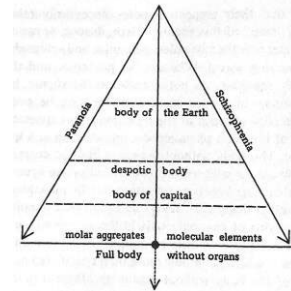


SCHIZO-REVOLUTIONARY ART: Deleuze, Guattari, and Communization

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Schizo-revolutionary Art: Deleuze, Guattari, and Communization

Stephen Zepke

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Schizo-revolutionary Art: Deleuze, Guattari, and Communitization

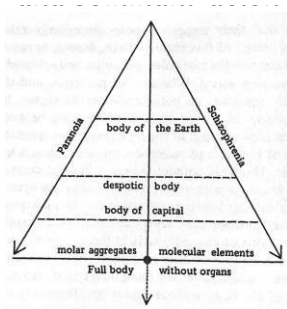
Stephen Zepke

‘Insurrection is an art.’ (Jacques Camatte, 2011 38)

‘It is as a rupture with the reproduction of what we are that will necessarily form the horizon of our struggles.’ (Endnotes, 2011 31)

What is the ‘art’ of insurrection? It encompasses – for Deleuze and Guattari at least – a homemade atomic bomb and a delicate landscape painted with the soft, wet swish of Turner’s brush. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 345, and 1983 132) Which is to say it is not defined by the specifics of its material, its technique, or its meaning, but by the nature of the act. The ‘art’ of insurrection is a mode of acting, of being in the world, a revolutionary style of life. But what is this? We can always point to something and say, ‘It’s that’ – a bomb, a brush – but this says more about the ‘that’ than about the ‘it’. In fact, ‘it’s that’ perfectly captures the paradoxical ontology of the ‘art’ of insurrection, it is *at once* an actual moment in the world, and the way in which this moment transforms itself into something else. The ‘art’ of insurrection then, is a transformative action by which something overcomes its determining conditions, an ‘art’ at once political, philosophical and aesthetic. An ‘art’ at once in and of the world, and in the process of leaving it.

But all this remains typically vague, invoking a grand alliance between politics, philosophy and art through broad gestures loosely amenable to weapon, pen or brush. A kind of metaphorical allegiance between practices which



barely goes beyond its evocation, its righteous self-evidence. This will never be good for anyone, because its fatuous and entirely general enthusiasms are precisely what the ‘art’ of insurrection is not. Insurrection is instead immediately singular and finite, it is something real, a thing – or better, a process. But this ‘thing-process’ is defined by its singular trajectory, making it undeterminable, immeasurable, infinitely open, aleatory and self-organising. It exists in a world where, Deleuze and Guattari tell us, ‘*everything is possible...*’ (1983 328). In this sense an insurrectionary thing-process (Guattari calls it a ‘schizoanalytic entity’ (2013 53)) can neither be described nor represented: ‘The undecidable is the germ and locus par excellence of revolutionary decision.’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 522) The art of insurrection can only be enacted, and in doing so constructs/discovered, as Deleuze and Guattari say, ‘an *unknown country*’ (1983 318), ‘the new world [...] a world created in the process of its tendency, its coming undone, its deterritorialization’ (1983 322). This new world is that of ‘the real in itself’ (1983 379), a reality that is always a ‘work in progress’ (1983 318). This means that the specificity and particularity of this new world exists, but this being is becoming, it is always being constructed. This emergent new world exists within our everyday actuality, but only as a repressed and exploited dream that occasionally bursts through in insurrectionary explosions. These explosions are the

¹⁵The most influential account of this process has been Boltanski and Chiapello’s *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, which famously argues that the ‘aesthetic’ revolution of 1968, and its demands for a less mediated and more creative life have been subsumed in the recent radical restructuring of capitalist management. This has led to a change in worker’s subjectivation that draws heavily on ‘artistic practice’ as its model. Focussing specifically on the sphere of art, Alexander Alberro convincingly shows how on the one hand many of the most directly ‘political’ strategies of the Conceptual artists were eagerly consumed or copied by the burgeoning class of marketing and advertising executives that formed the bulk of its collectors, and on the other how these artists and their dealers themselves borrowed extensively from the marketing strategies of their clients. (Alberro, 2003)

¹⁶Guattari will specifically say that schizoanalysis seeks to avoid the ‘Kantian opposition of sensibility and understanding’ (2013 187). The sublime not only avoids it, it overcomes it.

¹⁷I have elaborated this admittedly rather opaque claim in Zepke 2011a.

¹⁸For more on Guattari and the readymade see Zepke, 2008 and 2011.

social classes, without domination and without hierarchy – which requires the overcoming of the old forms of domination integrated in the very functioning of capitalism.’ (2011 27)

As a result of this strictly negative approach Alberto Toscano has pointedly accused Communisation theory of being a revolution that is both ‘now and never’, and ‘renders certain contemporary debates on communism more formal than strategic.’ (2011 88) As he quite rightly suggests, ‘the salutary emphasis on communism as the real movement of the destruction of value as a social form risks trading off theoretical coherence and purity for practical irrelevance.’ (2011 92)

¹³Deleuze and Guattari echo Camatte on this point when they write; ‘capital acts as the point of subjection that constitutes all human beings as subjects; but some, the “capitalists”, are subjects of enunciation that form the private subjectivity of capital, while the others, the “proletarians”, are subject of the statement, subjected to the technical machines in which constant capital is effected.’ (1987 505)

¹⁴As Camatte puts it elsewhere; ‘By simply having interiorized the social base on which it is built, capital has become autonomous, from which point it is then able to make its escape.’ (1995 97) This ‘escape’ constitutes what Camatte calls *The Wandering of Humanity*.

schizo-real, and it is the schizoanalyst who creates them: ‘The schizoanalyst is a mechanic,’ Deleuze and Guattari say, ‘and schizoanalysis is solely functional.’ (1983 322)¹ Schizoanalysis is the functional ‘art’ of making something – a class, a concept, a painting – escape from its ‘self’. And our selves first of all, we must escape our limits. ‘What does schizoanalysis ask? Nothing more than a little bit of a *relation to the outside*, a little real reality.’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983 334)

The ‘art’ of schizoanalysis can be concretely understood in political terms through Communisation theory’s view of revolution, and in aesthetic terms through a sublime theory of art. In fact we could understand these three terms as the ontological, political and aesthetic poles of a diagram of insurrection, a diagram this essay will attempt to sketch. This diagram is not an abstract idea but a practice. It begins from a method of immanent critique that reveals a system’s a priori conditions of possibility (our inheritance of Kant’s ‘genius’, according to Deleuze (1983 91)), and then invents techniques by which these conditions are overcome and so discovers their ‘principle of internal genesis’ (our inheritance from Nietzsche, Deleuze will say (1983 91)). All three poles of our diagram proceed in this manner, and together they constitute an outline of ‘political art’ in Deleuze and Guattari’s sense, an art that is ‘schizo-revolutionary’.

Why a schizoanalytic theory of political art? Because even the most cursory reading of *Anti-Oedipus* must conclude that schizoanalysis is a critique of capitalism by and through art.² Deleuze and Guattari map how the mechanisms of representation and Oedipus capture desire, and subject it to capitalist exploitation, while giving overwhelmingly artistic examples (that are also models) of insurrectionary desire (Proust, Miller, Lawrence, Rimbaud, Ray, Kafka, Beckett, Butler, Burroughs, Nijinsky, Chaplin, Artaud, Lindner, Tintoretto, Lotto, Turner, Cage, Lautreamont, Celine, etc.). Indeed, as Guattari will later argue, schizoanalysis is an ‘aesthetic paradigm’ because the analyst works as an artist;

‘This is art, this unnameable point, this point of non-sense that the artist works. In the domain of schizoanalysis it is the same aesthetic paradigm: how can one work a point that is not discursive, a point of subjectification that will be melancholic, chaotic, psychotic?’ (2011a 47-8)³

That schizoanalysis is an insurrectionary ‘art’ is an explicit assumption of Deleuze and Guattari’s work, what remains to be seen is how this art manifests in directly political and artistic terms.

Capitalism and Schizophrenia

The sub-title of both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* is ‘Capitalism and Schizophrenia’. This

¹⁰Deleuze has most clearly articulated this onto-political position in terms of ‘vitalism’: ‘When power becomes bio-power resistance becomes the power of life, a vital power that cannot be confined within species, environment or the paths of a particular diagram. Is not the force that comes from outside a certain idea of Life, a certain vitalism?’ (1988 92-3)

¹¹While *Théorie Communiste* and Deleuze and Guattari share the idea that ‘local [proletarian or minor] struggles directly target national and international axioms, at the precise point of their insertion in the field of immanence’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 512), they differ over the term ‘potential’, which clearly remains too ontological for *Théorie Communiste*. Deleuze and Guattari’s ontological optimism is always accompanied by a political pessimism, meaning that although schizophrenia is inherent to capital, its revolutionary power remains merely a ‘potential’. As they rather plaintively ask; ‘how can we count on art and science except as potentialities, since their actuality is easily controlled by the formations of sovereignty?’ (1983 376)

¹²Leon de Mattis, for example, writes:

‘We don’t know, we cannot know, and therefore we do not seek to concretely describe, what communism will be like. We only know how it will be in the negative, through the abolition of capitalist social forms. Communism is a world without money, without value, without the state, without

crystallizations of power which function around a dominant transformational component' (2011 178).

⁷As Deleuze and Guattari put it in *Anti-Oedipus*:

'The opposition is between the class and those who are outside the class. Between the servants of the machine, and those who sabotage it or its cogs and wheels. Between the social machine's regime and that of the desiring machines. Between the relative interior limits and the absolute exterior limit. If you will: between the capitalists and the schizos in their basic intimacy at the level of decoding, in their basic antagonism at the level of the axiomatic' (1983 255).

⁸In making a link between Deleuze and Guattari and Communisation theory I am following in the wake of Nicholas Thoburn's wonderful book *Deleuze, Marx and Politics* (2003), which convincingly places Deleuze and Guattari's work within the broader ultra-left political tradition, and in direct contact with Communisation theory.

⁹Deleuze and Guattari already said something very similar in *Anti-Oedipus*: 'It is a question of knowing how a revolutionary potential is realized, in its very relationship with the exploited masses or the "weakest links" of a given system. Do these masses or these links act in their own place, within the order of causes and aims that promote a new socius, or are they on the contrary the place and the agent of a sudden and unexpected irruption, an irruption of desire that breaks with causes and aims and overturns the socius, revealing its other side?' (1983 377)

subtitle does not offer us an opposition in the usual sense, because in fact capitalism is a form of schizophrenia. What then is schizophrenia? Schizophrenia is a mental illness in which the mediating forms of representation that enable the subject to both distinguish themselves from, and place themselves within the world have broken down (i.e., it is an absolute deterritorialisation), meaning that life is experienced as an unmediated flow of sensation that exceeds and often terrorizes 'normal' subjectivity. Schizophrenia is obviously a terrible tragedy and painful suffering for those who experience it, but nevertheless Deleuze and Guattari adopt it as both their model for reality, and as their technique for achieving it. As Guattari puts it;

'Schizoanalysis approaches all modalities of subjectivation in light of the world of the mode of being in the world of psychosis. Because nowhere more than here is the ordinary modelisation of everyday existence so denuded: [...] with psychosis the world of standardised Dasein loses its consistency. Alterity, as such, becomes the primary question.' (1995 63)

Obviously then, schizoanalysis will develop techniques by which social and subjective 'normality' are overcome, and a new way of being is invented.⁴ But what are these norms? These norms are capitalism.

Let's look more closely at *Anti-Oedipus* to get a better idea of the co-implication of schizophrenia and capitalism. 'At the heart of *Capital*' (1983 225), Deleuze

and Guattari write, referring both to the book and the economic system, a deterritorialised flow of labour meets a deterritorialised flow of capital capable of purchasing it. Each of these flows emerge from a decoding of the social structures that had previously contained them, and their relation (which is differential, a ‘disjunctive synthesis’) achieves a new regime of abstraction that concretises an amount of abstract labour in a commodity (measured by money as the ‘general equivalent’). This conjunction defines the social field particular to capitalism, on one side variable capital (labour power) and on the other constant capital (the power of machines). Surplus value flows from one side to the other insuring that the productive machine keeps expanding, but this also introduces one of the defining paradoxes of capitalism (Deleuze and Guattari call it an ‘axiom’ (1983 511)), the declining rate of profit. In order to increase productive efficiency more and more profit is invested into fixed capital (i.e., machines), but this means that the relative return on investment declines, even as the raw amount of return increases. As Marx explains in the third volume of *Capital*: ‘The fall in the rate of profit thus expresses the falling ratio between surplus-value itself and the total capital advanced.’ (1991 320) This tendency, Deleuze and Guattari argue, is the ‘diagram’ of capital; ‘The tendency’s only limit is internal, and it is continually going beyond it, but by displacing the limit – that is, by reconstituting it, by rediscovering it as an internal limit to

of digital technology and capital, ‘accelerationism’ has appealed to those who see technology as the road to liberation. Nick Land, for example, has offered the highly influential interpretation that ‘market immanentization’ means the obliteration of class opposition in the pure deterritorialising force of the ‘free market’. According to Land,

‘what appears to humanity as the history of capitalism is an invasion from the future by an artificial intelligent space that must assemble itself entirely from its enemies’ resources. Digitocommodification is the index of a cyberpositively escalating techno-virus, of the planetary technocapital singularity: a self-organizing insidious traumatism, virtually guiding the entire biological desiring-complex towards post-carbon replicator usurpation.’ (1993 479)

While there is much to recommend Land’s work, imagining *Bladerunner*’s replicants as cyberpunk insurgents of the future seems a little far-fetched. In hindsight, the way cyberpunk imagined a ‘liftoff’ of cybernetic technology as liberated machinic desire seems naïve, and its intoxicated celebration of a subversive cyber-future was often indistinguishable from a celebration of a liberated free-market (a point made by Fredric Jameson in his great book on science-fiction (2005 190).

⁶Guattari puts it a bit more technically; ‘the schizoanalytic objective will consist in disengaging the nature of the

⁴In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari argue for a ‘politics of psychiatry’ (i.e., an antipsychiatry) where ‘madness would no longer exist as madness [...] because it would receive the support of all the other flows, including science and art’. (1983 321) This would be the contrary to today’s situation where madness is deprived of all support, and must ‘testify all alone for deterritorialisation as a universal process.’ (1983 321) It means, in other words, that madness should no longer be considered the exception, *but the rule...*

⁵This is a quite different proposition to Deleuze and Guattari’s rather controversial, and more well-known statement:

‘Which is the revolutionary path? To go still further, that is, in the movement of the market, of decoding and deterritorialisation? For perhaps the flows are not yet deterritorialized enough, not decoded enough, from the viewpoint of a theory and a practice of a highly schizophrenic character. Not to withdraw from the process, but to go further, to “accelerate the process,” as Nietzsche put it: in this matter, the truth is that we haven’t seen anything yet.’ (1983 239-40)

Although my own affirmation of sublime art as a technique of ‘Communization’ is entirely consistent with Deleuze and Guattari’s claim that ‘one can never go far enough in the direction of deterritorialisation’, it nevertheless rejects their suggestion that this can be achieved through an acceleration of capitalism. Nevertheless, because of the co-implication

be surpassed again by means of a displacement; thus the continuity of the capitalist process engenders itself in this break of a break that is always displaced, in this unity of the schiz and the flow.’ (1983 230)

The break of the break... the deterritorialising power of the schiz is reterritorialised in the constant development of the machinery of production, and the more rapidly this technological revolution moves, the more brutal its controls and repressions. But, and this is the crucial ontological point for Deleuze and Guattari: ‘In the expanded immanence of the system, the limit tends to reconstitute in its displacement the thing it tended to diminish in its primitive emplacement.’ (1983 231) This means capitalism is permanently in crises, needing the ‘machinic surplus-value’ it produces in order to maintain ‘growth’, but also having to control this force so as not to be destroyed by it. ‘For capitalism,’ Deleuze and Guattari argue, ‘it is a question of binding the schizophrenic charges and energies into a world axiomatic that always opposes the revolutionary potential of decoded flows with new interior limits.’ (1983 246) This means channeling machinic surplus-value into greater exploitation of labour on one side, and increasing automation on the other. As we know, within our contemporary cybernetic context these are complementary, and they can never stop. Greater automation and exploitation (‘machinic enslavement’) does not fix the declining rate of profit in monetary terms, but it

introduces a new realm of decoding within the cybernetic body that succeeds in continually displacing the approaching limit. This is the emergence of deterritorialisation as the necessary logic of the capitalist social system, and the means by which the entire social system is reterritorialised on this schizo force. This requires an ‘extremely rigorous axiomatic that maintains the energy of the flows in a bound state on the body of capital as a socius that is deterritorialised’ (1983 246). As a result, ‘the flows of code that are “liberated” in science and technics by the capitalist régime engender a machinic surplus value that does not directly depend on science and technics themselves, but on capital – a surplus value that is added to human surplus value and that comes to correct the relative diminution of the latter, *both of them constituting the whole of the surplus value of flux that characterizes the system.*’ (1983 234)

The rise of neo-liberalism has intensified capitalism’s foundational rhythm of schizophrenic deterritorialisations and their biopolitical reterritorialisation within increasingly cybernetic forms of subjectivity. This, the ‘third age’ of ‘humans-machines systems’, or ‘machinic enslavement’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 505-6), has thrust the realm of affect (now produced as a commodity) and thought (immaterial labour) to the forefront of political struggles. Schizoanalysis attempts to liberate thought and sensation from their

– Zepke, S. (2012), ‘Art as Abstract Machine: Guattari’s Modernist Aesthetics’, *Félix Guattari in the Age of Semiocapitalism*. Edited by G. Genosko. *Deleuze Studies* Vol. 6, No. 2.

¹Schizoanalysis is in this sense ‘completely oriented towards an *experimentation* in touch with the real. It will not “decipher” an already constituted, self-enclosed unconscious, *it will construct it*’ (Guattari, 2011 171-2).

²This is even a criticism of the book Deleuze and Guattari anticipate; ‘Those who have read this far will perhaps find many reasons for reproaching us: for believing too much in the pure potentialities of art; for denying or minimizing the role of classes and class struggle; for militating in favor of an irrationalism of desire; for identifying the revolutionary with the schizo’ (1983 378-9). Their response? To confirm the reasons for reproach, and in particular: ‘that art and science have a revolutionary potential [...]; art and science cause increasingly decoded and deterritorialized flows to circulate in the socius, flows that are perceptible to everyone, which force the social axiomatic to grow ever more complicated, to become more saturated, to the point where the scientist and the artist may be determined to rejoin an objective revolutionary situation.’ (1983 379)

³The comparison of schizoanalysis to artistic practices is a common trope in Guattari’s work, see, 2000 40 and 2013 32, 36. For a more detailed account of Guattari’s use of art as a model for schizoanalysis, see Zepke, 2012 and 2011.

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- Théorie Communiste (2008), ‘Normative History’, *Endnotes 1*, October 2008.
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- Théorie Communiste (2011), ‘Communization in the Present Tense’, *Communization and its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles*. Edited by B. Noys. New York: Autonomedia.
- Thoburn, N. (2003), *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Toscano, A. (2011), ‘Now and Never’, *Communization and its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles*. Edited by B. Noys. New York: Autonomedia.
- Zepke, S. (2008), ‘The Readymade: Art as the Refrain of Life’, *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New*. Edited by S. O’Sullivan and S. Zepke. London and New York: Continuum.
- Zepke, S. (2011), ‘From Aesthetic Autonomy to Autonomist Aesthetics: Art and Life in Guattari’, *The Guattari Effect*. Edited by E. Alliez and A. Goffey. London and New York: Continuum.
- Zepke, S. (2011a), ‘The Sublime Conditions of Contemporary Art’, *Deleuze Studies* Vol. 5, No. 1.

cybernetic enslavement, through a ‘machinics of existence whose object is not circumscribed within fixed extrinsic coordinates’, but is instead directly compossible with ‘Universes of alterity’ (Guattari, 1995 64). This is not a rejection of cybernetic technology, but rather the necessity of inventing machinic interfaces that do not sacrifice schizophrenia on the alters of capitalist subjectivity and representation (i.e., profit). As a result, Guattari concludes; ‘Just as the schizo has broken moorings with subjective individuation, the analysis of the Unconscious should be recentred on the non-human processes of subjectivation that I call machinic, but which are more than human – superhuman in a Nietzschean sense.’ (1995 71-2) They are Nietzschean because the schizo has overcome its human conditions to enter the nonhuman flows of this expanded, ‘machinic’ life (2011 154). This is a sublime subjectivation, the emergence of an inhuman (non)subject whose activity (both material and immaterial) exceeds its economic determinations (‘labour’), its subjective subjugation (whether as ‘entrepreneur’ or ‘indebted’), and its corporeal limitations (the organism), to reveal its transcendental condition of alterity, or becoming. Such activity, according to Guattari, embodies a process of self-othering that is ‘the point of continual emergence of every form of creativity.’ (2013 5) In schizoanalysis ‘heterogeneity ceases to be something simply registered: it becomes productive of Effects. [...] It doesn’t affirm its difference *against* the

others but from its own interior, in an intensive mode of existential autonomization.’ (2013 88. 165)

Guattari argues that machinic surplus-value is double sided, being used to both further our enslavement, but also providing a surplus to capital itself. This is a surplus to the representational and subjectivising mechanisms of capital, a surplus of sensation (the surplus of the surplus, we might say) that defines the aesthetic paradigm, and gives art its power. As he writes; ‘precisely because it intervenes on the most functional levels – sensorial, affective and practical – the capitalist machinic enslavement is liable to reverse its effects, and to lead to a new type of machinic surplus-value accurately described by Marx (expansion of alternatives for the human race, constant renewal of the horizon of desires and creativity).’ (1996 220)

But given the immanence of machinic surplus value and machinic enslavement within cybernetic capitalism, the question remains: how can we escape? In *Anti-Oedipus* ‘lines of flight’ emerge out of the ‘creative’ sectors of capitalist production that are most strongly controlled – the areas of science and art.⁵ It is here that the greatest threat to the system emerges, a threat that is not so much an acceleration, as a phase-change that escapes capital’s exploitation of the ‘surplus value’ that art and science release. For all types of art the schizoanalytic question is the same; whether art remains on the level of its

– Guattari, F. (2008), *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*. Edited by S. Rolnik. Translated by K. Clapshow and B. Holmes. New York: Semiotext(e).

– Guattari, F. (2011), *The Machinic Unconscious, Essays in Schizoanalysis*. Translated by T. Adkins. New York: Semiotext(e).

– Guattari, F. (2011a), ‘On Contemporary Art, Interview with Oliver Zahm, April 1992’, *The Guattari Effect*. Translated by S. Zepke. Edited by E. Alliez and A. Goffrey. London and New York: Continuum.

– Guattari, F. (2013), *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*. Translated by A. Goffrey. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

– Iles, A. and M. Vishmidt (2011), ‘Work, Work Your Thoughts, and Therein see a Siege’, *Communization and its Discontents: Contestation, Critique, and Contemporary Struggles*. Edited by B. Noys. New York: Autonomedia.

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– Land, N. (1993), ‘Machinic Desire’, *Textual Practice*

– Lazzarato, M. (2012), *The Making of Indebted Man*. Translated by J. D. Jordan. New York: Semiotext(e).

– Marx, K. (1991), *Capital, Volume 3*. Translated by D. Fernbach. London: Penguin.

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- Guattari, F. (1996), ‘Capital as the Integral of Power Formations’, *Soft Subversions*. Edited by S. Lotringer. Translated by D. L. Sweet and C. Wiener. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Guattari, F. (2000), *The Three Ecologies*. Translated by I. Pindar and P. Sutton. London: The Athlone Press.

capitalist conditions of possibility – its market, its meaning, its expressive modalities, etc. – or whether it can move beyond these limits.

To prevent this capital enforces a regime of ‘anti-production’ on the creativity of scientists and artists, ‘as though they risked unleashing flows that would be dangerous for capitalist production and charged with a revolutionary potential, so long as these flows are not co-opted or absorbed by the laws of the market.’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983 245) Anti-production works through all the mechanisms that prevent or recoup creative excess, whether by refusing funding or support, or by rewards that monetise this excess. In this sense anti-production is not the opposite of production, but rather supports and develops it. As a result, the greater visibility, prosperity and integration enjoyed by the arts today does not mean they have more creative freedom. Just the opposite. As I will argue, contemporary artistic practice marks a particular low-point in creativity and insurrectionary spirit, not least because ‘resistance’ is now aggressively marketed as one of art’s selling points. In this way, Deleuze and Guattari acerbically argue, capital doubles the flows of cultural production with a ‘flow of *stupidity* that effects an absorption and a realization, and that ensures the integration of groups and individuals into the system.’ (1983 236) This means that artistic production can be encouraged and increasingly exploited as long as it is always already subjected to

capitalist axiomatics, and so merely reflects the ‘stupidity’ of its ‘workers’. What is needed, as Maurizio Lazzarato points out, is a struggle that denounces stupidity in this sense, and so divides people and refuses the governing consensus. (2012 157-8)⁶ This is true in the art world, as it is everywhere else. The question of course, is how are we to do it?

The practice of schizoanalysis begins with an immanent critique of existing conditions, by which something that escapes those conditions is produced. Deleuze and Guattari provides us with a clear picture of our conditions – capitalism – and their immanent mechanism of escape – schizophrenia. But because capitalism is itself ‘schizophrenic’, what escapes it is always a ‘minority’, not simply a numerical minority – although it often is this – but as well an ontological ‘minority’, a mode of being that does not obey the dominant conditions, and is insurgent. The ‘minority’ therefore marks a continuation of class politics, but in a form that is defined ontologically and aesthetically rather than economically or politically in their traditional senses.⁷ ‘Minor’ politics is a particular action that escapes capital’s axiomatics and then *might* proliferate into a larger movement. This is where it becomes possible to connect artistic practice to political action, because by creating experiences that escape our conditions of possibility art is able to contribute directly to the task of political transformation. Such ‘minor’ deterritorialisations are

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be ‘de-humanised’, could be turned from work into art. This involves a different way of communicating and knowing, a ‘knowing by affect’ as Guattari calls it (2013 180), ‘the triggering of a line of discursivity that is itself non-discursive, instituting itself prior to the opposition discursivity/non-discursivity.’ (2013 177)

Art joins Communisation theory by offering an aesthetic power of invention that is autonomous and immanent, and whose insurrectionary productions produce a future beyond the simple reduction of art to its supposed opposite, politics. In fact, the relation of art and Communisation theory seems to me doubly productive. On one side Communisation theory provides a powerful political framework within which art’s specific form of production finds its revolutionary potential. But on the other, art provides Communisation theory with a process that is on the one hand more down to earth than comical scenarios of self-organising military victory, and on the other more concrete than righteous refusals to describe a revolutionary future. Certainly, art’s production of sublime sensations is a micro-political version of revolution, a profusion of militant productions whose singularity is uncontainable, but also potentially insignificant. Those, quite simply, are the stakes of schizoanalysis.

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anomalies, mutations, monsters, madness, everything that is condemned, controlled and marginalised within ‘normal’ life. As a result, Guattari deadpans; ‘*Important things never happen where we expect.*’ (2011 196) But this ‘micro’ dimension of politics is not detached from the ‘whole’, because both part and whole emerge according to the same ontological process (schizophrenia). In other words, the ‘minor’ always emerges within the midst of capital, as what within capital exceeds it. Thus, Guattari explains, ‘there exists a sort of matter of unconscious deterritorialization, a matter of the possible, which constitutes the essence of politics, yet a transhuman, transsexual, transc cosmic politics.’ (2011 167) This is a ‘*politics of desire “before” objects and subjects have been specified*’ (2011 167), an ‘ontological pragmatics’ (2013 35), or ‘*a diagrammatic politics*’ that, Guattari thunders; ‘can do nothing but challenge every status of hegemony for linguistics, psychoanalysis, social psychology, and the entirety of the human, social, juridical, economic sciences, etc.’ (2011 174)

Communisation Theory

Good. We understand the ontological base of the insurrectionary ‘art’ of schizoanalysis, but we are yet to elaborate it in a concrete political or artistic sense. This is where Communisation theory comes in, which suggests a schizoanalytic understanding of the proletariat.⁸ In

contemporary capitalism, where the proletariat is entirely subsumed by capital, the only possible response is for the proletariat to schizoanalyse itself, to escape or even negate its own function as a necessary part of capitalist processes of valuation and exploitation. Conveniently, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that their figure of the ‘minority’ and the process of ‘minor’ politics takes this path:

‘The power of minority, of particularity, finds its figure or its universal consciousness in the proletariat. But as long as the working class defines itself by an acquired status, or even by a theoretically conquered State, it appears only as “capital”, a part of capital (variable capital), and does not leave the *plan(e) of capital*. [...] On the other hand, it is by leaving the *plan(e)* of capital, and never ceasing to leave it, that a mass becomes increasingly revolutionary and destroys the dominant equilibrium of denumerable sets.’ (1987 521-2)⁹

This important passage clearly echoes Communisation theory, which begins from the idea, as Jacques Camatte – one of the founding fathers of this theory – puts it: ‘When the proletariat is broken, its immediate form of existence is the process of capital itself.’ (1995 31) As a result, the only revolutionary action available to the working class is to become-minor and so overcome itself. Schizoanalysis will achieve this aim precisely to the extent that it is able to return us, as Deleuze and Guattari write, to ‘the great nonappropriated, nonpossessed flow,

Bifo suggests a strategy that begins from within the standardised language and ‘stupidity’ (in Deleuze and Guattari’s sense) of information that is embraced by contemporary artistic practices, but attempts to produce within them an insurrectionary excess, a ‘poetic’ sensation that escapes the circulation of discursive redundancies controlling our expression, imagination and subjectivity. As he writes, ‘poetry may start the process of reactivating the emotional body, and therefore of reactivating social solidarity, starting from the reactivation of the desiring force of enunciation.’ (2012 20) In this way ‘poetry is the excess of sensuousness exploding into the circuitry of social communication.’ (2012 21) In relation to contemporary artistic practices this statement does not even need to be taken literally, because it is not actual poetry that is required but a return to composing ourselves (it means our escapes) according to a ‘logic of sensation’, one in which affects multiply and lead towards a singular infinity of virtual possibility. As Nietzsche famously advised, we must become poets of our lives and in this way turn life into art. This, as Bifo rightly argues, is the way in which poetry (in its widest sense) might reconnect the social body and the general intellect. If the general intellect names the contemporary form of the alienated and enslaved proletariat, then ‘poetry’ could name the aesthetic practice of Communisation theory, the way the brain-screen of contemporary digital culture could be re-sensitised, could

the beginning of art's move away from sensation he suggests instead that it is 'a concept that creates sensations' (2011 43, see also 1995 95). The readymade (or artistic concept) does this, he argues (drawing on Bakhtin), by deterritorialising its object to the point where it appears to us as a pure and empty existential excess, a 'being there' that immediately spins off on multiple affective trajectories that are entirely singular because they are entirely context dependent (as Duchamp said, viewing is a 'creative act').¹⁸ This immediate interpretative proliferation is precisely the opening onto 'the aleatory at the heart of the enunciative' (2013 180) that schizoanalysis seeks to produce. The readymade is no longer lauded for its rejection of painting, but for the way it creates sensations in a new way, through the conceptualisation of itself as art. This would be the beginning of a contemporary schizoanalytic artistic practice located within Capital's cybernetic circuits of control. It is not the rejection of the concept or of discursive logics, but their *poeticisation*, their *infinitisation*, their entry into a contemporary sublime. Similarly, an aesthetics of Communisation does not involve a refusal of work, but rather, as Guattari puts it, 'a labor of heterogenesis' (2012 185). A labour by which, Bifo sings, 'language can escape from the matrix and reinvent a social sphere of singular vibrations intermingling and projecting a new space for sharing, producing, and living.' (2012 148)

incommensurable with wages and profits' (italics added, 1983 372).

Communisation theory therefore shares with Deleuze and Guattari a theory of revolution as immanent critique. In the words of the Endnotes collective, Communisation is 'a conception of communism as neither an ideal or a programme, but a movement immanent to the world of capital, that which abolishes capitalist social relations on the basis of premises currently in existence.' (2008 18) The status of this immanent movement is however, vigorously debated within Communisation theory. On the one hand, there is an 'ontological' theory of Communisation (for our purposes represented by Jacques Camatte and Gilles Dauvé) that is broadly compatible with Deleuze and Guattari's position, while on the other is a 'dialectical' position (most forcefully articulated by the group *Théorie Communiste*) for whom any ontology of revolution transcends current existence, thereby diluting the power of negation. *Théorie Communiste* criticise any attribution of an essential or ontological form to revolutionary struggle, whether this is understood as an invariant revolutionary potential (Dauvé and Deleuze and Guattari¹⁰), or as an essential human desire for community (or *Gemeinwesen* as Camatte understands this term drawn from Marx's early work). 'The proletariat,' *Théorie Communiste* write,

‘does not have an a-classist or communitarian dimension: it has, in its contradiction with capital, the ability to abolish capital and class society and to produce community (the social immediacy of the individual). This is not a dimension that it carries within itself – neither as a nature that comes to it from its situation in the capitalist mode of production, nor as the finally discovered subject of the general tendency of history towards community. [...] Rather it is the actuality of its contradictory relation to capital in a historically specific mode of production.’ (2008 80. 83)

For *Théorie Communiste* contradiction is dialectical negation, and emerges from within the constitutive logic of capitalism itself. But in our current biopolitical situation – what they call the real domination of the proletariat by capital – this constitutive contradiction now lives within the body of the proletariat, and revolution through self-negation – or Communisation – becomes possible: ‘We are in contradiction with capital on the basis of what we are, that is to say of what capital is, and not from what we could be, a potential which would somehow already exist as suffering.’ (2008a 198)¹¹ It is as if a certain ‘schizophrenia’ now defines the proletariat, whose contradiction to capital has emerged as the very logic of capital’s development. By negating itself then (i.e., negating the negation), the proletariat can strike a revolutionary blow against capitalism, and in this blow communism comes into existence. *Théorie Communiste*

coordinates.’ (2011 150) These propositions are micropolitical in an ontological sense, because their materiality expresses, and so connects them to the living whole, to ‘Nature’, the ‘plane of consistency’, etc.. This type of expressive connection (Deleuze will call it ‘analogical expression’ in his book on Bacon) is unthinkable within reductionist (i.e., digital (Deleuze 2003 115)) discursive systems, whose logical operating systems tend, according to Guattari, to lose all expressive ‘attachments to micro-social assemblages.’ (2011 151) Clearly this has significant repercussions for almost all aspects of contemporary practices, from the way they are organised around their conceptual content, to their reliance on the coherency of their funding applications, to the postmodern obsession with ‘theory’, and its latest instantiation in ‘research-based practice’. Such work needs to be interrogated according to Guattari’s schizoanalytic affirmation: ‘Rather than remaining prisoner to the redundancy of signifying tracings, we will endeavor to fabricate a new map of competence and new asignifying diagrammatic coordinates.’ (2011 176)

There is unfortunately not the space to explore this schizoanalytic and ‘asignifying diagram’ of contemporary artistic practices, so we’ll have to satisfy ourselves with an exemplary example. Guattari saw Duchamp’s readymade as the emergence of the artistic concept (1995 90, 2008 328), but rather than positing it as

transform life into art. Wherever art is produced – art defined as new and excessive sensation – an immanent outside to biopolitical controls emerges and a new community announces itself – the people to come as Deleuze and Guattari’s calls them – a *Gemeinwesen* that is no longer organised around work or the commodity, nor the proletariat’s role in producing and/or destroying them. The aim then, would not be to make art relevant to the worker’s struggle, but rather to grasp how it is art’s alterity and irrelevance that already anticipates its role in the Communisation movement.

The most immediate problem in such a schizoanalysis of contemporary artistic practices, is how to attack its post-conceptual reliance on language. As we have seen, art’s embrace of the conceptual and discursive logics underpinning late-Capitalism have lead to art’s subsumption and instrumentalisation. Deleuze and Guattari continually make the point that desire and sensation exceed their representation in discursive linguistic forms: ‘The unconscious,’ Guattari writes, ‘is constituted by machinic propositions that no semiological or logico-scientific propositions can ever grasp in an exhaustive fashion.’ (2011 149) Such machinic propositions (or art works) operate according to what Guattari calls the ‘invisible powers’ of ‘matters of expression’, propositions that ‘are unable to be circumscribed in well delimited substances from the point of view of explicit and spatio-temporal

therefore advocate a more traditional Marxist position (they specifically reject the reliance on early-Marx of their Communisation opponents (2008a 215)) based on Hegelian dialectics, but it is divested of any teleology, making communism the utterly specific moment of a revolutionary act. Thus communism becomes *Communisation*, or as *Théorie Communiste* put it: ‘It is this totality itself – this moving contradiction – which produces its own supersession in the revolutionary action of the proletariat against its own class-being, against capital.’ (2008a 215) While the rigorous immanence of revolution in *Théorie Communiste*’s position is appealing, it does restrict revolution to negating what is, rather than creating what is not. As a result, their rhetoric often takes the form of a kind of negative theology (‘communisation is not-that’) that leaves all ‘potential’ futures necessarily opaque.¹²

Théorie Communiste’s critical description of Dauvé’s position therefore applies to Deleuze and Guattari up to a point;

‘The history of class struggle is here always double: on the one hand the communist principle, the élan or revolutionary energy which animates the proletariat, a transcendent history, and on the other, the limited manifestation of this energy, an anecdotal history. Between these two aspects there exists a hierarchy. Transcendent history is “real” history, and real history with all its limits is only the

accidental form of the former, so much so that the former is constantly the judgment of the latter.’ (2008 87-8)

The point where the description is not accurate, is also the point that perhaps divides Dauvé and Camatte, and Deleuze and Guattari. For the latter, whether historical revolution or a minor schizoanalysis, ‘on this level, everything is good.’ (Guattari, 2013 3) Schizoanalysis certainly never ‘fails’ in the way that Dauvé describes the ‘death’ of insurrections, because it always goes as far as it can, and when it recedes another front, another struggle, another invention always fills the gap. This is the eternal ‘potential’ of a minor onto-politics, but its disadvantage – one felt especially strongly in relation to art – is that it struggles to connect to more widespread social movements. This is an important point we will return to, because in many ways it is a major motivation for contemporary art’s turn towards discursively based practices, and their seemingly ubiquitous desire to turn ‘art into life’.

Despite the similarities between Deleuze and Guattari and the ‘ontological’ stream of Communisation theory, significant differences emerge in their conceptualisation of the ontological excess. As we have seen, in Deleuze and Guattari schizo-revolutionary force is of necessity inhuman, inasmuch as the human, all too human is one of the most significant political conditions that schizoanalysis must overcome. In Camatte’s work especially, almost the opposite seems to be the case.

to inevitably move into life. In fact the schizoanalytic movement is in the opposite direction, towards the sublime and revolutionary sensation, and this is the way in which Iles and Vishmidt’s conclusion must be understood;

‘Not only do artworks pass through a moment which bypasses use value, and cannot be subsumed under exchange-value, they also connect with a form of activity which pressages non-objective values between subjects, activity which dismantles ‘the subject as congealed technology’ [Adorno]. Viewed thus communication would be a generalization of art and individuality *different* to that which we live through today.’ (2011 149)

That is all very good, but unfortunately Iles and Vishmidt’s conclusion stops here, at exactly the point it gets interesting, at the shocking idea that perhaps the endlessly repeated orthodoxy ‘that the dissolution of the borders between art and productive labor (or art and politics) heralds emancipation’ (Iles and Vishmidt, 2011 150) *isn’t right*. In fact, the so-called emancipation of art into life has turned out to be its diminishment (*anti-art*) and enslavement. We have therefore reached a point similar to that *Théorie Communiste* see in the dissolution of the worker’s movement achieved by capitalism’s restructuring of production; it is now time to begin a new cycle of struggles. We have reached the end of the trajectory of art-into-life, and its attempts to deny or subdue the sensation, and it is now time to go in the opposite direction, and

present forms of artistic expression. Maurizio Lazzarato puts it in an appropriately mundane way:

‘In the same way that capital must transform money (means of payment) into capital, the proletariat must transform the purchasing-power flow into a flow of autonomous and independent subjectivation, into a flow that interrupts the politics of capital, in other words, into a flow that is at once a refusal of and flight from the functions and subjections to which the proletariat is confined.’ (2012 85)

This would be art, even though Lazzarato doesn’t call it that.

The upshot of all this is that today, in our time of the total subsumption of labour, and as Anthony Iles and Marina Vishmidt put it: ‘Art finds itself in a new relation with contemporary forms of value production.’ (2011 131) As we have seen however, while Communisation theory is strong in describing this relation, it struggles to come up with a positive account of contemporary artistic practices. Iles and Vishmidt are no exception to this. They are certainly right when they claim; ‘If art’s emancipatory qualities are founded upon the tensions between self-directed activity and productive labor then attempts to close the distance between them are of paramount importance.’ (2011 135) But they are completely wrong when they repeat the tired litany of ‘political art’ movements, beginning with Constructivism, every one heading down the self-sacrificing road to Cavalry along which art seems

Camatte proposes *Gemeinwesen* as a kind of species-being that defines the human against Capitalism, drawing the term (as well as a sketch of Communisation theory itself) from a passage in Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844*. But Camatte’s work proposes a series of radical breaks with normative conceptions of life that makes his affirmation of the ‘human’ strangely useful for a specifically political understanding of schizoanalysis. Camatte is arguably most well-known for his rejection of organisations in all their forms, and first of all the groupuscules of the left. Communisation theory really starts at home in this sense. Leftist organisations, Camatte argues, mimic the strategies of capitalist marketing, and so breaking with the representational organisation of political groups, no matter how radical, is the only possible way of ‘carrying the break with the political point of view to the depths of our individual consciousness. [...] All political representation is a screen and therefore an obstacle to a fusion of forces.’ (1995 20) The revolutionary parties of the proletariat are therefore the clearest evidence, Camatte writes, that: ‘The counter-revolution triumphed in the guise of revolution.’ (2011 45) The counter-revolution is nothing less than the capitalisation of human beings (Camatte calls this ‘anthropomorphization’ (1975 6)) that makes humans over in capital’s image.¹³ One of the most significant of these images is that of the proletarian, and especially the proletarian revolutionary, who are living proof that ‘capital

reconstructs the human being as a function of its process.’ (Camatte, 1975 6) It does so, Camatte claims, through cybernetic machines in which the mind is turned ‘into a computer which can be programmed by the laws of capital.’ (1975 6) In this way capital is able to make itself the logic of transformation and liberation that human beings desire; ‘Since capital is indefinite it allows the human being to have access to a state beyond the finite in an infinite becoming or appropriation which is never realized, renewing at every instant the illusion of total blossoming.’ (Camatte, 1975 11) In this sense, and here Camatte uses very similar terms to Deleuze and Guattari, ‘the movement toward unlimited generalization of desire is isomorphic to the indefinite movement of capital.’ (1975 16) As a result, capitalism no longer depends on the production process, and so on humans, but rather humans have become ‘produced’ by capitalism through the mechanism of representation. ‘We are only the activity of capital’ (1995 150), Camatte writes, ‘the triumph of capital is the triumph of mediation and the loss of all immediateness for man, who cannot now experience what is immediate except through one of the mediations of capital.’ (1995 193) Here, a new ‘community of capital’ emerges, along with an ‘inhuman’ humanity (2011 12), by which an ‘autonomized form of capital is interposed between the knowing human subject and reality; this form has absorbed all representations and schemes of knowledge: science, art, ideology. Man is

exceeded in a sensation of an infinite material force. This experience evades the calculations of both the imagination and the understanding, as well as their supposed ‘free play’,¹⁶ and so exceeds the conceptual and empirical conditions of our experience. Sublime art qua schizoanalysis therefore takes the sensation beyond its discursive and subjective rationality, to leap into the transcendental schiz, a leap that does not reveal any Ideas of reason (as it does in Kant), but is instead a psychotic ‘reason’ that is always in the process of escaping itself.¹⁷ Camatte’s version of Communisation theory also affirms this point:

‘Whatever is rational in relation to the established order can be absorbed and recuperated. If revolution operates on the same terrain as its adversary, it can always be halted. It cannot rise up; it is thwarted in its most passionate desire, which is to realize its own project and to accomplish it *on its own ground.*’ (1995 120)

Here Camatte approaches the schizoanalytic concept of a sublime humanity, one whose capitalist subjectivities and forms of representation have turned mad, and so turned truly creative. Here, he says, ‘communism is not a mode of production, but a new mode of being.’ (1995 124)

Despite (or perhaps because of) the radicality of this rhetoric (which I in no way wish to disavow), the sublime sensation must find a way to emerge from within

wider emergence of immaterial labour and mass-media markets as the hegemonic mechanisms of social production. This would be the point at which contemporary art's interest in negating its own history by adopting 'non-art' compositional practices, effectively subsumed its 'process' to the emerging mode of production (and especially those involved with new media). The mistake of contemporary practice in this sense was to imagine its political efficacy to lie in overcoming its autonomy from 'life', whereas in fact exactly the opposite was the case. As Guattari so passionately insists in *Chaosmosis*, art must operate within the world and in relation to social production, but only as a 'minority' sensation, one that affirms its ontological autonomy. For this reason, he continues, we must always celebrate 'the universe of art as such, precisely because it is always in danger of collapsing.' (1995 130)

Camatte's critique of the Beaubourg succinctly states how discursive and conceptual strategies subordinate contemporary art to capitalist conditions of possible experience, most importantly discursive functionality and the logical systems and processes of subjectivation that underpin it. But Deleuze and Guattari's insistence on art's production of sensation as a political practice takes us a step further, and leads us to a schizoanalytic aesthetic practice that finds its model in Kant's concept of the sublime. In the dynamic sublime human conditions of possibility are

completely divested.' (2011 103)¹⁴ As a result, the revolution seeks to abolish the distance between the individual and community qua species being (*Gemeinwesen*), and to do so it must overcome the representation the proletariat gives of itself.

For Camatte, as for Deleuze and Guattari, revolution is not a question of raising consciousness, but of destroying repressive consciousness (2011 34), destroying the way the proletariat embodies 'the community of capital' (1995 183). Communisation is not, therefore, a new mode of production, or even the appropriation of the existing mode of production, because revolutionaries 'will not gain mastery over production, but will create new relations among themselves which will determine an entirely different activity.' (1975 35-6) In this sense Camatte, like Deleuze and Guattari, sees creativity – qua schizoanalysis – as part of the revolution, because any revolution must 'unleash free creativity and unrestrained imagination in a movement of human becoming.' (1995 98) But it is precisely at this point that Deleuze and Guattari go further, because they understand that creativity must become synonymous with revolution itself.

Art

But what is the precise nature of this creativity? It is time, perhaps, to point to something and say, in the spirit of Communisation theory, 'it's not that'. In a short

essay on the Beaubourg museum of art in Paris written in 1977, Camatte provides an interesting critique of many aspects of contemporary artistic practices. He argues that contemporary art marks the realization of the 'end of art' proclaimed by Dada (also known as 'anti-art' or 'art into life', an ideology that regained importance in the art world in the late 60s, and that Peter Bürger consequently and famously called the 'neo-avant-garde'), because under the real domination of capital nothing, least of all subjective expression/representation, is separate from capital. In contemporary capitalism art can truly be said to have moved into life because, Camatte says, prefiguring many recent debates surrounding art's complicity with 'cognitive capitalism'; 'Capital's art is knowledge of capital. It's a way to achieve knowledge of the new world it has created, in which the sacred, nature, men and women exist only behind death masks.' (1997 54) More specifically, at the end of the 60s art turns away from its modernist concern with the formal composition of the art work, and towards the creative process itself. Contemporary art's interest in the 'inner' creative process of artistic subjectivity imagined it to be the means by which 'art' could directly confront and challenge bourgeois 'life'. But despite all the good (and some not so good) intentions this had the opposite effect, and made the creative process available to capital to subsume and exploit.¹⁵ Camatte writes:

'Everything must be understood through capital's image. Such is the Beaubourg's function, a carcinoma, a neoplasm that must divert the aesthetic flux into domination of the future. It will create roles to that end. [...] The integration-realization of art by capital implies its integration of revolt. It will be absorbed.' (Camatte, 1997 55)

Echoing Deleuze and Guattari's account of deterritorialisation's vital function within capitalism, Camatte argues that revolt is no longer possible when capitalism presents such an openness of possibilities (Camatte calls it 'credit', which must be repaid in recognisable forms, hence the rise of advertising and mass-media in and as art), to the point where 'revolt' simply expresses the continual process of capital's own development.

Camatte's critique of the Beaubourg prefigures Deleuze and Guattari's later rejection of Conceptual art for its complicity with capitalism (1994 198-9). Deleuze and Guattari emphasise how Conceptual art hands over the decision regarding whether or not something is art to the 'opinion' of the American everyman, and so subsumes aesthetic alterity in capitalist 'stupidity'. In this way the modern-postmodern break introduces a new understanding of artistic practice as a creative conceptual and discursive operation that is independent of medium, and even of 'art'. In this way art becomes a form of information processing and communication, and its techniques feed on and into the