

Emma PUSTAN

Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University
Cluj, România
E-mail: pustanemma@yahoo.com

TRANSINDIVIDUALITY: IDENTITY, INDETERMINACY AND ONTOLOGICAL AVAILABILITY

Abstract: The main purpose of the present study is to detect and portray the way in which Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari aligned their views with a movement of annihilation of the *self-otherness* equation. It also tackles with the explanation of the concept of *transindividuality*, by which the overtaking of the polarised obsession of the ipseity-alterity definition is proposed. This concept encapsulates both a space of indeterminacy of identity and the incorporation of the multiple alterity – the collective. The present study does not guarantee the exhaustion of the ideological and conceptual content since it limits itself to determining the symptoms, obsessions and recurring elements concerned with the concept of *transindividuality* in the following core texts: *Anti-Oedip*, *Thousand plateaus*, *Kafka – for a minor literature* (which are collaborations of Deleuze and Guattari) and in a personal theoretical work of Deleuze: *Proust and signs*. The reasons that lead to the initiation of the present discussion are our interest for the ontological status of the singularity, for its relationship with the alterity and for the development of the social corpus.

Key words: transindividuality, community, identity, alterity, schizophrenia, capitalism

The interrogations surrounding the status of the self, individuality and identity may seem superfluous in a society that is, in appearance, well-established on spaces of differentiation between its components, in a society with polarizing

vocation, with moral architectures, categories, drawers, bars, boxes and tags. The basis of anthropology is sketched since the classical antiquity, but the concept of individuality is solidified in the modern age, once subjectivity and freedom are ratified in various fields: speech, art, culture, etc. As Denis de Rougemont¹ well noticed, the somewhat western obsession of individuality may be found even in Christian eschatology, which is based on an epithalamic dialectic that maintains the imperative difference between divine and human substance, in contrast to the oriental fusion of these essences. This is the major discrepancy between the culture of transcendence and that of immanence – the preservation of individuality/self versus the contemplative demarche of immersion in nature. Besides, Malraux² accused Europe of building itself as a “coherent myth” and that it became a “carefully organized barbarism”, masking the mourning of essence with strict forms and categories. This complex of discontent regarding the existential cartesian contour exploded however in the second half of the 20th century, and the consequences of this paradigm shift were boundless – be it in ethics, philosophy or the everyday existence. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari speculate in their collaborative texts this postmodern liminality and deconstructive fuss, even in the perception of individuality/identity, which is a last residue of the traditional, starched thinking (*Thousand plateaus* besides debuts with the following authorial confession: “The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd”³).

The traditional western thinking has always circumscribed the idea of individuality and identity to that of space. The identity is the closed and self-sufficient sphere that extends only up to the closed and self-sufficient sphere of otherness. The given identities incubate the difference, because the rapport between these spheres (even when they seem to overlap in case of communication and empathy) is that of an essential disparity, materialized by the distance that separates them.

The collective is an expression of a macro-individuality: a group of individuals with a vital distance conferring identity and personal contour. What Deleuze and Guattari suggest, surprisingly, is not to suppress this space of identity (this would have been to a certain degree plausible, given a certain sympathy for

¹ De Rougemont, Denis, *Iubirea și occidentalul*, Bucharest: Univers, 1987, p 69.

² Malraux, Andre, *Ispita Occidentului*, Meridiane, 1983.

³ Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix, *Capitalism și schizofrenie II – Mii de platouri*, Bucharest: Editura Art, 2013, p 7.

marxism), but the abolition of the individuality-collective/otherness rapport itself, which would lead to a cavalcade of potentialities in the medial space of becoming, a state that we will choose to label as *transindividuality*: “To get to a point not where you don’t say *I* anymore, but to the point where it doesn’t matter anymore if you say *I* or not”⁴.

If traditional logic considers that difference emerges from given identities, Deleuze and Guattari are stating that identities are results of difference, reversing the equation through internal structuring of any entity X as consisting in an endless series of differences. The transindividuality is sensitivity to multiplicity and refusal of enclosure in a single existential category. It is an alternative to the classical self-others rapport (inside of which the idea of individuality, of distinction between ontological roles and social norms is set), rapport in which the first term, namely *the self* constitutes the organizing pattern of reality. Etienne Balibar has developed the concept of *transindividuality* in his study on Spinoza, being aware of the fact that a collective can never be the simple fusion/aggregation of a series of individualities:

“But a living collectivity is never a simple aggregate or, on the contrary, a fusion on pre-existing individuals: it must be a culture, or a dynamic way of solving the individual’s problem. It has to return to the pre-individual level (consisting, among other things, in emotional patterns) to integrate them in a new, superior, metastable entity which, for that reason, will appear as neither external, nor internal to the individuals (but precisely transindividual)”⁵.

The implementation of the concept of transindividuality in the theories of Deleuze and Guattari will pertain to the following criteria – the overtaking of the spatial categories of individualization, overtaking the pathological categories through desubjectivisation, overtaking the classical identitary categories of world, class and species and overtaking the individualizing categories of literature and history.

⁴ Ibid., “Pentru a ajunge nu până în punctul în care nu mai spui “eu”, ci până în punctul în care nu mai contează dacă spui sau nu “eu” – My translation.

⁵ Balibar, Etienne, ‘Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality’, *Mededelingen vanwege het Spinozahuis*, Delft, Eburon, 1997, nr 25, p 22-23

Overtaking the spatial categories of individualization

As we already mentioned, every traditional theory regarding individuality and identity is intimately linked to a spatial predetermination (at least in a terminological sense) – be it about the effect of the environment on the self development, about freedom restrictions, or about the terms in which we address to law trespassing – all metaphors of a spatial organization of individuality. Several identity components can be detected in connection to a certain space: the viewpoints on existence are reflected in the spatial organization of a community, be it architectural or cosmic. The hierarchy is a perfect example of identity-space contamination – bearing inside the community both an ascending and an individualizing nuance. The individual is a monad – Deleuze and Guattari suggest the demolition of such a round formation of the self and the overtaking of the *monadism* through *nomadism*. The image of the nomad in mythology, popular apprehension and literature is always associated with the apocalypse of a well-established social order. The stranger – as agent of disorder and self dissolution – par excellence is Dionysos, as he is sketched by Euripides in *The Bacchae*.

The nomadism, as proposed by the two philosophers, means becoming – understood not as transformation of A into B, but as rambling in the blurred space between A and B. To better understand this concept, we bring into discussion the vision of the two concerning the world, the literature or any entity that is traditionally perceived as round, coagulated, with well-defined laws – *the rhizome*. The rhizome is an operating mode of the multiplicity in which any area/surface can get in contact with any other area in countless ways. The rhizome does not contain points – only lines and this is the way in which the nomadic logic functions – it only postulates the virtuality, the distance, the flight and thus, the polarizing obsession, the antonyms and the strict labels are ignored.

The only rule to which the rhizome abides is the despotism of infinite multiplicity – the rhizome cannot fall under the incidence of dualism, which would make it susceptible to become a contoured structure. Another concept linked to the overtaking of the spatial categories of individualization is the deterritorialization – a continuous allergy determined by limited, coagulated structures. The opposite of deterritorialization is the archetype – “process of spiritual reterritorialization”⁶ which

⁶ Deleuze&Guattari, *Kafka: Pentru o literatură minoră*. Bucharest: Editura Art, 2007, p 21 – “proces de reteritorializare spirituală” – My translation

aims to stubbornly preserve the label (being, as well as the hierarchy, another suggestive example of identity-space contamination) through historical, aesthetic and founding functionality. Such an archetype is individuality itself, because it reterritorializes, it reshapes everything in a monadic design, it labels and ultimately, it abridges. The transindividuality overtakes this spatial determinacy of identity not because it suggests an open field instead of a wall, but because it demolishes the edifices without rebuilding an alternative. The indistinct rambling between the identity pressure points is insensitive to ontical categories – it is a rambling in space-time and between them. The kantian and post-kantian philosophies assert the relativity of space and time, depending on the given subject of observation, but with the dissolution of the subject, the space and time are reappraised in their primordial-chaotic freedom which is not to be bound by any transcendental or individual interference.

Overtaking the pathological categories through desubjectivization

The purest model of identity nomadism is the schizophrenic – and this is an important paradigm conversion attained by Deleuze and Guattari, by rediscovering the reverence for the disparate and diaphanous reality of madness, which was always the sensitive threshold between pathology and prophetism. The schizophrenic has absolute freedom of choice in regards to his place in the existential theatre by the very refusal to limit himself to a single role: “Without a given identity, but having all of them... *The Self (...)*, since a long time the schizophrenic doesn’t believe in it anymore”⁷. The absolute freedom of the schizophrenic is the freedom of the universal producer in marxist terms – the bricoleur. This attitude is opposed to the professional status distribution of the capitalist system, which functions by a logic of the identity contamination between the individual and his profession (i.e last names or nicknames that depict a certain occupation). The bricolage is opposed to the principle of unidirectionality as well, of calling, of goal, because once with the abdication of disjunction, the creator becomes universal. Infinite freedom is guaranteed by the very demolition of the ivory tower of individuality and thus, by the metamorphosis of the creator into

⁷ Deleuze & Guattari, *Capitalism și schizofrenie I – Anti-Oedip*, Bucharest: Paralela 45, 2008. p 32 – “Fără identitate, dar avându-le pe toate... Sinele... de multă vreme schizofrenicul nu mai crede în el” – My translation.

a bricoleur. Regarding the author-oeuvre rapport, D&G reject the consecrate hierarchy of the textual roles, because traditionally, the author is autocrat in relation with the manoeuvrable writing, but the two describe the text as a literary machine, perfectly autonomous from the author/reader, able to produce the signifier and signified by itself.

Thus, the supremacy of the creative/constructive self is denied. The bricoleur-writer operates with a rhizome, with a container of multiplicities that expect the conjugation, the interchange, the division. In this case we can bring into discussion the concept of authorial transindividuality – the author is no longer creating by assuming the self, a unique grid of existence but by turning into an entity with identitary dynamism – running from a role/name to another, being a multiplicity that operates with another multiplicity – the text. The literature that emerges from such a process of bricolage is the expression of thematic transindividuality because it does not use the myths of the majority (the materialization of a historical supraindividuality, or a reterritorializing archetype) or personal experience and thus the studied singularity of the author is nullified by the multiplying force of identitary schizoidy.

The schizophrenic tries on all social roles in a carnivalesque manner, but never wholly assumes one. The critique from *Anti-Oedip* in regards to the classical psychoanalysis pertains to the fact that the oedipian triangle is under the reign of disjunction (either – or) and that, paradoxically, the Oedipus complex has lead to a reaffirming of the patriarchal family roles, not to their destruction. However, the schizophrenic dodges the trap of permanentizing and he suppresses the identitary disjunction not by a hegelian synthesis of the opposites, but by overflying the distance between them: he is *trans-deathalive*, *trans-parentchild*⁸. The overflight of this existential distance between things, states and roles preserves the schizophrenic away from the danger of assuming the very role of a schizophrenic, pathology being a category of existence created, after all, by those who consider themselves strangers of it.

The schizophrenic also uses a disjointed syntax: he desubjectivates himself. The subjectivation prevents the line of flight, the deterritorialization. Deleuze and Guattari talk about a certain folding of *the subject of enunciation* with the *subject of the act of enunciation*, namely the folding of mental reality on the prevailing

⁸ Id., p 104.

reality (morality, social code, existential code, etc.), fact that leads to the slavery of reason, to personal oppression (on another hand, the french *sujet* means both the subject of a sentence/action and slave, servant, employee). Subjectivation functions as hecceity, in Althusser's terms as *social interpellation*, which establishes the individual functions of enunciation. The social interpellation is packed either by pronominal distribution (and limitation), either by proper names, but Deleuze and Guattari state the fact that a name never embodies the totality of the individual because it does not encompass the deterritorialization, the schizoid multiplicity of the existence.

In *Proust and signs*,⁹ Deleuze besides accuses the univocity, stating that the subject of interpretation in reality is never *I*, but *Us* - that *Us* which is without content, proof of ontological availability to dialogism, rhizome - or *Him*, the schizoid self-reference that children grasp at an early age, when they introduce themselves as a foreign instance, a third person identification. The empty individuality is thus transformed into potential multiplicity – the man is a crowd or *I is another* as Rimbaud cried out (and the two philosophers' authorial confession pertains to the same idea). The multiplicity is a reconversion of the chaos, of primitiveness as infinite potentiality. In *The Antropological Structures of the Imaginary*¹⁰, Durand noted down the fact that there is a generalised angst for the symbols of the collective in commotion – the swarming, cluster, shoal, pack. This apprehension is the result of a unifying obsession and of multiplicity censorship from the popular imaginary.

An interesting topic brought to discussion in *Proust and signs* is the fact that love individualizes inside of a multiplicity, but the process described by Plato in the Banquet suffers a negative conversion. Deleuze quotes Proust, who narrates about the love of the protagonist from *En la recherche du temps perdu* for Albertine, a part of a group of girls inside of which she was not distinguishable until after he fell in love with her. Thus, love has the function of removing the subject from its desirable state of multiplicity and eternal potentiality and to propel it in only one direction, to reduce it to the self sketched by the eyes of the one that gazes.

⁹ Deleuze, Gilles *Proust and Signs*, Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

¹⁰ Durand, Gilbert *Structurile antropologice ale imaginarului*, Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 2000.

Overtaking the classical identitary categories of world, class and species

Deteritorialization is the overflight of the indefinite in-between, the schizoid becoming. The ability to deteritorialize oneself occurs since every entity, no matter how round and individualized, contains a bridge to transindividuality – *the line of flight*. If the absolute reteritorialization is the archetype, the absolute deteritorialization is the *becoming-animal*, which in Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical apparatus represents the complete cracking of individuality through surmounting the most profound limit: that of world class. The best example is probably the Dionysian ritual – through omophagy and the pharmakos substitution, the Greeks intuited the becoming-animal of man and vice versa. The becoming-animal is also the counterweight of the capitalist becoming-machine.

Overtaking the individualizing categories of literature and history.

Rimbaud confesses, as an insight in regards to the existential freedom of the lines of flight, that he is a *beast*, a *negro*, from an *inferior race*. The multiple identification with liminal categories leads to a *minorization* in an almost empathic sense of the nomadic, schizoid experience – and the concept of minorization (of literature) is introduced by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka – for a minor literature* with the purpose of deconstructing the classical exigencies of art. The concept of minor literature does not include the nuance of historical dilettantism with which this syntagma has already been accustomed to. For the two philosophers it means the literature of minorities. By identitary and national marginalization, the mechanisms of transindividuality in literature are triggered. Deleuze and Guattari enunciate the 3 characteristics of minor literature:

a) The deteritorialization of language: the example provided by the authors is the German spoken in Prague. Snatching a language from the familiar context of its evolution and crossing it with another cultural space leads to an identitary concussion, a defamiliarization that is susceptible to the collective creative act.

b) Branching the individual at political immediate: the minority status gives birth to an entirely political literary discourse (*political* with the meaning of collective, social). If great literatures tackle with individualities, with heroes, for whom the social environment is just a pretext, the minor literature (given its narrow space of becoming) is branching any individuality to the political, collective realm

– because any footnote of the great literature turns into a crucial event in such a transindividual, schizoid representation of classical literary themes.

c) The collective assemblages of enunciation: concerning the minor literature, everything acquires collective hue. The individuant enunciation is a residue of the culture of talent and of a certain esoterism of writing – but a minor literature doesn't possess a guild of masters of the word because, as Kafka writes in his diary, literature is a matter of the people. Since the collective conscience is susceptible to permanent splitting (given that the community is the representation of multiplicity in action), the minor literature is the only way to express the process, being distanced from both the subject of enunciation and from the subject of the act of enunciation. The literary transindividuality is guaranteed by the destruction of the idea of textual causality through the collective assemblage of enunciation itself, which is the renouncement at any individuant claims.

In *Proust and signs*, Deleuze contrasts two possible existential configurations: the Greek order - established on a spatial and molecular logic: the microcosm (the man) as an integrant part of the macrocosm – and a Proustian order – established on a temporal logic, that consists of different pieces that don't necessarily fit or don't even belong to a preexistent totality. The temporal order is an expression of overtaking the self (scored in spatial terms and metaphors) through reaching the indistinct realm of transindividuality. The temporal order of existence is umbilically connected to a chaotic primordiality, where the act of being is frantic, anominal, schizophrenic. This clutter of existence is, after all, the origin of every ulterior form. What Deleuze and Guattari try to recover through their conceptual apparatus is precisely the freedom of indeterminacy. Hamlet is an epigone of the Greek order when he cries out that he was born to put time back in joint, time that swarms uncontrollably in the presence of an act of self overtaking – of overtaking even the need of saying *self* – the transindividuality. The transindividuality has a strong political undertone because it operates inside a culture of individuality, which it undermines until the implosion of forms – and this is the final deterritorialization.

The temporal order of existence is, at a mythical level, a thematic recovery of the o (zero) moment of mythology and collective imaginary, moment that is demonized by socratism and the common sense of the polis: when Cronus swallows up his children. Given the etymology of Cronus' name (i.e. *time*), this observation may seem facile – a theomachic metaphor for ephemerality - but what is of interest

in this case is the complete transgression of limits by an entity with indistinguishable and interchangeable role and name. The Pantheon that follows Cronus only consists of individualized gods – both by proper name and particular assignment – individualization that emerges from a generalized angst regarding this primary cannibalism that does not abide to any logic or ethics. The devouring of the gods that are already engaged in a machinery of role/function/identity is a negative makeover of a salutary act – the attempt to transpose them in the indistinct interspace between inside and outside, life and Limbo and the attempt to actualize other possibilities of their existence, other than Hades, Poseidon, Zeus etc. The Greek distribution of space (polis versus outer/liminality) comes as a rectification of this fatal error of chaotic indistinction of the order of time.

Applying the concept of transindividuality in regards to the political and cultural theories of Deleuze and Guattari, this paper tackles with the general outline of individuality/collective, as shaped by neomarxist thought through a series of crucial paradigm shifts that ultimately lead to a mis-en-abîme of these structures by infinite internal revolution.

REFERENCES:

- Balibar, Etienne, “Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality”,
Mededelingen vanwege het Spinozahuis, Delft: Eburon Publishers, 1997,
 no 25.
- Deleuze, Gilles, *Proust and Signs*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,
 2000.
- Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix, *Kafka: Pentru o literatură minoră*, Bucharest:
 Editura Art, 2007.
- , *Capitalism și schizofrenie I – Anti-Oedip*, Bucharest: Paralela 45, 2008.
- , *Capitalism și schizofrenie II – Mii de platouri*, Bucharest: Editura Art, 2013.
- De Rougemont, Denis, *Iubirea și occidentul*, Bucharest: Univers, 1987.
- Durand, Gilbert *Structurile antropologice ale imaginarului*, Bucharest: Univers
 Enciclopedic, 2000.
- Malraux, Andre, *Ispita Occidentului*, Bucharest: Meridiane, 1983.