Difference as Rhythm and Thought as Subtractive Synthesis in Gilles Deleuze

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Abstract

This article discusses the place that the concept of *rhythm* occupies within Gilles Deleuze's philosophy. I present a panorama of different ways to conceptualize *thought* throughout Deleuze's writings from 1960's to 1990's, emphasizing the discussion about the *threshold* of thought. In the writings in partnership with Félix Guattari, Deleuze understand thought as an act of *confronting chaos*, what makes the *problem of consistency* a point of extreme relevance within his philosophical system. In this framework, the concept of thought is described as a tension between consistency and *infinite speed* (chaos). In order to elaborate this concept of thought, Deleuze resumes his conceptualization of the three syntheses of the time and formulates with Guattari the concept of *refrain*. I will show that the refrain is at the axis of an epistemological shift in the whole program of transcendental philosophy, by affirming a necessarily heterogeneous and aberrant Time, which features the concept of rhythm as *the* genetic element of difference. Within this conceptual framework, I follow the authors' suggestion that the logic of schizoanalysis is analogous to the logic of subtractive sound synthesis. The main goal is to demonstrate that rhythm is at the core of Deleuzian concept of difference and sound is at the core of Deleuzian concept of thought.

Introduction: exit ocularcentrism

Throughout his body of work, Gilles Deleuze understands philosophy in the key of differential heterogenesis, speculative pragmatism and ontological perspectivism.[1] Particularly in his collaboration with Félix Guattari, the idea of an *ontological heterogenesis* is described more explicitly in the formulation of the concept of *refrain*. It is not by chance that Deleuze and Guattari consider «the refrain» as their most particular concept.[2] This article aims to contribute for a more precise understanding of this specific point of the Deleuzian literature, while at the same time inquiring the analogy between sound synthesis and psychic synthesis stated in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

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[1]   Not surprisingly, several interpreters of Deleuzian philosophy unfold their concepts in terms of the characterization of ontologies radically different from those that mark Western thinking until modernity. In this respect, it is worth specifically conferring the work of the Brazilian anthropologist and ethnologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, formulated in terms of multi naturalist perspectivism (2014).

[2]   See the interview *We invented the Refrain* (Deleuze 2003).

For this, I argue that the *refrain* pushes Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy towards a significant otherness with respect to *ocularcentrism*. Within the epistemological debate, the term «ocularcentrism» is used to describe «a perceptual and epistemological bias ranking vision over other senses in Western cultures» (Chandler & Munday 2011: 301).[3] Deleuze and Guattari produce an epistemological shift *from sight to sound* as a material-sensory epistemological paradigm, especially through the concepts of *modulation* and *rhythm*. As we have known since the writings of the 1960s, Deleuze (1964: 115-126; 1968: 169-186) is concerned with a critique of basic assumptions that make the canonical *image of thought* in Western philosophy. After *Difference and Repetition* (1968), Deleuze and Guattari (1980; 1991) formulated a concept of thought operating outside representation and ocularcentrism, while relating directly with the «infinite speed». This epistemological exodus is particularly evident when the authors build an analogy between the sound synthesizer and the concept of thought at stake in schizoanalysis (Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 76; 509). Before we directly approach this point featured in the text *Of the Refrain* [*De la ritournelle*], we will go back to *Difference and Repetition* (1968) in order to appreciate Deleuze's discussion around the concept of *threshold of thought*. Comparing the way the philosopher characterizes the concept of thought in these two moments of his trajectory, this article will focus on the specific place that the notion of *rhythm* occupies in Deleuzian philosophy.

To enter the argument proposed here, I invite you, reader, to give yourself a minute to carefully observe the following image:

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[3] «An example would be a preference for the written word rather than the spoken word (in which case, it would be the opposite of phonocentrism). Both Plato and Aristotle gave primacy to sight and associated it with reason. We say that 'seeing is believing', 'see for yourself', and 'I'll believe it when I see it with my own eyes'. When we understand we say, 'I see'. We 'see eye to eye' when we agree. We imagine situations 'in the mind's eye'. 'See what I mean?'» (Chandler & Munday 2011: 301).
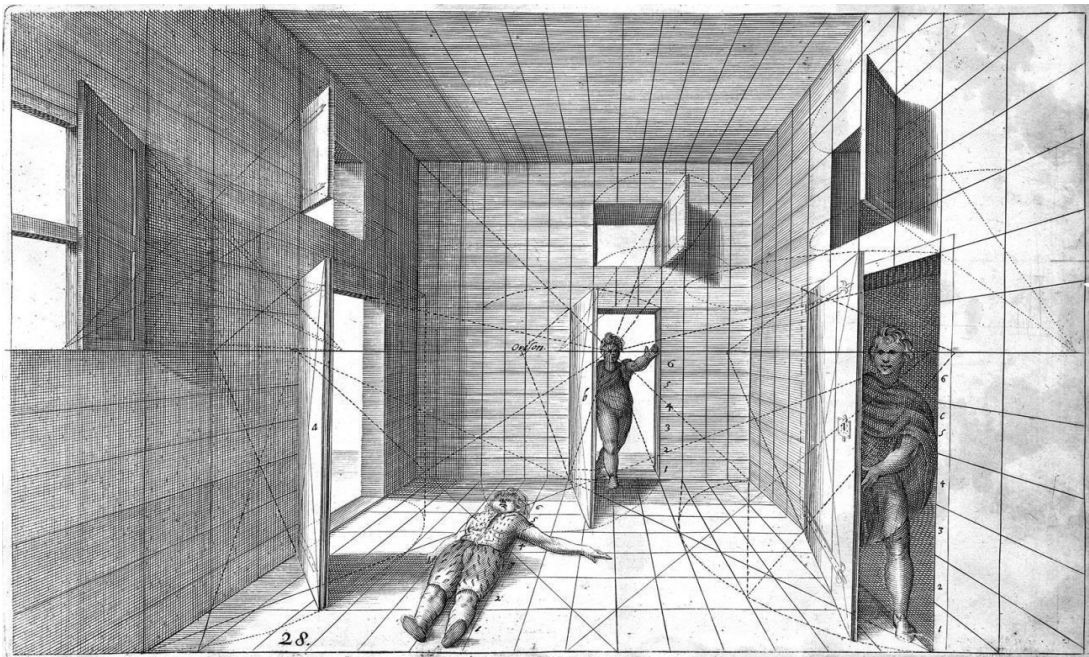
Figure 1: "Perspective", 1604. Artist: Hans Vredeman De Vries.

The image above was composed by the Dutch architect Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527-1607), and it was published in his famous collection of Studies on Perspective (1604). The image suggests a tension between two basic elements: 1) a hyper- rationalization of the space (using criteria from the early seventeenth-century perspective studies); and 2) an event that unfolds in this very space. More precisely, the image above suggests the inability of the mode of rationalization to explain the event, despite the space being extremely rationalized. The rationalization applied does not accommodate all the dimensions of space, so that an unexplained excess remains as an *incognita*. Is the individual on the right in the picture coming in or out the door? Why is there a person lying on the floor? What has happened?

It is worth noting that this image is a particular case among the various studies on perspective made by De Vries. Unlike the ones featuring empty spaces or spaces with a model at rest, this study sets a particular situation mixing measurement and uncertainty in a way that it suggests the *exteriority of an event in relation to a way of rationalizing space*. In this respect, it worth asking: is it not a similar problem that afflicts Gilles Deleuze in the early days of his philosophical production when he insists on the fact that the episteme of representation is incapable of thinking «difference in itself»? Is not it exactly a similar tension – the tension between a mode of rationalization and an event that remains external to it – that Deleuze brings into discussion throughout the whole *Difference and Repetition*?

Following the concept of «difference in itself», Deleuze (1968: 2, 187) elaborates a speculative debate outside the ocularcentric paradigm that governs the episteme of representation in general, and the modern episteme in particular. After *Difference and Repetition*,

the philosopher would establish a crucial alliance for his own epistemological exodus in relation to the ocularcentric epistemological agenda. Interestingly, this alliance was made with another Dutch geometer, but now a geometer of affect, Baruch of Spinoza. With this alliance, the initial problematization of thought now involves the whole body within an ontology in which life expresses itself in multiple ways, all of which being translated in terms of *speeds* (Deleuze 1968b; 1970). Having the variation of speeds as a philosophical criterion, Deleuze exit the scope of representation and its theoretical fictions of objectivity, while inscribing into Western philosophy a series of previously un-, semi- or sub- thought contents. Just as it happens in De Vries' work above, Deleuze's question is how to inscribe an enigmatic *event* within the phenomenical dimension.

At the same time in and out of the theoretical fiction of an objective world typical of ocularcentrism, Deleuze conceptually characterizes *a temporal reality that expands and contracts eventually, according to each case, and according to the material and incorporeal assemblages that are in play*. Such *plan of immanence* (Deleuze and Guattari 1991) is built from a mixture between Kant, Bergson, Nietzsche and Spinoza, in order to compose a *ge-ophilosophy of the unconscious that has in the speed and the rhythm the decisive components for the presentation of an ontology in which rhythm plays a crucial critical role*. This is what this article is about: rhythm is at the core of Deleuzian concept of difference, and sound is at the core of Deleuzian concept of thought.

Context: onto-epistemology

Deleuze articulates his philosophy around a specific epistemological debate gravitating around the concept of thought. What concept of thought operates silently in the works that make up the canon of Western philosophy? How is the act of thinking conceptually char-acterized? What concept of thought operates in Deleuze's own philosophy? From the writ-ings of the 1960s to those of the 1990s, the major theme of Deleuzian philosophy is the question of *what it means to think*, investigated through the critique of implicit assump-tions that compose the canonic *Image of Thought* in Western Philosophy. Along with crit-icism, Deleuze (1968: 173; 192; 217; 354-355) speculates a particular concept of thought, first referred to as a «thought without an image».

From the onset, Deleuze refuses the idea that thought is a kind of innate entity, given in nature and waiting to be unveiled by some artifice of representation. He states, on the con-trary, that thought is an event that is *engendered in the world from fortuitous encounters and involuntary movements* (*ibid*.: 181). In short, chance and materiality lie at the core of the Deleuzian concept of thought. But that is not all, though. It is necessary to be attentive to the fact that there is a significant variation in the way Deleuze describes his concept of thought throughout the 1980's and 1990's, particularly in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?,* both written in partnership with Félix Guattari. In *Difference and Repetition*

(*ibid*.), the concept of *thought* is characterized as being *the effect of a fortuitous encounter* with something in the world, which forces thought to happen. In this initial version, thought is *the effect of an encounter*, and there is no thought outside of a meeting or a relationship. In turn, in *What is Philosophy?* (1991) the concept of thought is characterized as the taking of consistency in relation to a domain of *infinite speed*. In this particular context, the concept of thought is formulated as being not only the effect of a fortuitous and involuntary encounter but also the exercise of «confronting chaos» (Deleuze & Guattari 1991: 186), that is, the effect of setting a plane of consistency against chaos.

Although this discussion is epistemological in nature, it bears significant ontological implications. It is no coincidence that the philosopher initiates *Difference and Repetition* making explicit his philosophical *parti pris*: «we believe in a world in which individuations are impersonal and singularities are pre-individual» (Deleuze 1968: 4). With this statement, Deleuze makes it evident that there is an ontology implied and presupposed as being at the same time the basis and consequence of the epistemological debate featured in his work. The thesis that there is a reciprocal presupposition between epistemology and ontology is therefore a topic that runs through all Deleuzian philosophy: the conditions by which the world is known and the image of the world that is constructed in the philosophical discourse are two faces of the same onto- epistemological coin.

Therefore, even though you can find two different ways of describing the concept of thought – one characterizing it as the effect of a fortuitous event, and the other characterizing it as the effect of setting a plane of consistency against infinite speed – both are built on the same assumption that thought is made through unconscious synthesis, despite the consciousness of a subject. Desire is at the core of everything. Back to the starting point: thought is elaborated amidst *individuations* «that are impersonal and singularities that are pre-individual» (*ibid*.). The starting point for thought is individuation and desire, that is, always a particular situation experienced in a contingent context. The starting point is therefore an already ongoing process. It is no coincidence that Deleuze (2003: 289) presents *A Thousand Plateaus* as «an universal history of contingence».

The threshold of Thought: towards modulation

In the third chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze sustains the thesis that, in the situation of encounter with the fortuitous in the world, a psychic process might tend to its '*nth' power* (*ibid*.: 184). This is a condition of possibility for thought. It is at this point that the theme of the *threshold of thought* is introduced. According to the philosopher, thought that escapes the image of thought is one that *tends to its own limit* (*ibid*.: 280; 293). On the other hand, a psychic process that remains within an economy of the «Image of Thought» is understood as being merely a process filled with redundancies of language and a world-image grounded on Identity and Representation (*ibid*.: 169-186). For Deleuze, thought, on

the contrary, is something of the order of difference.

The theme of the *threshold of thought* returns in *What is Philosophy?,* particularly when Deleuze and Guattari deal with the notions of *Virtual* and *Chaos*. Both are names that designate a sphere of non-thought against which thought must be cast in order to be able to happen. So far nothing new, for the idea that thought is exercised only while empirically experimenting its own limit has already been presented in *Difference and Repetition*, as shown above. What varies in the works *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?* is the detailed characterization of the threshold of thought as being a *temporal limit*, in particular, as a *matrix of infinite speed*. In both books*, the threshold of thought is fused with the theme of speed*, and this fusion set together two usually separated spheres in Western Philosophy: ontology and transcendental philosophy.[4] Speed is a concept that transposes the Deleuzian conceptualization about the threshold of thought to a new level. Now, the threshold is directly related to an *plastic, minor* time. Not a homogeneous entity, but as a limit that expands or contracts according to particular events.

This temporal plasticity qualifies thought as being of the order of the contiguous movements between matter and memory, that is, as being simultaneously concrete movement and virtual implicated in *material-forces* relations (Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 121; 452; 458). Thus understood, thought is described and experienced by Deleuze (and Guattari) as being pure *presentation*, a particular kind of dynamic force. Thought equals a particular material-force *thing* and, as such, as something of the order of *modulation*. Deleuze keeps the thesis that there is only thought in relation to the material-forces in a particular context, but the concept is presented in a new conceptual framework: the relational paradigm of the Deleuzian concept of thought is modulation, and the threshold of thought equals a heterogeneous, multiple, minor and aberrant time.

The threshold of an episteme: towards listening

In order to overtake the representational-ocularcentric epistemic regime, the philosopher found it convenient to resort to what he called *intercessors* (Deleuze 1990: 165-184), that is, non-philosophical modes of thought production, in particular art and science. It is at this point that, for example, musical thought plays a significant role in Deleuze's conceptual elaborations, especially in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze and Guattari understand that *musical thought provides a type of reasoning that formulates an empirical field described in terms of frequencies, modulations, rhythms, repetitions, and variations, while consolidating descriptions of the transcendental field in ways that philosophical discourse does*

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4   Deleuze articulates a mix between a transcendental philosophy (characterizing the conditions of real experience) and an ontology (characterizing the diversity of modes of existence that make up a world). The post-Kantian inquiry is confused with a theory of multiplicities, mixing Kant and Bergson in a particular way.

not. In other words: musical thought consists of thinking a transcendental field made not only of pre-individual singularities, but of a set of speeds, affects, and modulations.[5]

Many instances of Twentieth Century musical reasoning rationalize space and time as being multimodal. Deleuze himself assumes that the genesis and modulation of form in music is not only a matter of relating with musical canons, but of relating with materiality, movement and the speed of «sound particles».[6] As you can read in the following passage, Deleuze's ethics is informed by Twentieth Century inquiries on musical form in the light of modulation and generative processes:

> The important thing is to understand life, each individuality of life, not as a form or a development of form, but as a complex relationship between differential speeds, between particle deceleration and acceleration. A composition of speeds and slowness on a plane of immanence. It also happens that a musical form depends on a complex relationship between speeds and slowness of sound particles. This is not just a matter of music, but a *way of living*: we slide between things through speed and slowness, we get together with something else: we never start from nothing, we never do tabula rasa, we slip between, we enter the middle, we embrace or impose rhythms. (Deleuze 1981: 165-6, my emphasis)

From *A Thousand Plateaus* on, the «sound particle» (*ibid.*) is a significant empirical material in Deleuzian conceptualization of thought. Such a repositioning of the problem of thought having sound and rhythm as paradigms for thinking life processes is expressive of a philosophical shift from the scope of the object into the scope of speed, from the scope of the phenomenon to the scope of modulation, while shifting the sensory paradigm from the scope of sight to the scope of listening.

In turn, this transposition leaves open the following question: to what degree of precision and specification does Deleuze characterize the agonistic relationship between contingent slowdown and acceleration of particles and infinite speed? In other words: to what degree of precision the philosopher elaborates the relationship between intensity and chaos?

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[5] See the vital role that musical thought plays in the texts *Introduction: Rhizome*; *Postulates of Linguistics*; *Faciality*; *Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming Imperceptible…*; *Of the Refrain*; *The Smooth and the Striated*; and *Conclusion: Concrete Rules and Abstract Machines*, all featured in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980); as well as in the text *Percept, Affect, and Concept* in *What is Philosophy?* (1991).

[6] In the early 1980's the «sound particle» plays a significant role in Deleuze's writing. This is particularly evident in two books published at that time: *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Spinoza: practical philosophy*.

Plane of Immanence: to cut the infinite speed

Since thought is characterized as an act of confronting chaos, then what is the *mediation* between thought and chaos? Such mediation is a network of implicit assumptions that articulate against chaos, which is named by the authors of the *Plane of Immanence*. If to think equals confronting chaos, then to confront chaos is to set against it a plane of immanence:

> What defines thought in its three great forms of art, science, and philosophy is always confronting chaos, laying out a plane, throwing a plane over chaos. (Deleuze and Guattari 1991: 186).

The *Plane of Immanence* acts as a specific type of mediation: a *sieve.*[7] Such a sieve has two main characteristics: 1) it is primarily an *a-signifier* semiotic operator – different from being a meaning-content-phenomenon; and 2) it acts as a frequency filter, for if confronting chaos equals facing infinite speed, then it is *necessary* to filter speeds.[8] Let us take a look at each of these two points in more detail.

The plane of immanence is *eminently functional*: it acts within the language, as an a-signifier sign, a semiotic operator that Deleuze and Guattari called a *diagram*. According to these philosophers, a diagram is a «pure Function-Matter» (Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 176) which acts simultaneously as an analytic and synthetic operator. It performs the double-function of separating and connecting values, affects, memories, materials, meaning.[9] A diagram is a set of functions that might operate within every individual and collective psychic structure, working «independently of the forms and substances, the expressions and the contents that it will distribute» (*ibid*.). A «plane of immanence» acts *in a diagrammatic way*, inasmuch as it is «not thought in thought» (Deleuze & Guattari 1991: 112), operating «by *matter*, not by substance, by *function* and by form» (*ibid*.). Its nature is *strictly pragmatic* and non-representational, since it is not reducible to appear as a conscious phenomenon. For this reason Deleuze and Guattari characterize it as being the *unthought immanent to every thought*:

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[7]   «The plane of immanence is like a cut in chaos, and acts as a sieve» (Deleuze & Guattari 1991: 44).

[8]   In *What Is Philosophy?,* the concept of chaos is synonymous with «infinite speed» as we will see later in this article.

[9]   In his in-depth study of the work of Félix Guattari, the philosopher and sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato considers that «Guattari calls the semiotic operations assigning «diagrammatic'. (...) [Guattari] makes the diagrams a separate category, whose functions are operational, since they have the ability to reproduce with great accuracy 'the functional joints of a system'. The diagrammatic functions make inscriptions that are operational before they are representative» (Lazzarato 2014: 77, my emphasis). Analytic in the sense in which the diagram distributes expressions and contents, forms and substances, to then synthesize them in a particular and proper way (*ibid*.). In the condition of «pure Function- Matter», the diagram operates in order to «connect» (*ibid.*) between «traits of content and expression» (*ibid*.).

> We will say that THE plane of immanence is, at the same time, that which must be thought and that which cannot be thought. It is the nonthought within thought. It is the base of all planes, immanent to every thinkable plane that does not succeed in thinking it. It is the most intimate within thought and yet the absolute outside. (Deleuze & Guattari 1991: 111- 112)

The operability of the plane of immanence is that of «a sieve stretched over the chaos» (*ibid.*: 45) that «cut through the chaos» (*ibid.*: 44). But what exactly is to «cut through the chaos»? Deleuze and Guattari describe chaos not as a synonymous with disorder, but *as a specific temporal dimension*, namely that of infinite speed:

> Chaos is defined not so much by its disorder as by the *infinite speed* with which every form taking shape in it vanishes. It is a void that is not a nothingness but a virtual, containing all possible particles and drawing out all possible forms, which spring up only to disappear immediately, without consistency or reference, without consequence. (*ibid.*: 111-112, my emphasis)

While chaos opposes to all consistency, the act of thinking is described as being a sort of a cut through, a speed management, an economy of speeds, a filtering, a subtraction. Such a characterization of the concept of thought has brought the need for further conceptual developments. To describe the interface between a psychic flow in its relative stability and the chaotic domain of infinite speed, Deleuze resumed his characterization of the *three syntheses of time*[10] and unfolded it with Félix Guattari through the concept named *refrain*. Beyond a simple musical metaphor to refer to ordinary repetitions, the concept of refrain characterizes «thought» as being an operation of cutting and filtering Chaos, that is, as a *subtractive synthesis of infinite speeds*.

The problem of consistency and the logic of the synthesizer: refrain and an*other* Image of Thought

The tension between chaos and consistency is therefore constituted by *modulations between vibrational modes of existence.*[11] The entire description of the «three aspects of the refrain» (Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 382-384) is a detailed presentation of such events occurring at the microtemporal level. This point resumes another conceptual tension featured in Deleuze's philosophy since the 1960's, namely the contrast between extensive

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[10] The conceptualization of the three time syntheses is the mechanism by which Deleuze characterizes his concept of Difference from a specific type of Repetition. In this regard, see Deleuze (1968: 140-167).

[11] In this respect, we see the characterization of the concept constellation around the concept of refrain, in particular, the concept of *milieu* and *code* (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 384-388).

measurement and intensive movement. In turn, consistency is produced through the *reciprocal presupposition* (*ibid.*: 116; 136) between the two poles of this tension. Within this conceptual framework of modulations between microtemporal events, the problem of consistency refers to a short circuit between, on the one hand, a transcendental philosophy based on a pre-individual and impersonal transcendental field; and on the other, an ontology of immanence whose *material paradigm is the intensive movement of speed*, and *the relational mode par excellence is modulation*.

In the key of modulation, the problem of thought is appreciated between *becomings* («impersonal individuations») and the dimension of the *molecular* («pre-individual singularities»). Such redistribution calls for a particular conceptual character related to the act of thinking: the «cosmic craftsman» (Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 426-7), whose paradigmatic problem is not to ground a thought, but to achieve *some consistency* amid the tension with the «forces of chaos» (*ibid.*). In this context, the question is how to both *capture and consolidate material-forces*:

> The problem is no longer that of the beginning, any more than it is that of a foundation-ground. It is now a problem of consistency or consolidation: how to consolidate the material, make it consistent, so that it can harness unthinkable, invisible, nonsonorous forces? (*ibid.*: 422)

Here the philosophical question par excellence is no longer to establish a groundation, but to *effectively enter* «in the age of the Machine, immense mechanosphere, plane of cosmicization of the forces to be captured» (*ibid.*). This is a significant shift from the transcendent-oriented-metaphysics of earlier Western philosophy canon. To further this shift, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the sound synthesizer as being a model for thinking of psychic processes in the key of speed and modulation. Through the analogy between sound synthesis and psychic synthesis, the philosophical challenge of the *refrain* is to elaborate a conceptual constellation in order to make the very dynamics of psychic process thinkable, just as an instrument that «makes the sound process audible»: If this machine must have an assemblage, it is the synthesizer. By assembling modules, source elements, and elements for treating sound (oscillators, generators, and transformers), by arranging microintervals, the synthesizer makes audible the sound process itself, the production of that process, and puts us in contact with still other elements beyond sound matter. (*ibid.*)

In turn, this analogy between sound synthesis and psychic synthesis impacts the very concept of philosophy, henceforth understood as being a synthetic *experimentation* of the modulation between material and forces. Not anymore a correspondence between matter and form, but an agent that «make thought travel»:

The synthesizer, with its operation of consistency, has taken the place of the ground in a priori synthetic judgment: its synthesis is of the molecular and the cosmic, material and force, not form and matter, Grund and territory. Philosophy is no longer synthetic judgment; it is like a thought synthesizer functioning to *make thought travel*, make it mobile, make it a force of the Cosmos (in the same way as one makes sound travel). (*ibid.*, my emphasis)

As you can read above, the analogy between sound synthesis and philosophical synthesis makes both converge to the one and same *problem of consistency* (Ibid.). At this point, it is worth asking: is there any axial concept in the characterization of the problem of consistency? My hypothesis is: yes, and this concept is *rhythm*.

The diagram of the Refrain: towards rhythm

The concept of *refrain* describes very precisely the processes of acquiring consistency. What mediations are involved in this process? To answer this question, Deleuze and Guattari describe the conceptual constellation gravitating around the *refrain*, namely the concepts of *milieu*, *code* and *rhythm*. This constellation is the infrastructure of schizoanalysis, where the concept of *rhythm* is presented as the quintessential operator that articulates simultaneously, at the one hand, the critical-schizo movement; and at the other hand, the response to chaos.

The concept of Chaos is directly related to the concepts of milieu and rhythm. Deleuze and Guattari (1980: 384) define a *milieu* in the same way that acousticians define a pitched sound, that is, as a periodic repetition. A *milieu* is defined as a movement with relative periodic stability, and therefore as a repeated occurrence within a certain frequency: «each milieu is vibratory, that is, a block of space-time constituted by the periodic repetition of the component» (*ibid.*). Notice that a component of individuation has an agency.[12] A *milieu* is defined as a repetition, but, but it does not exhaust itself in repetition, for it produces a difference in its particularly temporal mode of existence: *rhythm.*[13]

Periodic repetition is also a determining feature of what Deleuze and Guattari call *code*. *A Thousand Plateaus* states that «each milieu is codified».[14] But just like it happens with the *milieu*, the repetition that makes the *code* implies in itself an element of variation:

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[12]   The notion of component here is understood to be literally any expressive fragment. A spinning body, an eye that blinks, a branch that rocks. Any color, a texture, a face, two holes, the winds in the leaves, the sound of the street. The character of an autonomous fragment of each matter of expression is a vital characteristic of the later investigation in the same text, that of the opening of the territory, in a game which they call a «territorial counterpoint», that is, a landscape of intermodulation of the components. For a detailed reading of the notion of territorial counterpoint, see Ferraz (2015).

[13]   «A milieu exists effectively through periodic repetition, but it has no other effect but to produce a difference by which it passes into another milieu» (Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 385).

[14]   «Each milieu is coded, a code being defined by periodic repetition; but each code is in a perpetual state of transcoding or transduction» (Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 384).

«each code is in a perpetual state of transcoding» (*ibid*.). The «perpetual state of trans-coding» is the condition of possibility of difference that is made through repetition: «trans-coding or transduction is the way in which one milieu serves as the basis for another, or on the other, dissipates or constitutes the other» (*ibid*.). A code is therefore the repetition at the core of a milieu.

Repetition is a structural component of the concepts of milieu and code, but so is Chaos: «the means are opened in chaos» (*ibid*.: 385), and Chaos «the threat of exhaustion or in-trusion» (*ibid*.). But the milieu has its own way of responding to Chaos, and this way is not done by repetition, but by difference. This is where the rhythm comes in: «the response of milieus to chaos is rhythm» (*ibid*.). Rhythm articulates two milieus, it articulates the rela-tion between elementary oscillatory movements in both physical individuation and psy-chic individuation, so that it establishes a plateau of ephemeral and metastable con-sistency, which must be consistent enough to prevent them from dissipating and be ex-hausted by the catastrophic intrusion of Chaos.[15] The passage «from chaos to the brain» equals the passage *from chaos to rhythm*.

From chaos to rhythm: intensive movements, «difference itself», minor time

Rhythm is a crucial concept in schizoanalysis, since it fulfills the function of specifying the microphysical operation by which thought acquires consistency in its tension with chaos. Rhythm is at the core of Deleuzian conceptualization of *difference*, since it specifies the thesis that repetition-measurement is just an ordinary mode of repetition, and not a necessary form of all repetitions – therefore, not a matter of law (*quid juris*) for thought. In Deleuze's philosophy, there is no thought without difference, there is no thought with-out rhythm. Rhythm is a *quid juris* question regarding thought.

To further this concept of thought, Deleuze elaborated a concept of Time that is external (but at the same time immanent) to the psychological time of an empirical subject. Such a concept of time is a condition of possibility for the «difference in itself», the «unequal in itself» that is, *intensity.*[16] As it can be read in *Difference and Repetition*, the intensive move-ment correlates to a particular synthesis of time. This synthesis, in turn, correlates to a kind of individuation tuned with intensive movements, so that it might dissolve the habit-ual image of subject. It might crack it, it might implode it in sparse fragments. The «third synthesis of time» is described as a kind of individuation

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[15]   «The rhythm never has the same plane as the rhythm. It is that action is done in a milieu, while rhythm is placed between milieus» (Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 385).

[16]   The «difference in itself» is equivalent to the concept of *intensity*, as can be read in the small passage: «It is not the qualitative opposition in the sensible, but an element that is in itself difference and at the same time creates the quality in the sensible and the transcendent exercise in sensibility: this element is intensity, as pure difference in itself» (Deleuze 1968: 187).

which discovers the future – it means that the event and action have a secret coherence that excludes that of the self, turning against the self that has become equal to it, projecting it into a thousand pieces, as if the generator of the new world to be raptured and dissipated by the fragment of what it causes to be born in the multiple: what the self is equated with is the unequal itself. In this manner, the I which is fractured according to the order of time and the Self which is divided according to the temporal series correspond and find a common descendant in the man without name, without family, without qualities, without self or I, the 'plebeian' guardian of a secret, the already-Overman whose scattered members gravitate around the sublime image. (Deleuze 1968: 121)

As extravagant it may sound, the third synthesis is still a synthesis. It is an effect of consistency, not a state of chaotic deterritorialization into the void (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980) or into a black hole (*ibid.*: 411-412; 420-429). What changes from *A Thousand Plateaus* on is the presentation of a conceptual cartography of this synthesis formulated in terms of frequency and modulation. What the authors call «code», «milieu» and «rhythm» are effects of frequency patterns that consolidate themselves within a psychic process amidst contingent, accidental and particular contexts. This procedure is in continuity with the more general purpose of the Deleuzian philosophy, namely to compose a philosophy of the event, attentive to the particular conditions of each case.[17]

The contingent sphere of particularity (each case) is not a question of fact, but on the contrary, it is transposed into the sphere of the *quid juris* conditions of thought. To mark this point, Deleuze and Guattari use the Kantian vocabulary for establishing a critical distinction between two significantly different concepts of Time: 1) Time assumed as being an homogeneous *a priori form*, given universally as a condition of experience to all thinking individuals; and 2) time assumed as being an aberrant dimension that is reconfigured each time, according to particular cases. This critical distinction is articulated by the thesis that «Time is not an a priori form; rather, the refrain is the a priori form of time, which in each case fabricates different times» (*ibid.*: 431). This thesis shifts the homogeneous Identity of Time to a secondary place in relation to a contingent and relative plasticity of a *minor* time without fixed Identity. Thus, to philosophically formulate an image of the real as being ontologically plural, Deleuze and Guattari had *to conceptualize time as being ontologically plural*.

At this point the concept of refrain once again intervenes to mark a fundamental critical distinction between two modes of understanding transcendental philosophy. The emergence of the unequal in itself as an intensive temporal articulation (*rhythm*) is what gives

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[17]   «Indeed, as we shall see, it may be necessary to reserve the name of Ideas not to the pure *cogitanda*, but rather to instances that range from sensitivity to thought and from thought to sensitivity, capable of engendering in each case, following an order belongs, the limiting or transcendent object of each faculty» (Deleuze 1968: 211-212).

the refrain a central role in the critical distance between the Deleuzian transcendental philosophy and the Kantian transcendental philosophy. This detachment has as its central point *the refusal of a Real based on the assumption of a single and homogeneous Time as the a priori form of all thought*. Against this assumption, Deleuze positions his formula of the reciprocal presupposition between difference and repetition in favor of the categorical affirmation of a heterogeneous and aberrant temporal multiplicity, as being a matter of law for thought. The refrain advances in the conceptualization of a time that differs from itself, a time that is *aberrant* (Lapoujade 2014). The above quotation does not relate with the empirical experience of time lived as a subjective psychological experience, but with the ontological pretension of conceptualizing the mode of existence of time. The concept of *refrain* relates with the becoming of *the* Time.

Therefore, *rhythm* is at the heart of Deleuzian assumption that it is only possible to think difference as such through an understanding «real» as an aberrant movement, and in turn, an understanding of time as an aberrant movement. In this context, *rhythm* has the status of a critical conceptual element par excellence, insofar as it operates at the heart of schizo-analytical conceptual tensions and reciprocal presuppositions, especially the one that gives title to the project: capitalism and schizophrenia. As you can read in *A Thousand Plateaus*, rhythm is *critical*, operating in the sphere of the Unequal, the Incommensurable. In short, in the sphere of heterogenesis:

> Meter, whether regular or not, assumes a coded form whose unit of measure may vary, but in a noncommunicating milieu, whereas rhythm is the Unequal or the Incommensurable that is always undergoing transcoding. Meter is dogmatic, but rhythm is critical; it ties together critical moments, or ties itself together in passing from one milieu to another. It does not operate in a homogeneous space-time, but by heterogeneous blocks. (Deleuze & Guattari 1980: 385)

Conclusion

Over four decades of writing and presenting academic courses, Deleuze re-elaborates his concept of «difference in itself» and translates it as «rhythm» while presenting the concept of *refrain* in *A Thousand Plateaus*. It should be stressed, however, that this is not a mere change in vocabulary, because when translated as «rhythm» the concept of difference gains a specific meaning and scope, beginning to operate at the core of the Deleuzian concept of real understood as a onto-political hyper-rhizome of modulations between continuities of major Power and cuts of minor power (capitalism and schizophrenia). But here the question is how this onto-political dimension articulates time.

By positioning rhythm as a philosophical concept of eminently critical relevance, Deleuze redistributes the program of transcendental philosophy through a very particular critique of one of its fundamental presuppositions, namely the homogeneity of time as a

priori form. The refrain is a post-Kantian concept par excellence, resuming Kantian characterization of the transcendental syntheses while introducing a problematic component that dismantles the Kantian transcendental system itself – the refusal of time as a homogeneous form in order to position a sort of Bergsonian a priori within the transcendental philosophy. This change implies working with a necessarily plastic, heterogeneous, contingent and *minor* time.

To conclude, it is important to remember that in this discussion, the «Man» or the «empirical subject» is assumed to be a merely intermittent fluctuation within psychic processes. Deleuze and Guattari (1980: 133) dissolve the image of «Man» as a *Majority* into a world-image in which the basic elements of agency are periodic repetitions and rhythmic variations. The *refrain* furthers a philosophy of nature eminently diastemic that pushes forward a particular critical movement in relation to the anthropocentric continuum that haunts Western thought for centuries. Perhaps for this reason Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the *refrain* as one of its most significant creations: because it expresses a philosophy of nature from an epistemic otherness in which each human life can be understood as being more-than-human, beyond the ocularcentric and anthropocentric presuppositions that govern the whole philosophy of representation, and in particular its modern variants. It might take decades, but time will come when Deleuze might be understood as an eminently *sonic* philosopher.

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