of a problem: How can the process of deterritorialization from biological memory and its reterritorialization on the level of collective inscriptions be understood?

Let me start by briefly delineating the context in which this brief text passage is inserted.

The term „memory of signs“ appears in the third chapter of the *Antioedipus*, chapter which is dedicated to the analysis of the repression of desiring production by taking the point of view of an external socio-historical perspective. (Whilst the previous chapter concerned an internal critique i.e. the liminal stage in which schizoanalysis reaches the autocritical limit of psychoanalysis). The title of the chapter – Savages, barbarians, civilized men – demarks three modes of social production seen genealogically as three social stages intervening in the development of the psychoanalytic Oedipus. As Eugene Holland remarks, these stages are not to be conceived as chronological moments, following each other linearly, but their potential is expressed in terms of discontinuity through time, as new social formations might reconfigure specific and selective features deriving from a heterogeneous mixture of older ones.

It is the first stage, the savage stage, which accounts for the initial forge of collective memory. The reference to Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* makes it clear that this problem of the passage of a memory of effects to a memory of signs, although examined and diagnosed within the realm of an archaic society, constitutes nonetheless a wider issue concerning the formation of heterogeneous subjective and cultural stages: „if something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only which never ceases to *hurt* stays in the memory.“ (Nietzsche, 61) And the less a society is able to rely onto a long term memory, the more it counteracts in ferocious rituals.

Nietzsche shows us that the same process of forging a memory can develop along two very heterogeneous directions: on one side it sets the necessary conditions in order to produce an individual capable of promising, that is acting on the basis of a freely aimed will, on the other „it makes men or their organs into parts and wheels of the social machine“ (Deleuze Guattari 1977, 145) through the social institution of punishment and guilt.

The operators at stake, which enact both of these two different configurations, as well as the multiplicity of scenarios lying in between, are the faculties of forgetting and of embodiment. It is only by conceiving forgetting as an active and positive faculty of repression, that it is possible to construct what Nietzsche calls an active process of not willing to leave beyond. That is, the process of erasing, understood as an affirmative act, enables a form of remembrance which opens subjectivity onto the presence and the future, that otherwise would be overshadowed by the continuous presence of guilt and obligation.

If we now follow the terminology of the AO, this scenario of interplay between forgetting and inscription can be reformulated in terms of conjunctive synthesis. The concept of conjunctive synthesis expresses the interplay of production (connective synthesis of libido) and antiproduction forces (the disjunctive synthesis demarking cuts and breaks in the desire flow) on the level of the

body – or more properly Body without organs (BWO), the surface onto which these positive and negative intensities come to action – in this way are accounting for the formation of a partial subjectivity.

Coming back to the original quotation, the „organization, which traces its signs directly on the body“, can be now understood as a sort of microdynamics, a complex web of disconnections and abrupt cuttings but also reconnections of fluxes, transitions and instabilities of desire, which accounts for the formation of what Deleuze and Guattari call „Territorial machine“ onto a macroscopical level.

Thus, the problem of collective memory, might be posed in terms of relationships between different orders of magnitude: the differential level of forces – the Nietzschean forgetting and embodiment – the complex topology of interrelation of libidinal fluxes i.e. the level of conjunctive synthesis, and the macroscopic level of the Earth – the whole unity of desire and production.

After these considerations, the initial problem can be posed in the following way: is it possible, and *in what terms* is it possible to understand the intertwinings between the three different outlined levels?

I'd like to attempt an approach of this problem in terms of the notion of *individuation*.

Following the French epistemologist Gilbert Simondon, the term individuation demarks a process of genesis which leads to the constitution of an entity or a being. It is a perspective which counteracts both the substantialist view, considering being as determined through its own unity, and the hyleomorphic view, thinking being as produced by the encounter of matter and form (Simondon 1964, 1).

The term „being“ or „individual“ in Simondon's parlance, is never conceived as a final stage but as an entity in the midst of a process of genesis. „The individual is that what has been individualized and that continues individualizing itself.“ (Simondon 1964, 197).

Individual here denotes an abstract and generic entity – it might demark the genesis of inorganic quantities as information, microorganisms, human beings as well as collective groups – which is defined and discussed in relation to the „preindividual“, a former stage which cannot be characterized in terms of mathematical unity. The term preindividual demarks an oversaturated state, a state „more than unity and more than identity“ out of which a dynamic process of dephasing which can be understood as a sort of stretching of this initial complex agglomerate might arise and thus unfold an operation of individuation. (Simondon 2007, 215)

Even after processes of individuation have occurred, a certain dimension of *archetypical* preindividuality remains, allowing for new processes of dephasing to continuously arise.

The preindividual oversaturation produces a condition of functional dissymmetry, which Simondon calls disparation, a margin of indetermination, which accounts for an ongoing metastable state of equilibrium within the individual.

It is starting from this state of disparation that resonance processes on larger scale are formed, accounting for the arousal of transindividual relations. Collectivity here is not understood as the grouping of an ensemble of individuals fully individuated in a previous moment, but as a process involving a fragmental multiplicity of preindividual potentials. Collectivity is thus not a dimension existing before individuated beings, but a reality which is individuated amongst the singular processes of individuation.

Now a question might arise: How can the concept of individuation be of any help in the definition of the problem of the outline of collective memory?

We have briefly seen that one fundamental concept of the AO is the term „production“.

My thesis here is that Individuation enables a differential approach to the concept of production.

That is, borrowing a term from Deleuze, production gets „dramatized“ as a tension between a multiplicity of productions, which are differentiated in space and time.

In order to clarify this statement i propose to look into Deleuze's reading and further reelaboration of Simondon's thought.

The term dramatization, before getting richly unfolded in *Difference and Repetition*, constituted the title of a lecture that Deleuze gave in 1967, at the French Society of Philosophy.¹

In this text Deleuze reelaborates Simondon's idea of disparation within the concept of obscure precursor. The obscure precursor is in his own terms a abstract 'difference operator' which relates difference to difference. With the notion of difference operator, Deleuze transposes the concept of disparation from a physical level onto a more abstract mathematical level. In this way Deleuze sets the conditions to break up Simondon's topology still characterized by a sort of general uniformity due to its straightforward analogy with physical fields of potential energy.

The uniform field of energy becomes the theatre of „spatiotemporal dynamisms“ (Deleuze, 96).

The field splits up into a *coupling* between different series of singularities, multiple phenomena of *internal resonance*, and an *inevitable movement* in form of an amplitude, which give rise to a series of differentiated states of intensity. This microlevel of dynamical communication gets generatively individuated in the Signal Sign Systems, accounting for the „flashing“ in between disparate order of singularities. As Toscano states „a complex interpenetration of formation and functioning“ (Toscano, 181) is at stake, which fully unfolds in the theatre of indi/drama different/ciation proposed in *Difference and Repetition*. Individuation becomes thus the moment of intensity that dramatizes the differential potential of the virtual and accounts for the creation of differential lines of actualization.

The border between the individual and the collective that Simondon already questioned at the level of the oversaturated preindividual which was the generative motor of both individuality *and* collectivity becomes further disgregated in the Deleuzian move: we assist here to a full break with the dialectical opposition between the one and the many and the consequent opening of a theatre of multiplicity.

Through this ontogenetical move the three different levels constituting the problem out of which I started the path through individuation - the differential level of forces, the complex topology of interrelation of libidinal fluxes, and the macroscopic level of the Earth - get fully integrated into the dimension of the plane of consistency as set in a *Thousand Plateaus*:

The plane of consistency knows nothing of substance and form: haecities, which are inscribed on this plane, are precisely modes of individuation proceeding neither by form nor by the subject. The plane consists abstractly, but really, in relations of speeds and slownesses between unformed elements, and in compositions of corresponding intensive affects.“ (Deleuze Guattari 1987, 507)

We started at the beginning with the notion of collective memory as a position of a problem. What is the shape it entails now after having been dephased through the generative process of individuation?

Because of how the process of individuation works, - i.e. what is individuated is the motor for further individuation - it is not possible to distinctively separate the signs traced in the body out of the *organization* which generates them, that is, at last, the activity of neuronal cells in the brain. On the contrary, those dimensions interact by means of mutual resonances accounting for an interactive de- and re- stabilization. (Because of their respective preindividual charge).

The „Collective memory“ is thus unfolded into an intricate web of neuronal (biological) and neural (artificial) connections in mutual metastable balance between each other. Creative and destructive acts both arise from and account for a reshaping of the microphases of its generative tissue.

1 The lecture was entitled „The Method of Dramatization and is published in (Deleuze, 94-116)

Creative acts are the result of „a non intentional invention of a local resolution of disparation and metastability“ (Toscano, 150) instead of being a bypass product of a conscious decision.

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