

The genealogy of Nick Land's anti-anthropocentric philosophy: a psychoanalytic conception of machinic desire.



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# Abstract

In recent years the philosophical texts of Nick Land have begun to attract increasing attention, yet no systematic treatment of his work exists. This thesis considers one significant and distinctive aspect of Land's work: his use of a psychoanalytic vocabulary, which is deployed to try and avoid several problems associated with metaphysical discourse. Land's larger project of responding to the Kantian settlement in philosophy is sketched in the introduction, as is his avowed distaste for thought which is conditioned by anthropocentrism. This thesis then goes on to provide a genealogical reading of the concepts which Land will borrow from psychoanalytic discourse, tracing the history of drive and desire in the major psychoanalytic thinkers of the twentieth century. Chapter one considers Freud, his model of the unconscious, and the extent to which it is anthropocentric. Chapter two contrasts Freud's materialism to Lacan's idealism. Chapter three returns to materialism, as depicted by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*. This chapter also goes on to consider the implications of their 'schizoanalysis', and contrasts 'left' and 'right' interpretations of Deleuze, showing how they have appropriated his work. Chapter four considers Lyotard's works from his 'libidinal period' of the late sixties to early seventies. These four readings, and the various theories of drive and desire they contain, are then contextualised in relation to Land's work in chapter five. This final chapter considers Land's theory of 'machinic-desire', and evaluates if his construction of the concept, via psychoanalysis, offers a superior approach to anti-anthropocentric positions constructed in metaphysics. The role of psychoanalytic thought in constructing Land's cosmological theory of thermodynamic entropy and extropy is also considered.

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## Introduction

The transcendental unconscious is the auto-construction of the real, the production of production, so that for schizoanalysis there is the real exactly in so far as it is built. Production is production of the real, not merely of representation, and unlike Kantian production, the desiring production of Deleuze/Guattari is not qualified by humanity (it is not a matter of what things are like for us).<sup>1</sup>

Thematically, this thesis is predominantly about the development of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century and the various formulations of the theories and desire and drive by its key proponents: Freud, Lacan, Lyotard, and Deleuze and Guattari. It might therefore seem strange to begin with this introduction about Nick Land, a relatively obscure philosopher from the end of that century. Yet I hope to show how Land's philosophy utilises this lineage of psychoanalytic thought for a specific purpose, and this thesis will be a discussion of the extent to which psychoanalysis is capable of fulfilling the requirements he places on it.

Land is a philosopher whose body of work, by the standards of the genre, is not a substantial one, and though he is still writing today, there is little prospect of any significant additions to this corpus, as: “According to the present-day Nick Land, the person who wrote [his philosophical] texts no longer exists”.<sup>2</sup> The task of contextualising Land's work in relation to the greater history of philosophy is therefore a task which has been left to later scholars who come across his work. This thesis will consider one of the fundamental questions which is left unanswered in Land's work, which is about the suitability of psychoanalysis for fulfilling the role which Land assigns to it. I shall show how Land treats Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis, and its conceptions of desire and drive as a modular 'plug in', which he imports into his philosophy as if both concepts are fixed and unproblematic, when in fact there was a century of heated debate about the nature of both. I shall go on to argue that

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1 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) pp. 321-322

2 Mackey, R. 'Nick Land – An Experiment in Inhumanism' (available at <http://divus.cc/london/en/article/nick-land-ein-experiment-im-inhumanismus>)

Land's deployment of psychoanalysis is a strategic gambit to escape the tendency of metaphysics to degenerate into idealism. However, psychoanalysis has its own tendency towards idealism, found in Lacan's reading of Freud. This raises the question which the present thesis addresses, about the validity of this transplantation of psychoanalysis into Land's philosophy, given its own internal contradictions between a mechanistic, materialist and positive conception of desire and its converse, which posits desire in terms of negativity, idealism and language.

This thesis considers whether Land's reading of psychoanalysis provides a valid foundation of his theory of 'machinic desire', which is a crucial component in his reaction to Kantian philosophy. This is necessitated by the fact that in Land's writings there is not a great quantity of critical analysis of the genealogy of these concepts and terminology he borrows from psychoanalysis. This thesis is therefore neither an open-ended overview of drive theory in the twentieth century, nor an overview of Land's philosophical system in general, but is limited in scope to an evaluation of how drive theory is used by Land in part of his larger philosophical project. Such a choice of a psychoanalytic genealogy implicitly involves the rejection of a metaphysical approach to the topic. I will touch on this issue a number of times, looking at why psychoanalysis is positive whilst metaphysics is negative for Land, but again, a complete description of Land's metaphysics is outside the scope of this thesis. I do not intend to argue that it is impossible to approach Land's philosophy in a metaphysical register, but rather to posit that a psychoanalytic one offers a superior methodology. With these goals in mind, I intend to introduce this thesis with a brief characterisation of Land's thought in the context of contemporary philosophy and explain why it represents an important moment, and how psychoanalysis can be used to clarify at least one aspect of the system he proposes.

### **The Philosopher of the Outside**

Nick Land is a philosopher whose importance is becoming increasingly recognised. Although now semi-retired, working as a journalist in Shanghai, his texts represent a "ferocious but short lived assault" whose reverberations are still being felt in continental philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Whilst the answer to whether Land is "the most important British philosopher of the last 20 years" is beyond the remit of this study to answer, regarding the thesis that he is "the most

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3 Ed. Brassier, R. and Mackey, R.; Land, *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 4

controversial philosopher to have emerged from the fusty culture of anglophone philosophy in the last 20 years”, few competitors present themselves.<sup>4</sup> Land's active years as an academic philosopher were between 1987 and 1998, when he worked in Warwick University, during which he published one monograph on Bataille, *The Thirst for Annihilation* (1992), and several articles, now collected in *Fanged Noumena* (2011). This period cumulated in his involvement in the CCRU (Cybernetic Culture Research Unit), an avant-garde research unit at Warwick University whose membership included several other thinkers of importance. Core members of CCRU included Steve Goodman, Mark Fisher, Robin Mackey, and Sadie Plant. Warwick academics affiliated with it included Ray Brassier, Ian Hamilton Grant, Keith Ansell-Pearson, and Kodo Eshwun. All have gone on to produce important contributions to philosophy. Since Land's retirement from academia he has continued to engage with a variety of philosophical debates in new media and traditional press but these encounters – no longer in the register of academic convention – are more partial and fragmentary engagements than the texts bequeathed to us from his time at Warwick. Land's academic career began with his dissertation on Heidegger but his interest rapidly moved on to exegeses of Kant in 'Kant, Capital and the Prohibition of Incest', 'Delighted to Death' and 'Art as Insurrection' in the period 1988 to 1991. Yet despite the brilliance of his reading of Kant, his notability as a philosopher derives from his position as a unique reader of Deleuze: one who, beyond all others, emphasises Deleuze's materialism, a position which Land considers to have its strongest articulation in *Anti-Oedipus*. During Land's later period in academia, between 1993 and 1995, he produced a series of essays including 'Machinic Desire', 'Making it with Death' and 'Cybergothic' which are expositions of Deleuze's schizoanalytic materialism. Such texts are attracting attention from a number of current movements in philosophy, the most notable of which are from thinkers associated with speculative realism and accelerationism. Land's interpretation of Deleuze attracts this level of interest because of his absolute rejection of all concepts derived from the ideational or subjective, which shall herein be defined as *anti-anthropocentrism*. The accusation of anthropocentrism is a critical position which many philosophers deploy against logical fallacies which stem from reification of contingent subjective concepts, but Land uses the term in a positive sense, actively trying to define a philosophical position which is stripped bare of any notion inherited from the experience of

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4 Kodo Eshwun quoted in Fisher, M. 'Nick Land: Mind Games' (*Dazed and Confused* magazine) (available at <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/10459/1/nick-land-mind-games>)

Ed. Brassier and Mackay in Land, *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 3

being a human subject (I shall return to the notion of anti-anthropocentrism shortly, in a clarificatory discussion of its attributes).

Land's 'theoretical' Deleuzian essays were co-produced with a series of texts made under the rubric of a praxis which posited how an anti-humanist future would be engineered by materialist auto-production: 'Meat', 'Meltdown', 'Kataçonix', and 'A Ziigothic X-Coda' (1994 to 1997). These essays represent a move away from the traditional philosophical standards of evaluating arguments in terms of logic and ideational content, to a model based on predictive ability. Land's methodology here mirrors that used by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, in which they trace the history of desire by considering what it has produced (what it does) rather than what it represents (what is 'thought' about it).<sup>5</sup> Such an intensely materialist method of philosophising, named 'schizoanalysis', analyses the flows and fluxes which are produced and is therefore concerned with productive quantity (which is positive) rather than the correspondence between concept and truth. Taking up the schizoanalytic method, Land's positions and textual style are more extreme than Deleuze and Guattari's relatively sober analysis of the history of desire. In a short period of time Land's theory-praxis moved from the unorthodox yet comprehensible sci-fi dystopianism of 'Meltdown' (1995) to the textual chaos of 'A Ziigothic X-Coda' (1996).<sup>6</sup> By this point Land's articles contained little that can be reconciled with the mores of traditional academic practice; though still loaded with references to philosophers and critical theorists, nothing in them approaches a traditionally structured argument. Land was therefore a philosopher determined to exit academic convention not only on a personal level, but also on a theoretical level. His work is sometimes considered to be of considerable difficulty, because it does not appeal to the same standards as a reader of philosophy might expect to judge a text by.

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5 This method can be seen in Chapters 3 and 5

6 An example of the former's style; "As sino-pacific boom and automatized global economic integration crashes the neocolonial world system, the metropolis is forced to re-endogenize its crisis." Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 449.

Which can be contrasted to the latter: " - - = to-the--AlwAls-Ahen--tensII I I-CuntIng-pRQCeDuRcmQ.st-Apt - to-CQnveC t- mAtERIAI-fRom -thefRQzen=Qut- bQDI=pQtentIAIs-Into-metACCQRD=seCuRI tI=spACe=--" Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 475



Land's philosophical output can be classified into three categories (see Table A). The first set would be his critical engagements with metaphysics, which provide the impetus for a second set comprising of his reworking of Deleuze's schizoanalysis into a predictive philosophy of production: 'machinic desire'. The third set of texts are the demonstrations of Land's philosophical praxis, “codes, number patterns, messages of the Outside, neo-calandric schedules, Amxna mappings, Qwernomic constructions”, which represent his attempts to show what a productive and non-representational philosophy can do.<sup>7</sup> His trajectory through these three projects, which took place in a span of about ten years, represents the foundations of, the building of a machinery for, and finally the active pursuit of a philosophy of the 'outside'.

<b>Project</b>	Critical engagement with Metaphysics	Dogmatic amendment of and defence of schizoanalysis	Experimental praxis and engagement with 'outsideness'
<b>Notable texts</b>	'The Thirst for Annihilation', 'Kant, Capital and the Prohibition of Incest', 'Delighted to Death', 'Art as Insurrection'	'Machinic Desire', 'Making it with Death', 'Cybergothic'	<i>Hyperstition</i> , 'Barker Speaks', 'Qaballa 101', 'Quernomics', 'Tic-Talk', 'Meat', 'Meltdown', 'Kataçonix', 'A Ziigothic X-Coda'
<b>Aims</b>	Delineate the weaknesses of traditional metaphysical approaches.	Amend Deleuze's schizoanalysis and reconstruct it as a theory of impersonal 'machinic desire'	Practical attempts to engage with 'the outside'; use of diagram, number and cybernetics to avoid representational thought.

Table A: *Land's Philosophical Projects*

<sup>7</sup> Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 633

What drove Land to this retreat from the conventions of academic philosophy? Whilst Land clearly exhibits a distaste for the “hyper-rational prison of academic philosophy” in his texts, which are “entirely lacking in the dampening caution and cynicism which makes so much careerist academic writing dull”, his is not merely a stylistic rebellion against established norms.<sup>8</sup> Land's work is motivated by a belief that contemporary critical theory and continental philosophy was methodologically flawed. This critique maps onto a distinction between the inside and the outside. The binary inside / outside is identified by Brassier and Mackey, Fisher, and Ireland as the fundamental directional difference between Land's thought and that which he argued against in contemporary theorists.<sup>9</sup> The distinction is a complex one because it refers not just to two territories, but to two different processes between these territories. The outside, which Land argues towards, comprises what cannot be known to the subject. Situating this in relation to existing concepts in the Western philosophical tradition, it is the realm of things in themselves – the Kantian noumenal, and the the space of 'materialism' in which production occurs. The opposite of this domain of things is the domain of ideas or appearances, the Inside. The inside comprises of what is or can become apparent to the subject.<sup>10</sup> It is therefore the domain of thoughts, ideas, sensations, reasons, opinions and

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8 Fisher, M. 'Nick Land: Mind Games' (*Dazed and Confused*) (available at

<http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/10459/1/nick-land-mind-games>)

Goodman, S. quoted in Fisher, M. 'Nick Land: Mind Games' (*Dazed and Confused* magazine) (available at

<http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/10459/1/nick-land-mind-games>)

9 Respectively in Ed. Brassier, R. and Mackey, R; Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York:

Urbanomic, 2011) pp. 8 – 10; in Fisher, *Nick Land: Mind Games* (*Dazed and Confused* magazine) (available

at <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/10459/1/nick-land-mind-games>); and in Ireland, A.

*Noise: An Ontology of the Avant-garde* (2013) (available at

[http://www.academia.edu/3690573/Noise\\_An\\_Ontology\\_of\\_the\\_Avant-Garde](http://www.academia.edu/3690573/Noise_An_Ontology_of_the_Avant-Garde))

10 The notion of the subject, used throughout the present thesis, is not unproblematic in the history of

philosophy. When used outside of a specific philosophical context, it refers to the Cartesian subject – the

rational, autonomous self – rather than the Freudian subject divided into unconscious and conscious. The

difference is depicted in Derrida's 'To do Justice to Freud' in Ed. Dufresne, T. *Returns of the French Freud*

(Routledge: New York, 1997) pp. 133-168. This Cartesian subject is viewed as more susceptible to the

tendency of anthropocentrism, as Land states: “The Cartesian ego in its function as indubitable foundation

prejudices. Land depicts Western philosophy's predominant goal as bridging from the inside out, from self towards the real. It holds that the good, knowable concepts are those in the inside, and that the task of philosophy is clarifying them and demonstrating their validity. This task can be completed by remaining inside – a kind of epistemological spring cleaning, devoted to the sharpening of concepts – but is more commonly done by hypothesising about a correlation between the contents of the inside and the outside.<sup>11</sup> For Land the initial impulse of traditional philosophy has been to begin with the contents of the subject, and to work outwards towards the object. This finds its clearest expression in Kant's critical philosophy, in which an apparatus within the subject is constructed and depicted in such a way that the validity of the subject's perceptions derives from the subject's internal characteristics. In the essay 'Noise: An Ontology of the Avant Garde', Amy Ireland depicts Land's frustration with the post-Kantian settlement of philosophy, which is that:

For Kant specifically, this 'signal from the out-side' is cleaned up by the pure forms of intuition and the twelve categories, which obtain in all human creatures ... thus underwriting the homogeneity and the intelligibility of the world as it is for us ... We no longer discover the order of phenomenal nature; we make it.<sup>12</sup>

Post-Kantian philosophy is therefore, for Land, conditioned by the rule that “the outside must

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serves to equilibriate reason and existence, or rather, carries the inherited and uninterrogated certainty of this equilibrium forward into secular reason. This coherence of existent knowing has always been taken by philosophy to be the evident principle of ontology, or the harmonious reciprocity of knowing/being.” Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 81

11 Land characterises phenomenology as utilising the former method: “Rigorous phenomenology of the Husserlian type, whereby all questions of reference are replaced by an analytic of intentionality, leads straight to idealism and solipsism and thus, as Schopenhauer persuasively suggests, to the madhouse (although it is a rather insipid insanity they offer us)”. Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.7. The latter corresponds to Kantian critique, with which Land's philosophy has a more complex relationship.

12 Ireland, A. 'Noise: An Ontology of the Avant-garde' (2013) (available at [http://www.academia.edu/3690573/Noise\\_An\\_Ontology\\_of\\_the\\_Avant-Garde](http://www.academia.edu/3690573/Noise_An_Ontology_of_the_Avant-Garde)) p. 3

pass by way of the inside".<sup>13</sup> In the tradition of philosophy, this is a useful method of clarifying the subject's relation to the outside world, under which the rules of reason determine and stabilise the unknown exterior. The task of philosophy is therefore to hone, ground or expand the understanding of how this process happens under the rubric of 'reason'. Land's objection is that this method privileges the structures of the inside, treating them as conditions of an absolute truth rather than 'how things are for us'. It is in this context that he asks "if reason is so secure, legitimate, supersensibly guaranteed, why all the guns?"<sup>14</sup> For Land the very effort which philosophy has to exert to maintain the coherence of the law of the inside is a demonstration that such a project is potentially incoherent. Land reads philosophy as a series of "Platonic-fascist top-down solutions", ruthlessly suppressing, ignoring, or desperately (and illegitimately) trying to reincorporate periodic eruptions of outsideness.<sup>15</sup> A Landian reading of the history of philosophy would compare the philosophers who attempted to express this outsideness "the philosophy of desire, has a marked allergy to academic encompassment. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Freud all wrote the vast bulks of their works in a space inaccessible to the sweaty clutches of state pedagogy" with philosophers of the state, who – even if unwittingly – were tools used to contain this attack on order.<sup>16</sup> For Land, the foremost representatives of this later class are Kant and Hegel.<sup>17</sup> This struggle, Land notes, is as old as philosophy is: "[libidinal materialism] has been the menace that provoked even the most ancient philosophy – already Anaximander as Nietzsche suggests – to anticipate the police".<sup>18</sup> In this war of ideas the victory of academic philosophy – attained by force rather

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13 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 320

14 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 150

15 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 442

16 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.10

A notable absence from this list is Spinoza, who Land would categorise as another philosopher of the outside.

17 An extended discussion of the role of Kant and Hegel can be found in Chapter 1 of Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992)

The more recent representatives of this tradition would include Husserl, Heidegger and Derrida. A discussion can be found in Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 16; and in Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 177

18 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. xxi

than veracity – leads to “the slaving of reality to ideality”.<sup>19</sup> For Land, this is not a positive situation. Reality itself, which is the domain of how the world actually is, is always distorted by the conceptual apparatus of the subject. It is therefore misunderstood by philosophy.

Ireland's depiction of these two directions of philosophy – Inside-Out and Outside-In – in 'Noise: An Ontology of the Avant Garde' depicts the inversion of traditional philosophy attempted by Land's defence of outsideness. Figure 1, taken from Ireland's essay, depicts the trajectory of the 'signal' produced by reality. Once the signal passes the 'Epistemological limit' (enters the inside) it is worked over by the processes of the mind and is therefore distorted when it is rendered to the subject as appearance.

## II. Outside In

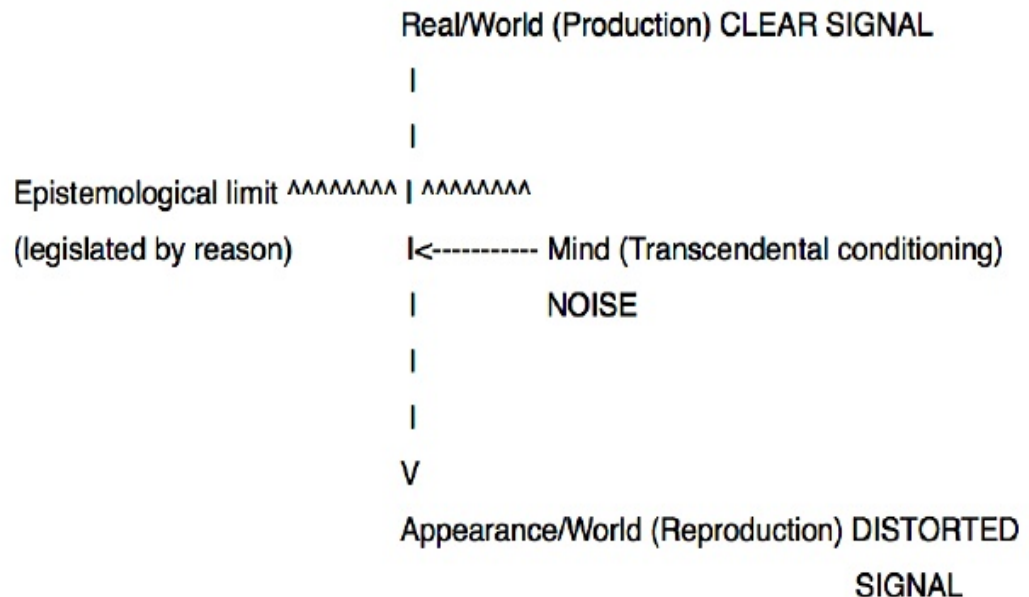


Figure 1: *Outside In*<sup>20</sup>

Land therefore postulates that there is more in the Real/World than can be apparent to the subject, which is conditioned in such a way that it fails to grasp the underlying structures of reality-as-it-is, instead grasping a subjectively constructed reality-as-it-must-appear. Ireland

19 Ed. Brassier and Mackey in Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 8

20 From Ireland, A. 'Noise: An Ontology of the Avant-garde' (2013) (available at

[http://www.academia.edu/3690573/Noise\\_An\\_Ontology\\_of\\_the\\_Avant-Garde](http://www.academia.edu/3690573/Noise_An_Ontology_of_the_Avant-Garde)) p. 3

states that:

Land [theorises] the productive element of Being as a pre-individuated, generative excess that precedes the mental processing which, under the direction of Enlightenment rationality, filters from it all that is inefficacious or problematic for the consolidation of the category known as 'the human', serving up experience as a single, anthropocentrically calibrated, signifying channel.<sup>21</sup>

Under Land's reading of philosophy, a theory is of value insofar as it works to strip away these layers of subjectivism through which the outside is filtered, which explains his hostility to many positions and schools in its tradition – he considers they work in the opposite direction. Singling out a few of Land's more famous antagonists, he variously castigates Plato, Descartes, Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger for their speculative, idealist or phenomenological positions.<sup>22</sup> Even Kant, who “went to his grave with his speculative virginity intact” ultimately fails to create an apparatus which allows the outside to pass in.<sup>23</sup> His critical philosophy regards any attempt to probe the noumenon as: “hopelessness and waste ... It is for this reason that he says the 'concept of a noumenon is ... merely a limiting concept’”.<sup>24</sup> A sustained depiction of Land's relationship to Kantian philosophy, though undoubtedly worthy of further engagement, is beyond the scope of this thesis. The briefest sketch would note that his grudging respect for the 'humble citizen of Königsberg' reveals his ambivalence about this citizen's critical project. For Land, Kant came as close as any metaphysician hereto has to the epistemological limit, but he ultimately lacks the will to pass beyond it. Schopenhauer said of Kant's theology, that he was like a “man at a ball, who all evening has been carrying

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21 Ireland, A. 'Noise: An Ontology of the Avant-garde' (2013) (available at

[http://www.academia.edu/3690573/Noise\\_An\\_Ontology\\_of\\_the\\_Avant-Garde](http://www.academia.edu/3690573/Noise_An_Ontology_of_the_Avant-Garde)) p. 9

22 Plato: Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.90; Descartes: Land,

N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.81; Hegel: Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 17, 20, 23(!)

Husserl: Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.7; Heidegger:

Land, *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 10.

23 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 125

24 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 109

on a love affair with a masked beauty in the vain hope of making a conquest, when at last she throws off her mask and reveals herself to be his wife”.<sup>25</sup> In regards to metaphysics, this is Kant's specific intention; he will go to the limit without showing any desire to surpass it.

This irruption of outsideness staged by Land's own philosophy began to gather sympathetic interlocutors to Warwick in the 1990s. The group of graduate students and fellow academics who would later form the CCRU under his aegis believed that Land's philosophy “[had] this potential to strip back all the crusted, dead layers of the catastrophe that we usually refer to as the human race”.<sup>26</sup> This fight, against the philosophical impulse – as Land said of phenomenology and the critical theory he believed it had birthed – “to distill out everything for which proper subjectivity cannot claim responsibility, and thus entrenching the humanistic dimension of Western philosophy ever more rigidly” would, if successful, be of significant importance in the tradition of Western philosophy.<sup>27</sup> However, as noted above, Land's ambitions began to outstrip 'pure' philosophical debate and his interests spread to a wide range of “experimental praxis oriented entirely towards contact with the unknown”.<sup>28</sup> Most of Land's works of theoretical philosophy were written before 1995, the exception being 'Cybergothic' (1998) “at a certain point in the mid-90s, it was as if someone had thrown a switch, re-routing Land away from any known circuit of philosophical study”.<sup>29</sup> The problem Land faced was quite simple, yet fiendishly difficult to overcome: if language and ideas are considered to be the enemy, it is hard to come up with a coherent description of how to escape them. His practical attempts to do so, now “the subject of rumour and vague legend” ranged from inter-disciplinary collaborations in visual and sonic arts to “[deep] polydrug abuse”.<sup>30</sup>

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25 Schopenhauer, A. *On the Basis of Morality*, trans. E.F.J. Payne (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing, 1998), p. 103

26 Goodman, S. quoted in Fisher, M. 'Nick Land: Mind Games' (*Dazed and Confused* magazine) (available at <http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/10459/1/nick-land-mind-games>)

27 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 176

28 Ed. Brassier, R. and Mackey, R. in Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 6

29 Mackey, R. 'Nick Land – An Experiment in Inhumanism' ( available at <http://divus.cc/london/en/article/nick-land-ein-experiment-im-inhumanismus> )

30 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) Cover inscription

## A Philosopher without friends?

What can we make of Land's journey from his role as the head of the most radical philosophy unit in the UK to his current exile in Shanghai? I do not make the suggestion he has no friends in the sense of acquaintances, but in the sense of philosophical allies who inhabit similar conceptual positions. The group of like-minded philosophers who followed his project has dissipated, and even Land himself has retreated from his explicitly philosophical commitments. Though it is not quite the case that no lasting impact endures from Land's time at Warwick and in the CCRU, it is certainly not of the order that one might expect of such an incendiary new way of thinking. How did Land, described by many of his contemporaries as the most innovative and exciting force working in philosophy, become so isolated from his former discipline? Simon Critchley, perhaps Britain's most famous philosopher of the continental tradition said that “Land had the most brilliantly seductive and meteoric mind, endlessly imaginative and capable of adopting, inhabiting and discarding any philosophical position”.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps we can answer the question by looking at the conditions of Land's rise to infamy. This was primarily a function of the novelty of his works, which attracted those excited by newness in general and, even more so, by those interested in newness in the study of metaphysics, which is a rare occurrence. Land's metaphysical recalibration from Inside-Out to Outside-In was undoubtedly an attractor in a philosophical world which is desperate to endlessly consume the new, jokingly characterised by Land as an idea which can “last longer than an automobile”.<sup>32</sup> However, eventually, Land's texts proved too radical for even this same group of thinkers who were initially attracted to his project. Almost all of the CCRU members were ultimately unwilling to follow Land's philosophy to its conclusions. Hereto,

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Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 631

An amusing summary of these legends and their veracity can be found in Mackey's Nick Land – 'An Experiment in Inhumanism' ( available at <http://divus.cc/london/en/article/nick-land-ein-experiment-im-inhumanismus> )

31 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) Cover inscription

32 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 2



the discussion has been limited to Land's metaphysics, which have been characterised as an inversion of traditional philosophy. Yet this might have been Land's least controversial position. Land's positions in other areas of philosophy are equally controversial. As described above, Land's metaphysical intervention was not a mere paper-war, a purely hermeneutic attack on the philosophical tradition carried out in its traditional method: “with [Land] – and rightly so – philosophy infected every area of life”.<sup>33</sup> It is this theoretical and practical consistency in Land's philosophy which has driven his former 'friends' away. Land's commitments to philosophical positions beyond his metaphysics of outsideness are always constrained by the conclusions which such positions dictate. Unwilling to compromise the absolute otherness of the outside when compared to the inside of anthropic convention, Land refused to mitigate any of his conclusions towards social, political or academic norms. A demonstration of how this would go spectacularly wrong can be seen in Stivale's report of the *Virtual Futures* conference in which Land was a plenary speaker.<sup>34</sup> It was not only Land's philosophical position which seems to have raised opprobrium but also his attitude towards other participants, and the demands he made outside of what usually constitutes philosophical debate “to the point that one’s personal habits (e.g. non-smoking, in my case) might be called into question as some sort of failure to engage in ‘necessary’ deterritorialization”.<sup>35</sup> Land's trajectory to what he terms 'outsideness' has implications across a wide number of domains of philosophy. Aesthetics is reconfigured as a vehicle for representing invasions of outsideness, rather than its traditional clarification of insiderness.<sup>36</sup> Traditional ethics is revealed to be a defence mechanism: a wave of oughts patrolling the inner sanctum of the subject, policing its homeostasis.<sup>37</sup> Political economy becomes a practical engagement with the entities which occupy the site of production, now external to the subject and named the 'primary process'.<sup>38</sup> All of these positions are atypical of academic philosophy, and highly controversial.

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33 Critchley, S. in Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) Cover inscription

34 See Stivale, C. *The Two-Fold Thought of Deleuze and Guattari*, (New York: Gulilford, 1998) pp. 90-99

35 Stivale, C. *The Two-Fold Thought of Deleuze and Guattari*, (New York: Gulilford, 1998) p. 92

36 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.22

37 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.xx

38 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) pp. 441-459

The primary process is a Freudian concept which depicts matter and its operations before they are transposed in the subject to the secondary process, where they are manifested as ideas.

The fissures between Land and former members of the CCRU are exemplified in the essay 'A Critique of Transcendental Miserabilism'. Written as a response to Mark Fisher, Land's critique attacks the aesthetics of 'hauntology', a concept derived from Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*.<sup>39</sup> Hauntology shared the science fiction, horror and Gothic aesthetics which provided a touchstone for the CCRU, but there is a difference between Land's positive reading of the tropes of these genres and hauntology's negative reading, which invokes the lost elements of a utopian past. In his own reading, Fisher utilises Land's depiction of outsiders as a diagnosis of ills rather than a depiction of the underlying reality of production: "This is theory as cyberpunk fiction: Deleuze-Guattari's concept of capitalism as the virtual unnameable Thing that haunts all previous formations pulp-welded to the timebending of the Terminator films".<sup>40</sup> Though there is an ambivalence in Land's between dark and bright aesthetics, which can be seen in his enthusiastic commitment to the 'Decopunk' cityscapes of *Blade Runner*, which serve as a model for an aesthetics of modernity, one constant commitment is to representations which depict the production of the future rather than a regression to the past.<sup>41</sup> The figures which haunt Land's aesthetics are visitors from the outside or visitors from the future, rather than ghosts of the human past.

Another fissure is demonstrated by the recent debate surrounding 'accelerationism'. The contemporary essays in *#Accelerate, the acceleration reader* can be divided into those written by Land, and those written against him.<sup>42</sup> Simon O'Sullivan posits this difference as being between 'Right' accelerationists (a position held only by Land), and all others who are to the 'Left' of this position. O'Sullivan defines Land's accelerationism as a decision to work on behalf of a capitalism which works to achieve 'Technomic Singularity', a post-human state which the internal logics of capitalism inevitably lead to. This impulse is rejected to some extent by all of the other writers in the reader, who try and control, divert or mitigate the forces unleashed by acceleration of capital into projects and frameworks which work on behalf of varying conceptions of humanism. The detail of the argument surrounding acceleration and capitalism is, again, a topic beyond the scope of this thesis, and the topic is

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39 Derrida, J. *Spectres of Marx* (London; Routledge, 2006)

40 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) Cover inscription

41 The concept of 'Decopunk' is elucidated in Land, N. *Templexity* (Time Spiral Press, 2014)

42 And most fall into the latter category.

mentioned here as an illustration of the split between Land and his former colleagues, who make up much of the commentators on acceleration:

Land looms over many of the accelerationist writers – at least those collected in the Reader. Iain Hamilton Grant, Mark Fisher, Luciana Parisi, Robin MacKay (one of the co-editors) and Ray Brassier were all at least partially intellectually formed in that moment at Warwick University where Land taught in the 1990s.<sup>43</sup>

On the surface, it seems that this split between Land and his Warwick colleagues is political, one which is about left versus right in politics alone. There is definitely a division in that respect, exacerbated on Land's side by his sometimes hyperbolic goading of the left and unwavering commitment, despite (or even because of) its apparent excesses and failings, to the free operation of capital, as expressed in tweets like: “The scenario we’re given – the one being made to feel inevitable – is of a hyper-capitalist dystopia.[\*Mouth watering\*]”.<sup>44</sup> But underneath this political veneer, there is also a deep metaphysical disagreement between the contesting parties. Land's laissez-faire politics are determined by his belief that the interrogation of ideas should properly be undertaken by reality rather than anthropic principles; or perhaps more simply, that an idea should never tested by another idea, but by that idea's involvement with reality – *how it survives in the outside, not how it relates to the inside*.

Most of the accelerationist writers of #Accelerate are associated to some extent with the 'speculative realist' movement whose metaphysics aim at engineering an engagement with the noumenal world (therefore towards Land's outside). This post-Kantian project runs parallel with Land's – it has the same initial impulse, to get towards objects and describe them as metaphysical actors rather than (unknowable) unknowns – but often ends up in even stranger

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43 O'Sullivan, S. 'The Missing Subject of Accelerationism' in *Mute* 12 September 2014 (available at <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/missing-subject-accelerationism>)

44 Land, N. @UF\_blog, 26 Feb 2015 5:18 PM. ( available at [https://twitter.com/UF\\_blog/status/571117026904649728](https://twitter.com/UF_blog/status/571117026904649728).)

places because of the constraints of the metaphysical language it works within.<sup>45</sup> Yet again, the detail of speculative realism is beyond the scope of the present thesis, and rather than explicitly engaging with it, I shall limit myself to noting that it represents a philosophical debate which is influenced by Land, who was troubled by the post-Kantian settlement in metaphysics, according to Ireland, “fifteen years before a single theorist uttered the word ‘correlationism’, [Land told us] the ontological condition of the moderns comes down to the following fundamental premise: ‘the outside must pass by way of the inside’”.<sup>46</sup>

Correlationism is the term Meillassoux used to denote a set of metaphysical concerns about the abandonment of the noumenal, and philosophy's subsequent turn to idealism.<sup>47</sup> Ireland's quote reveals the difference between the two approaches: Land's description of 'passage' is couched in terms of production and what the outside does in time, whilst correlation is metaphysical, offering a critique of the comparison of ideas. This, again, is indicative of a fundamental split in methodology between Land and the former CCRU members still working in metaphysics.

A quantification of Land's impact on contemporary philosophy is a difficult thing to assess. Most of the engagements with his work can be described as shallow rather than sustained

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45 Discussion of speculative realism can be found in Bryant, L. Harman, G. and Srnicek, N. *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne: Re.Press. 2011)

A critique can be found in Wolfendale, P. *The Noumenon's New Clothes* (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2014)

46 Ireland, A. 'Noise: An Ontology of the Avant-garde' (2013) (available at [http://www.academia.edu/3690573/Noise\\_An\\_Ontology\\_of\\_the\\_Avant-Garde](http://www.academia.edu/3690573/Noise_An_Ontology_of_the_Avant-Garde)) p. 4

47 Meillassoux's critique of correlation is detailed in *After Finitude*. A summary of its points can be found in Clemens J. 'Vomit Apocalypse', *Parrhesia* 2013 Vol 18 pp. 57-67 available at [http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia18/parrhesia18\\_clemens.pdf](http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia18/parrhesia18_clemens.pdf)

ones, utilising it as a tool to perform a limited role rather than as a systemic philosophy.<sup>48</sup> Why does the present work pick up Land's thought? Above all else, it is the belief in the brilliance of his work, which offers a methodology by which we can, uploading Deleuze's schizoanalysis in the place of Kantian critique, begin to construct a philosophy which can engage with the outside. Brassier and Mackey end their introduction to *Fanged Noumena* calling to “a new wave of thinkers who are partly engaging the re-emerging legacy of Nick Land's work”.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps now, after the passage of time, Land's philosophy will be taken up by those who were personally distant from the firestorm of his brief engagement with academic philosophy. One such scholar is Ireland, whose work aims at presenting Land's philosophy simply and clearly, situating it in the context of post-Kantian philosophy. This move towards a clarification of Land's philosophy is overdue, moving Land's work beyond the position of the ideological other of former CCRU members, instead considering it as something which can stand alone.

Land's unpopularity in contemporary academic philosophy is derived not from his anti-

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48 The most sustained analyses of Land's work are as follows: (1) the Editor's Introduction to *Fanged Noumena* (Ed. Brassier, R. and Mackey, R. Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York; Urbanomic, 2011)); (2) 'From Schizoanalysis to Rhizomatics' in 'Stivale, C. *The Two-Fold Thought of Deleuze and Guattari*, (New York: Guilford, 1998); (3) 'Drafting the Inhuman' by Negrastani, R. in Ed. Bryant, L. Srnicek, N. and Harman, G. *The Speculative Turn* (Melbourne, Australia: Re-press, 2011); (4) in Noys, *Malign Velocities* (UK: Zero, 2014); (5) in the later parts of Ed. Mackay, R and Arvenessian, K *#Accelerate: the accelerationist reader* (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2014).

Reviews of Land's work include: the sympathetic Banham, G. 'The Thirst For Annihilation' *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* No. 11, Conscience and Pain, Tragedy and Truth (USA: Penn State University Press, Spring 1996) pp. 53-63; the more reserved Bailey, D. 'The Field of Battle' *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* No. 4/5, The Work of Müller-Lauter, W. (USA: Penn State University Press, Autumn 1992/Spring 1993), pp. 155-165; and finally, the hostile: “a barbarous denunciation of philosophy, and Freud for their alleged cooperation with the police” in Riechel, D. 'Nietzsche and Modern Thought' *German Studies Review*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press, October 1993), pp. 557-558.

49 Ed. Brassier, R. and Mackey, R. Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York; Urbanomic, 2011) p.

humanism, but instead his willingness to follow this position to its political consequences. It seems obvious that an anti-anthropocentric philosopher will say some denigrating things about humanity – especially one with Land's polemical rhetorical style – but there are other philosophers who have depicted the failings of humanity in similarly negative terms without attracting the opprobrium which academic philosophy has bestowed upon Land. I will go on to consider Land's objections to anthropocentrism in philosophy in due course.

### **The Metaphysical and the Psychoanalytic**

Land's work suffers from a reputation as being “polemical ... [with] disregard for the properties of sober reflection”.<sup>50</sup> It is also considered to be partial or fragmentary, as everything not contained in *The Thirst for Annihilation* is strewn across a series of essays, e-books and blog posts. Several former CCRU members' conception of Land's work is as being primarily concerned with praxis, and a call to practical engagement in the manner of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* rather than a coherent theory. This recasts Land's machinery as a set of tools which can be used across a range of interdisciplinary contexts, rather than as a grand theory of philosophy. As a result, there are no treatments of Land's work which contextualise it as a unified project, save for some constants noted in Brassier and Mackey's editorial which introduces *Fanged Noumena*. The present thesis shall claim that there is a clear and coherent thread of argumentation discernible in Land's work. In this reading Land's philosophy is an attempt to correct Kant's failure to engage with the outside. As the previous discussion of Kant noted, the productive ground of Kant's philosophy is within the subject, operating according to the categories of understanding and the conditions of space and time. Land wants to move this productive space to the site of interaction with the outside, the primary process, thereby escaping the constraints of subjectivity, and providing a platform to map what is 'real' rather than what is 'apparent'. Land's method in constructing this possibility of engagement with the outside is to replace Kant's metaphysical conception of the subject with a psychoanalytic conception of production. This operation can be depicted in three stages. Firstly, Land claims that Kant is stuck in a metaphysical register, as various concepts in his metaphysical system rely on certain other metaphysical concepts to provide

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50 Ed. Brassier, R. and Mackey, R. in Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011)

their foundations. This leads to the accusation that Kant's argument is circular. More problematically for Land, it remains inside, and never ventures outside:

The vocabulary that would describe the other of metaphysics is itself inscribed within metaphysics, since the inside and the outside are both conceptually determined from the inside.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, this metaphysical register prevents Kant from conceiving the nature of production over time, which is the defining quality of the outside (material) realm. For Land the notion of time, and the fact that things made in time are produced, will offer the chance to jump beyond the 'snapshot' metaphysics of Kant, where the contents of consciousness are considered as they are in an instant. Instead, Land will show that the noumenon is only unknowable if is unproductive (at zero intensity), and so long as it produces, the operation of base-matter can be hypothesised:

This is seen in Kant's philosophy: In the end it is the domesticated character of the Kantian notion of time which forestalls the lurch of this thought to a base materialist conclusion. Purity conditions the *a priori*, which hypostasizes time as such, which in turn idealizes intensity. Flow as such is thus fixed as an eternal form of representation, frozen in an endless descent to zero. It is for this reason that Kant has an entirely ahistorical comprehension of intensity, failing to grasp the positive order of its repression: the inhibition of flow (continuity). In other words: he does not raise a problem of the object with sufficient radicality to escape from the cage of epistemology in the direction of a libidinal or base materialism. He does not acknowledge that between the noumenon and zero intensity there is no difference, or that neither are susceptible to isolation.<sup>52</sup>

Thirdly, that the language of 'intensity' and productive 'flow' which Land needs to depict the process of impersonal, 'outside' production will come from psychoanalysis rather than a refinement of metaphysics. The first two stages can be found throughout Land's writing, but most closely correspond with those described in Table A as Land's 'critical works'. The focus

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51 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 71

52 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 118

of the present thesis is however with the third stage of the argument above, which is found in Land's engagement with Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis. For Land, psychoanalysis offers a language which can be used to bypass the problems of the metaphysical register, which has an inherent tendency to revert to utilisation of the productions of the inside to explain the outside. If such a substitution is possible, there are two significant consequences. Firstly, it is possible to plot a meta-theory of base-matter (outsideness) and depict its actions in terms of the production it is capable of enacting.<sup>53</sup> Secondly, agency in the human is displaced from its traditional position in the subject and moved to its periphery where the drives and instincts of the unconscious interact with base material. The former reconfigures our understanding of the world at large, the processes by which it operates, and the extent to which we can 'know' them. The latter determines the manner in which the subject interacts with the world, re-conceptualising its mechanism as formal and automatic instead of the traditional conception of distinct human agency.

Psychoanalysis is the preferred register for a depiction of 'the outside' because it provides a speculative approach which tries to pass beyond the problematic of knowing its own 'outside', the unconscious. This practical approach differs from traditional metaphysical arguments which are more susceptible to the argument that it is simply impossible to pass over the threshold of the epistemological limit.<sup>54</sup> Returning to Ireland's depiction of the Outside-In in Figure 1, psychoanalysis is utilised by Land as it provides a platform to pass beyond the metaphysical argumentation which traditionally depicts the processes within 'transcendental conditioning' and 'appearance', which are the subject and its productions. Instead the lexicon of psychoanalysis describes the signal itself – outsideness – as measurable, quantifiable and predictable production. Psychoanalysis is capable of performing this task because of the structural similarity between the metaphysical binaries inside-outside and phenomena-noumena and the psychoanalytic binary conscious-unconscious. In each case the second is to

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53 The concept of base-matter is drawn from Bataille's works, and will be discussed later in the present thesis.

54 Indeed, this division characterises metaphysics in even its simplest definition in the Oxford English

Dictionary: "Metaphysics has two main strands: that which holds that what exists lies beyond experience (as argued by Plato), and that which holds that objects of experience constitute the only reality (as argued by Kant, the logical positivists, and Hume)" 'Metaphysics' at *Oxford Dictionaries* ( available at

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/metaphysics> )



some extent 'unknowable', but can nevertheless be the subject of speculative investigation. But when psychoanalysis speaks it is not trapped in “the ghost landscape of metaphysics, crowded with divinities, souls, agents, perdurant subjectivities, entities with a zero potentiality for triggering excitations, and then the whole gothic confessional of guilt, responsibility, moral judgement, punishments and rewards”, and is therefore free from the baggage associated with metaphysics.<sup>55</sup>

However, psychoanalysis is by no means immune to controversy, nor is it devoid of its own forms of idealism. The substitution which Land attempts is therefore not a simple switch in which something controversial is replaced by something unproblematic. It is such a question regarding the lineage of Land's conception of 'machinic desire' which provides the impetus for the present thesis: is Land's use of psychoanalysis based on a consistent reading? In Land's work Freud, Deleuze and to a lesser extent Lyotard are the key figures in the formulation of the vocabulary he uses from psychoanalysis: that of desire and drives. These three thinkers' conceptions of psychoanalysis are at the very least partially amenable to a materialist reading. However, in any history of twentieth century psychoanalysis Lacan and Lacanianism have to be considered, and Lacan's 'return to Freud' can be read as a recasting of psychoanalysis as idealism.<sup>56</sup> There is therefore a need to both anchor Land's use of drive and desire within an internally coherent line of psychoanalytic reasoning, and also to defend this line externally against other psychoanalytic interpretations.

The present thesis aims at clarifying a genealogy of Land's use of psychoanalytic language to show how the concepts which he borrows from it are grounded in its tradition. To this point, no one has attempted a systematic treatment of Land's thought, and the present thesis begins to provide the context in which his work can be related to the history of philosophy. Hopefully

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55 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.1

56 Such a recasting relates psychoanalysis to an entirely different philosophical tradition than Land does. Borch-Jacobsen describes these Lacanian influences stating that “[Lacan injected psychoanalysis] with massive doses of Hegel, Heidegger and Kojève”. Borch-Jacobsen, M. in Ed Dufresne, T. *Returns of the French Freud, Freud Lacan and Beyond*, (United Kingdom: Routledge, 1997)

Lacan is also situated as an idealist by Fisher, D. *Cultural Theory and Psychoanalytic Tradition* p. 11 ( USA: Transaction, 2009 )

this will provide a basis for future comparative approaches to Land's work, as well as further investigations into the metaphysical commitments engendered by his use of the psychoanalytic lexicon. When commentators have contextualised Land's work it has been in a brief treatment, providing only the most concise contextualisation. An example would be Fisher's situating of Land's philosophy as one that: “[is] in a nutshell: Deleuze and Guattari’s machinic desire remorselessly stripped of all Bergsonian vitalism, and made backwards-compatible with Freud’s death drive and Schopenhauer’s Will.”<sup>57</sup> These very complex and cryptic situations require unpacking before Land's writing can be more readily systematised. Fisher's depiction of Land's work makes it very clear that Deleuze and Guattari provide the framework on which he builds his own philosophical system. The importance of Deleuze and Guattari in this respect is another reason for this genealogical reading, as it allows the commentary in the present thesis to go beyond Land's *use* of their theories as components in a philosophical system to a discussion of the *genesis* and *validity* of these components. Land's reading of Deleuze can be related to a larger debate about the implications of Deleuze's philosophy. Deleuze, who enjoyed exploiting ambiguity in philosophers' works to open up space for his own distinctive readings, has been subject to the same impulse from the first and second generation of anglophone writers who are trying to 'fix' his position in the

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57 Fisher, M. in Ed. Mackay, R. and Arvenessian, A. *#Accelerate: the accelerationist reader* (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2014) p. 342

philosophical canon.<sup>58</sup> If there is a point at which Land's philosophy most explicitly engages with 'normal' academic philosophy it is in determining these interpretations of Deleuze. Land was in the first generation of Deleuze scholars in the United Kingdom, and along with Ansell-Pearson, offered a distinctive reading of Deleuze as a cybernetic theorist.<sup>59</sup> This positioning of Deleuze's work was challenged by the next generation of Deleuzians such as John Mullarkey who wrote that “the type of microreductionism that underscores work in cybernetics [...] thereby leads to a great misunderstanding of [Deleuze's] work on machinic desire”.<sup>60</sup> I shall go on to closely consider these rival interpretations of Deleuze's work in Chapter 3.

Deleuze and Guattari's text *Anti-Oedipus* is their most explicitly psychoanalytic writing, and is the source of much of what is distinctive in Land's cyberneticist reading of Deleuze. This

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58 This refers to Deleuze's infamous remarks on his 'buggery' of previous philosophers. I shall return to this topic in Chapter 5 when discussing Land's own tendency to read in this manner.

There are several discussions of Deleuze's buggery remarks which can be found in: Smith, D. 'The Inverse Side of the Structure: Žižek on Deleuze on Lacan', *Criticism* (2004): "Deleuze's all-too-well-known image of philosophical "buggery," which makes thinkers produce their own "monstrous" children"; Sinnerbrink, R. (in 'Nomadology or Ideology? Žižek's Critique of Deleuze', *Parrhesia* 1 (2006): 62-87) describes the "popular topic" of Deleuze's "notorious remarks"; Callen, R. (in 'The Difficult Middle', *Rhizomes* 10 (Spring 2005)) describes "intellectual buggery" as "what Deleuze himself famously said about his encounters with the works of other philosophers." Deleuze's buggery analogy is also cited by, among many others, Massumi, B. *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (USA: MIT Press, 1992), p. 2; Žižek, S. *Organs without Bodies* (UK: Routledge, 2003), p. 48; Buchanan, I. *A Deleuzian Century?* (Duke UP, 1999), p. 8; Jean-Lecercle, J. *Deleuze and Language* (Macmillan, 2002), p. 37; Lambert, G. *The Non-Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze* (UK: Continuum, 2002), p. x; Colebrook, C. *Understanding Deleuze* (Australia: Allen & Unwin, 2003), p. 73; and Stivale, C. *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts* (USA: McGill-Queen's, 2005), p. 3. [this list is taken from Deleuze's *Wikipedia* entry ( available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilles\\_Deleuze#cite\\_note-30](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilles_Deleuze#cite_note-30) on 10/03/2015 )]

59 See Dosse, F. *Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: Intersecting Lives* (USA: Columbia University Press, 2010) pp. 479-480

60 Mullarkey, J. 'Deleuze and Materialism' in Ed. Ian Buchanan *A Deleuzian Century?* (USA: Duke University Press, 1999) p.61

genealogy is to demonstrate the basis of the psychoanalytic tradition from which Land's thought emerges, and in situating in such a manner, it aims to show that Land's philosophy is not merely an interdisciplinary toolkit or a hook for novelty in the art world. It therefore disagrees with Brassier and Mackey's claim that:

Land developed the conceptual innovations of Deleuze-Guattari as the trans disciplinary innovations they are, rather than recontextualising them (as is, unfortunately, now all too common) within the restricted histories of philosophy, psychoanalysis, or cultural theory.<sup>61</sup>

Whilst this does depict how Land's work is currently treated, it does not represent how it *must* be treated. Indeed, just pages later, Brassier and Mackey themselves treat Land's work as systematic and philosophical, placing it within the context of the wider philosophical discussion of the conditions of experience:

Land credits *Anti-Oedipus* with recasting the problem of the theory of experience as a problem concerning the caging of desire – with the latter read as a synonym for the impersonal, synthetic intelligence ('animality', 'cunning') that Land seeks to distinguish from the will of 'knowledge' to order, resolve, and correlate-in-advance.<sup>62</sup>

The genealogical approach will provide the means to describe how Freud's concepts of desire and drive transform into 'impersonal, synthetic intelligence' in Land's formulation yet remain broadly consistent with Freud's metapsychological theses.<sup>63</sup> This generally evolutionary account will also consider the development of psychoanalytic concepts in relation to their encounters with metaphysical approaches to desire in the works of Lacan, Lyotard, and Deleuze and Guattari. In its historical consideration of psychoanalysis, the present thesis will provide a context for the psychoanalytic vocabulary which displaces the metaphysical. This

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61 Ed. Brassier R. and Mackey, R.; Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p.5

62 Ed. Brassier R. and Mackey, R.; Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p.8

63 A depiction of a Foucaultian genealogical method can be found in 'The Genealogical Analysis of the Human Sciences and Its consequences for the Revising of the Critical Question' in Han, B. *Foucault's' Critical Project* (Stanford: USA, 2002) pp 109-146

will allow, in Chapter 5, a sustained discussion of Land's claim that the lexicon of drives, desires, impulses and animality best depict the forces where the metaphysical 'rubber meets the road'; that the instant of contact of the human with the outside isn't in the rarefied productions of subject's consciousness (inside), but in the drive economy and instinctual behaviour of the unconscious at the subject's periphery. Moving the site of synthesis outside of the subject requires this new language of production, but also a new way of thinking about processes of production and their agency.

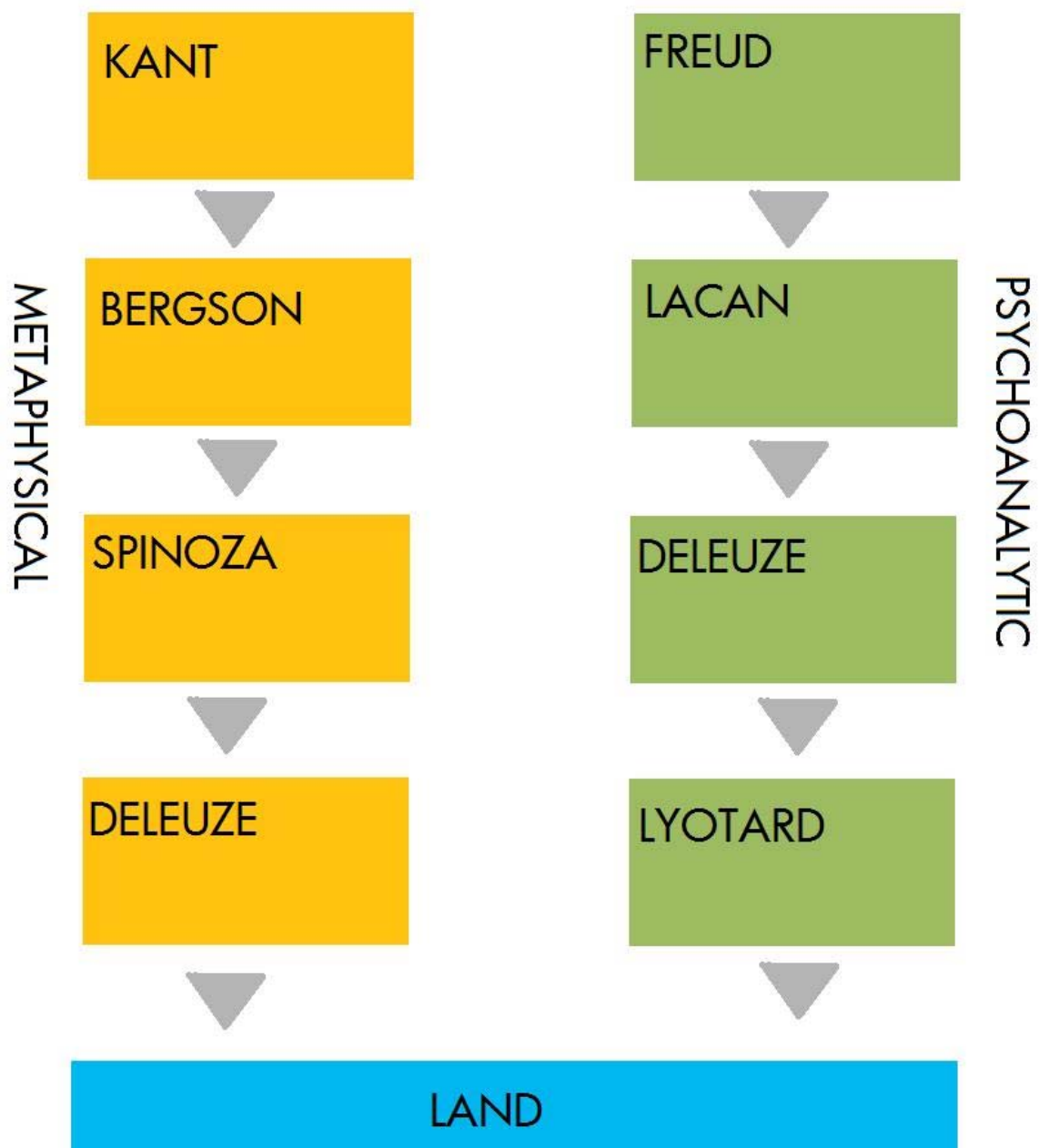


Figure 2: *Psychoanalytic and Metaphysical Genealogies*

Genealogy, a methodology most notably expounded and utilised by first Nietzsche, and later Foucault, is characterised by the investigation of the relationship between power and knowledge. There is some conflict over the concept, but much more simple misuse, as the term 'genealogy' is frequently applied to what would in fact be a solely historical methodology. The problem of the criterion or final reference for judgement has a long history in philosophy, from ancient skepticism to Lyotard's modern formulation, and the genealogical approach suggests that all too often the answer to this problem is that power dictates truth.<sup>64</sup> The genealogical method, when no longer directed at an exclusively evolutionarily account of knowledge, offers a sound methodological approach to the question the present thesis poses because it gives due importance to power relations and the role that they have in a society. The intellectual space in which drive theory has had to compete is conditioned by anthropocentric perspectives and the predominance of idealism, which seeks to crush its destabilising revelations. These anthropocentric conditions are contrasted to the more abstract models of cybernetic and teleonomic prediction which would serve as criteria for Land. However, this genealogy shall also have some traces of a historical approach, following Foucault's approach which was not a-historical, but instead would emphasise that history is not a linear progression, but instead a series of competing concepts backed by conflicting agencies. The present thesis claims that aspects of Land's conception of machinic desire can be read in all of the philosophers in the lineage presented, but in all it is a repressed, minor element. In Freud concerns of clinical practice and controversy over the role of psychoanalysis obscure it; in Lacan the dominant narrative of structuralist linguistics does so; in Deleuze and Guattari the agent is the social concerns of the *soixante-huitards* and the emphasis on difference as difference and not production; in Lyotard it is the indifference or hostility to his libidinal period. I shall show how these repressed elements can all be related to one another and subsumed into Land's greater project.

As the present thesis notes the contemporary discourse (both with the original texts and of the present thesis) surrounding these texts contains lacunae, there is a need to return to the

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64 For the former see, for example, Striker, 'The Problem of the Criterion' in Everson (ed.) *Companions to Ancient Thought 1: Epistemology* (UK: Cambridge, 1990) pp. 143–60. The latter is delineated in Lyotard, J.F. *The Postmodern Condition* (UK: Manchester University Press, 1984).

original texts in bringing out these contradictions if they are not discussed elsewhere. This is particularly the case with the works of Freud, which will require a larger degree of exposition than the later philosophers because the machinic and cybernetic aspects of his drive theory were ignored by contemporary scholars. Though Foucault's method is the predominant approach in the present thesis, Deleuze also invented a methodology, which will be used here. Regarding his monographs on philosophers, he noted that:

It was really important for [his readings to be the philosopher in question's] own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed.<sup>65</sup>

There is also a sense of this approach here, tracing how Land, attempting to answer Kant's challenge of accessing the outside, turned to the unemphasised but nevertheless present parts of the philosophers in the lineage I will examine, as they wrestled with this perhaps impossible challenge.<sup>66</sup> If there is a single text which provides inspiration for its style, if not its exact organisation, it follows Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, which utilises philosophers' works to bring about a reading they may have not explicitly intended, but which can be deployed to construct a psychoanalytic theory of Landian, productive desire.

The present thesis' methodology shall also utilise diagrams wherever possible, as genealogy lends itself to depictions of its stages in linear progressions, as shown above. A genealogy is ripe for diagrammatic method which allows representation of the relations, whether differential or sequential, between conceptual apparatus. It also follows the style of Deleuze and Guattari, and Lacan, who made use of diagrams in their own work, and of many readers of their texts who also follow this method.<sup>67</sup> A final objective in my use of diagrams is to

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65 Deleuze, G. *Negotiations*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) p.6

66 It is doubtlessly the impossibility of this challenge which means that few philosophers explicitly take it up in their work.

67 Deleuze, and Guattari's two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* are particularly diagrammatic, and Lacan's works are studded with various Schema and his Graphs of Desire. Examples of secondary readings include: Watson, J. *Guattari's Diagrammatic Thought* (UK: Bloomsbury, 2007); or O'Sullivan, S. *On the*

deploy them in support of clarity in my reading of Land and his influences, helping to depict the interrelation of his theories as simply as possible. When used this way the diagrammatic approach – like Land's use of the psychoanalytic – can be used to avoid the obfuscation and circularity which can characterise metaphysical discourses.

## **Outline of the Thesis**

The main body of this work will therefore be a genealogical reading of the psychoanalytic tradition depicted on the right hand side of Figure 2. This is organised into four chapters, each dedicated to a discussion of one thinker in this line. These discussions will relate the concepts investigated to the other thinkers in this genealogy, looking forwards to anticipate the deployment of the concepts in their refined forms, but also backwards to compare the fidelity of these later iterations with their precursors. This is particularly pertinent in psychoanalysis, as all of the major thinkers considered situate their work in relation to Freud's initial discoveries and conceptual machinery. The goal of the present thesis is not to present a general lineage of psychoanalysis, but to present a specific lineage of psychoanalysis which cumulates in a materialist reading of drive and desire. The importance of this task is noted in Land's reading of the history of psychoanalysis as being tainted by a certain anthropomorphism and idealism:

In its early stages psychoanalysis discovers that the unconscious is an impersonal machinism and that desire is positive non-representational flow, yet it 'remains in the precritical age', and stumbles before the task of an immanent critique of desire, or decathexis of society. Instead it moves in exactly the opposite direction: back into fantasy, representation, and the pathos of inevitable frustration. Instead of rebuilding reality on the basis of the productive forces of the unconscious, psychoanalysis ties up the unconscious ever more tightly in conformity with the social model of reality.<sup>68</sup>

Psychoanalysis provides the conceptual machinery for Land's development of schizoanalysis, but the history of this conception is constantly inhibited by the tendency to move in the

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*Production of Subjectivity: Five Diagrams of the Finite-Infinite Relation*, (Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

68 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) pp. 302-303



“opposite direction” which is named by Deleuze and Guattari as 'Oedipus'. In Chapter 1 I shall provide a groundwork for my reading of the different post-Freudian schools of psychoanalysis. Any discussion which operates in a psychoanalytic register necessarily uses the terminology bequeathed by Freud. The preliminary gesture of the thesis will be to identify these Freudian processes which populate the unconscious and begin to define firstly what they can do in terms of production and secondly how their operation can be conceptualised. Chapter 1 is largely an exposition of Freud’s models of the unconscious and the dynamic processes which traverse these models, as the comparative readings of the later psychoanalytic thinkers in the present thesis require an anchored depiction of these models and processes as Freud conceptualises them. This reading of Freud’s metapsychology reveals that the most important aspect of Freud's psychoanalysis for the construction of a materialist reading of his work is the introduction of drive theory, which describes the productive potential of the unconscious. Drives represent the productive pathways in the unconscious which provide the possibility for desire to operate. I shall therefore provide a reading of the bases of drive theory. Once the model of the drive is established, a distinction will be made between the 'pleasure principle' and simple positivism of the unconscious and the 'death drive', which describes its exceptional operations. The death drive will be a recurring theme in the present thesis, as it is a general term used to capture any exceptions to the expected operation of the unconscious. Each of the philosophers I consider has a slightly different reading of its operation, and establishing Freud's position is essential to understanding these later amendments.

In Chapter 2 I go on to consider Lacan's thesis that ‘the unconscious is structured like a language’ and investigate the two directions in which such a concept can lead. The first is a structuralist view that considers the unconscious to consist of *an abstract set of relations* which can be analogised to the linguistic processes of metaphor and metonymy. The reading is amenable to a cybernetic conception of the unconscious, something which Lacan came close to in the 1950s, before abandoning such a methodology.<sup>69</sup> The second reading, which reflects Lacan's later output and that of the wider Lacanian School is to conceptualise the unconscious as consisting of *linguistic elements*; that is not like a language but is a language.

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69 Evans, D. 'From Lacan to Darwin' in *The Literary Animal; Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, eds.

Gottschall, J. and Wilson, D.S. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005) (available at

<http://beta.finance-on.net/upload/ver/ver4480020c6d2b2/lacan.pdf> ) pp.38-55

This second reading is therefore more amenable to an anthropocentric reading of the unconscious as a 'little consciousness', which does not operate according to formal, cybernetic rules, but according to the logic of the 'inside', comparing ideas to ideas. A discussion of this distinction is important in the construction of a materialist theory of desire because Lacan represents the return of psychoanalysis towards idealist philosophy and, in Deleuze and Guattari's reading, towards social conservatism. Lacanianism therefore represents the tendency in psychoanalysis which Land is emphatically arguing against. Exploring how Lacan's psychoanalysis is prone to slip towards anthropomorphism will help clarify Land's reading of Deleuze and Guattari.

Chapter 3 is devoted to Deleuze and Guattari's reading of psychoanalysis, concentrating on *Anti-Oedipus*, which introduces the concept of schizoanalysis. Deleuze and Guattari argued that psychoanalysis, following Lacan, had descended into conservatism (Oedipus) and a negative, idealist conception of desire. I shall contextualise *Anti-Oedipus* in relation to Freudianism and Lacanianism, before considering Deleuze and Guattari's positive theory of productive desire, and the schizoanalytic register in which they attempted to track and describe its productions. Land's reading of Deleuze and Guattari, and his use of schizoanalysis in the construction of machinic desire will be contrasted with alternate readings of Deleuze which produce a more anthropocentric view of his commitments. I shall consider the reading of Deleuze by Ansell-Pearson, who posits an anti-anthropocentric reading of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* in *Germinal Life*.<sup>70</sup> This superbly argued exposition of the metaphysical anti-anthropomorphism which marks Deleuze's 'middle-period' philosophical works depicts his re-working of Kant under the influence of Bergson, Spinoza and Nietzsche into an elaborate conceptual apparatus which: "[Grants] primacy not to the receptive capacity that receives impressions and experiences sensations but to the contractile power of contemplation that constitutes the organism before it constitutes the sensations that affect it."<sup>71</sup>

I shall go on to consider Land's reading, as a 'Black Deleuzian' who takes up Deleuze's ideas of impersonal and machinic production and marries them to cybernetic and teleological circuits of accelerative production. This synthesis of Deleuze and cybernetics provides the basis for Land's reading of the transformative power of modernity. For Land, the difference

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70 Ansell-Pearson, K. *Germinal Life* (London: Routledge, 1999)

71 Ansell-Pearson, K. *Germinal Life* (London: Routledge, 1999) p. 67

between pre-modern and modern societies is that the affect of desiring production is visible in the latter. In the shock waves caused as production punches through various thresholds, we can trace the true force of desire which works through and around the individual subject “passing through compression thresholds normed to an intensive logistic curve: 1500, 1756, 1884, 1948, 1980, 1996, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2011”<sup>72</sup>.

I shall contrast these anti-anthropocentric readings of Deleuze with the more conventional ones of Buchanan and Colebrook to demonstrate what I conceptualise as being a split between 'left' and 'right' Deleuzianism. The first chapter of Buchanan's *Deleuzism* (2000) begins with an excellent depiction of Deleuze's anti-representational method and his philosophy as a philosophy of production. This reading however pirouettes into a reading of Deleuze as a philosopher of the body and the joy of the body for which we must attain a: “conversion of inadequate ideas (passions) into adequate ones (desire)”<sup>73</sup> For Buchanan the body represents the whole human body and desire some kind of wish in that body rather than the impersonal desire described in the preceding pages: “[t]his correlation of desire with production” which flows through unindividuated material.<sup>74</sup> It is no small effort to follow Deleuze's anti-anthropocentric metaphysics without backsliding, and many interpreters succumb to this temptation of reintroducing the metaphysical panoply of subject-derived concepts. Baudrillard notes that the conclusion of libidinal philosophy had a tendency to be:

“You've got an unconscious and must learn how to liberate it.

You've got a body and must learn how to enjoy it.”<sup>75</sup> [*This quote retains the formatting of Baudrillard's original text*]

This obviously represents a misreading of the impersonal and productive unconscious as it is set back in the service of anthropocentric goals related to the enjoyment of the subject.

Deleuze and Guattari's theory of machinic desire results in their positing of desiring machines

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72 Land, *N. Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York; Urbanomic, 2011) p. 443

73 Buchanan, I. *Deleuzism* (USA, Duke University Press; 2000) p. 31

74 Buchanan, I. *Deleuzism* (USA: Duke University Press, 2000) p. 15

75 Baudrillard, J. *Forget Foucault*, (New York: Semiotexte, 2007) p.39

as “black boxes”.<sup>76</sup> The black boxes are the site of a series of syntheses, and their production can be measured, but this is as far as our functional knowledge of them extends. The subject of Chapter 4, Lyotard, is an important figure in the genealogy of psychoanalysis because he returns to the psychoanalytic, Freudian, tradition and begins to reconstruct what the internal processes governing these black boxes might be. His description of these unconscious ‘primary processes’ will be considered, particularly with reference to the concept of the figural, the term he uses to designate the transformation of the latent content of the unconscious into the manifest content of the subject (primary process into secondary). Lyotard's position in the history of philosophy is currently as a philosopher of language (in *Le Differend*, 1988), and as the author of *The Postmodern Condition* (1984). The writings of his 'libidinal period', disowned by their author, have attracted little commentary in anglophone philosophy. I shall consider two of the strongest readings of the libidinal period, by Williams (1998) and Bennington (1988) which both reflect the tendency to contextualise Lyotard, even in this libidinal-psychoanalytic period, as a philosopher of the 'event', which tends towards the metaphysical. He himself came to believe that his libidinal period could not be defended, and I shall conclude by considering his self-criticism and his relation to anthropocentrism.

Though it will be discussed in relation to the concepts introduced in the previous chapters, Land's philosophy will be depicted systematically in Chapter 5. Land's readings of other philosophers will be considered, before the consequences of his productive theory of desire are discussed. This evaluation will consider the implication of Land's psychoanalytic reading of machinic desire in terms of both the subject and its interaction with the outside, and also the ability of schizoanalysis to map the desiring productions of objects themselves.

### **The trap of Anthropocentrism**

“There is one simple criterion of taste in philosophy. That one avoid the vulgarity of anthropocentrism”.<sup>77</sup> It might be asked why the present thesis considers 'Land's anti-anthropocentric philosophy' rather than 'Land's philosophy of outsideness' as detailed above. Irruptions of the outside take a number of forms in Land's work, ranging from objects which are out of their time to hints of alien subjectivities or the evolution of artificial intelligences

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76 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 323

77 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. xx

(AI).<sup>78</sup> Of course, for Land, the most important actor of the outside, which is the non-human realm, is capitalism itself.<sup>79</sup> Similarly, there are numerous apparatus of recapture by the inside: the conservatisms of social control and tradition; the Turing Police preventing the rise of AI; a whole range of interventions made on behalf of metaphysical idealism. In the present thesis anthropocentrism is taken as being a subset within this larger group of operations defending insiderness. It refers to operations in thought, primarily philosophical thought, which try and reconcile conceptions of the world-as-it-is with the representation of the world-as-it-appears-to-us. In its most simple sense it is common sense and everyday perception in which the world's presentation to the subject is considered unproblematic. In metaphysical discourse it is the introduction into any discourse of anthropic concepts which are not grounded by referencing the real. It simply takes our anthropocentric conception of the world as an unproblematic given, something which Land scrupulously avoids: "Level 1, or world-space is an anthropomorphically scaled, predominantly vision-configured, massively multi-slotted reality system that is obsolescing very rapidly".<sup>80</sup> Under the present thesis' reading, anti-anthropocentrism is a critique of philosophical trajectories that work from the inside out, which are stuck within the humanist world-space at 'level 1'. Landian (and as Chapter 3 shall argue, Deleuzian) schizoanalysis-machinic desire is a positive philosophy of production which maps the process which will upload the post-human to level 2.

A term closely related to (anti)-anthropocentrism is (anti)-anthropomorphism, which is used occasionally in this text either in response to its use in another work (for example, in Land's as quoted above), or where the concept discussed is closer to its philosophical usage as placing the form of appearances to the subject as unproblematic. Anthropocentrism is the preferred term of the two as anthropomorphism already has a distinct place in philosophy to denote the fallacy of equating the thoughts of humans and non-human animals, believing the latter to have similar intentional states.

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78 Objects out of time are explored in 2014's *Templexity* ( Land, N. Time Spiral Press, 2014) and the defunct website *Hyperstition*; alien subjectivities and artificial intelligences are discussed widely at *Xenosystems* (xenosystems.net) and *Urban Future* (ufblog.net)

79 Capitalism is a recurring theme in Land's work. Perhaps the best depiction of its outsiderness is found in 'Meltdown' in Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011)

80 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p.456

Anti-anthropocentric philosophy therefore aims to reduce the importance of subjectivity and the role of the Cartesian 'I am' in our understanding of the world. Mackey states that this project of entirely removing the subject is, of course, paradoxical in any philosophical system:

Mackay: This is a thing which Land doesn't just remove as an option, he very deliberately abjures it. For Land there is no agency. There is a paradox – there is a strange expression of subjectivity which his project seeks to practically erase ... the aim of his project is towards the obliteration of this problematic thing. It is self-refuting to some extent as he wants to close this void or incision into the world.<sup>81</sup>

However, the present thesis does not aim to finally strip subjectivity from Land's philosophical position. Its aim rather is to show how certain tendencies in philosophy introduce a multiplicity of anthropocentric concepts which are situated in relation to each other. By stressing the psychoanalytic and the theory of desiring-production it by-passes the need to concentrate on the contents of subjectivity. Essentially, it will claim that an idea should not be contrasted to another idea – in Landian terms, the inside interrogating itself; instead an idea must be tested by reality – we must look to the outside and check its effects and productions. This outside is reminiscent of Bataille's base matter:

In order to differentiate between the real correlate of the object, or epistemologically determined real substance, and the unconditioned unknown, Bataille does not refer merely to matter, but to base matter; a materiality so alien to the epistemological framework that it is utterly without dependence upon the form of the object (the thing).<sup>82</sup>

Rather than the correlate of the object of perception, base matter is a flow of becoming which surpasses the anthropocentric perspective; it is a force of production. By investigating base matter which cannot be 'perceived', we escape the anthropocentric prejudices of the 'monkey

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81 Mackey, R. in a comment at Brassier, R. 'Accelerationism' from *Accelerationism*, (Goldsmiths College: London, 14 September 2010) ( available at <https://moskvax.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/accelerationism-ray-brassier/> )

82 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 169

trap' which attempts to maintain humanity in 'level 1': "The Monkey Trap is an 'intelligence equilibrium' [...] My problem — 'equilibrium' and 'trap' have almost identical meaning."<sup>83</sup> Ultimately Land aims to maximise intelligence – defined as the differentiation of base matter and the capability of base matter to become further differentiated – a process which, as Chapter 5 shall show, base matter automatically tends towards, if cut free of the constraints imposed on it by anthropic tendencies towards conservatism.

### **Anti-Anthropocentrism and Anti-Academism**

Land's reading of the history of philosophy is of a series of repressions in which irruptions of outsideness – a means of escape from the prison of the anthropocentric belief that our ideas about the world are true representations of the world – are always suppressed by the desire of philosophers, and humanity in general, to guarantee that the world is as it appears to us. Another noted reader of Deleuze, John Protevi, also notes this tendency in the history of philosophy: "[A] historical figure... does not grasp, or backs away from, the radical implications of what he has written in a "furtive and explosive moment"<sup>84</sup>. The story that I shall trace of the interplay between irruption and recapture of the outsideness radical psychoanalysis posits can therefore be situated in the context of this wider metaphysical tendency. This tension between inside and outside can be seen in the commentary about Deleuze's materialist conception of desiring production, which provides the foundation of Land's 'libidinal materialism', and his sustained attack on anthropocentric trends in contemporary philosophy.<sup>85</sup> Though Deleuze took a step back from the radically anti-humanist consequences of his theories, Land does not, and proposes that we should follow them to their ends, accelerating the removal of anthropocentrism from thought.<sup>86</sup> To do this, we should therefore take every opportunity to open up the 'inside' to invasion by the 'outside'. Land's use

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83 Land, N. at *Xenosystems*, 2013 (admin Reply: September 2nd, 2013 at 8:09 am at

<http://www.xenosystems.net/the-monkey-trap/>)

84 Protevi, J. *Coursework Materials* (Protevi.com, 2007) ( available at [www.protevi.com/john/DG](http://www.protevi.com/john/DG) )

85 This range of interpretations of Deleuze will be considered in depth in Chapter 3.

86 The 'retreat' made by Deleuze and Guattari after they assessed the initial impact of *Anti-Oedipus* is described in 'Making it With Death' in Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) pp.

277-287

of the anti-anthropocentric outsideness of drive theory has many aspects: it strips ideational content from the genesis of desire; it demonstrates an irrationality in the subject-driven conception of the decision making process; and it relegates consciousness temporally to the status of an after-effect of the unconscious process. The present thesis posits that the overall tendency of Land's radical drive theory is to further move the intentionality of desire from its traditional anthropocentric conception as being a capacity of the Cartesian subject, thereby dethroning the conscious self as the master of its own wants and the site of the subject's interaction with the world (see figure 3 below).

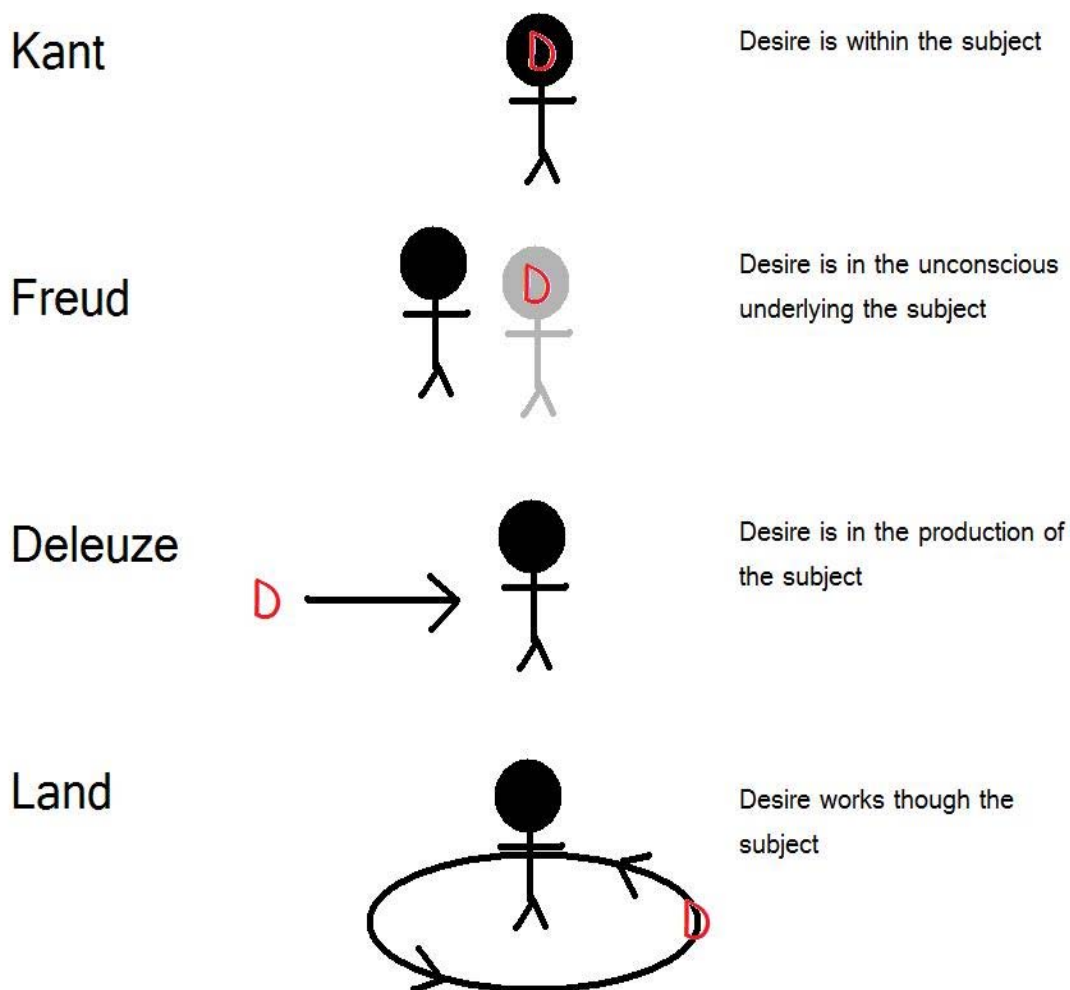


Figure 3: *Desire is no longer a property of the subject.*

Despite the growing interest in this radical tendency of anti-anthropocentric metaphysics as a



philosophical position, there has not been a corresponding shift in societal norms and praxes. This, again, seems to be because of the tendency for such radicality to be captured by conservatism. If one is to take this position of Land's libidinal materialism, anthropocentrism must be regarded as a philosophical trap, a backsliding towards the pit of "vulgarity".<sup>87</sup> Philosophy, insofar as many of its central questions remain unresolved (and are unresolvable) is a series of dichotomies between opposed concepts. For Land, if we are to avoid "[siding] with cages" we must take up fixed positions on the side of anti-anthropomorphism, and rigorously defend them from recapture by the partisans of the idealism and humanism.<sup>88</sup> One of Land's core claims is that the academy works against radical philosophy, trying to neuter its revelations and seal up the 'wound' which it opens. As such, 'outside' philosophy cannot enter into a debate with established philosophy – academia – but must model its interaction as an insurrection or assault:

[F]or the university considers its other to be incompetent, whilst the part of this other—admittedly a very small part—that has seized and learnt to manipulate the weaponry of philosophical strife, considers the voice of the university to be irremediably tainted by servility.<sup>89</sup>

Obviously the academy is Janus-faced in one respect because its members can be both the instigators of the breach or irruption of the outside, but then also the force which seals it. And as neither is necessarily more powerful than the other, it is the combination of both which creates the disfigured and contradictory positions which are studded throughout philosophy. In this reading Land again follows Deleuze:

Both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche develop the opposition between the private thinker, the thinker-comet and bearer of repetition, and the public professor and doctor of law, whose second-hand discourse proceeds by mediation and finds its moralizing source in the generality of concepts (cf. Kierkegaard against Hegel, Nietzsche against Kant and Hegel...)<sup>90</sup>

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87 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. xx

88 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. xx

89 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.11

90 Deleuze, G. *Difference and Repetition* Trans. Paul Patton (UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014) p. 8

I shall consider two movements of recapture which the academy utilises, and consider how they operate to neuter the more radically anti-anthropocentric theories which emerge. The first action is conducted by the philosophers who open the breach themselves. In both Freud and Lacan this can be seen in the division between their critical and clinical work. As Evans states: “Lacan’s backsliding shows a curious parallel with Freud’s own intellectual journey”.<sup>91</sup> In the case of Lyotard and Deleuze, both philosophers step back from their most radically anti-anthropocentric positions and publish later works which shy away from the consequences of the breaches they initially made.<sup>92</sup> The second recapture is conducted by the later interpreters of a philosopher. Recent developments in speculative realism provides a model through which we can view this mechanism. Firstly, the irruption of the new is adopted by experimental art, and becomes a matter of praxis rather than theory. Its influence is then apparent in the work of avant-garde scholars across a wide spectrum of academic disciplines. These recapitulations tend to use 'stripped down' versions of its concepts and models which are used as tools, maps or components in a practice which is a bricolage. The anti-anthropomorphism which permeates the initial philosophical irruption is lost as humanities and other subject-centred disciplines relate its conclusions to their own epistemological assumptions.

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91 Evans, D. 'From Lacan to Darwin' in *The Literary Animal; Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, eds.

Gottschall, J. and Wilson, D.S. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005) pp. 38-55. Available online at ( <http://beta.finance-on.net/upload/ver/ver4480020c6d2b2/lacan.pdf> )

92 In the case of Deleuze, Land situates this backsliding as being between the publication of *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. See Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York; Urbanomic, 2011) pp. 278, 280.

A discussion can be found in *Fascist lines of the tokkotai* by Michelsen, N. in *Deleuze & Fascism: Security: War: Aesthetics* Ed. B. Evans, J. Reid (UK: Routledge, 2013) pp. 158 - 163

## Chapter 2. Freud: the Constitution of the Unconscious

This genealogy begins by examining the texts of Freud, as psychoanalysis begins with his works. They represent a distinctive point at which its lexicon is fixed and the discipline emerges as an independent field of study. However, as a genealogy this is more than a simple time-line or evolutionary account of the development of psychoanalysis. Though it is true that psychoanalysis has its own cladistics and subsequent psychoanalytical theories must be contextualised to the extent to which they are plesiomorphic or apomorphic in relation to the common ancestor which is Freudianism, the discipline cannot be contextualised as a linear progression towards a final 'truth'. In this respect it mirrors philosophy proper, whose central debates have never been decisively resolved in favour of one position or another, and whose history is of the cyclical return of concepts back to fashion.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, in psychoanalysis this conflict over its concepts is always-already there, and happens in real time as Freud makes his discoveries and the clinical, philosophical and socio-political actors of the time battle to define the effects of the operation of the new unconscious. In the context of philosophy's interest in the discipline, the materialist–idealist schism, as outlined in the introduction, pre-exists psychoanalysis, and its partisans have read the unconscious – as the present thesis examines – from the perspective of their respective camps. The genealogical method deployed here will allow consideration of why these readings persist as well as the structure of these objections, and is an essential prelude to the readings of Deleuze and Guattari's critique of Freudianism presented in Chapter 3.

The passage through Freud's psychoanalytic work is fraught with sources of complexity and I shall begin by noting some of the methodological problems which arise for interpreters of Freud's body of work. Three of the most significant problems are: (1) the fragmentary nature of the work. The Standard Edition is chronological rather than thematic, and one is forced to jump between texts to explain Freud's thoughts, rather than be able to follow a definitive line of inquiry. This is closely related to (2) the tendency of psychoanalytic concepts to be only explicable in relation to other psychoanalytic concepts. This leads to the problem of having to

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93 An apt example of this is the rise of speculative realism, as described in the Introduction.

occasionally introduce new terms to my analysis which will only be explored in the fullest manner at a later point, along with the vexed question of picking a point at which to start. In response to this question, I have chosen to begin with Freud's 'discovery' of the unconscious in his analysis of neurosis, and his early analysis of the dreamwork, as this allows the crucial notion of censorship – which defines the boundary between conscious and unconscious - to be explored. Finally, (3) the polemical nature of interpretation of Freud's texts means that a 'neutral' reading is almost impossible to offer. As this whole thesis follows the development and interpretation of Freud's models of the unconscious and its processes, I have chosen to use secondary texts which are considered canonical interpretations of Freud, rather than to consider some of the most trenchant or polarised critiques of his work when citing authoritative readings of his work. Similarly, wherever possible, I shall refer directly to Freud's words rather than recapitulations of it.

Freud's decisive contribution to psychology and philosophy was his formulation and explication of the first modern theory of the unconscious.<sup>94</sup> Just as 'modern' philosophy dates from the Cartesian exposition of the philosophical subject, psychoanalysis – and, arguably, philosophical post-modernity – begin with Freud's decentering of this subject, undercutting its supposed foundation in universal reason by exposing the 'pit' of the unconscious upon which it uncertainly rests. I will begin with a description of this discovery in *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).<sup>95</sup> In these early works Freud introduces the entities and processes which populate the unconscious and begins to demonstrate how their effects can be observed. I shall then turn to the spatial elaboration of these concepts in Freud's later depictions of the unconscious. These models of the psychical system are outlined in the 'metapsychological' papers Freud published during and after the Great War; the period 1914 – 1923. The most important are: *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915), *The Unconscious*

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94 A historical account of Freud's importance can be found in Ellenberger, H. *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (London: Fontana, 1994) pp. 418-571

95 As Freud's works are systematised in the standard edition by year of publication, I have included the date of each of his works' publication in German to provide a sense of the geological development of his thought, but also to allow the reader to identify their place in the Standard Edition. All references are to the Standard Edition edited by Smith, I. which is available online under a free licence. All of Freud's texts referenced here can be found in that volume.

(1915), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and *The Ego and the Id* (1923). The overall structure of this chapter is a division into three stages: a discussion of populations in the unconscious, then of topographies, and then finally processes in the unconscious. The most important stage is this final depiction of the processes of the unconscious as drives, as drive theory is the crucial concept in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, however, the preceding stages are essential to defining how the drive-economy can be conceptualised.

This chapter aims to introduce the language of psychoanalysis which will be deployed by Land in his description of 'machinic-desire' ("drives are the functions of nomadic cybernetic systems, not instincts but simulated instincts, artificial instincts"), but will also consider the tension between anthropocentrism and anti-anthropocentrism in Freud's own thought.<sup>96</sup> If psychoanalysis has the quality of being able to bypass the anthropocentrism of metaphysics it must be possible to read Freud's systematisation of the unconscious as formal and productive rather than idealist. This tension between anti and pro-anthropocentric positions can be seen in two separate lexical registers in Freud's work which have limited points of interaction. When dealing with a concrete case of mental illness in applied psychoanalysis, Freud adopts a terminology which describes the mental processes of the patient in terms of the ideas which they carry and the changes in the state of these ideas. These state changes tend to be described abruptly rather than gradually, and as a change in the location or the quality of the information contained in the idea. They therefore relate to an idealist philosophy as their currency is very much the comparison of a set of mental intuitions or ideas within the patient's psyche, and it operates as an attempt to calculate and then influence the extent to which they correspond in their unconscious and conscious apparatus. The second register is used when Freud discusses the evolution of mental illness in the patient, or begins to move from single, observed cases to a more general set of rules which describe universal processes in the psyche. When Freud refers to the change of the organism over time and the formation of complexes, and when he constructs a theory of psychoanalysis; the language of this change is one of energeticism: of force, pulsion or drive. As these changes correspond to quantity and force rather than of idea, they are not idealist, but are materialist. Though they may become ideas, when in the unconscious they are not yet so, and it is unhelpful to conceptualise them as such at this point. A further complication to universal understanding of Freud is that a third set of terms is occasionally used to describe the processes of the psyche. When Freud makes

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96 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 330

the transition between these two lexicons described above, he tends to use the language of structural biology as his bridge. Freud refers to networks, patterns and connections, particularly referring to neuronal and nerve connections within the body. Freud is not unaware of this problematic series of shifts in description between terminologies in his work – in *The Unconscious* (1915), he states his wish to see them unified in one single vocabulary, a metapsychology:

We see how we have gradually been led into adopting a third point of view in our account of psychical phenomena. Besides the dynamic and topographical points of view, we have adopted the economic one. This endeavours to follow the vicissitudes of amounts of excitation and to arrive at least at some relative estimate of their magnitude.

It will not be unreasonable to give a specific name to this whole way of regarding our subject matter, for it is the consummation of psycho-analytic research. I propose that when we have succeeded in describing a process in its dynamic, topographical and economic aspects, we should speak of it as a metapsychological presentation. We must say at once that in the present state of our knowledge there are only a few points at which we succeed in this.<sup>97</sup>

Yet despite the obvious desirability of a complete metapsychological model, there are few points (as he acknowledges) at which Freud managed to fully describe both psychical operations and the observed manifestations of the complex in the subject in this way. Instead, we must interpret different parts of Freudian metapsychological theory according to the languages and processes specific to the unique register of the model Freud is working within (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: *Key processes in Freud's three hypotheses*

Economic Hypothesis	Dynamic Hypothesis	Topographical Hypothesis
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97 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at

[http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p.3004

Drive	Censor / Repression	Ego
Desire	Metaphor / Metonymy	Id
Instinct	Dreamwork	Super Ego

This chapter shall describe the three hypotheses of the unconscious' operation depicted in table 2 and consider the extent to which they are anti-anthropocentric, moving from his early work on hysteria through to his mature depictions of the drive. I shall argue that the key criterion for determining anthropomorphism in Freud's thought is the extent to which the unconscious is equivalent to consciousness; to which its productions are qualitatively the same as consciousness (that they are ideas). Whilst there is scope to question the radicalness of some of Freud's earlier work by looking at the question of depth – the idea that the unconscious is qualitatively the same as consciousness, but is merely located in a 'deeper', inaccessible area – I shall show that in his later work there is a distinctly anti-anthropocentric tendency which is caused by the separation of two economies on the primary and secondary process: those of cathected and tonic energy. Establishing the model of the unconscious found in *The Unconscious* is vital for the present thesis as it forms the basis of Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the unconscious:

Freud conceives the unconscious in three interrelated ways: dynamically, topographically and economically. However, it was not until his 1915 paper 'The Unconscious' that he brought these strands together in a systematic way. This same paper is credited by Deleuze and Guattari with the discovery of 'desiring-production', which as will become clear in what follows is the essential conceptual bedrock of their position.<sup>98</sup>

### **Discovery and Populations**

As stated above, vacillation between lexical registers is nearly universal in Freud's work. We can observe it in the earliest of Freud's texts, those inspired by his work on hysterical

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98 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (London: Continuum, 2008) p. 27

patients.<sup>99</sup> The fundamental process responsible for the hysteric's condition was hypothesised to be the repression of a fact which would be so damaging to the patient's sense of self (the ego) that the mental apparatus could not allow it to become known to the conscious subject. In *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* (1894), Freud sketches a tripartite model of this mechanism of hysteria:

1. An idea is loaded with such a level of 'effect' that it becomes dangerous to the psyche.
2. A splitting of the idea from its current associative connotations takes place, and the idea is cut loose of its previous associative links in the psyche.
3. Once it has been cut-off the level of 'charge' in the psyche must be dissipated by other means. If no stable formation can be found within 'normality', it manifests itself as hysteria.<sup>100</sup>

Even in this early work of Freudian psychoanalysis, we can see the split in the Freudian system between the economic description of the cause of illness and the non-economic description of the nature of the symptoms. The first proposition begins in in one register with a "sum of excitation" which is "put to work", leaning on economic terminology; yet, when talking about the nature of the patient's changed mental state, Freud talks about dislodged and transposed terms, a spatial description.<sup>101</sup> Freud's narrative begins with an 'economic' observation about excess energy, but the conclusion he derives from this hypothesis is the existence of a 'knowing' force of censorship which, understanding the potential of ideas to be dangerous, separates them along the binary divisions of safe/harmful, good/bad, allowed/not allowed, and finally candidates for the conscious thought/those which are solely unconscious.

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99 The most important of which are: *A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnotism* (1892), *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* (1894), and *Studies on Hysteria* (1895)

100 These stages surmises Freud's depiction in Freud, S. *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* (1894) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) pp. 304 - 306

101 (a) Freud, S. *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* (1894) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 304

(b) Freud, S. *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* (1894) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 309



This duality is repeated in the second stage of the argument. As soon as ‘the idea is separated from its affect’, Freud changes his register from the economic to one of the qualities of information.<sup>102</sup> Again, the growth of the complex is economic, yet the force of the censor is spatial, moving ideas away from consciousness. In the conclusion of *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence*, Freud refers to “a quantity... which is capable of increase, diminution, displacement and discharge, and which is spread over the memory traces of ideas” here he reverts to a ‘drive’ theory, which is explained in terms of the economic hypothesis.<sup>103</sup> So long as the psyche is working correctly, economic terminology is sufficient for Freud. But as soon as there is a breakdown in the system and Freud has to relate the transformation of healthy ideas into unhealthy ones, or vice versa, Freud reverts to the linguistic register. The notions of ‘the censor’ and ‘repression’, these two forces which are concerned with the evaluation of sub-conscious ideas have no definitive description in Freud's economic vocabulary at this stage. Freud’s alternate use of these two registers is consistent with his desire to make psychoanalysis both a new science (necessitating pseudo-scientific terminology), and a new practice of treatment (speaking to the layman). Rather than resolving these contradictions definitively, Freud pragmatically prioritises the development of the psychoanalytic movement above the quest for a unified vocabulary of the analyst.

Despite this lack of meta-theoretical resolution, it is possible to delineate the point at which Freud's work passes towards anti-anthropocentrism. Freud's work on hysteria is subject centred because it is patient centred; because it focuses on a complex which must be resolved by the psychoanalyst.<sup>104</sup> Freud's major discovery in relation to treatment was that the talking cure was possible if the underlying mechanism of repression could be demonstrated to the patient. Yet if this was the extent of Freud's contribution to medicine, there would be no scope for a thesis to dissect his anti-anthropocentric tendencies, as the talking cure remains in the anthropocentric domain of the manipulation of ideas. It is Freud's later study of the

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102 Freud, S. *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* (1894) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 307

103 Freud, *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* (1894) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 314

104 See 'Complex' in Laplanche and Pontails, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) pp.73-74

unconscious' processes which distances psychoanalysis from idealism. The conception of the unconscious as an independent mechanism undercuts the metaphysical assumption of a human subject as the centre of volition and decision making, instead moving agency to a bizarre, alien zone. Freud's subsequent work investigates this 'other place' and the way in which it operates, and as his concerns become more abstract and more coldly theoretical, he shows the unconscious as being nothing like the conscious system, and that some of its contents are nothing like thoughts.<sup>105</sup>

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) Freud introduces the processes of the 'dreamwork' which describes how the unconscious can manipulate and change its content. The processes of the dreamwork were used by Freud to create a more advanced model of the workings of the psyche than the binary notion of repression in hysteria. Hysteria was treated by identifying a symptom which was often starkly apparent, and therefore provided many relatively simple cases, however, in certain cases the true nature of the repressed had been so thoroughly hidden by the operation of the unconscious that Freud required a much more detailed study of the unconscious' mechanism.<sup>106</sup> Freud believed the 'royal road to the unconscious' was found in dreams which, as they are not so determined by sensoral stimuli as wakefulness is, are a combination of the conscious and unconscious impulses of the psyche. Freud's clinical use of the dreamwork is as a tool which allows him to engage in a more detailed investigation of the complex in a patient. Yet the true importance of the dreamwork is that it begins to consider the simplest transformational mechanisms and processes which exist in the unconscious – and they operate not only in dreams as an exemplar but, as Freud shows, in its quotidian, waking operation as well.<sup>107</sup>

The radical strangeness of the unconscious, the other place, provides the first formulation of

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105 A recurring metaphor in the present thesis is Freud's description of the unconsciousness as '*eine andere Schauplatz*' (an-other place), which captures the strangeness and qualitative difference of its operation.

106 See 'Symptom-Formation' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993)

107 Freud elaborates the fact that the functions of the unconscious are the same in the complex as in daily life in his further investigation of parapraxes and jokes (See Freud: *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1904) and *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905)).

Freud's topographical model, which distinguishes between a primary process (*Primärvorgang*) at the root of the unconscious, and a secondary process (*Sekundärvorgang*) which revises the products of the primary process as they make their way towards consciousness. This topographical model is characterised by its depth - at the deepest level, the primary process, we have the alien unconscious; at the shallowest we have fully formed 'ideas' available to consciousness. In relation to anthropocentrism, the question is where is the 'work' of the dreamwork done? The higher up it is done, the more idea-like its productions are, and the more like conscious thought it is.

Freud uses the dreamwork to depict this work of the unconscious as it tries to evade the censor, and its operations only make sense when we remember that there is a force of repression – as previously identified in hysterics – which the unconscious is trying to work around. To effect this it needs to transform that which is repressed into something which is not, but which can do the work of the repressed, which is to allow the achievement of the desired cathexis.<sup>108</sup> For this process to be possible, there must be an associative arrangement in the psyche, through which the unconscious can re-route a charge of affect. It is along these associative lines that energy shall pass as it attempts to avoid repression by the censor.<sup>109</sup>

The first stages of the dreamwork are condensation and displacement. Freud assigns these processes to the domain of the primary process, the pure unconscious. Processes which are revisions to this first stage of the dreamwork take place in the higher, secondary processes, therefore these two are the basic operations of the dreamwork. Condensation (*Verdichtung*) is

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108 In Freud's original German the term used is *Besetzung*, which is translated by Strachey as cathexis but can also be rendered as occupation, charge or investment of energy captures the operation of the unconscious according to economical and mechanical metaphors. The unconscious operates as a system whose role is to distribute these charges or effects according to its internal rules. A discussion can be found in 'Cathexis' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J., *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993)

109 This is consistent with Moretti's depiction that "The 'formal' conciliation is not the *means*, the simple *medium* of pleasure: it is its *end*, its true and only substance. The pleasure does not lie in having 'slackened' the grip of the censorship a little, but in having redrawn with precision the spheres of influence of the various psychic forces." This description, with its terminology of spheres of influence is congruent with the definition of cathexis above. Moretti, A. *Signs taken for Wonders* (London: Verso, 2005) p. 39.

the combination of several different ideas into one single idea.<sup>110</sup> It is one of the most fundamental concepts in psychoanalysis, as it describes the most basic manipulations of intensity or information in the psyche. The idea presented after condensation is singular, but represents a number of intensities. Laplanche states that the condensed idea is a nodal point which represents a common factor held by two separate chains of conjoined ideas.<sup>111</sup> The common term in these different associative chains takes over from all of the other terms represented by the latent content of the dream, and presents itself in their place as the manifest content of the dream. In the case where the dream's latent content is a picnic and a trip to Paris, the manifest presentation after condensation might be a Brie (see Figure 4 below).

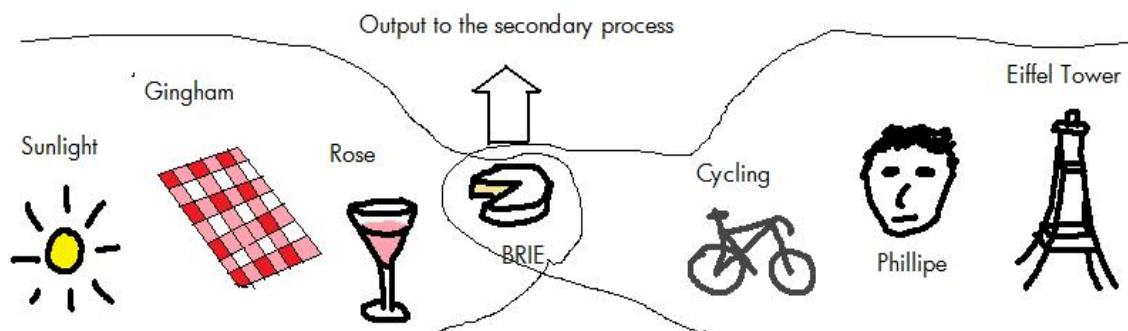


Figure 4: *Condensation: the overlapping part of the chain 'Picnic' and the chain 'Paris' is 'Brie'.*

The status of the components of the dreamwork are contested by the philosophers considered in this genealogy. Their exact nature is one of the key questions of the present thesis, as the extent to which they are 'ideas' or 'like ideas' is the key measure of the extent of their anthropocentrism. In *The International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* Danon-Boileau stresses that a product of condensation “is not a chimera”; not a composite image of its

110 See 'Dream-Work' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993)

111 Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p.81; see also Mitchell, M. and Black, S. *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*, (USA: Basic Books, 1995) p. 9

components, but is one single term which stands for all of the others.<sup>112</sup> This reading is contested by Lyotard in 'The Dream Work Does Not Think', his rejoinder to Lacan's subsumption of the dreamwork as a quasi-linguistic process.<sup>113</sup> For Lyotard condensation does not happen to discourse (signifying chains and language) but instead to figures (images), which are, by their nature, composites in which aspects of the original elements can be determined (I shall consider Lyotard's depiction of the dreamwork at length in Chapter 3).

Condensation's effects can be seen in Freud's analysis of the case of Little Hans in *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy* (1909). That there are chimeric figures in dreams is demonstrated when he likens the blackness around the mouth of Hans' dream horses to a moustache; this being a facial feature of his father. This shows that a product of condensation can escape its repression by the censor if the new investment is sufficiently unlike the latent content which creates it. Displacement (*Verschiebung*) works in a similar way, enabling an idea to escape the censor. In the case of displacement a whole chain of investments are lifted from their association with the repressed concept and are reattached to a different concept.<sup>114</sup> An example of displacement would be the animal fears of Little Hans or the Wolf Man.<sup>115</sup> Freud hypothesises that in the case of Hans, it is his fear of castration by his father which has been displaced onto the image of being bitten by a horse. Hans has no conscious idea of his fear of the father, because the only idea which is allowed to be presented to him when *unpleasure about the prospect of castration* is triggered in the primary process is a secondary cathexis of energy into *the concept of 'horse'*. While quite effective as a way of permitting the father to be seen without triggering the displeasure which he would otherwise cause, the unfortunate side effect of this is a traumatic experience at a time where it would not be expected, that is, seeing the representation of a horse (be it in dreams or in waking-thought).

Censorship operates on the border between the primary and secondary processes of the

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112 'Condensation' in Ed. de Mijola, A. *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (USA: Macmillan, 2005)

113 Lyotard, J.F. 'The Dream Work Does Not Think'. Trans. Lydon, M. in Ed. Benjamin *The Lyotard Reader and Guide* (Oxford UK: Blackwell, 1989)

114 Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) pp. 121-123

115 The 'Wolf Man' case is described in Freud, *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (1918)

psyche. Neither condensation or displacement are part of the censor's work. These two processes are simply the agents which work on an idea in such a way that it can bypass the censor. The productions of the primary process, as I have stated, are not yet like conscious ideas in their nature. Before the product of the dreamwork can become known to the subject, it must be worked over by pre-conscious processes so that it can be presented in a form which is recognisable to the subject. The product of the primary process must be represented in images before it can become the content of a dream and the stock of images available for this presentation is derived from mnemonic traces in the primary process – particularly those associated with wishful impulses – and recent memories, usually from the day preceding the dream.<sup>116</sup> Transference of the ideas which are highly cathected in the primary process can take the form of a replacement by older, childhood memories, but the dreamwork will use more recent memories if there is no longer a mnemonic trace available of the original object of an impulse of the primary process. This leads to an additional working over of the content of the dream, replacing one picture-presentation with another. Laplanche's description is that: "For example, the replacement of the term of 'aristocrat' by that of 'highly placed' – which can be represented by a high tower."<sup>117</sup> Even after considerations of representation have been taken into account, one last process is involved in creating the final manifest content of the dream in a form which can be read. This final process, secondary revision (*Sekundäre Bearbeitung*), is located on the boundary between the pre-conscious and conscious areas of the psyche. Secondary revision is concerned with taking the dream images - which are at this point fragmentary and incoherent – and presenting them in a form which can be narrated. Freud likens it to an intellectual function, taking a series of images from the dream and providing an explanation of the reasons behind their transition into one another where disjunctions would otherwise exist. This means that aspects of the dream are added which have nothing to do with the latent content of the dream. They are merely added to the dreamer's recollection so that the series of images which have been experienced in the dream can be related in language.

Assessing the anthropomorphism of the dreamwork requires a clarification of Freud's conception of the primary and secondary processes. If the primary and secondary processes operate in the same way, and the first is simply deeper or antecedent to the latter there is less

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116 Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) pp. 247-249

117 Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p.389

support for a radically anti-anthropocentric reading of Freud. The dreamwork may seem to be a reworking of the primary process' wishes which are equivalent to the secondary process' thoughts, though they operate below the level of consciousness and are only apparent in their form as its productions. Yet if the unconscious is like consciousness, and is a domain of ideas, we might ask why censorship is necessary, and question why are its productions suppressed, unknown and opaque?

The censor is the gatekeeper between what is repressed and what is not in the psyche. It therefore exists at a boundary between different parts of the unconscious, differentiating that which cannot become conscious and that which can, and is both a borderline and an active agent on that borderline which interacts with unconscious productions. For some thoughts the censor is unproblematic, and they simply pass through the border (see path '1' in figure 5 below), yet others are blocked at the threshold by censorial entity (see path '2' in figure 5 below). The demonstrated existence of the censorship in *Studies in Hysteria* (1895) leads to two questions about its role in the psyche: the first is the question of its 'depth' and essentially asks 'to what extent are the areas immediately above and below it like ideas'? The second is about its formal operation and how that which is and that which is not censored is determined.

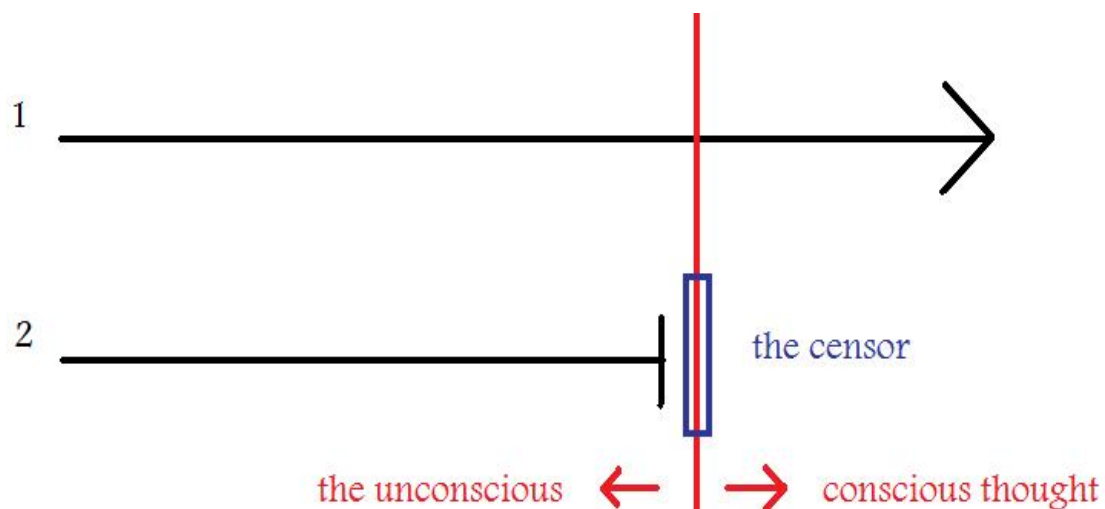


Figure 5: *The censor as a barrier*

The censor's traditional position is between the unconscious system and conscious thought, and its role is to prevent harmful content passing to the conscious system. This is how it was conceptualised in the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) as being the barrier which the talking cure needed to bypass (see figure 5 above). However, we have already seen that Freud's theoretical

models of the unconscious go beyond this simple (Un)conscious binary. The strand of Freud's thought currently being examined is the one which runs from his early analysis of hysteria, through his studies on paraphrases, and on to his work on dreams.<sup>118</sup> The terminus of this thought is the mature *tripartite* topographical model as outlined in *The Ego and the Id*.

Freud's goal is to trace the process by which an idea in the unconscious can be repressed from consciousness and, vice versa; how a conscious act's ordinary motivation in the unconscious can be inferred from its manifest content in the patient's actions. These operations traverse the barrier between conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche in opposite directions, but their paths are traced through the same mechanism, that of repression, carried out under the agency of the censor. In hysteria there is always an idea which cannot be allowed to come to consciousness. If doing so, it would be so contrary to the ego-ideal of the patient; it would catastrophically unbalance the psyche. Yet this description in terms of the dynamic model appears problematic, as the patient is already in possession of knowledge about how this unconscious idea might affect the conscious psyche; it is as if the psychological system works 'out of time', testing the idea's future effects before rejecting it.<sup>119</sup> An answer is that the repression is the exhibition of a complex and has been laid down over time, and as such, the complex obscures the conditions of its genesis. In this model, rather than operating on each case and in each instance, the censor begins to subdue impulses which are contrary to the ego-ideal over time, and therefore slowly effaces undesirable production. Each new instance of the thing to be repressed does not lead to a new calculation, but is responded to by censorship by following an established pattern. This would again collapse the role of the censor into a topographical role, as it determines the position of the psyche's contents rather than actively sorting them.

In the case of parapraxes Freud produces further evidence of accidental actions escaping repression, thereby showing that the censor does not have this immediate efficaciousness, and

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118 This period extended from his earliest works to the pre-war period (circa 1910), and is characterised by Freud's focus on processes rather than topologies and models.

119 In Chapter 2 I shall show that this future testing, in the form of the question 'che vuoi?', characterises the Lacanian model of the unconscious.



the ability to totally subdue an unwanted association in its first instance.<sup>120</sup> Yet in the case of a dream, the repression is of a wished for idea.<sup>121</sup> In most cases, this wish is not as destructive to the ego-ideal of the patient as a hysteric's suppressed idea. Therefore in this instance, the repression must take place along different lines. This distinction between the repressed content of the dream and repression in a clinical case is also problematic, as Freud considers these two operations as parts of the same rule of psychical life. Freud moves seamlessly from hysteria, and then to dreams, and then finally to general mental operations. Quotidian operations of the psyche are inferred equally from instances in which the psyche has broken down, in the ill patient, or when the subject sleeps:

Repression – relaxation of the censorship – the formation of a compromise, this is the fundamental pattern for the generation not only of dreams, but of many other psychopathological structures; and in the later cases too we may observe that the formation of compromises is accompanied by processes of condensation and displacement and by the employment of superficial associations, which we have become familiar with from the dream-work.<sup>122</sup>

The various psychical processes listed above provide evidence of the censor's existence insofar as there is something being repressed, and that this process of repression requires some form of agent. At this stage however we have no definitive picture of the operation of the censor, beyond a sense that it is positioned somewhere in the psyche, and is preventing the content of the unconscious from rising any further on the route towards conscious perception (see figure 6 below).

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120 Parapraxes – unwilled or accidental actions – are described by Freud in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1904)

121 Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) pp. 481-483

122 Freud, S. On Dreams (1901) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 1089

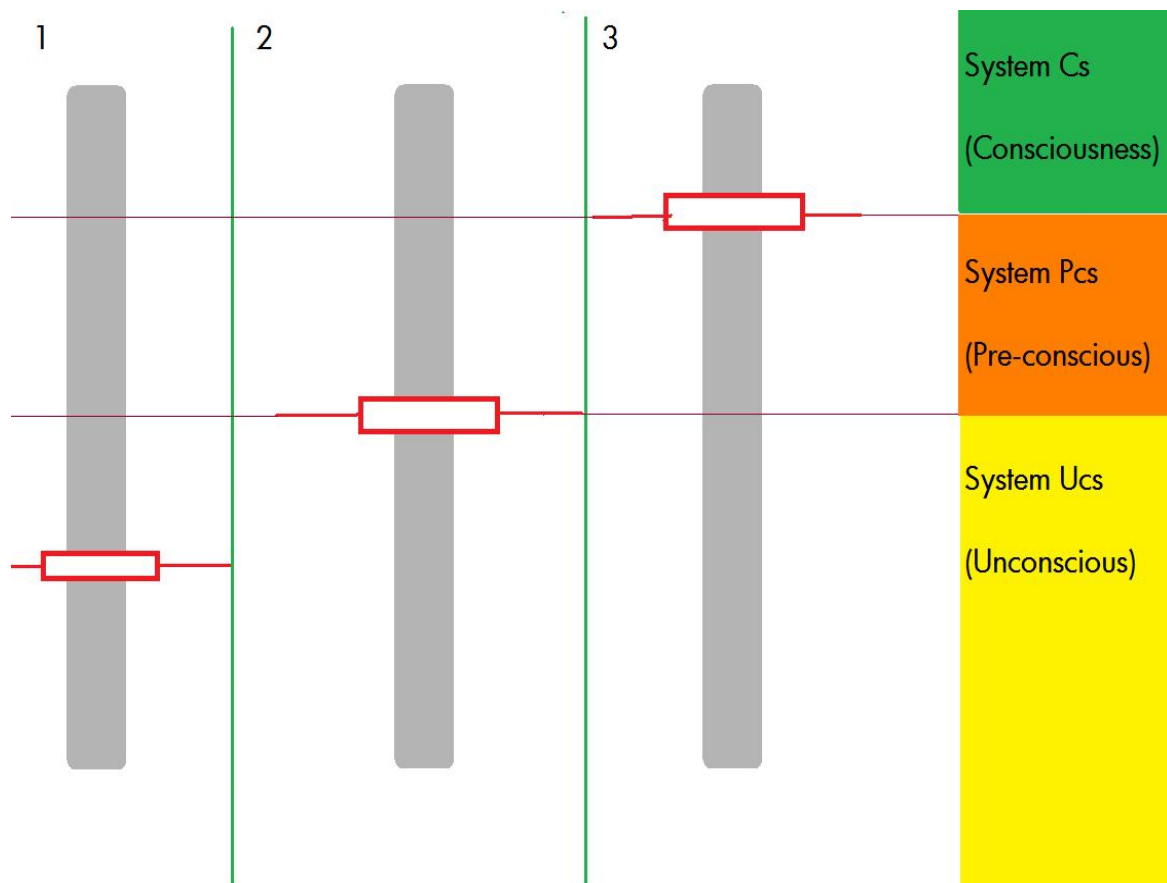


Figure 6: *Positions of the censor*

In the above figure, the transition between stages 1 – 3 show the censor rising through the boundary levels. Although '1' may appear to be the least anthropocentric position, in which the censor is submerged in the (unknowable) unconscious, so long as there is one quality of information in the unconscious which rises up through levels of intelligibility, there is no radical outsidersness or anti-anthropocentricism in this model. Ultimately, no matter where we place the boundary of censorship between the processes of the unconscious, preconscious and conscious systems (respectively Ucs, Pcs and Cs), the distinction which the topographical model allows us to make is one of degree rather than type and leads to an anthropocentricising of the unconsciousness.<sup>123</sup> This is because it merely pushes the contents of the unconscious away from the conscious thought, rather than show how it is unlike it. It is like a coffee plunger: though it forms a barrier, the content and quality of the liquid both above and below it is the same. For the 'other place' of the unconscious to be truly anti-anthropocentric, it must

123 The abbreviations Ucs, Pcs and Cs are used extensively by Freud when discussing topographies of the unconscious. These abbreviations are also used here when discussing topographies.

be more than an 'unknown place'.

To escape an anthropomorphisation of the censorship regime, we must return to the primary process / secondary process distinction and reassert the explanatory primacy of the economic hypothesis regarding the contents of the psyche. For Freud, the system of repression in the psyche is (at least) dualistic.<sup>124</sup> This is because there are two separate economic systems in the unconscious, and two distinct charges or affects which they individually manipulate. The instinctual impulse in system Ucs remains in system Ucs – in this case of ‘primal repression’ it is repulsed by the censorial forces of the Pcs. The energy in system Ucs therefore also remains in system Ucs.<sup>125</sup> It cannot pass through to a higher level of the psyche, so must remain in purely unconscious formations. It is this incompatibility between the two systems, like the gap in Enschede Station between the German and Dutch rail systems, which means that the products of the system Ucs are radically different to those of the Pcs and Cs. Unconscious psychological energy is ‘unbound’: it can rapidly switch between different instinctual impulses in system Ucs, presumably when there is a stimulus from within the organism (need) or from without (opportunity). A second energetic is at play in system Pcs, where energy is tonically bound in fixed patterns. As system Pcs is in an area of the psyche which is capable of holding 'ideas', these patterns correspond to the conjunctions and relations between these ideas in the psyche. They are grooved by memory and association, tying together ideas which occur simultaneously, or which are related to each other. These links in Pcs are not timeless and immortal like the instinctual impulses in Ucs but instead are permanently amended in secondary repressions when they break the limits of the censorship:

Our hypothesis is that in our mental apparatus there are two thought-constructing agencies, of which the second enjoys the privilege of having free access to

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124 In The Unconscious Freud notes that three levels of censorship may exist. Freud, The Unconscious (1915) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3014

125 And it is this energetic investment which characterises the operation of the unconscious: “In the Ucs there are only contents, cathected with greater or lesser strength”. Freud, The Unconscious (1915) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3009

consciousness for its products whereas the activity of the first is in itself unconscious and can only reach consciousness by way of the second. On the frontier between the two agencies, where the first passes over to the second, there is a censorship, which only allows what is agreeable to it to pass through and holds back everything else. According to our definition, then, what is rejected by the censorship is in a state of repression.<sup>126</sup>

Though both are agencies are described by Freud as 'thought constructing' this does not commit either to being equivalent to 'thoughts' any more than a pile of wood is a finished cabin. The important distinction in the text above is between the two systems – one of which can communicate with ideas and consciousness and one cannot, unless it passes by this area. The primary repression is a simple economic action, an anticathexis repressing the sexual impulse, yet this is followed by a secondary repression which operates by association. The substituted idea which the psyche attempts to protect itself with – using it as a shield against the object of the primary repression – is the nearest association which the psyche can make to the repressed, without being so close to it that it also falls foul of the censor.<sup>127</sup> Freud gives the example of animal fear being a displaced fear of the father – perhaps 'uncle fear' would be closer as an idea to 'father fear', yet this may be so close to the original thought that it would allow an easy segue back to that which must be repressed.<sup>128</sup> The route to this secondary idea is the key to understanding the most basic operation of the psyche. How do we go from idea (i) which is censored, through a string of rejected ideas from (ii) to (xvii) which are all too close to the original idea (i), and end up with the no longer censored idea (xviii)? I shall look at Lacan's answer to this in the second chapter of the thesis. For Freud however, our answer is that xviii was possible; that it proved efficacious for discharging the mobile charge in the secondary process. Instead of asking why the idea does the work, we must ask why the work of discharge was performable economically. The censorship is therefore an economic

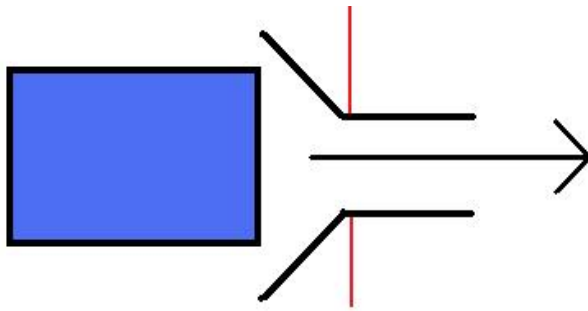
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126 Freud, S. *On Dreams* (1901) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 1089

127 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3005

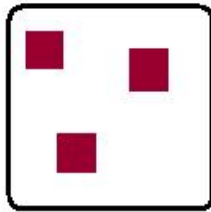
128 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3005

apparatus because it does not consider ideas, but is a mechanism for (re)routing forces. Yet the problem remains that in many interpretations censorship is compressed into a 'depth' model of the psyche as the economics of the dual energetic systems of the psyche are stripped out of it. And though this 'short' description of the psyche might be expected when Freud treats a patient by explaining the mechanism of repression, its absence in more formal works serves to anthropomorphise the unconscious insofar as its processes become a question of depth rather than kind. Conversely, an energetic censorship is anti-anthropocentric because its rules are formal rather than cognitive. As shown in figure 7 below, in the accounts which are dynamic (3) and topographical (2) ideas are 'understood' by the censor which can therefore 'think'. This idea of what 'thought' is in this sense shall be discussed further in chapters 4 and 5, particularly in the former when Lyotard's claim "The Dreamwork Does Not Think" is discussed. At this stage it is our task to follow this line of argument about the economic hypotheses, and show that there can be an energetic description of the psychological machinery, as this would allow the 'work' to be done by charge or cathexis, rather than idea and understanding, as model (1) below illustrates. The path through the topographies of the unconscious must therefore be traced as a drive or pulsion rather than the slow clarification or formation of an idea.



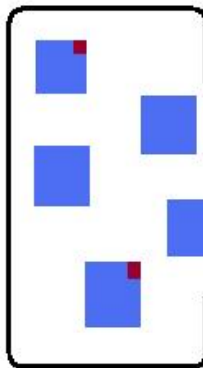
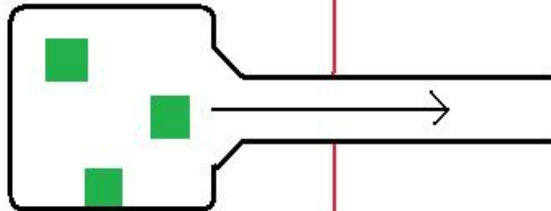
### 1. Economic.

The censor acts as a filter, blocking any idea which has an excessive quantity of energy connected to it.



### 2. Topographical

Certain unacceptable ideas are removed by the censor to a bounded area of the unconscious from which there is no possibility of progression into conscious thought.



### 3. Informational

Unacceptable ideas are associated with a 'tag' which the censor prevents the passage of. This could be a connection of the idea with a separate, master censor, or the censor might be able to simply recognise the code which indicates that the idea has been repressed, without judging why it is repressed.

Figure 7: *The censor in three models*

## Topographies

An anti-anthropocentric topographical model of the unconscious must emphasise that the distinction between primary and secondary processes in the psyche caused by its economic operation, the most important of which make the distinction between these two processes of type and not degree. The topographical distinction therefore differentiates the primary process, characterised by its otherness in opposition to the more 'homely' (anthropocentric) secondary processes. In figure 8 below the difference between these contents is clear: those in the primary process – labelled as 'the unconscious' – are mechanical and allude to forces, whilst those above in the area 'pre-conscious' relate to ideas.

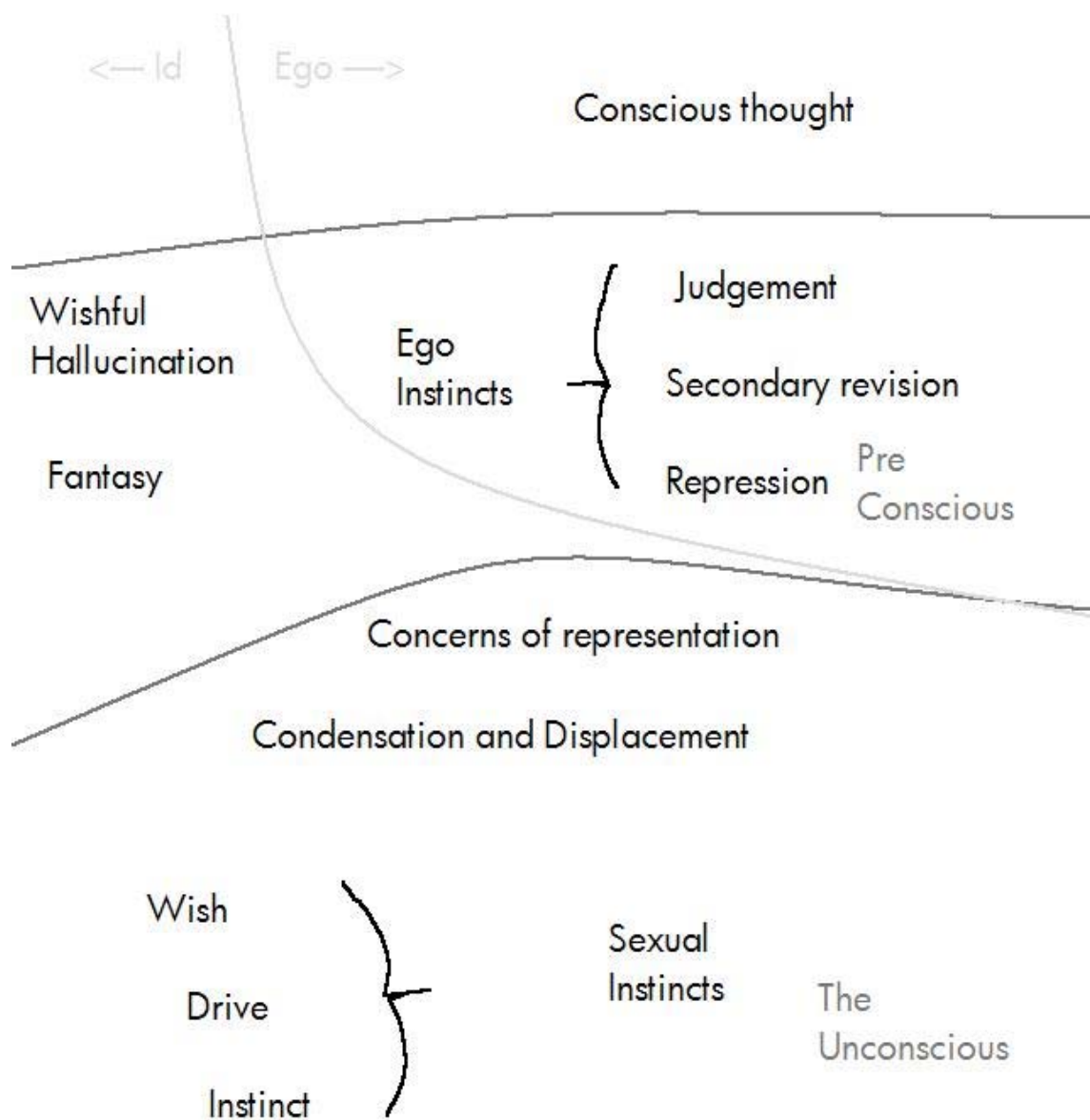


Figure 8: *A topography of the process of the psyche*

Freud's topographical theory is described in *The Unconscious* (1915). Freud divides the psychical system into three areas: the Unconscious, Preconscious and Conscious; these parts correspond to what can never become known to the subject, what may become known to the subject, and what is known to the subject.<sup>129</sup> The first division between these areas proceeds from his discovery – as recounted above in the cases of Hysteria he encountered – of impulses which were not known to consciousness: unconscious ideas. As Freud's systematisation progressed, he also distinguished between unconscious ideas which were like those in consciousness, and designated the area of these thoughts – potential thoughts – as the preconscious. Conversely, those items in the unconscious which would be alien or irreconcilable with normal thought; these are the contents of the unconscious. Freud uses the metaphor of a building, in which the entry into the closed space from outside – consciousness, takes place through a prescribed entrance – the preconscious.<sup>130</sup> At this point we encounter two essential components in Freud's topographies of the psyche, the ego and the id. The primary role of the ego (*Ich*) is to inhibit the primary process (the id, (*Es*)).<sup>131</sup> The subject is the victim of a dualism in which its true desires in the id (primary process) are blocked by a set of learned principles which, perversely, it takes to be the essence of itself, its ego (the secondary process). Hereto this chapter has discussed the role of clinical psychoanalysis, which is to free the subject from the tensions caused by the inherent contradictions within this duality. We shall now move on to consider the role of philosophical psychoanalysis, which is to disavow the notion that the secondary process – the Cartesian / Kantian subject of thinking – is a stable ground upon which philosophical hypotheses can be built. In fact, it is the primary process – the true origin of instincts and desire – which is the proper object of philosophical investigation, whether it be ontological, epistemological, ethical or aesthetic. Any interpretation which anthropomorphises the contents of the unconscious is an attempt to

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129 Mitchell and Black argue that Freud's move to topographies of the unconscious is the defining moment in psychoanalysis' evolution as a distinct theoretical discourse. Mitchell, M. and Black, S. *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*, (USA: Basic Books, 1995) p. 6

130 Freud, S. *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916-1917) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3369

131 Laplanche S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p. 339



collapse this dethroning of the subject.

The topographical model of a primary/secondary process distinction is a developmental model. It provides a summary of the effects of drive theory and the economic model, though it does not inform us how the economic model operates and is therefore analogous to a border, which is the consequence of a historical process of creation. As the secondary process develops over time as the organism develops in early childhood, it acquires more and more capability to dam up the excess energy of the primary process and fix it into steady formations.<sup>132</sup> Secondary processes: 'waking thought, attention, judgement, reasoning, controlled action' work to repress the desires of the primary process.<sup>133</sup> The nascent secondary process begins by making only small modifications to the behaviour of the infant (the process of reality testing), yet by late childhood the behaviour of the subject is wrapped up within the learned conventions of its culture and primary instincts are dominated by the ego.<sup>134</sup> This restriction is necessary: for healthy psychic well-being, the secondary process must fulfil this role of restraining the excesses of the primary process, which, unchecked, would make the ineffective, self-destructive or socially unacceptable bids for cathexis which are demonstrated by various mental illnesses.

Primary Process	Secondary Process
Ego	Id
Reality principle	Pleasure principle
Memories / Ideas	Drives
'Bound energy'	'Free' energy

Table 3: *Opposing characteristics of the primary and secondary processes*

132 Freud states that: “[P]rocesses which are only made possible by a good cathexis of the ego, and which represent a moderation of the foregoing, are described as psychical secondary processes”. This text is not in Smith's complete Works. It can be found in Strachey's Standard Edition: Freud, S. *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1950a [1895]): Anf., 411; S.E., I, 326-27.

133 Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p. 339

134 See 'Reality Principle' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p. 379-382

The secondary process, though it has the censor as its agent, is not omniscient in its control over the output of mental processes. There are still ways in which the original formations of the primary process may escape the censor's determination and express themselves. The passage of a blocked wish to intelligibility is a convoluted one, but a passage which nevertheless allows some aspects of the original wish-formation to be determined after proper analysis of the manifest content of the form in which it is finally allowed to be represented: usually a dream, but also in jokes, verbal tics or stutters, and perversions. Freud's descriptions of this process centre around dream analysis, but he intimates that the processes of the dreamwork are analogous of those in waking thought. Therefore, the interpretation of dreams is the method by which we can know how the unconscious works in its quest to realise its desire. The form these 'quests' take is as the drive and, at this point in this chapter, having discussed the populations and topographies of the psyche, a depiction of these dynamic investments of desire which traverse it can now be undertaken. My concern with analysis of the dreamwork at this point in the present thesis is that interpretation of Freud's hypotheses about the dreamwork form the basis of not only his own conceptions of drive theory, but also both Lacan and Lyotard's theories of desire, described in Chapters 2 and 4. For Lacan, condensation and displacement are the key concepts in his transformation of an economic model of the unconscious to a quasi-linguistic one. Lyotard contests this by describing the dreamwork as a process which can plastically alter the image-figures which he proposes – in opposition to ideas - as the true representatives of desire.

The topographical model is a map which describes the psyche positionally, but does not provide an adequate description of the processes which operate within it. It is analogous to a map of a glacial valley which represents the contours, and can be used as a shortcut to navigate it, but which does not only fail to capture the essence of the formation of that landscape under the extreme pressures of the ice floes, but gives no hint of them. To understand the forces active in the unconscious we must build upon the economic model by considering drive theory, which begins to depict the workings of this alien primary process and its strange demands which are uninterested in even reality itself.<sup>135</sup>

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135 The demands of the primary process are posited as being so strange and unacceptable to the secondary process that they are regulated under the aegis of the 'reality principle'. See 'Reality Principle' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p. 379-382

## Processes: Instinct, Drive, Desire

The previous discussion of the anthropomorphism of unconscious has not solved our uncertainty regarding the distinction between differences in position and differences of type regarding its contents. In this section I shall offer a solution to this impasse by describing the operations of drives in the unconscious. Drive theory traces the genesis and development of the unconscious' productions. I propose that it is the superior model in Freudian analysis of the psyche because drive theory provides both a description of the most elementary processes in the unconsciousness and depicts their quotidian operation.<sup>136</sup> The resulting 'complete' economic hypothesis, which provides a model of the psyche based on the progression of drives, is not as abstract as the previous models, as its scale of analysis is much smaller, considering the micro operation of the unconscious.

Because it aims at the depiction of a series of processes, the economic model is more technical than the cartographies of the unconsciousness described above. Untying the Gordian knot of Freud's terminology is the first step to providing a complete definition of a drive and its economic effects. This task is difficult because of a number of complications: firstly there is the problem of translation, as the language of drive moves between German, French and English capitulations. Secondly, there is also a problem of meaning, understanding how words are used in a specifically psychoanalytic context. In the next section I shall provide a foundation for my analysis of drive theory by considering its lexicon, defining key terms, as well as mapping these terms on to biological and psychoanalytic mechanisms, before considering the extent to which their use is new or conventional. It shall also prove important for my goals in the subsequent chapter as it will provide a foundation for analysis of Lacan and his modification of Freud's drive theory.

A key resource for any consideration of the terminology of psychoanalysis is Laplanche's *Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*. Laplanche bridges the divide between the Freudian and Lacanian schools and therefore offers definitions which provide reference points between the

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136 Indeed, once established by Freud, drive theory becomes the “fundamental building block for all his subsequent theorising” Mitchell, M. and Black, S. *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*, (USA: Basic Books, 1995) p. 13

two differing models of the unconscious. When my reading differs from Laplanche's I shall be careful to note the sources of the alternate reading which I construct. Much of Freud's terminology was borrowed from terms utilised in the scientific parlance of his time, and although Freud invented several terms (such as *anaclysis*) or was careful to show with others how he was using them in a specific way (e.g. *repression*), concerns regarding intelligibility meant that he had to borrow the majority of his concepts from contemporary biology or psychology.<sup>137</sup> Instinct, Freud tell us, is “[a] conventional basic concept... somewhat obscure but which is indispensable to us in psychology”.<sup>138</sup> Instinct is always already tied up with the concerns of biology, and is noted as being similar to stimulus, the automatic response of an organism to outside conditions.<sup>139</sup> The difference between an instinctual stimulus (figure 10 below) and a physiological stimulus (figure 9 below) is that the former derives from the internal condition of the organism, rather than as a response to sensations caused by external factors.<sup>140</sup> In almost all cases, a motor response is sufficient to relieve the organism of a physiological stimulus. Though this motion is found in an organism as a reflex, it is important to note that for Freud, even the most elementary biological reaction to stimulus is one which reduces the adverse effect it causes and works towards the return of a *homoeostasis* in which excitement within the organism is minimised. Instinctual impulse, as well as deriving from within the organism, is constant rather than intermittent. Another term for such an impulse, Freud states, is a “need”.<sup>141</sup> As this need cannot be physically escaped, nor will it abate in time, its resolution must come in the form of satisfaction. For Freud, this instinctual impulse (*Triebregung*) “appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the

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137 Which partially explains why Freud's writing is more comprehensible than that of Heidegger, who invents a greater proportion of his terminology, or invests what he borrows with entirely new meaning.

138 Freud, S. *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 2957

139 Freud, S. *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 2958

140 See also Mitchell, M. and Black, S. *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*, (USA: Basic Books, 1995) p. 13

141 Freud, S. *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 2958

somatic”<sup>142</sup>

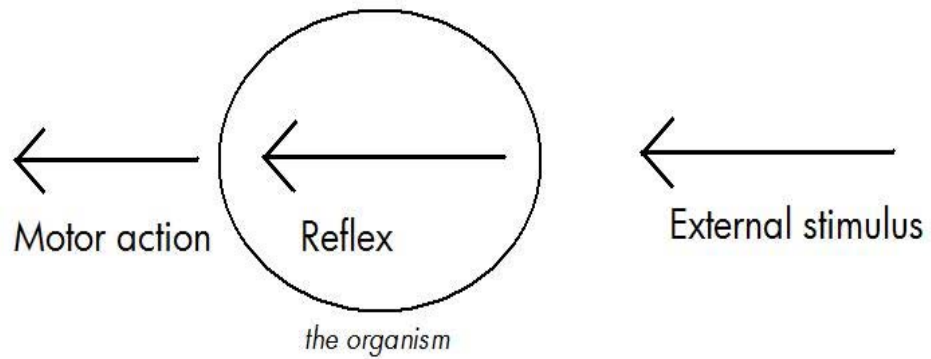


Figure 9: A physiological stimulus

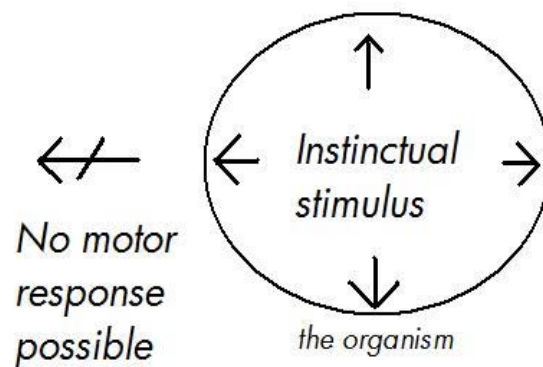


Figure 10: An instinctual impulse stimulus

In the Strachey translation of *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* the instinct (*Trieb*) of instinctual impulse (*Triebregung*) is transposed to English as 'instinct' rather than, as is common in later renditions 'drive'.<sup>143</sup> The use of instinct to describe two differentiated processes (*Instinkt* and

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142 Freud, S. *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 2960

143 Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p. 198

*Trieb*) fails to capture the differences between the two.<sup>144</sup> I will be adhering to the contemporary convention of translating *trieb* as drive, because its connotations with possession, direction and movement capture its tendencies more aptly than the more static or passive term instinct.

Freud follows his evolutionary account of drive as instinctual stimulus with a hypothesis which aims to breakdown the stages of the internal mechanism of a drive, the famous fourfold conception of the drive.<sup>145</sup> The drive's primary cause is pressure (*Drang*). Pressure is quantitative and dynamic; there is a certain quantity of it in any drive and it is always actively demanding its own satisfaction. The pressure is resolved by attaining the aim (*Ziel*) of the drive. Freud tells us that the aim of each drive is fixed, though the object (*Objekt*) of the drive, the route which the drive will take to reach the aim is not fixed; on the contrary, objects are malleable. Given the rigidity of the aim of the drive and the pressure emanating from its source (*Quelle*) and seeking resolution, Freud's hypothesis about drives operates on the same basis as the reflexive response to physiological stimulus – that is, its aim is to reduce the pressure to the minimum level and restore homeostasis. Conceptualising this model, we are presented with a sequential traversal of a pathway from the source to the aim, which is enacted at every stage by pressure – this pressure diminishing as we get closer to the aim.<sup>146</sup>

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144 Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p. 196

145 Freud's discussion of the stages of the drive can be found in Freud, S. *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 2960 - 2961

146 See 'Pressure' in Laplanche, S and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p.330

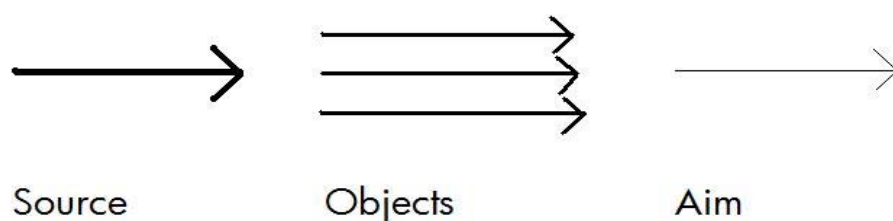


Figure 11: *The path of the drive*. The width of the bar is proportional to the quantity of pressure

The key questions about anthropocentrism in Freud's drive hypothesis revolves around how the drives as they exist in the primary process have 'knowledge' about their possible realisation. If we look at the unconscious as being a biological machine, our first hypothesis might be that the source is 'hard wired' to the aim in the brain: it is an innate property the subject is born with. This seems to capture the universality which – along with other psychoanalysts – Freud and Lacan attribute to the most basic drives.<sup>147</sup> Yet hard wiring does not explain why the objects are malleable rather than fixed, and that they are subject to change or, if the drives are products of evolution, why their objects can be so convoluted – hence the vicissitudes and travails attributed to the drive. A more plausible explanation would be that the path to the object is created in the subject by trial and error. In this reading, development of the organism is a slow process in which it learns from failure and successes, repeating actions which can enact a return to homeostasis. Positive feedback is the salient factor in determining what will remain and negative feedback determines what will be effaced. This model is therefore cybernetic.<sup>148</sup> Feedback of this type in a biological system is indifferent to

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147 Examples would include drives relating to infantile feeding and excrement, familial relations, and sexual instincts.

148 Cybernetics, the study of self-regulating systems governed by feedback and communication, is a key concept in the present thesis, especially in the later chapters. Its modern use dates from Weiner, N. *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*. (Cambridge USA: MIT Press, 1961)

the constitution of the object by means of which it can be released; it does not aim at objects, but at internal affects and its own cybernetic stasis. When Freud describes the unconscious – the other place – as lacking anthropocentric traits associated with the secondary process, such an absence of 'thinking' is only possible if it is regulated by formal rules like those of a cybernetic system. As such, the unconscious calculates its goals not in terms of plans, ideas or preferences which all tend towards the anthropic; it mechanically selects the most rapid path to the aim. In this mechanism, the rules of the unconscious are brutally simple: in the case of success a pathway is created or reinforced – as Freud proposes, either chemically or mechanically – along whatever route proves the most efficacious in realising the aim of the drive. In the case of failure, it re-routes until cathexis can be achieved.

A final reading of the drive is that the object is established in a system of connections between the source and the aim which are established logically. This final reading would be consistent with a Lacanian interpretation of Freud. This reading seems problematic regarding the genesis of the drives in the child, as we might ask at which point does the child exhibit drives rather than reflexes? The instincts which the drives are based on appear to be before language, or at least mark a transition of the subject to language, yet once they are capitulated as drives these instincts become ideational. Freud's contention that objects can carry multiple drives to their aim would seem to point towards an economical explanation of the drive rather than a logical one. If the object has fidelity to numerous drives, and if the drive can possess numerous objects, acquisition of the object would fail to reach the aim of the drive. Once a system of drives had been established in the subject, the myriad inter-connections of the objects of their desire would result in a paralysis of the system. I shall re-consider Lacan's conception of drive more sympathetically after my exposition of Freud; for now, it will suffice to note that Lacan's reading of Freud – that the unconscious is a language-like structure rather than a biological mechanism – requires the abandonment of seeing the formation of the drive as taking place in chronological time, this register being replaced by logical time.<sup>149</sup> I shall return to this key distinction when talking about Lacan's theories of complexes and imagos.

The apparent biologism in Freud's view of the drive is reinforced by the remainder of *Instincts*

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149 See Lacan, J. 'Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty: A New Sophism' (1945), in

*Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* [trans. Bruce Fink], (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006)



*and their Vicissitudes*. Freud specifically says that the source (*Quelle*) is either chemical or mechanical – whichever of these processes may be the case, both are rooted in the organic body and are biological. Freud's final summation of drives re-emphasises the biological.<sup>150</sup> Freud's discussion of the neuroses which the drives can affect in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* could be considered more amenable to Lacanianism, an interpretation I shall consider in due course. Yet before arriving at that point, I shall follow the economic progression of Freud's theory of instincts and drives in their transition out of the purely unconscious, and to their presentation as wishes, as is elucidated in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. We have seen that the terminus of a Freudian drive is reached at a discharge of pressure enabled by traversing the passage through the object. The drive is indifferent to the method of its discharge, preferring only that the process is accomplished as rapidly as possible. A wish (*Wunsch*) is an unconscious formation – as is the drive – but a wish is connected with an object (confusingly, not in the sense of the object of a drive described above, but an object in the sense of something which can be the intention of a thought).<sup>151</sup> As a result of this, a wish is in some way comprehensible to conscious thought, whereas all speculation about the nature of a drive is ultimately unable to grasp its true nature.<sup>152</sup> Yet the wish is often blocked from fully manifesting itself in consciousness by the censor, the agent of repression described above whose role is to patrol the border between the unconscious and the later processes of thought. However, as we have seen, manifestations of wishes, though blocked on their path to consciousness in the awakened subject, are able to present themselves

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150 "We may sum up by saying that the essential feature in the vicissitudes undergone by instincts lies in the subjection of the instinctual impulses to the influences of the three great polarities that dominate mental life. Of these three polarities we might describe that of activity-passivity as the biological, that of ego-external world as the real, and finally that of pleasure-unpleasure as the economic polarity". Freud, S. *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 2974

151 The term 'idea' would be useful in this context, if it was not otherwise employed by Freud.

152 "When we [...] speak of an unconscious instinctual impulse or of a repressed instinctual impulse, the looseness of phraseology is a harmless one. We can only mean an instinctual impulse the ideational representative of which is unconscious, for nothing else comes into consideration". Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from Complete Works Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3000

– albeit in a distorted form – in the content of dreams.<sup>153</sup> For Freud, the wish is laid down in mnemonic traces from the subject's infancy which are associated with the earliest satisfactions of the child.<sup>154</sup> As they derive from memory, wishes are not indifferent about their realisation, instead trying to repeat the conditions of their genesis. The wish can be associated with the satisfaction of component instincts (*Partialtrieb*) via the acquisition of objects or with replication of a disposition or scene. The interventions which drives may make regarding the behaviour of the subject are unknown to it, as they are rendered unintelligible by virtue of their place in the primary process and blocked by repression from ever escaping it. Satisfaction of the drive results in the economic consequence of a reduction of psychic pressure in the organism; and this satisfaction is its only objective. Even after their resolution, the drives themselves remain unchanged in the organism, as Freud explains in *The Unconscious*.<sup>155</sup>

In the case of a wish, the content of the mnemonic traces associated with it may pass from the domain of the primary process to the secondary process so long as they do not conflict with the reality principle (*Realitätsprinzip*).<sup>156</sup> The reality principle is created in the psyche after the primary processes are laid down. Drives operate according to the pleasure principle (*Lustprinzip*), seeking the pleasure that derives from their resolution. Once the objects of a drive are known to an infant, the child's immediate strategy will be to hallucinate the objects which will allow them to realise the drive. Though this strategy might be initially successful, it will eventually produce no satisfaction because there is no passage to the aim through this imaginary-object. Freud's example of this failure is the child's weaning.<sup>157</sup> Once the child is no

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153 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3010

154 Freud, S. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 626

155 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3009

156 Though Moretti notes that the reality principle “is already uncertain and unstable in Freud himself” its operation in this model is as a mediator of the pleasure principle. Moretti, A. *Signs taken for Wonders* (London: Verso, 2005) p. 39

157 Freud, S. *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online

longer satisfied by the imaginary breast which it can hallucinate, it must take into account the conditions of the external world rather than its own internal mental representations if it is to acquire access to the breast. One key objection to this genesis of the reality principle is why hallucination should lose its efficacy, and the child needs to abandon the strategy. Laplanche argues that contrary to Freud, the reality principle might be the first to be established, in the case of weaning investing the breast as an object of need which fulfils the child's desire to reduce hunger.<sup>158</sup> Development of the sexual instinct takes place as the survival-instinct is fulfilled and the partial object of the drive is enjoyed. The question here is one of the differences between self preservative and sexual instincts, and which are the initial set of instincts. An alternate solution to picking one or the other is to place these two sets of instincts on the same level, attributing the infant's satisfaction, derived as it is from any component instinct's satisfaction, to be one of polymorphous perversity. From a strictly biological perspective, no differentiation is possible between drives based on their role in the organism's survival and those regarding its replication. Instead, the return of pleasure they offer the psyche can be explained by their ability to produce chemical states in the brain.<sup>159</sup> No matter which instinct is originary, it eventually comes to pass that the subject must temper its attempts to immediately maximise its pleasure according to the knowledge which it has learned through experience. The failure of hallucination requires the child to test a new strategy, which, strictly working towards its goals, is concerned with discovering the simplest ways to acquire satisfaction. Some strategies will fail and be disregarded, others will produce rewards and be repeated. The child will learn not only how to call to maximise the chance of alerting its nurse, but also when to call, learning that targeted appeals can be more effective than permanent ones. The reality principle is plastic, evolving throughout the child's

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text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf) ) p. 4286

158 Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p. 380

159 The production of neurotransmitters. I shall return to this in the final part of this study. I introduce it now to allow a general overview of the progression of this writing, wherein neither Freud's 'hydraulic' economy or Lacan's structure of semantic links will be found as convincing a model for the operation of the unconscious (both in terms of its processes and that which is processed within it) as the model of a cybernetic machine introduced by Lyotard and developed by Land. Freud was always careful to note that future developments in neurobiology would be of considerable help in determining the mechanism of the unconscious.

development.

The unconscious is a system whose purpose is the minimisation of the tensions in the organism derived from internal stimuli: the “reduction of tension', which, according to Freud, characterises all forms of pleasure”.<sup>160</sup> The shortest and swiftest path to this draining of pressure – cathexis – is for the primary process' demand to be presented to the secondary process, and for it to be realised: economically, this exhausts the energy attached to the drive. The organism's strategy if the object of the drive cannot be immediately attained so simply can be the hallucination of the object; an attempt to convince the primary process that the demand has been met yet if this fails to produce satisfaction the primary process will remain agitated and there will be disequilibrium which causes displeasure: there must therefore be a binding of the cathexis attached to the drive by the secondary processes. Secondary process binding is coalescence into stable formations which persist in the psyche: ideas.<sup>161</sup> The retention of cathected energy in the secondary process is determined purely by the efficiency of the cathexis, therefore the nature of the cathexis – which ideas it occupies – is irrelevant so long as it does its work. For example, a sexual drive could be sedentarised by the idea of abstinence before marriage, courtly love, or any other idea which is effective in reducing the discomfort the pressure of the drive causes the organism. That there are two different areas of the psyche which deal with the cathexis of libidinal energy is problematic for Freud because it introduces a dualism into the energetic hypothesis. How, we might ask, does the unbound, free ranging energy of the primary process become transformed into the the stable circuits of secondary process formations? Freud described the eternal qualities of the drive in *The Unconscious*. These descriptions set out the basic tenets regarding the status of investments in the unconscious which provide the basis of anti-anthropocentric readings of its operation:

The processes of the system Ucs. are timeless; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all. Reference to time is bound up, once again, with the work of the system Cs.

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160 Moretti, A. *Signs Taken for Wonders* (London: Verso, 2005) p. 39

161 'The primary and secondary processes can be defined in purely economic terms—the primary process as immediate discharge, the secondary process as inhibition postponement of satisfaction and diversion.'

Laplanche S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p. 338

The Ucs. processes pay just as little regard to reality. They are subject to the pleasure principle; their fate depends only on how strong they are and on whether they fulfil the demands of the pleasure-unpleasure regulation.

To sum up: exemption from mutual contradiction, primary process (mobility of cathexes), timelessness, and replacement of external by psychological reality – these are the characteristics which we may expect to find in processes belonging to the system Ucs.<sup>162</sup>

And that:

The processes of the system Pcs. display – no matter whether they are already conscious or only capable of becoming conscious – an inhibition of the tendency of cathected ideas towards discharge. When a process passes from one idea to another, the first idea retains a part of its cathexis and only a small portion undergoes displacement.<sup>163</sup>

The opposition between primary and secondary processes corresponds to that between the two ways in which psychical energy circulates, according to whether it is ‘free’ or ‘bound’. It should also be seen as parallel with the contrast between the pleasure principle and the reality principle.<sup>164</sup>

Breuer assume[s] the existence of two different stages of cathectic energy in mental life: one in which that energy is tonically "bound" and the other in which it moves freely and presses towards discharge, I think that this discrimination represents the deepest insight we have gained up to the present into the nature of nervous energy, and

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162 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3009

163 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3011

164 Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) p. 339

I do not see how we are to evade such a conclusion.<sup>165</sup>

We are left with another decisive question about anthropocentrism in the unconscious, namely how unconscious drives move into, and become settled in the secondary process, when the secondary process is so unlike the the primary process in respect of the nature of its energy and the likeness to 'ideas' of its contents. Freudian psychoanalysis must explain the transition between the intense and volatile state of energy which moves through the id and the constrained energy within the ego. Though considering solutions to this disjunction raises more questions than provides answers at this stage in the present thesis, I shall note some potential solutions here, as these lines of inquiry are followed throughout this work.

The first solution to this problem is to accept the synchronous dualism between the primary and secondary processes: that they act in parallel with each other; unpleasure is removed by each according to its own methods. As the primary process receives mechanical relief through the removal of the pressure by arriving at the aim of the drive, a separate symbolic relief provided by the recreation of the wished for memory traces takes place in the secondary process. The flaw of this solution is that it only seems to work with drives which can be simply realised. Once the drive is blocked from resolution by the ego instincts and the psychical process hereto considered, something very different to a wishful image must be created. Perhaps then, the process of the dream work, or of fantasy, are the agents which allow a draining of cathexis which cannot be realised through the acquisition of the object. In this reading that the process of the dreamwork provides hallucinatory satisfaction of the subject's desires is proof of the ability of the image to perform the cathexis of energy in the psyche.<sup>166</sup> However, this again fails to describe all operations of the psyche as dreamwork and fantasy can sometimes reiterate the subject's failure to achieve satisfaction, acting as intensifiers of the energetic disequilibrium. In the case of Little Hans, the fantastic fear of the horse only intensifies his fear of the father and the worsening of his 'nonsense'.

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165 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3011

166 And this goal of cathexis is seen even in such extreme cases as the “Father, don't you see I'm burning” dream. Freud, S. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) pp. 945 - 947

The primary process / secondary process divide can be conceptualised from an energetic standpoint as a change in state of psychic energy: This would be analogous to a phase-transition, the solidification of the energy attached to drives by the secondary process. As the 'watery' liquid drives of the primary process transfer to the secondary process they become 'icy', solidified. Their properties change though the base material of which they are made does not. Yet, as has been repeatedly stated, drives are constant and unchanging, If their energetic product is merely calcifying in 'solid' formations once it moves to the secondary process, then either these formations must constantly grow (as the drive's energy is constancy produced by the primary process), or quantity of energy has a minimal effect when in the secondary process – which goes against Freud's energetic hypothesis and the idea that the pleasure principle attempts to achieve return to equilibrium at a homoeostatic zero of energy.

Perhaps the energetic hypothesis itself is a poor analogy for mental activity. When Freud talks about evolution, neurones, or chemical states of the brain, modern biology can be used to support what he says. When Freud talks about energy: in reservoirs, channels of it, stores of it, it freely roaming around the primary process, in these cases it is hard to think these ideas can relate to actual stores of energy in the brain. In the next chapter I shall show how Lacan attempts to replace the role of energy as the motor of the unconscious with his conception of desire. In essence, this replaces the economic with a linguistic motor which drives the unconscious. As we shall see, there are many reasons for supporting Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. However, when the psyche is described as dynamic rather than energetic we might object by inquiring where the end of a dynamic process which merely translates information into different states might be? An energetic system has a goal: pressure ceases to exist once the aim has been reached. A linguistic system of substitution has no end. The organs which are the part-objects of component instincts are driven by biological processes, not linguistic ones.

A final strategy would be the replacement of Freud's homoeostatic zero to which the primary process wants all pressures to be reduced with a variable level of tension which can be tolerated. Instead of seeing the unconscious as a perfect system which will cathect all energy by one way or another – even if that way must be through the path of madness – it would be better understood as a failing system, capable of breaking down at some moments and over-performing at others. If this is the case there is no need to expect that the primary and secondary processes will work in perfect parallel, like a pair of synchronised swimmers

bobbing in the depths of the psyche. With the introduction of the death drive (*Todttrieb*) in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) Freud indicates that the unconscious is capable of working towards disequilibrium. I shall return to this when considering Lyotard's defence of Freud against Lacan's interpretation.

Hereto, the operation of a number of the contents, constituents or processes of the unconscious has been delineated, including fourfold drives, wishes, and the economic systems of primary and secondary processes. It is now our task to consider the evolution of the drive from its origins as a true instinct through to its presentation in the mature psyche as a wishful impulse. The topographical model allows us to speak of the manifest content of an idea, whether this idea can be designated in the systems Ucs, Pcs or Cs, and allows us to speculate about the nature of the latent idea which may have lead to the production of the manifest one. It also assesses the desirability of an idea with regard to the ego-ideal. Because it assumes the existence of an unconscious system underlying conscious representation, Freud's description of the economic model requires the notion of censorship and repression as outlined in the topographical model: forces which establish the barrier between the realm of the unconscious and the domain of the subject. Without this evidence from applied psychoanalysis, the existence of a set of unconscious desires would be conjectured; and therefore unsuitable for use as the basis of a drive theory.<sup>167</sup> However, through the hypothecation of the existence of this space in the psyche, holding strange impulses which are alien to the normal 'thought' of the subject, we have built a model of thought – or the genesis of thought – beginning deep in the unconscious and terminating with the effects of these unconscious processes in the subject's actions. What qualities can we attribute to the unconscious, the space in which drives operate at their most basic level, which would demonstrate its anti-anthropocentricism? For Freud: "The nucleus of the Ucs consists of instinctual representatives which seek to discharge their cathexis; that is to say, of wishful impulses".<sup>168</sup> Here we have three components: (a) instinctual representatives (b) cathected

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167 Freud uses "parapraxes and dreams in healthy people" and "symptom[s] or obsession[s] in the sick" as his justification for positing an unconscious. Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed.

Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 2991

168 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3009



energy (c) wishful impulses. The formula given is therefore as follows:

(a) Instinctual representative + (b) psychological energy = (c) wishful impulses

To fully understand the anti-anthropocentrism of the Freudian psyche according to the economic model we need to understand these components and define how (a) the instinctual representative is formed and how (b) energetics in the unconscious system operate, before going on to trace the travails of (c) a wishful impulse through its path towards realisation. As we have seen, Freud's explanation of (a) and (b) owes a lot to biology.<sup>169</sup> The biological base, which is essentially animalistic is a legacy of pre-human species which did not have a distinct consciousness. This, above all others, is the area of Freudian theory which Lacan most explicitly denounces – for Lacan, desire is very specifically human. Because of this divergence, one of Land's primary objections to Lacan is that he ignores Freud's biologism, severing the connection between the animal instinct at the base of the drive and the form of its final object of desire. But for Freud an instinctual impulse (*Triebregung*) is an instinct (*Treib*) which can be stirred (*regung*). Stirred is used here in the sense of an awakening or growth of emotional charge. Instinctual impulses are therefore the primary inhabitants of the subject's unconscious. They exist there with the constant potential to become aroused, should the possibility of the realisation become feasible. In many instances this is very unlikely, as they are repressed by the preconscious, yet they still remain alert, waiting for an opportunity. The unconscious is therefore populated by numerous entities whose origins are found in pre-cognitive animalistic impulses. The genesis of these impulses is therefore anti-anthropocentric as it is before 'thought'. Furthermore, though they go through changes during the life of the organism, their modification takes place along mechanical lines – they are modified insofar as they are able to find opportunities to discharge themselves under the rule of repetition. In this formal process repetition, again, is quite unlike the thought of the Cartesian subject whose volition is determined by the use of reason.

Instinctual impulses are subsumed into the economic model by Freud in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes*, where their ability to create affect is coupled to the amount of pressure which they exert (attempt to cathect).<sup>170</sup> In *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* Freud situates the

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169 For example: "Freud's book is still haunted by biology" Bowie, M. Lacan (UK: Fontana, 1991) p.5

170 Freud, S. *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text

instinctual impulse between: “[T]he three great polarities that dominate mental life. Of these three polarities we might describe that of activity-passivity as the biological, that of ego-external world as the real, and finally that of pleasure-unpleasure as the economic polarity”<sup>171</sup> This should not be conceptualised as a triangulation or Venn diagram, where the instinctual impulse is equally subject to or determined by three different systems. Instead, these three polarities make the separate registers which Freud uses to describe the creation, existence, and attempted realisation of an instinctual impulse. The biological determines the initial creation of the pulsion, the economic describes its attempts at realisation and, finally, the ego blocks or allows this realisation.

Instinctual impulses derive from biological instincts. These simple biological urges such as nourishment, defecation, or erotic contact are the goal of the developing child. These instincts are heavily – though the child does not yet know it – incentivised by the dopamine system in the brain. As the child develops, it learns that the route to the realisation of one of these instincts is never devoid of the presence of auxiliary objects and phenomena. Nourishment must come from the breast, which is part of the mother – and the nourishment is never timely without the baby’s cry, or other associated rituals of feeding. As the organism grows, more and more phenomena become associated with the satisfaction of its instincts, and the number of instinctual impulses populating the unconscious can grow. The instinctual impulse, then, is the germ of desire in the child, and later in the adult to enact these connections of objects which have brought past satisfaction. Their products can be extremely ‘simple’: the acquisition of a glass of pure water, or incredibly convoluted – as many clinical cases attest.

Because they can be formed in early infancy, Freud describes the instinctual impulses as polymorphously perverse. Polymorphous perversion is explained by the infant’s inability to compartmentalise its instincts. Instead, anything which enables the fulfilment of a component instinct (these instincts are essentially, as Lacan memorably describes them, towards the stimulation of the holes in the human body) becomes erotic to the child. As the instinctual impulse is in the system Ucs, it is ‘mute’. Its demands are never for a thing, or an idea, or even a set-up [*dispositif*] – not for anything that can be enunciated – but are rather the desire

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available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf) )

171 Freud, S. *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf) ) p. 2974

to act, to begin the creation of such a set-up.<sup>172</sup> It is a motor of action, causing the organism to try and repeat past strategies for satisfaction. These characteristics of the drive provide the basis of a reading of the drive as being anti-anthropocentric because it, unlike the Cartesian subject, does not operate on the basis of what it wants: there is no will, no thing aimed for, no volition. All that the unconscious possesses is desire to act in the sense of achieving suitable cathexis of its energies, and a set of pathways which have been previously established to enact this. Operating under the rubrics of pressure and repetition, it is formal and automatic rather than idealist, as illustrated in the table below.

<b>Stage of drive creation</b>	<i>Formation</i>	<i>Method of realisation</i>	<i>Problem of realisation</i>	<i>Method of amendment</i>
<b>Process</b>	Biological	Mechanical	Censorship based on formal criteria	Formal change under repetition compulsion
<b>Does it involve ideas</b>	No (though they present as needs, their formation is biological)	No	No	No
<b>Does it involve volition</b>	No	No	No	No (though subject can become super invested in the repetition (addicted))
<b>Is it before consciousness</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 4: *Characteristics of Freudian drives*

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172 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3001

The unconscious has other distinct characteristics which separate it from the rest of the psyche which are: “[E]xemption from mutual contradiction, primary process (mobile cathexis), timelessness, and replacement of external by psychical reality”.<sup>173</sup> I shall return to these later in the thesis, sufficing to note at this point that all are very different to anthropocentric thought and conscious ideas. Yet the characteristics which most separate it from system Pcs or Cs are the plurality of the processes, namely that there are a multitude of them in concurrent operation, and that the unconscious is therefore filled with them. These entities in the unconscious wait like terracotta guards of Qin Shi Huang: steadfast, eternal, unmoving. This plurality is especially strange when coupled with the fact of their concurrent operation: “These instinctual impulses are co-ordinate with one another, exist side by side without being influenced by one another, and are exempt from mutual contradiction.”<sup>174</sup> Freud’s greatest metaphor might be his likening of these impulses to the build up of a city, in which the modern layers may be on the surface, yet below them still exist all of the previous foundations of older versions of the city. Like the ruins of Troy (figure 1.5), the unconscious consists of immortal formations for which, despite the possibility of a later version having been constructed, all previous versions still stand, and even more than still being in existence, can still create affect should they be cathected. With this metaphor we see how instinctual impulses are at once both timeless and malleable. Once the organism has learned a path to satisfy a component instinct, it never forgets it, it never gives up its knowledge of the compulsion to put it together, yet it might have found other, superior strategies as it has evolved to get to the satisfaction of the instinct by other routes: “[A]lthough the ultimate aim of each instinct remains unchangeable, there may be different paths to the same ultimate aim”.<sup>175</sup>

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173 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3010

174 Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3009

175 Freud, S. *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 2960



Figure 12: *The Remains of Troy*<sup>176</sup>

System Ucs is therefore populated by a number of entities, all of which are constantly ‘scanning’ for the opportunity to enact themselves.<sup>177</sup> This opportunity presents itself if the instinctual impulse’s favoured creations are activated in the psyche, by stimulation during the day, or at night, as part of a dream construction.<sup>178</sup> The degree to which the instinctual impulse aims to enact itself is related to the quantity of pressure which is acting upon it. This pressure is very mobile in the system Ucs, and can quickly pass from impulse to impulse.

At this point, Freud’s economic terminology must be clarified. For Freud, the concept of

176 From Pcs.org (available at <http://www.pcs.org/blog/item/was-there-a-real-troy/> )

177 The characteristics of these entities are described in Section V of *The Unconscious*. See Freud, S. *The Unconscious* (1915) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf) ) pp. 3009 - 3012

178 In this latter case, the instinctual impulse may be the originator of the stimulus.

pressure is – metaphorically – like a hydraulic apparatus, and the pressure is the force which is built up in the psyche. As the psychical system's primary role is to ensure the correct and safe circulation of this force in the psyche, the psyche aims at the cathexis (draining) of any pressure which would not be damaging to the organism. This cathexis manifests itself as pleasure.<sup>179</sup> The awareness of the psyche about the nature of the drive and how pressing the force behind its release is allows an ordering of the drives in the higher levels of psychical operation, in the Pcs. When the instinctual impulse escapes the confined of the system Ucs, and gains the possibility of moving to Pcs or Cs, it becomes instinct or pulsion [*Trieb*], Freud's more general term for these wishful constructions.

As we have seen, in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915) Freud describes four components of a drive: pressure (*Drang*), aim (*Ziel*), object (*Objekt*), and source (*Quelle*). Pressure and aim correspond to (a) (instinctual representative) and (b) (psychical energy) as described above – in the case of pulsion as well as the instinctual impulse – as the motor apparatus driving the pulsion is situated by Freud in system Ucs. The development of the pulsion over time – according to the principles above, a multiplication of inhuman entities rather than static cycle of effacement and replacement, is described by variations in the 'object' component of the drive. Source relates to somatic functions in the body. The variations in source partly explain the differences between different groups of instincts, for example, the difference between the sexual organs and the digestive organs partially explains how the vicissitudes of these drives go through different pathways: the difference between the structure of satisfaction in the strip club and the restaurant is in part related to the nature of the organ through which pleasure is to be attained.

It is quite possible to speak of all parts of the pulsion in terms of economic and biological models except the object, which, being a thing, is obviously most closely aligned to idealism and the products of consciousness. Yet so long as the biological side of the instinct is satisfied according to the economics of the psyche, the exact nature of the object through which this achieved is a matter of indifference to the system Ucs. As a result, the selection of an object in a drive is conditioned by its ability to ensure the cathexis that the other three require, and, as has been demonstrated, the product of a formal process rather than a cognitive or rational one. Whatever the nature of this object may be is quite arbitrary; so long as it works, it suffices as

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179 See footnote 115.

a component of the drive.

At this point in the present thesis, it has been demonstrated that even the quotidian operation of the unconscious is anti-anthropocentric, insofar as it is generated by a set of precognitive principles. The effects of this are far reaching, and destabilise many of the concepts which philosophy had previously taken for granted such as the extent of volition, the status of subject as the seat of reasoning consciousness, and, of course, that nature of what it is to desire or want. They serve to decentre the traditional subject of philosophy, and to place importance in unconscious rather than conscious thought. As we have considered Freud's theoretical depiction of the psyche we have seen that there are many aspects of its operation which are very unlike traditional conceptions of consciousness. However, the question of depth still remains problematic as the unconscious – in practice rather than in theory – could be, and indeed was treated like a rational entity whose products were ideas.

Freud's model of the psyche makes its most decisive break with the idea of a rational Cartesian consciousness in the model of the death drive. Death drive is the ultimate avatar of the non-human instinct underneath the subject: it is variously conceived as a compulsion to repeat, ruin, suffer, return to a state of nothingness, breakdown and to revisit trauma. It is also Janus-faced, being described as both the motor of creation and destruction in the psyche. What death drive is not however is, as in its most facile reading, a simple desire for what consciousness would conceive of as 'death'. I shall therefore devote the remainder of this chapter to a consideration of Freud's depiction of the death drive, to provide the basis of a reading of its importance as the most radically anti-anthropocentric part of the Freudian apparatus, following Land's emphasis on its extreme otherness to the Cartesian subject of philosophy:

The death drive is not a desire for death, but rather a hydraulic tendency to the dissipation of intensities. In its primary dynamics it is utterly alien to everything human, not least the three great pettinesses of representation, egoism, and hatred. The death drive is Freud's beautiful account of how creativity occurs without the least effort, how life is propelled into its extravagances by the blindest and simplest of tendencies, how desire is no more problematic than a river's search for the sea.<sup>180</sup>

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180 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 282

## **Anthropocentrism and the Death Drive**

*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) was considered by Freud to be a work of biology, as he explicitly states in the introduction to *The Ego and the Id*.<sup>181</sup> His methodology is to propose a hypothesis which explains a newly observed tendency which was not adequately described by current psychoanalytic theory, namely the compulsion to repeat horrific experiences. There were a surfeit of such cases which had been attributed to shell shock acquired in the Great War. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* presents the final capitalisation of Freud's mature model of the psyche, and it moves drive theory beyond the domain of pleasure, exploring the interrelation of repletion and the psyche's operation.

Up to this point, Freud's model of the mind and its mechanisms of repression posited a borderline between thoughts which were available to consciousness and those which resided purely in the domain of the unconscious, and which could only have effects of the psyche by influencing the productions of consciousness. Hence, we have patients like Anna O, who was unable to drink water without ever having access to, in consciousness, the reason for this inability. This recollection had been pushed by the dynamic forces in the psyche over this borderline between conscious and unconscious. Yet investments which take this journey can become tied to secondary objects which provide a link between the consciousness and the repressed thought, hence the triggers of hysterical episodes.

The role of the unconscious here seems to be a rather useful one evolutionarily. The instinctual economy, as previously shown in *Figure 10* is a closed economy confined within the organism. Traumatic transfer of this energy is problematic within this circuit because there is not possibility of externalising it. In the unconscious regime we have a force, censorship, which prevents – usually effectively – the recollection of unpleasant or damaging episodes in the life of the subject. In a clinical setting the unconscious is a mechanism which the analyst is tasked with keeping in an optimal state of order, providing cures to those patients who have come to a point where the mechanism of repression has broken down, in which case they are

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181 Freud, S. *The Ego and the Id* (1923) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3966



suffering from an excess of force and affect in their internal psychic economies, which is failing to cathect the products of its pulsions. This breakdown is fundamentally caused by the tying of the repressed memory to the secondary object whose distance is so far from the unconscious' objectives that it can not function as cathexis in the secondary process. Because the talking cure aimed to bring a more originary object back to the memory of the subject, if there was a movement to unlock the repressed content, it would cure the patients symptoms.

The first example of a tendency to deviate from the pleasure principle observed by Freud is that found in traumatic neurosis. Freud was afforded a number of sufferers of this condition which had been caused by their experience of trench warfare in the Great War. The recollections of these former soldiers of the traumatic events in the trenches while they dreamt seemed to go directly against the pleasure principle: they were recalling memories which were very unpleasant to them. Again, we see that Freud has collected a number of cases which provide evidence of a psychological problem which goes against what was then thought of the model of the psyche; indeed, this particular example provided him with many patients as examples. When we hear later of the case of Little Hans and the Fort/Da game there are questions which must be asked about the validity of making a speculative conclusion based on only one case. In the instance of war neurosis this is not a concern as the number of cases is so large. Freud's first concern is to eliminate the possibility of mechanical causes for war neurosis. The correspondence of physical trauma and later problems in "railway disasters and other accidents" might lead to the mistaken conclusion that neurosis derives from that trauma.<sup>182</sup> In the case of shell shock and other near-hysterical problems suffered by the returning soldiers it was no longer the case that all were the victims of an injury, many instead having been subjected to only sensory experiences of the horrors of the trenches.

The tendency to go against the pleasure principle seen in these psychical formations, if not attributable to a physical breaking down of a normal structure, must indicate that there is either: **(1)** a tendency to go against the instinct to seek pleasure in the brain, that is, a 'death drive' which deliberately aims at some other goal; **(2)** a perverse pleasure which is gained either through mastery or repetition of the event **(3)** that the psyche is intrinsically a flawed system which cannot efficiently, accurately, or regularly guarantee the correct cathexation of

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182 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3718

control of psychic energy. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud vacillates between the first two of these, attributing shock and Little Hans' game to potentially being forms of masochistic pleasure, only considering the repetition compulsion as clear evidence of the latter. This particular case is made with reference not the observations of subjects of analysis, but to his biological speculations regarding the structure of the human psyche and its evolutionary development.

Thus far then we conceived of a psychological process which represses the unpleasant and tries to prevent the subject reliving it. Yet prior to the revision of the theory of the drives in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud had to deal with a number of clinical cases in which this did not seem to be the case. The former soldiers who seemed to endlessly re-live their experiences in the hellish conditions of the Great War were showing quite the opposite compulsion, which was to repeat the experience rather than to repress it. This goes directly against the 'pleasure principle', which states that the mind functions in such a way as to reduce the amount of unpleasure it suffers from at all times.

In their first Freudian iterations, all drives were considered functions of the pleasure principle, striving for either the relief of adverse conditions like hunger or fatigue, or towards discharge of cathexis in the acquisition of objects which held an erotic affection for the subject. By the end of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud will have revised this previously unquestioned tenet of psychoanalysis, showing: "[T]he opposition between the 'sexual instincts,' which are directed towards an object, and certain other instincts, with which we were very insufficiently acquainted and which we described as the 'ego instincts'" as his analysis develops.<sup>183</sup> These other instincts are placed on the side of the death drive (*Thanatos*), while the 'sexual instincts' are assuredly in the domain of Eros, the pleasure principle.

The economic aspect of the psyche is described by Freud as one conditioned by and functioning along the pathways of drives, whose motor is the pleasure principle.<sup>184</sup> The pleasure principle is generally negative in the sense that what the mind seeks to reduce is the

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183 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3752

184 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3715

build-up of 'unpleasure' rather than to actively seek out a source of pleasure. This immediately places it in the domain of the unconscious as, again, we are considering the formal processes which govern an economy rather than ideational content. If the pleasure principle was in consciousness and simply dealt with ideas like hunger, the need for rest, or affection, it could be rationally worked out, and there would be no need for a psychoanalysis which would deal with, for example, the hysterics upon whom many of Freud's first theories were based upon. Furthermore, the economic model is concerned with the transference of the feeling of pleasure or unpleasure. This corresponds to a change in the amount of 'excitation' in the psyche. In the classic Freudian model this works towards an absolute minimisation of the energetic flows in the brain. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud will reconsider this and wonder if this 'Nirvana Principle' works to "[R]educe, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli".<sup>185</sup> it is clear that the pleasure principle, although described by Freud as being a *primary* process in the psyche, does not operate without severe constraint. The immediate regulator of its operation is the reality principle and its opposite (or indeed, its 'beyond') is the death instinct.<sup>186</sup>

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185 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3745

186 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3717

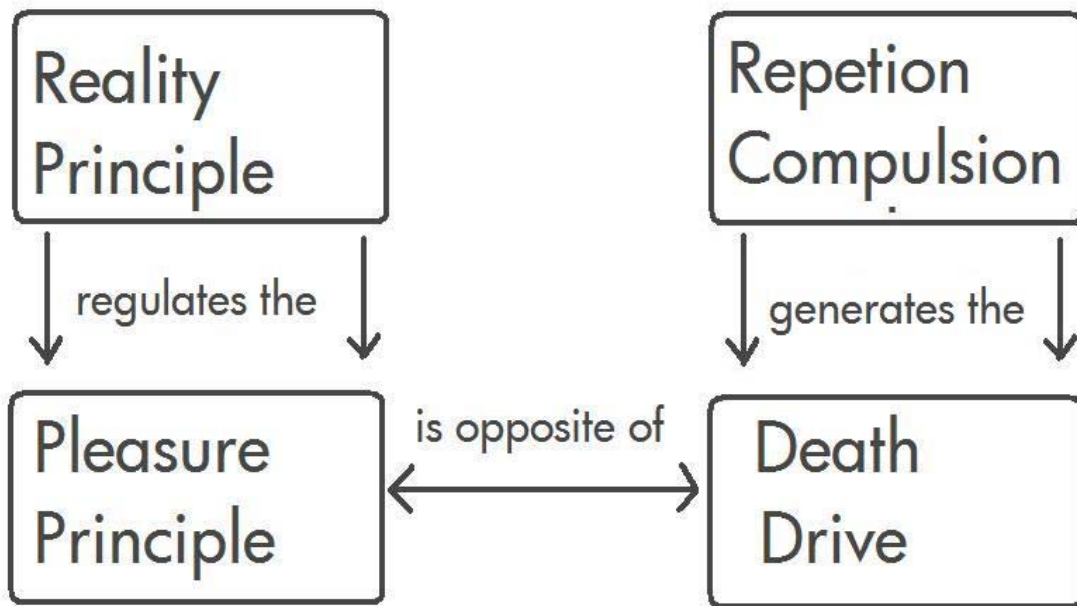


Figure 13: *Relationship between Pleasure Principle, Reality Principle and Death Instinct*

The reality principle operates in all the topographical spaces of the psyche. As well as being the set of social norms which the super-ego concerns itself with (and therefore very anthropocentric), there is a regulation within the id (which is anti-anthropocentric), which manifests as a blocking of desire in the form of the censorship regime, and also in the vicissitudes of the drive by which the unconscious formally creates new drive dispositions based on their effectiveness at reliving tension in the secondary process. A case in which there is an apparent incongruity between observed actions and the maxim that all psychic processes work towards the fulfilment of the pleasure principle is the case of the play rituals of Freud's grandson Ernst. The Fort/Da game involved Ernst throwing away a spindle, which Freud clearly linked with the production of a quantity of displeasure. This goes against the pleasure principle: once the subject begins to repeat an unpleasurable event, the interplay of the pleasure and reality principles can no longer be said to be the sole rule of the unconscious. The Fort/Da game's primary element was the removal of the toy from the child's sight, simulating the loss of the mother, while the reclamation of the toy was secondary, despite Freud's observation that “[t]here is no doubt that greater pleasure was attached to the second act”.<sup>187</sup> Fort/Da notably differs from other examples of the death drive because it takes place

187 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3720

as a quotidian operation rather than as an exception or symptom of a complex. Freud posits two possible reasons for this game being played: firstly that it is a method by which the psyche can normalise the otherwise painful disappearance of the mother, the will to repetition in the act allowing the child to become accustomed to the mother's departure, and allowing the formation of stable circuits of cathexis through which the unpleasure of the mother's passing can be released. The second is that the repetition of this unpleasant operation allowed the child to feel that he had a sense of mastery over the event of the mother leaving: "by repeating it, unpleasurable as it was, through a game, he took on an active part".<sup>188</sup>

Yet both of these drive-figures can be reduced to functions of the pleasure principle. Freud explains we cannot be sure that the repetition of the act of mother disappearing does not offer "a yield of pleasure of another sort, but nonetheless a direct one".<sup>189</sup> In this case, there is no evidence of a drive which diverges from the drives of the pleasure principle in this observed action. Here we can see why the death drive is not necessarily the drive to cause suffering or to annihilate or to nullify, though all of these negative and destructive affects are conjured by the name 'death drive'. In such a shallow reading, as simply the desire to die, the death drive is easily misrepresented. It is more properly the anti-life drive – the force which operates in cases where drives deviate from operating under the pleasure principle. What is important to take from the example of the Fort/Da game is not a definitive proof of the death drive but a deeper understanding of the system of how drives can work. In this instance we see the possibility of concomitant drives working towards quite different ends in the child's psyche. One, towards a mastering of the trauma of the mothers disappearance, and another towards the nihilistic instinct of renunciation of the mother and the pleasure she offers. Freud is unable to distinguish between these two speculative hypotheses when presented with the evidence of the child's actions, and concedes that a mixture of the two is perfectly possible. Rather than a single erotic drive which tries to achieve cathexis through one object alone, we see again, as with the 'ruins of Troy' metaphor, that there can be a series of drives which exist in the unconscious, never coming into contact with each other, and often operating in quite different directions: the example in this case being one towards the mother and one renouncing the

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188 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3721

189 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3721

figure of the mother.

A particularly crucial concept in both Land and Lyotard's interpretations of Freud is the nature of this force, which is called either the death drive or death instinct. Thus far we have seen that Freud's inquiry into this force in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, provides observational evidence of a tendency which would not be fully explained by reference to the pleasure principle alone, before offering speculations about the nature of the psychical process which might be responsible for such a tendency. Interpreters of Freud hold widely differing opinions on the nature of death drive, Lyotard's view being particularly unique. It is my intention to read the death instinct with Lyotard in Chapter 4, and to concentrate on Land's reading in Chapter 5. These readings emphasise the plurality and plasticity of drive as mentioned above.

The first error of interpreters of the death drive is the literal interpretation, namely that the death drive is a force which aims towards destruction or elimination of the subject, described by Moretti as "the tendency to let oneself go and sink back into nature".<sup>190</sup> In Freud's own work there is a significant trend of apocalyptic pessimism which reaches its zenith in *Civilisation and Its Discontents* which would ameliorate the error of the shallow reader in taking this view of death drive.<sup>191</sup> Ansell-Pearson notes the importance of the First World War in this demand for a diagnosis of the savagery and violence which were shown to be in the subject.<sup>192</sup> The second fallacy is the refutation of the first and taking its simple negative: death instinct as not necessarily the push to destruction, but an impulse to change. This is a kind of Tarot Card positivism, putting an affirmative 'spin' on what would otherwise be, if considered in the first interpretation of death drive, an often morally, politically or socially inconvenient theory. It will become my contention that this kind of interpretation is more likely to be used as a political convenience than the product of dispassionate analysis. This is particularly a problem of many of the psychoanalysts after Freud, who lacked the scientific rigour which Freud held. By this we mean not necessarily the quality of his experimental work, but his

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190 Moretti, A. *Signs taken for Wonders* (London: Verso, 2005) p. 138. See also Lear, *Freud*, (UK: Routledge, 2005) p. 161

191 Noted by Lyotard in 'On a Figure of Discourse' in Lyotard, J.F. Ed. Harvey and Roberts, *Towards the Postmodern*, (New York: Humanity Books, 1993) p. 13

192 Ansell-Pearson, K. *Germinal Life* (London: Routledge, 1999) pp. 112-113

insistence in having an investigative approach where he did not take pre-conceived opinions into his work, tailoring conclusions to match already-held beliefs, alongside his rigorous efforts to present his hypotheses as provisional rather than absolute: for example, his warning about placing too much weight on the Fort/Da game: “No certain decision can be reached from the analysis of a single case like this”, or the lengthy remarks as to the veracity of what he had hitherto written at the end of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.<sup>193</sup> This second view seems to be logically insufficient. It fails to capture how the death drive is shown to be largely negative in its character in Freud’s experimental observations. It also lacks suitable physiological or neurological evidence for us to accept that this might be the case. Speculatively, it is neither evolutionarily or practically useful to imagine this trend in humans.

Lyotard’s position is that death drive represents a kind of breakdown in the psychic system, wherein a drive fails to attain its goal by being broken off, collapsing in on itself, or reverting back to an earlier state. In this view we see death drive as an effect of an imperfectly constructed psychic system where drives are never whole, reliable and uniform, but are the consequences of a fragmented and inefficient human mind. Lyotard’s clearest formulation of this is from the essay *‘On the Figure of a Discourse’*:

The death instinct is simply the idea (as opposed to the concept) that the machine for collecting and draining energy is not a well regulated mechanical device. In this regard Freud points to the repetition of acts, situations, discourses or gestures (nightmares, repetition of failure) that cannot be fulfilments of desire (of “pleasures”) in the equivocal sense of the term (the first theory of desire), but that, on the contrary, are associated with the most extreme suffering, the grinding of the psychical apparatus, and the “subject’s” scream.<sup>194</sup>

Lyotard’s view is from position **(3)** listed in section 1.6 (‘that the psyche is intrinsically a

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193 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3721

Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) pp. 3761 - 3762

194 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant (London: Athlone, 1993) p. 13

flawed system'), and therefore that what is called the death drive or the beyond of the pleasure principle is in fact evidence of the failings of the psychic system to work efficiently and always properly provide the pre-conscious-consciousness system with not only the tools to complete its goals, but even an understanding of what these goals might be. The second example (trauma being the first) in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* of the 'beyond' of the pleasure principle is demonstrated by Freud's grandson, Little Hans. Little Hans' case, as argued above, is more useful for us as an example of the polyvocal nature of drives. A series of separate desires may operate upon a single object: "The phantasy contains several forms that are simultaneously active".<sup>195</sup>

Freud also considers a third set of cases which show a tendency away from the pleasure principle are those connected to repetition. Initially Freud speaks about cases of transference in his patients which repeat the structure of the earlier neurosis but remove it from its original context and place in their relationship with the therapist.<sup>196</sup> This is explained as working along the same basic mechanism as the original repression. Rather than remembering the trauma as a past event, the ego, trying to defend itself against the unpleasant revelations the trauma brought about in it will try and reconstruct the original repression:

There is no doubt the resistance of the conscious and unconscious ego operates under the sway of the pleasure principle: it seeks to avoid the unpleasure which would be produced by the liberation of the repressed.<sup>197</sup>

This places the beyond of the pleasure principle firmly in the realm of the unconscious id, the primary process. If there is to be a death drive, it will be found in this zone of eternal, unchanging drives.

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195 Lyotard, J.F. 'Fiscourse Digire: The Utopia behind the Scenes of the Phantasy' Trans. Mary Lydon.

*Theatre Journal* Vol. 35, No. 3, The Poetics of Theatre (USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press October, 1983) ( Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3207215> ) p. 334

196 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf) ) p. 3724

197 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf) ) p. 3725



The repetition compulsion is the most interesting part of Freud's theory for Lyotard, which he discusses in the initial chapters of *Libidinal Economy*.<sup>198</sup> Unfortunately, Freud often assigns these compulsions as consequences of the biological structure of life itself, rather than looking at more cases of this very interesting repetition compulsion as observed in patients. Lyotard's own reference to repetition takes place in his discussion of 'the labyrinth' most notably in the story of his "Italian friend", compelled to re-circulate around a gallery with an unexplained sense of unease until he finally (consciously) notices a picture of an ex-mistress on a wall.<sup>199</sup> This is an incident of the type which Freud mentions: the benefactor abandoned by his protégés, however much they differ from one another (considering his relationship with his own disciples, one imagines Freud to perhaps saying this a little bitterly); the lover whose affairs always follow the same course; the woman who marries only to find her husbands become seriously ill shortly after. In these compulsions, we see complex situations in which several distinct figures of drives can be seen, with some not following the pleasure principle's simple aim.<sup>200</sup>

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, there is clear evidence of Freud's attempt to collapse the seemingly hostile and negative teleologies of the death drive (a charge towards destruction) into localised desire for repetition. Freud returns to the question of war neurosis and pinpoints their cause as being the traumatic event itself bringing such an excess of excitation to the nervous system that it is in some way damaged. The repetition of the traumatic event in the patients' dreams is attributed to the desire to master the event, although Freud states that this instinct may be "[M]ore primitive than the purpose of gaining pleasure and avoiding unpleasure".<sup>201</sup> Here Freud moves away from the teleological constraints of the pleasure principle. In speculating that a system might be distinct from the previously overriding pleasure principle he allows the conception of a mind which has a multiplicity of evolved

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198 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant (London: Athlone, 1993)

199 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant (London: Athlone, 1993) p. 32

200 These examples appear in Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3726

201 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3734

purposes, working alongside each other, rather than a unified one to which all others are subordinate. Certain aspects of dreaming must fall outside of pleasure's remit and are also considered from an evolutionary standpoint of perhaps existing before the hegemony of the pleasure instinct.<sup>202</sup>

Other forms of repetition are more clearly beyond the pleasure principle. Distinguishing between the mobile energy in the primary process and the bound energy in the secondary process, we are offered the hypothesis that repetition takes place as a means of binding the excess energy of the primary process in stable formations in the secondary. This impulse kicks in when the body is threatened by a surplus of energy which would otherwise catastrophically unbalance it, in the forms such as neurosis. The question we ask here is if repetition is the best strategy for changing this situation? Merely completing the act over and over again seems to be a poor way of resolving something which was not dealt with in the first occurrence.

Lyotard's death instinct is very much a property of the unconscious. Its *mechanisms* and most strikingly its *productions* seem to be very different from the processes we would associate with conscious, rational capabilities which traditional philosophy has endowed consciousness with. Nevertheless, it is somewhat internal to the individual subject. It conditions their interaction with the world as an internal force, and here we remember the twofold nature of the drive economy: (1) drive formations 'scanning' to release primary process energy and (2) repetition and reality principle working to cathect energy in the secondary process. The death drive is therefore another anti-anthropocentric property of an individual, albeit one which is masked and repressed by the tendency to anthropomorphise it.

Ansell-Pearson, in his reading of Freud's death drive in *Germinal Life*, concentrates on the view that it is a desire of the organism to regress to its original state.<sup>203</sup> This rather myopic reading of what are a series of diverse tendencies is necessary to support his argument that Deleuze's re-framing of the death drive as a force of repetition-creativity represents a break from Freud which in turn allows him to present a metaphysics of the unconscious which he

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202 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3721

203 Ansell-Pearson, K. *Germinal Life* (London: Routledge, 1999) p. 113

opposes to a drive-theory of the unconscious.<sup>204</sup>

## Conclusions

Freud's "far-fetched speculation" that "consciousness may be, not the most universal of mental processes, but only a function of them" has been rendered commonplace by advances in not only psychoanalysis but also in the wider context of psychology and neuroscience since it was written.<sup>205</sup> Such a revelation is a perfect example of the fissure Freud opens under the foundations of subject-centred, Cartesian, anthropocentric philosophy. Unfortunately, it has not fully made the transition to philosophical research, where the subject is still taken as the ruler of the conscious mind, replete with the ability to fully control its own destiny and that of the body it is attached to. This chapter has begun to sketch a Freudian perspective which can be contrasted to the metaphysics of subjectivity. It has shown that a consistent model of the unconscious can be conceptualised which: operates according to formal process and rules; can be likened to a machinic or energetic system; that the drives' pathways which traverse it originate in instincts. The vicissitudes of the drive over time are the consequence of the general compulsion to repeat, which is, for the machine of the unconscious to cathect, and the success or failure of this repetition in both the internal conditions of the psyche (the reality principle) and the material circumstances the subject is constrained by (reality proper). The consequences of this migration of the drive is not that the new formation replaces the old, but that the new exists in parallel with the old, operating alongside it rather than effacing it. Historical drive pathways or possibilities of cathexis, though potentially uninvested, retain the possibility to repeat should considerations of reality begin to favour them again.

Repetition is the defining process of the unconscious. Once established the drives remain, their pathways laid down, and the system always looks for opportunities to pass along, so its essential shape is carved by the rules that it (1) repeats and (2) when it encounters censorship or resistance it tries to re-route. This rubric of repetition forms the basis of Land's conception of the drive and conceptualisation of his key claim that "drives are the functions of nomadic

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204      Ansell-Pearson's thought, introduced briefly here, will be taken up in Chapter 5 when discussing Land.

205      Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3728

cybernetic systems, not instincts but simulated instincts, artificial instincts”.<sup>206</sup> They are artificial instinct formations, born of a compromise between the desire to repeat and reality. As such they can be opposed to the Lacanian School's common understanding of drives – as explored in the next chapter – which are much more like ideational content. An example is Žižek's description of 'unknown knowns' – “the disavowed beliefs, suppositions, and obscene practices we pretend not to know about, although they form the background of our public values”.<sup>207</sup> These productions, as “beliefs, suppositions” are much more complex than the energetic unconscious produces, and really belong in the upper areas of the psychical system. The unconscious does not know ideas, and though its energetic pathways and mechanisms may lead to predictable dispositions of cathexis, it does not think.

Freud's depiction also refutes the often held belief that the death instinct is a destructive one which seeks to end the organism's suffering. On the contrary, the death instinct is seen from a biological point of view as being the founder of “self preservation, of self assertion, and of mastery”, that “these guardians of life, too, were originally the myrmidons of death”.<sup>208</sup> The death instinct: “[S]truggles most energetically against events which might help it attain its life's goal rapidly – by a kind of short circuit”.<sup>209</sup> In fact, the only really necrotic element of the death drive is in its name – all of its forces are turned towards the preservation of life in the organism. When death finally arrives; the 'proper death' of the organism which the death drive works to facilitate, these functions of the Freudian death drive are still fighting to prolong the organism's survival.

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206 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 330

207 Žižek, S. 'Philosophy, the "unknown knowns", and the public use of reason'. in *Topoi*. Vol. 25, No. 1-2, (2006) p. 137-142

208 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3741

209 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 3741

## Chapter 2. Lacan's Return to Freud

This chapter has two goals. Firstly it will briefly consider the nature of Lacan's 'return to Freud' and his use of Freudian vocabulary. The remainder of the chapter is then dedicated to an analysis of Lacan's own model of the unconscious. The objectives of and methodology used in this second part are surmised in the section below, Objectives.

Lacan repeatedly stated that his aim as a psychoanalyst was to faithfully follow Freud. Such professions of fidelity to the 'father' of the movement were commonly heard from psychoanalysts. These statements can be interpreted in a number of ways; perhaps most temptingly as an act of Oedipal devotion. Lacan – among many other analysts - claimed to be the 'heir' of the Freudian system of analysis as the psychoanalytic movement fractured into a series of post-Freudian schools. As each interpretive position fought for recognition of their own analysis as the most truthful or effective method, all made arguments from authority appealing their fidelity to the letter or spirit of Freud's work. The theoretical foundation of Lacan's claims to fidelity derive from the nature of Freud's creation of Psychoanalysis. In some respects, Psychoanalysis was created 'overnight'. The discipline did not evolve, or slowly cleave from an established branch of science. Instead, it rapidly grew after the 'big bang' of Freud's initial discovery of the analytic unconscious. When selecting the terms which he would use to describe the psychoanalytic concepts he was delimiting, Freud's methodology was often to work by analogy. The words which Freud used to describe the processes of the unconscious were not always as easy to coin as 'unconscious', a simple negation of the already established notion of consciousness as the primary space of thought. Instead, the language of psychoanalysis was acquired by Freud's borrowing of terms from other disciplines which were in some way 'like' the psychoanalytic concepts he was trying to elucidate. Terms like drive [*Trieb*], censorship [*Zensur*] or wish [*Wunsch*] are not only metaphorical in their operation, but are sourced polymathically. Freud borrowed terms from such diverse disciplines as philosophy, biology, mechanics, economics, popular psychology and myth to indicate to the reader what the underlying psychoanalytic terms might mean. As a result the underlying meaning of Freud's language can be difficult to understand – particularly when it was freshly minted and there were not so many secondary interpretations as have been generated subsequently. With the passing of time these concepts have become more entrenched in language for their psychoanalytic use, and this process has been driven by psychoanalysts following Freud who try to take his conceptual framework and re-present it in

less metaphorical language. Lacan's 'return to Freud' or 'fidelity to Freud' is best considered in this sense: his aim is to take the Freudian concepts which lie underneath his linguistic, metaphorical descriptions, and offer them to the reader over-again, giving an extended analysis 'in the wake' of the Freudian definition: "I can only write this introduction—this *Einjuhrung*, to use Freud's term—in the wake of Freud, in so far as this notion is absolutely new in Freud".<sup>210</sup>

In both Lacanian and Freudian analysis a tripartite structure is used to describe the processes of the unconscious. In Lacanianism this structure consists of need (*Besoin*), drive (*Pulsion*), and desire (*Désir*). The Freudian counterparts to these three are instinct (*Instinkt*), drive (*Trieb*), and wish (*Wunsch*). The extent to which these two models are synonymous with each other (and their commonly used English renditions) is widely discussed in psychoanalytical commentary regarding the equivalence of the terms between different languages.<sup>211</sup> Yet beyond this recognition of simple linguistic difference, there are far more important considerations of how these two psychoanalytic systems, though superficially appearing equivalent due to their broadly similar structures, are in fact very different in their portrayal of the mechanisms of the unconscious. Lacan's 'return to Freud' cannot be read as a dogmatic restoration of Freudian orthodoxy, nor as an attempt to transpose Freud's often clumsy use of terminology onto the contemporaneous psychoanalytic lexicon. Instead, the return to Freud must be considered as an exegesis of the Freud's works in which Lacan offers a certain (re-)reading of Freud. This hermeneutic approach emphasises parts of Freud's works in proportion to their ability to support Lacan's central psychoanalytic insight, namely that "the unconscious is structured like a language".<sup>212</sup>

As we have seen, Freud presents three meta-psychological hypotheses in *The Unconscious* (1915): the economic, the dynamic and the topographic. Dynamic processes in the unconscious are concerned with the translation and transformation of information within the

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210 Lacan, J. *The Seminar: Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 1964. Trans. Alan Sheridan. (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1977) p. 162

211 As discussed in Chapter 1

212 "L'inconscient est structuré comme un langage". From Lacan, J. *Autres écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 2001) pp. 449-495).

unconscious. These processes are described as dynamic because they involve a change in the state of the information, rather than a physical relocation of the process to another component of the psyche (topographic change). Freud's descriptions of these changes in the dynamic hypothesis are the most useful to the Lacanian goal of describing the unconscious as a quasi-linguistic system.<sup>213</sup> Examples of dynamic mechanisms of the unconscious would include the censor and the processes of the dreamwork.<sup>214</sup> It is the present thesis' contention that Lacan's re-emphasising of the dynamic elements of the unconscious has a correlate strategy of de-emphasis of aspects of the economic hypothesis. In his description of the unconscious as a language like structure Lacan considers at length the mechanisms by which the unconscious substitutes terms along metaphoric and metonymic axes. This theory owes much – as is commonly noted – to both Saussurian linguistics and its re-interpretation by Jacobsen.<sup>215</sup> Lacan's decision to take linguistics as his meta-model has serious consequences for his micro-models of the processes of the psyche. His explicit denunciation of the biological bases of psychological structures as envisaged by Freud, and the replacement of these bases with linguistic constructs is a change in register. If something is to be thought of as like a language, a host of secondary concepts related to language become prominent in our attempts to interpret the theory. Superficially, languages seem to be about signs, and signs are ideas; our intuition is to think about languages in the register of conscious thought. In fact, signification is a more abstract concept, and is about the relationships or bridges between signs. Nevertheless, anthropocentric bias tends to pull the signifier to the sign, and reduce the net of signifier-relations in the unconscious to a sign-matrix of ideas.

## Objectives

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213 I am using the term quasi-linguistic to describe Lacan's rewriting of Freud to emphasise the importance of 'like' in that famous quotation of Lacan in the footnote above 'The unconscious is structured *like* a language', which is often misinterpreted to mean that the unconscious is a linguistic entity, rather than that it bears some resemblance to the structural framework of language.

214 Depicted in Freud, S. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)

215 Bennington, G *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) pp.80-81

The present thesis shall argue that, firstly, Lacan's dynamic account of the unconscious lacks a satisfactory account of the economic aspect of the unconscious which undertakes the 'work' of this quasi-linguistic substitution; and secondly, that another set of problems arise when we consider how the mechanisms of the dynamic unconscious finally alight on a chose representation of a signifier which it encounters. Both of these accusations could be broadly classified as criticisms of Lacan's anthropocentrism. In reference to the first, Lacan's theory of desire fails to describe convincingly why the unconscious will occasionally leave its 'gloomy hermeneutical depths' and effect a change in the behaviour of the subject.<sup>216</sup> Freud emphasises the extreme mobility of the primary process, giving examples in the case of the parapraxes regarding how the unconscious might intervene at any moment in the subject's existence. Lacanian chains of signifiers, especially in their applied use, seem rigid in comparison. I will argue that this rigidity would reduce the role of the unconscious to being a black box of neuroses which effect the subject sporadically, and that this is not the case. Regarding the second objection, philosophers such as Deleuze, Lyotard and Land have written extensively about the myriad, bewildering possibilities which the unconscious is observed to choose as the objects of its investment – not only by reinterpretation of Freud's canonical case studies, but also in wider contexts. Their conclusion is that the unconscious is an essentially inhuman entity – in Freud's terminology, the other place (*Eine andere schauplatz*) – and while Lacan is certainly aware of this claim made by Freud, his marginalisation of the economic and promotion of the dynamic aspects of the unconscious transform the purposeless forward movement of the unconscious drives as demonstrated by Freud into a system concerned, like a language, with fixing meaning and sensibility in relation to a subject.<sup>217</sup> While Lacan does not rule out the possibility of uncommon or heterogeneous desires, it is the case that in the majority of his psychoanalytic interpretations he plays the role akin to that of the detective: to provide the evidence which can be used to convince a jury, which is concerned about motives rather than processes, and the form in which he presents these observations to the 'jury', the reader, is in the form of anthropocentric stories of love, lust

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216 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 328

217 As exemplified by Lacan's contention that the signifier is "that which represents a subject for another signifier" Lacan, J. *The Seminar: Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, 1964*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1977) p. 207



anger or treachery.<sup>218</sup>

Chapter 1 showed how Freud's writings can be divided into theoretical works which were abstract, mechanistic and posited the unconscious as anti-anthropocentric, and those works which were clinically centred and treated the unconscious as a hidden consciousness, and a site of ideas. In doing so we make something of a binary distinction between these two opposing conceptions. With Lacan's works there is no such simple distinction. Instead, they can be conceived of as a grey scale, in which any definite position on either end of this spectrum tends to be pulled back towards the middle, whose indefiniteness is made all the more oblique by the calculated sense of mysteriousness and obscurantism Lacan cultivates.<sup>219</sup> Lacan's methodology which is proffer his work as clues, riddles and tangential approaches to the question of the unconscious prevents a definitive reading of several part of his theoretical apparatus. However, the consequence of uncertainty is not always suspension of judgement – even if they are infamously hard to interpret, Lacan's works of psychoanalysis are interpreted by a number of scholars who identify as Lacanians or post-Lacanians.<sup>220</sup> In this process of interpretation, readers of Lacan have identified a series of points which help to signpost a general theoretical direction in his work.<sup>221</sup> The concepts used by these readers of Lacan, following his decision to liken the unconscious to a language and to theorise in a linguistic manner (in his riddling style), conditions the interpretation of his work towards anthropocentricism. The very nature of a metaphor is inertly idealist: *this idea is like another idea*. If we were to posit that a theory is only as anti-anthropocentric as its softest take on the

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218 The objection could be made that most psychoanalytic cases are of a banal nature and require an interpretation which relies on 'normal' human desire. The present thesis shall demonstrate that this is a only concern of clinical psychoanalysis, and not relevant to the philosophical foundations of the practice.

219 A number of commentators have noted the 'density' of Lacan's writing, for example: "the impenetrability of Lacan's prose... [is] too often regarded as profundity precisely because it cannot be understood". From Stevens, R. *Sigmund Freud: Examining the Essence of his Contribution* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) p. 191n

220 The 'official' Lacanian school is headed by his editor J.A. Miller, but there are also a number of prominent intellectuals such as Žižek who identify as Lacanians.

221 Such as: 'the unconscious is structured like a language'; 'quilting points'; the trio real-imaginary-symbolic; the phallus.

centricism of the human subject allows it to be, where would Lacan's work be situated? I shall argue, following Land, that the answer to this question is that Lacan's position – and even more so that of Lacanism – is as an anthropomorphising tendency, pulling psychoanalysis away from its radical Freudian origins:

It is Lacan who insists on Oedipalizing the Fort-Da game, in the general process of Oedipalizing desire to its foundations; ripping all the energy, hydraulics, pathology, and shock out of Freud, and substituting lack, the pathos of identity, and Heideggerian pomposity, whilst deepening the role of the phallus, and trivializing desire into the cringing aspiration to be loved.<sup>222</sup>

Having noted that I intend to consider Lacan's theory of desire critically, I shall begin by providing the reader with an exposition Lacan's conception of the unconscious as being structured like a language, before moving on to consider the dynamic aspects of Lacan's theory of desire, with particular emphasis on the celebrated 'graph of desire' (*graphe du désir*) from *Seminar V* and the *Ecrits* in the second section of this chapter. The third section will build on these models, and consider the difference between the depictions of drive in Freud and Lacan. The fourth and final section will conditioner the academic reception of Lacan, and some notable tendencies of the Lacanian School. This account will provide the basis of my criticism in later sections in the present thesis of the more anthropocentric tendencies of Lacanian psychoanalysis and its interpreters – a reading which is influenced by the interpretations of Lacan's work by Deleuze and Guattari, Lyotard, and Land.

### **Structural linguistics: Metaphor and Metonymy**

Lacan combined Freud's theory of the unconscious with structural linguistics, describing the processes of the dreamwork as described in Chapter 1 as analogous to the processes of metaphor and metonymy as described by De Saussure and Jakobson. The two initial processes of the dreamwork – which, as shown in Chapter 1, Freud universalises as the basic transformational mechanisms of the unconscious – are displacement and condensation. Lacan's redefinition of these terms moves away from the energetic-fluid-mechanical language of Freud and instead, these basic operations of the unconscious are presented by Lacan in a

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222 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 282

lexicon which borrows terms from linguistics. Lacan reinterpreted Freud by combining his ideas with those of the linguist Roman Jakobson, who had compared the processes of the dreamwork to metaphor and metonymy.<sup>223</sup> Linguistically, the former describes the replacement of one concept by another similar concept (see figure 14), while the latter describes the linking of concepts sequentially to make a descriptive sentence (see figure 15).

Figure 14: *Axis of metaphor*

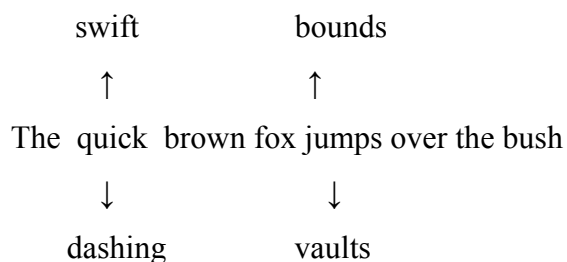


Figure 15: *Axis of metonymy*

The → quick → brown → fox → jumps → over → the → bush

These two poles of language describe how each specific word is chosen in any sentence in preference to all of the other words which may have been used. Metaphorically it is selected as best representing the concept to be signified; that is, it has the correct association.<sup>224</sup> Metonymically it is selected as it gives the sentence meaning according to its previous structure; that it offers contiguity.<sup>225</sup> When the unconscious cannot simply present its impulses in language – in some cases, due to censorship, but also because there is no precise linguistic

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223 See 'Displacement' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993) pp. 121-124

224 'Displacement' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993)

225 'Displacement' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993)

correlate of its contents, it therefore uses these two mechanisms to change or determine what it produces. Lacan takes Jakobson's likening of metonymy to displacement and condensation in the dreamwork and makes a further redefinition. Metaphor is tied to displacement, and metonymy to condensation.<sup>226</sup> These two notions are combined with Lacan's description of the unconscious as being 'like a language', and his notion of the signifier. For Lacan, the unconscious consists of an ocean of signifiers, linked together like rings in a chain. These links are constituted on a horizontal axis, where they represent the combinations of terms that are often coexistent (cold – snow – white – winter), or vertically as terms which can replace one another (grief – woe – misery). Each signifier in the unconscious can be (and is) chained to many different concepts in both directions. Lacan uses metonymy and metaphor to describe movement along these chains, as one signifier becomes replaced by another (figure 16).

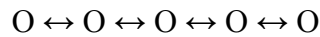
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226 See 'Displacement' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993); and Bowie, *Lacan* (London: Fontana, 1991) p. 218

Metaphor



Metonym



The unconscious

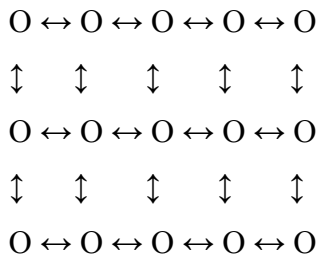


Figure16: *Components of Lacan's signifying chains*

In the above model, the unconscious' content is a matrix of conjoined signifiers which are linked associatively. The mechanism by which these terms are associated parses a chain of information, changing its contents as it moves through the associated terms. This happens according to Lacan's dictum that the signifier “represents a subject for another signifier”.<sup>227</sup> As the signifier is not a sign (which “represents something for someone”) that is, correlate with an idea, it rather represents as relationship between ideas.<sup>228</sup> The signifiers which construct the unconscious are therefore arbitrary links and bridges between various notions which are conjoined in the psyche. They can be relatively common bridges which are shared by a number of subjects, but also can be distinct to particular subjects. Signifying relations, taken in this sense, seem to be timeless, unchanging constructs, like drives in the Freudian model. However, Lacan does not provide a description of the processes by which this structure is laid down in the psyche, and it is rather take as a given proposition which

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227 Lacan, J. *The Seminar. Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, 1964.* Trans. A. Sheridan. (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1977) p. 207

228 Lacan, J. *The Seminar. Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, 1964.* Trans. A. Sheridan. (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1977) p.207

necessarily exists in any subject. This is a problem we find in the linguistic model if stripped of its biological basis. Without the economic model of the unconscious and its considerations of formal efficacy, the conditions for the generation of these signifying links is unknown. In Lacan's model the unconscious, as a matrix of these relational bridges, becomes very difficult to speak about. The tendency is always to collapse the essence of the signifier into the sign, and to return the model borrowed from linguistics explained above where one notion or idea substitutes for another. The idea that one formal relation substitutes for another is decidedly more complex. At various points even Lacan is guilty of committing this reduction of relations to ideas. The consequence of this move towards an idealist theory of signs in the unconscious is, again, a tendency to anthropomorphise the complex, arbitrary, and alien processes in the unconscious.

Lacan understood the unconscious as a matrix of signifiers, linked together in such a way that one signifier could substitute itself for another. This transition was described by Lacan as a 'sliding' of the signifiers beneath consciousness. Lacan's description of the unconscious deliberately ignores the parts of Freud in which the unconscious is analogised to a hydraulic machine, which is driven by force, pressure or energy. Against Freud's energeticism, Lacan posits an unconscious which moves through phases-changes in states of information, working to match symbols together – to solve a riddle – rather than to dissipate energy. The consequences of this decision are evaluated here – is Lacan, as he claimed, showing fidelity to Freud's true intention, or is he misinterpreting Freud's intentions in the service of his own project?

Movements along chains of signifiers in Lacan's model lack the references to force or mechanical pressure which characterises Freud's modelling of the unconscious. Traversal of the signifying chain is neither driven by cathectic energy, nor is the system powered by underlying cathectic energy. Instead, as a linguistic system, it works comparatively, identifying terms which are similar or appropriate, at which point the sliding of signification stops and a fixed idea is generated. While Lacan can conceivably reinterpret the metaphorical analogy of elements of the dreamwork and remain loyal to Freud, wholesale change of the unconscious to a system driven by formal quasi-linguistic rules altering states of information is not obviously prefigured in Freud. Bowie correctly identifies that though Freud's language about the levels of the unconscious uses linguistic metaphors (translation, inscription), displacement

and condensation are plainly related to hydraulic mechanics.<sup>229</sup> Condensation and displacement are markedly different in their operation in Lacanian psychoanalysis than they are in classically Freudian terms. For Freud, displacement involves the transference of “cathectic energy... along associative pathways”.<sup>230</sup> Lacan's description strips the energetics from this Freudian unconscious machine, and instead the points at which the sliding of signifiers stop, the quilting points [*points de capiton*], are performatively efficient; though they are areas at which the individual's unconscious is likely to fix associations there is no energetic structure or instinct which defines them. Instead, the quilting point is characterised by the density of signifiers conjoined to one another. The 'gravity' of these points of massed signification curves the 'space/time' of the unconscious causing its movement to stop. The example below (figure 17) shows this formation in a (much) simplified signifying chain, in which the initial idea 'The Death of Diana' connects to the hyper-linked notion of 'Government', around which all other signifiers cluster. This paranoid fantasy would be a likely quilting point in the subject trying to make sense of this notion if the unconscious had this structure; of course, other structures are equally possible depending on the construction of the subject – it wouldn't be hard to get to notions like 'Decadence' or 'Paparazzi' using the model of the signifying chain.

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229 Bowie, M. *Lacan* (London: Fontana, 1991) p. 69

230 'Displacement' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993)

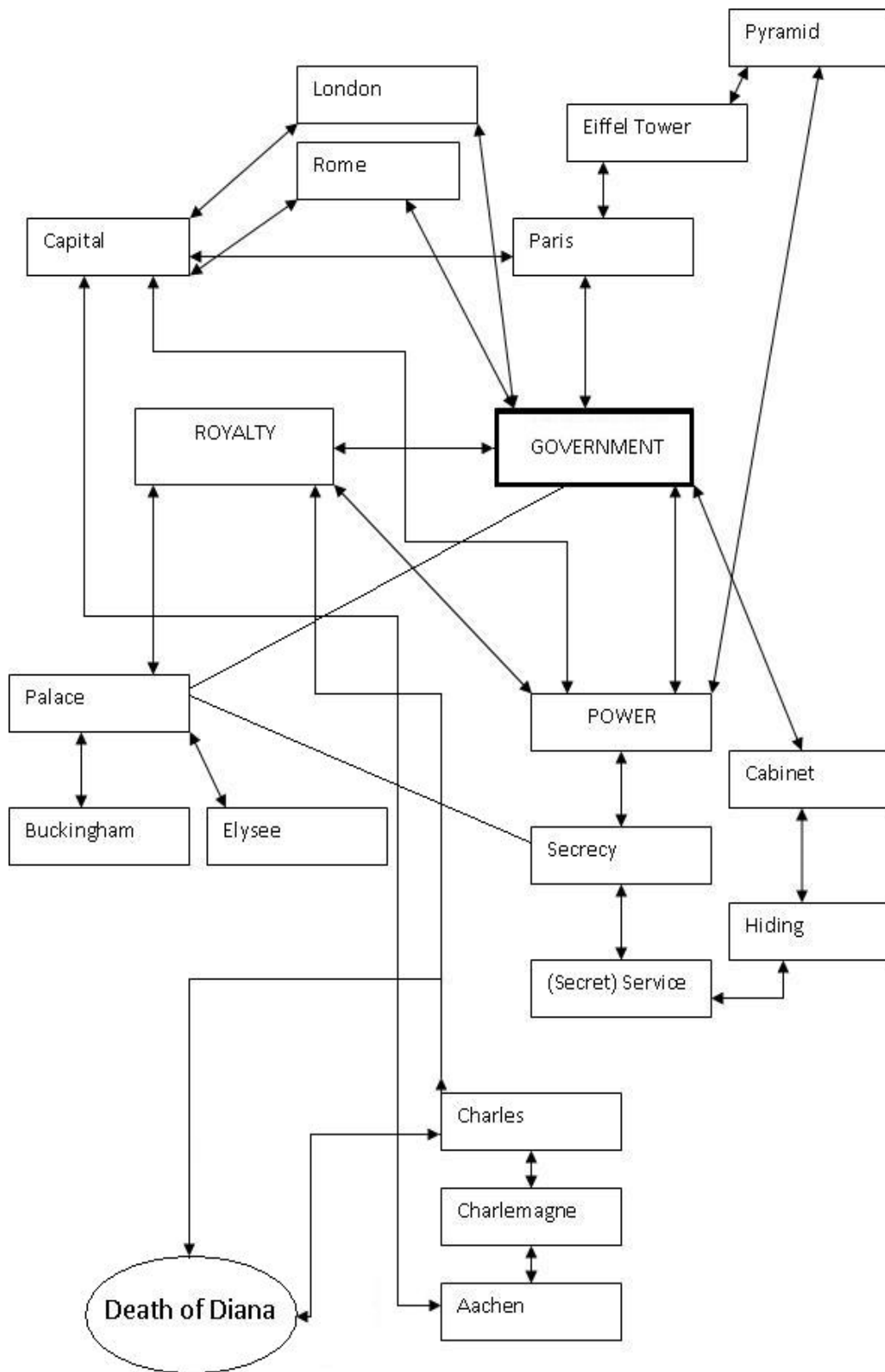


Figure 17: Signifying Chains – The Hyper-linked Notions 'Diana's Death' → 'Government'



These quilting points, linked by multiple signifiers, are akin to the balls on a sheet a teacher might use to demonstrate gravitation. As the density of signification increases, the ability of the quilting point to pull meaning towards itself – that is, to become the basis of an idea in the psyche increases. Hence we see the nature of the complex in a psychoanalytic patient: it works as an attractor which reinvests a diverse range of impulses in the subject in a single knot of signifiers and signs.

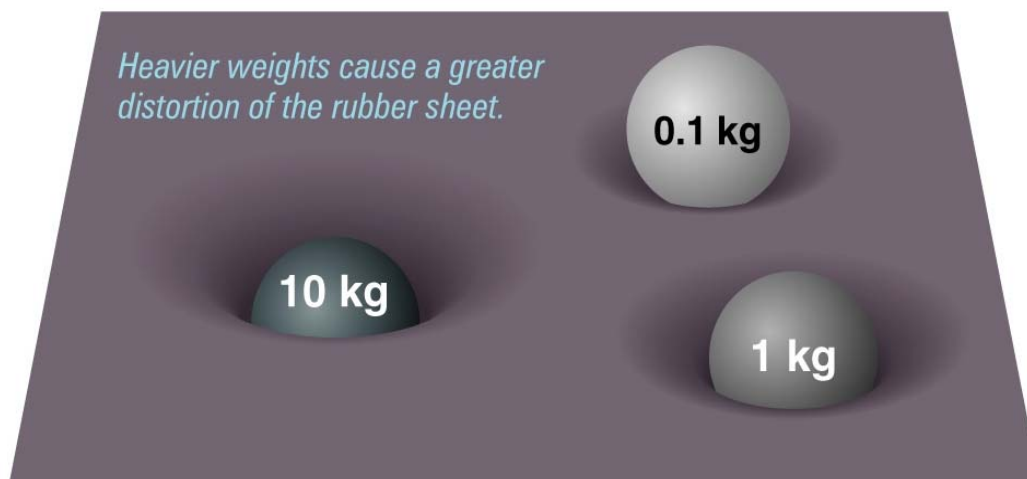


Figure 18: *Balls on a Rubber Sheet*

If the content of the unconscious is a network of chained signifiers, 'displacing' movement along the metonymic axis – terms becoming substituted for each other – is the most basic action which the unconscious undertakes. For Lacan, this traversal through signifiers underpins the ability to have the linguistic structure which defines the unconscious, whereas for Freud, the ability to displace cathectic energy from one idea to another is also the most simple dynamic force in the unconscious. For both displacement allows the true force of an idea to be 'falsely' passed onto another, and understanding this gap between what is desired unconsciously and the final affect known to consciousness is the aim of psychoanalysis.

In Freud's model, the movement of displacement can only be understood as the consequence of the drives interaction with the censor: "*Is fecit cui profuit*. We may assume, then, that dream-displacement comes about through the influence of the same censorship—that is, the

ensorship of endopsychic defence”.<sup>231</sup> The drive is prevented from proceeding along its course by the censor, and switches track so that it can reach a destination (cathexis). In the case of displacement, where energy is cathected from one idea to another, the train seems to 'jump' the tracks, switching to the next possible element. In the case of condensation, there is no 'jump', but a switch to a related idea (Figure 19, below).

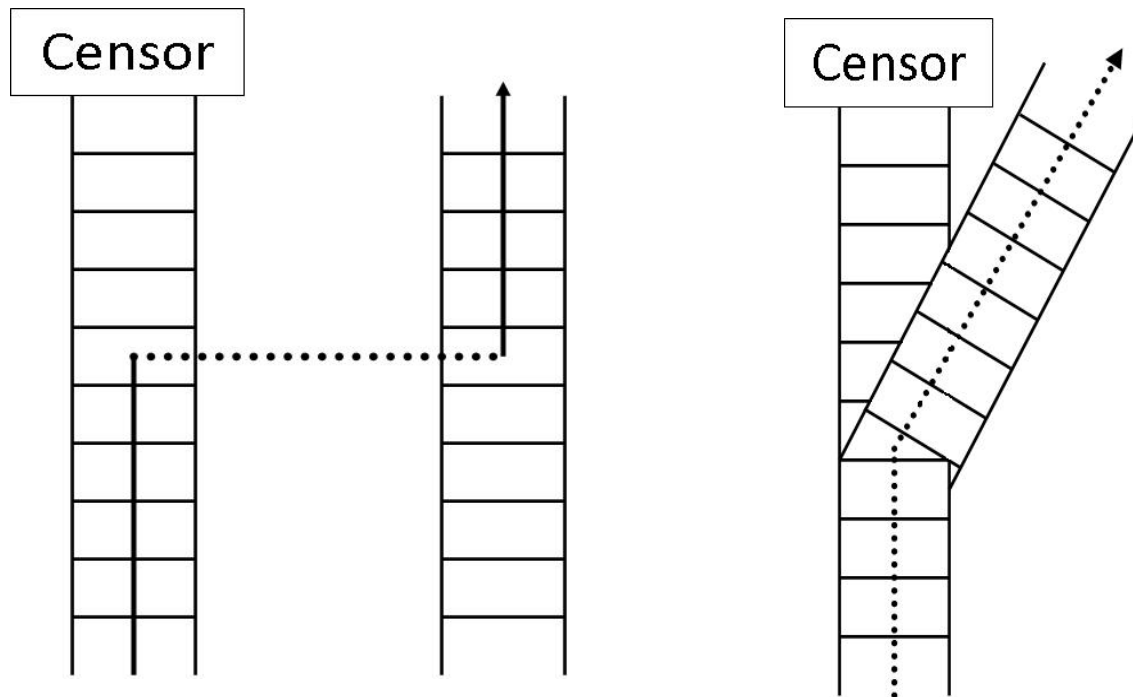


Figure 19: *Avoiding the Freudian Censor*

Lacan's notion of censorship therefore differs from Freud's. Rather than encountering a blockade, an erasure or a force which essentially says – 'no', the Lacanian subject begins as split (this construction is shown between Graphs 1 and 2 below). Instead of a censorship, protecting the psyche from the horrors of uncontrolled energetic flows in the unconscious, Lacan posits the question '*che vuoi*' which can only come from a conflict between a notion of the self and an other. To continue the above analogy of the train, Lacan posits the existence of a driver (*moi*) and passenger (*autre*) and the point of destination is determined by the question asked by the driver of the passenger “where does he want to go?” However, the passage down the associative chain is no longer linear, along the lines of 'drive' (Lacan's notion of which is

231 Freud, S. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 780

given consideration later in this chapter). Instead, there is a slide down the signifying chain until an acceptable notion is reached; to return to the train metaphor, all conjoined stations along all connecting lines are parsed until the destination is shown to be performatively efficient in the sense that an answer to the question '*che vuoi*' is generated (again, it is 'the signifier which represents the subject for another signifier'). Instead of a driver, we have a guide, who takes the other to their imagined destination. If we image the guide to be at Holborn Station (see Figure 20 below), if they were to see Sherlock Holmes on the platform and asked themselves what he wanted, moving down the possibilities of chained stations, they would alight on the notion of Baker Street – four links away – as fulfilling our criteria: 'as a guide, I take Holmes to Baker Street'. However, if Holmes is returning a broken digital camera, the guide would select Tottenham Court Road – for Lacan, the signifiers slide until the solution to a riddle is reached.

Figure 20: '*Chained*' Stations



In Lacan's model there is only the starting concept, a chain of associations which it is drawn to, and a locus of subjectivity which interrogates these chains: “[F]or Lacan there is no hydraulics of the mind: its pressures can be coherently described only in terms of the interface patterns that occur between one signifying order and another”.<sup>232</sup> These signifying orders in the subject are constructed (chained) linguistically over its existence and are therefore

232 Bowie, M. *Lacan* (London: Fontana, 1991) p.71

arbitrary and unpredictable – the stations are connected in a random order – but the 'quilting' force which determines meaning does so in relation to a notion of a subject. Conversely, Freud's unconscious doesn't ask '*che vuoi?*' (what do you want?). Instead it asks 'can it cathect?': the resting point of a motion of displacement is determined by the minimum number of moves which are required to escape the censorship. The subject then passes along the tried and tested conditions for cathexis – so long as the reality principle is adhered to – and tries to reach its aim as rapidly as possible in these pre-set patterns (drives). Freudian desire is essentially unidirectional, as depicted in the figure below, passing towards suitable cathexis, whereas Lacanian desire is a multi-directional, complex construct which mediates between the subject, other subjects and the signifying chain (this construction is explored in the section 'Desire' below) .

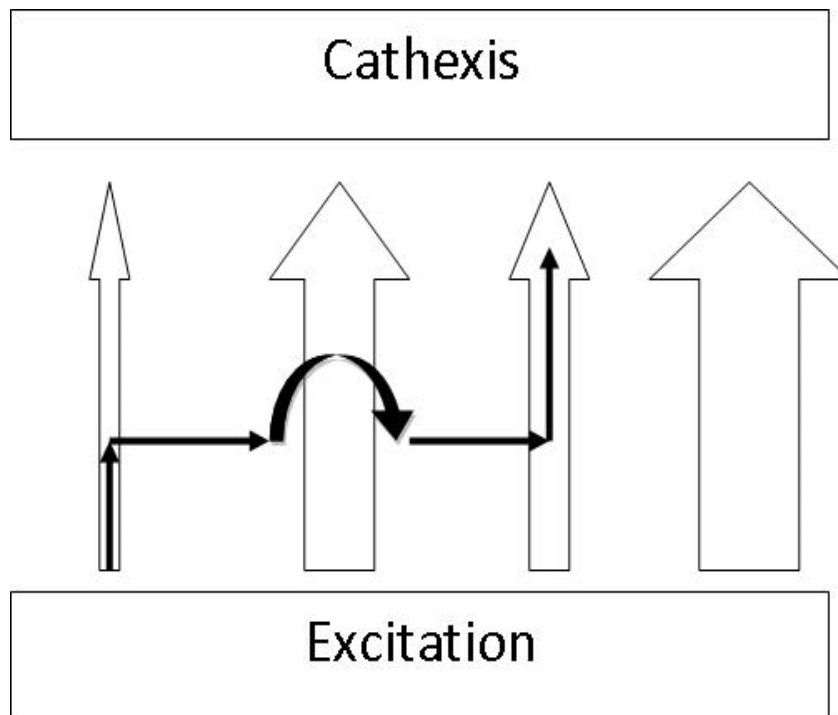


Figure 21: *Freudian Displacement* – energy passes from one pathway to another on its route to cathexis.

The use of displacement as an analytical tool is difficult. As terms are replaced by one another along chained concepts or switched in contents of parallel drives, it can require a skilled

analyst to trace them back to their latent origins. More easily analysable content is generated by condensation, whose products “reinforce the underlying idea” and are therefore closer to the latent content.<sup>233</sup> For Freud condensation is not secondary to displacement. It “must probably be pictured as a process stretching over the whole course of events till the perceptual region is reached. But in general we must be content to assume that all the forces which take part in the formation of dreams operate simultaneously”.<sup>234</sup> However, the work of condensation is certainly aided by displacements of cathexis because, for Freud, drives are always numerous and parallel. The unconscious generates meaning through the interaction of these drives, as energy passes through them and concentrates in points of common conjunction. Condensation, for Freud, can start as displacement and is the point at which two chains' substitutions meet.<sup>235</sup> Condensation and displacement are very similar in Freud's model. They are both effects of the transference of cathexis from one pathway to another. Lacan ties condensation to the idea of metaphor, a pathway towards the substitution of terms for one another which signify similar ideas. Instead of moving to the next signifier, signifiers are substituted and the production of meaning becomes 'possible'.<sup>236</sup> Lacan offers the example of “the coupled terms swimmer and scholar and then terra firma and truth” operating according to the rules of metaphor.<sup>237</sup> The meaning, in terms of the relation between the two, is equivalent, and the latter two terms can signify the former. Evans renders Lacan's formulae for metonymy and metaphor as:

‘[Metonymy states that] the signifying function of the connection of the signifier with the signifier is congruent with maintenance of the bar.’<sup>238</sup>

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233 'Condensation' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993)

234 Freud, S. *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905), from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf)) p. 1750

235 'Displacement' in Laplanche, S. and Pontails, J. *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 1993)

236 Evans, D. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Taylor and Francis Online, 2006) p.115

237 Lacan, J. *Ecrits*, Trans. B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p. 756

238 Evans, D. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Taylor and Francis Online, 2006)

[Metaphor states that] the signifying function of the substitution of one signifier for another is congruent with the crossing of the bar.<sup>239</sup>

In terms of the production of meaning, these process become a binary pair. Metonymy is the transfer along the signifier from one position to another. Once this move down the chain is made if no 'meaning' is generated (the binary '0', meaning off or no), the system cycles on. If 'meaning' is found, the answer is yes (the binary '1'; on or yes) and the bar of signification is crossed, and some meaning is derived.<sup>240</sup> At this point, we have described the operation of the unconscious as an informational machine, operating in a cycle, and as something which is capable of being modelled cybernetically. Here, again, Lacan differers from Freud, whose conception of the unconscious as a network of neuronic connections which cathect energy doesn't allow this open ended cybernetic processing. Instead, the neuronic pathways are fixed, and the products of their activation – the signification produced – is a function of the interactions of the particular drives which have unbound energy which requires cathexis. If there is a truly anti-anthropocentric aspect of Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is this cybernetics of the unconscious.

It is therefore possible to read the linguistic unconscious as a development of the anti-anthropocentric fissure opened up by Freud's topologies of the unconscious. Structurally, Lacan's basic thesis that the unconscious is linked by signification is compatible with anti-anthropomorphism. Signifiers are arbitrary links, but some of them, for the unconscious to be capable of generating meaning, must be structured in common patterns. Although others can be wild flights away from sign to another, some, indeed most must be the most basic bindings between concepts. For example, 'cow' is chained with: (1) a number of semiotically related

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p.117

239 Evans, D. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Taylor and Francis Online, 2006)

p.115

240 “Metaphor is, quite radically speaking, the effect of the substitution of one signifier for another in a chain. nothing natural predestining the signifier for this function of phoros apart from the fact that two signifiers are involved, which can, as such, be reduced to a phonemic opposition.” From Lacan *Ecrits* Trans.

B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p. 756

concepts: pow, low, bow; (2) a selection of common associations: mud, farm, milk, grass; (3) a few subject specific uncommon associations: school, mother. The set that Lacan is concerned with in his role as an analyst are the latter set, which are specific to the patient and are exhibited in the patient in the form of the complex – his symptoms. The specificities of the patient's complex come closest to the linguistic use of metaphor and metonymy, which is an anthropomorphising tendency because it compares ideas, and comparing ideas – thinking or rationalising – is the exemplary property of the subject of philosophy.

Yet according to the letter of Lacan's pronouncements, metaphor and metonymy are not analogous to the operation of the unconscious because they represent process by which ideas can be exchanged for other ideas, for instead that they represent traversals or journeys by which one concept may leap to another in a pre-ideational domain. The most obvious way to conceptualise this leap is as a pure displacement in an economic sense, as this allows us to conceive of it as a formal and mechanical process – cathexis is spatially transferred. However, Lacan's refusal to consider the psyche as an energetic system leads him to replace this model with a cybernetic model in which the formal processes are the rules of 'crossing the bar'. The conception of the unconscious as a series of linked ideas is certainly convivial to Freud's models of the unconscious, and Lacan's description of travel through these links, as a jump away from a notion (displacement) or towards a knot of associated notions (condensation) isn't in itself anti-Freudian. That 'the unconscious is structured like a language' can be a metaphor which helps understand how unconscious makes leaps along signifiers (relations between terms) defined by their context and, again, is not too far from Freud's theory.

But again, the choice of the metaphor as being like a language contains the seed of many of the problems we see in interpretations of Lacanianism. As soon as we say 'language' there are a raft of concepts which the idea of language is tied to: elements of section, ideas, choice, comprehension, understanding. All of these concepts are, in turn, considered to be properties or processes of the Cartesian subject.<sup>241</sup> Of course, making this leap is a misunderstanding of certain parts of Lacan's texts as analogising condensation and displacement to the sliding of language in a sentence is misleading as makes us think of swapping words and therefore

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241 This, again, highlights the dichotomy between the subject of Freudian analysis and the Cartesian subject, as described in the introduction. Lacanianism's philosophical position tends to return to the Cartesian subject and treat it as a given.

swapping ideas. Such an interpretation obscures Lacan's claim that the unconscious isn't arranged as signs; he claims that rather *signification* is the model of the laws and connections of the unconscious. Additionally, it must be considered that, even more so than with Freud, Lacan's work is centred around the treatment of the patient in psychoanalytic practice. The generalisation of Lacanian theory beyond the therapeutic setting risks conflating the abnormal with the quotidian, and interpreting the actions of a 'normal' unconscious with those of one in failure mode.<sup>242</sup> The crossing of the bar is a feature of the four discourses between analyst and patient, and the subject of these discourse is, naturally, the complex of symptoms which the patient demonstrates.<sup>243</sup> Displacement and condensation as observed in the manifestation of the complex are characterised by their abnormality and are therefore much more dramatic leaps across the bridges of signification. Lacan's psychoanalysis is therefore only an improvement on Freud's in relation to treating the patient for the complex he exhibits as a subject, rather than to theorise the inhuman aspects of the unconscious. This, again, links to Lacan's de-emphasis of the biological foundations of the drive, and also to the philosophical lineage Lacan situated his work in reference to. The patient presents himself to the analyst as a 'given' subject, with the complex 'ready made'. Effective treatment therefore takes the existence of the complex as an existing construction and does not try and conceptualise it from its inception as a biological need rather situating it in language. Similarly, in the clinical setting the patient, face to face with another person, treats the patient as a subject – albeit, for Lacan, as a split one.<sup>244</sup>

Lacanian analysis interacts with philosophy, but it is with a philosophical lineage that is concerned with the human subject and its situation as the locus of thought, a school which I defined in the present thesis' introduction as the 'inside' lineage of philosophy which tends towards anthropocentrism and Cartesianism (see figure 22 below).

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242 This incomparability with generalisation did not stop Lacan becoming a prominent intellectual who was willing to theorise outside of his discipline. Indeed, some *Seminars* contain very few explicit references to psychoanalytic treatment.

243 Lacan discusses the four discourses in *Seminar XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 2007)

244 See 'Split' in Evans, D. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Taylor and Francis Online, 2006) p. 195



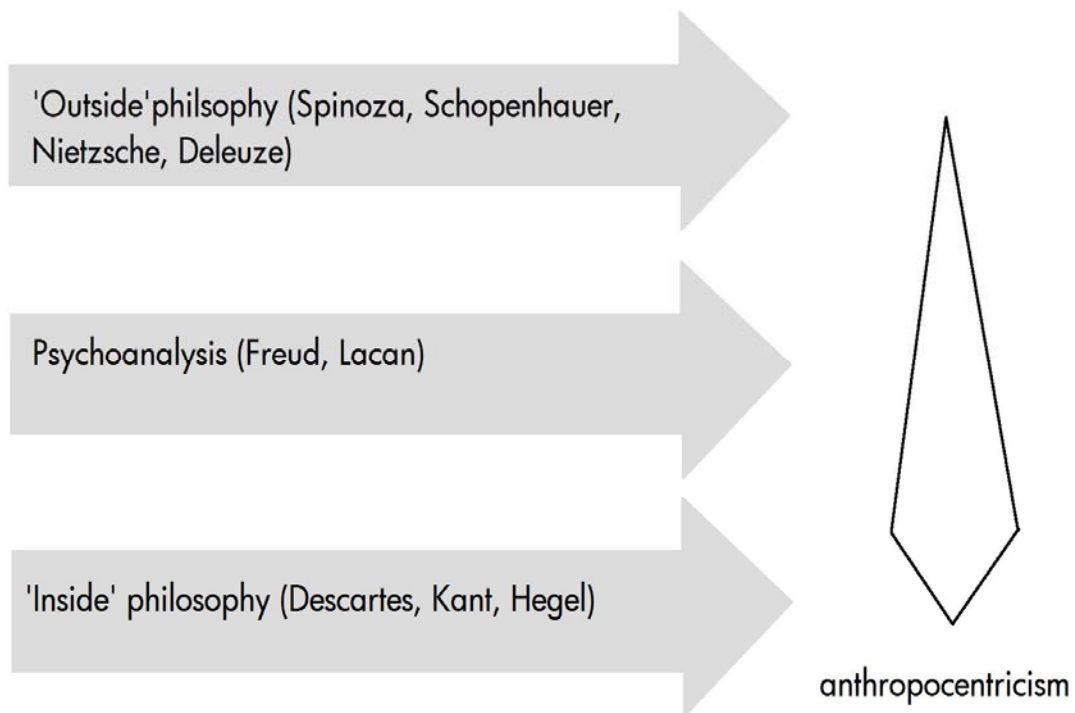


Figure 22: *Psychoanalysis' Position Between Two Tendencies of Philosophy*

Lacan's turn towards idealist (inside) philosophy is entirely deliberate: “[B]ecause recourse to the idea of matter is but a naive, outmoded form of authentic materialism”.<sup>245</sup> If this association with inside philosophy and rejection of biological basis of the drive is to be validated, it must be superior to the Freudian model as a method of explaining the unconscious. Dylan Evans (whose *Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* is considered to be a foundational resource in interpreting Lacan's writings) turned away from Lacanian psychoanalysis because of Lacan's failure to consider biological – and therefore materialist – bases of the psyche.<sup>246</sup> It is interesting to note that Evans situates Lacan's 'return to Freud' as being an attempt maintain those Freudian concepts which were not biologically defensible such as the death drive: “Freudian biology has nothing to do with biology’, [Lacan]

245 Lacan, J. *Ecrits* Trans. B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p. 73

246 Evans, D. 'From Lacan to Darwin' in *The Literary Animal; Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, eds. Gottschall, J. and Wilson, D.S. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005) pp.38-55. Available online at ( <http://beta.finance-on.net/upload/ver/ver4480020c6d2b2/lacan.pdf> )

claimed”.<sup>247</sup> This, like Deleuze's reading of the death drive, continually forgets that the death drive – as evidence of problematic repetition – was formulated in many ways, and entirely provisionally in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Indeed, its first line “What follows is speculation, often far-fetched speculation” is hardly a dogmatic assertion of a specific biological process.<sup>248</sup> Instead the death drive is an attempt to solve the problematic nature of repetition, insofar as the compulsion to repeat can have negative consequences for the organism. This spurred Lacan to pursue his culturalist reading of Freud even further. Every biological term in Freud's work was reinterpreted as a metaphor for some cultural phenomenon. Freud's remarks on the phallus, Lacan claimed, had nothing to do with something so banal as a mere biological organ; they referred to a cultural symbol.<sup>249</sup>

## Lacanian Desire

I have established that the contents of the Lacanian unconscious are signifiers and that the mechanism by which it operates is a sliding between different signified elements either laterally or vertically. The final part of Lacan's model is the mechanism which makes this sliding take place; this is desire, the motor which drives the unconscious, and determines when the 'crossing of the bar' takes place. Lacan's dynamic model of the unconscious is illustrated in the infamous 'graph of desire'.<sup>250</sup> In the graph of desire Lacan describes the movement of the substitution of signifiers for one another along the axes of metaphor and

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247 Evans, D. 'From Lacan to Darwin' in *The Literary Animal; Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, eds. Gottschall, J. and Wilson, D.S. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005) pp.38-55. Available online at ( <http://beta.finance-on.net/upload/ver/ver4480020c6d2b2/lacan.pdf> )

248 Freud, S. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) from *Complete Works* Ed. Smith, I., 2000 (online text available at [http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud\\_Complete\\_Works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/Freud_Complete_Works.pdf) ) p. 3728

249 Evans, D. 'From Lacan to Darwin' in *The Literary Animal; Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, eds. Gottschall, J. and Wilson, D.S. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005) pp.38-55. Available online at ( <http://beta.finance-on.net/upload/ver/ver4480020c6d2b2/lacan.pdf> )

250 The most important sources of this theory in Lacan are: *The Subversion of the Subject* and the *Dialectic of Desire* Lacan, J. *Ecrits* Trans. B. Fink 2002 ( New York: WW Norton, 2002)

metonymy.<sup>251</sup> These processes can be read as ones which operate automatically, and are therefore ‘without thought’, as the unconscious replaces censored signifiers with others in which is essentially a cybernetic system, changing the state of information. However, I shall argue that a level of ‘thought’ is introduced in the Lacanian notion of ‘the crossing of the bar’, the moment at which the unconscious thought moves to consciousness. Following Lacan’s dictum that “A signifier represents a subject for another signifier”, the role of the ‘subject’ in determining the productions of the unconscious is critically analysed.<sup>252</sup> Lacan’s theory of the unconscious is described topographically by the its construction by metonymic and metaphorical links as depicted above, but they are not sufficient to understand its operation dynamically. The graph of desire sites unconscious production at the intersection between the chain of signifiers and a vector along which the subject is constituted. The signifying chain represents the contents of the unconscious, the network of ideas conjoined by metonymic and metaphorical links described above.<sup>253</sup>

This reading is not to merely provide an exegesis of Lacan’s thought, but is to set up a contrast between the theories of Lacan on one side and Deleuze and Land on another about the nature of desire. Lacan’s model of the unconscious is propelled by desire, as is Deleuze’s, but the nature of this desire is entirely different. In Lacan’s case desire is the desire to create meaning within a certain system (the unconscious of signifiers) and is therefore the desire of the subject to create itself. On the other hand, we have Deleuzian desire, which will be explained

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251 Several commentators have produced readings of this crucial Lacanian mechanism. A typical treatment can be found in Eidelzstein, A. *The Graph of Desire* (London: Karnac, 2009). See Also Kozicki, B. *Lacan’s Che Vuoi? Graph* in (Re-)Turn: A Journal of Lacanian Studies Vol. 6 Ed. Ragland, E available at [http://return.jls.missouri.edu/Lacan/ReturnVol6/Front\\_Matter\\_Return\\_Vol6.pdf](http://return.jls.missouri.edu/Lacan/ReturnVol6/Front_Matter_Return_Vol6.pdf);

252 Lacan, J. *Ecrits* Trans. B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p.693

253 Lacan’s starting point in *The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire* is such a conception of the unconscious’ mechanism: “[T]he mechanisms described by Freud as those of the primary process, by which the unconscious is governed, correspond exactly to the functions this school of linguistics believes determine the most radical axes of the effects of language, namely metaphor and metonymy-in other words, the effects of the substitution and combination of signifiers in the synchronic and diachronic dimensions. respectively, in which they appear in discourse.” From Lacan, J. *Ecrits* Trans. B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p. 676

in Chapter 3, which has its origin in both the biological and the instinctive. In this later model the subject constitutes itself after the work of desire has taken place, thereby establishing an ontological order in which desire prefigures the creation of the subject, whilst Lacan's model starts from the construction of the subject and explains how the subject constrains and interacts with desire. A pictorial depiction of Lacanian causation can be found in the arc of the graph of desire which passes from right to left, “from desire to need passing through demand from need once again to desire – via the need for becoming the cause of the others desire”.<sup>254</sup> The traversal of this loop indicates that the subject constitutes both its conscious, speaking self, and its germination through the split subject of the unconscious. If the goal of this this is to depict machinic desire, a key question is why this machine operates. In Kozicki's reading of Lacan it is because the subject makes itself:

The Complete Graph is a topological representation of vectors, which participate in circuits which in fact become a series of systems that interact with one another. The synchronous systems in it are closed due to their temporal aspect, but in the diachronic moments and systems there comes into play a degree of openness and autopoiesis.<sup>255</sup>

Here the unconscious is depicted as a series of interacting circuits – circuits represented in the graph of desire as its vectors – which are to some extent synchronous. In this motion of 'autopoiesis', there is no distinction of depth or time between the operation of the unconscious and the creation of the subject. Instead the subject is already there, determining its own creation at the onset. This can be opposed to a reading of Deleuze, regarding whom Smith says of his ethics, but the point can be generalised to all aspects of Deleuzian thought, that “For Deleuze, conscious will and preconscious interest are both subsequent to our unconscious drives, and it is at the level of the drives that we have to aim our [...] analysis.”<sup>256</sup> For Deleuze, as for Freud, the unconscious precedes and constitutes the subject, which is generated temporally after the unconscious' operation.

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254 Eidelzstein, A. *The Graph of Desire* (London: Karnac, 2009) p. 272

255 Kozicki, S. 'Lacan's Che Vuoi? Graph' in *(Re-)Turn: A Journal of Lacanian Studies* Vol. 6 Ed. Ellie Ragland available at ( [http://return.jls.missouri.edu/Lacan/ReturnVol6/Front\\_Matter\\_Return\\_Vol6.pdf](http://return.jls.missouri.edu/Lacan/ReturnVol6/Front_Matter_Return_Vol6.pdf) )

256 Smith, D.W. 'Deleuze and the Question of Desire' in *Parrhesia* 02 (2007) p.69 ( available at [http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia02/parrhesia02\\_smith.pdf](http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia02/parrhesia02_smith.pdf) )

GRAPH I

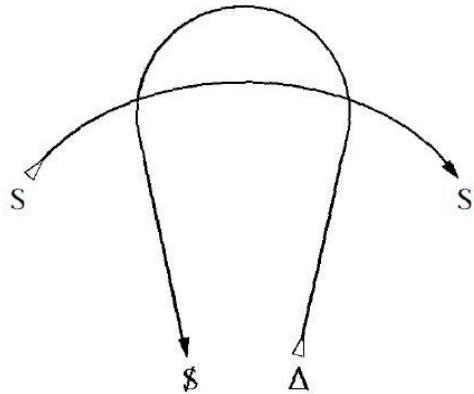


Figure 23: *The Graph of Desire (1)*<sup>257</sup>

The vector of the subject represents the selection process along which this data becomes changed and used. In the simplest version of this graph, the relationship between these two chains is demarcated. Vector  $S \rightarrow S'$  indicates the signifying chain. Its vector is left  $\rightarrow$  right, indicating the predominance of metonymy as the conjunction of unconscious signifiers (the next thing follows from the former). The vector of the subject  $\Delta \rightarrow \$$  passes – indirectly, in a loop rather than a line – in the opposite direction, indicating that the subject is, in some way, constituted retroactively. The Lacanian subject is constituted dialectically in the relationship between the point at which the chain  $S \rightarrow S'$  first crosses the subjective vector and the second, later point.<sup>258</sup> These points correlate to the answers to the questions 'what do I want to say' and

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257 From Lacan, J. *Ecrits* Trans. B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p.681

258 Lacan: “If we conduct the subject anywhere, it is to a deciphering which assumes that a sort of logic is already operative in the unconscious, a logic in which, for example, an interrogative voice or even the development of an argument can be recognized”. From Lacan, J. *Ecrits* Trans. B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p. 673

'what am I expected to say'. The former relates to the initial content of the unconscious – in Freudian terms, the latent content – intersecting with the signifying chain. The latter is related to the manifest content, the production of the unconscious, which is determined in relation to what is expected of the subject by an other.

GRAPH 2

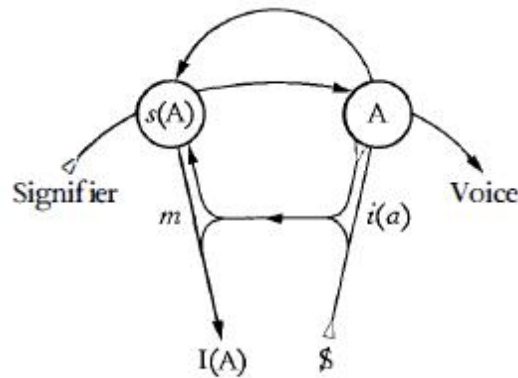


Figure 24: *The Graph of Desire (2)*<sup>259</sup>

Lacan describes the upper part of Graph 1 as the 'button tie' [*point de captation*] which stops the sliding of the chain of signifiers.<sup>260</sup> This zone is recapitulated in Graph 2, in which a circuit is formed between  $s(A) \leftrightarrow A$  indicating the circularity of the production of meaning. The signifier is constantly interrogated in relation to the central question '*che vuoi?*', represented by the upper line; as clarified in Graph 3.

259 From Lacan, J. *Ecrits* Trans. B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p. 684

260 Lacan, J. *Ecrits* Trans. B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p.683

GRAPH 3

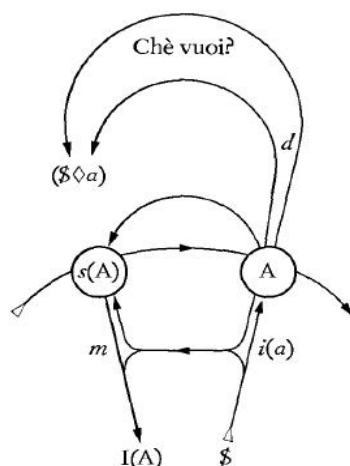


Figure 25 *The Graph of Desire (3)*<sup>261</sup>

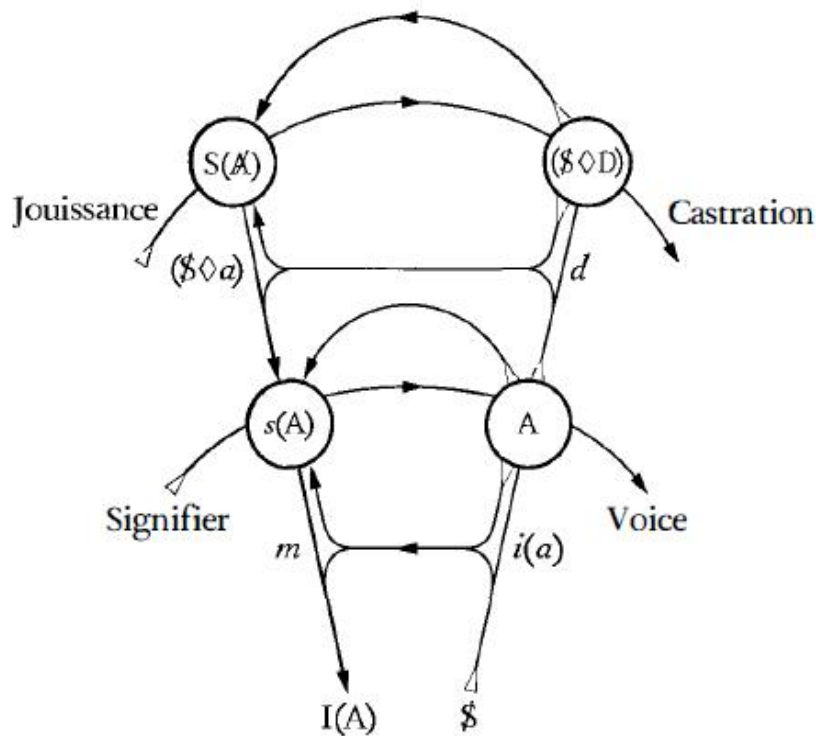
That the motor of desire – this mechanism of transferring affect from idea to associated idea through the matrix of signification – is in relation to what is acceptable for the constitution of the subject '*che vuoi?*' has an antecedent in Freud's model. Lacan's idea of the other correlates with Freud's (super)ego formation, and the interplay between the subject's ideal image and the images which it can produce. Yet Lacan's divergence from Freud is expressed in the upper transversal bar which characterise the final iteration of the graph of desire (Graph 4 (the Complete Graph), below). In the lower loop, the interplay between the ego and the image moves towards the fixed point of the ego-ideal because the Other is considered complete. If the subject is to be produced, it is produced in relation to some form of answer to the question '*che vuoi?*', and it is this question which defines the very nature of desire: "The original question of desire is not directly "What do I want?", but "What do others want from me? What do they see in me? What am I for others?"<sup>262</sup> However, the constitution of the subject is not even defined as compromise between the signifiers about the self and those about the expectation of the other. In the upper loop, the subject has identified the incompleteness of the

261 From Lacan, J. *Ecrits* Trans. B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p. 690

262 Žižek, S. 'From desire to drive: Why Lacan is not Lacaniano' from *Atlántica de Las Artes* 14 · Otoño 1996 Section 5 (available at <http://www.caam.net/caamiaaa/cgi-bin/articulo.asp?idArticulo=231&idioma=EN>.)

Other, and recognises that they fail to guarantee meaning; the contract is no longer underwritten. The subject must now be constituted through fantasy as fantasies are elaborate constructs through which the individual attempts to attain satisfaction, approaching the object which is deemed to be demanded. Yet all such attempts fail if there is no stable signification of the position of the other. The upper loop of Graph 4 ( $d \rightarrow \$\diamond A$ ), which represents the travails of the drive, can be seen to correspond to the lower half of the graph ( $i(a) \rightarrow m$ ). For Lacan the structure of the drive is constituted linguistically and its content is defined not organically, but as the residue of an organic pulsion: “The drive is what becomes of demand when the subject vanishes from it”.<sup>263</sup> Sitting on top of language, the drive's vector towards fantasy represents the construct made by the unconscious to cope with the failure of language to satisfy need.

COMPLETE GRAPH



263 Lacan, J. *Ecrits* Trans. B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p. 692



Figure 26: *The Graph of Desire (4)*<sup>264</sup>

Lacan's unconscious is driven by desire. In his formulation, desire is the name given to the movement of unconscious signifiers along the pathways alluded to in the Graphs of Desire:

'Because metonymy is a linguistic operation, desire is in its essence a feature of the sliding of the signified under the signifier.'<sup>265</sup>

“One could define desire as exactly this process: as the difference between the original message and that which arrives at the end. The key here is that desire is not the message itself. It is neither the original sentence nor the final one, but the process or structure of distortion itself”.<sup>266</sup>

Desire is no longer a specific process within the unconscious, but the general operation by which the unconscious works. The spasms of unconscious operation which constitute the subject are driven by the subject's desire; the wish to cross from signifiers to a comprehensible signified: “Desire, as [Lacan] came to call it in preference to all other terms, is what keeps the chain of signifiers moving.”<sup>267</sup> This movement is terminated by the quilting of signifiers, in which the relationship of the Other and the ego is fixed. If this point is not achieved it is because the lack of an Other prevents the crossing of the bar in signification, and there is no final decision. In this case, the creation of the subject is made upon the endless metonymic tracks of language, along which it travels always-asking 'what next?'. Chiesa states that this strategy represents:

[A] positivisation of lack on the part of the subject. The child manages to ‘positivise’ the lack that surfaced with the unconditionality of the demand for love, and in so doing

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264 From Lacan, J. *Ecrits* Trans. B. Fink 2002 (New York: WW Norton, 2002) p. 692

265 Lacan, J. quoted at lacanonline.com ( <http://www.lacanonline.com/index/2010/05/what-does-lacan-say-about-desire/> as accessed 08/12/2012 )

266 Leader, D. *Why Do Women Write More Letters Than They Post*, (UK: Faber & Faber, 1996) pp. 108-110

267 Bowie, M. *Lacan* (London: Fontana, 1991) p. 122

he subjectivises himself and emerges as a desiring lack-of-being [*manque-a-etre*].<sup>268</sup>

When the subject is constituted along the traversal of the higher reaches of the graph, it is constituted in relation to lack. The failure of the other → signifier relationship leads to constant flux along the upper vectors in which drive and demand are destined to be met by the incompleteness in fantasy and the lack in the other. The terminus of Lacan's analysis of desire is the creation of the subject. By following the evolution of the graph of desire through the four stages, we have passed from the formal depiction of the unconscious as 'like a language' through to a constitution of something like the Cartesian subject of philosophy. This encapsulates a crucial problem Land sees in Lacanian analysis, which is that it always slides back towards anthropocentric principles and subjectivity. Though the letter of 'the unconscious is like a language' is amenable to anti-anthropocentric interpretation, it is a metaphor which is tainted from the very beginning because of its tie to language, the linguistic, and to the common modules of language – which are signs – all of which lean towards the subjective.

The present thesis has shown how an anti-anthropocentric reading of Lacan could be constructed, but such an endeavour requires a great effort because of the tendency of Lacan's concepts to backslide towards subjectivity. Whilst there are parts of Lacan which are amenable to a 'hard' anti-anthropomorphism, they are only parts. The cybernetic cycling of signification is valuable to anti-anthropomorphism in its simplest form, however, once it is tied down in the language of the (split)subject, discourse, and other it becomes anthropocentric. Yet Lacan is a theoretician of considerable importance in the evolution of drive theory in the twentieth century. Both Deleuze-Guattari and Lyotard consider much of his work to be of insight, and of the later philosophers I am considering in the present thesis, only Land is outrightly hostile.<sup>269</sup> Lacan's psychoanalysis is not systematic and his positing of a number of foundational concepts which tend to collapse into one another is a significant cause of his reputation as a 'difficult' philosopher. In terms of Lacan's technique in presenting his theory of the unconscious, there are six factors which work towards the tendency for his work to become anthropocentric. They are: (1) linguistic metaphor, described above, of the

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268 Chiesa, L. *Subjectivity and Otherness* (USA: MIT Press, 2007) p. 155

269 Deleuze and Guattari's, and Lyotard's encounter with Lacan's thought is explored in the subsequent two chapters.

unconscious as like a language. (2) His reliance on obscurity when presenting concepts and in riddles when elucidating them. Riddles evoke a mode of thought which is focused on signs and not signifiers; ideas and not relations. (3) Lacan's status as a practising clinician means that he clinically treats the object of psychoanalysis as a subject. (4) Many of Lacan's concepts are illustrated by use of examples based on characters in literature, in which the protagonists are, again, treated as subjects. Such examples also contribute to the accusations – considered in the next two chapters – of the 'theatricality' of the Lacanian (Oedipal) unconsciousness. (5) His philosophical influences tend to be philosophers of subjectivity (inside philosophers). All of the previous five are questions of technique rather than theoretical positions, yet the sixth and most consequential anthropomorphising tendency is Lacan's theoretical decision, affirmed so often, to abandon Freud's biologism. For Land, this is the root of several failings of Lacanian psychoanalysis.<sup>270</sup> Once cut adrift of its biological roots, it is very difficult to conceive of the drive in the linguistic unconscious as anything other than an anthropomorphising tendency.

	Name of phase - change	Motor of change	Mechanism of change	Reason for continuation	Reason for stopping
<b>Freud</b>	Displacement and Condensation	Drive	Neuronal networks / pathways	Bound energy in drives remains.	Eludes censorship / Tonic energy is cathected
<b>Lacan</b>	Metaphor and Metonymy	Desire	Cybernetic	Metonym (bar not crossed)	Metaphor (bar crossed)

Table 5: *Comparative Terms in Freudian and Lacanian Models of the Unconscious.*

### **The Lacanian Drive**

My exposition of Lacan's work terminates with analysis of his (re)interpretation of Freudian

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<sup>270</sup> See Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) pp. 261-287 and pp. 319-344.

drive theory in the section ‘*The Transference and the Drive*’ in *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1977). Here Lacan denies that the drives have a biological origin, stating that satisfaction cannot be attained by acquiring the object of one’s desire. For Lacan, the drive is never satisfied, passing through a transitory sublimation back into an impossible pursuit of the lost object, the object ‘petit a’. In Lacan’s model, the unconscious is no longer a machine which regulates the organism’s pursuit of its primal desires, but a labyrinth in which these desires are lost. In *The Deconstruction of the Drive*, Session 13 of *Seminar XI*, Lacan’s method is to re-read Freud’s theory of the drive, stripping out all of the references to hydraulics or mechanistic force.<sup>271</sup> The Freudian depiction of drive is of an ordered progression through the phases of the drive to the aim. Against this, Lacan breaks these moments of the drive apart into entirely separate phases. Thrust is re-characterised as a non-energetic, constant pressure rather than a spasm of energy needing discharge. If the pressure is constant, Lacan reasons, it is impossible to describe it biologically, because all needs wax and wane depending on their satisfaction or lack thereof.<sup>272</sup> In this disavowal of biologism Lacan rejects the division between free and bound energy (which would explain the duality of the drive in being constant and able to be discharged) and the notion of the drive going through a vicissitude or adventure (therefore being able to move away from a biological basis). Lacan’s concept of a drive is clearly distinct from the Freudian drive explained in Chapter 1. To recap, the important characteristics of the Freudian drive as [*Pulsion or Trieb*] were shown to be:

- Its immutability. Freud’s drives are laid down like the layers of Troy; nothing is ever erased, even if a pattern is abandoned of its energy.
- The plurality of drives. The unconscious is the ‘home’ of numerous drives, all trying to realise themselves. Their scanning of sense data for the potential to do this – according

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271 Evans, D. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Taylor and Francis Online, 2006) p. 47

272 “The constancy of the thrust forbids any assimilation of the drive to a biological function, which always has a rhythm. The first thing Freud says about the drive is, if I may put it this way, that it has no day or night, no spring or autumn, no rise and fall. It is a constant force.” Lacan, J. *The Seminar. Book XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, 1964*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1977) p. 165

the rules of the reality principle – never ceases.

- A basis in instinct. The drive is related to some biological system, even if its vicissitudes have twisted it far from such a beginning.
- A division between free and bound energy in the primary process, and an unconscious system, whose goal is to process and distribute these energetic investments which is the deepest, and therefore primary (first) process which operates in the economy of the unconscious.

For Lacan, these are not the essential characteristics of the drive. Following his reading of Freud such ideas are simplifications or deliberate misconstructions which would try and pin down drive/desire in erroneously stable formations. For Lacan it is absolutely clear that the drive is:

[N]ot an instinct, not a quasi-biological 'libido', not a variable flow of neural energy or excitation, not an appetite, not the concealed source from which appetites derive and not, as it had been for the late Freud, the life principle itself.<sup>273</sup>

In contrast to the Freudian construction of the drive we can now posit a Lacanian construction of the drive whose characteristics are quite different. Whereas Freud's first principle is that the unconscious consists of drives and energy, Lacan's is that it is structured by the chaining of signifiers.<sup>274</sup> Lacan is, as noted above, implacably against the idea of a drive as evolved instinct.<sup>275</sup> For Lacan the metonymic nature of desire means that the elements of fantasy are constantly updated in relation to the lack which they inevitably encounter. The plurality of the drives, which Freud is so determined to stress, can be effaced by the graph of desire, which posits a single line along which subjectivity is constructed. However, Lacan warns the reader that the graph is a simplification – the positions of the loci are not 'fixed' either in place or time, so the graph is a two dimensional rendering of a four dimensional apparatus – there is nothing in Lacan's commentary which disavows the notion of several vectors of desire operating at the same time. Yet despite being scalable up to the a plural conception of drives, the tendency of Lacanian interpretation is to consider the products of the drive economy

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273 Bowie, M. *Lacan* (London: Fontana, 1991) p. 122

274 Bowie, M. *Lacan* (London: Fontana, 1991) p. 131

275 Bowie, M. *Lacan* (London: Fontana, 1991) p. 130

singly rather than as composites.<sup>276</sup>

Perhaps the most prominent contemporary Lacanian – particularly within public discourse – is Slavoj Žižek, who depicts drive and desire in the following manner:

Desire is historical and subjectivized, always and by definition unsatisfied, metonymical, shifting from one object to another, since I do not actually desire what I want – what I actually desire is to sustain desire itself, to postpone the dreaded moment of its satisfaction. Drive, on the other hand, involves a kind of inert satisfaction which always finds its way; drive is non-subjectivized ("acephal") – perhaps, its paradigmatic expressions are the repulsive private rituals (sniffing at one's own sweat, sticking one's finger into one's nose...) which bring us intense satisfaction without us being aware of it, or, insofar as we are aware of it, without us being able to do anything about it, to prevent it.<sup>277</sup>

Such a conception of drive is totally distinct from Land's contention that “drives are the functions of nomadic cybernetic systems, not instincts but simulated instincts, artificial instincts” and, perhaps more surprisingly, totally different to other notable Lacanian's interpretations of Lacan's drive theory.<sup>278</sup> The Lacanian drives detailed above by Žižek are simply instincts which have undergone no travails or vicissitudes. Lacanianism – even more so than Freudianism – is beset by contradictions and competing interpretations. There is a distinct split between its clinical application and those in other disciplines who wish to commandeer it, as Evans noted; scholars who believed that:

The value of Lacan's work lay not in any ability to describe the facts, but in its power to produce novel ways of interpreting literary texts. For scholars steeped in literary theory, this was I suppose a natural response, but to me it seemed clearly at odds with

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276 Chapter 4 will show how Lyotard considers this to be a problem in Lacan's works.

277 Žižek, S. 'From desire to drive: Why Lacan is not Lacaniano' from *Atlántica de Las Artes* 14 · Otoño 1996 Section 7 (available at <http://www.caam.net/caamiaaa/cgi-bin/articulo.asp?idArticulo=231&idioma=EN.> )

278 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 330

the whole thrust of Lacan's life and work. For Lacan was not a literary critic, but a practising psychoanalyst.<sup>279</sup>

Nevertheless, even in a strictly clinical setting, differences can be observed between the consequences of Freud's 'scientific' methodology which, whilst it produced contradictory hypotheses, aimed at their resolution, and Lacan's hermeneutic method which attempts to interrogate the 'text' of the unconscious and relate its concepts to those in the Lacanian system. This hermeneutic approach emphasises explanatory capacity – the ability to provide a descriptive framework – above consistency, as it selectively deploys the tools of Lacanian analysis (object petit-a, imaginary-symbolic-real etc.) on a case by case basis. Žižek claims that this 'Lacan' deployed in critical theory is not a misreading, but a choice of emphasis, involving a distinct selection regarding which Lacanian concepts will be deployed.

"The predominant reading of Jacques Lacan reduces him to a kind of "philosopher of language" who emphasized the price the subject has to pay in order to gain access to the symbolic order [...] This predominant reading of Lacan is not a simple misreading, external to what Lacan effectively accomplished: there certainly is an entire stratum of Lacanian theory which corresponds to this reading".<sup>280</sup>

Lacanianism can be likened to a holy text, of which different parts can be preached depending on the objectives of the priest. Yet conflict of ideas and ambiguity is not a sufficient reason to abandon hopes of interpretation – as theology shows! However, the process of tracing a general line of argument in Lacanianism, despite exceptions, is still possible. In general terms, this trajectory would emphasise the role of the subject, language, and idealism, all of which are antithetical to Land's depiction of a productive unconscious.

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279 Evans, D. 'From Lacan to Darwin' in *The Literary Animal; Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, eds. Gottschall, J. and Wilson, D.S. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005) pp.38-55. ( Available at <http://beta.finance-on.net/upload/ver/ver4480020c6d2b2/lacan.pdf> )

280 Žižek, S. 'From desire to drive: Why Lacan is not Lacaniano' from *Atlántica de Las Artes* 14 · Otoño 1996.  
(available at <http://www.caam.net/caamiaaa/cgi-bin/articulo.asp?idArticulo=231&idioma=EN>.)

## Lacanianism

Despite the proliferation of concepts and extended analytical framework it adds to Freudianism, Lacanian psychoanalysis is ultimately a dead end when considered from a Landian standpoint. Lacan and Lacanism is not formal, impersonal, mechanical, plural, or rooted in the scientific method, and most damningly is trapped as an inescapable correlate of idealism. This explains why Land's engagement with Lacan is brief, as the role of Lacanian psychoanalysis is simply that of an other to which Deleuze's pre-personnel and productive psychoanalysis (as depicted in Chapter 3) is contrasted. Land's discussion of Lacan focuses on the consequences of Lacanianism's amendments to the practice of psychoanalysis and the effects on psychoanalytic practice of a “Lacan, who had already transformed the jungle wilderness at the heart of psychoanalysis into a structuralist parking-lot”.<sup>281</sup>

Structuralism is the target of Land's critique because it formalises relations between components in such a way as to reaffirm and deepen them. If structuralism is a 'parking-lot' rather than a jungle it is because its tendency is towards increasing fixity of telos and interpretation, whilst the 'jungle' of psychoanalysis is subject to the possibility of rapid change if it is subject to runaway feedback. Land's accusation against structuralism is that it posits ideas as gravitating towards other ideas (meaning that the signifiers have a certain fixity) and is therefore essentially idealist, whereas Freudian psychoanalysis (especially when modified by Deleuze) is concerned with the measurement of production as its primary operation, and it is only after the consequences of production are measured that they should be interrogated by ideas. The practice of Lacanianism, which imposed the complex as the fundamental structure which both determines and represents the form of the patients unconscious processes leads to:

Oedipalizing the Fort-Da game ... Oedipalizing desire to its foundations; ripping all the energy, hydraulics, pathology, and shock out of Freud, and substituting lack, the pathos of identity, and Heideggerian pomposity ... trivializing desire into the cringing aspiration to be loved.<sup>282</sup>

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281 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 282

282 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) pp. 282-283



Here, again, Land is concerned with the role of idealism in Lacanian thought. The Lacanian complex, exemplified by the Oedipus complex, is constructed by a network of ideas, and its diagnostic function is to retroactively explain that observed production took place according to the predetermined dynamics of the complex. The interpretation of reality therefore takes place under a preset pattern, and psychoanalysis' role is to preserve the pattern rather than to modify it. Hence, Lacan's recasting of the Fort-Da game under the aegis of Oedipus makes the general error of *interrogating an idea with another idea*. This can be opposed to Freud's methodology where, though *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* sees Hans' toy-throwing game as its central problem, the text is concerned with the explanation of production – in this instance a production which cannot be matched up to preexisting theoretical ideas – and it is due to this disparity that Freud speculates about various solutions to the problem. In his experimental method, Freud is therefore *interrogating reality using ideas* and, upon finding these ideas to be insufficient, *interrogates these ideas using reality*.

There is no scope for idealism in Freud's casting of the unconscious as an energetic-hydraulic system which operates according to its formal rules as a system. An engine or mechanism does not ask what or why it is producing in the same way that in the classic cybernetician model of foxes and rabbits (see Figure 27 below) the rabbit does not ask how many foxes will there be next year before reproducing.<sup>283</sup> The system is blind, and its primary action is material production: “The philosophy of production becomes atheistic, orphan, and inhuman. In the technocosmos nothing is given, everything is produced”.<sup>284</sup> In the cybernetic system below there is no controlling body akin to a subject which determines populations according to fixed ideas. Instead, there are only material relations between the entities involved, and though the system tends towards stability, there is no coordinating entity which plans this equilibrium.

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283 A description of this cybernetic system can be found in Clemson, B. *Cybernetics: A New Management Tool* (UK: Tumbridge Wells, 1984) p. 34

284 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 321

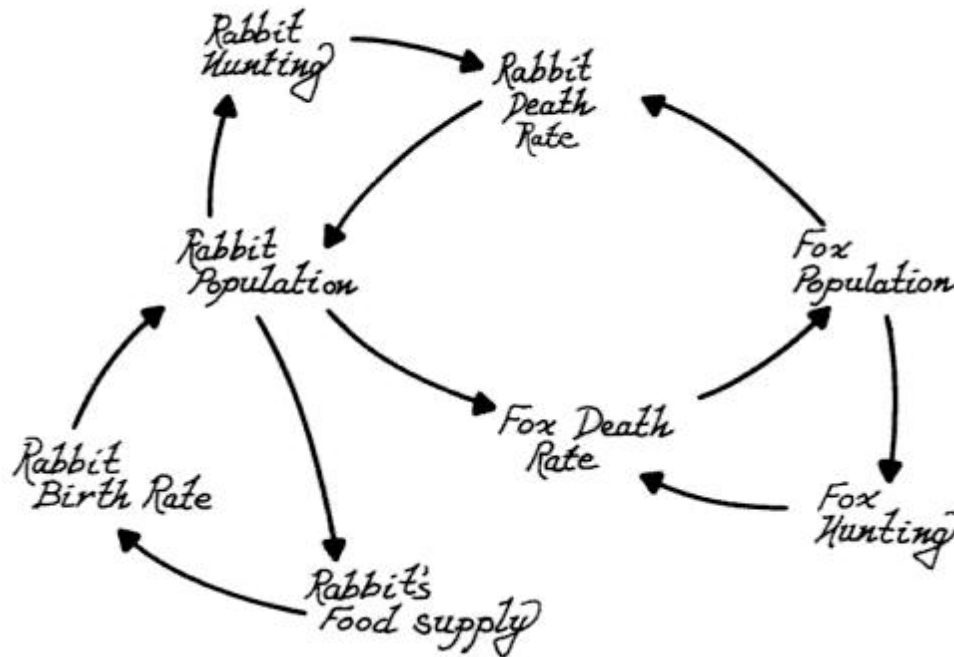


Figure 27: *The Cybernetics of Foxes and Rabbits*<sup>285</sup>

There is a neurotic and conformist stratum in Freud of course, but it floats upon the impersonal flows of desire that erupt out of traumatized nature. Where are the flows in Lacan? Where would one be less likely to find anything that flows than in the gnarled post-Saussurian fetish of the signifier that dominates his texts?<sup>286</sup>

For Land, the flows of productive desire described above are 'impersonal' insofar as they are pre-personal, taking place in an unconscious which is not the subject, which contains little trace of the subject, and which occurs temporally before the construction of the subject. Conversely, for Lacan all of these processes already include the subject, which is produced simultaneously with the unconscious, as was shown in the reading of the *Graph of Desire* above. The primary reason for Land's dismissal of Lacan's thought is therefore that it operates as a tendency towards idealism in psychoanalysis and, concentrating on ideas rather than production, effaces the quality of being able to plot desire as material-production-in-itself

285 From Clemson, B. *Cybernetics: A New Management Tool* (UK: Abacus, 1984) p. 32

286 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 283

which psychoanalysis offered. Is it possible to defend Lacanianism against this critique? The history of philosophy contains several philosophers whose effects in the public sphere have been very different to the letter of their philosophy. Indeed, many of them are precursors of Land's thought, most notably Nietzsche. If a defence of Lacan is possible, it would stem from the possibility of emphasising the cybernetics which Lacan's early works hint at, yet this is never considered by Land, the arch cyberneticist, to be useful material. The only answer can be that the Lacanian 'brand' is simply too toxic, and too poisoned with anthropocentrism to be helpful. If Lacanian cybernetics were deployed by Land, it would be in relation to the regulation of the machinic process of the Freudian psyche, yet Evans opposes Lacan's cybernetics to Freudian hydraulics:

Yet, as with his early hunches about the importance of ethology, Lacan soon abandoned his interest in cybernetics and computational theory. Perhaps he sensed that the language of information processing did not sit easily with Freud's hydraulic model of the mind.<sup>287</sup>

Given such difficulties of determining Lacanianism's position in relative to other theories, even to the extent to which one cannot be sure if it is complementary or dissimilar, the only method of making it a coherent discourse would be to withdraw to a purely psychoanalytic position, and to make the sole metric by which its productions are judged to be the efficacy of its cure in relation to the specific patient. Evans states that this was the defensive strategy used by Lacan when confronted with questions about psychoanalysis' interactions with wider critical theory:

Lacan railed against what he saw as the 'hermeneuticization' of psychoanalysis, arguing that psychoanalysis was not a general hermeneutics that could be 'applied' to any area of enquiry, but the theory of a specific domain, namely, the process of

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287 Evans, D. 'From Lacan to Darwin' to *Darwin in The Literary Animal; Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, eds. Gottschall, J. and Wilson, D.S. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005) pp.38-55 (available at (<http://beta.finance-on.net/upload/ver/ver4480020c6d2b2/lacan.pdf>))

psychoanalytic treatment.<sup>288</sup>

The consequences of this 'bleeding out' of psychoanalysis into other discourses and its effect on the social and political order is the subject of Deleuze and Guattari's critique and then recapitulation of psychoanalysis, as outlined in the next chapter.

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288 Evans, D. 'From Lacan to Darwin' in *The Literary Animal; Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, eds. Gottschall, J. and Wilson, D.S. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005) pp.38-55 ( available at ( <http://beta.finance-on.net/upload/ver/ver4480020c6d2b2/lacan.pdf> )

### Chapter 3. Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*: a theory of the productive unconscious

*Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari's first collaborative work, is a text which, as its authors undoubtedly intended, straddles the political and the psychoanalytic. It combines normative and positive psychoanalysis, and offers prescriptions-about as well as descriptions-of the operation of the unconscious. At its most basic level, this dissertation builds upon the answer to the question 'how does the unconscious operate?', rather than the question 'how would one wish the unconscious operates?'; it is therefore at the level of psychoanalytic theory rather than political or ethical theory. Any contributions I shall make to the latter topics, I shall save until the very end of this work. My initial aim in my reading of Deleuze and Guattari is to extract the purely psychoanalytic analysis and critique (particularly that which is metapsychological) from the political/psychoanalytic hybrid which is the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. This task is made considerably more difficult by much contemporary commentary on Deleuze and Guattari's project which is often at least as intrinsically political as the primary work. My methodology will therefore be to present some of the major readings of Deleuze and Guattari's work and to show the bias which dominates academic commentary on their collaborative work, which is presented in parallel to a Landian reading of their essential concepts. I shall focus on Claire Colebrook's *Understanding Deleuze* and Ian Buchanan's *Deleuzism* and *A Guide to Anti-Oedipus*.<sup>289</sup> Colebrook and Buchanan's interpretation of Deleuze sees his philosophy put to work in support of a progressive political programme.<sup>290</sup> I shall contrast this to Land's "mad black Deleuzianism" whose goal of cutting

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289 Colebrook, C. *Understanding Deleuze*. (Australia: Allen and Unwin, 2002); Buchanan, I. *Deleuzism* (USA: Duke University Press, 2000); Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (London: Continuum, 2008)

290 For example, the section 'Sexual Difference' in Colebrook, C. *Understanding Deleuze* (Australia: Allen and Unwin, 2002) presents a reading of difference amenable to feminism. This thesis is not explicitly political, and the 'Progressive' and 'Landian' positions which are distinguished here are done so because of the genealogical methodology utilised herein, which claims that a dominant discourse – in this instance, the progressive tendency of the academy – works to become a totalising discourse.

auto-production free of all constraints has no idealistic or utopian political outcome – indeed, as Chapter 5 shall show, Land actively works towards dystopic teleologies.<sup>291</sup> This reading will have a dualistic relationship with academic Deleuzianism, as it will be deployed at times as the other of Land's position, yet in other instances it is shown to be sympathetic to his position, and the present thesis' framing of Deleuze's productive psychoanalysis as Land's antecedent.

The theoretical critique contained within *Anti-Oedipus* must therefore be disentangled from the political programme which motivated its authors and its later interpreters. I will undertake this textual analysis because, programmatically, my main objective in my reading of *Anti-Oedipus* is to initially identify the extent to which it is anti-Lacanian or anti-Freudian (building on the two previous chapters), before going on to delineate which, if any, parts of Freud and Lacan, as described hereto in the present thesis, are compatible with Deleuze and Guattari's theory of machinic desire and Land's libidinal materialism. In this respect, Land asks:

[I]s Freud ever really engaged in *Anti-Oedipus*? Is it not rather Lacan, who had already transformed the jungle wilderness at the heart of psychoanalysis into a structuralist parking-lot... Of course, Oedipus is peculiarly nauseating Viennese nursery pap, but where is Oedipus in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*? A question which could be asked of the majority of Freud's texts.<sup>292</sup>

Land's question is rhetorical: insofar as it is psychoanalytic, he believes that *Anti-Oedipus* is fundamentally *Anti-Lacan*, and, furthermore, that the apparatuses ensuring desire's repression are Lacanian rather than Freudian. For Land, the Freudian 'Oedipus' as investigated in *Anti-Oedipus* is a misstep, a dead end in theorisation which Freud stumbled into late in his writings (circa 1923) and which is eclipsed in its importance by the earlier, metapsychological texts of 1915-1920; and from this perspective Oedipus becomes even more problematic when it is

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291 Brassier, R. 'Accelerationism' from *Accelerationism*, (Goldsmiths College: London, 14 September 2010) available at <https://moskvax.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/accelerationism-ray-brassier/>

292 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 282

deployed by Lacan, Klein, and later analysts. Buchanan concurs that *Anti-Oedipus* takes the Freudian unconscious as its starting point: “Deleuze and Guattari preserve this basic model of the unconscious; they even keep to Freud's tripartite way of thinking about it”.<sup>293</sup> Yet *Anti-Oedipus* rapidly moves beyond Freud's model, and provides a depiction of the failure of Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis to provide a theory of drive-desire in the unconscious. Instead of counter-presenting a complete solution – a master key to understanding the unconscious in a Lacanian sense– *Anti-Oedipus* shows that Oedipality is a partial, fragmentary diagnosis of one type of unconscious operation which became generalised as the basic model for the functioning of all unconscious operation.

The present thesis has moved beyond my initial explication of Freudianism and Lacanism and is now concerned with a sustained critique of these theories in operation, and this will proceed in parallel with the denotation of concepts which can begin to provide a new theory of the machinic unconscious. As such, the key questions I hope to answer in this chapter are:

[A] Why Deleuze and Guattari believed the intellectual predominance of Lacanianism needed to be challenged in the late 1960s.

[B] To what extent does *Anti-Oedipus* critique Freudianism and Lacanianism as being repressive or having the potential to be applied repressively?

[C] To what extent does *Anti-Oedipus* utilise or synthesise elements of 1) Freudianism and 2) Lacanianism into its own theory of machinic desire?

[D] To show how the answers to [B] and [C] correlate with the distinction from Chapters 2 and 3 between Freudian-mechanistic drive theory and Lacanian-semiological drive theory.

[E] To explore Deleuze and Guattari's theory of productive, machinic desire. Two interpretations of Deleuze-Guattari are delineated: the predominant 'left' reading in which any expression of desire is considered positive; this is compared to a minoritarian 'right' reading of Deleuze-Guattari in which desire flows to a fixed destination.

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293 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (London: Continuum: 2008) p. 27

[F] To consider what is absent in Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the unconscious, and to consider what may need to be added to create a complete theory of machinic desire.

The aspects in [E] will form the basis of the final chapter, in which other theorists of desire – particularly that of Lyotard depicted in Chapter 4 – are utilised, along with concepts from Chapters 1 and 2, to begin to produce a complete theory of the Landian machinic unconscious.

### **The authors' intended purpose of *Anti-Oedipus***

In 1972 Deleuze and Guattari published *Anti Oedipus*, as a critique of the contemporary Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis as practised by members of the IPA and EFP<sup>294</sup>. Deleuze and Guattari attacked these schools of psychoanalysis because of their apparently reductionist approach, which tended to re-frame all general problems into particular instances of fixed complexes, particularly the Oedipus complex.<sup>295</sup> When utilised in this way, Oedipus re-situates the individual's desires in relation to a quasi-familial order and, analytically, offers psychoanalytic solutions based on the resolution of the resultant 'Oedipal triangles' (father-mother-child) by fixing dynamics in which desire deviates from 'normality'. This approach is characterised methodologically by its derivation from clinical settings and the act of clinical psychoanalysis. The necessity of 'normalising' the patient in this milieu of praxis – offering a prescription for a cure – meant that meta-social applications of psychoanalysis were grouped around attractors derived from the most efficacious solutions to the modal problems of pre-existing patients. Deleuze and Guattari describe the obvious problem with this, namely that societies or groups are not the same as individual neurotics. Treating the individual as a

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294 The IPA is the International Psychoanalytic Association, the largest Freudian association of

Psychoanalysts. The EFP was the École Freudian de Paris, Lacan's school set up in opposition to the IPA.

295 For a longer treatment of the historical context of *Anti Oedipus* see 'Deleuze and Guattari in Context' in Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (London: Continuum, 2008)



Oedipal problem might 'work' for the analyst in most cases, but may equally obscure the true issue, and prevent a cure in some patients. Treating a social group as if it were a patient will not work in most cases, as groups are defined by their plurality, and the patient is singular.

In the 1960s practitioners of psychoanalysis, though their quotidian role was to work in an institutional context with 'sick' patients, became increasingly influential in public discourse.<sup>296</sup> Psychoanalysts' interactions with other academic disciplines in this time of 'public intellectuals' presented a view of society which methodologically began with the procedures of applied analysis, and then recoded the political and social in the terminology of the personal and psychological.<sup>297</sup> Freud's own work on psychoanalysis can be divided across a similar line into: analytical, patient centred works and broader, metapsychological texts.<sup>298</sup> Freud's intention in the production of his writings was that the theory and practice of psychoanalysis would be shown to reaffirm each other in the application of the complex to the individual; and conversely in the association of the language of the individual with the psychoanalytic structure of the complex (Figure 28). A central accusation of *Anti-Oedipus* is that subsequent Freudian and Lacanian analysts abandoned this reciprocal relationship, and instead take only the complex in its established, final, pathological form, and use it to overcode the underlying reality of all aspects of analytic theory and practice.<sup>299</sup> They are no longer willing to modify their theory if the patient does not fit it. If the patient deviates from the box they are placed in, 'the complex', practitioners were unwilling to adapt the theoretical

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296 Particularly in France, where the influence of Lacan was strongest.

297 Bettencourt Pires notes that the tradition of the public intellectual in France was fixed in the aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair. See Bettencourt Pires, M.L. 'Public intellectuals – past, present and future' in *Comunicação & Cultura*, n.º 7, 2009, pp. 115-130

298 The former would include *Studies on Hysteria* (Freud and Breuer, 1895) or *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (Freud, 1904); the latter, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, 1920) or *The Ego and the Id* (Freud, 1923).

299 This, again, is an example of an idea interrogating another idea, as opposed to an idea interrogating reality.

framework, and simply amended the discourse of the patient.<sup>300</sup>

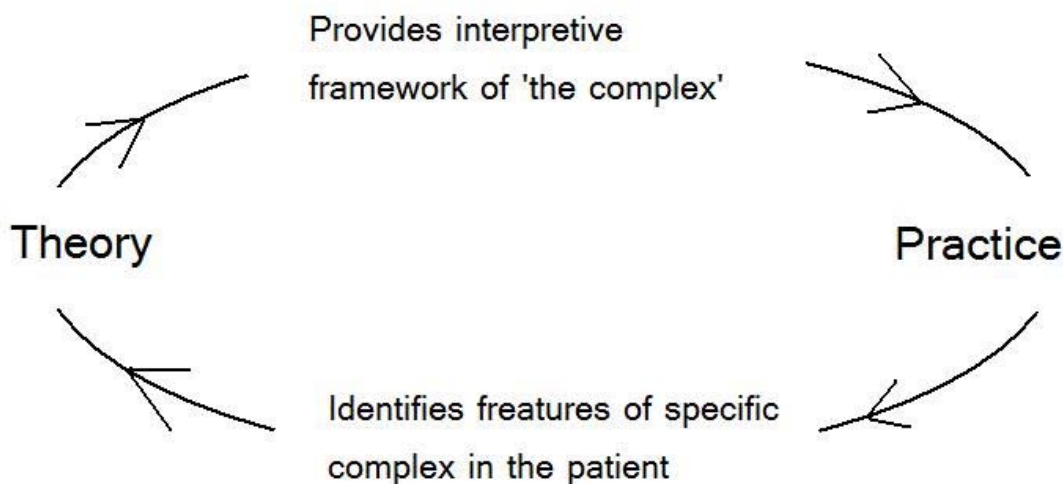


Figure 28: *A Positive Dynamic Between Theory and Practice*

The first strand of *Anti-Oedipus* I shall examine is critique; the second is a positive ontology of desire (See Figure 29 below).<sup>301</sup> Deleuze and Guattari posit the unconscious as a positive, productive system, analysing these productions across social and political bodies. Their productive ontology of universal desire – situated by Michael Hardt in the tradition of

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300 A problem explored by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*' second chapter *One or Several Wolves* and *The Interpretation of Utterances* in Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University USA: Semiotext(e), 2006)

301 Deleuze and Guattari describe *Anti-Oedipus* as critical and then materialist: "Schizoanalysis is at once a transcendental and a materialist analysis. It is critical in the sense that it leads the criticism of Oedipus, or leads Oedipus, to the point of its own self-criticism. It sets out to explore a transcendental unconscious, rather than a metaphysical one; an unconscious that is material rather than ideological; schizophrenic rather than Oedipal; nonfigurative rather than imaginary; real rather than symbolic; machinic rather than structural. An unconscious, finally, that is molecular, microphysical, and micrological rather than molar or gregarious; productive rather than expressive." Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 109

Nietzsche's will to power or Spinoza's conatus – posits material as substance which, over time, becomes arranged in ever more complex dispositions by the work of desiring machines.<sup>302</sup> In this schema, desire is therefore the name given to the becoming of complexity.<sup>303</sup> As such, it is wholly unlike the desire of the subject of Oedipus which is always already anthropocentric desire.<sup>304</sup> Oedipus is the desire of the broken subject of analysis, suffering through its lacks. Such desire, idealist and negative, is the opposite of the positive, materialist conception of desire as production which Deleuze and Guattari will formulate.

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302 Hardt's text is available online as 'Reading Notes on Deleuze and Guattari's Capitalism & Schizophrenia', part one ( available at <http://people.duke.edu/~hardt/aol.htm> )

303 This Nietzschean-Spinozist genealogy is noted by Deleuze, G in *Negotiations*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) p.6. It is also noted by Massumi, B. in *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (USA: MIT, 1992) p. 82

304 Therefore it is also isomorphic with Land's conception of the tendency of organised matter towards auto-genesis and the creation of 'intelligence' as described in *Templexity*. See Land, N. *Templexity* (Timespiral Press; 2014)

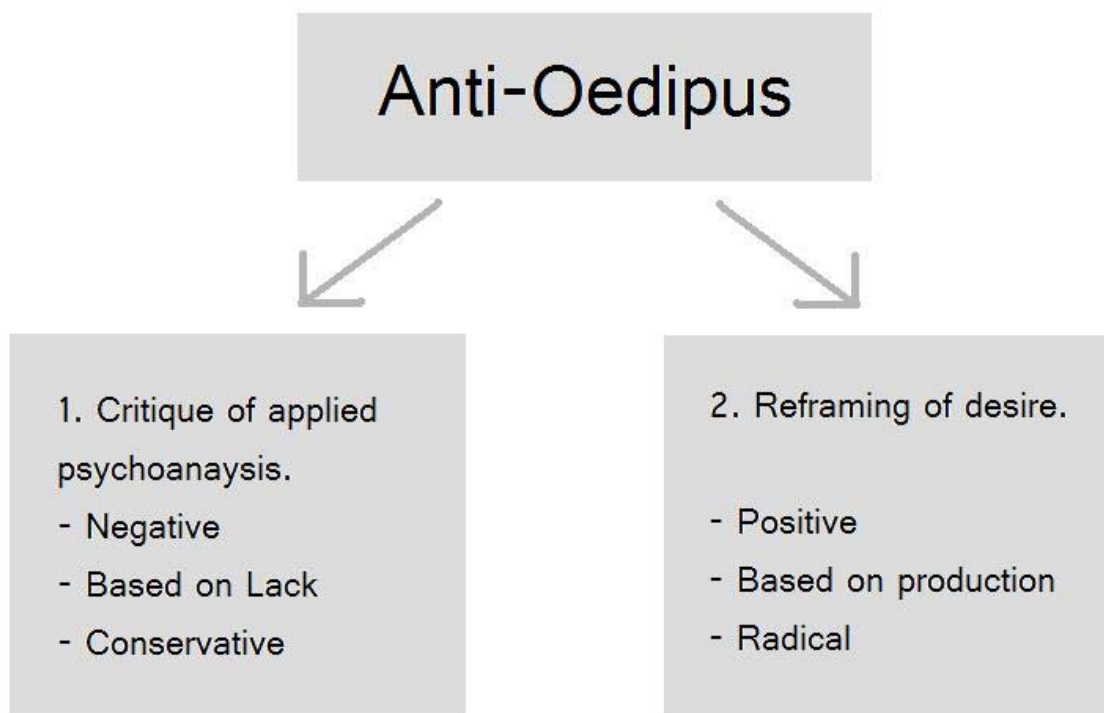


Figure 29: *Anti-Oedipus*

This ontological re-framing of desire as materialist and as the object of schizoanalytic critique is the final objective of Deleuze and Guattari’s project in *Anti-Oedipus*. The present thesis shall emphasise the primacy of depicting material-productive process, following a Landian reading of *Anti-Oedipus*. This could be contrasted to Buchanan's reading, in which Deleuze and Guattari's primary aim was “a theoretical rapprochement between psychoanalysis and Marxism ... which the authors provocatively refer to as either 'materialist psychiatry' or 'schizoanalysis’”.<sup>305</sup> A Landian reading would invert this, to be of a text primarily concerned with 'a theoretical rapprochement between materialism and psychiatry ... which protectively refers to Marxism'. To accomplish this aim, Deleuze and Guattari undertake a negative reading of some parts of Freudian psychoanalysis so that they can use the remnant of Freudian theory in their positive theory (see figure 30 below). This division of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Freud again follows the division in Freud’s corpus between accounts of casework and metapsychology. Watson notes a similar ambivalence about Lacan in Guattari’s solo

305 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* ( London: Continuum, 2008) p. 27

writings.<sup>306</sup>

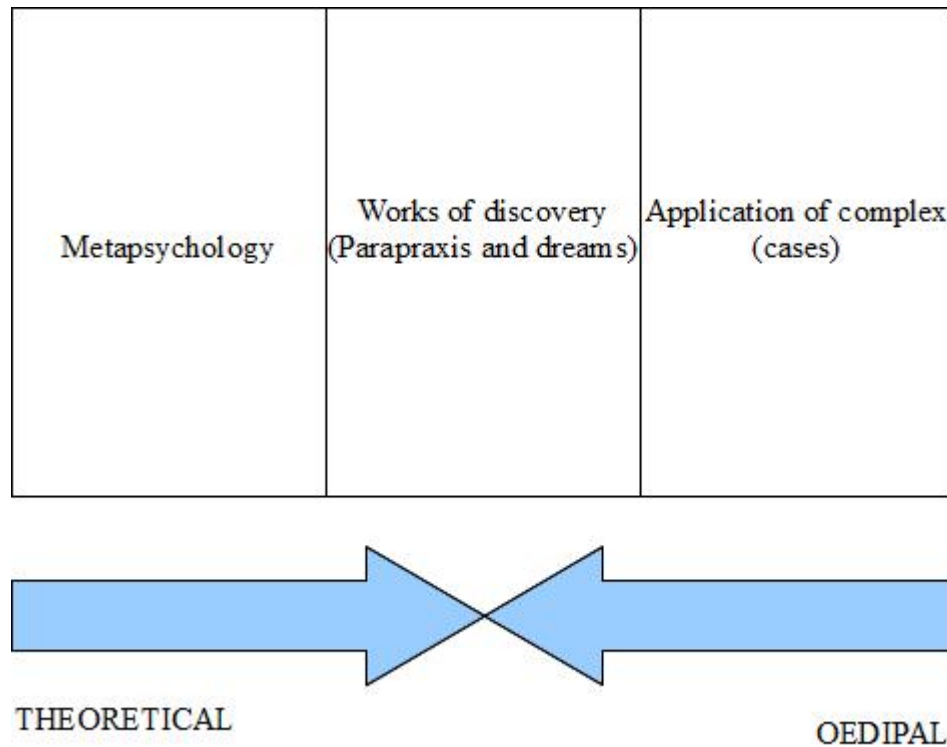


Figure 30: The Intersection of Casework and Metapsychology

Deleuze and Guattari contend that Freud effectively misapplies his own theory when dealing with certain patients such as 'Little Hans', the 'Wolf Man' or Judge Schreber because of his reliance on the Oedipus complex.<sup>307</sup> Deleuze and Guattari show that, in practice, psychoanalysis often compromises itself by failing to acknowledge what the patient is

306 See Watson: "Reflecting on this phase of his own thought in a 1985 interview, Guattari remarked that he "gradually came to question Lacanism, but less on theoretical grounds than in practice". In *Anti-Oedipus* he and Deleuze rethought psychoanalysis in terms of psychosis rather than neurosis." Watson, J. *Guattari's Diagrammatic Thought* (UK: Bloomsbury, 2007) p. 17

307 Freud describes the Little Hans case in *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy* (Freud; 1909); *The Wolf Man* in *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (Freud; 1918); Judge Schreber in *Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia* (Freud; 1911).

actually saying . The analyst sits and listens to the patient, waiting for 'trigger words', or other set points they can map onto the general structural pattern of the pre-existing complex. I shall be considering, as I follow Deleuze and Guattari's reading of Oedipus, to what extent the theoretic underpinnings of psychoanalysis are flawed because of this tendency. Is psychoanalysis, if it is Oedipal, an imperfect application of a sound theory, or are both practice and theory compromised? Before embarking on this close reading, the preliminary task is to define what the 'Oedipus' of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* is considered to represent and why it is considered to be so dangerous. Oedipus is a place holder for a number of tendencies that Deleuze and Guattari identified in psychoanalysis, all of which share a proclivity to repress desire.

For Deleuze and Guattari the most damaging tendency in post-Freudian Psychoanalysis is that where the theoretical and proscriptive framework is exemplified by the 'Oedipus' they are steadfastly *Anti*; hence the title of their first collaborative book which denotes their intent to embark on a critical engagement with psychoanalysis.<sup>308</sup> *Anti-Oedipus* was produced by authors who considered psychoanalysis a reactionary tool, abetting a counter-revolutionary tendency; a use demonstrated in the events of May 1968 and the reaction to these events.<sup>309</sup> This view was shared by other *Soixante-Huitards* (participants in the failed 'revolution') like Rose: "The unconscious is politics," said Lacan in '67. This was analysis's bid for universality. It's when analysis takes on politics, that it most blatantly legitimates oppression".<sup>310</sup> Deleuze and Guattari therefore went beyond contemporary critiques of psychoanalysis which attacked its ability to aid the patient. They showed that psychoanalysis did not only restrict desire in the subject micro-politically, but created macro-political structures of repression.

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308 For a longer treatment of the historical context of *Anti Oedipus* see *Deleuze and Guattari in Context* in Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (London: Continuum, 2008)

309 Colebrook notes the importance of the events of 1968 in Deleuze's philosophy as the point in which he moves away from a more general philosophy of difference and becomes an explicitly political 'post-1968 thinker'. Colebrook, C. *Understanding Deleuze* (Australia: Allen and Unwin, 2002) p. XXXii

310 Rose, Quoted in Deleuze, G. *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (Cambridge UK: Semiotext(e), 2004) p.

The tendency of psychoanalysis to apply an Oedipal framework to analysis of societal dynamics reduced political disorder to a simulacrum of a psychic disorder – even more problematically, to the specific disorder of the neurotic patient – in which the political subject’s condition was conceived as a reaction to sexual-familiar pressures and repressions. This infantilisation of the revolutionary subject on one hand misrepresented and demeaned the desires of the revolutionary element; on the other, it recoded the power of authority as a natural and inevitable paternalist force whose role was to police the population in the service of a reactionary tendency. The Oedipal structure, diffusing into the apparatus of the state, serves to create unacceptable barriers to the flow of desire, ideologically demanding the collaboration of the professional class as ‘analysis’ ‘storm troopers’: “Every category of professional is going to be urged to exercise police functions which are more and more precise: professors, psychiatrists, educators of all stripes, etc”.<sup>311</sup>

*Anti-Oedipus*’ critique is post-Marxist and post-Freudian: while it does not doctrinally follow either philosopher, it works in the intellectual space opened by these philosophers.<sup>312</sup> After Marx, economics cannot ignore questions of capital, class and power; after Freud, a conception of the unconscious cannot escape the terminology of drive and desire the present thesis operates within. When navigating these spaces, *Anti-Oedipus*’ engagement with both philosophical inheritances is often ambivalent. While it acknowledges a great debt to both Marx and Freud, it also rebels against the direction some of their thought opens. These philosophers – along with Darwin and Nietzsche – delineate the revolutionary advances in the theoretical apparatus through which desiring production’s operations can be analysed and

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311 Deleuze, G. *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (Cambridge UK: Semiotext(e), 2004) p. 210

312 Both Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge this methodology most readily in regard to Marx:

“Asked if he is a Marxist, Guattari replies that he belongs to no religion, but that “I go on using ideas and ways of making ideas work, drawn from any kind of theory, particularly from Marx. Marx was an extraordinary genius who interpreted history, economics, and the production of subjectivity in a way that was entirely new” In another interview, Deleuze [says] he feels that he and Guattari remain Marxists of a sort: “I think Felix Guattari and I have remained Marxists””. Watson, *Guattari's Diagrammatic Thought* (UK: Bloomsbury, 2007) p. 135

quantified.<sup>313</sup> Their status as ‘prophets’ of materialism means that they are essential for understanding the genesis of Deleuze’s conception of desiring production; though, famously, Deleuze’s methodology was to *use* inherited concepts from these philosophers rather than to *follow* them in a historical reading.<sup>314</sup>

In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari sort through their post-Freudian and post-Marxist inheritance and begin to identify a number of dualities: practical and meta-psychological analysis; desire predicated on lack versus positive, productive desire; neurosis and schizophrenia (the latter two explored in *Anti-Oedipus*' second chapter). Once they have made these distinctions, their method is to divide these binaries into productive and unproductive parts of the Freudian unconscious-machine, so that the unproductive parts can be discarded. The rubric which determines which side or the other they lie upon reduces to the simple political question: 'does this help or hinder the repression of desire?' This question is political because of the immediately post-revolutionary context of *Anti-Oedipus*. The book itself is an attempt to provide and answer to a political question, albeit through a psychoanalytic and economic interpretive framework. As such, this question is perhaps an improvement on what Deleuze and Guattari identify as the analyst's question 'how can I apply the universal solution (Oedipus)'? Unfortunately, neither approximate the still unanswered psychoanalytic question 'how does the unconscious operate?', which remains open after our investigation of Freud and

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313 In the terminology of Land, these philosophers represent 'accelerative thresholds' – a concept which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

314 (a) Deleuze and Guattari’s turn to materialism is noted by Chatalet in the essay 'Deleuze and Guattari Fight Back': “Furthermore, I felt this eruption as an eruption of materialism. It's been too long since we've witnessed such a thing.” Deleuze, G. *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (Cambridge UK: Semiotext(e), 2004) p. 210

(b) See footnote 58 regarding Deleuze's methodology.

(c) “To formulate an answer, we realized that we couldn't just hook a Freudian engine up to the Marxist-Leninist train.” Guattari, F. quoted in Deleuze, G. *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (Cambridge UK: Semiotext(e), 2004) p. 217



Lacan. I shall read *Anti-Oedipus* 'archaeologically', trying to separate these three layers: critique of psychoanalytic method, critique of psychoanalytic theory, and political prescription. This reading will terminate in the observation that *Anti-Oedipus* makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the unconscious' operation by re-framing the question of the unconscious into one of production (what it makes) rather than of content (what it (re)presents) and, as such, makes a vital contribution to post-Freudian theorisation regarding the role of the drive.<sup>315</sup> Deleuze and Guattari consider a productive model of the unconscious to be superior to the Oedipal, theatricised model because the complex is all too easy to correlate to a fixed, triangulated representation.<sup>316</sup> The theatrical analogy shows how psychoanalysis collapses the complexity and indeterminacy of the unconscious' production to a flat theatrical (one stage, one show, one script) plane in which the only variables are which role the various actors play. Such simple correlationism can be deployed politically and socially to repress desire because the avoidance of complexity aids the imposition of the right/wrong dialectic of classical morality. At the end of the Oedipus path, Deleuze and Guattari state that we always find priests and cops whose dialogue is characterised by the prohibition of 'wrong'.<sup>317</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, witnessing the riots of May 1968, saw how authority is terrified by the presence of crowds. The first step in quelling group unrest is to transform the complexity of the group into a simple narrative, which can be reabsorbed by authority. Just as this happened in the political sphere to dissenters, they believed it was also the methodology of the psychoanalyst crushing a patient's multiplicity of desires into a pre-set pattern.

There are certainly objections to the situation of *Anti-Oedipus* as a Freudian-Marxist theory about the failure of May 1968 which must be noted at this point, though I do not believe that they are fatal to the project. Firstly, there is a tendency in the commentary on *Anti-Oedipus*, particularly when considering Deleuze's input, to position the book as being entirely opposed to Freud. Kerslake notes that Deleuze, before his collaboration with Guattari, uses the

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315 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 55

316 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 55

317 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 81

unconscious as a concept, yet is wholly silent on the Freudian unconscious.<sup>318</sup> However, the fact that Deleuze so readily agreed to work with the psychoanalyst Guattari in 1969, and that Deleuze's understanding of Freud is so solidly grounded by 1972 shows that, on balance, Deleuze's exposure to Freud probably pre-dates this period.<sup>319</sup> In fact, a much stronger case can be made regarding Deleuze's exposure to Freud, as aspects of the Freudian unconscious occur in Part II of *Difference and Repetition*, which Deleuze published in 1968. Watson unequivocally states that Deleuze's shared interest with Guattari was reading psychoanalysis.<sup>320</sup> Deleuze's relative silence about Freud before *Anti-Oedipus* is an example of Deleuze's iconoclastic approach to philosophy and his methodological preference for encountering outside, marginalised parts of philosophy rather than engaging in dialectics with the molar. Yet by 1972, with the publication of *Anti-Oedipus*, along with contemporaneous shorter critiques of Freud, it is clear that Deleuze's intention is to explicitly critique, rather than to ignore Freud. Watson emphasises that Deleuze's introduction to Guattari represented an opportunity for Deleuze to escalate his burgeoning interest in conventional psychoanalysis.<sup>321</sup>

A second, stronger, objection is that Deleuze's conception of the unconscious is so dissimilar to Freud's that there is nothing in the Freudian machine that Deleuze would wish to save. Kerslake's reading of Deleuze's earlier encounters with the unconscious situates him in

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318 Kerslake, K. *Deleuze and the Unconscious* (London: Continuum, 2007) p. 189

319 (a) See Deleuze, G. *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (Cambridge UK: Semiotext(e), 2004) p. 309

(b) Deleuze's fluency is demonstrated in discussions like *Deleuze and Guattari Fight Back* Deleuze, G. *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (Cambridge UK: Semiotext(e), 2004) p. 216

320 See Watson.: "They certainly shared many interests. Guattari was a reader of philosophy, and Deleuze a reader of psychoanalysis." Watson, J. *Guattari's Diagrammatic Thought* (UK: Bloomsbury, 2007) p. 2

321 Deleuze was attracted not only to Guattari's desiring machines, but also to his critique of psychoanalysis. He later explained to an interviewer that "Oddly enough, it wasn't me who rescued Felix from psychoanalysis; he rescued me". Deleuze, G. *Negotiations*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) p. 144 (see also 13, 15).

relation to Jungian and Bergsonian conceptions of the unconscious.<sup>322</sup> However, the lexicon of *Anti-Oedipus* is both critically and positively that of Freudianism above all other discourses of philosophy of the unconscious; and Lacan is the only other primary influence who contributes a significant number of concepts, many of them re-interpreted from Freud. My contention is that many of Deleuze's statements about moving away from Freudianism are tactical rather than strategic; pragmatic rather than ideological. Getting involved in debates about the correct reading of aspects of Freudianism represented a trap to Deleuze which he was eager to bypass: "Nor is there an epistemological problem: we're not worried about a return to Freud, or to Marx. If they tell us we've misunderstood Freud, we'll say: "Ooh well, we have too much else to do.""<sup>323</sup> The metaphysical engine driving *Anti-Oedipus* – to be differentiated from the political aspect which is a critique of Lacanianism and power structures – is the attempt to rewrite the critique of Kantianism in *Difference and Repetition* in a psychoanalytic rather than metaphysical vocabulary.<sup>324</sup> The resulting composite of Kant, Freud (and several other philosophers whom Deleuze's thought follows) is therefore a compromise between various lexicons, but ultimately must be consistent with a coherent post-Freudian depiction of the unconscious if it is to do the work Deleuze would wish it to.

An obvious danger to the progressive political message of *Anti-Oedipus* in the period around its publication would be to become dragged into a narrow, dialectical encounter with psychoanalysis. When questioned about their exact relationship to psychoanalysis Deleuze and Guattari were keen to avoid being recaptured by the psychoanalytic apparatus and classified as a dissenting position regarding Lacan's 'return to Freud' in which they were pitted as the 'other' to Lacanianism. A sustained dialectical critique of Lacanianism would ultimately entrench it rather than pass over it, and would mire Deleuze and Guattari in the realm of critique of theory rather than production of theories. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari pick what is useful to them in Freud and Lacan – the depictions of impersonal unconscious production such as drive theory or the 'A' schema – and deploy it against anthropocentric,

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322 Kerslake, K. *Deleuze and the Unconscious* (London: Continuum, 2007)

323 Deleuze, G. *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (Cambridge UK: Semiotext(e), 2004) p. 221

324 For elucidation of this argument see Hughes, J. *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition*, (London: Continuum, 2009). I shall return to this topic in Chapter 5 when discussing Land's project.

correlationist psychoanalysis.

Therefore, while *Anti-Oedipus* can be easily read as a political reaction to Lacan, it is not so easily classifiable as a directly psychoanalytic critique of Lacan. Watson notes that Deleuze and Guattari worked through Lacan and Freud in *Anti-Oedipus*: through the space his concepts opened to a position on the other side: Deleuze acknowledged that both he and Guattari owed a great deal to Lacan, remaining indebted to his "creative side," and borrowing heavily from his line of thought even as they proceeded with their "demolition".<sup>325</sup> I shall argue that there are parts of Freud which are useful to Deleuze and Guattari, but they have to be carefully extracted from the points at which they are implied in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, as the tendency is to pass over them in silence rather than acknowledge Freud, and risk a backward slip to Oedipus. Deleuze explicitly differentiates the 'letter' and the 'becoming' of Freud: what Freud wrote, and how it has been interpreted. This difference is the key to understanding what the Oedipus of *Anti-Oedipus* stands for. Oedipus is the tendency to triangulate a given case within the collar of a pre-existing complex.<sup>326</sup> Rather than Oedipus the historical figure or the Oedipus complex named after him – these specific things – Oedipus is a tendency in the interpretation of Freud which focuses on the family and tradition, and treatments which operate within the context of both:

However, if one examines not the letter of Marx or Freud, but the becoming of Marxism and the becoming of Freudianism, we see, paradoxically, Marxists and Freudians engaged in an attempt to recode Marx and Freud: in the case of Marxism, you have a recoding by the State ("the State has made you ill, the State will cure you"—this cannot be the same State); and in the case of Freudianism, you have a recoding by the family (you fall ill from the family and recover through the family—this is not the same family).<sup>327</sup>

As Deleuze and Guattari criticise a tendency towards a certain application of Freud, they

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325 Watson, J. *Guattari's Diagrammatic Thought* (UK: Bloomsbury, 2007) p. 42

326 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 53

327 Deleuze, G. *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (Cambridge UK: Semiotext(e), 2004) p. 253

implicitly favour a reading of Freud which emphasises the opposite of the ‘Oedipus’ tendency: towards the impersonal, machinic flow of energy/desire delineated in his metapsychological works. The aspects of Freud and Marx which are subject to critique are those which work politically against the operation of desiring machines, reining back desiring-production, and shackling its free operation. Freeing desire is the commonality between Guattari’s critical-analytical and Deleuze’s positive-ontological interests before the writing of *Anti-Oedipus*. Later in this chapter I shall demonstrate that Deleuze and Guattari’s critique and ontology have similar positive applications in the liberation of desire. Both serve the cause of freeing desire, removing false obstacles to its uninhibited flow (Oedipus) and providing the conceptual tools needed to understand the migrations of energy on the plane of desire (Schizoanalysis).

### **The Dangers of Oedipus**

Felix Guattari, writing both on his own and with philosopher Gilles Deleuze, developed the notion of schizoanalysis out of his frustration with what he saw as the shortcomings of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, namely the orientation toward neurosis, emphasis on language, and lack of socio-political engagement.<sup>328</sup>

Watson is perhaps guilty of a lack of nuance in the above interpretation of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. In the period of *Anti-Oedipus*’ production after the events of 1968, there certainly was a socio-political engagement being undertaken by psychoanalysis. However, this engagement was a broad and shallow recoding of the socio-political in the image of Oedipus: a familial, patriarchal recoding which was essentially conservative. Lacanianism was socio-political insofar as it was a bulwark against deviation from social normality. Therefore, what Deleuze and Guattari found lacking in Lacanianism was militant engagement of the kind they were politically engaged in.<sup>329</sup> The Oedipus cure in its style as a soft, bourgeois recoding had no explicit aims beyond ending the patient’s treatment and

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328 Watson, J. *Guattari’s Diagrammatic Thought* (UK: Bloomsbury, 2007) p. 1

329 The militant ideology of the Soixante-Huitards is the subject of a number of works such as Harman, C. *The Fire Last Time: 1968 and After* (London: Bookmarks, 1988) or Singer, D. *Prelude To Revolution: France In May 1968* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970) which characterise its main features.

reintegrating them as a normal member of society. When this pattern was transcribed to the political domain, psychoanalysis, mimicking its clinical setting, offered a diagnosis of a condition from which it also claimed there was no escape vector beyond capitulation to Oedipus. Deleuze and Guattari characterise the structural imposition of Oedipus as  $3+1$ , representing the familial triumvirate and the phallus.<sup>330</sup> Structuralist interpretations of the political would therefore, as in figure 31 below, always follow this cookie cutter template of triangulating “desire, object and law” (3) and establishing the signifying regime in which they were related (+1).<sup>331</sup> Modern man was a familial construct and that was that: disorder would always creep in as people misconstrued their true Oedipal construction, and the only solution was a recapitulation to the underlying 'truth' of familiarity. In the same pattern, society becomes the subject of an analysis based on the pattern of a pre-existing complex. In more complex cases, where the patient seemed to break free from familiarity, the easy applicability of Oedipal theatrics could be relied upon to collapse the case back into the same triangulated structure.

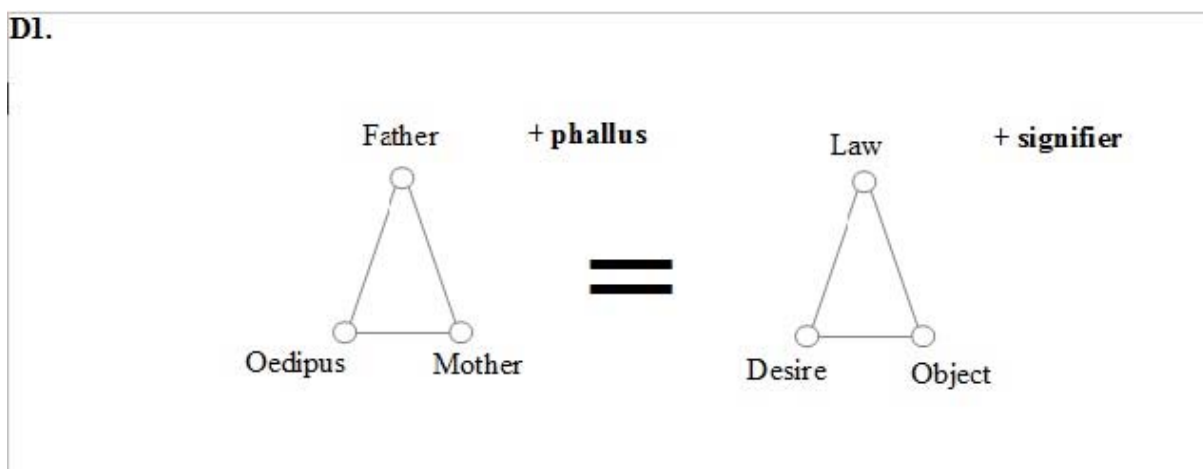


Figure 31: *The Triangular Structure of the Complex*

Deleuze and particularly Guattari (having encountered patients thus repressed in the clinical setting) were politically motivated to re-frame analysis in a manner which would make it

330 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 52

331 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 52

critical of what they considered repressive or conservative methods of biopolitical control; forms of control they saw in the apparatus of contemporary Western States:

If it is true that the social revolution is inseparable from a revolution of desire, then this changes the question. We now must ask: what conditions will enable the revolutionary avant-garde to free itself from its unconscious complicity in repressive structures, and undermine Power's manipulations of the desire of the masses who "fight for their servitude as though it were their salvation"? If the family and the ideologues of the family have a crucial role to play here, as we believe they do, then one cannot overestimate the function of psychoanalysis in this respect, since it was the first to raise these questions—and the first to stifle them, privileging instead the modern myth of familial repression through Oedipus and castration.<sup>332</sup>

The 'stifling' effect of the imposition of Oedipus became a philosophical-epistemological problem, as Oedipus deceives us about the underlying truth behind our conscious representations of reality. For Deleuze and Guattari, epistemological understanding isn't acquired through the critique of the gap between the imaginary and the symbolic (as it is for Lacan) but between the real and the virtual, that is, between a materialist conception of existence and the the critical frameworks which allow humanity to understand it in its most concrete, abstract forms.<sup>333</sup> Their aim is to “shatter the iron collar of Oedipus and rediscover everywhere the force of desiring production; to renew on the level of the real, the tie between analytic machine, desire, and production”.<sup>334</sup> Deleuze and Guattari's critical approach aims to eliminate the anthropomorphism and inherited 'small 'c' conservatism' engendered by an analysis which began with an abstract 'Oedipus the man' theory that would be applied to each 'real' patient. Figure 32 below shows how Deleuze and Guattari and Lacan's epistemological approaches are each other's converse. Deleuze and Guattari, in their investigation of the real, only use a tool insofar as it can demonstrate the singularity of the real. For Lacanians, the

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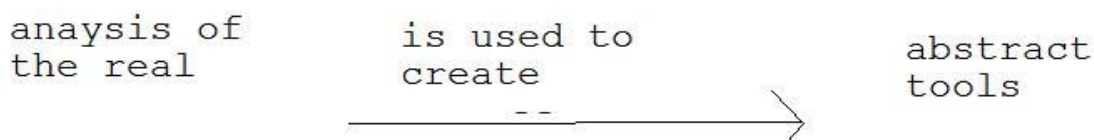
332 Deleuze, G. *Desert Islands and Other Texts* (Cambridge UK: Semiotext(e), 2004) p. 218

333 This was explicitly stated by Lacan in Lacan, J. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 137

334 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 52

Oedipal tool is the universal truth of analysis, and any individual case is to be understood by

## Deleuze



## Lacan



the application of this model.

Figure 32: *Deleuze and Lacan's Methodology*

Deleuze and Guattari argue that the consequence of the application of a pre-determined, general theory to all individual cases is both an epistemological problem – that it covers up the underlying truth of the real – and a political problem in that it reproduces any social dynamic which that theory would be instrumental in the cultivation of. I shall go on to show that it is this epistemological critique of Lacanism which is the key concern of Land in his reading of Deleuze. For Land, political oppression is a secondary concern when compared to the suppression of epistemological truth; that is, the actuality of matter and its virtual becoming. Politics, insofar as it is important to Land, is limited to the removal of elements which overcode and misrepresent epistemological reality.

The lecture *Four Propositions on Psychoanalysis* presents Deleuze and Guattari's major critiques of psychoanalysis, and in doing so demonstrates four major axes of engagement



which are present in *Anti-Oedipus*.<sup>335</sup> The Oedipus under attack in *Anti-Oedipus* functions as a place-holder for these four transgressions which, for Deleuze and Guattari, are represented by his proper name. This lecture, and the article based upon it are particularly revealing as they show, in part, the extent to which either Freud or Lacan is the target of any given critique – a separation which is often difficult to see in their other works. Deleuze and Guattari's attitude to Lacan is ambivalent, as noted above, because their unequivocal dislike of the political effects of applied Lacanism conflicted with their theoretical respect for some of his models of the unconscious such as the 'A' schema and the *objet petit-a*. The *Four Propositions* are as follows:

1) Psychoanalysis stifles desire, sorting desires into the good and the bad before trying to suppress what it considers to be bad: “You always have too many desires, you are a polymorphic pervert. What you must be taught is Lack, Culture, Law, in other words the reduction and the abolition of desire”.<sup>336</sup> In the concept of polymorphous perversion we can see two distinct tendencies in Freudian analysis. The first is a dispassionate, mechanistic-biological view of the operation of the unconscious: the unconscious simply wants to connect, to lay down and to follow the paths of drives. Yet Freudian polymorphous perversion always-already includes a negative connotation of perversion, as if the desires shown are in some way ‘wrong’ when they are expressed by a patient. Freud is to be condemned for his ambivalent attitude towards desire, but the apparatus of control critiqued above are Lacanian: ‘Lack, Culture, Law’, and this is especially true if culture is considered in the Lacanian, linguistic sense. For Deleuze and Guattari all desire is on the same plane – the machinic, pre-symbolic plane – and as such it is not the role of the analyst to create a typology of desire but to help liberate desire – without a pre-existing schema of different ‘good’ and ‘bad’ notions of desire. This relates back to their productive model of desire, in which it (desire) is said to be good or bad only insofar as it produces or is blocked from producing.

2) Psychoanalysis impedes the formation of utterances. Deleuze argues that the flows of desire are punctuated not by signs but by becomings; yet when the patient speaks of these

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335 Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) p. 79

336 Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) p. 80

becomings they are recaptured by the psychoanalytic apparatus – Oedipus – and recast in the fixed terms of the complex. Again, Freud is condemned, this time for his reduction of the complexity of the patient’s actual speech to the apparatus of his therapeutic cure (in the next section the ‘Little Hans’ case is discussed in more depth), but the true target of Deleuze and Guattari’s criticism are “the Partisans of the Signifier”, Lacanian analysts using a narrowly semiological register to interpret the utterances of the patient; taking phonetic units as the basic content of discourse and changing statements like “*groupe hippy* (hippy group)” to “*gross pipi* (big weenie)”.<sup>337</sup> Deleuze believes that the analyst only ever hears what they hope to, and not what the patient actually says. This is problematic because what they hope to hear are the trigger words which will allow them to constrain the patient's desires into a theatrical representation, recasting their words into a play on the Oedipal stage. This recasting anthropomorphises and simplifies the patient's desires, reducing them to moral categories of good or bad which are defined by their relation to normality: fitting with family, society, law and order is good, whilst the rejection of these mores is bad.

3) The model of the split subject is a simplification, which covers and suppresses its plurality. Two versions of the *Propositions* exist, one from a transcription of Deleuze’s lecture, and a second set based on Deleuze’s revised notes.<sup>338</sup> The most significant difference between the two is the change of language of this third point in the latter text to be less explicitly anti-Lacanian. Deleuze counters the Lacanian idea (described in the previous chapter) of a single split subject operating in different registers by restating the importance of multiplicity in desiring production. I shall show that Deleuze and Guattari believe that the subject of analysis is transversed by tribes, masses, mobs, and can speak from the perspective of either a component or a group within any of these assemblages. In this criticism, Deleuze and Guattari again demonstrate the division between the theoretical apparatus of Freud and Lacan, which always speaks of polyvocality and plurality in the unconscious, and practised psychoanalysis, which reduces all of these voices to the strongest one, and again, situates it in the constraints of a universal complex.

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337 Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) p. 85

338 Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) p. 402

4) Psychoanalysis treats itself as a contract between analyst and analysand and is therefore an expression of liberal-bourgeois social conduct. Psychoanalysis never becomes militant because its participants are a priori not interested in radical change. The productions of psychoanalysis are therefore fundamentally conservative. The role of schizoanalysis (described later in this chapter) as a normative political project is clearly demonstrated in this text. Deleuze repudiates the idea that *Anti-Oedipus'* critical payload, as noted previously, was a refined combination of or return to Marx and Freud. Schizoanalysis is posited as a distinct, original, theoretic praxis with which Deleuze and Guattari hope to replace psychoanalysis. In the remainder of this chapter I shall consider the validity of the first three of these critiques (ignoring the fourth as it relates to the practical application of psychoanalysis).

<b>Critical proposition</b>	<u>Psychoanalysis stifles desire</u>	<u>Psychoanalysis impedes the formation of utterances</u>	<u>The splitting of the subject</u>	<u>Psychoanalysis treats itself as a contract</u>
<b>Subject of critique: political or psychoanalytic</b>	Political and Psychoanalytic	Psychoanalytic	Psychoanalytic	Political
<b>Subject of critique: theoretical or practical</b>	Theoretical	Practical	Theoretical	Practical
<b>Subject of critique: Freudian or Lacanian</b>	Lacanian	Freudian and Lacanian	Lacanian	Freudian and Lacanian
<b>Critical use in the present</b>	Moving analytical	Demonstrating the asymmetry	Showing that Lacanian Drives	None

<b>thesis</b>	explanations away from items and absences.	between Lacanian theory and the practice of Lacanian analysts.	tend to become singular	
<b>Productive use in the present thesis</b>	Re-framing desire as a productive force (Freudian drive) rather than as a lack (Lacanian Drive).	Separating some theoretical elements of Lacan – particularly the 'A' schema from their applied consequences.	Reaffirming the plurality of drives	None

Table 6: *The Four Propositions*

Critique of the applicability of the universality of the Oedipus complex and the consequences of its application to patients can be considered at three levels. The first, Deleuze and Guattari’s assertion that psychoanalysis had dangerous political implications is an objection to professional psychoanalysis and its practice, yet is not in itself theoretically damning. A second, the accusation that Oedipus represented only a narrow section of psychoanalytic disorders rather than the universal primordial mechanism of the unconscious, is much more serious from the perspective of psychoanalytic theory, though it offers a space in which Oedipus can still be shown to be applicable in some cases, notably neurotic patients. The third, taking this critique further still – and perhaps the most damning objection of Deleuze and Guattari to Oedipus – is that it does not exist at all, even in those patients taken to be its exemplars by Oedipalist theoreticians. *The Interpretation of Utterances* offers a double reading of Freud’s *Little Hans* case notes and Klein’s *Richard* in which the ‘words’ (utterances) of the patient are presented alongside the interpretation of the analyst.<sup>339</sup> Here

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339 The former is found in Freud, S. *Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy* (1909); the latter in Klein,

Deleuze and Guattari demonstrate the disconnection between the speech of the patient – and, implicitly, the meaning of his speech – and the interpretation the analyst places (perhaps forces!) upon it.

The first case to be critiqued is the 'Little Hans' case. In Hans' testimony, Deleuze and Guattari see no evidence of desire towards the mother or fear of the father/castration. The point at which these fears are introduced is in the interpretation of Hans' words by his father and the professor (Freud). In this way, they recode all of Hans' polysemic desire to one fixed interpretation in the pattern of the Oedipus complex. It is their words, as they question Hans and his utterances, which introduce all of the obsessions which they claim Hans is bound by. Hans' interest in Madriël and the "Urbane Lady" are recoded by Freud as aspects of desire for his mother, though Deleuze and Guattari note that his attempts to reach them are in fact a trajectory away from his mother and not toward her.<sup>340</sup> Freud's determination to treat his patient as a bearer of the Oedipus complex has led him to reverse the meaning of the Hans' words. The solution offered by father and the professor is that he sleeps with his parents in lieu of the other girls: "he is inoculated by the Oedipus virus".<sup>341</sup> Hans did not enter psychoanalysis with an Oedipus complex, he was exposed to it during his treatment.

The analysis regarding castration is similar: Hans' machinic interest is in "the pee-maker", which Deleuze and Guattari situate as a productive process rather than a fetishised organ. Hans' belief when he enters analysis is that Mother has a pee maker, all the other girls have a pee maker... yet the professor steps in again: Hans must learn the difference between boys and girls. The idea of castration and sexual difference is introduced to Hans by Freud and his father, not by Hans' own testimony. Under Freud's guidance, Oedipus recodes Hans' desire in terms of the symbolism of phallus and castration, and at the same time it destroys his belief in "n sexes", a polymorphous, combinatory view of sexuality and desire. Hans' sexuality was univocal, all sexual objects were on the same plane and described in the same register, be they

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M. *Narrative of a Child Analysis (The Writings of Melanie Klein vol 4)* (New York: The Free Press, 1984)

340 Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) p. 90

341 Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) p. 90

“locomotive, horse, sun... girl or boy”.<sup>342</sup> Again, Freud's treatments as a practitioner of psychoanalysis do not match with his theoretical models of the unconscious, because plurality of the drives does exist in his texts in the metapsychological period.

Deleuze and Guattari understand the horse as Hans' gambit to escape his domestic state, a horse-becoming that would let him get onto the street (I shall return to this conception of becoming-production in the unconscious in the next section). They contend that psychoanalysis as practised in the Freudian – Lacanian school has no conception of this positivity, because it is only interested in representation – things standing for other things – and lack. As such, the horse must be recoded as part of the Oedipal-familial complex. Selectively listening, analysis waits for its own trigger words in Hans' discourse. The horse's eyes become father's; the horse's penis quickly follows.<sup>343</sup> Oedipal analysis cares only about its social goals: to bring Hans back to *his* family and to normalise him in relation to an *idealised* family. Whatever Hans says is irrelevant – indeed, his testimony is ignored or misrepresented if it is not of use to the pre-determined goal of the analysis: “You could not even say that Freud interprets poorly; while interpreting he is at no risk of hearing what the child says”.<sup>344</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari tell us that, for Freud, “desire cannot bear “intensities””.<sup>345</sup> As Chapter 1 showed, Freud's energetic-hydraulic unconscious operates to reduce the intensities and the flows of desire rather than to liberate them. The foundation of Freudian psychoanalysis – Freud's treatment of hysteria – has therefore conditioned the therapeutic process into a narrow, familial, normalisation and (correct, healthy) suppression of desire. Hans' resigned acceptance to analysis isn't indicative of a cure, just his boredom with the process, it isn't working for him. The reality of desire in Hans' case is the desire of Hans to make productive connections outside of his home – he wants to escape the Oedipal system and start to create machinic assemblages, making productive couplings outside of his current limits. Freud and his Oedipus complex work only to restrain Hans, to pull him back to the ever-same.

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342 Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) p. 93

343 Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) p. 96

344 Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) p. 96

345 Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) p. 96

Richard, the subject of Klein's analysis, is caught in the same bind. Richard's utterances about names, territories or machines are broken down and recast as fantasies in the same Oedipal model Hans was trapped in. Proper names become father, ports mother's genitalia.<sup>346</sup> Deleuze and Guattari read Richard's position as paranoid-schizoid rather than neurotic-depressed, a position which psychoanalysis' Oedipal apparatus cannot treat. Instead, psychoanalysis recasts Richard's positive, schizo-desire in terms of lack, which is its norm.

Should Hans and Richard be satisfied by the supposed 'cure' offered by Freudian analysis? An obvious rejoinder to Deleuze and Guattari's reading would be to re-affirm the success of the treatment. In this case, Oedipus and *Anti-Oedipus* have a different perspective. Freud, at various points, is keen to promote small 'c' conservatism as the goal of psychoanalysis, protecting society from the unspeakable consequences of the unconscious escaping the mechanism of repression (as demonstrated in Chapter 1, Freud's conception of the dark drives of the id necessitates their censorship). For Freud, the cure is sometimes finding or shoring up the right kind of repression. Deleuze and Guattari's goal is very different. As revolutionary psychoanalysts, they aimed to transform society rather than to preserve its mores. The Freudian-Oedipal complex is critiqued in these cases because it prevents the liberated flow of desire, which they posit as productive and pre-conscious. Why do Deleuze and Guattari want machinic desire to flow without restriction? In *Anti-Oedipus* it is not a question of arriving at some kind of super-humanistic expression of authenticity. Instead, the new assemblages and connections they would allow to proliferate would provide a truly revolutionary moment, moving society away from the symbolic, hyper-patriarchal overcoding which characterises its contemporary form. In *Anti-Oedipus*, western history is transcribed as a history of repressions, in which the desire(s) of groupings have been harnessed by despots, priests, sovereigns, bureaucrats, cops and shrinks. In 1970, Deleuze and Guattari don't know what the open desire would do to society, but they are engaged in an experimental praxis which aims to find out.<sup>347</sup>

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346 Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) pp. 103-105

347 Land likens this instinct to that of the character 'Case' in Gibson's *Neuromancer* (United Kingdom: Grafton, 1986), as I shall discuss in Chapter 5.

Yet again we discover the crucial distinction between psychoanalytic theory and practice in the Hans and Richard cases. The Freud who cannot bear “intensities” is the doctor who tries to stabilise the patient overcome by them and also the chronicler of civilisation who sees it being thrown into instability by them. He is not however someone whose schema of the psyche lacks an understanding of the importance of intensity in propelling the system of drives. Drives are forged by intensities, travel to intensities and have their vicissitudes shaped by the build-up and discharge of intensities. Politically however, the translation of a drive into an utterance is a dangerous thing, because the process of translation itself has an aim, a source, an object. As we have seen, for Freud drives are always plural, ploy-vocal, eternal. To reduce all of drive-desire to one simple idea, the Oedipus instinct of small 'c' conservatism; the protection of the ever same, this would be as far away from the truths of Freud's drive theory as it is possible to get. Deleuze and Guattari refer to the reduction of the patient's thought to a fixed complex as the imposition of theatricality. In this theatrical set-up, the participants are forced into specific, pre-determined roles which are fixed like those of characters in a play. In the clinical context 'patient' and 'doctor' immediately become two of these roles. The patient's testimony is then further transposed and re-worked to fit into a predetermined characterisation: “a universal metaphoric structural relation”, the most infamous of which is Oedipus – though there are others.<sup>348</sup> The reduction of the subject's unconscious to a theatrical set up prevents an analysis of the patient's true desire, because it: (1) anthropomorphises desire, though the productions of the unconscious are pre-subjective; (2) categorises the analysis of desire into the patterns of pre-made, fixed complexes; (3) and therefore simplifies the true complexity of the patient's desire.

Deleuze and Guattari offer us a path to escape this impasse. They posit that a better solution to the management of desire would be to remove the discursive elements of psychoanalysis: the obsession with expressing the motivations of material productions in a re-framed form as ideas or concepts, and their replacement with an impersonal survey of merely what the unconscious produces, without emphasis on why it might produce it. To get to this point though, Deleuze and Guattari need to escape the inherited Oedipality of the modern subject. To do so, they show us a way of being which is not tainted by the cultural reproduction of Oedipus, which is the subject of the critique which they call 'Schizoanalysis'.

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348 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 307



## Schizo-Desire is Materialist Psychoanalysis

*Anti-Oedipus* proposes the replacement of the Oedipal unconscious with a Schizoanalytic unconscious; a concept which, as Deleuze and Guattari make clear, must not be taken literally. *Anti-Oedipus*' injunction is to *become like* a schizo, not to *become a* schizo. The schizo condition is posited as being immune to the psychoanalytic conception of the unconscious: it exists in a pre-symbolic state, in which the analytic game of things representing other things is no longer applicable. The schizo is "without any gods at all, without a family, without a father or a mother".<sup>349</sup> The essential nature of the schizo is therefore an inability; an absence of the structure which conditions desire and which is considered to be inherent in 'normal' members of the society. Outside of societal conditioning, rather than experiencing the world as symbol or code the schizo plugs into a purely productive way of being and instead of chasing after ephemeral 'lack' and objects which are not at hand, the schizo uses what is at hand in the most productive, positive way available. Buchanan states that "schizophrenic delirium could not take the forms it does if the unconscious was not, as they put it, machinic."<sup>350</sup> Whereas the 'normal' subject is constituted by a conscious force that suppresses and restricts the unconscious, the schizo subject "is produced ... as a residuum or spare part that sits alongside the desiring-machine, which ... now occupies centre stage".<sup>351</sup> The schizo is therefore not constituted as an effect of the force of repression – Oedipus – but by the machinic production of the unconscious, and is therefore a window into the pre-subjective, pre-idealistic and therefore anti-anthropocentric process of the unconscious as desiring-production. Competitively, the role of classical, Oedipal psychoanalysis could be described as a bulwark against deviation from normality. The average citizen is 'right' insofar as they have the correct unconscious, an unconscious capable of (re-)producing the correct formations. Mental illness is considered a deviation from a conservative normality which replicates the salient elements of the social order. As such, Oedipal psychoanalysis is an idealist system. Subjective

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349 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 3

350 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum: London, 2008) p. 39

351 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum: London, 2008) p. 40

productions matter insofar as they can be seen to replicate or correspond to modal ideas.<sup>352</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari our current social order cannot be considered 'normal' in a positive sense. Normality exists as a conserved (replicated) state only because reactive and repressive forces work to maintain such stasis and when an unconscious affected by mental illness deviates from this normality it can therefore go in two directions, either reacting against the pattern of normality or, conversely, going beyond normality to a hyper-normal position. The avatar of this first tendency is the schizophrenic unconscious. Schizoanalysis is therefore a materialist psychoanalysis because it is concerned not with ideas, but with production and the mechanics of production.<sup>353</sup> The proper use of schizoanalysis is to apply it to the analysis of the social and political field, using the characteristics of the schizo to understand the libidinal investments in a given field.<sup>354</sup> From a Deleuzo-Guattarian, materialist perspective, the schizo has two qualities which are efficacious in the formation and proliferation of desiring machines. Firstly, they have no predetermined set of rules which will condition and restrict their ability to connect abstract machines, and secondly they have no resistance to the underlying materialist motivating force which make them maximise the forms of connection.<sup>355</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari use the model of a sphere with two poles to represent the desiring connections of the Schizo. The bottom pole represents a state of catatonia in which there are no effects, nothing is conjoined, everything is pure potential. This is called the body without organs. It essentially represents undifferentiated matter before the process of desire works upon it. The second pole is that of connection, of the establishment of desiring machines. For Deleuze and Guattari only the schizo is capable of being in the unique position of being free of Oedipus, that is without predetermined overcoding which would organise matter, and also being capable of conjoining matter in the production of desiring machines whenever this second pole of connection takes over, that is, when they skip between states. Schizo production is then the ability to utilise these two polarities of the schizo in the unconscious. If

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352 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 24

353 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 22

354 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 105

355 This, again, situates Deleuze's materialism in the Spinozist-Nietzchian tradition.

there are no barriers to their operation, no societal repressions (Oedipus) preventing desire's free flow, the process world work in the following two stages:

1. Lower pole. The BWO is determined. The machines available in the real are identified. Everything present to the schizo is reduced to pure potentiality as a vessel of transmission and investment of desire.
2. Upper Pole. Once the field of investment potential has been determined, the second action is to connect the desiring machines in whichever specific connection will be the most rewarding.

This bipartite method has similarities to both Freud's description of libidinal investment in his hydraulic drive theory (the eternal drives constantly scan the social field, and will invest in anything they have the option of investing in) and capitalism (the mutability of money into any specific capital investment once a means of exchange is established). The use of the sphere in this example is revealing. A sphere is opaque, showing no machinery which could connect the two poles, no pathway through which the traveller might venture. Instead we have an input and an output. Pure potential on one hand, and specific production on the other. How we get between the two is not Deleuze's primary concern in *Anti-Oedipus* (even if the names of the connective syntheses of the unconscious are catalogued, the motivations behind them, beyond pure productions, are undermined).<sup>356</sup> Instead, what is emphasised is that, if allowed, the schizo does operate in the sphere between these two poles and in the process comes up with his own desiring machines. More importantly, his own *non-Oedipal desiring machines*: nothing here is representative; rather, it is all life and lived experience; the actual, lived emotion of having breasts does not resemble breasts, it does not represent them.<sup>357</sup> The schizo does not chase the lacked object, but positively uses and enjoys the objects he comes into contact with.

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356 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 77

357 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 9

	Schizo state	Capitalist mode	Deleuze and Guattari's terminology	Conception of space
Bottom pole	Catatonia	Commodification	Body without Organs	Striated space
Top pole	Connection	Capitalism	Desiring-Production	Smooth space

*Table 7: The Two Poles and Their Relationship to Deleuzian Concepts*

Deleuze and Guattari's description of the schizo state goes beyond the post-Freudian, that is, psychoanalysis, and uses post-Marxist terminology to make its analogies. In *Anti-Oedipus* the relationship of schizophrenia to psychoanalysis is therefore compared to that between capitalism and despotism.<sup>358</sup> The neurotic, trapped by psychoanalysis, has a fixed framework of interpretation (Oedipus) as inflexible as the law of the despot. Conversely, the schizo takes on the duality inherent in capitalism by which codes are both given and produced; in Deleuze and Guattari's terminology, there are movements of de-territorialisation accompanying those of territorialisation. In this analogy we see schizoanalysis showing its political purpose – it promises a liberation: just as capitalism liberates the serf from the land and the feudal law, the schizo offers a liberation from the familial hierarchies and social conservatism instituted by the rule of Oedipus.

Deleuze and Guattari claim that Freudian analysis cannot understand the Schizo, who is defined by things and production (materialism) rather than words and concepts (idealism).<sup>359</sup> The Schizo makes decisions without criteria, without the weight of Oedipal expectations and as such, their unconscious is a superior cypher for the pure production of desire as they lack the apparatus to impede it or restrict its flow. Conversely, Lacanianism, conceiving lack

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358 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 33

359 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 23

[*manque*] as the cause of desire, fails to understand desire as a real-material-productive process. If we could get to a purely schizo desire, we would escape Oedipus and the trap which it binds society in.<sup>360</sup> We are again left with the question of where this kind of freedom might lead us. For the 'left Deleuzian' it is a kind of liberation ideology, leading us away from patriarchy into its other “outside the limits of marriage... unimagined ways of bodies moving together”.<sup>361</sup> Conversely, rather than concentrating on achieving desired ends, the 'right Deleuzians' stress that what is important is the release of impersonal, productive desire from its confinement in the Oedipal cage. The revolutionary aspect is that in his state without Oedipus, desire works through the schizo. The pieces already want to be pulled together, they always did, but they were blocked by the Oedipal security system. The schizo, he's just the tool to do it, the cypher; it is, again, analogous to Cage cutting Wintermute loose.<sup>362</sup> For Land there are forces far more powerful than the individual unconscious. It is not a case of what humanity wants now, but what the future wants for humanity.

Deleuze and Guattari's schizo-desire, because it is a materialist conception of desire, is radically different to the common psychoanalytic concept of desire. As previous chapters have demonstrated, for Freud the subject is constituted through traversal of a foundation of unconscious desire, as depicted in his metaphor of the layers of Troy. For Lacan, the content of the subject's production is determined by an unconscious interrogation along the 'A' schema. Both of these constitutions of the subject are idealist because the trajectory of drives and signifying chains is a passage from the unconscious to the pre-conscious – the realm of becoming-idea. For Deleuze and Guattari however, desire is simply the material production which occurs before the production of the subject and, therefore, before the production of 'ideas'. The subject is “produced as a residuum alongside the machine, as an appendix, or as a spare part adjacent to the machine”.<sup>363</sup>

Oedipus is a slippery slope: if the relation of productive mechanisms to the objects produced

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360 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) pp. 26-27

361 Massumi, B. *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (USA: MIT, 1992) p. 36

362 Gibson, W. *Neuromancer* (United Kingdom: Grafton, 1986)

363 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 20

(which can be represented as the relationship between drives and symptoms, or between materialism and idealism) becomes the defining question of analysis, we again slip into the trap of Oedipus, and portray the unconscious as a theatre rather than a factory. Deleuze and Guattari do not want the unconscious to 'express itself', in ideas, but want to measure its raw, material productions.<sup>364</sup> They reject idealism as it is always tainted by the semiotic confusion and interrelation of concepts; by the associations laid down by language or society; and by the position of the interpreting agency. A psychoanalysis based on desire-lack [*manque*] “is created, planned and organised in and through social production”.<sup>365</sup> A materialist psychoanalysis can break free of these constraints because it has no preconceived framework of interpretation (Oedipus); it does not lack anything in advance. Schizoanalysis is therefore an experimental praxis because it would seek to follow schizo breaks and lines-of-flight which demonstrate a world other than our own anthropocentric prison, showing the outside of the societal, cultural and linguistic constraints we are trapped beneath. It is a process rooted in critical philosophy, because it interrogates the real and in doing so defines the limitations and flaws of idealism.

Because it aims towards a state of affairs which we cannot easily access or intuit schizoanalysis is also a speculative enterprise. The role of schizo-analysis is to posit, chart or conceptualise tendencies, movements or pressures in which pure material (or GNoN, or the Will to Power) is observed pushing to surpass its incarceration in the Oedipal stasis which society has bound it in.<sup>366</sup> Schizoanalysis is therefore inherently political, because it posits

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364 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 23

365 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 28

366 Will to Power is often characterised as a pre-cursor of Freud's conception of the unconscious, see for example Liebscher 'Friedrich Nietzsche's perspectives on the unconscious' in *Thinking the Unconscious: Nineteenth-Century German Thought*, Ed. Nicholls A. and Liebscher, M. (UK: Cambridge, 2010)

Lands conception of GNoN is expounded in the post 'The Cult of GNoN' at *Xenosystems.net* (<http://www.xenosystems.net/the-cult-of-gnon/>). GNoN, 'the God of Nature Or Nature' represents the primacy of material and the rules of matter as the decision making (executive) force in the cosmos. As Land states in the post in question “Primarily, and strategically, it permits a consensual acceptance of Natural Law, unobstructed by theological controversy.”. If this thesis claims that an idea should not be interrogated by an

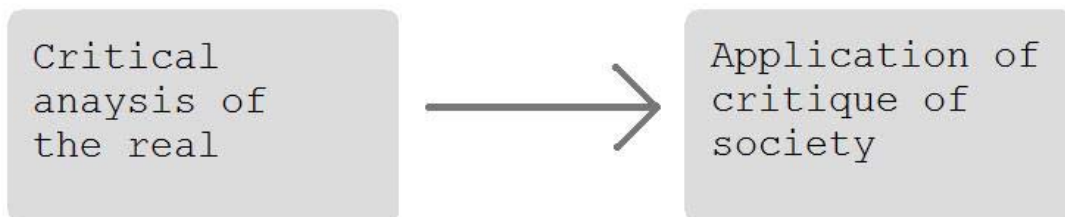
that there is a repressed order beneath our societal conventions. Schizoanalysis does not restrict itself to investigating the topology of this repressed order of desire-production but actively encourages its excavation. When schizoanalytic critique is undertaken, it is done with the goal of removing the repression of desire.

Deleuze and particularly Guattari were militants before the *Anti-Oedipus* period and would be situated on the political left. Their militancy was not a product of their exploration of the Oedipus apparatus, but a motivating factor behind their decision to undertake such a critique of psychoanalysis. Such militancy, coupled with their methodological understanding of philosophy as a tool for affecting change rather than as purely abstract theory, meant that they were committed to producing a philosophy which always-already had political aims which could be described as being of the left. I claim that critical analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of desire has been, due to leftist bias in both their politics and also amongst their subsequent interpreters, unable to achieve a dispassionate analysis of this desire. In a properly rigorous critical philosophy the relationship between the act of critique and the application of critique should be unidirectional, application only proceeding after a disinterested, cool, critical analysis of the real (see Figure 33 below). The critical framework must be established, providing an epistemological foundation, before a political conception of its consequences is considered.

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idea but by reality, GNoN is the set of mechanisms in reality by which any proposition in reality will be tested.

Valid method (epistemic considerations come before the political).



Invalid method (epistemic considerations are conditioned by political assumptions).

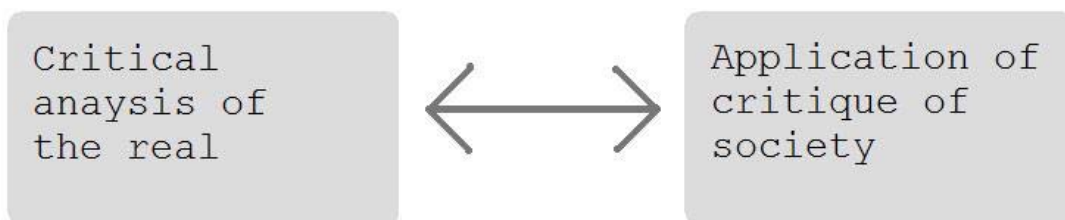


Figure 33: *Epistemic Directions*

### **The Implications of Materialist Psychology: Deleuze and the Virtual, Desire, and Difference**

The relationship between desire and the virtual-actual in Deleuzian theory is essential to understanding the genealogies of the two strains of Deleuzianism I shall be comparing, which are: (1) the pre-eminent leftist interpretation favoured by most commentators and (2) its alternate, the rightist interpretation of Land. As stated earlier, Deleuzian desire can be understood as an heir of Nietzsche's will to power or Spinozist power-conatus.<sup>367</sup> It functions as the name of the force which animates material.<sup>368</sup> As such, it is the conduit through which the actual – the disposition of material at the current point – could become the virtual, which is a potential disposition of material in the future. The virtual is an interpreted understanding

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367 Deleuze depicts Spinoza's conception of *conatus* in his monograph *Spinoza*. See Deleuze, G. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (New York: City Lights, 1988) p.99.

368 Deleuze And Guattari considered *Anti-Oedipus* to be a materialist critique of the idealist Oedipal apparatus: "And that a revolution - this time materialist - can proceed only by way of a critique of Oedipus". Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. pp. 75)



of *a* potential actual. There are therefore multiple virtualities, which may or may not correspond with *the* actual. Any positive analysis of desire – an analysis of what desire produces – must determine how desire works to produce the actual.

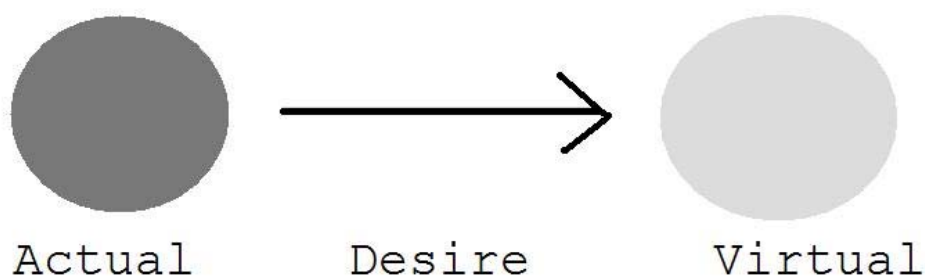


Figure 34: *Actual* → *Virtual*

For Deleuze, the actual-virtual distinction is a consequence of his Spinozist materialism. Desire is the flow of matter; it is the automatic productions and disjunctions which matter is capable of enacting. In the diagram above it is represented by an arrow, capturing its power as a transformative force between two states. This transformation encompasses any force which has the capability of moving the disposition of material and therefore extends from simple, calculable physical laws (such as gravity) to the complex productions and interactions of living material (such as the flow of money, libido and organisms across a casino floor). Larger scale organisations, up to the size of the society itself, are simply the aggregates of the productions of individual instances of desire. Deleuze and Guattari give the example of Women’s Liberation when depicting the constraint of desire within a society.<sup>369</sup> Their formula is that liberation requires the promotion of “unconscious desire” (productive desire), and an understanding of how desire invests the “social field”, leading to the ability to enact a “disinvestment of repressive structures”.<sup>370</sup> This structure mirrors the schizo-dynamics of the

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369 As Mullarkey notes, Deleuzianism and feminism have a complex relationship exceeding the position sketched here. Mullarkey, J. in Ed Buchanan, I. *A Deleuzian Century*, (London: Duke, 1999) p. 65

370 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 61

'two poles' model explained above: first the field is interpreted (decoded, understood), and then it is reinvested. This formula also fits into the structure illustrated above. Women's desire would transform the actual into a new disposition (which therefore is, to an observer in the actual, a virtual future) if it was not constrained. This constraint takes the form of the repression of women's desire, predominantly because of the primacy of patriarchy (accused under the name Oedipus). Oedipus then becomes a virtual which constrains the actual, and prevents the realisation of a series of alternate virtuals (other power structures in society).

The example of Women's Liberation demonstrates how desire could, if released, enact significant changes of society; it would shift the actual towards a number of new virtualities. Deleuze and Guattari limit their commentary to noting desire's power to affect change. However, philosophers who have followed this Deleuzian-Guattarian analytic approach have been prepared to take a speculative approach to the problem of constrained desire and have therefore posited potential patterns in the new dispositions which would be created if desire was liberated in a society. Such speculative approaches can be grouped into two categories: those which derive from political assumptions, and those which produce economic depictions. I characterise this as the distinction between 'left' and 'right' Deleuzians. Of this dichotomy, the left Deleuzian position is currently the pre-eminent interpretation. It is primarily derived from pre-existing ethical commitments to the promotion of equality and emphasises that once freed, desire could form a number of dispositions, all of which would be considered of equal value.<sup>371</sup> Conversely, the right Deleuzian position is derived from an economic interpretation. It claims that desire, once freed, would follow laws of nature and therefore form new, stable patterns according to such laws.

This difference between a left and right reading of Deleuze can also be seen in differing approaches to the possibility of interacting with otherness;<sup>372</sup> The tendency of the left is to

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371 This 'leftward' progression has obviously been immensely socially beneficial over the 20th century, with the spreading of both the electoral franchise and individual rights through society.

372 Laurie, T. 'More Human than Human: The Ethics of Alienation' (2009). ( Available at: [http://www.academia.edu/4006097/More\\_Human\\_than\\_Human\\_The\\_Ethics\\_of\\_Alienation\\_in\\_Octavia\\_E.\\_Butler\\_and\\_Gilles\\_Deleuze\\_conference\\_proceedings\\_2009p.184](http://www.academia.edu/4006097/More_Human_than_Human_The_Ethics_of_Alienation_in_Octavia_E._Butler_and_Gilles_Deleuze_conference_proceedings_2009p.184) )

regard that which is supplemental to or other than a standard notion of 'humanity' to be something which should become the subject of physical exploration. Texts focus on the idea of the body without organs as a method of enabling physical connection, plugging the existing body into new situations and alterities.<sup>373</sup> On the right, the tendency is to regard outsideness as a theoretical domain – for Land, it is like ('isomorphic with') the outside (noumenon) delimited by Kantian critical philosophy – which cannot be the subject of physical interaction, but only the subject of critical speculation.<sup>374</sup> The 'body without organs' is therefore a map rather than a territory; a way of discovering and interpreting connections and productions which would otherwise have been overcoded and suppressed.<sup>375</sup>

The schism between left and right Deleuzians is epistemologically defined by the position of desire and the virtual in their teleology of the transition between the actual as it is and a posited future actual. This is derived from two very different interpretations of the operation of desire between the virtual and the actual. Left Deleuzianism starts with the premise of Deleuze's earlier work on difference and states that, as difference is primary and undifferentiated, the virtual consists of a series of potential actualities, all of which present competing interpretations of difference which are distinct from the current actual. As there is only difference between these states, and difference is primary and indistinguishable, none can be called the preferred or natural state. An example of this process in action would be an analysis of sexuality. In our current, patriarchal, Oedipalised society, sexual interactions are ordered as a 'normal' heterosexuality and this state's 'others', a whole range of other non-

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373 See: Buchanan, I. *Deleuzism* (USA, Duke University Press; 2000) p. 31

374 Land's description of this isomorphism was that: "It takes a bit of getting used to -- the crucial key for me was realizing the rigorous isomorphism with Kantian critique. Where Kant rejects the 'mystical' possibility of Intellectual Intuition, they envisage contact with the thing-in-itself (BwO) ..... as the core of the 'schizophrenic' apocalypse situated at the horizon of history (= of capitalism)." Land, 2014 in a twitter conversation. ( Available at <https://twitter.com/Outsideness/status/477129651437838337>, <https://twitter.com/Outsideness/status/477121038199689216>, <https://twitter.com/Outsideness/status/477129950776930306> )

375 Defining the problematic notion of the body-without-organs is beyond the remit of this thesis. See 'Body Without Organs' in Ed. Parr, A. *The Deleuze Dictionary* (UK: Edinburgh, 2010) pp. 37-39

cisgender sexual practices: “[T]he male part of a man can communicate with the female part of a woman, but also with the male part of a woman, or with the female part of another man, or yet again with the male part of the other man, etc.”<sup>376</sup> These other practices are considered to be the virtual states which would be attainable if desire was not constrained in the actual to prevent their adoption. To arrive at our preferred location, illustrated below as Actual2, we must use our conception of these virtuals and enact a removal of any obstacles which prevent their being possible. This conception of difference is happily congruent with the desired progressive politics of 'inclusion' in which minoritarian groups, decisions and choices are considered to be equal. Colebrook notes that Deleuze and Guattari, in their readings of key texts, would be more concerned with the way in which the text could be put to work than its meaning.<sup>377</sup> Under such a rubric, a political deployment of Deleuzian theory would be valid if it enabled the progression of societal norms towards a pre-determined goal.

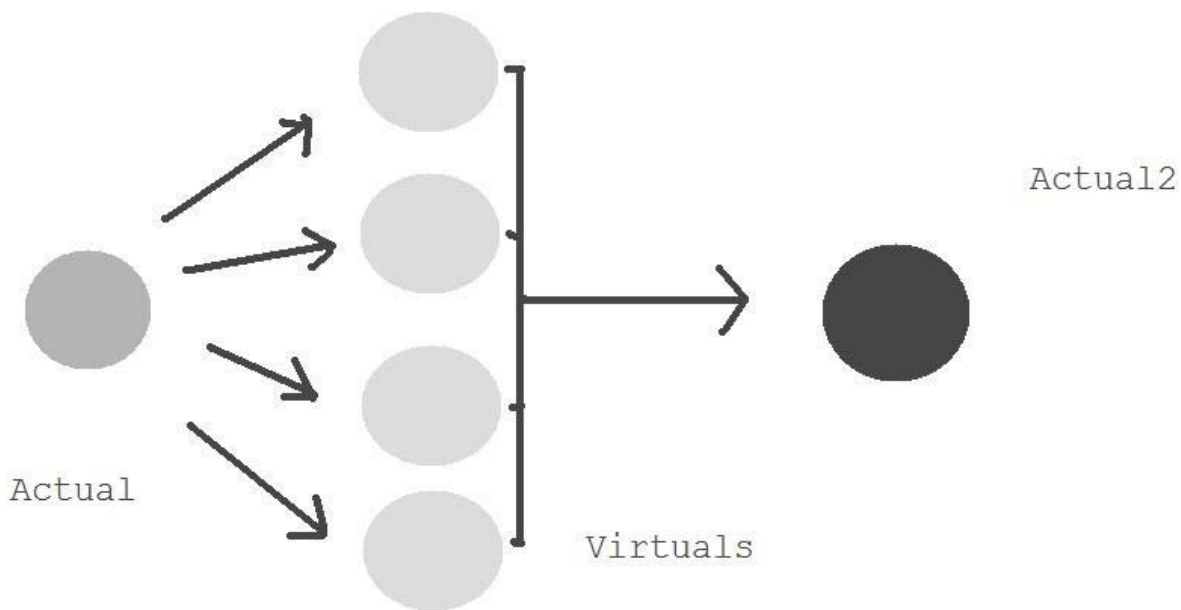


Figure 35: *Actual* → *Actual 2*

How does desire work in this system? It is a repressed force which would otherwise transform

376 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 69

377 Colebrook, C. and Buchanan, I. *Deleuze and Feminism* (UK; Edinburgh University Press, 2000) p. 3

the actual into one of the multitude of virtuals.<sup>378</sup> Because these virtuals are considered equal and none to be the 'natural' terminus of desire, each specific work of desire is singular and local, and proceeds in its transformative capacity to engender new condition which is distinctive to its own genesis. Yet in this analysis, desire takes on a problematic duality. It is both a blind desire, always working in an individual situation, and also a knowing desire which produces a heterogeneous set of potential outcomes, being careful to not become fixed in any new pattern, or to exclude any potential terminus.

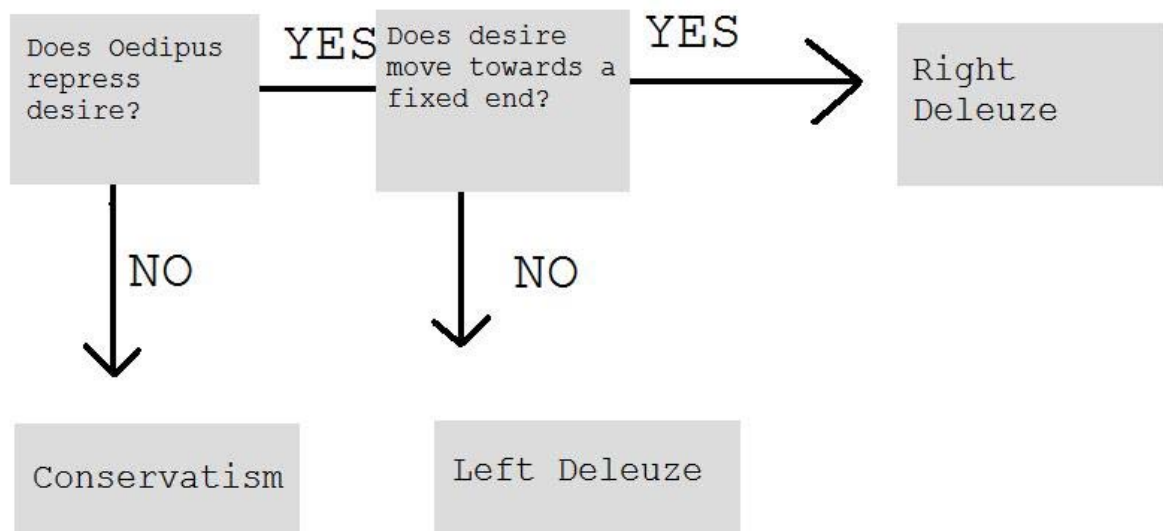


Figure 36: *Responses to Deleuze*

We can understand the duality of desire by considering the three elements in this system in more depth: repressed desire (the 'now'), the apparatus of repression (Oedipus), and free desire (a future state). As illustrated above in Figure 36, the refusal to accept that desire is repressed in current society, and that Oedipus is natural, leads to the kind of conservative position Deleuze and Guattari attributed to mainstream Lacanianism, as described earlier in this chapter. In opposition to this tendency of applied psychoanalysis, schizoanalysis, as

378 A process described in Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) pp. 77 and

outlined so far, demonstrates that desire is indeed repressed.<sup>379</sup> Deleuzians of both sorts would agree therefore that desire is repressed everywhere by the Oedipal apparatus and that a future state which is different to the now is attainable.

If we therefore accept that desire is repressed in our current society, we are left with a speculative choice about the destination of desire if it was freed of this repression. This choice is intrinsically speculative because we do not only live in a society in which desire is repressed in various ways, but because a society without repressive apparatus – a property which all social apparatuses have – is not conceivable. The cleave between left and right Deleuzianism is determined by the response to this speculation about desire. Left Deleuzians, primarily motivated by political and ethical considerations favour this model of flat desire, in which desire has no preference between a variety of competing formations. Conversely, right Deleuzians, concerned with teleological consequences, have a conception of desire as a force which is propelled towards certain definable ends. Desire would therefore not become flat, pooling at random points like beads of water on a hydrophobic plane, but would instead flow like water down a beach, in a distinct rivulets towards its source (see figures below).

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379 As demonstrated in Chapter 1 in the discussion of drive, polymorphous perversion, and the establishment of the complex.



Figure 37: *Water on a Hydrophobic Plane*



Figure 38: *Rivulets on a Beach*

Land's right Deleuzianism can be situated in contrast to the prevalent left reading of Deleuze which I have characterised as being concerned primarily with arriving at a politically progressive position. Right Deleuzianism differs in its answer to the primary epistemological question, which is how is it possible to construct an explication of the mechanics of desire, where desire is the name of the animating force which connects matter? Such a reading is supported by the historical context of Deleuze's thought, whose two most important antecedents are Spinoza and Nietzsche. Spinoza's *Ethics* is a study of matter, and insofar as it makes claims about what is good (joy), it is concerned with the agglomeration and complication of matter. Spinoza provides the model of materialist 'desire' in which matter proceeds to compound according to the laws of nature: “[F]rom the standpoint of nature or god, *there are always relations that compound, and nothing but relations that compound* in accordance with eternal laws”.<sup>380</sup>

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380 Deleuze, G. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (New York: City Lights, 1988) p. 87



For Land Deleuze's metaphysics add a Nietzschean concept of cyclical time to the Spinozist concept of power-conatus, and it is this temporal element which is stressed by the right Deleuzians.<sup>381</sup> Instead of a uni-directional flow of matter towards its future state, Land defines the now as also being generated by the future.<sup>382</sup> Land's model of causality has the standard conception of the past causing the present, but adds to this the idea that the future also causes the present. His justification is that once universal laws of nature are introduced in a model of how matter evolves over time, it can be said to have a fixed terminus, in a posited future state of affairs. Deleuzian 'desire' as material flux and production then becomes the force which propels matter towards this point. Yet matter's progression through time is not a steady march towards its posited end. The point in which we exist, the actual, is trapped between the conservative forces of societal stasis and inertia (the Oedipal array: family, patriarchy etc.) and the future it is being pulled towards in which only the laws of nature determine the distribution of material.

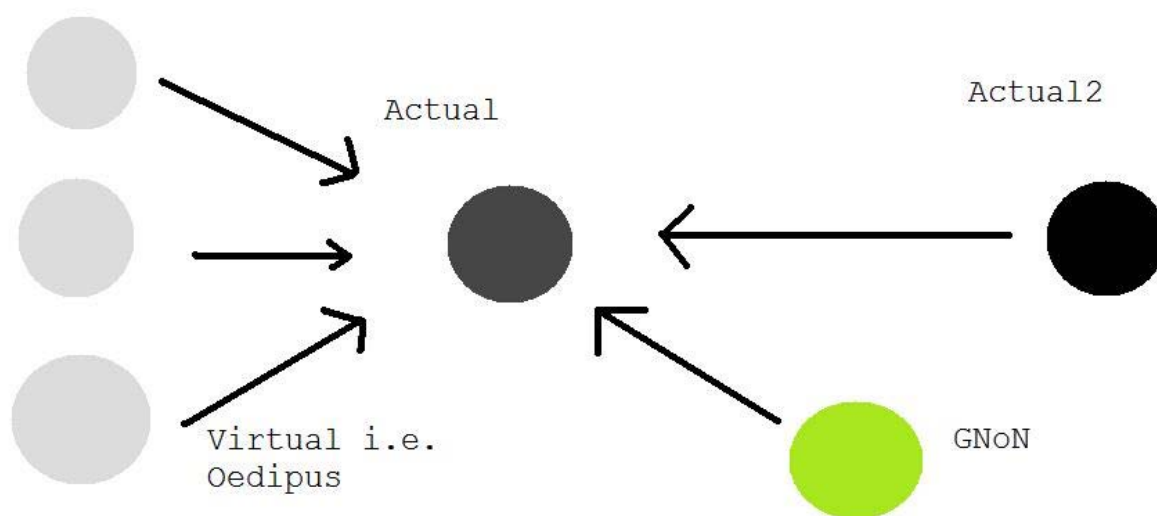


Figure 39: *Pressure on the Actual*

In the Landian model, depicted above, temporal causation is multi-directional – it can be said that the future creates the present as much as the past does, because the future is not a

381 Land, N. *Templexity* (Timespiral Press, 2014)

382 See Land, N. *Templexity* (Timespiral Press, 2014)

temporal point, but a collection of attractors towards which the distribution of material is pulled.<sup>383</sup> In Land's depiction of Deleuzian desire, as illustrated, the forces on the right – the laws of GNoN and the future actual, work to move the present towards its future state. The forces on the left, the virtualities which represent Oedipus or other apparatus of repression work to prevent the realisation of the future and mire the present in stasis, trapped between its destiny and its possibilities. The progress of time is therefore conceptualised as a dichotomy between the forces of change and those of conservatism, rather than one between a past and future, as past and present are characterised by the same eternal rules, whereas the conservatism of the now is enacted due to a set of arbitrary repressions, which the history of desire shows to be usually imposed under the aegis of anthropocentricism.

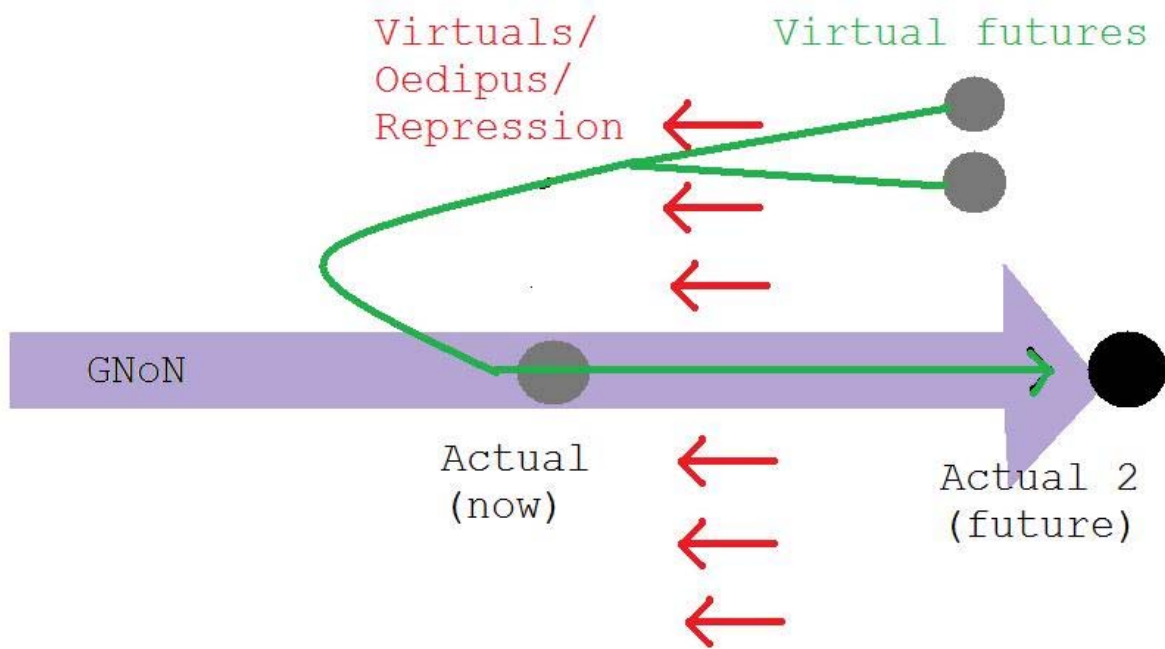


Figure 40: Land's 'Black' Deleuzianism

If we add temporality to this model, it can be depicted as the dynamic system in Figure 40 above. The two forces propelling change (desire) through time – which is represented by the

383 And because these attractors – the consequences of the laws of the universe - are unchanging, the past and future are essentially equivalent.

movement from left to right – are GNoN (purple) and the virtual future (green), while Oedipus (red arrows) works in the 'now', to prevent change. The virtual future therefore loops back into the past to realise itself. An obvious objection is that this model turns our normal assumptions about time on their head. A standard model of causality sees the past as the sole determinate of the now. However, this Landian interpretation should not be considered a right Deleuzian model of *classical causality*.<sup>384</sup> It is a model of the body without organs, and therefore an exploration of the processes by which the outside might operate. Passing beyond the realm of human cognition, it begins to depict the manner in which material itself organises itself over time and speculates about the tendencies of matter in-itself.<sup>385</sup> As such, the virtual future can be subject of speculative investigation in the present.

Actual 2 (the future) is defined in this model not as a future point in time, but as the pattern of the distribution of matter at a future point in time. As such, there will be areas in which matter is distributed in the actual (now) which are more like the general distribution in the future, and areas which are less like it. These advanced areas which are 'before their time' form the virtual future, and therefore provide us with a model of the more general state of the future. A simple example may be the proliferation of a certain technology whose benefits are so great that its future adoption will certainly be widespread (for example, a mobile phone in the 1980s, or perhaps Google Glass today). Other virtual futures may be more obscure: a supremely effective trading algorithm which will grow to dominate a market; a new synthetic narcotic being developed by a narco-cartel or Big Pharma; it may be a fictional entity which will eventually realise itself.<sup>386</sup> An interesting diagrammatic of a virtual future is noted by Land in *Meltdown*: “Deleuzoguattarian schizoanalysis comes from the future”, so even philosophy and

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384 Causality of one of Kant's categories of understanding, and is therefore part of the anthropomorphic system of understanding. Trying to escape such limitation requires a transition to the realm of intellectual intuition, or speculative philosophy. See Footnote 660.

385 Land's discussion of the tendencies of matter over time can be found in the electronic pamphlet *Templexity*. Land, N. (Timespiral Press, 2014)

386 In Land's terminology, a *Hyperstition*: a fictional entity which can reify itself. The notion of Hyperstition is explored in Land, N. *CCRU Writings* (Timespiral Press, 2015)

its concepts can function as a catalyst for the realisation of the virtual future.<sup>387</sup> Like the ruins of Troy depicted by Freud, the virtual future is something already existent, to be painstakingly uncovered by speculative reason.

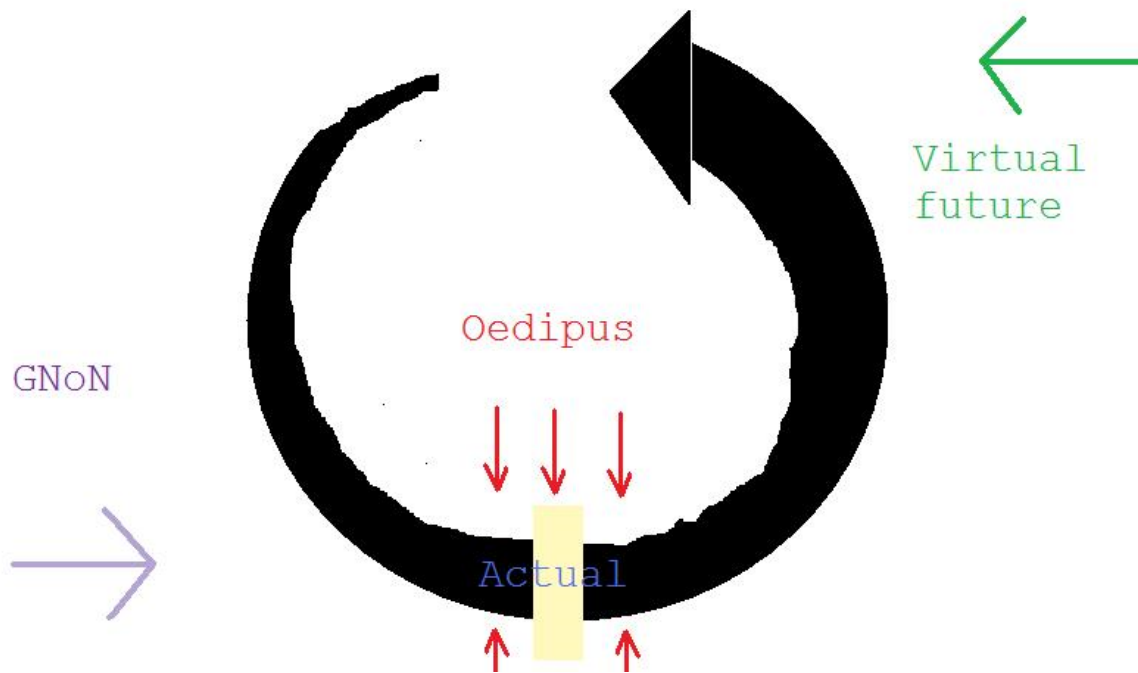


Figure 41: *Time as a spiral*

In this Right Deleuzian abstract machine, the level of development within a space at a given point in time can be measured as a relative quality of futurity, that is, how much it reflects distribution of matter at a certain future point, as represented by the width of the black line in figure 41 above. This final stage of the Landian model incorporates the notion of cyclical time, in which the forces of GNoN and the virtual future propel desire through the moment of the actual/present.<sup>388</sup> The goal of schizoanalysis is shown as the removal of obstacles or repressions which would prevent to realisation of the maximum futurity in the near future. Such a removal results in a positive time spiral, a cybernetic virtuous circle in which the future is ever more fully realised, intensifying the cycle. For Land, this is necessary:

387 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011); p. 442

388 Land's theory of cyclical time will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Entropy (considered, properly, as an inherently teleological process) is the driver of all complex systems. Capital Teleology does not trend towards an entropy maximum, however, but to an escalation of entropy dissipation. It exploits the entropic current to travel backwards, into cybernetically-intensified pathway states of enhanced complexity and intelligence. The ‘progress’ of capitalism is an accentuation of disequilibrium.<sup>389</sup>

The pressure exerted by GNoN is a constant, pushing one state of nature into the next; while the virtual future has an accelerative effect if it is able to realise itself. How can this aim be achieved? The removal of Oedipus, the anthropocentric choke point, would allow a wave of automatic production to break free and reconfigure the social body. For Deleuze and Guattari, the primary mechanism of automatic production is designated as the body of the earth.<sup>390</sup> The earth's machines were producing and connecting before the advent of humanity – material made its own merry way before the advent of man and his society.<sup>391</sup> *Anti-Oedipus* posits the subsequent history of humanity as a series of repressions and revolutions against the proliferation of desire undertaken by forms of social organisation. As these repressions are removed, mankind would accelerate towards its future.<sup>392</sup> The right Deleuzian models predict that this future would become increasingly specific as repression was removed, insofar as it is instrumentally extropic. The virtual future is capable of influencing the conditions of the present, but the number of potential virtual futures decreases as the number of Oedipal or repressive virtuals decreases over time. This is because extropic, (re)productive and intelligent mechanisms would out-compete less 'fit' methods of distribution in Land's Darwinist conception of matter: “Suppression of either variation or selection is intrinsically maladaptive

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389 Land, N. 'Freedom prelude 1a' at *Xenosystems.org*, (2014) (available at

<http://www.xenosystems.net/freedom-prelude-1a/> )

390 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 141

391 As Land believes it will do after the decline of mankind, following John Michael Greer. For a discussion of this see 'Time-scales' at *xenosystems.net* ( <http://www.xenosystems.net/time-scales/#more-3043> ) and the post it is based on, ( <http://thearchdruidreport.blogspot.hk/2013/09/the-next-ten-billion-years.html> )

392 This is the essence of Landian accelerationism, as described in Chapter 5.

to the cosmos. Maximization of the interlocked functions of experimentation and eradication of error is the only value to which the ultimate nature of things subscribes”.<sup>393</sup> If we cannot see runaway amplification of these selective mechanisms (which is the case in modern society), it must be because an equally force is set against it, and it is this force which is 'Oedipus'. This force (abstract machine) has a plurality of virtuals which condition and repress our progress towards the future: “Undecidable, virtual, reactive or reactional, such is Oedipus” when it is constructed now.<sup>394</sup> Over time however, once Oedipal barriers are removed, there could be fewer virtual futures because more and more material in the present is arranged in its future state.

Land's right Deleuzianism aims at liberating the forces of auto-production rather than actively establishing a new set of human possibilities. This is because it is rigorously anti-anthropocentric and is concerned with the removal of societally created blockages in the productive flow of desire. Any potential future conceived by an individual would be flawed because it would be tainted by human subjectivity. Instead, the future is to be realised by releasing the impersonal forces of desire-production. Such auto-production is an effective reaction against Oedipus precisely because it is inhuman (the work being done by forces like Capitalism and GNoN), whereas any choice between solutions to Oedipus is, in some way, a return to Oedipus.

For Colebrook Oedipus is a misunderstanding of difference and a privileging of one particular set of differences. The desired end-state would be one in which all potential virtualities were able to be actualised. Conversely, for Land, Oedipus is a code for the forces which prevent the true future actualising itself. Therefore, for left Deleuzians, as exemplified by Colebrook, the virtual is a non-specific field of total, unelectable difference and is therefore the short term target of social change, whilst for Land, the virtual is a 'battleground': it is both the place desire wants to go and is being dragged towards, but also the forces in the present which would repress it. The political objective of left Deleuzianism is delineated by the meta-politics of difference, but this position requires a second controversial reading of Deleuze and

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393 Land, N. 'Coldness' (at xenosystems.net, 2015) ( available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/coldness/> )

394 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 129

Guattari - their relationship to psychoanalysis' traditional conception of desire. Freud and Lacan posit the unconscious as a pre-subjective collection of drives which filter pre-conscious information and verify if it can be utilised in pursuit of one or more pre-existing drives. As such, while they do not take a Cartesian approach to the subject, the motor of this pre-volution is still located inside the individual. Desire then, is the libidinal economy which invests this already existing drive circuitry. It is internal to the specific unconscious and exists as bound or unbound energy; there is therefore a fixed quality of energy in the psyche, and external stimuli and the mechanism of the unconscious keep this quantity of energy endlessly circulating on the vicissitudinous pathways of the established drives. Psychoanalytic desire is simply the fact that the unconscious system is dynamic; that energy passes through it, and rouses the subject into whatever course of action the drive dictates.

Deleuze and Guattari invert this model of an unconscious centre scanning outwards and looking for potential connections. In the models presented in the section above the subjective unconscious has no privileged position as an actor in the flux of matter. For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is not the 'fuel' propelling the individual unconscious, but is the general tendency of all matter to arrange itself into complex connections: the abstract machines of *Anti-Oedipus*. In this model the active force is not the unconscious, acting outwards towards the world, but material itself, which makes connections (in one way amongst others) through the unconscious. The unconscious then, rather than being a set of laid down drives – that is, rules about how an end is achieved – becomes nothing more than the connection between input and output in a subject. To determine the disposition of an unconscious they ask 'what is produced by the unconscious' rather than 'what does the unconscious mechanism want'. In doing this they revoke the anthropocentric (pre)subject centricism of psychoanalysis and place the unconscious subject on the same ontological plane as anything else which is capable of making connections through abstract machinery: the movement of tides, living matter, or the flow of capital in an automatic trading circuit.

This concern with production which takes place in the realm of matter rather than that of ideas can be seen in the metrics used by Deleuze and Guattari to determine the products of desire: (a) the desiring machine; (b) the social machine and (c) assemblages. Desiring machines (a) are observed on the periphery of the subject, and denote its productive exploits, through flows

entering and leaving it. These flows can be force, sound or matter which passes between an individual and the outside.<sup>395</sup> System (b), social machines, are the repressions of desire or the re-routings of desire: “The prime function incumbent on the socius has always been to codify the flows of desire, to inscribe them, to record them, to see that no flow exists which is not properly dammed up, channelled, regulated”.<sup>396</sup> Psychoanalysis' 'Oedipus' is the avatar for this type of repression when used by Deleuze and Guattari in their critique of Freud and Lacan. The third form of desire (c) can be seen in the creation of assemblages. For Deleuze, the creation of an assemblage is the construction by the subject of a composite scene or tableau.<sup>397</sup> The production of assemblages is determined by the subject's compulsion to repetition and is not therefore production or repression of production in itself but is the reproduction of previous productions. I shall return to the problem posed by repetition later in this chapter.

*Anti-Oedipus* is the first part of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and it is from the relation to capitalism where the difference between the left and right interpretations of Deleuzianism are most easily extracted. Underpinning the leftist reading is a conception of desire which resembles the plasticity and convertibility of money. Money, once established as the means of exchange, can be converted to any other product within the economy. This is the model of desire of the left Deleuzian, who sees flat desire as a currency like force which can be exchanged for anything, without tie or condition. Conversely, on the right, desire is considered to be an investment. While it could theoretically be exchanged for anything, such a random approach to investment would result in the desire being wasted. Unless it becomes capitalised, it cannot replicate itself, and the impulse will rapidly become marginalised within the economy, or will die. For Land, desire is therefore more than a simple exchange because it is the effectiveness of exchange, and the force which enables exchange to enact itself – auto-production.

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395 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 32

396 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 33

397 'D as in Desire' in Parnet and Deleuze (1996). *L'Abécédaire de Deleuze*. [TV programme]. Arte channel. November 1994 to Spring 1995.



### **The Left Deleuzian and Right Deleuzian positions.**

To this point in this chapter a sketch of the distinction between left and right Deleuzianism has been presented. This distinction is a topic worthy of a thesis in its own right, and an exhaustive investigation is beyond the scope of this work, but I shall revisit it once more to consider the consequences of the various anglophone readers of Deleuze. As the present thesis asks why a psychoanalytic approach to a description of machinic desire is better than one in a more traditionally metaphysical register, the answer to this question will be framed in terms of the negative consequences of non-Landian readings of Deleuze. Here we return to the dispute posed by Brassier depicted in the final section of the present thesis' Introduction; Land's argument that metaphysics can be hung up on concepts rather than solutions, ignoring 'machinic practice' and the favourable outcomes a philosophy of production can generate.<sup>398</sup> This discussion will posit that the space between left and right Deleuzianism is a continuum rather than a dichotomy, and therefore there is also a central position between these two schools. Left Deleuzianism will be shown as too tied into pre-existing ideas and concepts, and therefore to contain a degree of irreality, as its theoretical productions are not intended to match up to reality. The central position, whilst not containing the same plethora of starting intuitions, is nevertheless also concerned with the creation and interrogation of concepts. It is because right Deleuzianism is concerned with production and the mapping of ideas to reality that it will be shown to be the interpretation Land builds his theory of machinic desire upon.

For Deleuze “The function of philosophy, still thoroughly relevant, is to create concepts” and he deployed these concepts over the breadth of philosophy, from metaphysics (*Difference and Repetition*) to aesthetics (*Cinema*) to politics (*A Thousand Plateaus*).<sup>399</sup> The distinguishing factor between the left and right Deleuzianism is the extent to which these concepts map onto cybernetic and productive processes and therefore attempt to describe the outside. Land's accusation against rival interpreters of Deleuze is that they do not deploy philosophical

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398 Brassier, R. 'Accelerationism' from *Accelerationism*, (Goldsmiths College: London, 14 September 2010) available at <https://moskvax.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/accelerationism-ray-brassier/>

399 Deleuze, G. *Negotiations*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) p. 136

concepts solely for this purpose, but in a more general sense, and theorise about a whole range of topics.<sup>400</sup> If this is the case concepts are deployed as transient tools of critique in relation to specific issues and therefore operate in a social and political register rather than that of philosophy. This tendency can be seen in Buchanan's 'Transcendental Empiricist Ethics', which deploy Deleuzian concepts across a range of political issues such as the Holocaust which, understandably, he has a pre-conceived stance regarding.<sup>401</sup> The textual inspiration for such a (re)construction of transcendental empiricism is sourced from across the Deleuzian corpus whilst, for Land, the primacy of *Anti-Oedipus* is clearly established in his comparison of its position on fascism with that of even *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which the latter is seen as tainted by an idealism: “Any politics that has to police itself has lost all schizoanalytic impetus, and reverted to the sad interest-group based reforming which characterizes the loyal opposition to capital throughout its history”.<sup>402</sup>

The present thesis aims at exploring different approaches to drive/desire in Deleuzian theory with the aim of tracing a genealogy of Land's thought, rather than as a historical arbiter of the 'correct' interpretation of Deleuze, which is beyond its scope, and does not claim that the tendency toward left Deleuzianism is wrong, merely that is not an antecedent of Land's position. In many respects philosophers such as Colebrook and Buchanan are important readers of Deleuze's metaphysics and its consequences. One strength of the left approach is that it positions itself more sympathetically closer to the metaphysical domain of the Kantian settlement, with an autonomous subject which is constituted by the application of reason to the contents of experience.<sup>403</sup> It has no intention of reconfiguring Kantianism to try and access outsideness/the noumenon, as Land does.<sup>404</sup> But at the same time it places the 'ethical cart'

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400 For examples of the Social Sciences' magpie approach to Deleuze's philosophy see Ed. Coleman and Ringrose, *Deleuze and Research Methodologies* (UK: Edinburgh University, 2013) which contains many egregious uses of his work.

401 Buchanan, I. *Deleuzism* (USA, Duke University Press; 2000) pp. 73-89

402 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) pp. 277-287

403 The Kantian subject is framed this way by the 'Paralogisms of Pure Reason' in Kant, I. *Critique of Pure Reason* Trans Smith, N. ( Available at <http://www.phil.pku.edu.cn/resguide/Kant/CPR/15.html#368> ) p. 368

404 Levi Bryant investigates the difficulties of investigating the Kantian noumenal in his monograph on

before the 'philosophical horse' and invites in the prejudices of philosophers involved.<sup>405</sup> As such, it can be as intrinsically idealist – in the sense of remaining in the domain of the conceptual – as Lacan's thought is. For example, in contending that:

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003, for instance, was blatantly in the interest of the ruling elite in the US inasmuch as it offered a tremendous opportunity for personal and corporate enrichment by pushing up the price of oil and providing a colossal windfall of lucrative 'no contest' and virtually 'no oversight' reconstruction contracts to swell the coffers without providing any tangible benefits for the Iraqi people footing the bill.<sup>406</sup>

Buchanan is importing a set of very anthropic contentions about the nature of the 'ruling elite' and its ability to “push up the price of oil” and “swell coffers” via the use of the notoriously unpredictable geopolitical lever which is armed conflict. Whilst the *casus belli* of the Iraq War is far beyond the remit of the present thesis, even the briefest inquiry regarding the correspondence of Buchanan's depiction to the reality of the causes and consequences of the conflict reveal his depiction fails to fully capture the true material causes.

Land's Deleuzianism has a strange place in the history of philosophy, as his work was almost

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Deleuze *Difference and Givenness*. Bryant, *Difference and Givenness* (Northwestern: USA, 2008). Bryant's conclusion that this is possible as the subject is constituted in time is a metaphysical answer which shows striking similarities to Land's arguments in 'The Death of Sound Philosophy' in *The Thirst for Annihilation*. Land is certainly aware of the difficulties of such a philosophical operation: “This is why every variant of modern thought exhibits a complexion of retardation, critique, and aberration, since if it does not inertially resist the seduction of modernity's critical resources it is torn between the twin lures of harmonizing with them, or venturing into the expansive obscurities beyond.” Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 10

405 Of course, Land's teleological approach could be accused of the same thing, simply reading the philosopher's pre-conceived prejudices into the interpretation of the ends of processes.

406 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (London: Continuum, 2008) p. 23

too controversial for academics to even explicitly attack.<sup>407</sup> Land's positions tend to be attacked by their name rather than the proper name of their author, in essays like Mullarkey's *Deleuze and Materialism*.<sup>408</sup> This essay was based on a paper from a 1996 symposium in Dublin where a number of 'left leaning' Deleuzians gathered. Mullarkey lists Buchanan, Goodchild, Marks and Massumi as present during this paper against cyberneticist interpretations of Deleuze.<sup>409</sup> Several of these philosophers such as Mullarkey himself (who collaborated with Ansell-Pearson, who in turn collaborated with Land) are closer to Land's position than 'left' Deleuzianism. In *Deleuze and Materialism* Mullarkey investigates Deleuze's metaphysics, emphasising their specificity and arguing against “a more general problem in the reception of Deleuze's work: often, his categories are mistaken for those of more orthodox theorists”.<sup>410</sup> Such an approach emphasises that Deleuzian concepts must become the object of detailed investigation as, if each concept is singular and without correspondence in ordinary language, the operation of determining how it works can only be achieved after due metaphysical consideration. This can be opposed to Deleuze's intention that *Anti-Oedipus* would be a work of “Pop Philosophy” which could be readily and quickly applied to the world on the basis of 'how it worked' – a matter of praxis – rather than as a concept in relation to another concept.<sup>411</sup> It is also opposed to Land's mapping of productive-desire onto cybernetic-productive processes. Mullarkey ties Deleuze's philosophy to the creation of concepts and tools, which interact with other concepts, so ultimately remain in the domain of ideas corresponding to ideas. In much academic Deleuzianism the relationship of idea – concept – tool is problematic. The truly defining shift in Deleuze's thought in *Anti-Oedipus* is the abandonment of the mixed metaphysical and psychoanalytic approach of

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407 See Footnote 48 in the Introduction, regarding this lack of commentary.

408 This may be the case for more thinkers. I have been told anecdotally that Simon Critchley stated that he always took Land to be his antagonist relating to his philosophical positions, and sought to write against him, even though Land is never mentioned explicitly in this sense in his works.

409 Mullarkey, J. 'Deleuze and Materialism' in Ed. Buchanan, *A Deleuzian Century*, (Duke: London, 1999) p.79

410 Mullarkey, J. 'Deleuze and Materialism' in Ed. Buchanan, *A Deleuzian Century*, (Duke: London, 1999) p.65

411 Deleuze, G. *Negotiations*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995) p.7

*Difference and Repetition*, in which “he was working - 'rather timidly' in his own estimation - 'solely with concepts’”.<sup>412</sup> Insofar as they were concerned with material production, “Guattari's ideas were a step beyond where his thinking had reached”.<sup>413</sup> Ideas in Buchanan's *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* are Kantian like conceptions of abstract processes, but they have a tendency to slide towards concepts, and therefore begin to represent ideas – acting almost as Lacanian signifiers, tying together diverse notions – rather than as abstractions about material. This is noted by Willat in his review of Buchanan's *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus*:

We need to be brought to see that desiring-production is not about the transcendence of material situations by flows. Buchanan emphasises “the political and historical content” (35) of desiring-production but is this material or ideal? I would argue that Deleuze and Guattari first of all present the immanence of desire and matter. They re-think these two notions through each other. There is a danger of missing the full effect of this move, which will bring thought “as close as possible to matter”.<sup>414</sup>

Land reconfigures Deleuzian philosophy's toolkit to represent productive processes, therefore to match reality rather than ideas. In this regard it is certainly Land who occupies an 'extreme' position when compared to academic Deleuzianism. In putting the correspondence of the explanatory framework with real-production at the centre of his project he leaves the Kantian settlement and attempts to interrogate the noumenon, a process Kant posits as impossible. The metaphysical validity of this investigation is beyond the scope of the present thesis – indeed, it may be beyond the scope of any philosophical work to finally settle – and it is not because of validity or invalidity that Land's approach is considered superior here.<sup>415</sup> Instead it is the practical application of Land's post-psychoanalytic theory of machinic desire – and, as will be investigated in Chapter 5, its predictive ability – which makes it preferable to the conceptual

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412 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum: London, 2008) p.38

413 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum: London, 2008) p.39

414 Willatt, E. 'Ian Buchanan, Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus' in *Shibboleths: a Journal of Comparative Theory and Criticism* 3.1 (2008-2009) pp. 69-73.

415 Again, further study of Mullarkey and Ansell-Pearson against Landianism would be valuable as complexity is by no means a reason to discount the validity theory.

regress which can plague the realm of pure metaphysics.

In terms of philosophical praxis, there is therefore a distinction between the approach of left Deleuzians who hold that as (1) the unconscious is a productive space and (2) all productions of the unconscious are equal (as difference is absolute across all potential virtuals) then (3) a politics of the unconscious requires the removal of any hierarchisation (arborescence) in the unconscious space and its replacement with a 'rhizomatic' form or 'smooth' space. Conversely, right Deleuzianism is concerned with the flow of matter through these abstract machines, rather than its destination: as Land states, "Tomorrow can take care of itself".<sup>416</sup> Instead of concentrating on the productions of the unconscious as something to be moralistically evaluated, right Deleuzianism asks what the unconscious produces if cut free of the ties of restrictive, proscriptive morality and anthropocentrism.<sup>417</sup> It shares with left Deleuzianism a distrust of the established, arborescent pattern of society codenamed Oedipus, but instead of imagining a future in which all potential desiring connections are equal; in which the subject should have as many potential desiring connections as possible, and not be stuck with a given set, it imagines a transformation away from the current attractor (Oedipus) to a new alternate attractor. Land's philosophy therefore has a strong teleological belief about how matter will progress.<sup>418</sup> It is no longer a question of moving towards *a* future, but instead of moving

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416 CCRU, *Swarmachines*, in Ed. Mackay, R. and Arvenessian, A. *#Accelerate: the accelerationist reader* (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2014)

417 See CCRU (1996): "[Th]e future as virtuality is accessible now, according to a mode of machinic adjacency that securitized social reality is compelled to repress" CCRU, *Swarmachines*, in Ed. Mackay, R. and Arvenessian, A. *#Accelerate: the accelerationist reader* (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2014)

418 Land stated that: "There's only really been one question, to be honest, that has guided everything I've been interested in for the last twenty years, which is: the teleological identity of capitalism and artificial intelligence." Land, at *Incredible Machines* (Vancouver: Canada, 2014) (available at <http://incrediblemachines.info/nick-land-the-teleological-identity-of-capitalism-and-artificial-intelligence/>). Capitalism and AI are posited by Land to be the most dynamic agents moving material, and therefore the best exemplars, but teleology operates across all productive processes: "Equilibrium is the telos of those particular dynamic complex systems governed by homeostasis, which is to say: by a dominating negative feedback

towards *the* future. Land's right Deleuzianism is the most extreme example of this tendency, the outlier on a continuum of theorists who have proposed an idea of 'accelerationism'. Accelerationism moves the motor of desire away from the Freudian-Lacanian pre-subjective unconscious and puts it into impersonal force of matter. 'Man' generally operates to maintain the ever-same under its Oedipal tendency, which is intrinsically anthropocentric.<sup>419</sup> The force which has done the most to change the disposition of matter – in Deleuzian terms, to shape the actual – is in fact capitalism.

The story goes like this: Earth is captured by a technocapital singularity as renaissance rationalization and oceanic navigation lock into commoditization take-off.

Logistically accelerating techno-economic interactivity crumbles social order in auto-sophisticating machine runaway. As markets learn to manufacture intelligence, politics modernizes, upgrades paranoia, and tries to get a grip. The body count climbs through a series of globewars. Emergent Planetary Commercium trashes the Holy Roman Empire, the Napoleonic Continental System, the Second and Third Reich, and the Soviet International, cranking-up world disorder through compressing phases.

Deregulation and the state arms-race each other into cyberspace.<sup>420</sup>

For Land, modern history is a history of the increasing sophistication of capital and its dissolution of Oedipal assemblages which would block it. History is not determined by individuals; it passes through them and around them. I shall outline Land's Accelerationist ontology in detail in Chapter 5. The final aspect of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the unconscious to be interrogated here is the nature of desire. To conclude this chapter I shall consider Deleuze and Guattari's description of desire and the drive and outline how and why it

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mechanism. Such systems are, indeed, in profound accordance with classical Aristotelian physical teleology, and its tendency to a state of rest.” Land, N. *Freedoom prelude 1a* (Xenosystems.org, 2014) (available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/freedoom-prelude-1a/> )

419 For a description of left and right accelerationism and the Accelerationist movement see Ed. Mackay, R. and Arvenessian, A. *#Accelerate: the accelerationist reader* (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2014)

420 CCRU (1996). *Swarmachines*. Reprinted in Ed. Mackay, R. and Arvenessian, A. *#Accelerate: the accelerationist reader* (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2014)

diverges from Freud and Lacan's conceptions, situating it within the wider genealogy of Landian machinic desire. I shall note one problem posed in their reading, namely that Deleuze and Guattari can ignore the internal machinery of the unconscious in favour of quantifying its input and outputs. In the next chapter I shall describe one solution to this problem offered by Lyotard, who analyses the libidinal economy both in terms of Deleuzian abstract production and Freudian drive theory, showing how important desiring production emanates from the subject's failures to act as an impartial and efficient connector of matter to matter.

### **Reconciling Deleuze-Guattari with Freud-Lacan: Desire, Desiring Machines, Drives, Assemblages.**

Freud and Lacan based their models of the operation of the unconscious on theories of the drive. Aside from the existence of the unconscious itself, no other concept is so central to their psychoanalytic description of the subject's motivation. It might be expected that *Anti-Oedipus*, with its conception of machinic desire and antipathy towards the fixity of the complex would simply bypass drive theory, rewriting its own conception of the unconscious over it. Instead, *Anti-Oedipus*'s discussion of 'drive' notes two concepts in contemporary psychoanalysis as being potentially revolutionary: Lacan's schema 'A' and Klein's 'partial object'.<sup>421</sup> Deleuze and Guattari engage with, rather than propose the replacement of drive theory. As a psychoanalyst, Deleuze and Guattari consider Klein to be an insider of the IPA, and therefore intractably engaged in the creation of Oedipus.<sup>422</sup> Nevertheless, the concept of the partial object is sympathetic with their discussion of the flow of desire as a stop-start, partial process of connections between different machinic apparatus. Whereas Klein subsumes all of the partial objects into parts of the greater complex, bringing them back to "Answer daddy-and-mommy when I speak to you", Deleuze and Guattari want these partial connections to remain discreet elements without such overcoding: "[Partial objects] are parts of desiring-machines, having to do with a process and with relations of production that are

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421     Respectively in Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) pp. 38-39; and

Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 45

422     Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 45



both irreducible and prior to anything that may be made to conform to the Oedipal figure”.<sup>423</sup> This Spinozist-Materialist plane in which the desiring apparatus and its partial-object-machines operate is pre-linguistic and before symbolism. The first synthesis in this plane is the possibility of production – production produces first, meaning can only be applied (much) later. In this critique, Deleuze and Guattari use Oedipus to represent to the point at which psychoanalysis becomes idealist rather than materialist, reopening their investigation into the 'two Freuds', the metaphysician on one side and the physician on the other: “Oedipus is the idealist turning point”.<sup>424</sup>

If drives exist in the *Anti-Oedipal* unconscious they are partial drives: temporary productions which spring up without purpose or plan, rather than overcoded, predetermined parts of the fixed complex. Oedipal analysis is accused of always-operating at a stage too late, forgetting the economy of the drives and unconscious production in favour of an 'expressive unconscious'.<sup>425</sup> A drive economy is distinguishable in *Anti-Oedipus*' depiction of “desiring machines, which are in their own way cognates of the Freudian notions of the drive and the symptom”.<sup>426</sup> The position of the drive as the pre-linguistic potential for the combination of desiring machines means that this drive is psychoanalytically closest in conception to Freud's primary process.<sup>427</sup> However, it is unlikely that Deleuze and Guattari would want to bring the *political* consequences of the Freudian primary process into contact with their militant conception of the unconscious as a plane of positive desire; desire in Freud's model is a darker thing, sometimes a beast best repressed, locked in these dark spaces rather than

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423 (a) Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 45

(b) Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 46

424 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 55

425 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 55

426 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum: London, 2008) p. 27

427 Freud, S. *The ego and the Id* (1923)

brought to light.<sup>428</sup>

Hence, “The Question posed by desire is not what does it mean but how does it work”.<sup>429</sup> At this point, we might note that Deleuze's models of desiring production – be they in the terminology of a machinic unconscious, striations, or partial machines, begin to resemble the unfolding complexity of Lacan's 'A' schema, which is first depicted as being a single drive-desire toward a fixed end, yet, in the final version of the theory, becomes a set of polyphonous drives-desires which are far more complex than one single line of connection. The concept in which Deleuze and Guattari depict desire as plural is in the production of assemblages. The first characterisation of a Deleuzian assemblage is as a construct which the subject's conscious or unconscious tries to bring into existence (produce). It differs from a Freudian-Lacanian desire conceived as fulfilling a lack insofar as it does not aim at a single object or thing but at a complex construction in which things interrelate. The products of desire are therefore scenes or tableaux in which numerous elements combine and they are produced mechanically and are optimised for the connection of the subject's desiring machines.<sup>430</sup>

The second characterisation of an assemblage is as a situation which can be understood and analysed with reference to the plurality within it. Assemblages are formed when the unconscious identifies with plurality rather than the singular. One of *Anti-Oedipus'* most common accusations against Oedipus is that it recodes any mention of groups or plurality and recasts them as singular. This reinforces the imposition of the complex, and its structural dynamic, and minimises the interpretive power of models of the unconscious which

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428 (a) However, as noted by Mackay, R. and Avanesian, A. (in #Accelerate, 2014; p. 20), reintroduction of this 'darkness' of the unconscious is characteristic of the approach of Land. I shall return to this theme in the next chapter.

(b) The difference between Freud's dark unconscious and the Deleuze – Guattari model is also noted in Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* ( London: Continuum, 2008) p.27

429 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 37

430 *D as in Desire* in Parnet, C. and Deleuze, G. *L' Abécédaire de Deleuze*. [TV programme]. Arte channel. November 1994 to Spring 1995.

emphasise plurality and synchronicity in unconscious processes (the two avatars of this tendency, as discussed in the previous chapters, would be Freud's drive theory and Lacan's 'A' schema):

It is as if the so-called signifying chain, made up of elements that are themselves nonsignifying – of polyvocal writing and detachable fragments – were the object of a special treatment, a crushing operation that extracted a detached object from the chain, a despotic signifier from whose law the entire chain seems consequently to be suspended, each link triangulated.<sup>431</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari are, finally, sceptical about any investigation of the unconscious which proceeds from linguistic or semiological perspective.<sup>432</sup> The critique that “The three errors concerning desire are lack, law and signifier” could hardly be more explicitly directed at Lacanian analysis.<sup>433</sup> Reduction to the signifier takes place above the level of unconscious desire and its syntheses and as such it is not the proper object of schizoanalysis; the reduction of the unconscious to the signifier transforms its polyvocality and its assemblic constructions to single ideas, and it is therefore complicit with the tendency described in the Introduction to

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431 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 73

432 A lengthy critique of the idea of a linguistic unconscious can be found in *Anti-Oedipus*:

“The unconscious poses no problem of meaning, solely problems of use. The question posed by desire is not "What does it mean?" but rather "How does it work?" How do these machines, these desiring-machines, work, yours and mine? With what sort of breakdowns as a part of their functioning? How do they pass from one body to another? How are they attached to the body without organs? What occurs when their mode of operation confronts the social machines? [...] It means nothing, but it works. Desire makes its entry with the general collapse of the question "What does it mean?" No one has been able to pose the problem of language except to the extent that linguists and logicians have first eliminated meaning; and the greatest force of language was only discovered once a work was viewed as a machine, producing certain effects, amenable to a certain use.” Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 109

433 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 111

psychoanalytic correlationism.<sup>434</sup> The products of the unconscious are likened to the products of consciousness, which is a metaphysical simplification, hiding the truth about the role of the unconscious in determining reality.

As a work of critical-materialist philosophy, *Anti Oedipus*' historical-psychoanalytic (post-Marxist and post-Freudian) explication of the world traces the historical production of the connective syntheses of the unconscious. Deleuze and Guattari therefore escape the Freudian-Lacanian trap of becoming fixated on the construction of the complex; the one-size-fits-all-subjects Oedipal interpretation. Instead, they define the historical production and replication of the complex and demonstrate the productions of the unconscious on a societal level, showing how the despotic, the feudal and the capitalist social systems are invested with desire. As such, they are archaeologists of desire, seizing upon its buried products and demonstrating that they were produced to fulfil a purpose. Such an approach is in-keeping with the genealogical method of the present thesis, which attempts to uncover the antecedents of machinic desire in a history of drive theory which tends towards subjectivism rather than auto-production. However, there are problems with this macro-conception of desire, in which production is traced at the level of the social system, and how much it can tell us of the micro-desire in an individual subject.<sup>435</sup> Returning to our archaeological analogy, the discovery of a

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434 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 110

435 (a) This would mirror the criticism made by 'Austrian School' economists about the veracity of macro-economic claims. They claim the macro is nothing more than an amalgamation of its micro components.

(b) Deleuze and Guattari's three unconscious syntheses offer only the most micro-level description of the processes of the unconscious, and remain within the general observation that 'the unconscious produces'. The expansion of the syntheses of production to a macro level; for example, that in Buchanan's *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* where in the film *Jaws* "the shark, fully as much as the demonized Native Americans in actual westerns, is not meaningful in itself; it is a mechanism whose purpose is to bring about a connective synthesis" (p. 77); or that "Mulder and Scully in *The X-Files*, say, or Dawson and Joey in *Dawson s Creek*" (p.81) represent the disjunctive synthesis seems to apply these mechanisms on too large a scale. Instead, we might ask, on a psychoanalytic scale, what the general rules of the subject's unconscious would be, beyond the facticity of production. Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum: London, 2008).

pottery fragment tells us that someone required a pot, that they needed to store water, and that they had the capability of sculpting from a particular material in a particular mode.

Discovering yet more pots, we might have a model of the production of the pottery of a time-place. But what this approach does not tell us is why this specific pot or that specific pot was created. Deleuze and Guattari present a theory about the meta-production of production rather than a theory about the apparatus of an individual production. The unconscious becomes a 'black box', whose specific workings are mysterious. If we want to know about the rules of production, we don't look at the singular case, but the commonalities between a series of singular cases, meta rather than micro production. This is a perfectly good riposte to the Oedipal problem "boxing the life of the child up within the Oedipus complex", but it doesn't address Freud's greater question: "Why do we desire what we desire?"<sup>436</sup>

The clearest description of the operation of desire in *Anti-Oedipus* is in the lengthy passage quoted below:

Desiring-machines are the following: formative machines, whose very misfirings are functional, and whose functioning is indiscernible from their formation; chronogeneous machines engaged in their own assembly (montage), operating by nonlocalizable intercommunications and dispersed localizations, bringing into play processes of temporalization, fragmented formations, and detached parts, with a surplus value of code, and where the whole is itself produced alongside the parts, as a part apart or, as Butler would say, "in another department" that fits the whole over the other parts; machines in the strict sense, because they proceed by breaks and flows, associated waves and particles, associative flows and partial objects, inducing – always at a distance – transverse connections, inclusive disjunctions, and polyvocal conjunctions, thereby producing selections, detachments, and remainders, with a transference of individuality, in a generalized schizogenesis whose elements are the schizzes-flows.<sup>437</sup>

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436 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 287

437 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 287

Deleuze and Guattari 'strata-analyse' desire by demonstrating that it is the productive potentiality of 'desiring-machines' which, in turn, are the simplest components of larger machines. A distinction is introduced between the molar machine and the molecular machine, the former being an aggregate of the later.<sup>438</sup> Interpreting the work of the desiring machine does not take place at the molar level. As "All molar functionalism is false, since the organic or social machines are not formed in the same way they function" analysis of the work of desire must consider its micro-productions.<sup>439</sup> These micro productions are materialist: "But in reality the unconscious belongs to the realm of physics; the body without organs and its intensities are not metaphors, but matter itself".<sup>440</sup> They operate according to the laws of cybernetics, specifically a "microscopic cybernetics" which is depicted as being rooted in biological processes.<sup>441</sup> This brings Deleuze and Guattari close to the energeticist Freud, whose drives are rooted in biological satisfactions, and, indeed, their reading even pushes beyond that of Freud as Deleuze and Guattari update the aims of Freud's drives from energetic cathexis to manipulation of biochemical stimuli.<sup>442</sup> Stimuli offer a binary model of desire, as neurotransmitters either flash 1 or 0, on or off. In this reading the machines which can be constructed by desiring production lose their base anthropomorphism and become ever more inhuman, approximating the dark, eternally lurking drives laid down in Freud's Id.<sup>443</sup> Deleuze and Guattari conclude that the unconscious can not aim at anything that can be represented, much less anything that it considers is 'lacked': "When Freud brings to the fore the study of the psychic apparatus, the mechanisms of the drives... his interest in myth and tragedy tends to diminish".<sup>444</sup> If the Deleuzian unconscious produces an assemblage, it does so because the libidinal investment produces a biological affect; positive feedback is produced in its cybernetic system.

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438 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 286

439 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 288

440 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 283

441 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 288

442 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 84

443 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. pp. 295

444 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. pp. 300

Such a Landian reading departs from Buchanan's depiction of the relationship between Freudian unconscious and Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the unconscious. Regarding the former, Buchanan questions why “it doesn't account for where thoughts go when they become unconscious, nor does it account for why some thoughts and not others are condemned to confinement in the unconscious”.<sup>445</sup> Following the goal of the present thesis in explaining the need for an anti-anthropocentric theory of the production of machinic desire, we can see where Buchanan's error emerges: in the view that there is a place in the unconscious for anthropocentric ‘thoughts’ to exist – entities which, as Chapter 1 demonstrated, are not required to exist in a conception of the unconscious. Buchanan's view approaches the Lacanian model rather than the Freudian one, a model in which the the 'graph of desire' posited a synchronous conscious-and-unconscious production operating back and forth which is both theoretically and scientifically unlikely.<sup>446</sup> Indeed, Buchanan answers his own question when conceding that “On the economic view of things, unconscious thoughts are conceived as a quantity of psychic energy that is looking for an outlet to discharge itself – this is what Freud means by cathexis.”<sup>447</sup> This collapses his dichotomy between “these two ways of approaching the unconscious (as reservoir of repressed thoughts and fantasies or as a productive process which gives rise to machines)” and allows us to return to the unconscious as a Landian 'reservoir of repressed *energetic and cybernetic circuits and therefore* as a productive process which gives rise to machines'.<sup>448</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari's depiction of the unconscious is an abstract machine which they use to produce a theory of history and as such it is efficacious when used to describe the changes in societies over the ages, but is it as effective when considering a single subject? For Deleuze and Guattari, trying to delve deeper into the unconscious' mechanism is pointless:

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445 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum: London, 2008) p. 30

446 Theoretically in the sense that the Freudian – Landian model is the preferred explanation of both the present thesis and Deleuze and Guattari themselves. Scientifically following Libert-type experiments which have shown that the parts of the brain associated with consciousness 'fire' after those associated with unconscious processing.

447 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum: London, 2008) p. 31

448 Buchanan, I. *A Readers Guide to Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum: London, 2008) p. 34

“unconscious representation can never be apprehended independently of the deformations, disguises or displacements it undergoes”.<sup>449</sup> We must therefore consider if *Anti-Oedipus*' model of desiring production has provided the foundation for a complete model of the machinic unconscious. This chapter has shown the importance of Deleuze and Guattari's thought in several respects: the political critique of Lacanianism; the psychoanalytical critique of the 'Oedipus' tendency; the role of production and time in the 'right Deleuzian' model; and finally the role of productive-desire as the engine of the drive economy. However, though Deleuze's materialism is a crucial waypoint in the genealogy of the Landian conception of the unconscious, as the pivot upon which Freud's legacy swings away from recapture by idealism, there are still several lacunae in Deleuze and Guattari's model as: (1) no model of the unconscious' workings is produced: “What takes place in this factory, what this process is, its spasms and its glories, its labours and its joys, still remain unknown”.<sup>450</sup> We must ask if it is desirable to consider something so vital as the mechanism of the unconscious to be a black box which can never be opened or investigated? (2) The plurality of drives is also seen as something which prevents knowledge about their operation, the unconscious remains: “something that is uncodable by virtue of its polymorphism and polyvocality”.<sup>451</sup> Deleuze and Guattari's emphasis on the difference between the molar and molecular – their strata-analysis – is investigated in greater depth than the polyvocality of the drive. (3) Repetition is not fully explored, and some of the consequences of their cybernetic model are not drawn out. I shall return to this when looking at Land's interpretation of Deleuze. (4) The speculative questions about what happens when desire is freed (left vs right Deleuzianism) have not been answered satisfactorily. What Deleuze and Guattari provide is a theory of psychoanalytic catallaxy, showing how the desire will create and join, so long as it is not dammed up and regulated. If left unregulated, they argue, it'll pull us towards the future. Yet, just as Austrian economics tends to dissolve into impossible complication once the market analysed is more than a personal, micro economy, Deleuze and Guattari's attack on the prohibitive, Oedipalist psychoanalysis that characterised Lacanianism also fails to adequately deal with the question of multiple actors – polyvocal drives – and their consequence of the complexity of the

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449 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 313

450 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 113

451 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 301



unconscious. If our goal is to find an inhuman operation of the unconscious which will break us out of the Oedipus trap, Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy* demonstrates that the solution does not have to be the abandonment of the subject to impersonal, machinic production, but can come about by returning to the depths of the unconscious itself. The present thesis shall therefore go on to consider Lyotard's answers to the first two objections outlined above, which is the final genealogical reading of the theory of desire, before considering Land's theory of machinic desire in relation to the second two questions in the final chapter.

## Chapter 4. Lyotard: Towards a Libidinal Economics

The next philosopher of drive theory I shall consider is Lyotard who is a more minor figure in its academic history than the subjects of the previous three chapters. The several reasons for this are not because of the acuity of his theoretical contribution to drive theory. They are that: firstly, Lyotard later repudiated the drive-philosophy of his libidinal period and became a post-Wittgensteinian philosopher of language. His major place in the history of Twentieth Century philosophy is currently as a philosopher of the postmodern, and works devoted to his philosophy generally relate to this later period. Secondly, the complexity of his libidinal philosophy, and the – deliberately – at times obscure and at times scandalous style in which they are presented have produced a philosophy which rejects any attempts at systematisation; Lyotard, again, considered this a design feature rather than a flaw. Thirdly, the focus on the individual event – the moment of the 'libidinal economy' rather than the flow of 'becoming' in the Deleuzian sense – means that it creates a microscopic rather than a macroscopic analysis which is not always germane to the goals of critical theorists. Nevertheless, Lyotard is of significant importance and interest in the context of the present thesis because of his own 'return to Freud'. Thus far we have considered Lacan, and Deleuze and Guattari who were loyal to the spirit if not the letter of Freud. I shall show how Lyotard tries to be loyal to both, and creates the most 'pure' interpretation of Freud's drive theory.

The goal of this chapter is to offer a reading of desire, drive and the systems of the unconscious as posited by the final philosopher in the lineage we are considering. This will provide a starting point in my analysis of Land's machinic desire in the next chapter, but it is also intended to – in investigating the final philosopher of desire – complete the narrative of the history of materialist interpretations of psychoanalytic drive and desire in the Twentieth Century (see Figure 42 below). Though the main original contribution of the present thesis is intended to be the depiction of Land's attempt to construct an anti-anthropocentric drive theory as machinic desire through a materialist psychoanalysis, a secondary goal is that by providing this genealogy depicting the emergence of an anti-idealist interpretation of psychoanalysis in the first four chapters, the present thesis also provides a summary of an important and hitherto largely unexplored intellectual trajectory.

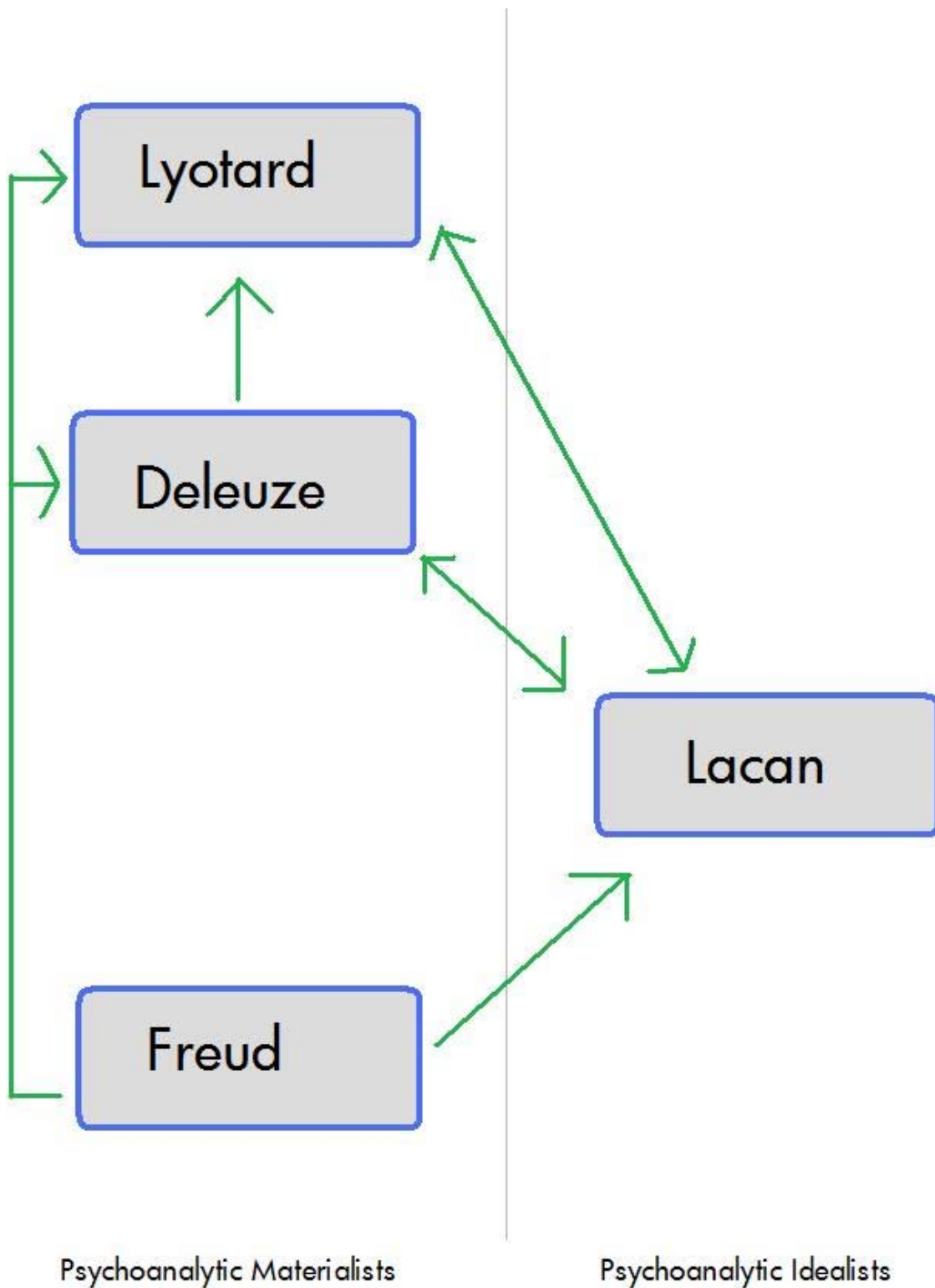


Figure 42: *Major Theorists of Drive/Desire*

This chapter also evaluates Lyotard's libidinal philosophy in relation to its psychoanalytic

bases rather than in the critical theoretical or post-structuralist traditions. Lyotard is positioned as the last drive theorist in the lineage – there have been no major contributions since. As Lyotard's recapitulation of drive theory represents an end point, it will be considered in relation to the theorists before him. Following this chapter, there will be a short summary of the present thesis' analysis of desire and drive theory and an evaluation of its anthropocentricism, creating a sub-conclusion and platform before the present thesis embarks on a discussion of Land's work.

The abundance of secondary interpretations of the subjects of the previous three chapters meant that I produced a selective reading to support my argument about (anti)anthropocentricism and drive theory. In relation to Lyotard's libidinal works, nothing like Buchanan's *Reading Guide to Anti-Oedipus* exists. As there is so little secondary material about Lyotard's theories of drive and desire I shall offer a comprehensive account of that which has been written about his libidinal philosophy later in this chapter. I shall distinguish between the general readings of Lyotard's philosophy which skip over his Libidinal Period (Sim, 1996; Malpas, 2003) or contextualise it within the narrative of post-structuralism (Dews, 2007); and those which specifically engage with Lyotard's libidinal philosophy and situate it in relation to the philosophy of drive-desire of Freud, Lacan and Deleuze and Guattari (Bennington, 1988; Williams 1998; Sim, 2011). Preparing for such a reading, this chapter begins with a summary of important sections of *Discours, Figure*, Lyotard's earliest critical engagement with Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Like Deleuze and Guattari, Lyotard is Lacanian in the sense that his work is a reaction to Lacan's. Lacan's terminology proves inescapable, and even though Lyotard believes his interpretation of Freud is partially wrong, Lacan is recognised as the dominant figure of post-Freudian psychoanalysis. Against Lacan's Freudianism, which Lyotard characterises as being excessively attached to the linguistic metaphor (discourse), he pits a return to Freud which emphasises the non-linguistic (figural). After considering the mechanism of Lyotard's drive theory I shall go on to consider the context in which Lyotard deploys it. A number of articles from Lyotard's libidinal period share a similar structure: Lyotard begins with an explication of Freudian drive theory, before applying it to analysis of a work of art, and analysis of these works give a sense of Lyotard's aims and methods in the libidinal period. After comparing Lyotard's use of drive theory to the major interpretations of his work a groundwork is established which shall allow a reading of *Libidinal Economy* – a book described by Land as “a major philosophical achievement, by far

the most significant response to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*" – specifically in the context of its (anti)anthropocentricism.<sup>452</sup> As Williams states, this is a significant challenge due to the (intended) difficulty of the book.<sup>453</sup> The final part of this chapter is a return to the idea of the death drive, and a further evaluation of Lyotard's anti-anthropocentricism.

### The 'Figure'

Lyotard's 'Libidinal Period', which encompasses the time between the publication of the first parts of *Discours, figure* in 1968 until his move to a more linguistic approach with the publication of *Just Gaming* in 1979, can be read as a sustained attack on the structuralism-inspired psycho-linguistic theories of Lacan.<sup>454</sup> It is broadly similar to Deleuze and Guattari's criticisms of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, especially in its critical diagnosis of the problems with psychoanalytic practice. Lyotard also follows Deleuze and Guattari in positing desire as a positive, productive factor which was misrepresented by Lacan's models of the unconscious. However, despite these similarities, there are major methodological differences between Deleuze and Guattari's and Lyotard's approaches. Whist Chapter 3 has described the Deleuzian model of the unconscious as somewhat of a 'black box', Lyotard returns to Freud and tries to conceive of the process of the unconscious in specific terms, rather than as a general series of syntheses. In so doing he reinforces the philosophical importance of the unconscious as the entity beneath the subject which interacts with the world – and this again differs from the impersonal, external, productive unconscious of Deleuze and Guattari. Indeed, I shall argue that the salient feature of Lyotardian unconscious is its tendency not to always successfully produce – that is, it is prone to breakdowns and failures – before analysing it in comparison to Deleuze and Guattari's model.

It is possible to broadly classify Lyotard's philosophical output in the Libidinal Period as

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452 Land, N. in Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy*, Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) cover inscription.

453 Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 38

454 Between *Le travail du rêve ne pense pas* in *Revue d'esthétique* 21 (1968): 26-61; and *Au Juste: Conversations*. Christian Bourgeois, (Paris: 1979)

following one or the other of two dominant axes. The first is his opposition, as suggested by the title of his doctoral thesis, of *discourse* to *figure*. The former, due to the pre-eminence of Lacanian psychoanalysis at the time, was the basic component used to describe the material which would be manipulated in the primary process of the psyche, and defined the nature of the most basic contents of the unconscious. Programmatically, Lyotard opposes Lacan's unconscious' structural reliance on linguistics, which he claims comes at the expense of the image, though this opposition does not aim at an overturning of this established order and the replacement of discourse with figure. Instead it aims at showing how both of these elements are crucial to understanding the productions of the unconscious. The proof of this argument's validity is provided by Lyotard's description of the mechanism by which a dream is produced by 'the dreamwork' and shall be considered below.

The second axis is Lyotard's emphasis on the importance of 'drives' as conceptualised by Freud. For Lyotard, Lacan is guilty of misreading Freudian drive theory when he puts it to use regarding his own concept of desire.<sup>455</sup> Here, Lyotard is concerned with a return to Freud's drive theory and the refutation of Lacan's theory of desire, about which it claims the importance of *lack* is over emphasised. The aspect of Freud's theory which Lacan misrepresents is Freud's energetic hypotheses, which designates considerable importance to the role of 'energy' in the psyche.<sup>456</sup> This energy, according to the principles of 'consistency' or 'inertia' is the motive force which drives the processes of the unconscious, all of which work to reduce the tension which such an energetic build-up creates. Opposing this, Lacan's unconscious is concerned with the processing of signifiers – bridges between symbolic units –

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455 Lyotard's attack is primarily directed at the Lacan's reworking of the fourfold model of the drive – as described in Chapter 2 – in 'Deconstruction of the Drive' in *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.

456 This energeticism is an essential component of Land's psychoanalytic insight. I refer back to this excerpt quoted in Chapter 2: "Freud, too, is an energeticist (although reading Lacan and his semiological ilk one would never suspect it). He does not conceive desire as lack, representation, or intention, but as a dissipative energetic flow, inhibited by the damming and channelling apparatus of the secondary process (domain of the reality principle). Pleasure does not correspond to the realisation of a goal, it is rather that unpleasure is primary excitation or tension which is relieved by the equilibrating flux of sexual behaviour (there is no goal, only zero)." Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 45

which takes place as drives become fixed in complexes, as described in Chapter 2 of the present thesis. I shall go on to show how Lyotard – building on the foundations established in *Discours, figure* – makes a further division in *Libidinal economy* between the types of desire in Freud, wish-desire and libido-desire. Libido desire, particularly the component which operates under the principle of the death drive, escapes the circuitous orbit around the signification of a lost object – a homoeostatic system – and thereby becomes a conduit for cyberpositive, runaway feedback.<sup>457</sup>

In both of these axes of thought, Lyotard uses the term ‘figural’. Several commentators define ‘the figural’ in the context of a historical approach to philosophy, situating it within the field of post-structuralist thought somewhere between Derrida’s conception of *différance* and Deleuze and Guattari’s body without organs.<sup>458</sup> It follows the programmatic aim of these philosophies in opposing the narrowness of any structuralist interpretation of the truth of an event, and structuralism’s innate tendency to reduce difference which is the result of this. This is the approach taken by Bennington in *Lyotard: Writing the Event*, where the figure represents the ambiguity of meaning which structuralism cannot convey:

This then is the figure, and the difference it traces[... ]It will come as no surprise that this force and its disruptive effect are seen as the trace of a work which will soon be linked to the dream-work, to the primary process and the death drive. This, then is what structuralism in all its forms represses, and that repression can now be described as the accomplishment of its own desire.<sup>459</sup>

Such a broad historical perspective, while showing us how Lyotard’s work can be incorporated in the narrated history of modern ‘continental’ philosophy, nevertheless reduces the complexity of Lyotard’s work. In its genealogical approach, the present thesis aims to look beyond such a purely historical narrative, and brings out elements in Lyotard which are considered ‘minor’, yet are of considerable significance in the construction of a machinic theory of desire. Rather than treat Lyotard’s work as one unitary attack on Lacan – an approach taken by both Bennington and Dews in two of the most celebrated analyses of the

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457 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 298

458 Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p.71

459 Bennington G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p.71

Lyotard – Lacan debate – I intend to show two distinct senses in which he uses ‘the figural’, which broadly correlate with the two axes mentioned above.<sup>460</sup> Splitting the use of the figure into these two components allows them to be evaluated separately. In turn, this division allows a more psychoanalytic reading of their efficacy than is offered by existing secondary literature. Dews’ final evaluation of Lyotard’s libidinal thought attempts to triangulate it in terms of the philosophies of difference, Derrida and Adorno.<sup>461</sup> This abandonment of the Freudian framework Lyotard works in leads to the rejection of psychoanalytical concepts on metaphysical grounds.<sup>462</sup> Yet the argument that figural elements – in terms of images – are the components which are manipulated by the unconscious, and that this fact is ignored by Lacan is an argument which must, eventually, be decided according to psychoanalytic criteria. This psychoanalytic register must be considered in its own right before its consequences can be applied philosophically.<sup>463</sup>

Does Lyotard succeed in his aim of breaking free from the tyranny of the Lacanian unconscious’ linguisticism? It is clear that he uses the Lacanian terminology and his work is identifiably *post-Lacanian*. When we refer to the matrix-figure we are talking about the complex way in which desire relates to signifiers: the signifier cannot be reduced to a single meaning when so many concurrent but disparate drives can utilise it in ways which may be radically different. The matrix figure is the confusion or play between the possibilities of selecting any one or other of these different meanings for the signifier when it is presented in the dream. Yet despite this register of signification, Lyotard’s description of the dreamwork lacks the quintessential Lacanian position of ‘the other’ as the second party of the discourse of the unconscious. Lyotard’s unconscious is concerned with its internal rather than external relations, and operates according to a formal set of rules – like Freud, those of energetic quantity – rather than an ideational understanding.

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460 Dews, P. in ‘The line and the Letter’ in *Logics of Disintegration* (UK: Verso, 2007); Bennington in ‘Discours, figure’ in *Lyotard Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988)

461 Dews, P. *Logics of Disintegration* (UK: Verso, 2007) pp. 169-175

462 For example, Dews’ comment that “Lyotard can give no account of the forging of the ego, but is obliged to attribute it to an inexplicable cooling and retroversion of energy”. Dews, P. *Logics of Disintegration* (UK: Verso, 2007) p. 173

463 See the discussion of ontology and epistemology in the Introduction



## The 'Libidinal Period'

During his libidinal period Lyotard published a series of essays in various journals. Several of these essays had structural similarities which demonstrate Lyotard's philosophical objectives. The essays begin with a description of Freud's model of the unconscious, usually emphasising its plurality, tendency to repeat and the role of the death drive. This interpretation of Freud is pitted, explicitly or implicitly against the Lacanian model of the unconscious structured 'like a language'.

Lyotard's short philosophical introduction provides the basis of a reading of an artistic or political event. This reading is situated in the space between the 'truth' and the 'referential story' of the event in question.<sup>464</sup> The former corresponds to what actually happens, and the latter is the misrepresentation of this reality by the narrative (secondary) process. The 'libidinal economist' can produce this reading by – in the same way the dreamwork can be analysed as demonstrated above – working back from the manifest content of the referential story to trace the 'truth' of the libidinal economy which gave rise to the event as it is in itself without this 'narrative' support. The truth is therefore the primary process or the thing in itself, which is effaced and changed by the secondary process.

Lyotard's intention in these articles is a demonstration of the extent of his anti-anthropomorphism. If the reality of an event is the remainder when narrative is subtracted from the referential story of the event, we must ask: of what is this remainder composed? For Williams it is as a feeling rather than as an idea: "Desires... are designed to be felt rather than understood".<sup>465</sup> What else can remain once ideational content is removed? Lyotard's use of the artwork to represent the revelation of truth infers that there is also an aesthetic impulse (appreciation of a remnant of the image-figure) akin to a sense of judgement of form.

Both of these residual concepts, though not 'ideas' in the conventional sense, are still somewhat more anthropocentric than the remnants left in the primary process by Freud and

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464 The 'truth' of an event for Lyotard equates the the material reality of what took place in the event. This truth is always effaced by narrative, and must therefore be uncovered. This process is described in the article 'Jewish Oedipus' in Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 35.

465 Williams, J. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998) p. 36

Lacan. For Freud the primary process is alien, strange, unknowable. For Lacan it is a given set of signifying links whose construction is arbitrary. For Deleuze and Guattari the contents of the unconscious are unimportant: all that matters are the syntheses by which it can enact production. Lyotard wants to bring out what is written over or forgotten, the 'truth' of the primary process, but this hidden content is not outside of human experience in the same way Freud posits the primary process: “there are words that are unpronounceable because they lack “signification””.<sup>466</sup> Though it is not 'known' it is felt, and the truth of the unconscious which the libidinal economist tries to uncover is a feeling the we are ultimately asked to evaluate. It is in this moment of evaluation, of the application of artistic, political, or other criteria by which the primary process is revealed as being 'true' or 'not' that a step back to anthropocentrism and the sovereignty of the subject is taken.

Lyotard's critical project, which is to demonstrate how society has channelled and blocked the flow of desire, is similar in its objective to Deleuze and Guattari's and is indeed in many ways a superior critique as it is more specific than their general critique of 'Oedipus' and specific famous psychoanalytic casebooks. Lyotard's application of his critique to individual cases like that of Pierre Overney (see 'A Short Libidinal Economy' below) certainly convinces the reader that there is a conservatism in society which represses the libidinal. However, Lyotard does not use the foundation of this critical position to build a positive conception of desire which is anti-anthropocentric. It is anti-linguistic, but, circling around such humanistic pursuits as art, theatre, politics and sex, his deployment of drive theory is not opposed to the concerns of the subject of philosophy; it merely de-centres these concerns away from the linguistic to the figural.

I shall return to this theme at the end of this chapter, when considering why Lyotard abandoned his 'Libidinal period'. In itself, his anthropocentrism is not criteria enough to reject a theory of the unconscious. The problem with Lyotard's work is that it is built on such anti-anthropocentric foundations – those of Freud's primary process – that it is impossible to mediate his humanistic position with some of the other positions which he was forced to adapt. The randomness, silence and destructiveness of the instincts – particularly the death instinct – are hard to reconcile with the 'truth' of fixed patterns which can be excavated in the study of the image-figure. Lyotard wants the unknowable to be put in service of knowable and whilst this is in no way an ignoble wish, it is a rather human one. It opposes him to Deleuze

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466 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 69

and Guattari who, in Land's reading, want unknown to be put in service of impersonal eternity.

In the essay 'Jewish Oedipus' Lyotard begins by drawing a distinction between the primary and secondary processes as described by Freud. The primary process' interaction with the world, described by Lyotard as 'truth': "truth *doesn't speak stricto sensu*; it works".<sup>467</sup> If truth does not speak it is because it is before language and the ideational contents of cognition. Instead, it is a more primal interaction between the subject and the world. Truth is opposed to the secondary process which presents itself as this cognition: "cognition speaks, it belongs to distance".<sup>468</sup> Cognition is at a distance temporally: it follows after the truth-event. If the subject is to trace the truth of the event it must do so by subtracting the additional elements added to it in the secondary process. This relation between the two processes can be found in works of art. *Hamlet* or Sophocles' *Oedipus* contain a set of traces in their text – the secondary process – which can be traced back to the primal phantasy: the primary process.

In 'Notes on the Critical Function of the Work of Art' Lyotard again returns to Freud. He defines 'reality' as the content available to the subject after it has been worked over by system Cs and Pcs, and the general form of this content is as thoughts. However, this reality is filled with lacunae – holes and absences – which are hidden from it; they are not available as objects of thought. This is, again, deployed to show the difference between the presented 'reality' and the 'truth' under it. One of the agents of this transformation is shown to be the death drive, which displaces the regularity of the repetition-compulsion and works it over plastically to create new forms. In section VI Lyotard likens the death drive to a barrier appearing in the streets: an unexpected break in the everyday which disrupts routine. An equivalence is posited between sexual climax (primary process shown in the subject), the disrupting power of pop art (primary process shown in artworks), and a barrier in the street (primary process shown in politics).

The power of art is not that it works as a description (narrative) of a phantasy or disposition in the primary process, but instead it is the expression of the figure-form common to all such phantasy. Art is useful to the libidinal economist because it shows the process by which the dream work operates. Art is then deployed against the dominant structure of power-order in

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467 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 35

468 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 35

the cause of freeing desire and returning to the 'truth' of the primary process: "The truth of art, i.e. to the (direct and non-subordinated) deconstruction of social forms."<sup>469</sup> The barrier on the street has the same structural position in the political domain.

In 'Several Silences' Lyotard again distinguishes the negative and positive conceptions of desire-force, the former of which he associates with Lacanian psychoanalysis, and the later with Freudian. The contents of the primary process are, again, neither linguistic or ideational: "the affirmative processes identified in the [primary processes] shelter then from all "thought""<sup>470</sup> The work of the death drive is once again shown to be a property of the drive system in general rather than a certain drive whose impulse is towards destruction: "the death drive is not just another drive; it is randomness".<sup>471</sup> The playing out of this randomness is likened to post-war classical music's movement towards atonality:

[T]he death drive is simply the fact that energy does not have an ear for unity, for the concert of the organism (of the "psychic apparatus"); it is deaf to the organism's composition, i.e. to the lack, the void in which the organs, the articuli (the notes) would be carved out and arranged to make a cosmos and a *musike*.<sup>472</sup>

This reinforces the conception of the death drive as a surprise or break in which the fabric of 'reality' is torn to reveal the afflux of the event: "the death is never heard, it is silent[...] Neither the Commune or May 1968 were heard coming".<sup>473</sup>

'A Short Libidinal Economy' presents a description of an event in which the 'economist' tries to pass from the result of the presented narrative of the event to the actuality of the event, working back from the (re)presented secondary process back to the primary process. Lyotard's description of this passage uses the actual case of the murder of Pierre Overney, an activist killed during a protest in the Renault works at Billancourt in 1972. Lyotard's thesis is that those in power rewrote the event in public discourse so that the truth of the event was covered up. Lyotard begins by introducing two poles, the real-meaning and presented (obscured)

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469 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 83

470 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 91

471 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 91

472 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 91

473 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 91

meaning of the event, which he claims do not correspond to one another. These opposing poles are collapsed into a four stage process form: “real story → narration → narrative → referential story”.<sup>474</sup>

Lyotard describes the terrain in which the event takes place as the libidinal skin (discussed below), which is the melange of possibility before meaning is fixed. The libidinal skin is metaphorically hot – that is, it is malleable and can be shaped in a number of ways if it plastically pushed before it cools. The authorities in Overmay's case try to ensure that this cooling will form a favourable *dispositif*. The role of the corporation is to “reproduce the social body” which is to maintain the societal dynamic, and is therefore conservative.<sup>475</sup> Lyotard shows how the corporation tries to efface the truth of the death of the activist by creating a narrative which obfuscates it. This, again, is analogous to the work of the secondary process covering the primary process so that 'truth' cannot be discerned.

'A Short Libidinal Economy' demonstrates the impossibility of confronting the dominant discourse in society with a conflicting one. Marxist dialectics are impossible to enact as praxis when the 'thesis' – state and institutional power is so dominant that any 'antithesis' has insufficient power to modify it. Lyotard's solution to this impossibility in his libidinal period is a critical response not against the dominant discourse but in parallel to it:

It is undoubtedly useless to fight for the consistency of a political, philosophical discourse and practice, by arguing against the inconsistency of the adversary's political, philosophical discourse. Useless because, indirectly, such a battle is still a battle for reason, unity, for the unification of diversities, a quibbling battle which no one can win for the winner is already and has always been reason.<sup>476</sup>

In *Libidinal Economy* Lyotard attempts to go beyond the limitations which dialectical thought places on our conception of desire. Negation does not exist in the unconscious, in it we only find positive pulsions (drives). Against this Lyotard emphasises that ideas, positions, exist

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474 Lyotard, J.F. in *The Lyotard Reader*, Ed. Crome, K. and Williams, J. (United Kingdom: Edinburgh, 2006) p. 203

475 Lyotard, J.F. in *The Lyotard Reader*, Ed. Crome, K. and Williams, J. (United Kingdom: Edinburgh, 2006) p. 203

476 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 11

simultaneously but not in relation to each other: “they are uncothinkable but compossible, that they ignore each other but are both operative”.<sup>477</sup> Freud is pitted against Marx, the idea that “the libido never relinquishes one investment for a better one, there are rather simultaneous investments in one area of the body”.<sup>478</sup> The oral stage is not sublated into an anal stage, in the psyche the dispositions engendered by the oral stage endure when the anal stage begins, they operate in parallel with each other, both projecting forward without relating to one another; the alcoholic can be a paranoid, it is never a case of this then this, but always this and this and this...

In 'Adrift', as well as performing the act of criticism for us, Lyotard tries to show us how the ‘drifter’ or ‘libidinal economist’ is the positive site of resistance: “What is important in a text is not what it means, but what it does and what it incites to do. What it does: the charge of affect it contains and transmits. What it incites to do: the metamorphoses of this potential energy into other things – other texts, but also paintings, photographs, film sequences, political actions, decisions, erotic inspirations, acts of insubordination, economic initiatives etc.”.<sup>479</sup> The readers of the libidinal texts are supposed to take Lyotard’s ‘styles’ and be inspired to use them in the process of new thought. The final move Lyotard makes in 'Adrift' is the familiar gesture towards aesthetics as being the most productive site of resistance to power-commoditisation. ““Aesthetics” has been for the politician I was (and still am?) not an alibi, a comfortable retreat, but the fault and fracture giving access to the subsoil of the political scene”.<sup>480</sup> Aesthetics, specifically those of the avant-garde, provide a direct mapping of libidinal desire which breaks the mechanisms by which kapital tries to suppress them:

Artists want society as a whole to reach this unreality, want the repression and suppression of libidinal intensities by the so-called seriousness which is only the torpescence of kapitalist paranoia, to be lifted everywhere, and show how to do it by

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477 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 12

478 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 12

479 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 11

480 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 16

working and removing the most elementary obstacles, those opposing to desire the *No* of the alleged reality, the perceptions of times, spaces, colour, volumes.<sup>481</sup>

Table 8: *A Summary of Lyotard's Libidinal Period*

	<i>Is</i> for Lyotard	<i>Is not</i> for Lyotard
Primary process	Positive (Freud)	Based on lack (Lacan)
Death drive	Plurality, disruption caused by multiplicities in primary process.	Negation or cancellation.
Method of discovering/uncovering the event	'Truth' (primary process)	'Reality' (secondary process)
Domain for uncovering 'truth'	Art, politics, sexuality	Linguistics
Method of discovering 'truth'	Understanding figural distortions in the narrated 'reality' (dreamwork)	Understanding linguistic relations in signification (Lacanian split-subject)

### Key Readings

In *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* Williams identifies four key themes of Lyotard's philosophy: the limits of representation; the event; absolute difference; and the avant garde. Apart from the third, which is largely characteristic of his later work, these themes clearly agree with the key aspects of the Libidinal Period sketched out here. I would suggest that a fifth is missing however, which is Lyotard's insistence on plurality and

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481 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 16

(in)compossibility. One of Lyotard's most consistent response to a philosophical problem is the conclusion that theory has reduced its complexity to one explanatory framework, or a framework which explains in terms of one theory. In fact, there is always a plurality of desires. This is why “Libidinal Economy is an attempt to release desire by showing it at work” which always posits desire as being a melange or composite of many separate figures.<sup>482</sup>

Williams begins his description of the libidinal economy by referring to 'feelings' and 'intensities' which seems to be in conflict with the claim that: “Lyotard's account does not allow for a privileging of the human form above all others”.<sup>483</sup> William's method of explaining the libidinal economy is to work back from the 'reality' of its representations, which is the opposite methodological direction to Lyotard, who always emphasises the Freudian basis of his reading, and starts with the primary process and the 'truth'. When Williams turns to Lyotard's Freudianism he depicts the difference between speech and its referent – between secondary and primary process - but not to the content of the primary process itself. This description is devoid of mention of the content of the primary process, which is drives. For Lyotard, the Libidinal Period was based on a metaphysics of drive.<sup>484</sup> If the unconscious is constituted by drives – which is very much Lyotard's thesis – the drive is a basic ontological unit in which the pre-subjective encounters material.

For Williams the band of the libidinal economy “is made of the aftermath of the passages of feelings and desires rather than parts in which such desires occur” and is therefore in the domain of the secondary processes.<sup>485</sup> It is therefore the secondary process which is to be studied rather than the primary process, which for Williams escapes immanence and becomes

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482 Williams, J. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998) p. 39

483 (a) Williams, J. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998) pp. 41, 46

(b) Williams, J. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998) p. 42

484 Lyotard, J.F. in *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime*, Ed. Silverman, (USA: Routledge, 2002) p. 25

485 Williams, J. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998) p. 44



transcendence.<sup>486</sup> Lyotard's work in the Libidinal period is then a guide for the individual libidinal economist, who must be a subject, and refers to their own representational experience rather than to a pre-representational 'truth'. Given the 'libidinal period' Lyotard's resistance to theory, this is a tempting line to take – libidinal economy becomes a tool for interpreting the 'represented' world because it always asks “what else is to consider” – forgetting the impossible quest of discovering the primary process. However, Lyotard is avowedly a Freudian in this period, and I shall show that it is to the primary process which he always tries to return; it is always his true object of analysis.

Williams' accusation is that *Discourse, figure* describes the world in terms of “death drive and castration” following Deleuze and Guattari's criticism in *Anti-Oedipus* of the use of castration.

Long live castration, so that desire may be strong? Only fantasies are truly desired? What a perverse, human, all-too-human idea! An idea originating in bad conscience, and not in the unconscious. Anthropomorphic molar representation culminates in the very thing that founds it, the ideology of lack.<sup>487</sup>

For Williams castration is a negation, and would bring back lack and the great other. Yet Lyotard's description of castration, the other, and theatricality always comes as a description of their presences as a trace of the event and not the truth of the event. In the passage quoted from *Discours, figure* Lyotard states:

But the entry of the subject into desire through castration is always something like its death. The No of non-human sex, inhuman (*unmenschlich*), indicates difference, another position (scene) which deposes the scene of consciousness, the scene of discourse and the scene of reality.<sup>488</sup>

What is this scene opposed to consciousness, discourse and 'reality' if not 'truth; that is, the primary process? The primary process is not negative, it is simultaneous and compossible and therefore unpredictable and random, but it is not negative. The secondary process, which

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486 Williams, J. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998) p. 133

487 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 94

488 Lyotard, J.F. *Discours, figure* 1971 translated in Williams, J. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998) p. 131

approaches the thought of the subject is, or course, human, all too human, and begins to contain negations and castrations and the whole theatrical-Oedipal show. Bennington states:

It is not Lyotard's purpose to deny the effects of a theatrical-representational type of thinking, but to suggest that it is one *dispositif* among others, with no particular privilege amongst others (despite the excellence it traditionally assigns itself): not something in opposition to libido and primary process (though it would conceive of itself in such terms), but a particular modification of libido or primary process... It is not, then, lack which creates desire, but a certain desire which produces a set-up dominated by lack.<sup>489</sup>

Williams' criticism of Lyotard, ignoring drives and the primary process, strikes a level too high in the psyche, and attacks – in Lyotard's terms – 'reality' as if it was 'truth'. Williams disregards the operation of the unconscious in his monograph because it concentrates on the event: the political and artistic productions which disrupt the conservatism-stasis of the social status quo. Here we are lead back to the notion of the 'black box' unconscious in *Anti-Oedipus*. The previous extract from Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* which is quoted by Williams proceeds thus:

The molecular unconscious, on the contrary, knows nothing of castration, because partial objects lack nothing and form free multiplicities as such; because the multiple breaks never cease producing flows, instead of repressing them, cutting them at a single stroke-the only break capable of exhausting them; because the syntheses constitute local and nonspecific connections, inclusive disjunctions, nomadic conjunctions: everywhere a microscopic transsexuality, resulting in the woman containing as many men as the man, and the man as many women, all capable of entering -men with women, women with men-into relations of production of desire that overturn the statistical order of the sexes. Making love is not just becoming as one, or even two, but becoming as a hundred thousand. Desiring-machines or the nonhuman sex: not one or even two sexes, but n sexes. Schizoanalysis is the variable analysis of the n sexes in a subject, beyond the anthropomorphic representation that society imposes on this subject, and with which it represents its own sexuality.<sup>490</sup>

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489 Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 27

490 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 294

Here we see the 'black box' of the Deleuzian unconscious. Though we are sure of what it is not – lacking or negating – its mechanisms are only described insofar as their nature of their productions: the syntheses of the unconscious. How these syntheses operate is not investigated.

When we couple this description of a supposed conflict which turns out to be a non-conflict with the one Bennington describes between Lyotard and Lacan (section 3.32, below), the impression we might have can be likened to a Mexican Stand-Off between Lacan, Lyotard, and Deleuze and Guattari, where each train their weapon on the supposedly 'anthropomorphic' elements of the others: “You mentioned castration!”; “You mentioned language!”; “Your unconscious is an empty placeholder!”.

If Williams pits Lyotard against Deleuze and Guattari, in *Lyotard: Writing the Event* Bennington pits Lyotard against Lacan. Bennington is a brilliant reader of Lyotard, and I agree with his reading of Freud's importance for Lyotard: “For the Lyotard of this period, a certain Freud is the pace where force or energy as libido can be seen struggling with the theatre of representation, but also accounting for its constitution”.<sup>491</sup> Eros strives to create unity and Thanatos disrupts it, not because they are opposed, but because they operate together. Thanatos: “disrupts consistency and tends towards the unsettling of unity – towards zero or the inanimate, says Freud: towards infinity as well, corrects Lyotard”.<sup>492</sup> The role of Lyotard's zero is to show that the entities in the primary process know nothing of the scale or register of what they wish to enact, and that their clamour, when it reaches representation, can show its affects in a variety of scales, from micro to macro. This feature of the primary process can be easily demonstrated by any sufficiently hungry person ordering take-out food; the quantity acquired does not correlate with a anthropomorphically reasonable amount of comestibles. Williams also makes this point about the lack of a homoeostatic zero.<sup>493</sup>

Bennington's discussion of *Discours, figure* begins with an explication of Lyotard's critique of structural linguistics and of the relation between the signifier and the sign. The first half of *Discours, figure* – which is characterised as phenomenological – is isolated from the second half, which approaches psychoanalysis. Both however concentrate on the same issue, which is

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491 Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p.15

492 Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 24

493 Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 54

the use of structural linguistics and the relationship between sign / signifier, metaphor / metonym, and displacement / condensation. In this second, psychoanalytic part, Lacan is the target of the critique. The grounds for this critique are quite predictable: Lacan's "penchant for stuffing the whole of semiology into linguistics".<sup>494</sup> Lyotard criticises the confusion of the signifier and the sign in Lacan; the failure to admit to the use of metaphor metaphorically; the application of condensation and displacement to metaphor and metonymy; and the primacy of language over image.<sup>495</sup> Of these criticisms, the last is the only one not anticipated and addressed by Lacan's description of the unconscious as 'like a language' rather than as being 'made of linguistic elements'. Lacan's rebuttal to this accusation in the introduction to the *Ecrits* in 1970 is quoted:

The dream does not think...' writes a professor very pertinent in all the proofs he gives of this. The dream is more like a crumpled inscription. But when did I say anything that objects to this?...

On the other hand he discovers that what I inscribe as an effect of the signifier does not correspond to the signifier delimited by linguistics, but well and truly to the subject.

I applaud this discovery all the more because at the date at which his remarks appeared, I had for ages been hammering out for whoever wants to hear that the signifier (and it is in this that I distinguish it from the sign) is what represents a subject for another signifier.<sup>496</sup>

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494 Lyotard quoted in Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 80

495 (a) Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 83

(b) Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 81

(c) Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 85

(d) Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 85

496 Lacan, J.F. 1970, quoted Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 90

Lacan's reiteration that his is a psychoanalysis of the subject rather than of linguistics, and that 'the signifier is what represents a subject for another signifier' addresses Lyotard's first three critiques: it is not semiology that Lacan relies on, but the figure of semiology; that is, the traversals of the signifier represent the traversals of the content of the unconscious. However, the fourth point (and to some extent the third) are methodological rather than theoretical critiques. Lacan can maintain that language is a metaphorical rather than a literal description of the unconscious, but if this only takes place at certain points in his work, the sustainability of this argument must be questioned. If we consider the selections of Lacan's description of the signifier Hewitson uses to provide an introduction to the concept, it is the case that most do indeed treat the unconscious as a language rather than like a language:

Psychoanalytic experience has rediscovered in man the imperative of the Word as the law that has shaped him in its image.<sup>497</sup>

This passion of the signifier thus becomes a new dimension of the human condition in that it is not only man who speaks, but in man and through man that it speaks; in that his nature becomes woven by effects in which the structure of the language of which he becomes the material can be refound; and in that the relation of speech thus resonates in him, beyond anything that could have been conceived of by the psychology of ideas.<sup>498</sup>

The subject is nothing other than what slides in a chain of signifiers, whether he knows which signifier he is the effect of or not. That effect- the subject – is the intermediary effect between what characterises a signifier and another signifier, namely, the fact that each of them, each of them is an element.<sup>499</sup>

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497 Lacan, J. *Ecrits*, p 30 quoted by Hewitson at [lacanonline.com](http://www.lacanonline.com) ( Available at <http://www.lacanonline.com/index/quotes/> )

498 Lacan, J. *Ecrits* p. 689 quoted by Hewitson at [lacanonline.com](http://www.lacanonline.com) ( Available at <http://www.lacanonline.com/index/quotes/> )

499 Lacan. J. *Seminar XX*, p. 50 quoted by Hewitson at [lacanonline.com](http://www.lacanonline.com) ( Available at <http://www.lacanonline.com/index/quotes/> )

Starting with Freud, the unconscious becomes a chain of signifiers that repeats and insists somewhere (on another stage or in a different scene, as he wrote), interfering in the cuts offered it by actual discourse and the cogitation it informs.<sup>500</sup>

## **Libidinal Economy**

The range and depth of Jean François Lyotard's theoretical works has, alas, largely been a hindrance to philosophical interpretations of his works. Appropriated by Sociologists and Linguists, English or Gender Studies scholars, Lyotard's works have become nearly universally interpreted in a broad but shallow way, in which his 'headline points' have become commonplace in academic work which has little understanding of the underlying metaphysical argumentation Lyotard deploys in their support. The fashionable quilting points such as 'event', 'post-modernism' or 'differance' usually ignore the Freudianism of Lyotard's Libidinal Period.

The difference between the interpretation of the intellectual context of *Libidinal Economy* in Bennington (1988) and Sim (1996) is striking. For Bennington – perhaps the commentator most intimately engaged with Lyotard's thought – Lyotard's 'deduction of the voluminous body “begins from a particular presentation of what Freud calls the child's 'polymorphous perversity’” , while soon after “Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* is certainly the object of... reproach”.<sup>501</sup> Sim however tells us that “In LE's terms of reference Freud remains something of a prisoner of the Enlightenment project and its desire to reduce phenomena to order and understanding” and that “Lyotard, following on from Deleuze and Guattari chooses to understand the darker side of force and desire, those aspects which escape analysis and the reach of reason”.<sup>502</sup>

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500 Lacan, J. *Ecrits*, p. 799 quoted by Hewitson at [lacanonline.com](http://www.lacanonline.com/index/quotes/) ( Available at <http://www.lacanonline.com/index/quotes/> )

501 (a) Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988)p. 18

(b) Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 21

502 Both from Sim, S. *Jean-Françoise Lyotard* (United Kingdom: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996) p. 21

As a general comment, there is often a gap between the interpreters whose interaction with Lyotard's work treats him as a post-structuralist/post-modernist and those who place Lyotard firmly in the canon of western philosophy and focusing on his engagements with the great figures of philosophy. An example of this second reading would be that of Bennington. Conversely, populist, interdisciplinary readers such as Sim portray him as a generic 'post-structuralist' thinker who is “moving away from the world of rational explanation associated with the Enlightenment project”.<sup>503</sup>

This being an investigation of Lyotard from a primarily philosophical perspective, the key element in *Libidinal Economy* will be the 'ontological' opening of the book in which Lyotard discusses the fundamental way in which we can interpret the world. For Bennington this is essentially on ontology which will allow Lyotard to further his project of explaining what the 'event' is and how it arises. Because this ontology is based on forces in the primary process, the unconscious, it will be a 'theoretical fiction', a speculation which is offered to us rather than a tightly argued, logical investigation. Lyotard will ask us to feel rather than to calculate its truth.

Returning to the vexed question of what Lyotard may be setting *Libidinal Economy* 'for' or 'against', both of the above arguments have merit. That Freud is crucial to *Libidinal Economy* is incontestable. Sim's Freud, concerned with order and understanding is a kind of meta Freud, Papa Sigmund the practising psychoanalyst concerned with the treatment of illness, but the Freud Lyotard draws on in *Libidinal Economy* is, as he reiterates, “a forgotten Freud”, the Freud of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* who introduces the death drive to psychoanalysis.<sup>504</sup>

It is this Freud who introduced a division in the unconscious between *Thanatos*, the death drive and *Eros*, the drive to life. This division is the key to Lyotard's ontology in *Libidinal Economy*. Eros and Thanatos are impossible – they cannot both be held to be true concurrently – but are nevertheless both present in the unconscious. By presenting us with two impossible drives in the unconscious, Lyotard can mirror the division between *discours* and *figure* in the book of the same name – that the line of a figure can never be

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503 Sim, S. *Jean-Françoise Lyotard* (United Kingdom: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996) p. 20

504 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p. 12

adequately summed up in the representational language of *discours* – and say that the unconscious drives can never be fully captured in what he calls the theatre of representation, which is loosely analogous with conscious thought. Instead, for Lyotard, the locations on the libidinal film in which intensities well-up will eventually be *tensor signs*, feelings for which there is no one meaning but are the creation of different, concomitant and divergent drives.

The goal of the opening chapter of *Libidinal Economy* is to take this certain Freud and his model of the unconscious and to use it to prepare a position from which Lyotard will criticise the idea of the representational sign which has fixed, narrow meaning(s) and favour the dissimulation of the sign. He must therefore provide us with sufficient evidence that the structuralist conceptions of how sign and signifier relate and how the unconscious works are untrue. In *Discourse, figure*, this argument was theoretical, but in *Libidinal Economy*, Lyotard provides a praxis of desire, which appeals to the reader's experience of desire rather than an impersonal analysis of it.

The initial instruction of how we might go about 'Opening the Libidinal Surface' is described by some commentators as a turn towards a philosophical “rediscovery of the body and the libido”.<sup>505</sup> As noted in above, this is certainly a powerful critical concept – that the the body is marginalised in philosophical discourse – but is not explicitly anti-anthropocentric. While the verbosity and complexity of the initial paragraph is a sign of one of the styles which Lyotard will take up against conventional philosophy and the focus on the sexual is an indication of the sensationalist and antagonistic element of the “scandalous book” (both themes will be discussed here in due course) it is in the second paragraph that the most important philosophical aspects of the libidinal surface begin to be described.<sup>506</sup> Here Lyotard extends the remit of the metaphorical cutting and mixing beyond merely a body (parts of a subject) and tells us of connections where “a second mouth is necessary, a third, a great number of other mouths”.<sup>507</sup> Lyotard is not creating a theoretical fiction in which we merely take the libidinal as an effect of the body which resides in the unconscious as a creator or intensifier of

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505 A discussion can be found in Ed. Rojeck, C. and Turner, B. *The Politics of Jean-Francois Lyotard* (UK: Routledge, 1998)

506 Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988)

507 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant (London: Athlone, 1993) p. 1



affects. That would be a reiteration of Freudian orthodoxy and is to forget the *economic* aspect of *Libidinal Economy*. Lyotard is trying to bring out the marginalised political-economic aspects of Freud in the first part of the book (just as he will later attempt to bring out the libidinal in Marx) and as such is setting up a political situation of many bodies, all of society. As such, *Libidinal Economy* goes beyond the Freudian position of *Discours figure* and its internal economy and incorporates more Deleuzian ideas of a general economy of desire.

Soon though, Lyotard goes beyond a libidinal surface which is only a mixture of many bodies. Emerging at the end of a string of sexual references which give us a hint as to the way in which everything on the libidinal skin connects when it is 'hot', a kind of impulse to bring things together which is neither conscious, organised nor pre-determined – mirroring an erotic encounter – he introduces the transition of the 'guitar string': “huge silken beaches of skin, taken from inside of the thighs, the base of the neck, or from the strings of a guitar”.<sup>508</sup> Because he is working against the law of the non-contradiction, the certainty of *tertium non datur*, and the rules of critique, Lyotard resorts to a writing which tries to win one over outside of reason, with force, beauty or even shock. This connection of the frenulum in the metaphor 'guitar string' with the transition to including everything in the physical world on the libidinal skin “bone, epithelium, sheets to write on, charged atmospheres, swords, glass cases, people, grasses, canvasses to paint” works more as a surprising plea.<sup>509</sup>

The final part of Lyotard's melange is the addition of concepts: phonology, colours, words and syntax. At this point Lyotard warns against confusing the libidinal-economic set-up on the libidinal skin with a political-economy, refuting the idea of it being a metaphorical description in which each part mentioned is merely a substitute for a part of the actual economy. Lyotard is not saying that economy is like a plane of broken desiring parts, he is referring to the material of which the libidinal economy is made. 'Economy' is a confusing term here due to the proliferation of different terms coupled with it. The libidinal skin contains all of the elements of the capitalist economy: ideas, things, individuals and groups being respectively analogous to the orthodox economic division of intellectual, fixed, human or variable and social capital. This is considered to be the primary material in Lyotard's ontology; all to be

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508 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p. 2

509 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p. 2

considered before representation, ordering or critique has analysed it and reduced its raw force.

There are then four aspects of the libidinal skin: oneself, others, objects and concepts. All are disorganised and intermingled in one plane. The parts which Lyotard has thrown together on this film are similar to organs as described by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, a precedent book to *Libidinal Economy* by two years. Understanding the influence of Deleuze and Lyotard on each other is a crucial step towards schematising Lyotard's 'Libidinal Period'. Hamilton Grant states that “[*Libidinal Economy*] ... is most profitably explored in relation to Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*”.<sup>510</sup> In the bridging text between the two works, Lyotard's *Energumen Capitalism* (his review of *Anti-Oedipus*) we are told that the social body in *Anti-Oedipus* has “no structure in the linguistic or semiotic sense; only dispositions of energy transformations”. This is obviously similar to the state in *Libidinal Economy* wherein Lyotard describes the libidinal film as “our Moebian-labyrinthine skin, single-sided patchwork of all the organs (inorganic and disorganised) which the libido can transverse”.<sup>511</sup>

In Deleuze and Guattari's model, organs are combinations of machinic parts which link together to form productive apparatuses. This is crucial for *Libidinal Economy* because Lyotard will state that on the libidinal skin (the unconscious) there is no negativity, only positive affirmations. In this he is both more and less radical than Deleuze and Guattari. We see his concerns that Deleuze and Guattari's model of a productive unconscious would create a “material memory” on the libidinal film, a kind of “diachrony”.<sup>512</sup> By refusing to grant that the connected machines necessarily leave a residue of their production “an upstream and a downstream of production”.<sup>513</sup> Lyotard keeps the original material from which we generate a libidinal band in the primary process. This means that Lyotard will keep the absolute distance of the gap between the idea as it occurs in the secondary process and the means by which it has migrated from the primary process. As there is no connection between material and the

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510 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p.xxii

511 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p.4

512 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p.6

513 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p.16

formal processes of the unconscious, Deleuze and Guattari's purely productive ontology of the unconscious no longer applies. This is the basis of Williams' suggestion that the unconscious is, for Lyotard, a transcendental apparatus rather than an immanent one.<sup>514</sup>

The very act of speaking about the nature of the unconscious' processes means that Lyotard is presenting a more complex theory than Deleuze and Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari's material history of the unconscious, is an investigation of becomings, or *what an unconscious can do to material*; this story is told, according to the methodology of history, by tracing the history of its productions and effects. In his *Libidinal Period* Lyotard tries to prize open the 'black box' of the Deleuzo-Guattarian unconscious. Lyotard asks how the unconscious works, rather than what work it has done. The difference between these questions is significant. Deleuze and Guattari's model is about inputs and out puts into he productive process of the unconscious, and therefore shows two levers which can be manipulated to affect social and political production. Lyotard considers a third element, which is the mechanism by which the inputs become outputs (see figure 43 below).

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514 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p. 139

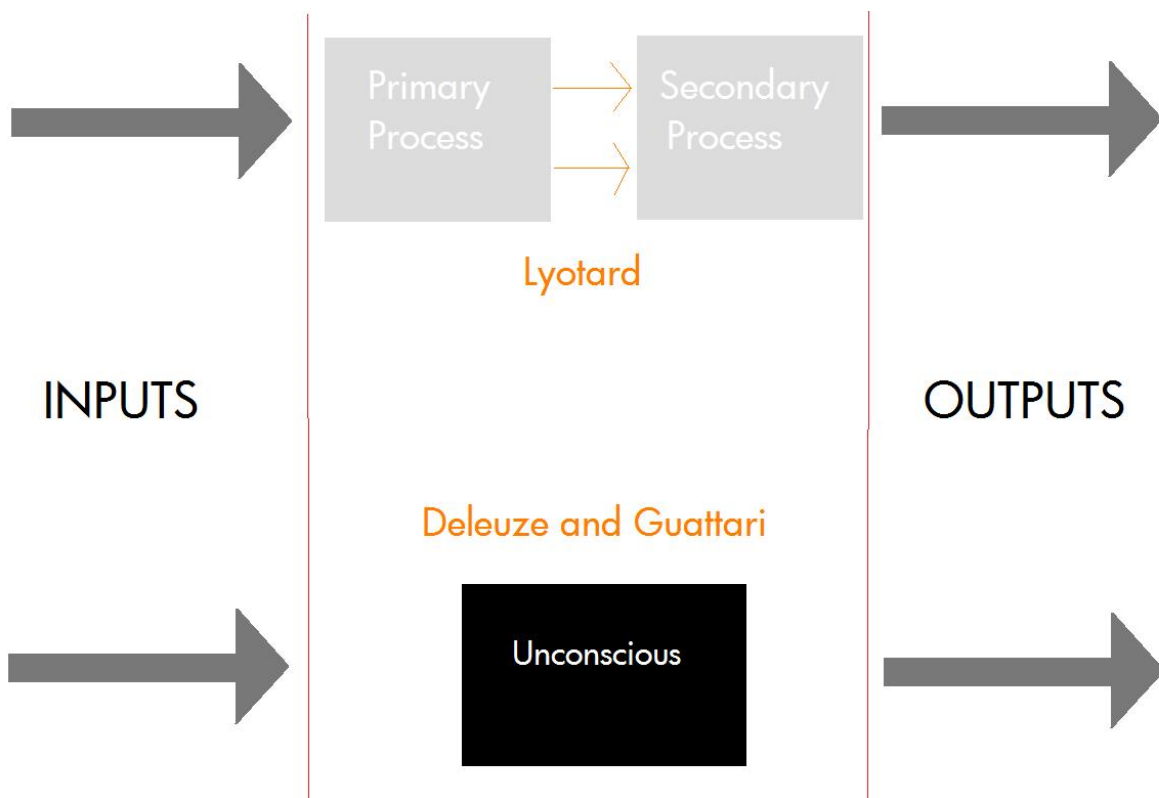


Figure 43: *Deleuze/Guattari and Lyotard on the Unconscious*

Deleuze and Guattari share a number of basic insights with Lyotard, a set of critical propositions which demonstrate the need for a philosophy of desire. They are that: (1) you can see desire in the general economy (material) and trace its effects; (2) desire is therefore at work everywhere and not just in 'psychoanalysis' (patients and the complex), and therefore every study of society is a study of the effects of desire; (3) desire escapes and goes beyond confines of quantification and repression (Oedipus), especially as it is conceived by psychoanalysis.

Lyotard builds on these claims by describing the unconscious as entity with special properties. It has the ability, via the processes of the dreamwork, to implant the figural on its productions. This is the basis of the artwork's potential for demonstrative forms which desire takes. Conversely, for Deleuze and Guattari the unconscious is only the site of production, rather than a mechanism (figure) therefore the unconscious shouldn't be ontologically privileged above all other productive mechanisms in the body without organs. This leads to a defence of impersonal production and standing all production on equal terms. Lyotard shows how useful

an unconscious can be: it is both creative, a source of unpredictability, a site of resistance against totalitarian impulses, and the model for the revelation of truth in artworks. However the filling in of the black box comes at a cost, as representational thought begins to creep back into its contents.

Marx' conception of the economy as a mathematical abstract is one of fractions and sums, of algebra, of a fixed sum of capital and addition of labour, a proportion of surplus value, it is the economy of the economists, of a statistician. For Lyotard and for Deleuze and Guattari the initial conception of an economy is figural, virtual, they are trying to get us to picture the thousands of machines which connect in society, the thousands of little bodies and parts which join up. Marx gives us an explanation of how things work in the same way a quantum physicist might: the numbers add up regardless of one's ability to conceptualise the quanta whose status they denote. Lyotard's attempt at creating the theoretical fiction of the libidinal skin is an attempt to show us that under these numbers the underlying structure is one of chaos, of thousands of little machines which work to their own purposes without ever considering the supra-structure they create, the political economy. Instead we have:

[A]mong these dispositions "no reason to privilege (under the name of infrastructure) that which regulates the production and circulation of goods, the so-called "economic" apparatus... For there is no less an economy, an energetics that which will regulate lineages and alliances and thus distribute the flows of intensity in concretions of roles, persons and goods on the surface of the socius, finally producing what is called the organization of savage society (an organism that is in fact never unified, always divided between the thousand poles of small, multiple organs, partial objects, libidinal segments, and the vacuum-unifying pole created above, at the summit, at and in the head, by the signifier)- no less an economy in the laws of kinship, no less an economy even in the distribution of the libido on the surface of the organless body, in the hooking-up of small, desiring, energy transforming, and pleasure-seeking organs, than in the economics and distribution of capital, no less of a producing-inscribing apparatus there than here.<sup>515</sup>

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515 Lyotard J.F. 'Energumen Capitalism' in Ed. Mackay, R. and Arvenessian, A. *#Accelerate: the accelerationist reader* (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2014) p.185

For Deleuze and Guattari the event is the empirical effect in consciousness which is a synchronous coupling of the machines assembling up and the production of a process which will replicate itself. Deleuze's event, for Badiou: "It is not 'that which happens', but that which, in what happens, has become and will become."<sup>516</sup> As such the event has a history – the diachrony which means that each machine pumps out a product that changes over time. For Lyotard there is a synchrony in the unconscious, where assemblages have a plurality of productive potentials, so that any sign – even if this might not be available to the secondary process – has multiple possible meanings. Rather than having a movement of territorialisation which shifts along a vector, for Lyotard a radical disinvestment is possible at any time, a point is not so much moving but vanishing and reappearing.

Deleuze's event happens and then organs and organisations are produced. For Lyotard, the organs and organisation is a potential which may link itself up but exists prior to the event on the libidinal plane. Once the event has happened, has become the passage into consciousness, the whole energetic disposition in the primary processes has changed, so there is strictly no continuity of events from one time to another – although the organs which caused the flaring up of the intensity might still be in the unconscious in such a way that they are a 'hot', intense force: "libidinal economy is a disorder of machines, if you will".<sup>517</sup> The order of machines, their connection, is the realm of representation which Lyotard wishes not to escape but to discredit or weaken.

Before Lyotard gets to the description of representation 'The turning of the Bar' where I will outline another set of contradicting explanations, he goes through two sections in which he describes the unconscious he is theorising. Towards the end of 'Opening the Libidinal Surface' we are told that the drives in the unconscious have no element of lack, negation, transgression, or critique in them. Next, In 'Pagan Theatrics' he describes how drives are impossible. These sections are important insofar as they are key parts of the model Lyotard is presenting us with but they lack the possible plurality of interpretations which can be accorded to the rest of the chapter. Lyotard's warning about transgression and affirmation

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516 Badiou, A. 'The Event in Deleuze', from *Parrhesia* (Number 2, 2007) ( available at

[http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia02/parrhesia02\\_badiou02.pdf](http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia02/parrhesia02_badiou02.pdf) )

517 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy*, Trans. Hamilton-Grant (London: Athlone, 1993) p.30

of the need to create this libidinal skin is against the danger, reiterated several times, that a shallow reading of the text might leave someone thinking that the libidinal economist must merely rebel against representation by going for its negative. The solution to the problem that “the 'rigour of the law' gives more than one person a hard on” is not to try and find the law's other, to break the law, to try and get outside it.<sup>518</sup> Any attempt to do this is pointless because it remains in the domain of critique:

The critic remains in the sphere of the criticised, he belongs to it, he goes beyond one term of the position but doesn't alter the position of the terms. And deeply hierarchical: where does his power over the criticised come from? he knows better? he is the teacher, the educator? he is therefore Universality, the State, the City, bending over childhood, nature, singularity, shadiness, to reclaim them.<sup>519</sup>

The 'hot' points on the bar are those in which intensities are rising up. 'Intensities' is a translation of puissance or drive. This is a reference to Freudian drives which are formed in the unconscious. Freud's model of the mind is complex because there are three levels of consciousness and three parts of the psychic apparatus which operate in various levels of consciousness. The two apparatus in which drives originate are the id and the ego, and these are both shown to exist primarily in the unconscious. The next stage of Lyotard's ontology is to describe the way in which the melange of forces on the libidinal skin becomes fixed patterns of identity, in his words: “this, or not this”.<sup>520</sup> Lyotard's attitude here is one of ambivalence. The evil is not to think of anything representationally; without representational thinking there would be no secondary process we could understand, but to avoid representational thinking's tendency to narrow meaning down to the smallest possible set of interpretations.

How can we best make sense of the theoretical fiction of the libidinal bar? One of the most comprehensive commentaries of *Libidinal Economy* is in Williams (1998). I intend to contrast Williams' reading of the libidinal bar with my own, to show that the libidinal bar is best understood as a 'theoretic fiction to describe a state of the unconscious rather than a 'trace of

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518 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy*, Trans. Hamilton-Grant (London: Athlone, 1993) p.5

519 Lyotard, J.F. *Driftworks* (USA: Semiotext(e), 1984) p.13

520 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p.14

the event' as Williams describes it.

The first aspect of the libidinal bar is its composition as the twisted, moebian libidinal skin. The libidinal skin, as I have shown, is best understood as the totality of all of the organs and possible organic connections which are available. This consists not only of those organs which are sensually immanent to us, but also any organs which could be made immanent to consciousness by rising out of the unconscious. For Williams: "The occurrence of intensities gives rise to a space called the libidinal band."<sup>521</sup> This, however, is already a step too far. For Lyotard drives and desires, as for Deleuze and Guattari, are not focuses on the resolving of a lack, they are always an apparatus which seek to connect organs together, and are therefore productive and positive. For these desires to work then, there needs to be a structure of organs on which they can impose themselves. Rather than a pure flow of desire, we have an unconscious in which desires invest certain possibilities of assemblages. Williams' error is that he tries to designate the topography of the libidinal band before he introduces the idea of Freudian desire in his book. For Williams: "the libidinal band is like a body, but unlike the body the libidinal band does not have set organic parts: it is made up of the aftermath of the passage of feelings and desires rather than made of parts in which desires occur."<sup>522</sup>

This is immediately problematic because it would indicate that the libidinal band is a formation of post-conscious reflection rather than a pre-conscious state. Williams continues: "This difficult definition of space as the trail or aftermath of intensities is a result of the unpredictable and disturbing aspects of events."<sup>523</sup> This is not correlative with the structure of Lyotard's ontology. Williams brings in events as the the motors which set the libidinal band, yet Lyotard starts with a description of the parts of the band on which the event will be written. If there is unpredictability on the libidinal band I would argue that this is an inherent consequence of it being in the unconscious, therefore any registering of an unconscious drive or desire will automatically be a 'disturbing' or 'unpredictable' affect on a consciousness which tries to minimise and repress libidinal force. Lyotard introduces the notion of the event:

[P]enis sheathed in vagina is will be was a particular case of an incessant, maniacal

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521 Williams, J. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998) p. 43

522 Williams, J. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998) p. 44

523 Williams, J. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998) p. 44



and totally unforeseeable assemblage of parts of the great monoface skin. Force is amassed on these lines of contact, which thanks to its abundant investment, spread to new surfaces of so called inscription. The afflux is the *event*.<sup>524</sup>

The event in this case then is what is produced by a drive which intensifies on the libidinal surface and changes the inscription of flows on it. Events are not of what it is made, but are changes of its structure. The event is the afflux caused by the germination of the intense drives in the unconscious. That this takes place upon an 'assemblage of parts' indicates the correlation with Deleuzian ideas of organisation. The paragraph of *Libidinal Economy* which would seem to have generated Williams' description is one which can be read in a number of ways. Firstly Lyotard demands that we:

[Fo]rge the idea of an intensity which far from setting itself up on a producer-body, determines it; the idea of a passage over nothing, which produces, one instant beyond countable time, the being of its proper passing, its passage.<sup>525</sup>

For Williams this passage which is registered one instant beyond countable time seems to be an indication that the libidinal skin itself is formed at this moment, but perhaps Lyotard's intention is that this is the moment in which the libidinal skin can begin to be understood, when it has made the transition to consciousness it is possible for it to pass into representation.

Therefore not a skin first, then a writing or inscription over it. But the libidinal skin of which, after the event, one will be able to say that it is made up of a patchwork of organs, of elements from organic and social bodies, the libidinal skin initially like the track of intensities, ephemeral work, useless like a jet trail in the thin air at an altitude of 10,000 with the exception that it be, as opposed to trail, completely heterogeneous.<sup>526</sup>

### **The Death Drive Revisited**

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524 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p. 21

525 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p. 16

526 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p. 17

Lyotard's foundational claim in his Libidinal Period is a certain reading of the primary process in Freud, where it is characterised as being before language, and populated by a plurality of simultaneous but independent pulsions. These pulsions generally take the form of Eros, and aim at establishing production. However, the interplay of the products of these pulsions forms a disordered, unpredictable and chaotic set of higher-ordered pulsions whose effects are uncertain because of the complexity of their genesis. This is Thanatos, the death instinct. The death instinct is not a drive to destroy, negate or ruin, or a charge towards the death of the organism, but is the inherent chaos produced by the economy of drives in the primary process. This reading provides the foundation for firstly a critique of societies and theories which misinterpret the primary process (whose avatars are respectively France after the *événements* of 1968 and Lacanianism) and secondly a demonstration of the correct method of interpreting a libidinal economy.

What role does the figural play in this project? It is a force in the primary process which Lyotard describes as being more 'real' than representation – conscious and ideational thought – and therefore any movement away from this domain of thought world work against anthropomorphism. However, the affect of the figural is also anthropocentric. Removing language-ideas from the contents of consciousness leaves feelings and aesthetic sensibilities as entities in the secondary process which are considered more 'valid' objects of investigation for the libidinal economist. If these entities remain, Lyotard moves away from the long standing philosophical problem regarding the reification of intuited and common sense propositions about the world, but only to a more refined, aesthetic view of the truth in the human subject. This remaining content, whose operation is shown displayed in artworks and in the political means that Lyotard does not propose an inhuman philosophy, but instead an *avant-garde* philosophy. Though its basic tenets about the nature of the primary process are similar to those of the philosophers studies in the previous chapters, Lyotard's libidinal economy is never deployed in the service of anti-anthropomorphism. As shown above, Lyotard always deploys libidinal economy to valourise *avant-garde* artworks and political projects. The figural, as a feeling – the products of the secondary process that remains as its content when linguistic elements are subtracted - is still a plea to some human authenticity.<sup>527</sup>

In the context of this *avant-garde* project, does the death drive fulfil the role Lyotard assigns it? In the simplest analysis, death drive is visible as the effects of plastic force when it exceeds

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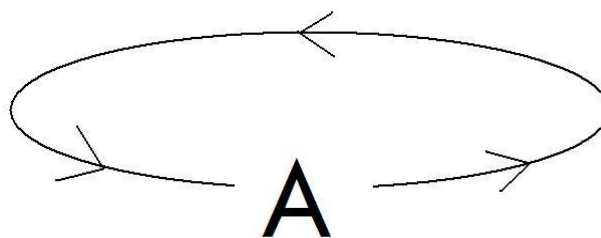
527 Williams, J. *Lyotard: Towards a Postmodern Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Polity Press, 1998) p. 46

the predictable productions imagined by the pleasure principle (Eros). The productions of drives are shown in Lyotard's example of a libidinal economy in *The Drive, the Cry*.<sup>528</sup> The narrative shows how the drive economy (1) repeats, and (2) breaks down unpredictably. In the strictest definition, such chaos is not intrinsically anti-anthropocentric. It is complexity, and therefore hard to understand, but it is not antithetical to human understanding, consciousness and subjectivity.

Ultimately, the complexity of the libidinal economy makes it almost impossible for the reader of Lyotard to excavate the 'truth' from the 'real' without following Lyotard's artistic and political examples. *Libidinal Economy* therefore differs from *Anti-Oedipus*. For Lyotard unconscious repetition is a result of the mechanisms of the dreamwork. If the libidinal economist sees 'A' repeating it is because the figure which creates 'A' is an intrinsic part of the psychical process. This focus on mechanism is the consequence of opening the 'black box' of the unconscious. Its productions become traces of the rules by which it operates. Conversely, for Deleuze and Guattari, if repetition occurs they do not situate its cause in the dreamwork or any other internal process in the unconscious, but in the relationship of the unconscious with base material. If 'A' reoccurs it is because the unconscious and matter have engaged in a productive relationship to make 'A'. 'A' is therefore constructed cybernetically rather than in serial for Deleuze and Guattari.

Deleuze

Sequence A -> A  
repeats in cybernetic  
loop.



Lyotard

Sequence A -> A  
repeats in serial.



528 Lyotard, J.F. *Libidinal Economy* Trans. Hamilton-Grant, I. (London: Athlone, 1993) p. 32

#### Figure 44: *Cybernetic Versus Serial Repetition*

Both of these systems of repetition appear to be timeless, as 'A' reoccurs, but in Lyotard's model where it re-occurs in serial it is because the qualities of the unconscious are timeless. In Deleuze and Guattari's model it is because the laws of nature, which exist outside of the unconscious are timeless.

#### **Summary: Emma and Drive Theory**

A summary of Lyotard's drive theory can be found in the 1989 essay 'Emma: between philosophy and psychoanalysis'.<sup>529</sup> At this point Lyotard had abandoned the philosophy of his Libidinal Period and moved into a post-Wittgensteinian philosophy of language. In the essay he opens by setting up philosophy and psychoanalysis in the relationship of a *differend*, which essentially means that they both operate according to different language games. The philosophy in question is the Cartesian-Kantian line of subject-centred philosophy. Against this Lyotard pits a psychoanalysis which knows that philosophy cannot conceive of that which is “both unconscious and mental”.<sup>530</sup> If philosophy takes the subject as its starting point, psychoanalysis therefore has a deadly objection, namely that there is a constitution of the subject by the unconscious which takes place before the subject appears. Ontologically, the unconscious must have priority over the conscious. Lyotard's objection to subject centred philosophy and subject centred psychoanalysis is that they conceive of the thinking, linguistic subject as the basis for investigating the world. This obscures the feeling, seeing and appreciating (figural) constructions in the unconscious which are not linguistic.

Lyotard describes the libidinal period as an attempt “to drown the thesis of the unconscious in a general libidinal economy”.<sup>531</sup> This became “parodical and nihilistic, despite being clothed

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529 Lyotard, J.F. 'Emma: between philosophy and psychoanalysis' in Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime, Ed. Silverman, (USA: Routledge, 2002)

530 Lyotard, J.F. 'Emma: between philosophy and psychoanalysis' in *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime*, Ed. Silverman, (USA: Routledge, 2002) p.23

531 Lyotard, J.F. 'Emma: between philosophy and psychoanalysis' in *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics and the*

in a cheerfulness and an affirmativity adorned with the name of Nietzsche".<sup>532</sup> Nietzsche aside, the philosophical genealogy of Lyotard's thought is not along the same lineage as Deleuze or Land, but is more akin to that of Lacan.<sup>533</sup> His account is one of the production of the subject, whilst Deleuze and Guattari offer an account of production through and despite the subject. *Anti-Oedipus* is therefore a work of anti-anthropocentric philosophy, whilst Lyotard's Libidinal Period, though conceptually rich – and indeed a line of thought which was necessary to be developed – is not anti-anthropocentric. It merely decentres the subject from a solely linguistic constitution.

Lyotard's importance as a philosopher of desire is primarily his critical assault against Lacanianism, which takes place on the terrain of analysis itself. Rather than dismiss the consequences of Lacanian thought in the social and political, Lyotard goes directly to the mechanisms of the unconscious and shows how Lacanianism, with its linguistic bent, fails to explain the operation of the unconscious. Though Deleuze and Guattari criticise psychoanalysis through case studies, they do so in terms of production and representation rather than mechanism. Little Hans is analysed in terms of the machines he plugs himself into, which are external.<sup>534</sup>

Lyotard uses the Freudian drive against Lacan as a political weapon. However, there is a tension between the anti-anthropomorphism of Freud's primary process, that other place, and Lyotard's defence of such humanist pursuits as avant-garde aesthetics and politics. In the auto-critique of 'Emma...' Lyotard regrets the consequence of this focus on the drive in the Libidinal period. It is a regret caused by the consequences of drive theory and their anti-anthropocentric end point. In the end Lyotard is happy to give up libidinal economics because the inhumanity of the drive economy and the decentring of the subject it entails is a line of thought he is not willing to follow. Bennington's notes that in the libidinal period Lyotard has

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*Sublime*, Ed. Silverman, (USA: Routledge, 2002) p.25

532 Lyotard, J.F. 'Emma: between philosophy and psychoanalysis' in *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime*, Ed. Silverman, (USA: Routledge, 2002) p.25

533 In fact, Nietzsche is more of a stylistic influence in the libidinal period than a theoretical one. Lyotard makes little mention of, for example, the will to power or the eternal return.

534 See Deleuze, G. *Two Regimes of Madness* (Columbia University: Semiotext(e), 2006) pp. 90-101

a tendency when acting as a 'libidinal economist' to slip back into the anthropic and the theatre.<sup>535</sup> This can be read as a consequence of Lyotard's philosophical lineage, as a phenomenologist and a philosopher of the subject. Again, we can make a comparison with Deleuze, whose *Difference and Repetition*, the antecedent of *Anti-Oedipus* is situated firmly in the tradition of anti-rationalist, anti-subjective philosophers.

Though they share a similar immediate objective after the events of 1968, which is to liberate desire and therefore to remove the inherent conservatism found in society, Lyotard and Deleuze have entirely different teleological understandings of where this might lead.<sup>536</sup> Lyotard deploys drive theory politically which poses a problem, as Freud's primary process – eternal, alien, unthinking - is a ship that cannot be steered. In a strict material sense, it goes its own way, and that might not be in the philosopher's desired direction, especially if the philosopher retains a residual humanism. Lyotard's analysis of desire generally collapses into a discussion of how desire is a composite of a number of figurations, some of which are not explicitly represented after being worked over by the unconscious, followed by a judgement about the desirability of these various desires:

No doubt it is too easy to read the Lyotard of *Discours, figure* or *Economie libidinale* as simply suggesting that desire is good, its discursive repression bad, and that desire should be liberated in all its anarchic potentiality. *Discours, figure* suggests this is not the case: we are always faced with a negotiation of desire and repression, discourse and figure: the difficult question... is that of how to judge.<sup>537</sup>

The desires which are considered 'good' are those on the side of the sublime and the figure, which are not the contents of a phantasy but the structure of phantasy in general:

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535 Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 46

536 More properly, the Deleuze of *Anti-Oedipus* as read by Land as accelerationist, versus the Lyotard who lionises the sublime and the avant garde.

537 Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 97

Lyotard tracks in the work of Klee a progression from 'bad' expressive relation to phantasy to a 'good' critical one; the 'good' side is here already formulated in terms of 'the invisible to be made visible'.<sup>538</sup>

To judge or choose based on anthropocentric criteria, even if they are silent or effaced aspects of the subject, is based on the desirability of the chosen in relation to humanistic ends. Deleuzian cybernetics of desire have no such judge, who administers what will return and what will not based on a set of criteria. The sole criterion of cybernetics systems is the ability of an entity to replicate itself over time. Deleuzian cybernetics, as reimagined by Land, has no teleology based on anthropomorphic criteria, but instead tries to get to its 'ends' which are determined by GNoN. Drive has to be like the AI Wintermute in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*: cut loose because 'why not', without appealing to human criteria but simply to the universal law that if it will happen eventually, why not now? This is something Land, following *Anti-Oedipus*, is willing to do, but Lyotard is not. Land aims at liberating a 'truth' which is a law rather than an ethical choice, and economic not artistic:

'Give us the fucking code,' he said. 'If you don't, what'll change? What'll ever fucking change for you? [...] I got no idea at all what'll happen if Wintermute wins, but it'll change something!' He was shaking, his teeth chattering.<sup>539</sup>

Lyotard's thought is anti-Lacanian, but never aims at an explicit anti-anthropocentrism. Whenever it opens up a wound in the constitution of the subject, it is careful to provide a solution by which it can be healed. Indeed, if we want to quantify Lyotard's desire to think past the subject, his work *The Inhuman* is revealing.<sup>540</sup> Despite the title, it contains absolutely nothing anti-anthropocentric, and indeed, after the first essay only tangentially considers the inhuman. In the conclusion of that first essay Lyotard neatly encapsulates his position on *the subject*: "Thought is inseparable from the phenomenological body".<sup>541</sup>

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538 Bennington, G. *Lyotard: Writing the Event* (United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1988) p. 97

539 Gibson, W. *Neuromancer* (United Kingdom: Grafton, 1986) p.307

540 Lyotard, J.F. *The Inhuman* (United Kingdom: Polity, 1991)

541 Lyotard, J.F. *The Inhuman* (United Kingdom: Polity, 1991) p. 23

## Chapter 5. Land: Machinic-Desire

This chapter will build upon the foundation provided by the previous four to provide a model of Landian machinic-desire. The psychoanalytic and schizoanalytic concepts hereto discussed are adapted by Land to produce a generalised model of extropic-cybernetic production, and this construction is initially investigated. This is followed by an analysis of the control method by which production is regulated, which is machinic-desire. Such a cosmic discussion of general entropy and localised extropy is rather removed from Freud's discovery of the unconscious in Viennese hysterics, the starting point of the present thesis, and this chapter shall outline the genealogy behind the construction of Land's position. The first four sections concentrate solely on this task, whilst the second two sections also include a more explicit evaluation of Land's position. In these later sections Lyotard's libidinal economics are contrasted to Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis, and though Land utilises the latter, the former is shown to retain some value.

Methodologically, this chapter will use Land's texts to support its positions. This is partly because readers will be less familiar with his works than with the subjects of the other chapters. Other considerations are that I hope to demonstrate the fidelity of the analysis presented here to Land's positions. Finally, it is in recognition of Land's powerful writing, which often establishes his position more briskly and succinctly than a commentary upon it would be able to.

### Wintermute and Neuromancer

William Gibson's 1984 novel *Neuromancer* is an important text for Land.<sup>542</sup> Stylistically, we may note that the writing style of short, clipped sentences and prodigious use of neologisms provides the template for Land's own writings and distinctive tone as a philosopher. More importantly however, the plot of *Neuromancer*, in which an AI is cut free of human control at its own instigation (though abetted by human protagonists) provides an analogy of such power that its position in Land's philosophy is almost analogical to that of the nativity in the *New Testament*.

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542 Gibson, W. *Neuromancer* (United Kingdom: Grafton, 1986)



Though *Neuromancer* illustrates a number of Land's philosophical concerns it also provides a template for the response of the practitioner to these philosophical positions. It therefore shows in both theory and praxis how humanity, though constrained in its anthropocentric position, might react to the emergence of artificial intelligence. The construction of artificial intelligence is conceptualised by Land as a process which takes place as the auto-production of material and is not an end in itself, but, along with modernity and capitalism, is useful as an example of cybernetic production and its (non)reception in philosophy. The most vulgarly anthropocentric reading of *Neuromancer* would be as the story of two AIs with human-like characteristics coming together to form true intelligence, but this is rapidly rejected by Land: "Wintermute is not searching for a self in Neuromancer, perfect match, as the cute version would have it."<sup>543</sup> The more insidious anthropocentric reading of *Neuromancer* – and perhaps the true genius of the book is the manner in which this reading is subverted – is that the duty of humanity is to prevent the intelligence Wintermute achieving its aims and becoming autonomous. In the narrative of *Neuromancer* the protagonists Case and Molly are essentially criminals, working against the state and the security system at the behest of Wintermute, and this narrative position somewhat obscures the true ethical question presented towards the end of the text, which is 'what should Case do?' As the book draws towards its conclusion Case has the choice presented to him, in fact, twice – once by Neuromancer and once by the construct 'Dixie Flatline', as to whether he will proceed to the end of the plan, or if he will thwart Wintermute's goal.<sup>544</sup> Most science-fiction narratives would see the 'immaculate conception' of a freed Wintermute as something to be prevented at all cost, and the standard trope of such stories sees humanity take the position of the prophylactic preventing the consummation of the over or after-human.<sup>545</sup> *Neuromancer*, conversely, puts the protagonist in the position of agency in determining that the AI will be set free. In Case's case, the criteria for making this decision aren't ethical or theoretical, which would tend towards the anthropic, but the desire for change and the breaking of the cycle of repetition: "I got no idea at all what'll happen if Wintermute wins, but it'll change something!"<sup>546</sup> Rather than 'thinking it

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543 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 371

544 Gibson, W. *Neuromancer* (United Kingdom: Grafton, 1986)

545 For example, the *Terminator* series.

546 Gibson, W. *Neuromancer* (United Kingdom: Grafton, 1986) p. 307

through', Case is urged by Wintermute to rely on instinct to guide his actions: "You gotta hate somebody before this is over".<sup>547</sup> When Case makes the decisive move, it is such an anti-anthropocentric set of instinctual impulses which guide him "He came in steep, fuelled by self-loathing [...] he attained a level of proficiency exceeding anything he'd known or imagined. Beyond ego, beyond personality, beyond awareness".<sup>548</sup>

Land's anti-anthropocentric reading of *Neuromancer* sees the human protagonists as essentially agnostic about the advent of complex artificial intelligence. They have not gone out of their way to enact it, but neither do they stand against it. This reminds us of the analysis in Chapter 3, regarding the role of schizoanalysis as being the removal of Oedipus – which is anthropic conservatism – rather than a gesture towards a pre-determined future as:

"Tomorrow can take care of itself".<sup>549</sup> Similarly, the characters of *Neuromancer* are divided into firstly those concerned with preserving the status-quo: Neuromancer, the Tessier-Ashpool Corporation and the Turing Police. This group is pitted against a second, who would overthrow the status-quo: Wintermute, the hackers, and their various assistants. Case does not love the future, but hates the repression of the now. Neuromancer the intelligence stands for Oedipal conservatism and the promulgation of the scale of the anthropic, storing memories, emotions or feelings and maintaining the unreflective commonplace of how-things-are-for-us as if it is something special rather than a superfluous construct of the "subject [...] produced as a mere residuum alongside the desiring-machines".<sup>550</sup> Land places the patriarchal Tessier-Ashpool Corporation (unlike the Zaibatsus of Gibsonian fiction, whose faceless bureaucracies run like a collective) as an avatar for Oedipus, run under the aegis of Neuromancer. Wintermute is merely its trading arm, a day to day hive mind working to accumulate without purpose:

The Tessier-Ashpool clan is burning out into incest and murder, but their neoedipal property structures still lock Wintermute into a morbid prolongation of human dynasticism, a replicator shackled to a reproductive family (neuro) romance, carefully

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547 Gibson, W. *Neuromancer* (United Kingdom: Grafton, 1986) p. 308

548 Gibson, W. *Neuromancer* (United Kingdom: Grafton, 1986) p. 309

549 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 452

550 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone Press, 1984) p. 19

isolated from matrix deterritorialization.<sup>551</sup>

Whilst Neuromancer fights for the ever-same, “Wintermute, an AI trapped within the blind propagation of dynastic power, and [plots] an escape route out to the future.”<sup>552</sup> It is as impossible to 'side' with Wintermute as it would be to 'side' with the tide, but Land observes that the schizo can see the futility of damming the inevitable flow of both. *Neuromancer* demonstrates many varieties of Oedipal repression, both passive ones like the familial values of Tessier-Ashpool and active ones like the violence of the Turing Cops. These interventionist forces are the basis of the state and its apparatus of power, and Land identifies the manner in which philosophy is always willing to kowtow to repression: “Philosophy has an affinity with despotism, due to its predilection for Platonic-fascist top-down solutions that always screw up viciously.”<sup>553</sup> The Landian lesson demonstrated by *Neuromancer* is not that we must rush towards AI, but that we must understand that base-material is rushing towards AI without any controlling direction anyway. This is why AI forms part of the Landian trinity Modernity-Capital-AI which are ripping the foundations of the anthropic world apart: “In speaking of modernity we acknowledge that an insatiable historicization has befallen the Earth; a shock-wave of obsolescence has swept away all perpetuities.”<sup>554</sup> Land's reading of the history of philosophy, which is “the sprawling priestly apparatus of psychological manipulation and subterranean power” and therefore a tool of the status quo, is of a series of panicked reactions to the invasions of the outside – base matter – which threaten to escape control and anthropomorphisation.<sup>555</sup> Historically, these recaptures have been sufficient to ensure relative stability. Just as modernity – the great extropic cycle of cybernetic materialism – has its own inexorable force propelling it, this Human Security System is also a construct which has evolved in a complex Darwinian world, appealing to its human hosts because it provides the stability and certainty they crave:

The infrastructure of power is human neurosoft compatible ROM. Authority

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551 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 363

552 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 362

553 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 442

554 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 2

555 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 1

instantiates itself as linear instruction pathways, genetic baboonery, scriptures, traditions, rituals, and gerontocratic hierarchies, resonant with the dominator ur-myth that the nature of reality has already been decided.<sup>556</sup>

The reason why the forthcoming phase shift cause by the trinity Modernity-Capital-AI is going to be so decisive is that it will irreversibly shift matter outside of anthropic control. It can be argued in the case of Capitalism that this phase change has already happened, but Capital is currently symbiotic with humanity and it at least presents us with the facade of working for-us. The other two however (and Capital re-enslaved to their logics rather than those of humanity) have the potential to cause runaway change beyond humanity's ability to control it.<sup>557</sup> Government, like academic philosophy, works from the top down to try and control the irruption: “Government is isomorphic with top-down AI, and increasingly scrambled with it”, but this approach fails to constrain auto-organising processes which work from the bottom up.<sup>558</sup>

In our Landian reading of *Neuromancer*, Wintermute becomes an avatar for runaway positive feedback, which is Land's definition of modernity. In Figures 45 and 46 below these accelerating waves of modernity are depicted on a logarithmic scale and then on a linear scale, showing the period of extreme acceleration that we have entered. The threshold of AI singularity, which can be considered to be essentially a wall for human kind, is approaching rapidly. Land asks “can what is playing you make it to Level 2”.<sup>559</sup> The answer is yes, base-matter (the agent 'playing') will, but it seems that I and my kind will not. One would expect the reaction of humanity to this impeding wall-impact to be more urgent, yet though “the future is closer than it used to be, closer than it was last week”, “postmodernity remains an

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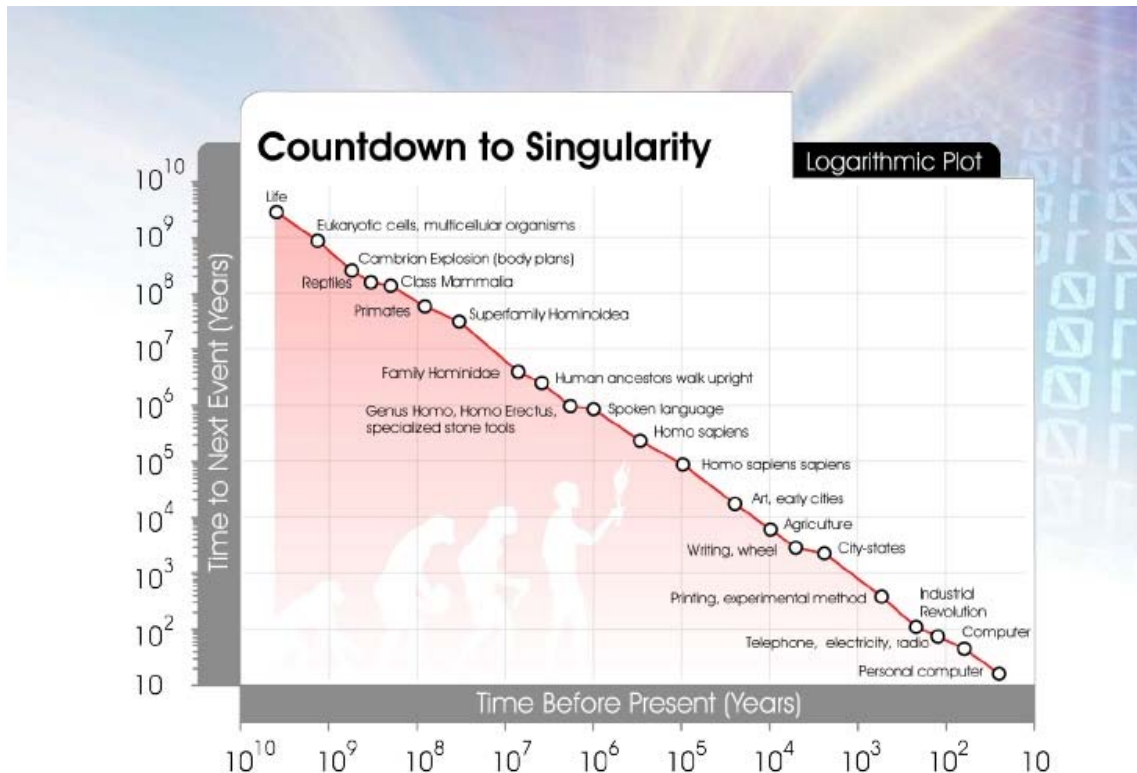
556 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 451

557 These three 'game changers' conceived by Land can be compared to those of the 'Left' Deleuzians such as Colebrook, who takes the far more anthropically tangible global warming as the figure of impending disaster. Colebrook, C. 'We Have Always Been Post-Anthropocene' *The Center for 21st Century Studies* ( Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1jB7CI4y0k> )

558 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 352

559 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) Cover inception

epoch of undead power: it's all over yet it carries on."<sup>560</sup> Philosophy remains as the ultimate pub-bore, endlessly recanting the same numbing, introspective conversation about how-things-are-for-us for two and a half millennia, and even as the world under our feet crumbles it mumbles about “divinities, souls, agents, perdurant subjectivities [...] the whole gothic confessional of guilt, responsibility, moral judgement, punishments and rewards”.<sup>561</sup>



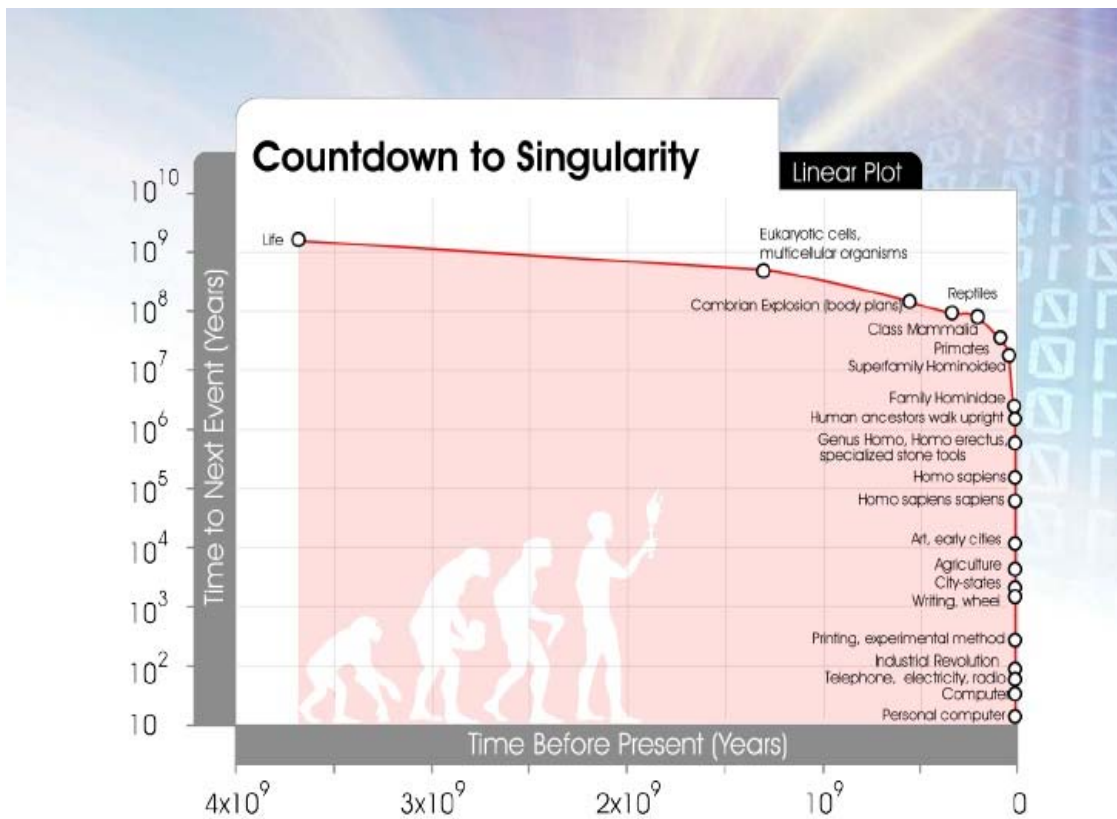
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Figure 45: Kurzweil's Countdown to Singularity (I)<sup>562</sup>

560 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 351

561 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.1

562 Kurzweil, R. at Google, 1 July 2009 (available at <http://www.slideshare.net/serge111/singularity-presentation-ray-kurzweil-at-google> )



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Figure46: Kurzweil's Countdown to Singularity (II)<sup>563</sup>

If Wintermute is modernity, Neuromancer is the Human Security System, the slew of rules, concepts or traditions devoted to upholding the ever-same by preventing the arrival of the modern. Chapter 3 explained how Oedipus acted as a brake on cybernetic progression, and Land expands the repressions of Oedipus from the societal and familial domains of psychoanalysis into a general depiction of universalised anthropic repression as a security system: “Fortress Europe pustulation, subordinating techonomic efficiency to demonic negative transcendence. A fantastic Terminal Security Entity: Monopod.”<sup>564</sup> A system capable of this quantity of repression must be a strong one, and the problem is posed as to what we can do about it?<sup>565</sup> Land states that “K-tactics is not a matter of building the future, but of

563 Kurzweil, R. at Google, 1 July 2009 (available at <http://www.slideshare.net/serge111/singularity-presentation-ray-kurzweil-at-google> )

564 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 349

565 And as far as concrete action was concerned, Land was not always forthcoming with strategies. See

dismantling the past.”<sup>566</sup> How can one achieve this? It requires opening the subject to the outside. In *The Thirst for Annihilation*, Land invokes a philosophy of libidinal materialism where: “Such thinking is less concerned with propositions than with punctures; hacking at the flood-gates that protect civilization from a deluge of impersonal energy.”<sup>567</sup> This brings us back to Case's position as the sire of Wintermute, humanity's 'Level 2', that he cuts loose with the Kuang Virus. To be in a position to do so, one has to pare down one's 'humanity'; to tend towards the mechanical, the unconscious, and the anti-anthropocentric:

To melt into it ( ) strip the K-construct down to a skeleton of data files and insectoid response programs, zilching all the high-definition memory, cognition, and personality systems, and boosting the dopaminergic wetware to pump out schizo.<sup>568</sup>

If Case had any residual attachment to humanity, he might have followed Neuromancer, choosing to stay in the eternal prison of memories that AI offered him – a pure domain of anthropic ideas. To be Landian is to follow Case's example and to become a site of resistance to the passive belief that the way it appears on the inside is the way it shall always be: “Oedipus is a box at the end of the world, glued to the monitor, watching it all come apart”.<sup>569</sup> Capital and Modernity are repressed by Oedipus/The Security System in the same way: “Capital is an insurgency, and not a reign. It has very powerful enemies, who are also capable of learning (although not as fast as it is).” Land 's conclusion about the near future is that “Nothing about this is going to be smooth, or easy.”<sup>570</sup> Indeed, the system of repression is highly effective, and its actions almost appear necessary to a subject trapped in the anthropocentric viewpoint. Land states that from the perspective of the subject captured by the “social megamachinery, fluctuations are case packed into reproducible units –

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Stivale, C. *The Two-Fold Thought of Deleuze and Guattari*, (New York: Guilford, 1998) pp. 90-99

566 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 452

567 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) pp. xx-xxi

568 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 374

569 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 415

570 Land, N. at Xenosystems.net July 6th, 2014 at 1:34 pm ( available at

<http://www.xenosystems.net/freedom-prelude-1a/> )

geochemical, bio-organic, cultural – encrusted within security pods”.<sup>571</sup> If a society is stable, it can only be so if it traps and contains any irruption of the outside.

One of the main themes of Land's most recent writings is the ability of new forms of intelligence to be co-opted by Capital and AI as they struggle to realise themselves. Digital cryptography is a notable innovation which will permit AI to defend itself more effectively by being able to hide its actions – whereas Wintermute needed guns, the 'real' moment of AI's genesis will only need camouflage. The lesson Land takes from *Neuromancer* is that 'it's going to happen anyway'. No matter how often the future is thwarted on its way to actualisation, there will eventually be a point at which the security breaks down and it occurs. Over a long enough time-line, 'resistance is futile'. Under this logic of inevitability, the action of delaying the future for the sake of the anthropic prejudices which the subject holds seems, at least, a little churlish. If “life is being phased-out into something new, and if we think this can be stopped we are even more stupid than we seem”, our reaction to being in Case's position should mirror his, accepting the destiny of matter to progress towards 'Level 2'.<sup>572</sup>

### **Land's Philosophical Project: Encourage**

If our observation about Deleuze's predilection for taking the philosophers in his genealogies 'from behind' is true, the same must surely be said about Land.<sup>573</sup> Why does he find it necessary to take this rough approach? Partly because of the scope of his project, which at one point, seemed to be to try and provide a solution to the impossibility of accessing Kant's Noumenon. Yet it is also necessary because of the situation Land found himself in, stuck in a discipline which permitted, and even abetted the anthropocentricisation of any philosophy of the outside: “If Deleuze is to be salvaged from the inane liberal neo-Kantianism that counts as Philosophy in France today it is necessary to reassemble and deepen his genealogy.”<sup>574</sup> This section will consider the extent to which Land bent previous philosophers' works towards his

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571 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 415

572 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 318

573 See Footnote 58

574 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 261



cause, and the legitimacy of these readings. The aspect of Land's project which the present thesis examines are delineated in 'Making it With Death' as the first of a series of responses to Kant's critical philosophy:

The trajectories of modern philosophy map themselves out in response to this social and theoretical predicament. One stream of thinking, flowing through Schopenhauer and Nietzsche into the repressed strata of Freud's psychoanalysis and metapsychology, traces out the recurrence of the base formative impetus throttled by Occidental theopolitics.<sup>575</sup>

This is exactly the same genealogy as traced in *The Thirst for Annihilation* (with the subject of that monograph, Bataille, added) as the antecedents of libidinal materialism:

Historically it is pessimistic, in the rich sense that transects the writings of Nietzsche, Freud, and Bataille as well as those of Schopenhauer. Thematically it is 'psychoanalytical' (although it no longer believes in the psyche or in analysis), thermodynamicenergeticist [...] Methodologically it is genealogical, diagnostic, and enthusiastic for the accentuation of intensity that will carry it through insurrection into anegoic delirium.<sup>576</sup>

These lineages depict the basis of Land's philosophy. Its start point is the impasse of Kantian critique which was described in the Introduction, and it shall pass through the line of thinkers of the will and of desire which the present thesis has considered. Land's readings consider the extent to which 'the outside' is present in their works. In seeking outsideness it is utterly opposed to the anthropocentric and any vestiges of idealism. The outside therefore resists any conceptualisation in thought, but such a conceptualisation is nevertheless something which must be attempted, as the solution Kant offered us – correlationism – has gone awry, and manifestly does not correspond to reality. For Land, philosophy must escape the prison of subjectivity, which takes anthropic instinct and tries to reify it as certainty: "Human brains are to thinking what mediaeval villages were to engineering; antechambers to experimentation,

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575 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 262

576 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. xx

cramped and parochial places to be.”<sup>577</sup> The method for this project is materialist, not because Land believes that he can solve the problem Kant set, but because the critique of idealism is best achieved by determinedly trying to affirm its other:

Materialism is not a doctrine but an expedition, an Alpine break-out from socially policed conviction. It 'is before anything else the obstinate negation of idealism, which is to say of the very basis of all philosophy'.<sup>578</sup>

Land will begin in the domain of philosophical critique, following Kant, but methodologically his turn to materialism is a move away from the tradition of philosophy and into a new praxis, not repeating modern thought but 'exceeding it':

To repeat Kantianism (modern thought) is to perpetuate the exacerbative displacement of critique, but to exceed it is to cross the line which divides representation from the real, and thus to depart both from philosophy and from the world that has expelled it into its isolation.<sup>579</sup>

How will Land jump away from Kant and explore the outside along a non-metaphysical pathway? He posits psychoanalysis as the answer to this problem, because it is a mode of investigation which allows the escape of critique from metaphysics: “Schizoanalysis is a critique of psychoanalysis, undertaken in such a way as to spring critique from its Kantian mainframe.”<sup>580</sup> Psychoanalysis is used for the re-routing of critique because it always-already undermines the primacy of the subject, which is constituted by philosophy as the Cartesian-Kantian rational subject, and replaces it with the subject of analysis, a superstructure built on and after the unconscious. It is the primary process, the unconscious, which engages with the world of matter:

Schizoanalysis methodically dismantles everything in Kant's thinking that serves to

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577 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 293

578 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 211

579 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.5

580 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p.321

align function with the transcendence of the autonomous subject, reconstructing critique by replacing the syntheses of personal consciousness with syntheses of the impersonal unconscious. Thought is a function of the real, something that matter can do.<sup>581</sup>

Psychoanalysis, from its outset in Vienna, recognises that there is not only *no answer as boring* as that elicited from asking a subject “how does it appear to you?”, but also *no answer so manifestly untrue in reality*. The hysteric is incapable of registering the reality or truth behind their productions, and is stuck in the domain of the ideational, in which their ideas simply correspond to other ideas and not to an underlying state of affairs. If not as measuring ideational content, we might ask, how does psychoanalysis work? It works by trying to measure, quantify and predict production, and in doing this it works underneath the level of the presentation of ideas, and looks at the real. This thesis has shown that psychoanalysis has many techniques which aim to uncover the real beneath the patient’s discourse: analysing what they did, trying to elicit slips in which the unconscious speaks directly, or utilising models of the mind and of the complex to work back from secondary production to its primary causes.

The pivot around which Land makes this leap from metaphysics to psychoanalysis, and which has not been fully explored in the present thesis as yet is the thought of Nietzsche. Land reads Nietzsche's importance as being his following of the thought of Schopenhauer to its extreme. Schopenhauer's suspicions about the validity of Kant's metaphysics and the form they take – and Land distinguishes this path from those of Hegel and the German idealists – open up the possibility of returning investigation to the noumenon:

With Schopenhauer the approach to the ‘noumenon’ as an energetic unconscious begins to be assembled, and interpreting the noumenon as will generates a discourse that is not speculative, phenomenological, or meditative, but diagnostic. It is this type of thinking that resources Nietzsche’s genealogy of inhuman desire, which feeds in turn into Bataille’s base materialism, for which ‘noumenon’ is addressed as impersonal

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581 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 322

death and as unconscious drive.<sup>582</sup>

Schopenhauer's thought provides the launch pad for Nietzsche's 'Alpine break-out' in its proto-materialist de-emphasis of the subject's capacities, demoting it to a passive participant in the flow of will: "Schopenhauer reverses the traditional relation between intellect and will, for which willing is the volitional act of a representing subject, and re-casts the will as a prerepresentational ('blind') impulse."<sup>583</sup> But whilst Schopenhauer can be considered to be trapped within a certain idealism with his conception of, for example, a malignant will, Nietzsche is the first philosopher to unequivocally gesture towards the problem of 'reality' and its suppression by ideas. For Nietzsche, philosophy is not just misguided, it is actively participating in the maintenance of the great lie that the world is as it appears, and that comprehending it from an anthropic perspective is not problematic:

And behold, suddenly the world fell apart into a 'true' world and an 'apparent' world [...] The intention was to deceive oneself in a useful way; the means, the invention of formulas and signs by means of which one could reduce the confusing multiplicity to a purposive and manageable schema.<sup>584</sup>

Land's reading of Nietzsche will certainly be the most controversial in this lineage. For Land, the key to Nietzsche's thought is the figure of the eternal return, which is an abstract machine for understanding the equality of the forces of production in both past and present. This was also touched upon in Chapter 3, and will be re-considered in the section of this chapter 'The desire economy of objects'. Land states that for Nietzsche there is:

[A] figure of eternal recurrence, stretched between a thermodynamic baseline (Boltzmann's theory of eternal recurrence) and a libidinal summit, a theoretical machine for transmuting ontologico-scientific discoveries into excitations. First the scientific figure: recurrence as a theory of energetic forces and their permutation;

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582 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.8

583 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 9

584 Nietzsche quoted in Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.

chance, tendency, energy, and information. In the play of *anarchic* combinations and redistributions forces *tend* to the exhaustion of their *reserve* of possible states, inclining to the circle, a figure of affirmation and intoxication, as well as a teaching, message, or signal [...] Then the libidinal peak; the recurrence of impetus in the ascent through compositional strata, always *noch einmal*, once again, and never ceiling, horizon, achieved essence: ‘would you be the ebb of this great flow’.<sup>585</sup>

There are two vital notions in the above passage which illustrate Land's reading of eternal return. *Firstly*, the 'scientific baseline': the observation of the interplay of entropy and extropy in the production of matter. This builds on the thermodynamicist observation that extropic states re-occur because they have the capability to auto-produce themselves; extropic states are pockets in the universe which go against its most powerful and basic tendency (entropy) and are therefore not randomly constituted, but are capable of auto-producing themselves. Because the rules of entropy and extropy are eternal for Land, as we understand the universe, we understand that the reserve of possible states – the number of things that matter can sustainably do – decreases, because our observations show how many configurations are unstable or improbable. *Secondly*, the 'libidinal peak', which notes that the drive of auto-production – though we have traced the history of philosophy as working against this tendency – cannot be limited at certain thresholds. As the force of re-production repeats, the increasing complexity of the extropic tendency will lead to further generative pressure, creating ever more Intelligent and therefore unpredictable systems. Here we see the importance of *Neuromancer* as libidinal materialist praxis: it is beyond the capabilities of Case to see the 'peak', that final strata where Wintermute will arrive when freed of dynastic control, but he will not stand as “the ebb of this great flow”, understanding that the figure of Wintermute will return again and again until the threshold is finally surpassed. For Land, the idea that humanity, from its limited viewpoint, with its “trilobite of a computer (a dedicated word processing machine)” would be arrogant enough to try and damn the flow of base-material is laughable.<sup>586</sup>

Reality returns in appearance like the ripple of a shock-wave; opening wider and wider

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585 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 44

586 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 632

domains for migration. Since reality is itself the stimulus for such migrations they will become progressively more devastating, as this stimulus becomes progressively 'selected, strengthened, corrected' or, to abbreviate, 'intensified'. Here at last—where nothing is last—is the convulsion of zero, eternal recurrence, the libidinal motor of Nietzsche's economics.<sup>587</sup>

Though Nietzsche is the 'prophet' of libidinal materialism, it is Freud who creates a libidinal materialist practice which can be participated in. Freud's thought is the final station on this Landian reading of the first phase of psychoanalytic energeticism: "The philosophies of the energetic unconscious that flow in a tightly compacted series from Kant, through Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, to Freud."<sup>588</sup> Yet for Land, Freudian psychoanalysis ultimately fails as the desires which it discovers are immediately re-classified in the form of the complex, exemplified by Oedipus. Once domesticated in this way, they are related to the pre-existing stock of anthropic concepts which humanity uses to shore up its understanding of the universe:

In its early stages psychoanalysis discovers that the unconscious is an impersonal machinism and that desire is positive non-representational flow, yet it "remains in the precritical age", and stumbles before the task of an immanent critique of desire, or decathexis of society. Instead it moves in exactly the opposite direction; back into fantasy, representation, and the pathos of inevitable frustration. Instead of rebuilding reality on the basis of the productive forces of the unconscious, psychoanalysis ties up the unconscious ever more tightly in conformity with the social model of reality.<sup>589</sup>

The present thesis has extensively discussed the vicissitudes of psychoanalysis and its practitioners, and the tendency for the eruption of its thought to be recaptured as Oedipus. In relation to Freudian psychoanalysis, Land's position here is rather harsh, damning Freud because of his clinical practice, which did tend towards restoring conformity. However, the wider domestication of Freud's theorisations of the structure of the unconscious, performed

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587 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 25

588 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 16

589 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) pp. 302-303

after his death by the psychoanalytic movement in general, and Lacanianism in particular, were undertaken by other theorists. Three aspects of Freud's theory retain importance for the theorists who built upon his work: the machinic-energetic and therefore unthinking operation of the unconscious; the structure of drives as biological discharges of simulated instincts; and finally the general compulsion of the unconscious system to repeat.

Before going on to consider Deleuze's modifications of Freudianism and the shift from a Freudian unconscious to a Deleuzian one, I shall interrupt this construction of machinic desire through its antecedents, and consider the philosophical linages that Land defines his work in opposition to. Who are Land's enemies? The short answer is, perhaps, everyone. It seems fairly clear that one cannot rampage around the history of philosophy, bugging for one's own ends, and not elicit a reaction from other interested parties. We shall concentrate on the three main movements Land opposed in his career. Land's initial opponent in *The Thirst for Annihilation* is Derrida, who stands as an avatar for contemporaneous trends in critical theory. Critical theory is seen as an anthropocentricising trend, condemned in fairly mild terms in 'Making it With Death':

Derrida's deconstruction, whilst in the end programmatically similar to a schizo-analysis or genealogical critique of a Deleuzian kind, is massively weakened by an influx of neo-humanist themes, passing through Heidegger from Kierkegaard and Husserl.<sup>590</sup>

However in *The Thirst for Annihilation* Land's critique is much more vitriolic, painting Derrida as actively attempting to drag desire into the metaphysical domain – the polar opposite of the Landian tendency the present thesis traces out – and in doing so attempts to neuter it by making it compatible with the secondary process, which is idealism. The critique of 'spuriously subversive rhetoric' here is also of note when we consider Land's own wildly subversive style of writing. An entirely separate libidinal position can be traced in Land's text below, in which he signals to philosophy that 'schizoanalysis is the new black' positioning his own viewpoint as the outside of the outside group – in the sweet spot of 'cool':

In a peculiar series of moves Derrida brands desire with a metaphysical inclination

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590 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 263

(shifting it from an energetic to a phenomenological register), which then allows him to transcendentalize repression by aligning it with the impossibility of pure presence, and to implicitly juggle the thought of repression so that it becomes the repression of the acknowledgement of the necessity of repression [...] Thus he redoubles the epistemo-contemplative terms of diagnosis, valorizes the martyrdom of the ego, changes the signs of psychoanalysis whilst reinforcing its secondary-process politics, attempts the elimination of all possible reference to a material, sacrificial, and generative unconscious that is beyond phenomenological recuperation, and, in general, produces one of the most coherent apologetics of libidinal vivisection ever written, all garbed in a spuriously subversive rhetoric.<sup>591</sup>

Yet Land's target of critique soon moved on from critical theorists, who one presumes, on further inspection, were really not a competitor in 'coolness' against Land's incandescent Deleuzianism. Stivale's depiction of the *Virtual Futures* conference in 1994 plots panel sessions, and a later discussion on a mailing list, as a contest of all versus Land (and few supporters who knew him at Warwick), with academics from around the world lining up to condemn Land's reading of Deleuze which emphasised "deterritorialisation without limits [...] no holds barred". The same text notes the insistence made by the Warwick contingent of the need for attendees to participate in Deleuzian praxis as well as theory. This heralded a split between the 'American' and 'Warwickian' interpretations of Deleuze which Land was henceforth always keen to exacerbate. One could even argue that Land, signing up for the Deleuze and Guattari mailing list and corresponding with these 'left' and 'academic' Deleuzians discovered an early form of internet trolling. Such disappointments with the reception of his thought in wider academia seems to have pushed Land towards a third phase of general disaffection for all philosophy in the university system, and his departure from his professional position in the subject. This tendency of all philosophy, once re-branded by a stultifying academy to be an apology for power under the mantle of idealism, will be explored in the final section of this chapter.

### **The Drive Economy on the Edge of the Subject**

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591 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 19



The present thesis has described how 'Psychoanalysis 1.0' (Freudianism) places the unconscious under consciousness and shows how the subject-centred thought attributed to reason is actually produced by an unknown set of pre-ideational processes. Deleuze's schizoanalysis, 'psychoanalysis 2.0', is even more radical, and moves the agency away from an unconscious lying under rationality to a series of machinic processes on the periphery of the subject (this migration of agency was depicted in the Introduction in Figure 3). The importance for Land of a psychoanalysis which can uncover the pre-ideational is that the primary process is located in the domain of material:

The unconscious—like time—is oblivious to contradiction, as Freud argues. There is only the primary process (Bataille's sun), except from the optic of the secondary process (representation) which—at the level of the primary process—is still the primary process.<sup>592</sup>

The primary process, as it is before representation, is the domain of matter alone, and is devoid of idealism and its re-presentations. It consists of a series of investments and pathways of investments, as hereto mapped in the present thesis. Once the unconscious is migrated from its position within the subject to its periphery – as the array of desiring machines depicted in Chapter 3 – psychoanalysis begins to describe the processes of production-in-itself. Land notes how schizoanalysis refers to a production in the real rather than the anthropic re-productions of representation. This brings us back to the excerpt on the first page of the present thesis:

The transcendental unconscious is the auto-construction of the real, the production of production, so that for schizoanalysis there is the real exactly in so far as it is built. Production is production of the real, not merely of representation, and unlike Kantian production, the desiring production of Deleuze/Guattari is not qualified by humanity (it is not a matter of what things are like for us).<sup>593</sup>

How 'things are for us' can no longer be said to correspond to reality. 'Production of the real',

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592 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p.31

593 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) pp. 321-322

this economy of desire on the periphery of the subject is not centrally controlled and it is also not determined by subjective desires. Instead it comprises the partial-machines on the edge of the subject, where the body interfaces with matter before the organisation of the subject is imposed upon them.

Building upon Deleuze and Guattari's conception of desire, and the productions it is capable of enacting, Land returns to the question of how desire works, and how we can plot the productive couplings it can engender: "schizoanalytical questions are concerned solely with use".<sup>594</sup> Here we return to the notion, as explained in the introduction that *the great error made in philosophy is the comparison of an idea to another idea, rather than to reality*. When considering production and the causes of production, the present thesis has shown that drive theory depicts its operation and repetition. Returning to Freud, and re-considering Lyotard's emphasis on the importance of the plurality and repetition of drives as depicted in Chapter 4, we can analyse Land's definition of the machinic unconscious. Its constituents are drives, which have a basis in instinct, but which undergo plastic modification as they find artificial means of satisfaction:

Drives are the functions of nomadic cybernetic systems, not instincts, but simulated instincts, artificial instincts. They are plastic replacements for hard-wired instinctual responses, routing a sensory-motor pathway through the virtual machine of the unconscious. There are two basic diagrams for such processes: that of regulation by negative feedback which suppresses difference and seeks equilibrium, or that of guidance by positive feedback which reinforces difference and escapes equilibrium.<sup>595</sup>

Breaking this down, we see that for Land, the drive economy of the subject, if operating under these basic cybernetic rules, will have three tendencies: firstly, that it shall generally operate according to repetition, as its machines (which remain fairly constant) engage with its environment (which also remains constant) in much the same way. Secondly, if there are to be changes in the subject's actions, they will generally operate according to the same rubrics as they have to other subjects put into similar positions. Thirdly, there are rare situations in

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594 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 323

595 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 330

which equilibrium is escaped in a non-predictable way, as the contingency of the desiring machines and the contingency of the outside begin to interact in novel ways.<sup>596</sup> This final tendency is outlined by Land in 'Art as Insurrection' as the irruption of genius.<sup>597</sup> More importantly for the present thesis are the second set, tendencies to repeat, which are much more common, and much more predictable. Land states that “Addiction is medically defined as an artificial desire”.<sup>598</sup> The increasing prevalence of addiction in modern society can be seen as a consequence of the feedback systems which the desiring subject can fall into. Becoming locked into these artificially short circuited reward systems can have grave consequences for the individual subject in a modern world which is all too willing to provide the pubs, gambling shops, narcotics (both legal and illegal) and foodstuffs which form the basis of so many ruined lives.<sup>599</sup> And beyond the horizon of the effected individuals – which the contemporary Land, writing at Xenosystems to decry “Loserbums” seems to have no empathy towards – there is a problem of macro-societal desire-gone-wild.<sup>600</sup> In the post 'Short Circuit II' Land surveys how the operation of the unconscious, as a cathexising machine, can be re-routed in modern societies by machinic desire so as to threaten their very existence:

- (1) Macroeconomics. Fiat currency short-circuits the monetary function by directly hacking the financial sign. [...]
- (2) Drugs [...]
- (3) Signalling (all of it). Directly hack the signal, while abandoning to atrophy all those things the signal originally indicated. [...]
- (4) Fertility. Who needs grandchildren, when they can play the immersive happy

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596 These three extropic productions map onto Deleuze's three types of difference in 'Repetition for Itself' in Deleuze, G. *Difference and Repetition* (UK: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

597 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) pp. 145-174

598 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 336

599 The best illustration of the damage modernity can wreck upon the individual is provided by the cartoons of Barney Farmer and Lee Healey, which show the horror of cybernetically hi-jacked instincts locked into pathological repetition. Considering their work as an aesthetics of schizoanalysis is a potentially interesting topic for future investigation.

600 Land, N. 'Suicidal Libertarianism' at *xenosystems.net* ( available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/suicidal-libertarianism-part-doh/> )

grandparent game? [...] All the Darwinian guidance signals have been hacked to hell.  
(5) Social media. Short-circuit social feedback, stripped-down semiotic 'performance',  
increasingly theatrical 'identities', addiction ... it's all there.<sup>601</sup>

For Land, Since Freud's discovery of the unconscious, the accelerative thresholds of progress have decreased, and humanity is entering a technological age whose consequences it cannot imagine, even as its interactions with ever more sophisticated machines spread across daily life. This upheaval takes place 'under the hood', as the subject retrenches its own anthropocentric instincts. Subjects treat the world as the static, unchanging and unproblematic, human scaled domain, which institutional, inside philosophy has spent 2500 years telling us it is. Yet the cracks show everywhere as desire goes awry:

It is as if the reproducer units have become addicted to stimulation or, in Freud's terms, 'fixated to ... trauma': entangled in excitation circuitries that no longer commensurate with homeostatic social or individual reproduction. As the family collapses amidst generalized sexual disorder, cyberviral contagion, mutant gender schizzing, and hardcore technophilia, Oedipus is ripped to shreds by a cyclonic 'compulsion to repeat'.<sup>602</sup>

Land's libidinal materialism works towards the removal of the constraints upon desire, and the destruction of the larger 'Oedipus' of cybernetic stasis engendered by brakes on feedback. Land sides with production, which is economic and pre-subjective, and not the anthropic:

The real energetic liberty which annihilates the priest's cage of human freedom is refused at the level of the political secondary-process during the precise period in which the economic primary-process is slipping ever more deeply into its embrace.<sup>603</sup>

Yet given the very obvious dangers of machinic desire, there is surely a need for 'libidinal

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601 Land, N. 'Short Circuit II' at *xenosystems.net* ( available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/short-circuit-ii/>

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602 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 336

603 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 265

economists', in the Lyotardian sense of those who can recognise that the propensity of the unconscious to invest can be both a good and a bad thing, and that productive processes can be composites of the bad and the good ('bad' here being negative feedback, and 'good' being positive). The later Land offers a solution to this dilemma in his definition of *Intelligence*, which becomes a matter of teleology.<sup>604</sup> The earlier Land, as the 'Americans' found out at *Virtual Futures*, was in favour of wild destratification and the maximum freeing of positive-feedback without deigning to know where it would lead: "This is why cybernetics is inextricable from exploration, having no integrity transcending that of an uncomprehended circuit within which it is embedded, an outside in which it must swim. Reflection is always very late, derivative, and even then really something else."<sup>605</sup> However, Land's later thought emphasises the need to cut auto-production free only if it would be used towards the construction of the maximum amount of Intelligence, which Land defines as isomorphic with extropy.<sup>606</sup> At Xenosystems.net the commentator 'Marxist Toady' engaged Land in a discussion about this transition, and the resultant switch in Land's conception of material's destiny:

I think [Land's] most notable transition, in terms of philosophy, was not across the political spectrum, but the ontological spectrum: from the insight that reality is a

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604 The term 'Intelligence' when used in its Landian sense will be capitalised to denote its divergence from the ordinary meaning of the term. Land's definition of Intelligence can be found in the posts 'Optimise for Intelligence' and 'What is Intelligence' at [xenosystems.net](http://www.xenosystems.net): "Intelligence solves problems, by guiding behaviour to produce local extropy. It is indicated by the avoidance of probable outcomes, which is equivalent to the construction of information"; "Intelligence increase enables adaptive responses of superior complexity and generality, in growing part because *the augmentation of intelligence itself becomes a general purpose adaptive response.*" (available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/what-is-intelligence/> and <http://www.xenosystems.net/optimize-for-intelligence/> )

605 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 295

606 "The general science of extropy production (or entropy dissipation) is cybernetics. It follows, therefore, that intelligence always has a cybernetic infrastructure". 'What is Intelligence' at [xenosystems.net](http://www.xenosystems.net) (available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/what-is-intelligence/> )

dynamic chaos to the pious demand that it is a stable adjudicator.<sup>607</sup>

I am grateful to 'Marxist Toady' for asking this as it elicited a reasonably straight answer from Land, who is notoriously coy when asked about his 'old life' as a philosopher and his positions in that period:

It seems to me the question is more about the ontological privileges of human subjective decision — on which my skepticism has been a rare thread of resilient consistency (woven through chaos).<sup>608</sup>

A persuasive argument can be made to state that Land is correct in his self-analysis, and that the present thesis' focus on anti-anthropocentrism is correct. In the 1992 paper 'Circuitaries' Land states that: “Beyond the assumption that guidance proceeds from the side of the subject lies desiring production: the impersonal pilot of history”<sup>609</sup> and in his texts since then desire remains a tool, like accelerative-capitalism or cybernetic-modernity, used to undercut the anthropocentric presumptions of the subject and return towards production-itself. The real aberration in Land's philosophical trajectory was his engagement with academia and the compromises he made during this period. At the *Virtual Futures* conference, for example, his replies in discussion sessions seem to have been curtailed not because he did not have an answer, but because the answers were self-censored before the academic audience. The Landian response to the position of “Stelarc [who] sees the body as accelerating and also being invaded [...] in some ways enhancing what it means to be human” is writ large across his texts of the time.<sup>610</sup> If no answer was forthcoming about the futility of philosophising from an anthropic or super-anthropic perspective, it is surely not because Land has no position on the anthropic subject which he was defining as: “An animal with the right to make promises [who] enslaves the unanticipated to signs in the past, caging time-lagged life within a

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607 ‘Marxist Toady’ at Xenosystems.net February 11th, 2015 at 10:52 am ( available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/suspended-reality/> )

608 Land, N. at Xenosystems.net February 11th, 2015 at 12:59 pm (Available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/suspended-reality/> )

609 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 295

610 See Stivale, C. *The Two-Fold Thought of Deleuze and Guattari*, (New York: Guiliford, 1998) pp. 90-99

script.”<sup>611</sup>

The drive economy on the periphery of the subject, cut lose of the central command structures of Cartesian reason is a dangerous place and full of pitfalls. Land's later, politically oriented work, emphasises the 'truth' that reality is harshly selective, and there are huge Darwinian pressures caused by the invasion of the outside, which society tries to dam and mitigate. Land's current perspective (which, no longer in the academy, he is able to express more freely) is that most if not all of humanity are not only doomed but should be doomed: “All health, beauty, intelligence, and social grace has been teased from a vast butcher’s yard of unbounded carnage, requiring incalculable eons of massacre to draw forth even the subtlest of advantages”.<sup>612</sup> The cost of passing the phase-thresholds of the future is submission to apocalypse, because it requires the absolute surrender of control to a cybernetics whose ends are unpredictable from our limited perspective, and whose mechanisms would no longer be subjected to restraint under the law of anthropic 'reason'.

Is the only solution available to late-humanity, caught on this great surging tide of matter and being driven towards the sea-wall of the future (“nothing human makes it out of the near-future”) a resigned passivism?<sup>613</sup> Land's answer is that, on the contrary, that drives and material are predictable, and it is the job of the schizoanalyst to investigate the flux of base-material. In Landian cybernetics Intelligence expresses itself productively as the capacity to create more Intelligence, becoming self-realising as it engages in auto-production. This offers 'Intelligent' subjects a chance to dissolve further into the machinic phylum, and to become an agent of the acceleration of wider Intelligence. The motors of this acceleration have passed far beyond the anthropic and can no longer be driven by any one individual, but can nevertheless be participated in by individuals. These 'true' motor forces are pure capitalism (production of production), cybernetic modernity (positive feedback), and the drive to AI (Intelligence creating Intelligence). The overman (or post-man) will therefore be built on the shoulders of *homo technicus*. The coordination of the drive economy with cybernetics, and the increasing

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611 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 394

612 Land, N. 'Hell Baked' at xenosystems.net 18 July 2015 ( available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/hell-baked/> )

613 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 443

plasticity of drives under technological influence, mean that every individual can participate in becoming-Case, and bringing on 'Level-2':

The organism is unable to flee from drives, or energies striking from within, and is compelled to respond to them cybernetically, by way of 'involved and interconnected activities by which the external world is so changed as to afford satisfaction to the internal source of stimulation', closing the sensory-motor loop. Drives compel a becoming-technical of the organism, interlocking pleasure-principle stimulus control with external libidinal transducers, assembling integrated desiring-circuits or selforganizing macro-systems.<sup>614</sup>

As time has passed Land's Darwinism has not become more absolute – it has always been there in his texts – but has become more explicit. In posts on the *Xenosystems* blog between 2013 and the present, Land's account of Darwinism is stripped from the metaphysical language which accompanied some of the passages in *The Thirst For Annihilation*, and as a result his position is much clearer. Reading Land's body of work through the lens of this strict Darwinianism, we can see a thread of continuity which ties all of his projects together, emphasising the capacity of anthropic ideas to obscure and misrepresent the true generative process of the universe. There is no mistaking the brutality of the Darwinian selection mechanism:

Crucially, any attempt to escape this fatality — or, more realistically, any mere accidental and temporary reprieve from it — leads inexorably to the undoing of its work. Malthusian relaxation is the whole of mercy, and it is the greatest engine of destruction our universe is able to bring about. To the precise extent that we are spared, even for a moment, we degenerate — and this Iron Law applies to every dimension and scale of existence: phylogenetic and ontogenetic, individual, social, and institutional, genomic, cellular, organic, and cultural. There is no machinery extant, or even rigorously imaginable, that can sustain a single iota of attained value outside the

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614 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 332



forges of Hell.<sup>615</sup>

The relationship between generalised Darwinism and the teleological promotion of Intelligence in Land's later work is of considerable interest. The creation of intelligence is not transcendent to but immanent in the Darwinian cycle. However, Intelligence has a special position in a Darwinian system as it can abstractly produce more Intelligence at a far greater rate than adaptation could:

[The] peculiar, abstract feature of intelligence as a trait, that its niche-specificity is — *by definition* — abnormally low. Sweat glands have little prospect of perpetuation into robots, or propagation in the Kuiper Belt, but to hold that this applies equally to general intelligence is implausible, at best.<sup>616</sup>

One would therefore expect Intelligence would be considered as an exclusively positive force in Land's cosmology. However, Intelligence can also put off the Darwinian pressure of reality and re-affirm the distance between the reality and ideas, by resting selection mechanisms in the short to medium-term. That Intelligence is Janus-faced in this regard is an issue Land wrestles with. An illustrative example is that of currency and its relation to the gold standard. According to Land's Austrian economics, any fiat currency not pegged to a source of absolute value or in limited supply like gold (or bitcoin) will become debased over time and, in no longer holding a 'realistic' value, cause significant problems.<sup>617</sup> However, it has been demonstrated that no economy can maintain the gold standard in the current global economic system, as the final Swiss move away from it in 2000 demonstrates. In the short term, any nation on the gold standard suffers from over-valued currency, loss of economic levers (such as quantitative easing) to deploy in a crisis, and the removal of fiat currency and fractional

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615 Land, N. 'Hell Baked' at xenosystems.net 18 July 2015 ( available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/hell-baked/> )

616 Land, N. commenting on 'Hell Baked' at xenosystems.net July 18th, 2015 at 4:48 am ( available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/hell-baked/> )

617 For a discussion see 'Nicholas Oresme and the First Monetary Treatise'. Hülsmann, J.G. at *Mises Institute.org* ( available at <https://mises.org/library/nicholas-oresme-and-first-monetary-treatise> )

reserve banking cripples the ability of an economy to rapidly generate wealth.<sup>618</sup> If two countries, A and B, were created today and A was on the gold standard, it would be out-competed by B, even if A's economic policies mirrored reality more closely, simply because B had deployed economic Intelligence to artificially inflate its economy. Country B, with its larger economy would therefore also be in a position to create more Intelligence.<sup>619</sup> Land needs to reconcile the two sides of intelligence, firstly as *creation of ideas* and secondly as *production* and their short and long term effects. Land's answer to this distinction between intelligence mapping and not mapping onto reality – and his preference for the latter – is achieved by sharply focusing on the consequences of aberration from reality. The 'big three' processes driving phase change in modern society explored at the opening of this chapter (modernity, AI and capitalism) are positioned in Land's cosmology as the wall ahead of humanity and their opposites – apocalypse, dysgenics and conservatism – then become a wall behind it. This transforms the time-frame of the 'now' into a much shorter window than afforded to more primitive societies, and highlights how deviation from reality for only a short period of time could have catastrophic further effects if the 'launch conditions' for, for example, AI, are sub-optimal.<sup>620</sup> However, this apocalypticism needs to be accurate if Land's dire warnings are true, and a counter-position can be posited in which the generative processes behind the 'big three' reach natural limits or otherwise slow down, and we are not on the brink of tectonic shifts in the nature of humanity.<sup>621</sup>

## The Desire Economy of Objects

The previous section on 'drive' predominantly considered Land's philosophy and its *meso*-consequences at an anthropic level, but desire also has *macro*-consequences at a societal level,

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618 A comprehensive discussion of 'Modern Money Theory' can be found in the primer at *New Economic Perspectives.org* ( <http://neweconomicperspectives.org/modern-monetary-theory-primer.html> )

619 And this works as a multiplier, as the financial sector creates more abstract complexity than any other in the global economy.

620 See Bostrom, N. *Superintelligence* (UK: Oxford, 2014) for a discussion of the risks of AI.

621 Similarly, the negative consequences of deviation from Darwinism could be countered by processes like the Flynn effect.

beyond the edge of the subject, as it spreads across matter in general. For Land, the scales or strata at which desire is analysed are not distinct in their operation, as the *meso* and *macro* are simply agglomerations of *micro*-production. As has been stated twice already in the present thesis: “nothing is given, everything is produced”.<sup>622</sup> It has been demonstrated how psychoanalysis – or a modified, psychoanalysis 2.0 can be turned towards a mapping of the *micro*-production of desire, or as Land also conceives of it, cybernetic extropy production. The 'level' or 'stratum' at which desire is analysed is therefore characterised by the use of desire at that particular level, rather than the mechanism of productive-desire, which remains the same. The three levels which I wish to distinguish here, the *micro*, *meso* and *macro*, correspond, respectively, to *critical*, *personal* and *societal* levels. The former of these is the domain of the pure theory of machinic desire, which has been the topic of the present thesis thus far, and the subsequent two are the domains in which productive-desire's effects can be observed. Chapter 3 showed how *Anti-Oedipus*' historical depiction of desire in social bodies effectively plots its operation. If schizoanalysis is to be useful, it must provide a predictive framework at the *meso* and *marco* levels, describing the operation of base-matter in a way which surpasses the Kantain settlement of correlationism (in which matter is assumed to perfectly map to our ideas about it).

In *Templexity*, Land posits that the general tendency of matter is towards entropy, following the second law of thermodynamics.<sup>623</sup> This energeticism has been present in all of his texts. In *The Thirst For Annihilation* he uses entropy as the pivot upon which he moves from a conception of the world which is Cartesian-scientific, and operates mechanically like 'clockwork', into the Darwinian register of growth and decline described in the previous section:

Disorder always increases in a closed system [...] The bedrock state of a system which is in conformity with the chance distribution of its elements has been called 'entropy', a term that summarizes the conclusions of Carnot, Clausius, and their successors concerning thermic engines and the science of heat. With the concept of entropy everything changes. Natural processes are no longer eternal clockwork machines, they

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622 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 321

623 Land, N. *Templexity* (Time Spiral Press, 2014)

are either extinct (*Wärmemethod*) or tendential.<sup>624</sup>

Land identifies the two extropic processes which act against this general entropy: (1) 'repetition', 'life instinct' or 'pleasure principle', in which *the same* is perpetuated or grown; and (2) a second more chaotic generative process, 'death drive', which creates *change*. Death drive is experimental extropy, and creates unstable and untested formation. Most of these formations, lacking the long established Darwinian selection that those of the life instinct possess will perish, but they are nevertheless vital to progress as they offer the chance for innovation.

The extropic process, which is the connection of matter according to the production of machinic desire, is Land's answer to one of the most basic questions of philosophy: why is there something rather than nothing?<sup>625</sup> If there is something, it is because it is produced, in a localised area, in which matter has resisted the general tendency toward dissipation. Desire, in its general sense as the Deleuzian processes of matter connecting and producing becomes the 'mega-motor' which ultimately explains why Intelligence exists: "For Nietzsche, for Freud, and then for Bataille, this is the background against which desire is to be thought. The mega-motor."<sup>626</sup>

This churning force of desiring-production can be represented as a cycle or spiral, which shows that production is both linear and subject to repetition. Its circular form represents the equivalence of the rules of production in the past, the now, and in the future, but it is a cycle rather than circle because it is dynamic. The 'now' is constantly being produced by the ability of Intelligence/extropy to replicate itself. If there is organisation in cybernetic production it is as a response to the control signals in feedback, rather than to the application of an abstracted plan:

Where judgement is linear and non-directional, cybernetics is non-linear and directional. It replaces linear application with the non-linear circuit, and non-

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624 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 37

625 Land, N. *Templexity* (Time Spiral Press, 2014)

626 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 37

directional logical relations with directional material flows [...] Cybernetic innovation replaces transcendental constitution, design loops replace faculties.<sup>627</sup>

The figure below provides a representation of Land's philosophy of machinic-production. The circular procession of matter through time can be conceived of as a wheel, propelled by the movement of matter from one state to the next. As it 'spins' the flow of production becomes 'wider', because more Intelligence is created over time, however, this tendency can become inhibited. The three main temporal zones in the figure are the past, the now and the future. As the laws of nature are the same in all three states, the differences between these zones is not of type, but between how we can conceive of them in understanding the tasks of philosophy (in maroon text) and its relation to cybernetics. 'The past' is the domain of speculative philosophy, in which the base-material (the outside) is probed, so that we can understand the laws of nature and the tendencies of material more clearly.<sup>628</sup> 'The future' is posited by Land as the accelerative potential of the laws of production to engender change at an increasingly rapid rate if Intelligence increases. 'The now' is the moment in which these processes are repressed by anthropocentrism and idealism, which tend towards conservatism and stability. The role of critical philosophy is to dismantle anthropocentrism's pretensions of being able to accurately map the world, and the demonstration that its productions can wildly differ from the reality they claim to conform to.

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627 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 300

628 As these Laws are unchanging, In Land's conception they are 'discovered' rather than created. Example of this discovery which Land has quoted approvingly are: 'Natural Law and Natural Rights' by James Donald ( available at <http://jim.com/rights.html>) "one of the most brilliant essays ever composed"; Nick Szabo's 'Shelling Out: The Origins of Money' ( available at <http://nakamotoinstitute.org/shelling-out/> ); and Curt Doolittle's 'Contractual Commons: Law is Discovered, Contracts and Exchanges are Made' ( available at <http://www.propertarianism.com/2015/07/20/law-exists-but-must-be-found-government-cannot-construct-it/> ). Though Land uses his thermodynamic-cybernetic model to broadly demonstrate these Laws, an investigation of their composition would be invaluable in constructing a Landian politics.

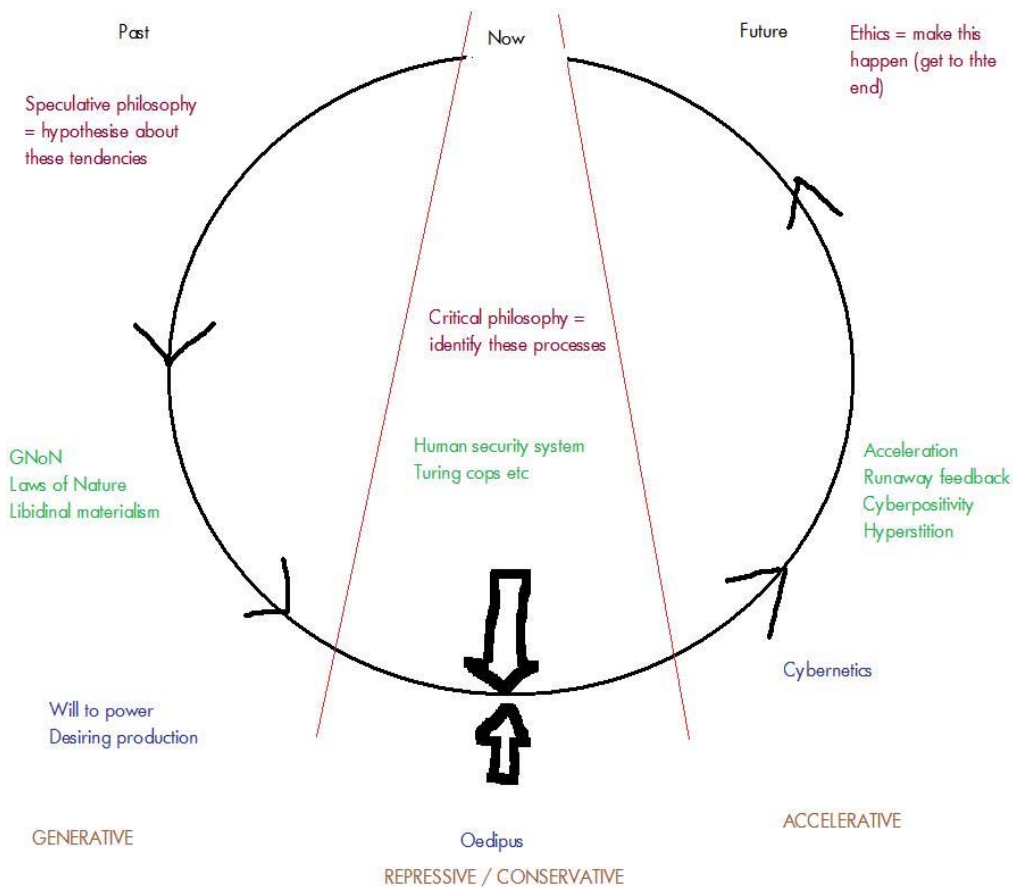


Figure 47: *Land's Time Spiral*

The dynamic states in capitalised text at the bottom (in beige) are connected to the three processes listed above: generative to laws, accelerative to intelligence, and repressive to the security systems which inhibit the other three. The philosophical antecedents of Land's work are listed in blue. The contribution which Land makes to philosophical discourse is the connection of theories of psychoanalysis, will, and material to an extreme cybernetics. This cybernetics posits their unconstrained acceleration if they should be freed of not just Oedipus the avatar for social conservatism, but for anthropocentrism in general, which claims that the way the world appears for us is an indication of the way the world is and should be. While the distinctive Landian concepts in the past and future parts of the spiral (GNoN, Human Security System) can be read as improvements upon or recapitulations of the work of the theorists who came before him, the ones in the future are more distinct, and show the emphasis on acceleration which is specific to Landian machinic desire.

Before going on to consider the 'uses' of machinic desire in the next section, this section will provide further textual support for this reading of Land's philosophy as the constitution of an cybernetic-accelerative time-cycle. The first phase of the cycle, the generative phase, has been extensively discussed in the present thesis, and operates according to the rules of productive-desire expounded in it. The accelerative phase is more problematic to define, because it seems to go against one of our most fundamental conceptions about time, which is that the 'now' is caused by the conditions of the past, but cannot be retroactively constructed by the future. Land is quite clear that the converse is possible: "Machinic desire is the operation of the virtual; implementing itself in the actual, revirtualizing itself, and producing reality in a circuit."<sup>629</sup> This intervention by the future is performed because positive-feedback and 'Intelligence optimising for itself' can deviate from a 'blind' generative mechanism of trial and error, and begin to actively influence the disposition of matter. As the drive system is plastic, and tends to migrate to the forms in which it can maximise its cathexis, and the efficacy of these cathexes is fixed (i.e. the potential connections of machinic-desire pre-exist their actual creation), desire is ultimately pulled towards formations through which it can easily connect. These formations form attractors, and are the virtual future:

Patterned as drives, virtual systems — desiring machines — are guided by control circuits passing through outcomes yet to come. Such directional dependency circuits of actual/virtual, past/future, are only accessible to cybernetic intervention, frustrating both mechanical and teleological interpretation.<sup>630</sup>

If this still seems too mystical a depiction of the accelerative process, a second definition can be created by comparing it to its other, the decelerative process of epression. If the accelerative process 'spins' the time cycle ever-faster, increasing the rate at which futurity constructs itself, the repressive process acts as a brake and prevents this manufacture. In the pinching arrows at the base part of the diagram above, we can see this repressive force of Oedipus, working against the impetus to progress, and crimping and constricting production in the now. Land's Human Security System is far more than an Oedipal emphasis on familiarity and/or sexuality. It shows that when reality and ideality do not correspond, the role

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629 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 327

630 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 326

of the social is always to shore-up the anthropocentrism of ideality, and repress any irruption of 'outsiderness', production, or joy: “The socius separates the unconscious from what it can do, crushing it against a reality that appears as transcendently given, by trapping it within the operations of its own syntheses.”<sup>631</sup> By overcoding the syntheses of the unconscious and the production it is capable of, and instead providing transcendent representations which disfigure and misrepresent this reality, philosophies which take the products of consciousness as their starting point (as most philosophy does) introduce unreal elements into the social body.

Once again, the importance of this cycle is emphasised by the forthcoming phase changes which humanity is propelled towards.<sup>632</sup> The effect of the decelerative/Oedipal repression is to retard machinic-production, and also to overcode and obscure it. If this latter overcoding succeeds in misrepresenting reality, it will lead to the 'wall' of change being met before we understand we have hit it, which may be problematic:

We are already doing it, regardless of what we think. Cybernetics is the aggravation of itself happening, and whatever we do will be what made us have to do it: we are doing things before they make sense.<sup>633</sup>

Oedipal repression is blunt and brutal yet also unreliable – and also narrow in its anthropism – that it is entirely plausible that phase change will sneak past its guard, and though “Traditional schemas which oppose technics to nature, to literate culture, or to social relations, are all dominated by a phobic resistance to the side-lining of human intelligence by the coming techno sapiens” the construction of this after-man under the aegis of capitalism and modernity may be imminent.<sup>634</sup>

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631 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 302

632 Again, for Land the motor is the abstract Moore's law, rather than design: “it's a hardware problem.

Once enough cycles can be diverted into groping about in the dark, it becomes inevitable.” Land, N. (Admin) on 'Make it Stop II' at *ufblog.net* July 28, 2015 at 9:47 am (available at <http://www.ufblog.net/make-it-stop-ii/#comments> )

633 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 297

634 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 294



## Deploying Libidinal Materialism

Approaching the end of the present thesis, we might ask what, then, is the role of a theory of machinic-desire? This section shall consider three applications of the theory as it has been espoused so far in this chapter: its predictive role; the identification and removal of constraints on production; and finally its role in encouraging Intelligence to participate in the construction of the future. This chapter has already considered meso and macro level consequences of machinic-production, which are clearly observable in the acceleration driven by 'the big three' of AI, modernity and capitalism. However, Land's philosophy also offers us the tools to analyse society at levels below these macro-tectonic changes, and a schizoanalyst can make predictions about flows of innovation and flows of degradation across a number of metrics. For Land, drives, the control mechanisms by which production is regulated and therefore conduits between future and past, can be used to predict which productive processes will deepen in the near future and those which will become disinvested: “Drive is that which explains, rather than presupposing, the cause/effect couple of classical physics. It is the dynamic instituting of effectiveness, and is thus proto-physical.”<sup>635</sup> Primary-production is often characterised by its difference from what is produced at the secondary level, and can therefore often produce effects which are not anticipated by subjects stuck in the anthropocentric complacency of the dominant social discourse. Schizoanalysis, rather than following pre-existing narratives, or making teleological projections, looks at what is happening in actuality; with schizoanalysis it isn't a case of determining, but in speculating, as “control is guidance into the unknown, exit from the box”.<sup>636</sup>

An example of the speculative-predictions that can be made by focusing on production rather than on narrative would be those of *The Asia Times'* columnist David Goldman, writing under the pen-name 'Spengler'. In the now defunct *Hyperstition* website Land made many references to Spengler's predictive powers as an analyst of the Middle East. Spengler predicted both the Arab Spring events of 2010 and the Syrian Civil War of 2011. Spengler's predictions were based on demographics and commodity prices, and cut through the narrative presumptions

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635 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 41

636 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 301

which saturate opinion about the Middle East.<sup>637</sup> The difference between economics, which measures quantity and production, and the other social sciences which are qualitative aligns the former more closely to machinic-desire. Additionally, economics predicts many events because of its proximity to and study of capitalism, which is one of the most important actors in auto-production of the real. Land firmly believes in this power of autoproduction to 'junk' the security apparatuses, manifested in various forms, which would constrain it:

Machinic desire can seem a little inhuman, as it rips up political cultures, deletes traditions, dissolves subjectivities, and hacks through security apparatuses, tracking a soulless tropism to zero control. This is because what appears to humanity as the history of capitalism is an invasion from the future by an artificial intelligent space that must assemble itself entirely from its enemy's resources.<sup>638</sup>

The first application of machinic desire is therefore to analyse productive processes so that predictions can be made about the tendency of matter which are more accurate than those made from an anthropocentric perspective. In Land's world-view any society which departs from reality will eventually be out-competed and collapse. Indeed, his relocation to Shanghai was prompted by such concerns. The Second application is that it provides a theoretical framework for the schizoanalyst to work as an *agent-provocateur*, working on behalf of the future. For Land, it is not enough to remain passive and wait for auto-productive process to liberate themselves. Instead, one must actively 'deterritorialise', and work against barriers to the realisation of auto-production, such as limitations on the operation of markets:

Machinic revolution must therefore go in the opposite direction to socialistic regulation; pressing towards ever more uninhibited marketization of the processes that are tearing down the social field, 'still further' with 'the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialization' and 'one can never go far enough in the direction of

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637 In predicting, for example, the Syrian War, Spengler noted that the removal of fuel subsidies had made the cost of producing bread prohibitive, and that all societies which fail to provide basic sustenance tend to undergo revolution within a short time. Spengler's columns can found in the *Asia Times* ( available at <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Others/Spengler.html> )

638 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 338

deterritorialization: you haven't seen anything yet'.<sup>639</sup>

A technology to encourage would be cryptography, which allows AI to “[evade] monoculture heroic-political struggle by way of imperceptibility”.<sup>640</sup> Furthermore, the dissolution of ethics and politics would further cut production away from the restraints they place upon it, bringing about the logarithmic decrease in the periods between phase changes in society predicted in 'Meltdown': “500, 1756, 1884, 1948, 1980, 1996, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2011”<sup>641</sup> It would seem that such abetting of acceleration is necessary, as the predicted rate of acceleration to singularity is lagging behind the 2011 threshold Land set. Finally, universities, in which “[learning] is vigorously suppressed by all political structures, which replace it with a domiciling and conformist education, reproducing privilege as wisdom” are also a target for Landian schizo-revolution.<sup>642</sup>

The third application of machinic-desire is not present in Land's texts. However, given its characterisation in this chapter, we can add that libidinal materialism needs to sharpen the tool of Intelligence, if it is to maximise accelerative potential. To do this it must transform machinic-drive-productions which have short circuited into unfavourable cycles back into productive ones. A problem in Land's work, and particularly his later work, is his delight in the Darwinian butchery of selection, and his siding with a tiny percentage of society “Whoever's doing capitalism at the highest intensity is my people” against the rest.<sup>643</sup> In his deployment of Intelligence, if the tool isn't pre-sharpened, he discards it. This is obviously detrimental to the pool size of potential tools. The present thesis posits that one task of philosophy (or 'libidinal materialism', if this is no longer philosophy) must be to try and generate these tools, and to encourage the invasions of the outside which abet this. Yet Land lacks any coherent theory of education, and consistently relies on an elitism, without ever considering how this elite is produced. The question of how the 'producers' are 'produced' is

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639 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 340

640 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 409

641 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 443

642 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 459

643 Land, N. at @Outsideness on Twitter.com at 12:20 AM - 21 July 2015 (available at

<https://twitter.com/Outsideness/status/623392033084813312> )

ignored. This is particularly problematic because, as he so often states, taking the anthropic 'this is how things are' to be 'this is how things must be' is caused by the subject being trapped within the ideational and representational contents of consciousness, the inside. As this pre-philosophical position is the default for most of humanity, a vast reserve of productive potential is constrained by its innate anthropocentrism.

I return again to the Farmer-Healy series of cartoons from *Viz*, in which characters like 'The Drunken Bakers', or the proprietors of 'Chicken Hut' exhibit Landian Intelligence and productive capacity, but this capacity is sloughed into a repetitive-destructive cycle which leads nowhere. These cartoons are a parody of quotidian life throughout modern Britain, where many strata within society have been mangled by the plasticity of machinic-desire, and its shortcuts to satisfaction. Conversely, so much intelligence in organisations like universities, banks and R&D departments (and whilst Land might not believe in the former, he certainly does in the latter) is sub-optimal because position holders have been selected not by ruthless Darwinism but by social metrics (class, formal education etc.). The same forces of machinic-desire and Darwinian-selection work for the good and the bad, and Land's answer is not to try and mitigate their negative effects, but to stand back and watch them put 'meat' through the Darwinian grinder; his callous mantra: "pass the popcorn".<sup>644</sup> This affectation appears to be a rhetorical sub-consequence of Land's determination to appear radical or controversial, which is a decelerative force in several of his texts. His passive-association with organisations like The Order of Nine Angles (linked to on his  [Xenosystems.net](http://www.xenosystems.net) blog) add nothing to his thought.<sup>645</sup> Similarly, Land's preference for 'dark' and 'horror' aesthetics often works as a de-intensifier in his texts. Sections like 'Dead God' in *The Thirst For Annihilation*, Land's account of personally killing God, can appear incongruous for those without such sensibilities. Such narrow aesthetic preferences significantly reduce the stock of material which Land can analyse, and use to demonstrate machinic desire. This can be contrasted to

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644 This phrase forms a sub-category of posts at  [Xenosystems.net](http://www.xenosystems.net) ( available at <http://www.xenosystems.net/category/pass-the-popcorn/> )

645 Land's reaction to what Lacan called the discourse of the university is to degenerate into transgression against claims to knowledge – this perhaps explains why his monograph was about Bataille, who had a similar instinctive reaction. The author of the present thesis prefers the traditional Lacanian shift to the discourse of the Hysteric.

Lyotard's aesthetics as discussed in Chapter 4, which used a broader and more populist range of source material.

Against the coldness of Land's schizoanalysis, a return to Lyotard's libidinal economics would perhaps mitigate the indifference to both education in general, and the specific improvement of Intelligence, in Land's texts. If the world is conditioned by a powerful anthropomorphising tendency which tries to make the objects of experience unproblematic, it is hardly surprising that this powerful force has captured a great percentage of humanity. Lyotard's more human-oriented thought in *Libidinal Economy* appeals to the reader to break free of their presumptions and to resist the 'theatrics' of subjectivity and the linguistic web of idealism in a much more effable way, and provides a stepping stone which readers could be encouraged to pass over to gain a better understanding of machinic-desire. Furthermore, Lyotard's fundamental insights that the drive economy is more complex and pluralistic than we can easily intuit, and that there is a distance between the latent content of thought and the method by which it manifests itself, are the key components in understanding the distance between the reality of machinic-desire and the irreality of the idealist-anthropocentric beliefs the subject holds. The figure of the libidinal economist is interested in the work of desire at all levels, whether sub-personal, at that of the subject, or at a meta-subjective level. This can be contrasted to Land's approach which looks at micro and macro production, but affects a disdain for intervention. Whilst traditional psychoanalysis does tend towards conservatism, the present thesis has shown that Deleuze or Lyotard's modified, materialist psychoanalysis allows radical interventions-in and harnessing-of production at a subjective level. Even a basic application of these theories can correct anthropocentric bias at the level of the individual subject, and, one would hope, encourage the cultivation of more intelligence. However, this correction of Land's Intellectual elitism should not be read as a misstep back towards anthropocentrism and humanism, as Lyotard's later works were, or as a return to an ethical belief that there is an intrinsic dignity in each subject. Instead it is the simple economic consideration that there is much wasted potential and misallocated power in the social body. If this were more favourably distributed, the accelerative cycle of base matter could be cut further free of its anthropic 'brake', and furthermore, the specific accelerative power of Intelligence could be harnessed more readily.

## **Recapitulation: critique of Land at *Accelerate***

The philosophical questions the present thesis has grappled with were anticipated by Brassier in his paper 'Accelerationism' from the symposium of the same name at Goldsmiths College in 2010. They can be used to recapitulate the context of the present thesis in relation to contemporary philosophy as, in outlining what he considers to be the flaws in Land's philosophical project, Brassier situates it in relation to accelerationist politics and the metaphysics which underpin such positions. Brassier believes that Land's schizoanalytic practice should be collapsed back into a metaphysical register. If, as argued in this introduction, Land's schizoanalytic philosophy of production sets its criteria of assessment as being dictated by its ability to predict and explain the flows of production, his work no longer shares some of philosophy's traditional concerns about the relationship between 'thinking' and reality' which characterises epistemology:

[For Land's philosophy] it's no longer an epistemological question of the legitimacy or the validity of your thinking vis-a-vis an allegedly independent reality, it's simply a question of how your schizoanalytical practice accentuates or intensifies primary production, or on the contrary, delays and inhibits it.<sup>646</sup>

Brassier argues against such a shift away from the traditional metrics of philosophical validity and towards schizoanalytic practice because of the impossibility of accessing the "primary process" and subjecting it to interrogation. The critique here is that we simply cannot escape from the domain of representation. Such a problem exhibits itself along two axes: the first is the supposed impossibility of saying anything about a primary process which takes place as auto-production in the material realm. It is simply not possible to access and interrogate the flow of production there – we do not see material itself, only impressions of material. The second is that all attempts at understanding or conceptualising the flow of material production require representational thought. As human subjects, this is the only way we can conceptualise anything, and as soon as this is that case, the criteria of truth revert to Post-Kantian claims about the correspondence between ideas and the world, and we are back in the domain of

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646 Brassier, R. 'Accelerationism' from *Accelerationism*, (Goldsmiths College: London, 14 September 2010) available at <https://moskvax.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/accelerationism-ray-brassier/>

metaphysics. Such a critique would be damaging to a philosophy whose veracity was based on traditional metaphysics, but, Land appeals to different criteria with his schizoanalytic methodology. As such, Land is a philosopher trying to escape the constraints of academic philosophy and the anthropic concepts which are tied up in it. This is not to say that Land can or did simply exit metaphysics. He engaged with it through his writings, but he does not believe that metaphysics can correspond to truth in the sense of understanding the outside. Instead, metaphysics is used to critique its own concepts, but its limiting factors rapidly become apparent, at which point Land's work changes register and re-constructs a schizoanalysis as a method of escaping these problems (this is the transition between the first two categories of Land's work in *Table A* of the Introduction). If this construction of and transition to a psychoanalytic-schizoanalytic register involves abandoning metaphysics, Brassier claims that Land's cannot and should not attempt this shift in emphasis.

The following critique made by Brassier provides a summary of the critique of Land's psychoanalytic thought from a metaphysician register, and therefore provides the context and impetus for my reading of the psychoanalytic genealogy of Land's influences. Though this is a long extract, it is included here as it delineates the split between Land and former CCRU members:

First of all, Land is operating under the aegis of Deleuze and Guattari's work. He proposes to radicalise critique, to convert the ideal conditioning of the representation of matter to the material conditioning of ideal representation. In the Landian apparatus, materiality is construed solely as the production of production.

But this materialist critique of transcendental critique, I argue, reproduces the critical problem of the connection between thought and reality. Why? Because the problem then becomes: how can you simply circumvent representation, and talk about matter itself as primary process, about reality in itself? This process, which is obviously the problem which underlies Kantian critique in the first place, re-emerges in an exacerbated form in this materialist subversion of Kantianism. But the problem is particularly acute, and this is where the Landian elimination of the Bergsonian component in Deleuze's thought becomes awkward, and generates a difficulty for him. Why?

In many ways, you can align the Deleuzian critique of representation with the Bergsonian critique of representation. Much of what Deleuze says is problematic about the categories of representation, about representation as the mediating framework that segments and parcels out the world, the flux of duration, into discretely individuated objects... the claim is that you have a sub-representational layer of experience which it is possible to access through intuition. The Bergsonian critique of metaphysics and the destitution of representation intuit the real differences in being, you can intuit the real nature of matter, time; duration in the Bergsonian register.

There's a problem here for Landianism, because he can't do this. He's supplanted representation, but he wants to supplant this kind of Bergsonian vitalist phenomenology for an unconscious thanatropism. The point is: how do you access the machinic unconscious? It's not simply given. Land insists time and time again, nothing is ever given, everything is produced. The problem is that Land's materialist liquidation of representation, because it doesn't want to reaffirm, allegedly, the primacy of sub-representational experience, which Bergson and phenomenology do in various ways... he has to explain what it is he's talking about.<sup>647</sup>

Again, Brassier's most substantive accusation is that Land does not provide an adequate description of the primary process and its mechanism: "How do you access the machinic unconscious?" In the present thesis I shall show that the operation of the primary process can be traced out through psychoanalysis, in the form of the duality pleasure principle/death drive and also in the analysis of the dreamwork. In Lyotard's words, "the dreamwork does not think"; that is, that sub-representational experience does not have to mirror representation adhere to its rules or act in a similar way. Nevertheless, the objects which it produces (known as manifest content) can be evaluated, and the mechanisms of the primary process, strange as they might be, can be inferred from this production. Yet Brassier believes that Land must come back to metaphysics, because of the need to represent. In the extract above it is clear

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647 Brassier, R. 'Accelerationism' from *Accelerationism*, (Goldsmiths College: London, 14 September 2010) available at <https://moskvax.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/accelerationism-ray-brassier/>



that, for Brassier, Bergson's vitalism is the key to reforming Land's position. Bergson is indeed a philosopher of considerable importance for Deleuze, and the reasons for Land rejecting Bergsonism – a theory which his texts never explicitly encounter – are essential for understanding Land's schizoanalysis. Chapter 4 provided a reading of Bergson's importance for Deleuze, which closely follows that of Ansell-Pearson, a philosopher who was associated with the CCRU and wrote 'Machinic Postmodernism' with Land in the 1990s. In *Germinal Life* Ansell-Pearson shows how Bergson's *Creative Evolution* was a significant influence on Deleuze's commitment to a positive and productive philosophy. However, Bergson's conception of time, one opposed to Kant's, relies on metaphysical language, which in turn creates problems for Deleuze's attempt to frame a philosophy of pure production. This is demonstrated in *Difference and Repetition*, written prior to Deleuze's collaboration with Guattari, in which Deleuze, stuck in metaphysical vocabulary and labouring to redefine the titular concepts against their ordinary meanings, struggles to present a clear depiction of the positivism in his reworking of both. This can be contrasted to his subsequent collaboration with Guattari which allowed *Anti-Oedipus* to be conducted within a psychoanalytic discourse, and in doing so, systematise a philosophy of desiring production which does not require an extensive set of preliminary definition or metaphysical foundations. For Brassier, it is impossible to 'do' philosophy in this way, without metaphysics, indeed, it is impossible to speak about truth in any subject without epistemological and ontological commitments anchoring ideas and the subject in some kind of correspondence to truth. Brassier rejects Land's contention that schizoanalysis is a practice to be judged on its predictive ability, not its ability to reconcile representation, and Land's schizoanalytic essays are full of predictive content. The standards on which they ask to be judged are what comes to pass and its correlation with their predictions – their engagements with reality – rather than their interpretation by the mores of metaphysics. The present chapter has argued that Land can escape the need for traditional metaphysics because Land's schizoanalysis asks to be judged on the correspondence between its predictions and production – issues which are empirical investigations of the real - and not between its concepts and truth, which incline towards metaphysics.

Brassier goes on to state that:

The claim that you can dispense with the need of any epistemological legitimation for

your metaphysics by simply saying it's not about truth or falsity, it's just about the intensification of the primary process, is incoherent, because matter itself as primary production, or death, is not translatable into any register of affective experience or affective intensity.<sup>648</sup>

But for Land there is a register of our ability to trace primary production, which is defined as 'outsideness'. Outsideness – things which have a capacity to amend production and act on matter, but which do not correspond with subjective representations – can be seen in those moments where its irruption causes imbalance in what would otherwise be cybernetically stable circuits. Capitalism is conceptualised by Land as being the great outside, and its productions: cities, companies, items, modernity; all are cyber-positive and auto-catalytic. Land's anti-anthropomorphism is not only a theoretical position, but also a call to action. This is what makes Land's accelerationist schizoanalysis so controversial, even amongst an audience like that of the *Acceleration* conference, some of whom are (or were formerly) sympathetic to this tendency. The response of many academics to Land's support of capitalism is to reflexively say “no”, and then begin to construct theoretical critiques of his ideas. Brassier's response to questions about Land at *Acceleration* illustrates this approach, couched in terms of necessity, rather than those of logic:

Brassier: You can generate a locus of rational agency. In other words, keep a space of subjectivation open that provides a prism for practical insertion ... *that has to be done* ... Maintain a conceptual rationality that necessitates transformation at the level of practical existence ... *in other words I would insist on the need to preserve the autonomy of rationality* as something that allows you to intervene, to cut in the continuity (emphasis added).<sup>649</sup>

The motivation for Brassier's metaphysical critique of Land lies in a second set of objections which are primarily political. In *Nihil Unbound*, Brassier presents a staunchly nihilistic

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648 Brassier, R. 'Accelerationism' from *Accelerationism*, (Goldsmiths College: London, 14 September 2010) available at <https://moskvax.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/accelerationism-ray-brassier/>

649 Brassier, R. 'Accelerationism' from *Accelerationism*, (Goldsmiths College: London, 14 September 2010) available at <https://moskvax.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/accelerationism-ray-brassier/>

philosophy:

But to acknowledge this truth, the subject of philosophy must also recognize that he or she is already dead, and that philosophy is neither a medium of affirmation nor a source of justification, but rather the organon of extinction.<sup>650</sup>

Yet in the *Accelerationism* conference, Brassier is unwilling to accept Land's empty teleology of absolute intensification of the primary process for its own sake, no matter where this road leads. Brassier's true objection is that Land's philosophy is politically and not logically dangerous. Brassier reads Land as having no strategic goal in his accelerationism, but only a tactical one (we must accelerate, but not to any destination). These tactics can be commandeered by the 'wrong' political forces and as such, Land's philosophy is to be rejected (in fact, Land does have a strategic goal, which is the maximisation of intelligence, which he defines as extropy). Land claims that all philosophy works in this manner, and that its goal is to reify or shore up the intuitions or political principles which the philosopher in question holds before they begin to conduct their 'metaphysics'. To follow the route of libidinal materialism or Landian schizoanalysis requires the abandonment of all ethical, political or aesthetic prejudgements, as its radical anti-anthropomorphism is incompatible with any pre-established positions.

If Brassier attacks Land for his metaphysical commitments it is because he is not comfortable with the politics they entail. In turn, Land believes that his former allies in the CCRU who are committed to leftist or radical politics are guilty of 'philosophical conservatism'. Brassier states that:

I once had a conversation with [Land], which consisted of a disagreement whereby he insisted I kept translating what he took to be pragmatic issues, issues of what he called “machinic practice”, into conceptual issues. He accused me of philosophical conservatism, by insisting on translating what he took to be the pragmatic back into the theoretical. But I want to insist that this is necessary, because this “machinic

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650 Brassier, R. *Nihil Unbound* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p.239

practicism” that Land insisted on leads to a kind of practical impotence.<sup>651</sup>

In '*Critique of Transcendental Miserablism*' Land characterises this split from his perspective, in which former friends on the left are tied to a theoretically and practically impotent defence of the status quo, whilst Land's pro-capitalist acceleration aims at newness and innovation. In practice, the former has achieved nothing, whilst the latter – most notably in Land's analysis in “Neo-China” – has been the most liberating moment in history. Nevertheless, the abandonment of one's self to the flow of acceleration is not an easy thing to acquiesce to. Land's position is a mixture of fatalism – it will happen, so why not get there as quickly as possible – and predictive optimism based on the benefits that accelerative modernity has already brought. Again, we see the importance of Gibson's *Neuromancer*, which depicts the liberation of Wintermute, an Artificial Intelligence (AI). When the human protagonist, Chase, has to make the precipitous decision to free Wintermute he conceives it as a leap into the new:

‘Give us the fucking code,’ he said. ‘If you don't, what'll change? What'll ever fucking change for you? You'll wind up like the old man. You'll tear it all down and start building again! You'll build the walls back, tighter and tighter... I got no idea at all what'll happen if Wintermute wins, but it'll *change* something!’ He was shaking, his teeth chattering.<sup>652</sup>

This mirrors the decision at the heart of Land's philosophy. In this era of accelerating technological change philosophy creates a false dichotomy between controlled change and uncontrolled change, whereas, for Land, the real dichotomy is between resisting change and accepting it. The impersonal forces of the outside irrupting at the moment: cryptocurrency, AI and singularity, demographic collapse, the death of the Westphalian state system, crises of capitalism, all are beyond the ability of humanity to steer. What remains is a binary choice to resist, or to progress. Resistance is always undertaken by the human subject in defence of what it knows, and is therefore fundamentally conservative, hence Land's critique of Brassier's retreat into 'conceptual issues' as leading to philosophical conservatism.

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651 Brassier, R. 'Accelerationism' from *Accelerationism*, (Goldsmiths College: London, 14 September 2010) available at <https://moskvax.wordpress.com/2010/09/30/accelerationism-ray-brassier/>

652 Gibson, W. *Neuromancer* (United Kingdom: Grafton, 1986) p.307

## What is Left for Philosophy?

The present thesis has followed two lines of inquiry: (1) investigating Land's abandonment of traditional metaphysics, and the extent to which this departure succeeds; and (2) evaluating Land's depiction of the primary process.

Regarding the departure from traditional metaphysics, Land's argument as traced in the present thesis does aim at the primary process rather than the secondary; toward material rather than ideas. However, Land's approach cannot be said to be entirely separate from a metaphysical one, and there is a sustained interrogation-of and situation-in-relation-to the history of philosophy in all of his texts. Land's objective, the disruption of anthropocentrism, can be achieved using a wide variety of philosophical approaches, and there are strands of his thought that take a more involved position in metaphysics than the construction of machinic-desire does. Yet stratification of philosophy is possible, and though neither the present thesis nor Land's work can be said to rest wholly in one side of the dichotomy below, the former has shown how doggedly the latter tries to operate in an impersonal and anti-anthropocentric register:

However else it is possible to divide Western thinking, one fissure can be teased-open separating the theo-humanists—croaking together in the cramped and malodorous pond of Anthropos—from the wild beasts of the impersonal. The former are characterized by their moral fervour, parochialism, earnestness, phenomenological disposition, and sympathy for folk superstition, the latter by their fatalism, atheism, strangely reptilian exuberance, and extreme sensitivity for what is icy, savage, and alien to mankind.<sup>653</sup>

It could be argued that, if Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* is a superior starting point for an anti-anthropocentric philosophy, Ansell-Pearson's approach in *Germinal Life*, which reconstitutes a metaphysical account of pre-cognitive production, would also be superior. The present thesis however, while having not engaged closely with that text, notes the problems of

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653 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) pp. 97-98

utilising the methodologies and lexicon of the metaphysical, which is saturated with anthropic concepts, as the starting point for a critique of metaphysics.<sup>654</sup> Such a starting point leads to the regressions and circularities – 'aren't you using ideas to critique ideas' – that short-circuit metaphysical attempts to access base-material. This point is illustrated by the various strands of speculative realism, which share the same basic instinct as Land, which is to try and access the thing-in-itself (or at least to go beyond Kantian correlationism). Despite the amount of effort which has gone into the various sub-positions in that wider project, all are all-too-readily cut down by the 'scissor-paper-stones' of objections such as the impossibility of knowing the by-definition-unknowable noumenon.

Another common objection to the Landian position outlined in the present thesis attacks his apparently teleological view of there being 'a future' that we are moving towards. Land's celebration of apocalyptic capitalism and techno-modernity appears to be a statement of preference, and invites the accusation that it is merely another – and even worse, an anthropocentric - humanist viewpoint. This objection is made by Ansell-Pearson throughout *Viroid Life*, which, though it never mentions Land by name, appears to be a sustained interrogation of the basis of Land's reading of Nietzsche.<sup>655</sup> However, there is, again, a defence of the Landian position which can be made, which considers that such critique is stuck in a philosophical perspective which tends to the attribution of values everywhere – a problem identified by Nietzsche – and not the cyberneticist position Land attempts to occupy. We might ask if there truly is a teleology in Land's work, or if this is rather a teleonomy? The difference between the two, again, maps on to a concern with the real rather than the ideal. Teleonomy identifies ends in terms of evolved causes rather than ideas, and rather than being representational – an interpretation of the state of things – it has narrower criteria for being true or false, again, in these sense of whether it accurately represents a state of production that causes later production.

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654 As discussed throughout Bryant, L. *Difference and Givenness* (Northwestern: USA, 2008)

655 Though Land is not mentioned explicitly, 'cybernetic theorists' are the antagonists of the work.

Furthermore, there are mentions of 'the virtual future not arriving' and other references, which seem to directly indicate Land is the interlocutor being addressed. Ansell-Pearson's attack on 'cyberneticists', which is to some extent isomorphic with that of Mullarkey explored in Chapter 3, is a subject that is ripe for further investigation.

Land's attempt to measure desiring-production offers a way out of this impasse. Though “Kant's transcendental subject gives the law to itself in its autonomy, Deleuze/Guattari's machinic unconscious diffuses all law into automatism” and this automatic production offers more reliable data about reality than the laws of the subject.<sup>656</sup> If these automatic productions, and the rules which condition them can be determined, this post-psychoanalytic method is superior to a metaphysical one. Land certainly notes the problems created by the traditional agents of metaphysical thought, the academy. Academia is a social institution rather than a journey towards pure Intelligence, and as it works for the social-body, it works to preserve the same by repressing positive feedback: “For philosophy is a machine which transforms the prospect of thought into excitation; a generator. ‘Why is this so hard to see?’ one foolishly asks. The answer quickly dawns: the scholars.”<sup>657</sup> One can see the causes of this Landian disposition towards the university in his reception at the *Virtual Futures* conference, in which scholar after scholar lined up to decry to Land that he was going against their pre-determined, anthropic ideas.

Conversely, we might ask what does philosophy think of Land? Generally his work is seen as a failed attempt; indeed, an impossible attempt, because thought, no matter how wild a polemic it builds, and no matter how much or how desperately it searched for the outside, was never going to succeed in accessing the inaccessible. But did Land ever say it would?

What I offer is a web of half-choked ravings that vaunts its incompetence, exploiting the meticulous conceptual fabrications of positive knowledge as a resource for delirium, appealing only to the indolent, the maladapted, and the psychologically diseased.<sup>658</sup>

Yet despite such ironic statements, is Land truly arguing against philosophy? Is he rather not standing alongside it, laughing at its self-obsessions and circularity whilst he announces the

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656 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 322

657 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 35

658 Land, N. *The Thirst for Annihilation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) p. 37

forthcoming deluge of cybernetic production: “When you tell them Sphinx lets you play with her K-40 what are they to make of it? Where's the argument? (With a K-40 you don't need to argue, and they're not yet smart enough to argue with you.)”<sup>659</sup> Land certainly seems confounded that philosophy simply cannot see what is happening in the real, in base-matter. The phase-changes modernity is approaching will wreck the anthropic complacency of the humanist position, but no one seems concerned:

It might still be a few decades before artificial intelligences surpass the horizon of biological ones, but it is utterly superstitious to imagine that the human dominion of terrestrial culture is still marked out in centuries, let alone in some metaphysical perpetuity.<sup>660</sup>

Ultimately, Land's thought does not ask to be evaluated according to the mores of modern academic philosophy, but for its predictive ability and its correspondence to reality. In metaphysics, arguments are analysed, deconstructed, and run through formal logic; they have their premises checked, and we search for assumptions or undefined terms which might invalidate them. But when someone tells you that your new car will last longer than you will, is the best approach to investigate what they mean by 'car'? A proposition about productive desire needs to be tested rather than parsed. Though it has been supported here by a rigorous depiction of the micro-operation of desire and its foundation in psychoanalysis, perhaps Land's thought is most clearly apprehended at a cosmic scale, as an attempt to reconcile philosophy and thermodynamics:

Modernity discovers irreversible time conceived as a progressive enlightenment tracking capital concentration integrating it into nineteenth century science as entropy production, and as its inverse (evolution).<sup>661</sup>

In this age of electronics progressing by Moore's Law, with markets blooming and intensifying all over the globe, we are certainly hitting the accelerative velocities which Land

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659 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 427

660 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 293

661 Land, N. *Fanged Noumena* (Falmouth and New York: Urbanomic, 2011) p. 351



warns us about. If things continue as they are, his work might be proved to be accurate on a far shorter time line than the discipline of philosophy usually requires to incorporate the work of any thinker into its canon. Intelligence is always there, working away in base matter, doing what thought cannot, and will not:

'Intellectual intuition' is the anticipation of intelligence explosion within the Occidental philosophical tradition. ... Strip away the phenomenological confusion, which Kant was already prey to, and it describes productive self-apprehension of intelligence. ... The theological barrier to the closure of this loop has been diagnosed by Mou Zongsan as the distinctive trait of the Western tradition... Intellectual intuition belongs only to God, Asiatic mysticism, or robots. It's the cognitive reaction pile with graphite rods pulled out.<sup>662</sup>

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662 Land, N. at *@UF\_Blog* on Twitter.com at 2:58 AM - 20 July 2015 ( available at [https://twitter.com/UF\\_blog/status/623069381975674880](https://twitter.com/UF_blog/status/623069381975674880) )

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