

The Three Ecologies

FÉLIX GUATTARI

Translated by

IAN PINDAR and PAUL SUTTON

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*This translation is dedicated to the memory of
Teresa Anastasia Smith (1934-99)*

Contents

<i>Félix Guattari: A Chronology</i>	ix
Translators' Introduction	1
Note on the Translation and Acknowledgements	21
THE THREE ECOLOGIES	23
Notes	70
The Life and Work of Félix Guattari: From Transversality to Ecosophy by Gary Genosko	106
Bibliography	161
Index	169

There is no one else who has done this before. It is a great honor to be named as the recipient of this award. I am grateful to the committee for their kind words and to the donors for their generous support. I will continue to work hard to make a difference in the world.

For Sacha Goldman

The world is full of people who are trying to make a difference. Some are doing it in big ways, and some are doing it in small ways. But all of them are doing it because they care. They care about the people who are suffering, and they care about the future of our planet. They care about the world we are leaving behind for our children. They care about the world we are leaving behind for all of us. They care about the world we are leaving behind for the world.

I believe in the power of love and the power of kindness. I believe in the power of hope and the power of faith. I believe in the power of the human spirit and the power of the human mind. I believe in the power of the human heart and the power of the human soul. I believe in the power of the human race and the power of the human world.

There is an ecology of bad ideas, just as there is an ecology of weeds.

Gregory Bateson¹

The Earth is undergoing a period of intense techno-scientific transformations. If no remedy is found, the ecological disequilibrium this has generated will ultimately threaten the continuation of life on the planet's surface. Alongside these upheavals, human modes of life, both individual and collective, are progressively deteriorating. Kinship networks tend to be reduced to a bare minimum; domestic life is being poisoned by the gangrene of mass-media consumption; family and married life are frequently 'ossified' by a sort of standardization of behaviour; and neighbourhood relations are generally reduced to their meanest expression. . . . It is the relationship between subjectivity and its exteriority – be it social, animal, vegetable or Cosmic – that is compromised in this way, in a sort of general movement of implosion and regressive infantilization. Otherness [*l'altérité*] tends to lose all its asperity. Tourism, for example, usually amounts to no more than a journey on the spot, with the same redundancies of images and behaviour.

Political groupings and executive authorities appear to be totally incapable of understanding the full implications of these issues. Despite having recently initiated a partial realization of the most obvious dangers that threaten the natural environ-

ment of our societies, they are generally content to simply tackle industrial pollution and then from a purely technocratic perspective, whereas only an ethico-political articulation – which I call *ecosophy* – between the three ecological registers (the environment, social relations and human subjectivity) would be likely to clarify these questions.²

Henceforth it is the ways of living on this planet that are in question, in the context of the acceleration of techno-scientific mutations and of considerable demographic growth. Through the continuous development of machinic labour, multiplied by the information revolution, productive forces can make available an increasing amount of time for potential human activity.³ But to what end? Unemployment, oppressive marginalization, loneliness, boredom, anxiety and neurosis? Or culture, creation, development, the reinvention of the environment and the enrichment of modes of life and sensibility? In both the Third World and the developed world, whole sections of the collective subjectivity are floundering or simply huddle around archaisms; as is the case, for example, with the dreadful rise of religious fundamentalism.⁴

The only true response to the ecological crisis is on a global scale, provided that it brings about an authentic political, social and cultural revolution, reshaping the objectives of the production of both material and immaterial assets. Therefore this revolution must not be exclusively concerned with visible relations of force on a grand scale, but will also take into account molecular domains of sensibility, intelligence and desire. A finalization of social labour, regulated in a univocal way by a profit economy and by power relations, would only lead, at present, to dramatic dead-ends. This is obvious from

the absurd and burdensome economic supervisions of the Third World, which lead some of its regions into an absolute and irreversible pauperization. It is equally evident in countries like France, where the proliferation of nuclear power stations threatens, over a large part of Europe, the possible consequences of Chernobyl-style accidents.⁵ One need hardly mention the almost delirious stockpiling of thousands of nuclear warheads, which, at the slightest technical or human error, could automatically lead to collective extermination. In all of these examples it is the same dominant modes of valorizing human activities that are implicated. That is to say:

1. those of the imperium [Latin: 'authority'] of a global market that destroys specific value systems and puts on the same plane of equivalence: material assets, cultural assets, wildlife areas, etc.
2. those that place all social and international relations under the control of police and military machines.

Trapped in this double pincer movement, the nation States see their traditional role of mediation being reduced more and more, and they are frequently put in the combined service of the authorities of the global marketplace and of military-industrial complexes.⁶

The current situation is all the more paradoxical as the time is almost over when the world was placed under the aegis of an East-West antagonism, a largely imaginary projection of working-class/middle-class oppositions within capitalist countries.⁷ Does this mean that the new, multipolar issues of the three ecologies will simply take the place of the old class

struggles and their myths of reference? Of course, such a substitution will not be automatic! But it nevertheless appears probable that these issues, which correspond to an extreme complexification of social, economic and international contexts, will increasingly come to the foreground.

Initially the class antagonisms that were inherited from the nineteenth century contributed to the creation of homogenous, bipolarized fields of subjectivity. Then, during the second half of the twentieth century, the hardline worker subjectivity crumbled with the advent of the consumer society, the welfare system, the media, etc. Despite the fact that today these segregations and hierarchies have never been so intensively experienced, this group of subjective positions has been cloaked by the same fictitious smokescreen. A vague sense of social belonging has deprived the old class consciousness of its tension.⁸ (I won't go into the accumulation of violently heterogeneous subjective poles, such as those that are emerging in the Muslim world.) For their part, the so-called socialist countries have steadily introjected the 'unidimensionalizing' value systems of the West.⁹ Therefore, in the communist world the old façade of egalitarianism is giving way to mass-media serialism (the same ideal standards of living, the same fashions and types of rock music, etc.).¹⁰

It is difficult to imagine the situation can be improved in any significant way as far as the North-South axis is concerned. Admittedly, in the end, it is conceivable that the spread of agri-business techniques will allow us to modify the theoretical givens of the tragedy of world hunger. But on the ground, meanwhile, it would be a complete illusion to think that international aid, such as it is designed and distributed today,

would be able to permanently resolve every problem. Henceforth, the long-term establishment of immense zones of misery, hunger and death seems to play an integral part in the monstrous system of 'stimulation' that is Integrated World Capitalism. In any case, the hyper-exploitative New Industrial Powers, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, etc., depend on these zones for their development.

We find this same principle of social tension and 'stimulation' born of despair in the developed countries, with the establishment of periods of chronic unemployment and the increasing marginalization of the population: the young, the old, 'part-time' workers, the undervalued, etc.

So, wherever we turn, there is the same nagging paradox: on the one hand, the continuous development of new techno-scientific means to potentially resolve the dominant ecological issues and reinstate socially useful activities on the surface of the planet, and, on the other hand, the inability of organized social forces and constituted subjective formations to take hold of these resources in order to make them work.

But perhaps this paroxysmal era of the erosion of subjectivities, assets and environments is destined to enter into a phase of decline. The demands of singularity are rising up almost everywhere; the most obvious signs in this regard are to be found in the multiplication of nationalitary claims which were regarded as marginal only yesterday, and which increasingly occupy the foreground of the political stage.¹¹ (We note, from Corsica to the Baltic States, the conjunction of ecological and separatist demands.) In the end, this rise in nationalitary questions will probably lead to profound modifications in East-West relations, and in particular, the configuration of Europe,

whose centre of gravity could drift decisively towards a neutralist East.

The traditional dualist oppositions that have guided social thought and geopolitical cartographies are over. The conflicts remain, but they engage with multipolar systems incompatible with recruitments under any ideological, Manicheist flag.¹² For example, the opposition between the Third World and the developed world is being completely blown apart. We have seen with the New Industrial Powers that productivity is becoming on an altogether different scale from the traditional industrial bastions of the West, but this phenomenon is accompanied by a sort of Third-Worldization within developed countries, which is coupled with an exacerbation of questions relative to immigration and racism.¹³ Make no mistake about it, the great disorder and confusion surrounding the economic unification of the European Community will in no way impede this Third-Worldization of considerable areas of Europe.

Another antagonism, transversal to that of class struggles, remains that of the relations between men and women. On a global scale, the female condition is far from being ameliorated. The exploitation of female labour, like that of child labour, is as bad now as it was in the worst periods of the nineteenth century! Nevertheless, for the last two decades, a gradual subjective revolution has modified the female condition. Although the sexual independence of women is very unequally developed in correlation with the availability of methods of contraception and abortion, and although the rise of religious fundamentalism continues to minorize them, some indices lead us to think that long-term transformations – in Fernand Braudel's sense – are well and truly on the way (the

appointment of women as heads of State, demands for equality between men and women at important representative levels, etc.).¹⁴

As for young people, although they are crushed by the dominant economic relations which make their position increasingly precarious, and although they are mentally manipulated through the production of a collective, mass-media subjectivity, they are nevertheless developing their own methods of distancing themselves from normalized subjectivity through singularization. In this respect, the transnational character of rock-music is extremely significant; it plays the role of a sort of initiatory cult, which confers a cultural pseudo-identity on a considerable mass of young people and allows them to obtain for themselves a bare minimum of existential Territories.¹⁵

It is in this context of break-up and decentralization, the multiplication of antagonisms and processes of singularization, that the new ecological problematics suddenly appear. Don't misunderstand me, I don't claim in the least that they can be relied upon to take charge of the other lines of molecular fracture, but it appears to me that they lead to a problematization that is transversal to them.

If it is no longer a question – as it was in previous periods of class struggle or the defence of the 'fatherland of socialism' – of creating an unequivocal ideology, it is conceivable, on the other hand, that the new ecosophical example indicates the lines of reconstruction of human praxis in the most varied domains.¹⁶ At every level, individual or collective, in everyday life as well as the reinvention of democracy (concerning town planning, artistic creation, sport, etc.), it is a question in each

instance of looking into what would be the dispositives of the production of subjectivity, which tends towards an individual and/or collective resingularization, rather than that of mass-media manufacture, which is synonymous with distress and despair.¹⁷ The ecosophical perspective does not totally exclude a definition of unifying objectives, such as the struggle against world hunger, an end to deforestation or to the blind proliferation of the nuclear industries; but it will no longer be a question of depending on reductionist, stereotypical order-words which only expropriate other more singular problematics and lead to the promotion of charismatic leaders.¹⁸

The same ethico-political aim runs through the questions of racism, of phallogentrism, of the disastrous legacy of a self-congratulatory 'modern' town planning, of an artistic creation liberated from the market system, of an education system able to appoint its own social mediators, etc.¹⁹ In the final account, the ecosophic problematic is that of the production of human existence itself in new historical contexts.

Social ecosophy will consist in developing specific practices that will modify and reinvent the ways in which we live as couples or in the family, in an urban context or at work, etc. Obviously it would be inconceivable to try and go back to the old formulas, which relate to periods when the planet was far less densely populated and when social relations were much stronger than they are today. But it will be a question of literally reconstructing the modalities of 'group-being' [*l'être-en-groupe*], not only through 'communicational' interventions but through existential mutations driven by the motor of subjectivity. Instead of clinging to general recommendations we would be implementing effective practices of experimen-

tation, as much on a microsocial level as on a larger institutional scale.

For its part, mental ecosophy will lead us to reinvent the relation of the subject to the body, to phantasm, to the passage of time, to the 'mysteries' of life and death. It will lead us to search for antidotes to mass-media and telematic standardization, the conformism of fashion, the manipulation of opinion by advertising, surveys, etc.²⁰ Its ways of operating will be more like those of an artist, rather than of professional psychiatrists who are always haunted by an outmoded ideal of scientificity.

Nothing in these domains is played out in the name of history, in the name of infrastructural determinisms! Barbaric implosion cannot be entirely ruled out. And, for want of such an ecosophical revival (or whatever we wish to call it), for want of a rearticulation of the three fundamental types of ecology, we can unfortunately predict the rise of all kinds of danger: racism, religious fanaticism, nationalitary schisms that suddenly flip into reactionary closure, the exploitation of child labour, the oppression of women . . .

Let us now try to grasp the implications of such an ecosophical perspective on our conception of subjectivity.

The subject is not a straightforward matter; it is not sufficient to think in order to be, as Descartes declares, since all sorts of other ways of existing have already established themselves outside consciousness, while any mode of thought that desperately tries to gain a hold on itself merely turns round and round like a mad spinning top, without ever attaching itself to the real Territories of existence; which, for

their part, drift in relation to each other like tectonic plates under continents.²¹ Rather than speak of the 'subject', we should perhaps speak of *components of subjectification*, each working more or less on its own. This would lead us, necessarily, to re-examine the relation between concepts of the individual and subjectivity, and, above all, to make a clear distinction between the two. Vectors of subjectification do not necessarily pass through the individual, which in reality appears to be something like a 'terminal' for processes that involve human groups, socio-economic ensembles, data-processing machines, etc. Therefore, interiority establishes itself at the crossroads of multiple components, each relatively autonomous in relation to the other, and, if need be, in open conflict.

I know that it remains difficult to get people to listen to such arguments, especially in those contexts where there is still a suspicion – or even an automatic rejection – of any specific reference to subjectivity. In the name of the primacy of infrastructures, of structures or systems, subjectivity still gets a bad press, and those who deal with it, in practice or theory, will generally only approach it at arm's length, with infinite precautions, taking care never to move too far away from pseudo-scientific paradigms, preferably borrowed from the hard sciences: thermodynamics, topology, information theory, systems theory, linguistics, etc. It is as though a scientific superego demands that psychic entities are reified and insists that they are only understood by means of extrinsic coordinates. Under such conditions, it is no surprise that the human and social sciences have condemned themselves to missing the intrinsically progressive, creative and auto-positioning dimensions of processes of subjectification. In this context,

it appears crucial to me that we rid ourselves of all scientific references and metaphors in order to forge new paradigms that are instead ethico-aesthetic in inspiration. Besides, are not the best cartographies of the psyche, or, if you like, the best psychoanalyses, those of Goethe, Proust, Joyce, Artaud and Beckett, rather than Freud, Jung and Lacan? In fact, it is the literary component in the works of the latter that best survives (for example, Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* can perhaps be regarded as an extraordinary modern novel!).

My reassessment of psychoanalysis proceeds from a concern with aesthetic creation and with ethical implications, yet it doesn't at all presuppose a 'rehabilitation' of phenomenological analysis, which I consider to be handicapped by a systematic 'reductionism' that leads it to reduce the objects under consideration to a pure intentional transparency. I myself have come to regard the apprehension of a psychical fact as inseparable from the assemblage of enunciation that engenders it, both as fact and as expressive process.²² There is a kind of relationship of uncertainty between the apprehension [*la saisie*] of the object and the apprehension of the subject; so that, to articulate them both, one is compelled to make a *pseudo-narrative* detour through the annals of myth and ritual or through supposedly scientific accounts [*descriptions*] – all of which have as their ultimate goal a *dis-positional mise en scène*, a bringing-into-existence, that authorizes, 'secondarily', a discursive intelligibility.²³ I am not advocating a return to the Pascalian distinction between the mathematical and the intuitive mind, for these two types of understanding, conceptual on the one hand and affective or perceptive on the other, are in fact entirely complementary.²⁴ However, I am suggesting

that this pseudo-narrative detour deploys repetitions that function, through an infinite variety of rhythms and refrains, as the very supports of existence.²⁵ Discourse, or any discursive chain, thus becomes the bearer of a non-discursivity which, like a stroboscopic trace, nullifies the play of distinctive oppositions at the level of both content and form of expression.²⁶ It is only through these repetitions that incorporeal Universes of reference, whose singular events punctuate the progress of individual and collective historicity, can be generated and regenerated.

Just as Greek theatre and courtly love or chivalric romance were once adopted as models or rather as modules of subjectification, so, today it is Freudianism which continues to underwrite our perception of sexuality, childhood, neurosis, etc.²⁷ I do not at present envisage 'going beyond' Freudianism [*le fait freudien*] or breaking definitively with it, however I do want to reorient Freud's concepts and practices so as to use them differently; I want to uproot them from their pre-structuralist ties, from a subjectivity anchored solidly in the individual and collective past. From now on what will be on the agenda is a 'futurist' and 'constructivist' opening up of the fields of virtuality. The unconscious remains bound to archaic fixations only as long as there is no investment [*engagement*] directing it towards the future. This existential tension will proceed through the bias of human and even non-human temporalities such as the acceleration of the technological and data-processing revolutions, as prefigured in the phenomenal growth of a computer-aided subjectivity, which will lead to the opening up or, if you prefer, the unfolding [*dépliage*], of animal-, vegetable-, Cosmic-, and machinic-becomings. At the same time

we should not forget that the formation and 'remote-controlling' of human individuals and groups will be governed by institutional and social class dimensions.

In short, the mythic and phantasmatic lure of psychoanalysis must be resisted, it must be played with, rather than cultivated and tended like an ornamental garden!²⁸ Unfortunately, the psychoanalysts of today, more so than their predecessors, take refuge behind what one might call a 'structuralization' of unconscious complexes, which leads to dry theorization and to an insufferable dogmatism; also, their practice ends up impoverishing their treatments and produces a stereotyping which renders them insensible to the singular otherness [*alterité*] of their patients.²⁹

I have invoked ethical paradigms principally in order to underline the responsibility and necessary 'engagement' required not only of psychiatrists but also all of those in the fields of education, health, culture, sport, the arts, the media, and fashion, who are in a position to intervene in individual and collective psychological proceedings. It is ethically untenable for these psychiatrists to shelter, as they so often do, behind a transference neutrality supposedly founded upon a scientific corpus and on a perfect mastery of the unconscious. More so given that the domain of psychiatry has established itself as the extension of, and at the interface with, aesthetic domains.

I have stressed these aesthetic paradigms because I want to emphasize that everything, particularly in the field of practical psychiatry, has to be continually reinvented, started again from scratch, otherwise the processes become trapped in a cycle of deathly repetition [*répétition mortifère*]. The precondition for any revival of analysis – through schizoanalysis, for example –

consists in accepting that as a general rule, and however little one works on them, individual and collective subjective assemblages are capable, potentially, of developing and proliferating well beyond their ordinary equilibrium.³⁰ By their very essence analytic cartographies extend beyond the existential Territories to which they are assigned. As in painting or literature, the concrete performance of these cartographies requires that they evolve and innovate, that they open up new futures, without their authors [*auteurs*] having prior recourse to assured theoretical principles or to the authority of a group, a school or an academy . . . Work in progress!³¹ An end to psychoanalytic, behaviourist or systematist catechisms. In order to converge with the perspective of the art world, psychiatrists must demonstrate that they have abandoned their white coats, beginning with those invisible ones that they wear in their heads, in their language and in the ways they conduct themselves. The goal of a painter is not to repeat the same painting indefinitely (unless they are Titorelli, who in Kafka's *The Trial* always painted identical portraits of the same judge).³² Similarly, every care organization, or aid agency, every educational institution, and any individual course of treatment ought to have as its primary concern the continuous development of its practices as much as its theoretical scaffolding.

Paradoxically, it is perhaps in the 'hard' sciences that we encounter the most spectacular reconsideration of processes of subjectification; Prigogine and Stengers, for example, refer to the necessity of introducing into physics a 'narrative element', which they regard as indispensable for the theorization of evolution in terms of irreversibility.³³ All the same I am

convinced that the question of subjective enunciation will pose itself ever more forcefully as machines producing signs, images, syntax and artificial intelligence continue to develop. Here we are talking about a reconstruction of social and individual practices which I shall classify under three complementary headings, all of which come under the ethico-aesthetic aegis of an ecosophy: social ecology, mental ecology and environmental ecology.

The increasing deterioration of human relations with the *socius*, the psyche and 'nature', is due not only to environmental and objective pollution but is also the result of a certain incomprehension and fatalistic passivity towards these issues as a whole, among both individuals and governments. Catastrophic or not, negative developments [*évolutions*] are simply accepted without question. Structuralism and subsequently postmodernism, has accustomed us to a vision of the world drained of the significance of human interventions, embodied as they are in concrete politics and micropolitics.³⁴ The explanations offered for this decline of social praxes – the death of ideologies and the return to universal values – seem to me unsatisfactory. Rather, it appears to be a result of the failure of social and psychological praxes to adapt, as well as a certain blindness to the erroneousness of dividing the Real into a number of discrete domains. It is quite wrong to make a distinction between action on the psyche, the *socius* and the environment. Refusal to face up to the erosion of these three areas, as the media would have us do, verges on a strategic infantilization of opinion and a destructive neutralization of democracy. We need to 'kick the habit' of sedative discourse,

particularly the 'fix' of television, in order to be able to apprehend the world through the interchangeable lenses or points of view of the three ecologies.

Chernobyl and AIDS have dramatically revealed to us the limits of humanity's techno-scientific power and the 'backlash' that 'nature' has in store for us. If the sciences and technology are to be directed towards more human ends, we evidently require collective forms of administration and control, rather than a blind faith in the technocrats of the State apparatuses; we cannot expect them to control progress and to avert risks in these domains, which are governed primarily by the principles of a profit economy. Of course, it would be absurd to want to return to the past in order to reconstruct former ways of living. After the data-processing and robotics revolutions, the rapid development of genetic engineering and the globalization of markets, neither human labour nor the natural habitat will ever be what they once were, even just a few decades ago. As Paul Virilio has suggested, the increased speed of transportation and communications and the interdependence of urban centres are equally irreversible.³⁵ While on the one hand we must make do with this situation, on the other we must acknowledge that it requires a reconstruction of the objectives and the methods of the whole of the social movement *under today's conditions*. To symbolize this problematic I need only refer to an experiment once conducted on television by Alain Bombard.³⁶ He produced two glass tanks, one filled with polluted water – of the sort that one might draw from the port of Marseille – containing a healthy, thriving, almost dancing octopus.³⁷ The other tank contained pure, unpolluted seawater. Bombard caught the octopus and immersed it in the

'normal' water; after a few seconds the animal curled up, sank to the bottom and died.

Now more than ever, nature cannot be separated from culture; in order to comprehend the interactions between ecosystems, the mechanosphere and the social and individual Universes of reference, we must learn to think 'transversally'. Just as monstrous and mutant algae invade the lagoon of Venice, so our television screens are populated, saturated, by 'degenerate' images and statements [*énoncés*].³⁸ In the field of social ecology, men like Donald Trump are permitted to proliferate freely, like another species of algae, taking over entire districts of New York and Atlantic City; he 'redevelops' by raising rents, thereby driving out tens of thousands of poor families, most of whom are condemned to homelessness, becoming the equivalent of the dead fish of environmental ecology.³⁹ Further proliferation is evident in the savage deterritorialization of the Third World, which simultaneously affects the cultural texture of its populations, its habitat, its immune systems, climate, etc. Child labour is another disaster of social ecology; it has actually become more prevalent now than it was in the nineteenth century! How do we regain control of such an auto-destructive and potentially catastrophic situation?⁴⁰ International organizations have only the most tenuous control of these phenomena which call for a fundamental change in attitudes. International solidarity, once the primary concern of trade unions and leftist parties, is now the sole responsibility of humanitarian organizations. Although Marx's own writings still have great value, Marxist discourse has lost its value. It is up to the protagonists of social liberation to remodel the theoretical references so as to illuminate a possible

escape route out of contemporary history, which is more nightmarish than ever. It is not only species that are becoming extinct but also the words, phrases, and gestures of human solidarity. A stifling cloak of silence has been thrown over the emancipatory struggles of women, and of the new proletariat: the unemployed, the 'marginalized', immigrants.

In mapping out the cartographic reference points of the three ecologies, it is important to dispense with pseudo-scientific paradigms. This is not simply due to the complexity of the entities under consideration but more fundamentally to the fact that the three ecologies are governed by a *different logic* to that of ordinary communication between speakers and listeners which has nothing to do with the intelligibility of discursive sets, or the indeterminate interlocking of fields of signification. It is a logic of intensities, of auto-referential existential assemblages engaging in irreversible durations. It is the logic not only of human subjects constituted as totalized bodies, but also of psychoanalytic partial objects – what Winnicott calls transitional objects, institutional objects ('subject-groups'), faces and landscapes, etc.⁴¹ While the logic of discursive sets endeavours to completely delimit its objects, the logic of intensities, or eco-logic, is concerned only with the movement and intensity of evolutive processes. Process, which I oppose here to system or to structure, strives to capture existence in the very act of its constitution, definition and deterritorialization.⁴² This process of 'fixing-into-being' relates only to expressive subsets that have broken out of their totalising frame and have begun to work on their own account, overcoming their referential sets and manifesting themselves as their own existential indices, processual lines of flight.

Ecological praxes strive to scout out the potential vectors of subjectification and singularization at each partial existential locus. They generally seek something that runs counter to the 'normal' order of things, a counter-repetition, an intensive given which invokes other intensities to form new existential configurations. These dissident vectors have become relatively detached from their denotative and significative functions and operate as decorporealized existential materials. However, as experiments in the suspension of meaning they are risky, as there is the possibility of a violent deterritorialization which would destroy the assemblage of subjectification (as was the case in Italy in the early 1980s, for example, with the implosion of the social movement). A more gentle deterritorialization, however, might enable the assemblages to evolve in a constructive, processual fashion. At the heart of all ecological praxes there is an a-signifying rupture, in which the catalysts of existential change are close at hand, but lack expressive support from the assemblage of enunciation; they therefore remain passive and are in danger of losing their consistency – here are to be found the roots of anxiety, guilt and more generally, psychopathological repetitions [*réitérations*]. In the scenario of processual assemblages, the expressive a-signifying rupture summons forth a creative repetition that forges incorporeal objects, abstract machines and Universes of value that make their presence felt as though they had been always 'already there', although they are entirely dependent on the existential event that brings them into play.

Furthermore, these existential catalytic segments can also remain the bearers of denotation and signification. The ambiguity of a poetic text, for example, comes from the fact that

it may both transmit a message or denote a referent while functioning at the same time through redundancies of expression and content. Proust skilfully analysed the function of these existential refrains as catalytic focal points of subjectification: Vinteuil's 'little phrase', for example, the ringing of the Martinville church bells or the flavour of the madeleine. What we must emphasize here is that the work of locating these existential refrains is not the sole province of literature and the arts – we find this eco-logic equally at work in everyday life, in social life at every level, and whenever the constitution of an existential Territory is in question. Let us add that these Territories may already have been deterritorialized to the extreme – they can embody themselves in a Heavenly Jerusalem, the problematic of good and evil, or any ethico-political commitment, etc. The only commonality that exists between these various existential features [*traits*] is their ability to maintain the production of singular existents or to resingularize serialized ensembles.

Throughout history and across the world existential cartographies founded on a conscious acceptance of certain 'existentializing' ruptures of meaning have sought refuge in art and religion. However, today the huge subjective void produced by the proliferating production of material and immaterial goods is becoming ever more absurd and increasingly irreparable and threatens the consistency of both individual and group existential Territories. While there no longer appears to be a cause-and-effect relationship between the growth in technological resources and the development of social and cultural progress, it seems clear that we are witnessing an irreversible

erosion of the traditional mechanisms of social regulation. Faced with this situation, the most 'modernist' capitalist formations seem, in their own way, to be banking on a return to the past, however artificial, and on a reconstitution of ways of being that were familiar to our ancestors. We can see, for example, how certain hierarchical structures (having lost a significant part of their functional efficiency as a result, principally, of the computerization of information and organizational management), have become the object of an imaginary hypercathexis, at both upper and lower executive levels; in the example of Japan this hypercathexis occasionally verges on religious devotion.⁴³ Similarly we are witnessing a reinforcement of segregationist attitudes vis-à-vis immigrants, women, the young and the elderly. Such a rise in what we might call a subjective conservatism is not solely attributable to an intensification of social repression; it stems equally from a kind of existential contraction [*crispation*] involving all of the actors in the socius. Post-industrial capitalism, which I prefer to describe as *Integrated World Capitalism* (IWC), tends increasingly to decentre its sites of power, moving away from structures producing goods and services towards structures producing signs, syntax and – in particular, through the control which it exercises over the media, advertising, opinion polls, etc. – subjectivity.

This evolution ought to make us reflect upon the ways in which earlier forms of capitalism operated, given that they too were not exempt from this same tendency towards the capitalization of subjective power, both at the level of the capitalist élites as well as among the proletariat. However, the

true importance of this propensity within capitalism was never fully demonstrated, with the result that it was not properly appreciated by theoreticians of the workers' movement.

I would propose grouping together four main semiotic regimes, the mechanisms [*instruments*] on which IWC is founded:

- (1) *Economic semiotics* (monetary, financial, accounting and decision-making mechanisms);
- (2) *Juridical semiotics* (title deeds, legislation and regulations of all kinds);
- (3) *Techno-scientific semiotics* (plans, diagrams, programmes, studies, research, etc.);
- (4) *Semiotics of subjectification*, of which some coincide with those already mentioned, but to which we should add many others, such as those relating to architecture, town planning, public facilities, etc.

We must acknowledge that models which claim to found a causal hierarchy between these semiotic regimes are well on their way to completely losing touch with reality. For example, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain that economic semiotics and semiotics that work together towards the production of material goods occupy an infrastructural position in relation to juridical and ideological semiotics, as was postulated by Marxism. At present, IWC is all of a piece: productive-economic-subjective. And, to return to the old scholastic categories, one might say that it follows at the same time from material, formal, efficient and final causes.⁴⁴

One of the key analytic problems confronted by social and

mental ecology is the introjection of repressive power by the oppressed.⁴⁵ The major difficulty here is the fact that the unions and the parties, which struggle, in principle, to defend the interests of the workers and the oppressed, reproduce in themselves the same pathogenic models that stifle all freedom of expression and innovation in their own ranks. Perhaps it will still be necessary for a lapse of time to ensue before the workers' movement recognizes that the economic-ecological vectors of circulation, distribution, communication, supervision, and so on, are strictly situated on the same plane, from the point of view of the creation of surplus value, as labour that is directly incorporated into the production of material goods.⁴⁶ In this regard, a dogmatic ignorance has been maintained by a number of theoreticians, which only serves to reinforce a workerism and a corporatism that have profoundly distorted and handicapped anticapitalist movements of emancipation over the last few decades.

It is to be hoped that the development of the three types of eco-logical praxis outlined here will lead to a reframing and a recomposition of the goals of the emancipatory struggles. And let us hope that, in the context of the new 'deal' of the relation between capital and human activity, ecologists, feminists, antiracists, etc., will make it an immediate major objective to target the modes of production of subjectivity, that is, of knowledge, culture, sensibility and sociability that come under an incorporeal value system at the root of the new productive assemblages.

Social ecology will have to work towards rebuilding human relations at every level of the socius. It should never lose sight of the fact that capitalist power has become delocalized and

deterritorialized, both in extension, by extending its influence over the whole social, economic and cultural life of the planet, and in 'intension', by infiltrating the most unconscious subjective strata. In doing this it is no longer possible to claim to be opposed to capitalist power only from the outside, through trade unions and traditional politics. It is equally imperative to confront capitalism's effects in the domain of mental ecology in everyday life: individual, domestic, material, neighbourly, creative or one's personal ethics. Rather than looking for a stupefying and infantilizing consensus, it will be a question in the future of cultivating a *dissensus* and the singular production of existence. A capitalistic subjectivity is engendered through operators of all types and sizes, and is manufactured to protect existence from any intrusion of events that might disturb or disrupt public opinion. It demands that all singularity must be either evaded or crushed in specialist apparatuses and frames of reference. Therefore, it endeavours to manage the worlds of childhood, love, art, as well as everything associated with anxiety, madness, pain, death, or a feeling of being lost in the Cosmos . . . IWC forms massive subjective aggregates from the most personal – one could even say infra-personal – existential givens, which it hooks up to ideas of race, nation, the professional workforce, competitive sports, a dominating masculinity [*virilité*], mass-media celebrity . . . Capitalistic subjectivity seeks to gain power by controlling and neutralizing the maximum number of existential refrains. It is intoxicated with and anaesthetized by a collective feeling of pseudo-eternity.⁴⁷

It seems to me that the new ecological practices will have to articulate themselves on these many tangled and heteroge-

neous fronts, their objective being to processually activate isolated and repressed singularities that are just turning in circles. (For example, a school class in which are applied the principles of the Freinet School aims to singularize the overall functioning through cooperative systems, assessment meetings, a newspaper, the pupils' freedom to organize their own work individually or in groups, etc.)⁴⁸

From this same perspective we will have to consider symptoms and incidents outside the norm as indices of a potential labour of subjectification. It seems to me essential to organize new micropolitical and microsocial practices, new solidarities, a new gentleness, together with new aesthetic and new analytic practices regarding the formation of the unconscious. It appears to me that this is the only possible way to get social and political practices back on their feet, working for humanity and not simply for a permanent reequilibration of the capitalist semiotic Universe. One might object that large-scale struggles are not necessarily in sync with ecological praxis and the micropolitics of desire, but that's the point: it is important not to homogenize various levels of practice or to make connections between them under some transcendental supervision, but instead to engage them in processes of *heterogenesis*.⁴⁹ Feminists will never take a becoming-woman far enough, and there is no reason to demand that immigrants should renounce their nationalitarian belonging or the cultural traits that cling to their very being.⁵⁰ Particular cultures should be left to deploy themselves in inventing other contracts of citizenship. Ways should be found to enable the singular, the exceptional, the rare, to coexist with a State structure that is the least burdensome possible.

Unlike Hegelian and Marxist dialectics, eco-logic no longer imposes a 'resolution' of opposites. In the domain of social ecology there will be times of struggle in which everyone will feel impelled to decide on common objectives and to act 'like little soldiers', by which I mean like good activists. But there will simultaneously be periods in which individual and collective subjectivities will 'pull out' without a thought for collective aims, and in which creative expression as such will take precedence. This new ecosophical logic – and I want to emphasize this point – resembles the manner in which an artist may be led to alter his work after the intrusion of some accidental detail, an event-incident that suddenly makes his initial project bifurcate, making it drift [*dériver*] far from its previous path, however certain it had once appeared to be.⁵¹ There is a proverb 'the exception proves the rule', but the exception can just as easily deflect the rule, or even recreate it.

Environmental ecology, as it exists today, has barely begun to prefigure the generalized ecology that I advocate here, the aim of which will be to radically decentre social struggles and ways of coming to one's own psyche. Current ecological movements certainly have merit, but in truth I think that the overall ecosophical question is too important to be left to some of its usual archaizers and folklorists, who sometimes deliberately refuse any large-scale political involvement. Ecology must stop being associated with the image of a small nature-loving minority or with qualified specialists. Ecology in my sense questions the whole of subjectivity and capitalistic power formations, whose sweeping progress cannot be guaranteed to continue as it has for the past decade.

The present ongoing crisis, both financial and economic, could not only lead to important upheavals of the social status-quo and the mass-media imaginary that underlies it, but certain themes promoted by neo-liberalists – such as flexible labour, deregulation, etc. – could perfectly well backfire on them.

I stress once again, the choice is no longer simply between blind fixation to old State-bureaucratic supervision and generalized welfare on the one hand, and a despairing and cynical surrender to 'yuppie' ideology on the other. All the indications suggest that the productivity gains engendered by current technological revolutions will inscribe themselves on a curve of logarithmic growth. Henceforth it is a question of knowing whether the new ecological operators and the new ecosophical assemblages of enunciation will succeed in channelling these gains in less absurd, less dead-ended directions than those of Integrated World Capitalism.

The principle common to the three ecologies is this: each of the existential Territories with which they confront us is not given as an in-itself [*en-soi*], closed in on itself, but instead as a for-itself [*pour-soi*] that is precarious, finite, finitized, singular, singularized, capable of bifurcating into stratified and deathly repetitions or of opening up processually from a praxis that enables it to be made 'habitable' by a human project. It is this praxic opening-out which constitutes the essence of 'eco'-art.⁵² It subsumes all existing ways of domesticating existential Territories and is concerned with intimate modes of being, the body, the environment or large contextual ensembles relating to ethnic groups, the nation, or even the general rights of humanity. Having said this, it is not a question of establishing