

Article

The Nascent State

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Abstract: I suggest here ecologies of the nascent state, posing the following general questions: what is this state and what is it to live, to fabricate modes of life, in its immanence? I believe populating this state is, by right, ‘ecological’, even if what I offer here is only a sketch or glimpse, playful as it is, of the possibility of such modes of life, of dwelling. As I develop it here, the nascent is in flight of being. It is populated by lesser, minoritarian existences. If it is ‘ecological’, it is because these existences, or modes of becoming, are themselves, in their own right, ‘ecologies’, that is, modes of dwelling, of life, on the ‘other side of existence’, as Antonin Artaud put it once, in exile from Being. The power to return eternally to the nascent state is the power to live, to dwell, in the absolute forgetfulness of Being, in the interstice where philosophy supposedly ends, but where it nevertheless begins again, in oblivion itself, where being is never already the verticality of Being, its difference with beings, but always nascent, in the beginning, eternally so.

Keywords: chaos; minoritarian; nonsense; others; being in the world

1. Chaos

In *Nouvelles révélations de l'être*, which appeared in 1937, a little more than a year or so before being committed to 9 years of psychiatric asylums, including one in Rodez, Antonin Artaud speaks of being in the world as a “delirious illusion”. In a defeated tone, as if on the verge of suicide, he writes: “I struggled to try to exist, to accept the forms (all the forms) with which the delirious illusion of being in the world has clothed reality” [1]. If we compare the desperation of these ‘revelations’ to the almost triumphant tone of *The Theater and Its Double*, which appeared in 1935, it seems something must have happened between both that later leads Artaud to his years of internment (one of my questions in relation to Artaud is precisely how could he have experienced such a mental collapse after the great health of his ‘theater of cruelty’). In any case, my focus at the moment is on what seems to be Artaud’s very early reception of the fundamental conception of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, his “fundamental ontology”, which describes “being in the world”. What I ask, generally, while taking Artaud at his word, that is, *literally*, is in what way being in the world could be understood as what Artaud says is a delirious illusion. This means inquiring into the “real physiognomy” Artaud says is clothed by being in the world, which would allow us to apprehend in just what sense, contrary to what Heidegger suggests, it is actually Being itself, in all the openness of its clearing (*Lichtung*), that ‘veils’ or ‘conceals’ (*Verborgenheit*) reality.¹ But what ‘reality’ is there other than the one of being in the world? Beyond or prior to the ontological difference between “Being” and “beings”? Even in his youth, Artaud already spoke of what he called “the other side of existence”, understanding his own life as a kind of involuntary suicide towards it. In a passage which has echoed in my mind for years now, he says: “And it is certain I have been dead for a long time, I have already committed suicide. They have suicided me, so to speak. But what would you think of an *anterior suicide*, a suicide that would make us retrace our steps, but to the other side of existence, not to the side of death. This is the only suicide that would have value for me. I have no appetite for death, I have an appetite for *not existing*”.² What is this appetite? The other side of existence? What death or suicide is this that takes us to it? Where reality



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is apprehended as real? Finally naked, if you will, or at least unclothed by being in the world?

I claim that Artaud's 'other side of existence', or what he calls the 'real physiognomy of life', refers to a region which I define as the nascent state. Actually, the expression itself is borrowed from Guattari, and very much inspired by his work, as well as Deleuze's, taken both individually and in terms of their prolific collaboration (so criticized by thinkers such as Badiou or Žižek for 'guattarizing Deleuze'). At a certain moment in *Chaosmosis*, in the essay "Schizo Chaosmosis", which I am reading here in more detail, Guattari speaks of the 'nascent state'. He writes the following: "It is being's new ways of being which create rhythms, forms, colors and the intensities of dance. Nothing happens of itself. Everything has to continually begin again from zero, at the point of chaotic emergence: the power of the eternal return to the nascent state" [2]. And even this 'zero', he clarifies a few pages earlier, is not at all to be confused with an undifferentiated abyss. "It is a like a freeze-frame", a kind of "ontological petrification", associated clinically to catatonic schizophrenia, or to what Artaud also describes as a diversion from the flow of life, a paralysis imposed on the mind, "which both indicates its basic (or bass) position in the polyphony of chaotic components, and intensifies its power relative to them. Thus, it does not constitute a degree zero of subjectivation, a neutral, passive, deficient, negative point, but an extreme point of intensification. It is in passing through this chaotic 'earthing' [*prise de terre*], this perilous oscillation, that something else becomes possible, that ontological bifurcations and the emergence of coefficients of processual creativity can occur" [2]. Even if only as a curious anecdote, it is worth recalling how Deleuze himself describes Guattari as embodying "two aspects of an anti-self", corresponding to each one of his proper names, Pierre and Félix. "In the most natural way imaginable", Deleuze says, "Guattari embodies two aspects of an anti-self: on the one hand, he is like a catatonic stone, a blind and hard body invaded by death as soon as he took off his glasses; on the other hand, he lights up and seethes with multiple lives the moment he looks, acts, laughs, thinks or attacks. Thus, he is named Pierre and Félix: schizophrenic powers"³; ontological petrification belonging to Pierre, ontological creationism to Félix. My point, in any case, is that neither of these schizophrenic powers, or embodiments of an anti-self, are indicative of an undifferentiated abyss, or nothingness, of the sort that usually appears contrasted with 'Being', or understood to be the only (immanent) exteriority to being in the world, following an exclusionary disjunctive logic. The essential claim arising from Deleuze and Guattari's work, both individually and collectively, perhaps even one of the main reasons for their collaboration, ontologically at least, is their claim (I will quote Guattari) that "chaos is not pure indifferentiation; it possesses a specific ontological texture. It is inhabited by virtual entities and modalities of alterity that have nothing universal about them" [2]. Or, with Deleuze, in what could very well be understood as a war cry traversing his ontology: "We cannot accept the alternative which thoroughly compromises psychology, cosmology, and theology: either singularities already comprised in individuals and persons, or the undifferentiated abyss". And which leads him to the following philosophical program, shared with Guattari: "We seek to determine an impersonal and pre-individual transcendental field, which does not resemble the corresponding empirical fields, and which nevertheless is not confused with an undifferentiated depth" [3].

The nascent state corresponds to this interval between an undifferentiated abyss, which Deleuze and Guattari reject entirely, in favor of 'chaos', the 'ontological textures' constituting it, and Being, or being in the world. "It is not therefore Being in general which erupts in chaotic experience" [2]. In fact, there is no such thing as Being in general, at least in the nascent state. Following Guattari, who is more vocal about this point, making it a crucial aspect of his work, what comes first in the nascent state, as constitutive of the state itself, is the experience of *chaotic vertigo*, "which finds one of its privileged expressions", he adds, "in psychosis". It is this vertigo which "is constitutive of the foundational intentionality of the subject-object relation", where "psychosis starkly reveals an essential source of being in the world" [2]. But even saying it like this seems to give

too much, I feel, to intentionality, or to being in the world (to phenomenology generally), especially if we recall what Artaud says of this 'Being', or being in the world. After all, if the reality of which he speaks refers to Guattari's nascent state, such a reality or state should suffice unto itself, even if it founds, or may be conceived to be an essential source of being in the world. Still, much more detail is needed with regard to the constitution of the nascent state other than the sort of programmatic statements we find in Guattari's *Chaosmosis*, for instance, when he clarifies that the "ontological apprehension belonging to psychosis is in no way synonymous with simple chaotic degradation", or that "the passage through chaomic homogeneity, which can be a path to complexual heterogeneity (but this is never mechanically or dialectically guaranteed), does not constitute a translucent, indifferent zone of being, but an intolerable nucleus of ontological creationism" [2]. Much more is demanded in terms of the ontological inquiry when dealing with such statements. Namely, (1) what is this chaotic or psychotic vertigo, especially in its relation to being in the world? (2) How is it an intolerable nucleus of ontological creation? And (3) why such an ontological inquiry is relevant today, in its own right, and not insofar as it founds or is conceived to be an essential source of this or that, especially if the 'Being' said to be at stake is apprehended as a delirious illusion.

It is in relation to this last point that I want to suggest ecologies of the nascent state, or to pose the general question of what is it to live, to fabricate modes of life, of dwelling, in this state. I believe populating this state is, by right, 'ecological', even if what I offer here is only a sketch or glimpse, playful as it is, of the possibility of such modes of life, of dwelling. In any case, one general point I think can be made of these modes, these possibilities of dwelling: they all suppose 'lesser existences'⁴; the modes of life they affirm are 'minoritarian', ontologically speaking, as the lives at stake, the modes of becoming they affirm, never attain, even remotely, the sort of verticality resonating the 'givenness' of a 'Being' already 'there', given in its givenness all at once, from which modes of 'concealment' may be determined, including those of non-human life, however 'poor in world' they may be conceived to be. What I propose—and I think Deleuze and Guattari also demand, all of us listening carefully, literally, to what giants such as Artaud have to say—is to begin an ontological inquiry while supposing the impossibility of 'Being', the abyss where 'Being' is not 'there', and perhaps never already was, if we assume it to be what Artaud says it is: a delirious illusion. In other words, *the nascent state is in flight of Being*. It is populated by lesser, minoritarian existences. If it is 'ecological', it is because these existences, or modes of becoming, are themselves, in their own right, 'ecologies', that is, modes of dwelling, of life, on the 'other side of existence', in exile from Being. The power to return eternally to the nascent state: this is the power to live, to dwell, in the absolute forgetfulness of Being, in the interstice where philosophy supposedly ends, but where it nevertheless begins again, in oblivion itself, where being is never already the verticality of Being, but always nascent, in the beginning, eternally so.

2. Illiteracies of Being

It all begins in chaos, vertigo. It all begins with what I define as an illiteracy, or rather, as illiteracies of Being (I am reminded of Beckett's *Watt*, as if there were always a *Watt* responding in utter confusion, bewilderment even, to Being) [4]. One of Heidegger's key propositions is that Being is interpreted or read, that it is not only already there, but that in relation to which one has to direct oneself towards in a certain manner to be able to interpret, to read, in order to investigate its different 'structures', its 'facticities', of 'being in', 'being with', 'being towards death', 'care', and so forth. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger makes it clear that the phenomenological method of investigation implies bringing to the light of day, or to put in the light, that which shows itself in itself, in other words, the phenomenon (which is not an appearance, as the appearing does not show itself, or merely announces itself by that which does not appear—the thing in itself). At stake, therefore, is a manner of investigating that unveils the disclosing (what Heidegger calls 'logos'; what lets something be seen) precisely insofar as it 'interprets' or 'reads' the phenomenon, in

its multiple structures ([5], §7). This gives way to a hermeneutic of a specific kind, of 'Being' itself, which Heidegger called, early on, the 'hermeneutics of facticity'. He writes the following: "Hermeneutics has the task of making the Dasein which is in each case our own accessible to this Dasein itself with regard to the character of its being, communicating Dasein to itself in this regard, hunting down the alienation from itself with which it is smitten. In hermeneutics what is developed for Dasein is a possibility of its becoming and being for itself in the manner of an understanding of itself"⁵.

Now, let us assume the possibility, again echoed in psychosis, but not limited to it, and which Heidegger, but not only him, seem to ignore entirely, which is of this 'Dasein' not being able to 'communicate' itself to itself in the manner Heidegger suggests, of 'hunting down the alienation from itself with which it is smitten', the impossibility, that is, for this Dasein to be for itself 'in the manner of an understanding of itself'. Dasein no longer reads or is able to read its Being. Not because this entity is not adequately turned towards its own question, or its manner of showing itself in itself, but more simply, far more simply, because however turned towards itself it may be, such Being, such showing, is uninterpretable, has become unreadable, rendered non-comprehensible. Because, that is, one is illiterate, or has become illiterate to Being, to the very hermeneutics of facticity. Because however 'thrown' into Being one may be, it is Being, its structures, its facticity, which can no longer be 'read', 'seen', 'grasped', much less 'expressed' in concepts. And this is not to speak of what such 'throwness' [*Geworfenheit*] is said to project, the very horizon or contour of finitude, which has become utterly meaningless (or as Artaud imposes, "Before committing suicide, I demand to be assured of being, I want to be sure of death)" [1]. Even if such a thing as a 'there' of Being could be said to exist, or to have existed, it no longer remains, but is perforated in multiple ways by unframed holes of being, by a generalized illiteracy, a few good notches below or beyond the radar of Being (*Watt*).

In my work alone, I count a few of these illiteracies of Being, organized into different domains, each asking what sort of chaotic or vertiginous experience of the body, of language, of thought, of time or of the world itself, would justify or help us sense the kind of illiteracy I am suggesting, which is the one of 'Being' itself. For the present purposes, allow me to illustrate, in very broad strokes, such illiteracy by way of one of these domains, the one of language, which, in any case, I find to be exemplary, not only because the problem at stake is one of literacy, but especially with regard to the other domains, as a kind of vortex of the chaotic experience itself. It is extracted from Artaud's life and work, and analyzed memorably by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*. I am referring to Artaud's 'glossolalia', more specifically to his 'anti-grammatical attempt against Lewis Carroll' [1].

3. Two Regimes of Nonsense

"We must be attentive", Deleuze alerts, "to the very different functions and abysses of nonsense . . . Crude similarities set their trap . . . A little girl may sing '*Pimpanicaille*'; an artist may write '*frumious*'; and a schizophrenic may utter '*perspenticace*'. But we have no reason to believe that the problem is the same in all of these cases and the results roughly analogous. One could not seriously confuse Babar's song with Artaud's howls-breath [*cris-souffles*], "RatararatararatarataAtaratatara rana Otara otarakatara" . . . "With horror we recognize it easily: it is the language of schizophrenia. Even the portmanteau words seem to function differently, being caught up in syncopes and being overloaded with gutturals. We measure at the same moment the distance separating Carroll's language and Artaud's language—the former emitted at the surface, the latter carved into the depths of bodies" [3].

Deleuze's point is that there are two very different kinds of nonsense, the first, at the 'surface', in relation to which he finds in Lewis Carroll an exemplary staging of its paradoxes, and the second, of the 'depths', which he attributes to 'schizophrenic language', to Artaud. At stake is the general problem of Deleuze's logic of sense: on the one hand, we find a radical collapse of sense, or a kind of nonsense, related to schizophrenic language, which does not suppose or operate a 'donation of sense', which does not "posit between

sense and nonsense an original type of intrinsic relation". The other kind of nonsense supposes this 'donation' or "mode of co-presence" [3].

For instance, we may assume Carroll's 'Jabberwock' to be an unheard-of name, a fantastic beast, that designates its own sense, but putting it like that only confirms that it is a word that designates exactly what it expresses and expresses what it denotes, or, if you will, that it says its own sense, which, of course, is completely abnormal—"the name saying its own sense can only be nonsense" [3]. Deleuze also mentions Meinong's 'impossible objects' as examples of this 'surface' kind of nonsense; after all, what is a square circle, or a mountain without a valley? Being absurd, they are without signification, not even attaining the threshold of being either possibly true or possibly false, but they are not without sense; much to the contrary, one seems even forced to admit that they *only have sense*, in other words, that they are "extra-being" in a strange, immanent way, where transcendence no longer operates in height but along a surface defined ontologically by "a minimum common to the real, the possible *and the impossible*" [3]. The cry "Carroll yes, Camus no" has perhaps never resounded so deeply as in Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*, even if he quips it only in passing. One thing is to strip significations of their meaning, whose determinations are themselves organized according to laws, organizing names, each of which having its own sense, into classes and properties of different types. Another thing entirely different, however, is to assume, on the contrary, that nonsense is that which donates sense, is in co-presence with sense, in sum, that "there is always too much sense: as excess produced and over-produced by nonsense as a lack of itself" [3].

Even if only as an illustration of what I mean, specifically with regard to the nonsense at the surface, let us recall one of the ways Carroll stages the paradoxes of sense, in terms of the paradox of an indefinite regress. I am referring, for instance, to Alice's meeting with the Knight in *Through the Looking Glass*, where each name is made to refer to another name which designates the sense of the preceding one, language finding itself caught in an indefinite nominal regress, or proliferation of verbal entities (also known as Frege's paradox)⁶:

"The name of the song is called 'Haddock's Eyes'".

"Oh, that's the name of the song, is it?", Alice said, trying to feel interested.

"No, you don't understand", the Knight said, looking a little vexed. "That's what the name is *called*. The name really is 'The Aged Aged Man'".

"Then I ought to have said 'That's what the *song* is called?'" Alice corrected herself.

"No, you oughtn't: that's quite another thing! The song is called 'Ways and Means': but that's only what it's *called*, you know!"

"Well, what *is* the song, then? said Alice, who was by this time completely bewildered.

"I was coming to that", the Knight said. "The song really is 'A-sitting on a Gate!'" [8].

Is it only Alice who at this point is completely bewildered? Are we really to suppose that there is such a thing as an 'originary sense' somewhere along the line of this regress?

With regard to schizophrenic language, it includes two poles, a maternal one, as if schizophrenia not only had its own language but a foreign one, a foreign language *of that* schizophrenic maternal tongue, or an exteriority still internal to schizophrenic language generally. "The procedure is this: a word, often of an alimentary nature, appears in capital letters, printed as in a collage which freezes it and strips it of its sense. But the moment that the pinned-down word loses its sense, it bursts into pieces; it is decomposed into syllables, letters, and above all into consonants which act directly on the body, penetrating and bruising it . . . Stripped of its sense, its *phonetic elements* become singularly wounding. The word no longer expresses an attribute of the state of affairs; its fragments merge with unbearable sonorous qualities, invade the body where they form a mixture and a new state of affairs, as if they themselves were a noisy, poisonous food and canned excrement . . . In this passion, a pure language-affect is substituted for the effect of language. 'All writing is

PIG SHIT" (that is to say, every fixed or written word is decomposed into noisy, alimentary, and excremental bits" [3].

"Nonsense no longer gives sense, for it has consumed everything" [3]. Still, there is another, active pole to schizophrenic language, a duality internal to the schizophrenic word. "For the schizophrenic", Deleuze notices, "it is less a question of recovering meaning than of destroying the word, of conjuring up the affect, and of transforming the painful passion of the body into a triumphant action, obedience into command, always in this depth beneath the fissured surface . . . What defines this second language and this method of action, practically, is its consonantal, guttural, and aspirated overloads, its apostrophes and internal accents, its breaths and its scansion, and its modulation which replaces all syllabic or even literal values. It is a question of transforming the word into an action by rendering it incapable of disintegrating: *language without articulation* . . . Triumph may now be reached only through the creation of breath-words [*mots-souffles*] and howl-words [*mots-cris*], in which all literal, syllabic, and phonetic values have been replaced by *values which are exclusively tonic and not written*" [3].

Between two regimes of nonsense: this seems an adequate way of characterizing Deleuze's logic of sense, at least in what its two key dimensions are concerned. Besides the duality of the schizophrenic word, what is to be distinguished is this 'word', with its "sub-sense, a-sense, *Untersinn*", ref. [3] from the nonsense at the surface, where we find another kind of word ('esoteric' ones, as Deleuze defines them) which, saying their own sense, are themselves the kind of nonsense which only has sense, words where sense and nonsense are in co-presence, entertain an intrinsic relation with each other. In any case, my point, with regard to Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity, is this: Can Being really be read, interpreted, seen, and so on, on the basis of these 'languages', not only that of the schizophrenic, of Artaud, but also that of the little girl, of Carroll's Alice? In the case of schizophrenic language, it does not seem reasonable to dispute the impossibility of Being that Artaud screams so frequently, due to his inability to interpret such a thing as being in the world. After all, are we really to suppose something like a hermeneutics of facticity, the very trace of the facticity of Being, from within the abyssal to-and-fro movement where, on the one hand, the word is literally emptied of its sense, broken down into aggressive consonants, to a foreign one where, on the other hand, it is modulated into cries, breaths, actions of a language without articulation? Does not the schizophrenic's accusation that being in the world is a delirious illusion lose Being and the verticality of its self-transcendence?⁷ And even Carroll's little girl, Alice, with her looking glass—does her manner of making sense a function of nonsense not evade Being absolutely? The sort of originary common sense or *Ur-doxa* Heidegger himself evokes when speaking of a "pre-ontological understanding of Being?"⁸

Technicalities apart, the following point remains: if sense is to be produced as a function of nonsense, there being nothing other than an indefinite regress without even the mere semblance of an originary sense, then it is sense that depends on a paradoxical instance, itself non-identifiable, lacking its own identity and its origin. Lacking its own Being, just as square circles or mountains without valleys have sense, only have sense, without having Being. Through the looking glass, being in the world becomes the object of a fundamental illiteracy. *The Hunting of the Snark* evades Dasein's hunt of its own alienation to itself to which it is, Heidegger says, 'smitten'. Which is to say, to reverberate a sentence written by a very young Emmanuel Lévinas, who must have read *Being and Time* more or less when Artaud did, and which I too stutter here in a fundamental stammering, one which spits out 'Jabberwock' just as much 'Ratararataratara': "Every civilization that accepts being—with the tragic despair it contains and the crimes it justifies—merits the name barbarian" [9].

4. Others

There is another example I want to include, another illiteracy I would like to consider, even if only very generally, as a manner of introduction. It appears in Michel Tournier's

extraordinary recasting of Daniel Defoe's classic, *Robinson Crusoe* [10]. What becomes of a man who is alone, without Others, on a desert island? This, of course, is the problem posed by Defoe and Tournier, resulting, in any case, in very different outcomes, opposed even, especially with regard to the question of sexuality. Defoe's Robinson is asexual, eliminating sexuality entirely as he reproduces on the island the (economic) reality of his originary world. Tournier's Robinson, on the contrary, discovers on the island a non-anthropomorphic sexuality, of a vegetal nature, as he deviates incessantly, fantastically, perversely even, from his own original world, our world. Again, Deleuze's analysis of the differences between both these Robinsons is illuminating. But my interest is in the concept of Others, which has little or nothing to do with what is conceived as 'the Other' in philosophies such as those of Lévinas or Derrida. By Others, we mean nothing other than the existence of other people, in the empirical, everyday or colloquial sense of the term. For Robinson, the desert island is a world without Others. Besides the metamorphoses he undergoes, neurotic, psychotic, perverse, analyzed by Deleuze, we also find his own reflections, of a philosophical nature, with regard to the world, to the role of Others in giving us the world as we know it, which he induces by means, precisely, of its counterpoint, a world, the desert island, where they are no longer present. What is the 'effect' of the presence of Others? How is this effect important in our experience of the world? And this is all toward the point of introducing us to a 'structure', defined by Others, of an entirely different kind, which in its absence what appears to be compromised is—again—the very possibility of comprehending what Heidegger's hermeneutics takes for granted, a 'pre-ontological understanding of Being'?

I count three main effects of the presence of Others, or what Deleuze will call the *structure-Other*, which are induced as the result of their absence, or the circumstances of the desert island. The first is structural and relates directly to perception—to the perceptual field. Without Others, as Deleuze analyzes, "there reigns a brutal opposition of the sun and earth, of an unbearable light and an obscure abyss . . . 'Everywhere I am not total darkness reigns', [Robinson says] . . . Instead of relatively harmonious forms surging forth from, and going back to, a background in accordance with an order to space and time, only abstract lines now exist, luminous and hurtful—only a groundless abyss, rebellious and devouring . . . Having ceased to stretch out and bend toward one another, objects rise threateningly; we discover then wickedness which is no longer that of man" [3].

Induced from this hostile world of all or nothing, the first effect of Others is to fill the world, as Deleuze says beautifully, "with a benevolent murmuring". Of course, other people may be a powerful element of distraction, which Heidegger's *Dasein* seems to have to resist so much in order to tune into the verticality of its own self-transcendence. But here, on the contrary, Others and their concerns illuminate a background, at the edge of our consciousness, capable at any moment of becoming its center. It is as if Others were themselves a kind of pre-existing light, or vision, where the part of the object our consciousness, at any given moment, does not perceive, is perceived by Others, giving to the world a depth, a margin with its own transitions, where in transiting from one side of the object to the other, or from one object to the next, I assume both that Others had already perceived it and, therefore, that it is from a common depth that they arose. "In short, the Other assures margins and transitions in the world. He is the sweetness of contiguities and resemblances. He regulates the transformations of form and background and variations of depth. He prevents assaults from behind. He fills the world with a benevolent murmuring. He makes things incline toward one another and find their natural complements in one another. When one complains about the meanness of Others, one forgets this other and even more frightening meanness—namely, the meanness of things were there no Others" [3].

Far from Others being reduced to a kind of background noise, or distraction, or even understood simply in terms of an object I perceive or a subject perceiving me, in terms of Robinson's philosophical reflection, Others appear as a structure, the *structure-Other*, without which the perceptual field would not function as it does, or would appear with the meanness that it does to Robinson, who finds himself in a world without Others. "That this

structure may be actualized by real characters, by variable subjects—me for you and you for me—does not prevent its pre-existence, as the condition of organization in general, to the terms which actualize it in each organized perceptual field—yours and mine. Thus the *a priori Other*, as the absolute structure within each field” [3].

The second effect relates to the category of the possible. If, with Others, it is from a common depth or background that subjects and objects appear, then the possibility of such appearing depends on this depth, on the background itself. It is Others, a structure defining the perceptual field, who trace the contour of the possible. But there is more, in what I find to be a formidable development: as such possibility, Others are not only a horizon, they are also *expressed*. The Other structures the possible, but it is also expressed as a possible world in the perceptual field. How are these worlds expressed? How are Others expressed? They do so by means of the *face*. It is the face of the Other that expresses a possible world. “The terrified countenance bears no resemblance to the terrifying thing. It implicates it, it envelops it as something else, in a kind of torsion which situates what is expressed in the expressing”⁹. As structure, the Other is not only a possible world, it is also the expression of this world by means of the face.

Finally, the third effect is the one of a fundamental reversal, with deep philosophical implications, insofar as Robinson inaugurates a new dualism rejecting how the perceptual field is commonly thought. Either the field includes categories belonging to it immanently, or, on the contrary, it depends on subjective syntheses operated on the matter of perception—such is how the dualism is commonly presented. Rejecting it, Robinson will find that “the true dualism lies elsewhere; it lies between the effects of the ‘structure-Other’ of the perceptual field and the effects of its absence (what perception would be were there no Others)” [3].

Without Others, this structure, can we speak of a ‘pre-ontological understanding of Being’? Does not this understanding presuppose the effects of Others? Which is to say, is such an understanding really operative in a world without Others, contrary to everything Defoe’s Robinson may want us to believe? Perhaps we could say Others are, in fact, a kind of structure conditioning the (long) list of structures Heidegger comprehends as internal to such an understanding: Being-in, with, and so on. But is it really? Could we not revert the order, say, at last, that we have no need of such an ‘understanding’? Of its ‘structures’? That we can dispense with them as what Artaud tells us they are: a delirious illusion? Could it be that we only need Others, nonsense, besides other illiteracies of Being, with their respective sparks? All of which constitutive of the nascent state, in eternal exile of Being?

5. Sparks of Life

Each of the illiteracies of Being includes, therefore, its singularities, whether they be a distinction between two regimes of nonsense, or a philosophical reflection on the effects of Others. These singularities allow for the construction of different logics, in this case, a logic of sense and a logic of Others. What I call sparks of life include these three elements: illiteracies, singularities, logics. And there are many other sparks besides the ones I include here. We can say they are the sparks of life of the nascent state, or that this state is constituted by sparks. Still, this does not inform us what it is to dwell in this state, or the modes of life that are fabricated in its immanence. There must, therefore, be other logics, not only joining these sparks without unifying them (following inclusive disjunctions), but also allowing them to mix in such a way as to produce new actualities, their own modes of life. Although I will only indicate it here, it is, first, on the basis of a *logic of the event* that I propose a conception of the ‘chaosmos’ joining the different sparks on a common plane, or Planomenon, and, second, in terms of a *logic of multiplicities* that these events are singularized in acentered, ‘rhizomatic’ systems, actualizing the different sparks of life in concrete modes of life (now a ‘chaosmosis’, properly speaking, where the chaosmos encounters its osmotic principle). The nascent state includes sparks, events, actualities, sparks born from all sorts of *Watt* or illiteracies of Being, and events singularizing these sparks in multiple actualities.

It is, therefore, in the immanence of a generalized illiteracy of Being that the nascent state is constructed. If we had to localize such a 'region', it would be, as we said, between Being and what is commonly understood as its counterpoint, an undifferentiated abyss. In this sense, we could perhaps say that the nascent state is *infrabeing*. But there is a further point I would like to focus on, this time transversally to what I understand as an illiteracy of Being. In fact, if we ask in what sense the modes of life are immanent to the nascent state 'ecological', I would begin by saying their ecology refers, primarily (but, of course, not exclusively), to the nature of the existence they affirm, which I also began by characterizing as 'lesser', or 'minoritarian'. We are in a position now to detail a little more what I mean by such existences.

One of Dasein's structures is its 'being towards death'. Heidegger insists on a certain relation of this entity with death; basically, that death, or rather, the anticipation of our own individual deaths, is the most intimate or 'ownmost' possibility afforded to each one of us, so much so that it is on this basis that, on the one hand, we individualize ourselves fully, or 'authentically', and, on the other, encounter the horizon or 'totality' of our own 'potentiality for Being', the 'potentiality for authentic existence'. He puts it like this: "Anticipation [of death] utterly individualizes Dasein, and allows it, in this individualization of itself, to become certain of the totality of its potentiality for Being . . . [Anticipation] brings [Dasein] face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned freedom towards death—a freedom which has been released from the Illusions of the 'they', and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious"¹⁰.

Needless to say, but worth saying and repeating as many times as needed, all illiteracies, whether stemming from schizophrenic language, Robinson on the desert island, or others, reject such 'freedom' absolutely—the conception that death is that which is 'ownmost', besides the idea that it is in terms of such a being towards death that an 'authentic potentiality' for Being is 'seized upon'. What characterizes the illiteracies of Being is, precisely, *a powerlessness to be towards death*, an absolute passivity towards such potentiality for Being. It was Maurice Blanchot who famously distinguished two aspects or facets of death, one personal and the other impersonal. Noticing that systems of thought, mainly those of Hegel and Heidegger, assume power over death as the extreme form of power over oneself, Blanchot questions this power. Do we really have this power over death? Of making it 'mine', 'my death'?¹¹ Blanchot's question is so mystifying in its simplicity, it seems to hit us from behind with the same wickedness of the objects on the desert island, the ones which, without Others, spurt directly from an obscure abyss, a total darkness. On the other hand, how can I *not* have power over death? After all, I can always kill myself, which seems to be indicative that I have some power over the event, in the very least, that I can make it possible for myself, bring it close, close enough to make it coincide with my own demise. Yet, is such a coincidence really possible? Can I truly coincide, or do I really have the power to coincide with my own death? Blanchot's analysis of Dostoyevsky's character Kirilov—in *The Possessed*—is memorable in this regard. His point is that such a coincidence is an illusion, and with it, the power one assumes to have over death, very much in the same way Artaud accuses being in the world of being a delirious illusion. Why? Because "the fact of dying", Blanchot writes, "includes a radical reversal through which the death which was the extreme form of my power not only becomes what loosens my hold upon myself by casting me out of my power to begin and even to finish, but also becomes that which is without any relation to me, without power over me—that which is stripped of all possibility—the unreality of the indefinite . . . Whoever wants to die does not die, he loses the will to die. He enters the nocturnal realm of fascination wherein he dies in a passion bereft of will" [15].

It is this 'radical reversal' that is lived in every illiteracy. Which is to say, all illiteracies are traversed by an impossibility of being towards death. Lesser, minoritarian existences have no being towards death. They have let go of the being which is towards death, but they do so in life and not in death, extending the radical reversal beyond the 'fact of dying'

(so much so that Blanchot relates it to writing, to ‘the space of literature’). There is no being towards death from the point of view of schizophrenic language, or Robinson’s philosophical reflections, but only a dying where I no longer can assume any power over death, of appropriating it as mine, as belonging to the Being, as Heidegger repeats so many times in the course of *Being and Time*, which ‘is in each case mine’ [*je meines*]. It is the powerlessness with regard to this power which defines a new power, the one of reversibility itself, which begins where we began, with Artaud’s accusation of being in the world as nothing other than a delirious illusion. Of course, we already knew indirectly that if an illiteracy of Being includes the incomprehensibility of a pre-ontological understanding of Being, that it would be *all* the structures making up being in the world, including the one of being towards death, which would never really be ‘at hand’. But with regard to this last structure, we can feel the sort of reversibility which is presupposed by the nascent state a little more acutely, the way the power of appropriating the very event of death as Heidegger conceives it hides a profound powerlessness which, in being affirmed, *as such*, reveals a power of a different order, where life is always that which is Outside, which passes through the interstices of Being, just as a river finds its way to the sea.

Said in this way, we could just as well conclude that the dying reverting being towards death is what Deleuze, at the end of life, defined as “a life...”. He speaks of “a pure stream of a-subjective consciousness, a pre-reflexive impersonal consciousness, a qualitative duration of consciousness without a self . . . beyond good and evil, for it was only the subject that incarnated it in the midst of things that made it good or bad” [16]. As a radical reversal of being towards death, Blanchot’s ‘dying’ traverses the illiteracies, it is, as this reversal, a life, “complete power, complete bliss . . . an absolute immediate consciousness whose very activity refers to a being but is ceaselessly posed in a life” [16]. The sparks of life are the sparks of this pure stream, of this river. They are constituted in flight of Being, against the barbarism of the civilization that accepts Being. From spark to spark, a chaosmos is constituted, wherein different processes of osmosis fabricate new actualities, multiplicities constitutive of the modes of life, of dwelling, in the nascent state.

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Notes

- ¹ “Leaves the cave of being . . . It is only by a diverting of the flow of life, by a paralysis imposed on the mind, that one can fix life in its so-called real physiognomy” [1].
- ² The part where Artaud says ‘they have suicided me’ already evokes his reading of *Van Gogh, The Man Suicided by Society* (appearing roughly two decades later, in 1947, after his many years in mental asylums. Of course, Van Gogh actually killed himself in 1890. By this time, close to the end of his own life, and after Rodez and multiple sessions of electroshock ‘therapy’, Artaud understood creations from within this ‘suicide’, or loss of being in the world, that is, in the immanence of the other side of existence, as the work of genius, to which he associates Van Gogh and in relation to whom he accused ‘modern medicine’ and ‘psychiatrists’, in particular, of ‘suiciding’) [1].
- ³ This passage is from Deleuze’s preface to Guattari’s *Psychoanalysis and Transversality*. Cf. “Three Group-Related Problems” [2].
- ⁴ I am borrowing the term from David Lapoujade’s *The Lesser Existences*, who thinks of them in relation to Étienne Souriau’s pluralistic ontology, especially with regard to virtual beings, incomplete in their constitution as they invite acts of creation capable of hearing their appeals and giving them existence, defending their right to exist [1].
- ⁵ Which means, therefore, “‘hermeneutics’ is not being used in its modern meaning, and in no sense does it have the meaning of such a broadly conceived doctrine about interpretation. In connection with its original meaning, this term means rather: a

definite unity in the actualizing *ἐρμηνεύειν* (of communicating), i.e., of the interpreting of activity in which facticity is being encountered, seen, grasped, and expressed in concepts" [6].

6 "In order to speak of an expression 'A' one may simply use the phrase 'the sense of the expression A' ... It is quite clear in this way of speaking words do not have their customary referents but designate what is usually their sense" [7] (pp. 211).

7 "Being, as the basic theme of philosophy, is no class or genus of entities; yet it pertains to every entity. Its 'universality' is to be sought higher up. Being and the structure of Being lie beyond every entity and every possible character which an entity may possess. Being is the *transcendens* pure and simple" [5].

8 "If to Interpret the meaning of Being becomes our task, Dasein is not only the primary entity to be interrogated; it is also that entity which already comports itself, in its Being, towards what we are asking about when we ask this question. But in that case the question of Being is nothing other than the radicalization of an essential tendency-of-Being which belongs to Dasein itself—the pre-ontological understanding of Being" [5].

9 Curiously, Deleuze develops his theory of faciality both in *A Thousand Plateaus* (plateau 7) [11] and with regard to cinema in *The Movement-Image* (what he calls the "affection-image", ch. 6, 7) [12] without considering the role of Others, or the structure-Other. *Proust and Signs* [13] is perhaps clearest in the association of the face (Albertine) with the expression of possible worlds (with regard to the signs of love, in ch.1), even if, again, Others are not mentioned. The first pages of *What is Philosophy?* [14] returns to Others, to give an example of what Deleuze and Guattari understand by a concept, being only there that Deleuze combines the triad Others–possible worlds–face, adding a further component, that of real language or speech. "The other is a possible world as it exists in a face that expresses it and takes shape in a language that gives it reality" (p. 17).

10 Heidegger emphasizes 'freedom towards death' in bold; see [5] p. 311.

11 "By its very essence, death is in every case mine, insofar as it 'is' at all. And indeed death signifies a peculiar possibility of Being in which the very Being of one's own Dasein is an issue. In dying, it is shown that mineness [*Jemeinigkeit*] and existence are ontologically constitutive for death" [5].

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