

# The Earth as a Freudian Spaceship – an introduction

An abstract geometric artwork featuring a central black silhouette of a person's head and shoulders. This silhouette is surrounded by a complex, symmetrical arrangement of colorful triangles in shades of pink, orange, yellow, green, and blue. The entire composition is set against a background of black, expressive, brush-like strokes radiating from the center, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Transcript of a seminar series given by Dr Matt Lee at the  
Free University Brighton 2021

## The Earth as a Freudian Spaceship – an introduction

In May 2021 I taught a seminar at the Free University Brighton (FUB), a radical education project that has been going since 2012 and which I help organise. FUB provides free degree level education courses, as well as facilitating alternative education across the city of Brighton and Hove. The project is run entirely without money, basing itself on mutual aid and the slogan 'education for love, not money'. Some dozens of university lecturers have taught courses in their spare time and hundreds of students have attended over the years. Our courses are radically open access and attract a wide range of people, producing an educational space radically different from that within traditional University settings. This seminar was held to introduce and 'test out' some of the ideas and thinking that have arisen from the Freudian Spaceship project and was generously received by the seminar participants who provided a valuable space in which to begin to think together the world in which we live. The seminar was held in a mixed online space, with lectures in public on Twitch and seminar sessions in private on Zoom. Following the formal sessions, several seminar participants continued the conversation in public Twitch streaming sessions. Readings and online text chat took place in FUB's virtual learning environment, which is held on Ryver, as well as a contemporaneous forum on a private Discord server. The seminar took place as we were beginning to come out of the COVID 19 lockdown and where face to face teaching was still generally avoided.

(33,840 words – edited 16/6/2022)

### Session 1 – 24th May 2021 - Thinking the World

*AI Summary: The first session of the course "The Earth as a Freudian Spaceship" focuses on the idea of thinking the world as a Freudian spaceship, with the earth being alive in a Freudian sense, driven by drives and comprising an unconscious formed by primary repression. The session discusses the methodology used in the course, including the use of conceptual personae, intuition and poetics in thought, and responding to the world with honesty. The course also introduces the idea of the Freudian Spaceship as the complex assemblage of the earth, world, and planet.*

(The text of each of the following sections was run through the ChatGPT AI, on 15/12/2022, with the instruction to summarise.)

Good evening. This is the first session in a new course for the Free University Brighton that I am running, called The Earth as a Freudian Spaceship (TFS). Welcome if you are here.

Today's session is titled 'thinking the world', thinking the world as a Freudian Spaceship in particular. When we say something like 'thinking the world as a Freudian Spaceship', what are we talking about when we speak of a Freudian Spaceship? By we, I mean here, me and Eric or the project that I'm coming from. What are we talking about when we speak of a Freudian spaceship? We imagine the earth as a Freudian Spaceship.

It was one of the first moves of the project, to try and create this image as the home of life moving through space, and which is not just alive in its own right - we obviously often think about the earth as being alive - but which is alive in a quite Freudian sense. In other words, it's alive in the sense in which it is driven, it's comprised of drives, and it's also comprised of an unconscious formed by something like a moment of primary repression. Now that's immediately to take this image and the

use of Freudian psychoanalysis, the drives, and the unconscious, and completely metaphorize them in some way, completely expand them beyond where they're meant to apply and create this poetic figment. This - the earth as a Freudian Spaceship - that could somehow be subject to psychoanalysis. Now, it's a working tool. This is an image, a working tool. It's one that we hope enables us to try and think beyond our own perspective, as human or as animal, and in doing so try to become something other, try and imagine the limits and possible futures of the Earth.

This use of an image or idea like this is also a key part of our methodology and no doubt not just ours. We develop, for example, three figures, sometimes these can be called conceptual personae. This is a phrase that comes from Deleuze and Guattari in their book *What is philosophy?* These three figures, these conceptual personae, these are like characters in a novel, that's one of the things that they are a bit like, and they're there to give us a way of trying to think concretely about certain problems. We develop three figures that we think offer modes of living that we affirm or that we think we can learn from. These three figures are the revolutionary, the sorcerer, and the psychoanalyst.

Another feature of our methodology is that we try and allow our intuitions and a poetics into our thought as a way of allowing our bodies to speak as well as our minds. We pay attention for example, to signs or symptoms in the world, things we notice, respond to, and we try to assemble them together into something like a body as a way of thinking that doesn't dismiss rationality and yet doesn't deny the irrational. Now that's a standard sort of dichotomy, and this is a methodology for us not getting trapped in that dichotomy between rational and irrational. Above all what we try and do is we try and find a way to respond to the world around us, with honesty, knowing all the while that this is never a simple matter. It's always bound up with our own social, our psychical, our physical needs. It's bound up with who we are and where we are and how we respond. It's also bound up with problems of what it is to respond and how that response cannot just be passive, how it cannot just be automatic or a reflex.

Therefore, the Freudian Spaceship is a name that we give to what we can call the complex assemblage of the Earth, the World, and the Planet. This is another way in which we often try and think. These things - the earth, the world, the planet - they name the same space, but they name it in different kinds of ways, they're organizing it in different ways for us. So, the Freudian Spaceship is the name that we give to the complex assemblage of this home or this space that we live in, sometimes called the earth, sometimes the world, sometimes the planet. Obviously, we might also call this our home, and this idea of home, homelessness, being at home, these are very important backgrounds for some of what we're thinking.

Now at the very least the earth, we might say, is a home of life and it is life that we pay attention to in thinking the world. We're developing, not a vitalism, but we are paying attention to, or interested in this, this concept of, or this thing that is referred to as life, which as Foucault indicates in some places, is a relatively new concept. It's a concept that arises out of some of the developments in biological sciences in the 18th and 19th century. But we pay attention to that life when we're thinking the world.

For example, the litany, that list of words, earth, world, planet is greater than just the name world, not just because it's plural, but because in each case, as I mentioned, these names name something different and more importantly, they're different forms and they perhaps even have different laws in each area, or at least perhaps different laws that matter, or that make a difference in each area. What matters when we talk about the earth might be different for what matters when we talk about a world or the world and again when we talk about the planet.

Part of this multiple naming, the use of images, this attention to symptoms, signs, this attempt to assemble them all together in some way, part of this is a struggle against bad abstractions. That might seem in some ways a strange thing to say, because plainly it looks like we're beginning to use abstractions. We're beginning to try and use these names, these words, in a way that might seem vague or abstract. There's an inevitability to that when we first introduce them. In some sense, all I can do in this session is introduce some of these terms. In general, the dynamic of trying to use these terms is to struggle against what we would call bad abstractions. One of the things I want to think about in terms of what a bad abstraction might be, is I want to think about what we might call the problem of scale, or sometimes we encounter this problem around issues of what are sometimes called totalizations or universalities. We want to struggle against bad abstractions by going to the concrete. That might be one way in which a struggle against bad abstractions might take place.

Let's make things concrete. And that's in a sense exactly how we began this project, from something very concrete and from the concrete problem of how we respond to a very concrete thing, a very real event. Our thinking is prompted in the first instance, by the problem that presents itself in the conjunction of two ongoing situations, climate change, or the climate crisis, depending upon what you want to call it, and the Black Lives Matter struggle. At the heart of these concrete situations that we encountered over the last five years, at the heart of our response to these contemporary moments, the way in which we might say that we 'have them' in our world at this time, either through the news media or through social media or through education, is that we are had by the events as much as we have them. To be had by...this phrase might be applied when we are deceived, but it also suggests being possessed by an outside force and being unaware - to some extent - of such capture. To be had up for...this phrase might occur when being arrested, being had up for a crime for example. Having an event in our world, therefore, might prompt our thinking, but the problem is how to respond in such a way that our responses aren't captured, and are free responses.

In other words, how not to have a knee jerk reaction, how to enable thought in the space of this situation, what is it to be able to respond? Because obviously to respond with caution and with a , "well let's think about it, let's all be careful", that also is a particular response that is problematic and is just as captured in a sense, because it's trying to avoid violence, it's trying to avoid anger, it's trying to avoid passion, it wants everything to settle down and be calm and that's just as much a capture of a response as the response of anger or passion. That capturing of responses, that way in which we can be almost programmed to behave, programmed to respond, affects everyone when they encounter these kinds of situations we believe.

So, our primary resources for our project, and the way we try and respond when we encounter these concrete situations, with the strategy of avoiding bad abstractions, the primary resources are, again, going to sound in some sense, abstract. But the idea is that it's not abstraction itself that's necessarily the problem. It's bad abstractions. So, our primary resources are, as I say, abstract themselves, they're from schizoanalysis, Freud and Marx and the way in which they are or can be meshed.

If that's our first primary resource, the background of where we came from that might have captured the framework of our entry into this problem, the next resource is Franz Fanon and in particular the concept of sociogenesis. This concept is drawn out of Fanon in some ways by Sylvia Winter, but it's a keyway of getting a lesson from Fanon. We'll also say, straight away about Fanon, that there is the relationship to colonialism. Fanon in a sense added to some of the material and resources in schizoanalysis, added this crucial relationship to what it would be to be at home on the planet, at home with life.

Those are the two primary resources. At one point we described this as trying to produce something like a Fanonian Schizoanalysis. It's a meshing and learning from both traditions, both resources, but our third resource is our own biography. This is because one of the things we were keen on when we were thinking about how to respond, to Eric Garner's death for example, one of the triggers for the Black Lives Matter movement that was crucial for us in terms of how we respond, is that we don't respond in a way that makes us think as though from a neutral perspective, as though we were somehow an empty vessel. Again, this speaks to a bad abstraction. You ought to respond with a positive or useful abstraction. I think it's necessary to ground our understanding and reading of those events within biographies and autobiographies, speaking in some sense to the three figures or the three characters that we want to deploy, that we want to think with, which I mentioned earlier, the revolutionary, the sorcerer, and the psychoanalyst.

From these resources we try to make tools to think with and this is the problem of concepts or of the toolmaking of thought. We're trying to make tools to think with that aren't subject to simple criteria of an end and efficiencies. They're not subject to a specific set goal. They're not subject to achieving that goal as quickly as possible. That's not the criteria for whether a thought is useful or interesting. For us, the criteria of what makes a useful thought in these situations is itself difficult to pin down, but it would be something like, that which enables us to pay more attention to life, that a concept or a tool of thought should enable us to pay more attention to life, that it gives us a greater capacity to do this. Something along those kinds of lines would be our criteria, not a pre-existing goal or an end that should be reached, rather the cultivation of a capacity to pay more attention to life.

Some of these tools that we're trying to use, they connect to the idea of scales, this problem of scale, of totalization, of the question at what point do you bring things together? At what scale? The idea that there are multiple scales and multiple forms that are operating all the time with each other, this could produce something that we might call assemblages, although that's a word that is a bit of a jargon word for Deleuze and Guattari, but we might also think of psychological complexes or of small network systems diagrams. A set of elements and their interactions.

When we produced that thought about a set of elements and their interactions, this question - at what scale is this assemblage working at? - appears particularly important. That's why we were thinking and talking with each other about the earth, the world, and the planet, not just one of those terms, trying to use those terms to pick out or remind ourselves to draw in different scales. We also talk, particularly in more recent parts of the project, about three different scales in which we want to think about relationships of agents. We wouldn't say these are necessarily human relationships, because they extend beyond the human, and we would not necessarily limit them to the human, but these three areas would be the one-to-one the group and the community. Each of those areas has a different scale and a different set of forms and a different set of dynamics. When thinking about agential relationships, what it is to be an agent, what it is to respond freely to the world, this is going to be different in each of those different spaces, in each of those different scales.

As I say, we think about the three figures, the psychoanalyst, the sorcerer, and the revolutionary, and that's also one of our tools. We begin very early on from something that I'm calling a breathdrive, a reconceived libido. One of the things that we early on began to suggest and posit, one of the experimental theses if you like, is that the first drive is the breath, not necessarily a sexualized libido, but a breath. Again, that's also not located within the human, it's extensive throughout both what we might call the natural world, the human world, and to a certain extent, even, the inorganic.

We talk about what we call the interval. And this is the production of thought or the space of the production of thought.

We try to develop poetic formulas, comply or die is one of them for example. In the first text where we try and develop poetic formulas, not to express something, but to enable them to connect things and to see how things look in the light of those kinds of formulas.

So, what is the problem we're working with?

At different times it will be described differently, but in some sense the problem is how do we pay attention to life? How do we respond to the call of life? How do we think what it is to be at home, to be at home at a planetary scale as well as a world scale and an earth scale, what it is to be at home in this complex world?

In some ways we can try and go back a little bit into philosophical history and think, well part of what we're doing is responding to a more classical problem, we're responding to this classical problem of the tension between what we might call structure and individual or system and person. One of the ways of thinking about this more classical problem is to think about the phrase "personification of processes". So that phrase, the personification of processes, when we think about that problem what questions would we want to ask here, at what scale is the problem?

Let's take an example. This phrase – personification of processes - came to mind as a way of posing this problem when I was watching a YouTube video lecture from Michael Heinrich, discussing Marx's monetary theory of value. He describes the logic of capital as abstract processes, processes that dominate individuals, which I know is a common way of describing Marxism, which we can find in the things people can be heard saying, things such as the abstract logic of capitalism dominates, the individual capitalist dominates. Within this situation the individual worker decides or makes a limit as to what it is the capitalist can do, but the process is supposed to be driven by these abstract structures or forms.

The way in which Heinrich describes the relationship between this logic of capitalism, with its abstract process, and the individuals who are affected by these processes, by the system, he describes this in terms of the personification of processes. And a question is asked. And the question is about the choice of Marx to do science in the way he does. In other words, the question is about the choice of Marx to start with categories and abstract processes and to imagine that persons are personifications of categories and processes. The question is, well, why start this way? What is it, what are the reasons for Marx to start this way?

The question then is what in Capital itself, in the book, in the scientific work, makes that choice right. Heinrich's response is an interesting one. He says, well, there's a biographical element, to do with the situation in which Marx is working, but in the end, there's fundamentally a pragmatic element in terms of what, in Capital, makes this choice of analysis, of analytic practice, what makes it right? It's a pragmatic criterion. The pragmatic criterion - in other words, does it work? Specifically, when we say, does it work, what we're talking about when we're talking about the use of categories, the use of abstractions, the use of a description of the world that involves those categories, is does the description of the laws derived from those categories map to the description from the activity of persons. We therefore have two different descriptions, one that that's describing, let's say capital and the commodity form when it's split between use value and exchange value and the necessities of the logic that derives from that (the laws) and on the other hand, we have capitalists and workers, and their behaviours.

The argument is just this, does this description using the categories, in a sense, map to the description from the activity of persons. Heinrich's phrase to justify this program is that "we must see if the analysis works". The example he gives is from Chapter Two of the first volume of Capital, which is a description of what commodity owners must do, what capitalists must do, not what they supposedly want to do but what they must do. And he says, does this match to what he calls the "form determination" in Chapter One of the first volume of Capital. This "form determination", this is a phrase Heinrich is using to describe Marx's account of what capital is, what capitalism is, at the heart of which is the "commodity form" which has two elements to it, exchange value and use value. The first description, that abstract description in Chapter One volume One of Capital is followed in Chapter Two by a description of people's activities. And the idea is to map them together, so that if they mapped together, if they work, then pragmatically speaking, the analysis seems to be productive.

What is the analysis producing? Importantly where, at what scale, do these form determinations of capital appear? It seems that when we talk about things like capital or capitalism, we're talking at an historical level or a political economic level or a level of society or level of the human as a species. No matter where it might be, we're always talking at a particular scale. We usually don't talk about these things, these abstract form determinations of capital for example, in terms of my minute thinking process on an everyday level, or we don't think about these things in terms of small numbers of people interacting with each other, or in terms of Freudian slips or artistic practices or feelings of sexual arousal and so on. We tend to implicitly talk about a particular scale at which abstract form determinations operate, and then a different scale when we're talking about people's behaviours. And even then, that behaviour, people's behaviours when they're with their best friends or their partner can be quite different from people's behaviours when they're in class or in school and quite different again from people's behaviours when they're out in a large situation such as their city or their town. In each of these areas, we think it's a good thing to think about the different scales at which things are operating. So, when we think simply about this idea of abstract categories and a logic of the world, and it's mapping to a description of the activity of persons, immediately we also have to bring into this, we think, this relationship of these different scales and perhaps begin to play around with them to see whether there's missing elements, whether there are different things that can be put in there, different things at work.

And so, the question constantly is what scale my tools of thinking come from, what scale are my tools of thinking working on. This is not, as it were, a question to be answered, it's rather a methodological checking practice. Philosophy, for example, often appears to come onto the scene at a particular scale of thinking, one that is expansive, one that is all consuming, one that is very often connected to something that we might call the universal, or a grasping of the whole. And yet each time philosophy appears or comes onto the scene it also appears in a very singular and specific way. It's always a grasping of the whole from a specific position. It's not like the philosopher is somehow absent from the philosophy. Now this is a phrase that was a lot more famous a few years ago, perhaps not so famous now, but what we're basically trying to argue here is that there is no view from nowhere, to use the famous phrase from Thomas Nagel which can be found in discussions of philosophy of mind. This methodological checking practice also has a background in Nietzscheanism, it has background in schizoanalysis, it has a background in a whole process of philosophical activity that attempts to reorganize the use of abstract categories to prevent bad abstractions and produce more concrete relationships. In other words, to produce a situation in which that description of a logic of the world, better maps to a description of the activity of persons.



Now this nowhere - or we might also say this “no when”, these kinds of abstractions from space and time are the sort of things we find, for example, in what Spinoza called his “sub species aeternitas”, in other words, the view from eternity. We can find them inside philosophers as though they were a final, complete position of adequate knowledge, what Spinoza calls adequate knowledge. Adequate knowledge is more than that which has come from your senses and your imagination, it is the point at which you’ve accessed the logic, or the necessities involved in your knowledge. And a common trope of philosophy is to assert the need for something like this, this view from eternity, this sub species aeternitas, or alternatively to deny its adequacy. The former, for example, this need for something like a view from eternity, is a rationalism, quite often in which things like necessity and law are crucial and the latter, the denial of the adequacy of the view from nowhere, the latter is often an empiricism with emphasis on things like contingency and accident. But rather than considering these different relationships to that sense of knowledge as opposed, rather than think of them as opposed, we want to try and think of them as different scales at which we are thinking the world.

What we're trying to do with the use of this idea of different scales, let's say when we're talking about something like the personification of processes, is that we're trying to pay attention to different objects that are involved in these processes. Some objects can only be seen at specific scales in the same way that microscopes and telescopes organize our capacity to see certain kinds of objects that can't be seen at other scales. Often this would involve things like statistical relationships, for example, revealing certain scalar objects such as speed or temperature or time, or gender and race, certain objects that only really exist in that situation of being statistically brought to life, as well as patterns and movements, vector objects such as the rate of change of temperature, things like these, these kinds of objects that occur at different scales. These objects at different scales are different assemblages, different collections of things interacting and one of the things that can be objected to in this use of different scales is that scales can multiply and be multiplied almost to infinity.

There's a gamble that we play here, which is that of the triple or threefold minimum. So, at a minimum, when we think about the different scales of something or a problem, at a minimum think in threefold, think in three folds, literally, think at three different scales. Why is that? Because in a sense, it enables us to think the intersections of objects rather than the oppositions, the intersections of processes rather than in the oppositions of processes. We don't need to think every scale possible. That is impossible. Rather we need to think the plurality of actual scales, and again, this is not a law. It is an attempt to try and experiment, as it were, to see what happens.

Let's just try and think about these different scales then. This is going to be just a very rough example. So, we have the problem the personification of a process. How do we think the personification of a process? Particularly when this very dynamic of the personification of processes is as it were one of the crucial critical ways in which we think the world or people think the world, not necessarily, just how we think it. Think about training, for example, the reason this example came up is because I'm doing what's called the couch to 5k now. I'm doing this running thing that the BBC produces an app for, these little voices that come from the BBC's paraphernalia, I think the person speaking to me is called Joe Wiley, a DJ that I partly grew up with, grew up listening to. So, there's a strange familiarity to that. And this app was recommended to me by my partner. The question is, at what scale does the app appear? At what scale does it exist? At what scale is it interacted with? And so, let's just use this as a practice idea for this idea of world earth planet and see whether we can orientate and organize some things along those lines and dynamics using this



idea of at least three scales, at these three different kinds of levels to see which objects were involved in this process of training.

**World Scale** - At the scale of the world, at the scale of the human horizon, let's say, not the individual, but the human, the social horizon, we might talk about something like a political or social policy scale that's involved in this particular app, this couch to 5k app and a social policy to deal maybe with health or wellbeing, or it might involve medical support from doctors or from the medical institutions that put limits onto the particular app, they form part of its structure, it's form if you like, they put limits, for example, on how quickly the training can be done, in terms of how many weeks are going to be needed because presumably you could train faster or you could train slower. But there's a point at which, let's say, the institutions organize a sense of safety or sense of competence or a sense of general applicability. In this case of the app, I think it's nine weeks. At the scale of the social or the political we might have information, we might have knowledge and objects about who can be reached by such a program, we might have all sorts of issues to do with how it connects into a political agenda, there could be all sorts of things, but you can imagine thinking about the app at a particular scale, that is, as it were, a political social policy scale. And we can call that, let's say, that the scale of the world.

**Earth Scale** - Now at the same time in the encounter with the app - and the app only exists in this encounter - there's someone following the instructions and in doing so moving their body through the world in a particular way, one that can be quite strange and this we can call the runner. So, in the encounter of the person personifying the process - the training is a personification of process - one of the things that's there is, is the runner. This runner is not there as part of the statistical object that we are dealing with at the political or social policy scale, where we're talking about the runner as 30% of people who are unfit and therefore the runner (as an object at this scale) is a means of transitioning from unfit to fit.

There's no real individual anywhere in that first scale of the world. Whereas at this scale of the earth, let's say, there is the runner and in that situation there's all sorts of things involved in that, all sorts of things that might be described in terms of phenomenology or lived experience perhaps, and these would include things like the decision to run itself, to use the app, but they'd also include familiarity with and access to the technology involved in it and they would also include the encounter with the body as a running body. One of the most interesting encounters for the person involved, for me at least, involved in being or becoming the app or in that mode of becoming, that training, was this encounter with the body as a running body and at the heart of that was an encounter with breath. Perhaps we're talking there about an embodied scale rather than the social scale in the first situation, we'd call that earth.

**Planet Scale** - And then there's another scale at which we want to include things that may or may not be relevant, but we might want to think about what objects were involved here and that we might think of as a scale, we might call them micro or macro physical things like gravity for example. The app is not going to work in quite the same way, with a whole bunch of other peripheral objects, on the space station, as it's not going to work in the same way on earth, as it is in the space station. There's a presupposed relationship to gravity connected into the assemblage of this app for it to work in the way it does on earth in gravity. We might think of that as perhaps the hard science scale of the app, call it the planet. Now the idea here is that instead of the app being one thing, we're trying to reorganize the idea of the app, the object, as an intersection of processes, an intersection of forces, an intersection of scales that operate and produce different elements of the objects and the assemblage of which the object is, is as it were part. To do that, we use these kinds of techniques of the threefold, the world, the earth, the planet, or we'll use the technique later of the

one-to-one, the group and the community, just to try and multiply without excess the object that we're looking at, the object that we're trying to deal with in any abstract logic that we're thinking about. This is to enable that connection, that personification relationship, that relationship of the process becoming actual, to enable that somehow to become, again, a better abstraction, rather than a bad abstraction and with a view to making it a good abstraction.

When we think about a process being personified, the questions that are relevant are to do with what processes are being personified. We must be careful here because we can, if we want to, take a classical philosophical move, we can just drop straight into self-reference and that always produces some interesting philosophical thought but it's probably not where we want to go in this project, because we'll be thinking less about the world and more about our thought at that point. By self-reference what I mean is if we're talking about the personification of a process, obviously we could ask what happens if the process is personification itself, becoming persons. We would then have the personification of the process of becoming persons. We might ask how do the process and the person fit together? Here we would generate this self-referential mirror on mirror situation of the process and the person, twisted and combined into thought and there are issues that arise in these kinds of situations of self-reference, the situations of self-reference are very important for thinking, but our methodology is just going to put those to the side for this project and at the same time try and emphasize that the process, the person and the fit, are essentially the general theme of the project.

Now when we talk about this, it's important to try and make a distinction here and push back against one way of understanding this methodology and that is, that this is not a question of a holistic thinking. We're not here suggesting that this is a form of thinking that that could be evaluated as more holistic or a better account of the whole. Rather what we're interested in - because I'm not even sure that's even possible, to get a holistic thinking, or whether it's desirable actually - rather the interest lies in the tensions between the different scales, where one scale operates against another, where there's these counteracting or countervailing tendencies.

On the one hand it enables us to begin to think objects with more nuance, ambiguity, variety, but importantly, it enables us to begin to try and think about the tensions within the different relationships between these different scales. What this comes down to is when we're looking at some of the personification of processes, rather than thinking about some problematic of domination in the abstraction, of being free in the abstraction, we're trying to think in terms of the personification of process in terms of living the tensions involved in those processes and that being the focus, where are the tensions and how are they lived. Not what is this view of a process mean for individuals or what does this view of a person imply about the applicability of process. We're not interested in the philosophical moves of what does this view imply about something, et cetera, we're more interested in trying to find the way in which tensions exist inside the personification of processes, the way in which those tensions are lived in the real world. It's those things that are of interest.

Those tensions, why those tensions, why those resistances, those counteracting tendencies, why those, why are these important? They begin to show us the limits of things but partly they're also something that comes from a relationship to schizoanalysis, in which often - let's take Anti-Oedipus - often it's encountered as a philosophical methodology that advocates an incessant productive process going on all the time and that there's this continual effervescence of life, effervescence of ideas, effervescence of living imagery and forms. What's often not encountered so clearly inside thinking about schizoanalysis is the counteraction tendencies. So, for productive tendencies, there are also anti production tendencies, and it's this dynamic of the production tendencies and anti-

production tendencies, it's this dynamic that can be explored in the living of the tensions between those things. This also then enables us to think about the world, to think the world of our contemporary situation of climate crisis, and racism and colonialism, these processes in which a whole bunch of dynamics now have radically impinging counter dynamics. The dynamics of capital have radically impinging counter dynamics of climate destruction, the dynamics of colonialism now have radical counteracting impinging dynamics of a disruption of liberalism through racial tension, the disruption of the civil, if you like, and quite reasonably. The interest in exploring the lived tensions, that can be encountered when we think at different scales, the interest in that is in trying to make concrete this very peculiar dynamic, that's very abstract inside schizoanalysis, between production and anti-production.

So, what is anti-production? In some sense it's that countervailing tendency, but what process is it? There's an example that was given by one of Guattari's collaborators (Anne Querrien) that I quite like, and the example is of a lock and a key. The lock we can talk about as something like the production of a controlled connection, that's dependent on materials, rigidity, solidity. You can't make a key out of a soft object very easily. They tend to have to be capable of being reproduced and physically interacting, I'm talking about a physical key obviously, there's a certain sort of relationship that the key has that depends upon physicality to make it work. And yet that very thing that is the condition of its operation - so the condition of the operation of the key is that it doesn't just change shape, it has a rigidity to it - the condition of its operation is at the same time one of the sources of its collapse, in this case through friction, through the wearing out of the key and so we have this production anti-production dynamic, a dynamic of counteracting, through the process of friction, that dynamic of production of a tool such as a key that is dependent upon a certain sort of rigidity.

Rather than a bad abstraction, the general idea of this project, the general line of thought, is to try and produce a better or a good abstraction and a bad abstraction is something, as I said, that has a nowhere and no when no what structure, it has this blank space abstraction, in some ways its view from nowhere, whereas something that is going to have a more positive or is going to be a more concrete abstraction, something that's going to have a better relationship or a better ability to fit the process, in a sense, a good one or a better one is going to emphasize the presence of space and place, the presence of time and process and the presence of things like materials and interactions. One way of thinking about that is a good abstraction or a better abstraction is going to be something like a dirty thought, and we want to produce a dirty thought and I'm aware of all the possible connotations that can occur with that. This is a kind of sexualized idea, a dirty thought, but we want to produce something like a dirty thought, one that's capable of thinking the dirt and the friction on the key, the wearing away of material and the wearing away in the counter and anti-production of dynamics, one that has ambiguity and nuance in it, one that has vague edges and cross-fertilization, and it's sometimes a bit of a dangerous word, that ambiguity and nuance, people want their thought to be clean and crisp.

There's a lesson I early learnt in philosophy in terms of the power and the interest of ambiguity. One of the preparatory readings for this week was Chapter Five of *Black Skin White Masks* by Frantz Fanon, on the black experience. It's a description of black lived experience from a particular lived position, that of Frantz Fanon himself, but also from a particular position philosophically, where Fanon is inspired and taken up in a philosophical movement that has a lot of background connections and dialogue with existentialism. Towards the end of Chapter Five Fanon talks about the way in which a black consciousness that he'd come to through a movement called Negritude, which had been inspired by people like Aime Cesaire, that this black consciousness had been dismissed by Sartre as part of a dialectic where there was a moment of racism – the thesis - and then

there was a counter active negation of this - the antithesis - and Sartre is posing black consciousness or Negritude as this antithesis. Instead of it having value in itself, it becomes a reaction, it becomes a reactive value. Fanon resists this very, very strongly and he resists it in part through this idea of ambiguity, an idea that in some senses itself comes out of existentialism, an idea of resisting the dialectic, resisting being captured and dying in the dialectic, resisting being told that the lived experience that you're having, or the encounter with the object of your love, resisting being told that all these things are simply part of processes. Instead of being the way in which processes are personified, we become just the abstract person within a process. And so, ambiguity and nuance are dynamics that enable us to push past being captured by a process of dialectics and a process of dialectical reason in which everything becomes a moment in an overarching game and persons are dropped out of that. That's a thought that is a reclaiming of the concrete, reclaiming of the experience, reclaiming of moments that can't be captured by the dialectic. That is a thought that comes almost directly out of the origins of existentialism, Kierkegaard Fear and Trembling, Kierkegaard relationship to Hegel, Kierkegaard resistance to the way in which rational thought orders and schematizes things and the way in which, for Kierkegaard the paradox of Abraham disrupts these kinds of dynamics. It's for us ambiguity, and that the production of multiple layers, multiple scales, and the intersections and tensions of living at the edges of those different scales, these enable us to begin to escape the dialectic and make our thought concrete without rejecting abstraction. And so that in a sense is the dynamic of the research project.

## **Aside – can the body host the breath?**

“...the difference between Western and non-Western cultures is not the difference between civilized and primitive. That is an ideological reading. The difference is that between the first commodity-culture in the history of human existence and all other cultures. A mutation has occurred.” Sylvia Wynter, *Ethno, or Sociopoetics?* p.12

### *Can the body host the breath?*

What can be seen across the world is the problem of the breath, breathing. To explore this problem of hosting the breath we need to pause and reflect on the section called ‘Breath.’

In that section of this text, we try to express our encounters with this moment, a moment we call ‘the time of the last breath’. It is not an analysis, but an expression of intensity, raw intensity, and an attempt at honesty in the expression of an intensity, the effect of having had our own breath taken away when faced with what seems like a slow, horrific descent into the suffocating world our children are growing up into. Affected with anger, but also always with a hope and love that a thoughtful witnessing can embrace unforeseen connections which link to networks of resistance. The hope that the reader will be as enraged or even better, more enraged. The intention is the production of hope as enraged engagement with networks of action.

It takes our breath away to see the levels of violence against black lives. It takes our breath away to see the rise of resistance to this violence. It takes our breath away to see the forest fires, to know about the dying oceans, to listen to stories of disaster, death, and destruction. All so unnecessary. It takes our breath away to see such deliberate disaster. This list could go on and on until we run out of breath. What takes our breath away perhaps most of all, what is almost too obvious to have to acknowledge, is that this is deliberate disaster.

Agasp that capitalist gain can bomb land. Profit obtained by not only gaining access to resources but letting the bombed citizens pay for the so-called rebuilding. This shock doctrine (Naomie Klein) is akin to the way the way police in some parts of Afrika will arrest sex workers, rape them, and then get the sex worker to pay to be released.

In the face of this deliberate disaster, what kind of response can we cope with? Tears, anger, frustration, desolation, all these affects flow through us just as they also flow through our communities. Grief is perhaps the easiest way to describe this. Grief is also a troublesome idea, however.

In grief we encounter the death of the loved one, whether they were family, or community, or even just an 'image'. Yet in grief we encounter death as it is, arriving from the outside to cleave open the present, placing some into the realm of the ancestors whilst leaving others bereft of a future. As we move through grief we regain a future, this time reconfigured to include a new set of ancestors, where the people we grieve for take their place. This new future, with our new ancestors, re-organises us. We become a new person, perhaps a child without a parent or a partner without their companion. The grief recedes as the new future arrives.

It's for this reason that grief, whilst perhaps the easiest way to describe our response to the contemporary moment, is insufficient as a concept. In grief, death has arrived. Yet in our contemporary moment death is becoming the horizon of life, no longer arriving from the outside but now embedded into the future of our present life. In grief death arrives and a new future is opened, whereas in our contemporary moment death is coming, always coming, and the future appears increasingly as forever closed.

When it comes to death, the Western therapeutic cure is one preoccupied with letting go, moving on, but it is challenged. Narrative therapy, for example, invites one to talk to the dead. This is not about belief in an afterlife but a reframing of the process of mourning. The process of inviting our ancestors to bear witness alongside us through what's been called a 'critical melancholia'.

Ranjana Khanna notes that within the nation state there is something that cannot be mourned. For Khanna, it is impossible to totally digest the past, resulting in a critique of agency that engages us in what they call a 'critical melancholy' as the trace of trauma remains, and its symptomatic embodiment is haunting. It presents an ethical, political, and communal challenge to be present to that which critically insists. The strategy is to develop the persistence of the insistent, rather than its digestion or dissolution.

That strategy of dissolution is, in Philip Derbyshire's reading of Khanna, ascribed to Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, who are described as having "revised Freud's theory" and in so doing "Ferenczi's distinction between introjection and incorporation as an underpinning to the distinction between mourning and melancholia, becomes central. Mourning is achieved through introjection, the full assimilation of loss; melancholia involves the incorporation of the unassimilable, which, encrypted, evades integration, and entails a process of endless lament." Derbyshire goes on to claim that "in opposition to Abraham and Torok's therapeutic strategy, which designates melancholy as pathological and attempts to decrypt the buried loss and articulate the unassimilated into narrative, turning loss into ordinary mourning, Khanna holds that the unassimilable must remain as such." There is an echo of Claude Lanzman here, who claims that there is an obscenity to understanding when it encounters the holocaust. To ask why is too easily a salve, aiming to explain, to assimilate, to quieten the body that is choking.

Extinction is not death, it is far worse, it is the destruction of the future and the loss of the ancestors. This transformation encounters death no longer as an outside that interrupts, rather death now becomes us in ways anticipated by Foucault with the concept of docile bodies. Is it any wonder that the fascination with zombies has grown so much in the last decade or two? Our 'collective unconscious' expresses itself in stories of a living death and living with a living death. Given the weight of this terror, how are we to live?

We acknowledge that in expressing our encounter with the contemporary moment within the 'Breath' text we present yet another dying light. We might describe ourselves as 'war weary', having been trapped inside the class war all our lives, played out across multiple spaces, in multiple ways. We still feel, but we also know that to feel is to fear, and 'fear is the mind killer' (Bion).

How to deal with this? How is it possible to investigate our contemporary moment and feel without becoming numb, without relying on some kind of 'moral heroism' where we force ourselves to 'face things'? For the psychoanalyst Wilfrid Bion, most famous perhaps for his work on groups, when the body is in pain but the risk to feel the pain is too dangerous, then experience is evaded. His call is to learn from experience, to be modified by the affective dimension of expression which becomes thought-feeling and feeling-thought.

The all-too-common strategies of 'facing reality' are presented as simple moral choices, but if we have learnt anything as psychoanalysts, philosophers, or revolutionaries it is that the desire to live outruns any moral choices that might need to be faced up to. The difficulty is that this desire to live is too often channelled by capitalism in a self-destructive direction, either into individualism or into group dynamics that depend on a border or an 'Other' against whom the group defines itself. Information overload, forced habits that evade experience, thoughtlessness prevails in the place of thoughtfulness and embodied thinking/feeling, touched by events

Whilst we would agree with the slogan "don't mourn, organise", quite what must be organised is still unclear. What we think is that what needs to be organised is the interplay of new and old ways of coming to the support of life, becoming life. This is perhaps our 'proposal', if we had one, if we were able to make one.

It is to the question of life that we must turn our face if we want to think and live beyond the moment of the last breath.

How can we think about life? Perhaps here the breath plays its most interesting role as both a fact and concept, as a way of getting to grips with life. Life breathes but cannot breathe without a host, like thoughts cannot occur without a thinking apparatus (Bion). We might almost go so far as to say that life is primarily breath, the drive to breath, the drive 'to breathe easily'.

The Earth breathes, the organism breathes, there is even a kind of historical or temporal breath, operating at a scale of the global climate and ecosystem.

Fundamentally breath is a metabolic dynamic, the core thread of changes and movements of energy that constitute life. Without breath, death. Without a host, no breath. The breath cannot be abstracted from the breathing bodies, as it entwines the corporeal and incorporeal in a process that produces the life that is both embodied and entangled, connected. Networks of bodies/hosts breathing into other bodies/hosts. In breathing the body is infiltrated by the world, no longer distinct but incorporated into a system, into a web and network of struggling, squirming survival.

To think about life, then, is to think about the breath as it is hosted within the system of bodies. Is the breath constricted, is it full, does it gasp or struggle, or is it easy and calm? From the panic

attack to the dreaming body, the breath is hosted by the bodies it flows through, sometimes held, sometimes released. In our contemporary moment, we claim, the way in which the breath is encountered is quite specific, it is encountered as limited from the outside, in what we have called the chokehold.

The breath is held captive, not hosted, not welcomed, not treated as the stranger that needs somewhere to rest before moving on. We live within a system that is a poor host to the breath, treating it like a slave or possession when it needs to be welcomed as our necessary outsider.

So, our question, can the body host the breath, is a way for us to try and think about whether change, revolution, can be made real, whether and how we can become good hosts. Not you, not me, but us, for the emphasis is community. This plays out across the system, as well as within the specific bodies each of us is that forms part of the global network. It ranges across the possibilities for climate survival as well as the breathing practices of the person attempting to find a way to live within a world of the chokehold. It ranges from the figure of the revolutionary to that of the psychoanalyst to the sorcerer at the edge of the field, each of whom offers ways of breathing that have potential for loosening the grip of the chokehold.

It is through this question - can the body host the breath - and these conceptual personas, figures - the revolutionary, the psychoanalyst and the sorcerer and the children of the future - that we begin to try and think about a future beyond grief, beyond the chokehold and within the present.

## **Session 2 – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021 - On Fanon**

*AI Summary: This text discusses the role of Franz Fanon as a teacher in the project, focusing on the concept of sociogeny. The author discusses the concept of learning from a person and its importance in the context of responding to the world and crises like racism and climate change. The concept of sociogeny, which links phylogeny and ontogeny, is introduced as a framework for understanding Fanon's teachings. The author also discusses the idea of epidermalisation, a term coined by Fanon, and its relevance to the project.*

Welcome to the second session of the Freudian Spaceship, The Earth as a Freudian Spaceship. This is a course that explores a project that I've been working on with the psychoanalyst Dr Eric Harper, and this is a seminar course reporting back on that project and opening a conversation as part of that project, its final stage as it moves to being written up.

Now the way the course is structured, we had a brief introduction last week, we're going to spend the next three weeks looking at our teachers, the teachers we had in the project. And so rather than the text we interpreted or the ideas that we were, you know, rigorously trying to think through - obviously all those things being the way that philosophy is usually done - here we were trying to learn how to respond to the world. That's the point of the project. How to respond, particularly to the crisis of black lives, exemplified by Eric Garner, but obviously continuing in various forms - and so we use the phrase Black Lives Matter, just as an index of that, not specifically to speak about the organisation so much, but just this specific crisis, now, the crisis of racism, not just in America, but in Britain and of course across the rest of the white capitalist west.

And so, we're responding to that moment and responding to the climate crisis, the climate change, whatever the name you prefer - the situation in which we are in - and these two elements as speaking to us, as demanding of a response. So, the first thing we're going to do in this course is just try and orientate people to the framework in which the work has been developed.



The next three sessions, therefore, we'll be looking at three of our teachers. This session is looking at Franz Fanon, the next session will look at Sigmund Freud – or Freudian thought, it's not just Sigmund Freud - and the third session will look at Deleuze and Guattari, the schizoanalytic background. So, we have these three different elements, these three different kinds of traditions, practises. Three teachers.

After that the course is open. I have various ideas as to where we can go and what we can do, but obviously the course is a bit more open, it's a conversation, it's not a course in which I'm teaching you simply, straightforwardly, about something, and you're following along. This is, as I say, a conversation. After the three introductory and scene setting or conversation framing sessions, we will have a bit more space for other participants to direct the focus, obviously still within the framework of the conversation we're trying to have around this project. It's a complicated thing, obviously. It's always a complicated thing, trying to have a conversation, particularly if it lasts for quite a while and over a period of weeks and is focused on a theme.

Today I want to, as I say, talk about the role of Franz Fanon as a teacher in the background to this project and specifically I will look - I mean, there's too much to talk about in terms of Fanon, he is an incredibly rich and vibrant thinker in many ways and obviously we can't cover everything inside Fanon - so this is trying to give a framework and the concept I'm going to focus on is the concept of sociogeny. That's a strange word. It links with two other words, phylogeny and ontogeny. And it produces a new threefold framework that I'll talk about in a little while.

But I think the first thing to talk about is, it's just this notion of a teacher, the notion of learning from somebody, which is what we're doing in this project, and Fanon being one of those people that we're learning from. And when you're learning from a person, when you're trying to respond to the world, when you're trying to learn from the person as to how you might be able to respond, what responses to the world you might be able to make, what you're interested in is less abstract theoretical arguments and making a clear killer decisive counterargument to some point they've made - which is generally, or at least often, how you're trained inside academia - what you're less interested in is that cleverness, I suppose - it has a place, obviously - but you're less interested in that cleverness, and you're more interested in how the person speaks to you. You're more interested in what phrases, what little moments in a text, what little moments in a biography speak to you, give you something that you can learn from. I think that's crucial.

I mean, one of the things Fanon has taught me is that I hadn't yet read Fanon and that was an appalling oversight. This wasn't an appalling oversight because somehow not having read an important black philosopher was some sort of personal failing, although obviously it was as well, but it was an oversight because Fanon's work had simply never been presented inside the philosophical training I had inside the University. And this is even though I had quite a lot of training in post Second World War French existentialism, so Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Albert Camus, Sartre, de Beauvoir, all these kinds of people. I still teach existentialism. I love teaching existentialism. It's a really interesting philosophical thought, it's a really interesting school, and as I say, I'd been trained in this in University, but what was missing was this fantastic intervention that is made both by Aimé Césaire and by Fanon in particular, into the work of the existentialists, in a way that frames it completely differently from the way these schools are often taught, that I was taught, which was French existentialism within a relationship to politics - if it had a relationship to politics - within a relationship to the PCF, The French Communist Party and the resistance of the Second World War and the French Communist Party, let's say, it's lethargy, it's reactionary moments post Second World War, which are finally overcome in the '68 rebellions at which point the French Communist Party is moved aside and there's a new politics formed.

This relationship between existentialism, particularly in France, completely avoided Algeria, completely avoided the massacre in '45 in Algeria, completely avoided the enormous impact of the Algerian Revolution, completely avoided in particular - which you can maybe excuse for philosophy, it was not to deal with politics - but completely avoided this response by Fanon that develops from right inside the French existentialist and philosophical movement and that develops across a decade<sup>1</sup>.

And so Fanon's response to the situation of colonialism, the situation of racism, and he first responds to the situation of racism before explicitly responding to colonialism, these are contained in two, I mean, most famously in two books, a book from the early 50s, 1954 I think it is, it might be 52, but I think it's 54, Black Skin, White Masks and a book from the 60s, early 60s, The wretched of the earth. These two books orientate Fanon as deeply engaged with the philosophical movement in France and this is extremely clear inside Black Skin, White Masks, where there's a very explicit intervention and engagement with an essay by Sartre, called Black Orpheus. And it's still clear in The wretched of the earth where Sartre is writing a preface for the text.

One of the things that was distressing when beginning to talk Eric and when beginning to meet the thinking of Fanon, was the fact that this had been missing from my own intellectual training as a philosopher, and I think that speaks to the difficulties that are involved when people talk about things like decolonizing the curriculum. You often have this strange notion that it's somehow about adding... I mean, there's a sense by people who attack that notion that there are people who somehow want to add something in that doesn't belong there and in fact this is completely the wrong way of thinking about it. What actually needs to occur is our curriculum needs to reflect accurately and much more clearly the real conversations that were taking place, contemporaneously, with the development of certain thoughts and this in particular is made incredibly clear with the ignorance and removal in many ways of Fanon from the philosophical training and even sometimes in the way in which Fanon is picked up and used and taken away from his philosophical engagements and not treated as a philosopher.

Having said that, let's just wind back a little bit and give a little bit of background as to why Fanon became this person that was interesting and why it then opened up our work.

Fanon has two particular connections that were interesting to us. There is a philosophical connection, obviously, with regard to race and colonialization, but there is another connection that is fascinating and resonant. This the relationship to psychiatry and this relationship to psychiatry is almost like the flip side of the relationship that Felix Guattari has to psychiatry. Fanon is trained by the same people, trained in the same institutions, engages in what's called social therapy and practises social therapy, which he then takes from a place called St Albans in France, post Second World War, and he takes this social therapy practise that he learns under a guy called Tosquelles and at St Albans and he takes this into Algeria. And it's this engagement in Algerian mental health work as a psychiatrist that first begins to really articulate, for him, the theoretical problem at the heart of both racism and colonialism. It's this relationship that Fanon has to that practise that he develops from St Albans, from the social therapy, it's from there that he begins to develop this concept of sociogeny.

Now what's crucial there is that this is the same background that Felix Guattari has. Guattari trains in the same place, trains with the same people, and not only that, they both have quite similar political backgrounds, they're both involved in left politics, they both keep away a little bit from the French Communist Party, they're possibly more connected to Trotskyists and people that are slightly

more heretical on the left, let's say, and they both have this very strong interest in what we would, let's call for now as a shorthand, the psychological. It's as though they travelled on parallel paths.

I think that's something that, for a lot of reasons, as we as we began to look at and read Fanon as a first possible stop, as a first possible teacher in our response to the world around us, what opened up was a world of parallelisms, a world of interests that are shared, a world of trainings and methodologies that are crossing over these different networks and being deployed in different ways. So, the deployment of social therapy, which in some senses is one of the backgrounds to what will become schizoanalysis, this deployment of social therapy inside Algeria is the crux point for Fanon, and he begins to orientate himself to the psyche in a particular way, and in a way that prefigures, for us, the way in which schizoanalysis will orientate towards the psyche, and in particular the crux of this is that no longer is the psyche taken to be an individual. It's no longer thought to be the responsibility or somehow, it's no longer thought to be bound up within the individual itself, and to sort of bear this in mind, it's probably worth at this point just thinking about the way in which Fanon phrases this setup.

So, what occurs - and I've asked people to just, if you're interested, to just read through the introduction to Black Skin White Masks, but obviously we're going to need to look at other stuff that he's written in a bit more detail at certain points, perhaps.

So sociogeny. As I say, it develops out of this concept of social therapy and in the relationship that Fanon has inside Algerian psychiatry and so Black Skin White Masks is writing from the perspective of Fanon having learned and developed a philosophical concept as part of a methodological practise, as part of his psychiatric practise. So, he articulates, in the introduction, a situation, a description of racism, in which there is a framework that's imposed upon someone and then there's the response to the framework. And Fanon, his focus here, is interested as much in the response to the framework as the framework itself. They're both key elements of what he wants to look at. He's as interested in how someone liberates themselves from racism just as much as how racism is imposed upon someone. But these two elements aren't capable of being, as it were, removed from each other. Quoting Fanon:

Before opening the proceedings, we would like to say a few things. The analysis we are undertaking is psychological. It remains, nevertheless, evident that for us the true disalienation of the black man implies a brutal awareness of the social and economic realities (BSWM, Introduction).

This is the key element of the process of coming out of the framework, breaking through a framework, disalienation, this is the description of that. Continuing with Fanon:

The inferiority complex can be ascribed to a double process.

When he is referring to the inferiority complex here, he is referring to the way in which people are caught inside this trap, this framework that is imposed upon them and then caught inside a logic of responses in which they are trying to gain value from a system that is inherently devaluing them, or removing the possibility of value, and in doing so they end up only being able to gain value with this inferiority relationship. The inferiority complex, Fanon says, can be ascribed to a double process:

First economic.

Then, internalisation, or rather epidermalization of this inferiority.

Obviously, by epidermalization we're referring to skin, we're referring to the index of racism here, and this is where he introduces his particular methodological dynamic, his concept of sociogeny:

Reacting against the constitutionalizing trend at the end of the 19th century, Freud demanded that the individual factor be taken into account in psychoanalysis. He replaced the phylogenetic theory by an ontogenetic approach.

So that's the biological being referred to. Now what this effectively means is that the phylogenetic effectively refers to the way in which a species as a whole develops, the genesis and growth and development of a species, whilst the ontogenetic refers to a member of the species, a particular individual, how that species is expressed and articulated in a particular individual member of the species. To continue with Fanon:

We shall see that the alienation of the black man is not an individual question. Alongside phylogeny and ontogeny, there is also sociogeny. In a way, in answer to the wishes of Leconte and Damey, let us say that here it is a question of sociodiagnostics.

What is the prognosis?

Society, unlike biochemical processes, does not escape human influence. Man is what brings society into being. The prognosis is in the hands of those who are prepared to shake the worm-eaten foundations of the edifice.

There's a bunch of stuff that needs to be unpacked in this situation. First of all, it's important to recognise that Fanon comes from a very scientific background. He's training as a psychiatrist. He's had medical training. He uses in the course of the introduction words like lysis, which means the dissolution of the cell membrane. It's a biological process that can be done chemically or physically. He uses a concept of regressive analysis, which is a way in which you take one factor, one variable, and you change various other variables around it in order to see what influences it. And these are elements and concepts that are coming out of a biological scientific background, and so at this point what's crucial is that as a biologically trained medical psychiatrist Fanon is responding to the way in which that model dominates psychiatry, he's responding to that by trying to introduce a way in which biological determinism essentially doesn't work any longer. And the way in which he does this is by introducing this concept of sociogeny.

By introducing this concept, he claims that there is, as it were, a social origin, a *genie*, genesis, a social origin, or social genesis, that's just as important as a phylogenetic or an ontogenetic element within a psychiatric condition, within the conditions he's meeting in Algerian psychiatric hospitals. But he also wants to do more than that. In various different articles he explores the way in which the response to what are termed 'psychiatric situations' is also framed and constructed, it's also a particular sociogenic project, a sociogenic framework, and so he notices and reports on the different ways in which mental illness is treated amongst the Islamic communities inside Algeria in the early 50s. In particular, he reports on the way in which the idea of individual responsibility is not present in those situations and in which people with what would be classically thought of as mental health issues are not thought of as responsible for their issues, just as someone who has tuberculosis is not thought of as responsible for the tuberculosis. He finds that the way in which the community, its construction, its production of this concept of mental illness not only works differently in naming it but works differently in responding to it.

The crux here is not just that there are different causal mechanisms that must be taken into account when dealing with something like the psychological and not just that those causal mechanisms have to be taken into account within the specific individual, within the specific ontogeny, within a specific case history of the person but that the very social framework in which the person is developing,

having their genesis, is a crucial variable factor in terms of what the outcome of a mental health situation will be like.

When we find this phylogeny, ontogeny, sociogeny, this threefold analytical framework, being produced, what we also find if we push a little bit further is that it offers a breach of what we might think of as a human/animal divide, and this is going to become a very important issue, this particular relationship between human and animal. Silvia Wynters, for example, building on Franz Fanon in some ways, but obviously developing work in their own right, will later talk about the way in which the human and subhuman are actually the developments that come out of the West. All of this is deeply connected to the way in which we mark the boundary between human and animal. And obviously one of the things that is important to consider with this phylogeny ontogeny sociogeny framework is that this is not simply applicable to the human. This is something that extends, it's a methodological framework in which the human being can be treated and responded to differently from a purely biological framework but at the same time, it's still completely capable of working within a causal situation, a causal framework, what we might call the core framework of a naturalistic approach.

And because it can breach this human animal divide, it can do this because if we pay any attention to the concept of sociogeny, of the social, it becomes very clear that the social is not a human factor. It's not an exclusively human event, and it's not an exclusively human formation. And in doing so, in extending our threefold analytic framework into the social we, in a sense, extend beyond sentience. We don't any longer need to simply think of the psyche or what we can sometimes call mental health as somehow dependent on, conditioned by, or somehow responsive to, bound into, relationships of sentience. We can begin to consider the organism as bound into a much more complex set of relationships, before there is ever a mind, before there's ever any awareness, before there's any development later of what we might call the psyche. I think there's a situation in which we can begin to pick on and identify relations that are contingent and and that are still causal. So, sociogeny is a line of development that I think can be tracked in such a way that implicit in it, there is a causal relationship of matter outside of the biochemical.

Now for Fanon it's also clear that one of the things that sociogeny does is prompt the response of a possibility of change, of contingency, and this relationship to the social as being capable of being changed is a key element that cuts across many of the philosophical responses that you might find to today's realities, although they've developed perhaps in the last 100 years, at least since Freud and Nietzsche, and possibly since Marx. What I mean by that is, there's a philosophical response that, as it were, presupposes the intellect. It presupposes rationality. It presupposes the ability to decide consciously, clearly, justifiably and on the other hand, there's a set of philosophical dynamics, philosophical concepts, that increasingly make that seem like - at best - any response is an illusion of control or an illusion of response and at worst actively deceiving us, actively, self-deceiving.

A lot of the ways in which those kinds of arguments, both from Nietzsche and Freud, let's say, a lot of the ways they develop is through organising around concepts of the will, organising around concepts of desire, organising around concepts of as it were, an automatism of the social, an automatism of the social conflicts. And it's on this very fine line between whether we, as it were, turn the social back into an unconscious process of automatic causal relationships, or whether we undo the biochemical phylogeny ontogeny relationships, untangle them slightly from their causal necessitation in biochemistry, it's on the fine line between which way you move, whether you as it were socialised nature or naturalised society, it's on the fine line between those two things that we find some of the most interesting difficulties in responding to the world around us.

Why do we find these difficult? I mean, one of the responses that's interesting, and this again is a lesson from Fanon, is that let's say, thought is not enough, intellect is not enough. It is not enough to know, but it is crucial to engage, to do, to respond with something over and above an understanding. And it's very clear that this is something that motivates Fanon, but it's also clear that in doing that - and this is something Fanon actually mentions at one point - in doing that, the question that continually comes to the fore is what damage have you already done? What damage have you done yourself? What part have you played, what role have you played in replicating some of the damaging processes that occur, as it were, socially?

This moment of engagement, this moment of reflection, this moment of finding ourselves both wanting to respond to a process, respond to a situation, and being caught inside that situation, this tension at the heart of this is, I think, responded to by Fanon and responded to in a way that I think is something I definitely want to learn more from him about, but it's responded to by Fanon with an affirmation, an affirmation process that we find very much at the heart of existentialism. So, when Kierkegaard describes the affirmations of Abraham, the affirmations of the individual who can make the leap in his Fear and Trembling he's describing these as affirmations in the face of the system, affirmations in the face of understanding, affirmations in the face of the reasonable. And in a sense, that framework of understanding, framework of reason, framework of the logic that imposes itself upon the person in the existential situation, who can then respond by affirming themselves beyond that framework, that system, it's this model that we pick up as well from Fanon's relationship both to psychiatry and to politics, both to capitalism itself and to racism. It's from that ability to try and work out how, despite being caught in the process, one can respond, how one is capable of breaking through the framework that is part of the sociogenic background. It's that lesson I think that is crucial for us to take from Fanon, or at least that's the lesson that I've been taking from Fanon.

So, Fanon provides us with this very interesting thought that enables us to trouble a nature / human distinction. It provides us with this fascinating way in which we can begin, as we want to, to think beyond an anthropomorphic perspective, whilst knowing the difficulties involved in that and the reasons for beginning to think beyond that are given to us by climate change, forced on us by climate change. But it also gives us these very important relationships between the existence inside a particular framework. So, the experience of the black man that he talks about is the experience inside racism, inside a particular framework and what's ambiguous here is that the experience is constructed and framed and given a logic by a framework that's oppressive but at the same time is complied with to a certain extent, not out of choice, and so there's a default compliance that operates and this, I think, is a crucial insight into how we can think about the world around us at the moment and how we can respond to the world around us at the moment.

We describe it in the first chapter of our text as an axiom of capitalism, and the axiom is comply or die and there really isn't any getting around this axiom. Comply with the logic of capitalism or die. This is the fundamental principle of capitalism. But at the same time, one of the things to remember here is that the logic of comply or die is not a logic of decision. This is a logic of imposition in which the way in which people work is fundamentally driven by the options and frameworks around them, it's not driven from inside. It's not driven fundamentally by some sort of set of individual choices made up and composed by the particular individual, it's driven by the options in front of them. It's driven by what's available for them to do, and in the situation of the colonised and in the situation of the proletarianized, the reality is that wage labour, for example, or the work that needs to be done, appears as though it's not an option. It appears as though there is no choice because of this particular relationship to the logic of comply or die, that's what essentially pushes the fact that there

is no choice. It's that without taking the particular route of getting the job, doing the work, buckling down, growing up, getting rid of your ideals, whatever the particular thing is, but without taking the route of buying into the society the choice isn't, as it were, to somehow buy out. The 'choice' is die. The choice doesn't exist.

Well, at least it doesn't exist in a way that can be imagined.

And so, if in this sense, one of the things we can learn from Fanon is the complexity of living within a particular framework that oppresses you as an individual, the complexity of that being that it's not simply an experience of opposition to that framework. At first, it's an experience of compliance, in a sense, with this framework and not through choice, but because of habit and if we can take that and work with this idea of sociogeny as well, this idea that there's a contingency and causality within the social, and that an element of operative freedom, we might say, exists in that particular dynamic, then one of the things that becomes very clear and one of the things that Fanon seems to work on quite explicitly, is that the development of new habits, the development of, and the production of, capacities to affirm my existence or an existence and the development of new frameworks, these are all elements of an ongoing process of resistance.

Now, one of the things I want to do, and I want to just come back to is this element that is mentioned here as 'first economic', and it's the element that Fanon will discuss when he talks about Hegel and the dynamic of what's called mutual recognition and the way in which this does not work within the situation of racism. This notion of the economic, this is a Marxist notion, so there's a Marxism in the background to Fanon here and within Marxism, classically and actually quite badly, there is this division between the economic and as it were, the social, the economic base of society and the social superstructure that forms on top of this, and there's a separation into these two different areas. And often a determinism between the economic and the social superstructure. In fact, that's not generally the way in which it would work. What we would think of as determinism is actually much more like a limit, there are certain things that cannot be done and certain things that must be done within a capitalist economic framework. So rather than thinking of somehow the economic as causing ideas or causing social structures, it's much more useful to think of them as setting up certain options, setting up certain basic choices, basic ways of doing things, limits on what can be done.

These limits are instituted sometimes informally and then formalised, depending upon class relations. We see this, in fact, in the development of racism and slave ideology inside America between the 1650s and 1700s where there's a massive shift and codification of different kinds of resistance. There's this codification of different kinds of resistance that is first informal, let's say between good workers and bad workers, that then becomes formalised into something like people who have rights and people who don't. And these things occur through gradual imposition, the gradual imposition of habits, and then the gradual formalisation of habits.

In some sense capitalism and racism obviously developed together. There's a huge debate about whether one is the cause of the other. It's almost impossible to imagine capitalism as it exists today without racism and in its particular formation is very specifically tied into racism and what Sylvia Wynter calls sometimes the X Factor, which is the particular way in which our capitalism runs, as a racial capitalism. But part of that is also difficult to unpick because there was no choice, in a sense, at the beginning of capitalism to construct it as a racial capitalism. Rather, there is, as I say, a series of habits that become formalised, a series of habits that become laws or become particular key concepts or words that are put into law. And so, one of the things that's crucial about what Fanon is doing is unpicking something that is as endemic to capitalism as it is to racism, a particular way in



which the relationship to an oppressive framework works not just in terms of power, but in terms of its experience, the experience of this framework.

One of the things that's very difficult for a lot of left revolutionaries, leftists, often is to untangle, when they look at the world around them and when they try and think about the responses around them, why people - this would be the phrase - why people aren't acting in their own interests, as though somehow people are being deliberately self-destructive, as though somehow people have failed to see their own interests and isn't it obvious? Occasionally I even see this discussion that memes the idea that workers under climate capitalism - or just workers under capitalism - are somehow involved in a Munchausen syndrome where they believe themselves to be good friends of the capitalist, if only, if only, if only they'd get the break, they could become a capitalist and it's all a matter of bad luck. And this is disparaged, as though it were some sort of ideological problem that has to be expelled from the people's minds by education and anger and rage and showing them the truth and various other forms that the left takes in terms of its moral outrage at the world and its moral outrage at those who aren't outraged at the world. And all of this is extremely performative, and I'm sure very validating for a lot of people who engage in the moral outrage but does very little to engage anyone who's involved in living within the framework of capitalism and who is undertaking that lived experience as part of their day-to-day life and that includes the racialized and the proletarianized. And one of the things that Fanon can offer us, in fact, is a way of understanding that experience of oppression from the inside, that experience of what it's like to be racialized and can offer us this in such a way that we might be able to draw lessons that go beyond the individual, lessons that speak to this socio diagnostics that he talks about, lessons that speak to the way in which a sociogeny that depends upon a certain oppressive relationship has to produce particular habits, some of these being these ways in which people are habituated into compliance.

So, it's much less an issue of right ideas, and it's much less an issue of making people take the right stand, it's much more an issue of what other options can be made to exist. What other possibilities can exist, sometimes simply possibilities in terms of imagining a different future. What other possibilities can be made to exist?

Now it's difficult to do that, and for each of these initial three sessions where I'm just trying to introduce some of the teachers that we were using, it's difficult to do that without also introducing one of the teachers that sits in the background and that is going to be less focused on perhaps than they should be, and that's Marx and in particular the way in which Marx brings to the fore the structures and formations of the labour process and the way in which capitalism, first of all, is not to be understood or thought about as somehow bosses imposing themselves on workers, but rather it must be thought about as the development of a particular organisation of the labour process, a particular organisation of some of those social relations.

Sylvia Wynter talks about Western capitalism as a mutation, but she also describes it as the first commodity culture, the first culture that is entirely organised around the production of commodities, and in doing so is building on a point of Marx that capitalist logic is the logic of what he calls commodity production. What's interesting about that is that it has two key elements. It has this element of the rearrangement of the production of values, and so there is a new mode of value production that takes place once commodity production begins to become dominant, and then there's a new value that is produced and in Marx's case this is what he called surplus value, but it derives from work, it derives from labour in many ways, although in a very curious way. There's this new value that's produced, but there's also this new practical organisation of what we might call the economic life of the individual, there's a new practical organisation. There's a new set of options that are placed in front of you as to how your daily bread can be raised and how you can eat your

fill. These two different elements of it produce self-reinforcing habituations, they emphasise each other, reinforce each other.

In this reorganisation of the labour process that Marx talks about he names three different features, three different elements. The first element is the personal activity of the human being, the person doing the work, this personal activity being what we might call the work itself. So, the digging of the ground, let's say. He then names what he calls the subject of that work. So, for the person digging the ground the subject of that work is the ground that they're digging. But then he names the instruments of labour. And it's in this particular situation that we can begin to, I think, bring some powerful lessons from Fanon, because one of the things that Fanon does as he moves from his discussion of racism, as it were, in general, which he does in Black Skins, White Masks, to a much more concrete focus on colonialism, which is in The Wretched of the Earth, one of the things he begins to do is make explicit and very clear how the colonised are turned into instruments of labour and the way in which - the analogy should be clear - in the way in which that is very specific to the racial and colonised situation, but that has an enormous number of lessons for the proletarianization of labour, for the way in which labour itself, a human itself, is as it were, organised into a labour process as one of the instruments of that labour.

Now, what's important for thinking about some of the stuff from Marx is that he still perceives nature passively, it's still perceived - the soil for example, the earth - these are, particularly when he's speaking economically, these are still perceived as subjects of work, subjects that are essentially things that can be worked on, things that can be freely worked on. There's not a dual relationship, there's not a dialogue relationship between the subjects of labour and work, there's still very much an extractive exploitative logic inside that which is something that I think is problematic about Marxism and problematic about the way in which it deals with the subject of work. But one of the things that's crucially interesting about it is this emphasis on the fact that the process, the labour process itself, is not something that exists outside of the experience of that process by the participants and the experience of that process by the participants is fundamentally one in which they are habituated into certain sorts of compliant habits and habituated into certain sorts of situations. And yet at the same time there is this capacity for resisting and breaking the bounds of this particular situation.

So, this is just a little quote from Marx, just to talk about the way in which he still perceives the world, the earth, as a valid source of income for us. So, this is Marx:

as the Earth is his original ladder, so too it is his original tool house... The Earth itself is an instrument of labour, but when used as such in agriculture implies a whole series of other instruments and a comparatively high development of labour

Marx, Capital, Vol 1, Ch7, S2 p188

The Earth itself is an instrument of labour. This is crucial. And one of the things that's crucial about the switch that Fanon can enable us to make is to begin to see the human in both of these roles, both as that which is doing the work, but also as that which is an instrument of labour and the instrument of labour element is that in a sense which is formed by the structures outside of you. So, the way in which your work is organised, the way in which your social life is organised. Whilst the work itself still has a degree of contingency and has a degree of particularity that's not determined by these things, it's still limited, it's within a framework.

This relationship to becoming an instrument of labour, becoming an instrument of - we might say - an abstract process, becoming a cog in the machine, or part of a depersonal or impersonal set of

processes, what we're dealing with here and what is the element to remember, is that everything that's interesting, everything that's a ground of a response, that is free, depends upon a conflict between the imposed forms and habits and this affirmed existence in relationship to, in response to, the imposed formed habits. The complexity arises politically from trying to work out how the affirmed response, that impulse to rebel, that impulse to resist, that momentary freeing up from the habits of compliance around us, how that can be sustained, and that seems to be one of the most important questions. In the same way that we might analogously think of how a breakthrough for someone in a mental health situation, a breakthrough that enables them to break out of a particular habit and pattern that they're in at the moment, a set of behaviours or a set of responses that they're no longer happy with, how that breakthrough, that step forward, how that can be sustained? How that can be supported? How that can be cared for and worked with and and they can be enabled to develop that, because the breakthrough moment is still not yet a moment of breakdown for the society around them, and this is the tension I think that's at the heart of trying to respond to the world around us.

It is not a situation of an absolute freedom, absolute purity of response, of answering a question such as what is the right way of responding? What's the right thing to think? What's the right position, the right decision, the right perspective? All of these things, for most of us, that's going to be impossible for us to work out. And there's always going to be some argument and counter argument process that we're going to get caught in where we never quite know which way we should be thinking, or which way the wind is blowing or what's going on. Rather, the crucial moments of resistance, that crucial moment of breakthrough, that crucial moments of insight that need to be nurtured, this is what we perhaps should be focusing on more often.

Just for a moment we can actually see the world and we can actually feel something about the world, just for a moment there might be a thought about a future that doesn't have to be immediately crushed as impossible, and just for a moment there might be a sense of resistance that gives us a feeling of joy and and the real issue is not then to work out whether that's right or wrong or valid or good, rather it is a question of actually how on earth can we keep that sense alive? How on earth can we enable that response to be developed and to grow and how can we do that with full awareness - or an attempted awareness - of the world around us and its difficulties and habits and laws of formation, without at the same time feeling like we're overwhelmed.

### **Session 3 - 7th June 2021 - On Freud**

*AI Summary: The text discusses the idea of close reading and the problem with the "neutrality assumption" that is often made in the practice of philosophy. The author argues that it is important to remember the bodies involved in the process of learning and understanding, and to consider the desires that prompt the desire to learn. They also discuss the discomfort that can come from learning and how it can implicate the learner.*

What can we learn from Freud? As I mentioned in Session 2, when I talk of 'learning from' it's not a simple matter of grabbing an argument from some thinker, of mining some seam of cleverness, it instead involves reflecting on how the person speaks to us, what it is that calls to us from the work. This often involves noticing how a particular phrase, formula or model grabs our attention.

Close reading is an important skill in the practice of philosophy, slow reading and close reading involve paying attention to the way the philosopher has written, even to how they might inadvertently import unthought elements into their work. It's a crucial form of philosophical

interpretation, but it aims at understanding the author and this aim is assumed to be neutral. Whilst close reading is valuable and important, this 'neutrality assumption' is a booby trap. It assumes that there's some clean 'truth' that we can access. Moreover, it assumes that this aim of understanding the author is unproblematic, that it's right.

Why is this a booby trap? As we pursue the thought of a philosopher, as we try to carefully understand, it's too easy to forget the bodies involved. Our bodies. It's too easy to take on the persona of 'the intellectual', 'the one who knows' or 'the one who pursues the truth'. What's forgotten are the bodies. Why this text? Why this author? Why this thought? The responsive bodies, the organising bodies, the ancestral bodies, these are too easily forgotten as we slip into the comfortable neutrality of 'the intellect at work'.

Something here speaks to how we understand the process within which we are working when we try to understand something. These processes of understanding, of learning, are caught up in the institutions within which they are carried out - the University and the School for example. They are also caught up in the processes that prompt the desire to learn.

This "desire to learn", what if it is a desire to quieten some trouble? If everything is easy, everything works, nothing troubles us, then what would prompt us? Put aside the purely functional (I need to get X qualification to get Y job) and consider instead the desire to learn as a response to the problems of living. Something doesn't work, doesn't feel right, seems hidden or obscure and we want to know - or, more, we want to quieten the disquiet we feel. Our bodies need a way of dealing with the disquiet, of settling the tension, of restoring calm. One way is to learn, to have a moment of insight, or clarity - a moment of understanding. This settles us for the night, tucks us in, gives us a sense of empowerment - "at least I know why it's happening, at least I know what is happening. Aha! Yes, of course! That makes perfect sense!" We understand, and we no longer need to learn. We have settled things. We have quietened the chatter in our heads and simplified the tensions.

The point here is not to denigrate understanding or to deny the effectiveness of learning, rather it's to point to an element of the process that is forgotten, which is that it's hard to learn if it involves an increase in discomfort, if it makes us feel less secure, less certain, less sure of ourselves. And all learning involves a degree of discomfort because it must involve a movement from 'not knowing' to 'knowing' (or perhaps, from feeling like we don't know to feeling like we do know). To learn is to encounter the fact that we didn't know, and this is perhaps fine in the abstract, but it might be a little less comfortable if what we are learning about implicates our ignorance. If we learn, for example, that a way of speaking or acting was harmful. We see this problem playing out now in the discussions around racism. Such discussions aren't neutral, they involve us, they implicate us, they touch us. So, we find that concepts such as 'white fragility' arise as ways of trying to articulate this implicated relationship the participants have in the conversation about race.

When Fanon speaks of the 'epidermalization' of a structure, he is pointing to this implication of the body, to its involvement. The skin is a point of contact with structure or system or process.

Just to remind ourselves, this is Fanon from the Introduction to Black Skins, White Masks -

The analysis we are undertaking is psychological. It remains, nevertheless, evident that for us the true disalienation of the black man implies a brutal awareness of the social and economic realities. The inferiority complex can be ascribed to a double process: First, economic. Then, internalisation or rather epidermalization of this inferiority.

Two things call to me in this passage, two things speak to me, prompt me to want to learn. The first, perhaps, is the word 'epidermalization'. It crystallises something, it sits there waiting to be heard, to talk some more. The second came later and it's the word 'brutal'. "The true disalienation of the black man implies a brutal awareness of the social and economic realities." A brutal truth, a brutal awareness. Not easy, not comfortable, not an easy truth but a brutal truth. Something here calls us to notice the bodies involved, the experiences involved, the difficulty involved. Avoiding that awareness seems, in this context, quite understandable. Why put yourself through such a process? For Fanon, it seems the claim is that only the brutal can be a path to true disalienation. It's important, I think, not to hear this as some sort of humblebrag. It's not because it's somehow a higher form of awareness (look at me, how strong I am!). Rather it's because it's only through the body, only in going through the body that the black man (to use Fanon's phrase) can encounter this process of racism, "the social and economic realities".

It's here that Freud comes in. Arrogantly puffing on the cigars that were to destroy him, he engages precisely in such an attempt at 'brutal awareness'. His breakthrough work, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, is a form of self-analysis. His dreams, his desires, his self is what fascinates him, something that is made obvious in the letters he writes to Wilhelm Fliess as he writes the *Interpretation*. Freud brings the body to bear on the self and in doing so produces a huge machinery of concepts, a huge cacophony of ideas that constantly seem to squirm and shift, all in the service of the attempt at brutal awareness.

(ASIDE: Or perhaps, in the service of an attempt to present as though engaged in an act of brutal awareness. Such a form of presentation - 'only I can face up to the truth of human desire and sexuality' - might well produce both insights and obfuscations. In a fascinating reading of Freud's *Interpretation* called Freud's Wishful Dream Book, Alexander Welsh carefully, and slowly, reads the *Interpretation* as embodying Freud's ambition in a 'wish to know'. Welsh analyses and tracks the body in the text, its pleasures. "Theory", Welsh suggests, "sometimes takes refuge in knowingness, akin to the knowingness that is a source of so much pleasure in the dream book" (p131). A page later Welsh remarks, after noting the sweeping nature of Freud's claims, specifically the claim that "every dream is the fulfilment of a wish" that it is "exhilarating to make sweeping claims, and the immediate payoff may be credit for a universal theory of dreams, the discovery of a scientific law" (p132). This notices how the ideas are not neutral, not clean, but are instead dirty thoughts, implicated in the body and its desires, pleasures and dynamics.)

Reading Freud is exasperating. He makes things slide, squirm and shift as he brings the body to bear on consciousness. Crucially (a word I noticed I was using a little like a 'tick' in the last session when I reviewed it) - crucially, Freud multiplies the self. No longer is there a singularity here, no longer a simple point, but now we have these multiple moments, each struggling with each other.

A quick review of some basic Freudian concepts, just a naming. The Id, the Ego and the Superego. Manifest and Latent content. Repression, both primary and secondary. Primary and Secondary process. Cathexis, abreaction, transference, sublimation, displacement, and condensation. There's this whole panoply of terms and concepts in Freud, one that is so widespread as to produce a whole system, a language of psychoanalysis. One of the most interesting texts about Freud is in fact called just that, The language of psychoanalysis. Written in the 1970s by Jean Laplanche and Jean Bertrand Pontalis, it presents at first sight as a kind of 'dictionary', with entries for all the 'basic' concepts from Freud, each entry naming a concept and giving a little account of it. As you begin to read you realise that there are these little asterisk marks, these little stars after some words, each star indicating another Freudian concept, another entry in the text. It's as though it's a hyperlinked text and you can begin anywhere and track these threads of connection between one concept and

another. A beautiful book, one to get lost in, but one that makes it even clearer that with Freud you either buy into it, or you don't. There's no royal road to Freudianism, rather there's this curious machinery of concepts that appears to call to some and repel others.

I don't buy it, not fully, not to the extent that I could live in the Freudian space, but at the same time, there's this compelling sense of a new kind of narrative of the self, a new kind of way of encountering the human, the body, the mind. As I said, the primary component of this new narrative is the multiplication of the self, how Freud organises the self as a complex interplay between different forces and drives, rooted in the body, expressed in consciousness. As part of this interplay of forces, we encounter the difficulty of a neutral knowledge, but also - crucially - the engagement with an insight.

In the last session, one of the things I was pointing to at the end was those conceptual systems, such as those of Fanon or Marx, which present us with structures that constitute oppressions - the colonised, the racialised, the proletarianised for example - which, to the extent that they explain the oppression, produce an impersonal imposition. At the same time, and this is far clearer in many ways in Fanon, the affirmation of life in the face of such impersonal systems is just as much a part of the conceptual system. My interest, in this situation, was in how we might think of these moments of the affirmation of life and how we might nurture, cultivate, sustain such moments. The question becomes less one of understanding and moves to the question of survival - how can we survive? How can we sustain the moments of breakthrough that we encounter in the affirmation of life to produce a breakdown in the systems that alienate? The lessons of psychoanalysis are perhaps to be found less in the squirming systems, from Freud to Klein or Lacan, than in these engaged attempts to form breakthroughs, to sustain breakthroughs. Put bluntly, what makes psychoanalysis interesting is its purpose, which is not one of knowing, but one of changing a constituted reality.

Psychoanalysis would be worthless as a theory without psychoanalysis as a practice. (And this will apply to both the revolutionary and the sorcerer as well, which is one of the reasons these three conceptual persona form parts of the way we have been responding to the world). What's curious is that the practice would equally be worthless without the theory. And yet there is no causal relation here, there's not a mechanical movement from the theory to action. It's not like learning an engineering problem, where we - crudely speaking - might say something like the following - have a goal, conceive a solution, work out the strengths and weaknesses of a material with which you can build the solution and then test. The more accurate my theory of, say, the properties of physical material and forces, the more accurate my initial building of a solution. There is a test and refine loop, such that the practice can inform the theory, but fundamentally the theory is the ground of the practice. In psychoanalysis, the relation is more like a marriage, a co-dependency, a co-constitution. The theory might be complete bullshit, but like a good story, does it engage the audience, does it enable the imagination to move, does it produce shifts in the bodies engaged. Engineering or physics might require accuracy of the representation of the world, whereas psychoanalysis requires a workable relation - and in terms of our response to the world, the workable relation is more urgent than ever.

#### *A closer look at Freud (just a start)*

At this point, let's look a little more closely at some of what Freud says. I'm looking at the text, An outline of psychoanalysis. This is something Freud writes in 1938, something he leaves unfinished, and which is published in 1940, just after his death. It's not quite his last text but it's close to it. It presents as a codification of psychoanalysis. It's not a case history, nor is it one of the more fluid, slippery texts that Freud produces throughout his life, where there is a to and fro, a discussion of his

ideas in which counterarguments and difficulties are staged. Rather this is a plain text, direct, straightforward, with the tone of the scientific biology from which Freud's work arose and to which he always appeared to aspire. It's as though we are reading a textbook, a teaching aid or a creed. Maybe, given the moment it's produced, just as he's dying from a horrendous cancer of the mouth brought on by the continual sucking on the cigars, he feels a need to stamp his mark, his standard, on the growing field of psychoanalysis. The last word on the matter.

Here is the opening of Chapter 2:

The power of the id expresses the true purpose of the individual organism's life. This consists in the satisfaction of its innate needs. No such purpose as that of keeping itself alive or of protecting itself from dangers by means of anxiety can be attributed to the id. That is the business of the ego, which is also concerned with discovering the most favourable and least perilous method of obtaining satisfaction, taking the external world into account. The super-ego may bring fresh needs to the fore, but its chief function remains the limitation of satisfactions.

The forces which we assume to exist behind the tensions caused by the needs of the id are called instincts. They represent the somatic demands upon mental life. Though they are the ultimate cause of all activity, they are by nature conservative; the state, whatever it may be, which a living thing has reached, gives rise to a tendency to re-establish that state so soon as it has been abandoned. ... (p5, OP, London 1949)

Even in this short description of the psychic apparatus, we can see these multiple forces, this multiplied self. The four factors at play - Id, Ego, Super-Ego, External World; the so-called 'principle of constancy' that produces this 'natural conservatism' of the id; the relationship of control or struggle for dominance between the various elements of the psyche that ensues. At the heart of it these 'instincts' (ASIDE: Trieb, drive, instincts - cf. Laplanche and Pontalis, *Instinct (or Drive)*, p214).

One of the lines that speaks in this passage is this, speaking of the instincts - "they represent the somatic demands upon mental life". This, coming after those opening lines, that opening move in which the "true purpose" of the individual organism's life is identified with the instincts of the id, and the ego is relegated to a kind of 'negotiator' with the external world, is a remarkable embodying of the kind of being that we are. Think of this for a moment. The ego, that thing we might say 'is me', where I say I and where I am conscious of myself, is nothing more than a mediator between my 'true purpose' and the world. Immediately we let slip something like a paternal or parental function. The ego is there to prevent my id from crashing and burning. It's not there to know, or to illuminate, but to protect. The "ultimate cause of all activity", the id, is like an idiot, in need of the protection of the conscious ego that can negotiate with the external world, protect me from myself.

This 'self-protection' dynamic is central to Freudianism and one of the things that's at the root of both the interesting narratives of behaviours that it produces as well as its inherent conservatism and expulsion of joy. You can almost see the whole relationship of a sensible adult protecting the wild child, crushing the child within under the boots of mediocre normality, urging conformity. Stability. Caution. Conformity. Compliance. Protection. These are the watchwords of the Freudian machinery, the watchwords of the Viennese bourgeois. This is the very model of domestication.

It becomes even clearer in a sense, this model of domestication, if we look a couple of pages earlier. At the end of the first chapter, we find the distinction between the ego and the super-ego. The ego deals with the external world via the development of experience (memory), "avoiding excessive stimuli (through flight), by dealing with moderate stimuli (through adaptation) and, finally, by



learning to bring about appropriate modifications in the external world to its own advantage (through activity). As regards internal events, in relation to the id, it performs that task by gaining control over the demands of the instincts...". This basic relationship of domestication is then complicated, according to Freud, because of the long childhood of the human, which leaves a kind of imprint or trace of the parents' own mode of domesticating their child. The ego is then in a constant struggle to domesticate the id in a way that is compatible with its own domestication by its parents. This curious domestic drama, translated into a theoretical model of the psyche, seems almost transparently to reproduce the self-image of comfortable bourgeois family life. However, after this little soap opera is played out there are two interesting moments. The first suddenly displaces the family and places us back in the social, somewhere near to where Fanon would develop his concept of sociogenesis. This is Freud:

The parents influence naturally includes not merely the personalities of the parents themselves but also the racial, national, and family traditions handed on through them as well as the demands of the immediate social milieu which they represent. (emphasis added, Freud, *ibid*, p4).

He goes on to note that, like the id, the super-ego must "represent the influence of the past", whereas the ego is "principally determined by the individual's own experience, that is to say by accidental and current events". The id and the super-ego stand, therefore, as the somatic and the social. The ego lives at the border of these two constitutive moments, domesticating the animal into the social. Interestingly the last move of this first chapter reinforces this curious sense of the real tension being between somatic and social factors. Again, here is Freud:

This general pattern of a psychical apparatus may be supposed to apply equally to the higher animals which resemble man mentally. A super-ego must be presumed present wherever, as in the case of man, there is a long period of dependence in childhood. The assumption of a distinction between ego and id cannot be avoided.

Animal psychology has not yet taken in hand the interesting problem which is here presented. (*ibid*)

This last move is one of those things that once again speak. The human-animal distinction, which would seem so central to psychoanalysis in many ways - the more so the more we emphasise language, as with Lacan perhaps - appears here to dissolve. The psychic apparatus of id, ego and even super-ego are not human, but are here presented as parts of any 'higher animal'. Dolphins, whales, maybe the big cats, chimps, and apes and even dogs maybe - minds proliferate well beyond the human.

Putting this interesting moment aside for now, the other thing to note is this relationship of the id and the super-ego to 'the past'. It might seem obvious what is meant here, biological heredity and social tradition for example. Yet what slips by too quickly is the fixed nature of this past. It's happened, it's there, it's not changeable - it's a kind of necessity. Note how the ego is the current lived experience, determined by "accidental and current events". In the last session I spoke about the tension between socialising nature and naturalising society and how, along this tension, we can find the problem of what, in the first session, I named as 'the personification of process'. Freud, in this moment, appears to be naturalising society. He appears to be taking it as causal, but fixed, a 'natural fact'. This is in many ways the archetypal structure of the social, including of capitalism - the transformation of a contingency based on human choices and decisions into a natural fact immune to agency. We can thus see here the importance of the specific way in which Fanon poses sociogeny

when he places it into a causal relation and at the same time posits it as contingent and subject to change.

*Even more briefly on Daniel Stern (and Marx)*

Marx still lingers in the background here. As I mentioned in the last session, his analysis of the social relations of labour, of how we work, is such that capitalism is described in terms of a machinery of forces, much in the same way that Freud describes a machinery of forces to explain the psyche. In Marx's case, however, the machine itself is central to the machinery of forces. The three factors of the labour process - the work itself, the subject of work and the instruments of labour - are organised in a specific way within capitalism, understood as a society of commodity production.

Commodities are specific things, not just stuff made by people. It names the type of objects produced, claims that the social relations these objects embody are different under capitalism than in other social structures. Briefly, the commodity is thing that's produced by work, but the work is not directed simply at producing something useful, or that someone needs. It continues to have this element in it, what is called use-value, but it also has this other, stranger element, exchange-value. Things are made to be sold.

This rather simplified way of putting things marks a crucial shift in the dynamics of the machinery of the labour process. It re-organises social relations. In doing so it re-organises the human who does the work, transforming work from a practice grounded in satisfying needs and desires, to work structured and disciplined according to the logic of exchange value. The 'id' of capitalism, the 'driving force', the "ultimate cause of all activity" to use Freud's phrase, is the fact that this new arrangement found in the commodity enables the production of value, as if by magic. This new value produced, 'profit', arises from the transformation of work into a commodity itself. As Marx says,

"the specific use value which this commodity possesses [of being] a source not only of value, but of more value than it has itself. This is the special service that the capitalist extracts from labour-power, and in this transaction, he acts in accordance with the 'eternal laws' of the exchange of commodities" (Capital, Vol 1, Ch.7, Section 2; p188 Lawrence and Wishart, 1977)

The capitalist doesn't "pay the worker for their work" but instead purchases labour-power. Capital captures the power of work and in doing so transforms it from being productive of life, to being productive of value, a value that is controlled by the capitalist. Capitalism thus marks a radical shift in the control of the power of human work, human activity. It is this capturing of control that we encounter as the alienation of labour.

I bring forward this brief excursion back into Marx to notice two things. First, that at the heart of Marx is an account of the radical transformation of social relations. Capitalism is a specific social relation and is no more a natural fact. He goes on to try and establish a theory of history, a general account of how social relations change over time, called historical materialism. This is embodied in the phrase from the Communist Manifesto, "the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Maybe, maybe not. The point is here not to buy into historical materialism, only to note the contingency of the social, that it's not a natural fact, that it changes, quite radically. Second, this emphasis on social relations and the different forms they can take also plays out in dealing with the psyche. I just want to indicate one other model of the machinery of the mind, the way in which the psyche is formed in relation with the world, and that is the model of Daniel Stern. I

want to mention Sterns model because it is used by Felix Guattari, who I will be looking at in the next session.

Stern proposes four different forms of the self, each of which 'layers' upon the other. Instead of a single narrative development, as in Freud, governed by a dynamic of domestication, Stern suggests a gradual complication of what it means to 'have a self'. These four layers are as follows:

- The sense of an emergent self, which forms from birth to age two months (continuity)
- The sense of a core self, which forms between the ages of two and six months (subjective perspective)
- The sense of a subjective self, which forms between seven and fifteen months (intersubjective)
- The sense of a verbal self, developing from 2 years onwards (language acquisition, abstraction, and narration)

What's interesting about Sterns model is that it gives a different way of thinking about the machinery of the mind. In each new layer, more complex relations with the social world are available, yet each 'layer' remains and continues.

Stern develops this model in his book The interpersonal world of the infant and develops it further from this initial model in a revision where he adds two more layers. Now what's important is not the details of Sterns' theories, which we can look at in more detail later if we want to. What's important is the way in which this model still places centrally the relation to the social but displaces the curious domestic drama of the taming of the id. What also matters, returning to the remarks at the beginning of today's session, is the way in which this model 'speaks to us'.

The complexification and multi-layered set of dynamics that Stern suggests are things that speak to us, more than much of the domestic drama of Freud. It's models like these that we pick up and run with when we begin to think in terms of one-to-one, group and community relations as 'modes' in which we encounter and respond to the world, something I mentioned in the first session, and which is part of the second and third sections of the book.

## **Session 4 – 14th June 2021 – On Guattari**

*AI Summary: The text discusses the concept of the "abstract machine" as it relates to the philosophy of Guattari's schizoanalysis. The abstract machine is seen as the nucleus of an "enunciative assemblage," which is a space of expression that produces a context. The abstract machine allows for a dynamic understanding of context, and can be applied to various expressive materials, including language, technology, and aesthetics. The text also discusses the relationship between subject and object in the context of enunciative assemblages, and how the production of subjectivity can be thought of in terms of machinic processes.*

In many ways the project is best understood as being located within schizoanalysis, in fact, the self-description we offer is that we're thinking a Fanonian Schizoanalysis, one where the wretched of the earth are thought entwined with the wretched earth, one where the voices of the revolutionary in Fanon or Guattari are in chorus, resonant and vibrant. There is still the question that has been raised, of what difference does this make. What difference does thinking make, particularly when the mode of thinking is one in which the rational intellect is no longer master. Part of the answer comes from the idea of abstract machines.

In the first chapter of Guattari's Chaosmosis - an ethico-aesthetic paradigm, it's made clear that the idea of an abstract machine derives from a "brilliant intuition" from the linguist Hjelmslev (p23). It's also clear that the role of the abstract machine as found in linguistics is to be expanded, pushed out beyond the domain of language into the "extra-linguistic, non-human, biological, technological, aesthetic, etc" (p24). Guattari continues:

The problem of the enunciative assemblage would then no longer be specific to a semiotic register but would traverse an ensemble of heterogeneous expressive materials. Thus, a transversality between enunciative substances which can be, on one hand, linguistic, but on the other, of a machinic order, developing from 'non-semiotically formed matter', to use another of Hjelmslev's expressions.

These couple of sentences immediately drop us into the strange world of Guattari's schizoanalytic cartographies, where there is this intense jargon or complexity, where amidst a swirl of concepts, connections and strange words, a strange dynamic can be sensed, one in which the world itself speaks, or something like that.

Let's just work through this passage. 'The problem of the enunciative assemblage' - let's begin there. To enunciate, to speak well, to enunciate your words.

Think here of the way an accent is so often a component of speech. Or think of the mouth, its formation and function, the throat, the lungs, the diaphragm. Breath and breathing. Rhythm, connotation, association. Or power, a judge handing down a sentence, a word within a specific frame of power - "Detention!" shouts the teacher. Or the famous example of someone shouting "Fire!" - it makes a difference when it's in a crowded cinema, or perhaps when it's on a firing line, as the enemy approaches.

The 'problem of the enunciative assemblage' is basically the problem of how that which speaks can do what it does. The functioning of the enunciative assemblage - how it learns to do what it does, how the functions 'operate' in practice, how we work out what 'minor components' make up the 'major assemblage'. All these questions, and more, form 'the problem of the enunciative assemblage'.

Within Guattari's account in the first chapter of Chaosmosis, he's specifically looking at the relation between subject and object, very traditional philosophical territory in many ways, so in large measure, the problem of the enunciative assemblage is approached via the ways in which the relation of an object to a subject develops. This is also where we find Guattari's emphasis on 'the productions of subjectivity' and it can be easy to slip back into the human a little too quickly at this point. So, a word of caution - the schizoanalytic framework takes language to be only one situation within a wider context of non-linguistic enunciative assemblages.

Guattari again, slightly earlier in the passage just cited:

"...we would like to resituate semiology within the scope of an expanded, machinic conception which would free us from a simple linguistic opposition between Expression / Content and allow us to integrate into enunciative assemblages an indefinite number of substances of Expression, such as biological codings or organisational forms belonging to the *socius*." (ibid)

Notice the way that the desire in this passage is to be 'freed up', via the concept of machines, the 'machinic conception'. The strategic argument here arises from the aim of 'freeing' a way of understanding language from a 'simple linguistic opposition'.

Why and How? These two issues are distinct, but the abstract machine is part of the How...

Before we get onto more details of this 'how', we should first pay attention to the 'why'.

Here the guiding question is something like, who is speaking? The way in which this question should be heard is important, however. It should be contrasted, or at least thought in tension with, the question 'what is speaking'?

'What is speaking', for example, might enable us to see that there are other forces at work in expression - forces such as the unconscious, or forces such as the racialised value system of colonialism. For example, might we say that in Fanon, what is speaking in 'the black man's experience', as he describes it in *Black Skin, White Masks*, is both racism, in other words the value system of racism, in which the black man is inferior and the resistance to that value system that expresses something named as human. Two different drives or dynamics in tension.

But who is speaking? This is Fanon himself. Not some structure, not some training, nor even some biography, but nonetheless Fanon is who speaks here. Or part of Fanon, at the very least.

Who is speaking?

There's a key formula that can be found all over the place when it comes to psychoanalysis, and it goes something like this: the subject of psychoanalysis is the subject of transference.

Let's think, for a moment, about that analytical model of the unconscious drive. There is, in Freud, a basic tension between id and ego that I described last week as a kind of 'domestication' model. Unruly, free energy organised into a coherency over time by its relations with the self-conscious ego. This is a kind of self-organising process, no strict architect at hand, rather a set of major factors and their interactions. Id, ego, pleasure, sociality. Self-organisation takes place, subjects form personalities if you like, but within a system of effectively pre-established factors. We assume certain things, the free energy of the id for example, or the restrictive nature of the social, and then work out our 'causal narrative' from these factors. Accidental factors, trauma for example, impact as something like 'external forces' and so we have quite a rich set of characters to form a story with. The idiosyncrasies of the individual can be accommodated as 'tones' or 'colours' within a basic plotline. Yet the plotline must be assumed. The story is already told, just not the details of the moments.

So, in the process of analysis, what is speaking is less the details, the manifest content that we encounter in the words, actions, emotions of an individual, more the plot point of the story itself, the latent content. Transference is the process by which the conversation in the analysis is recognised as expressing not just the people sitting in the room but the characters that accompany the individuals. The past. The story so far. Transference is the moment when the refrain from another character is expressed in the words or actions of the therapist. In more Jungian language we might find the sense of projection and archetype, and there's a sense in which transference and projection are trying to think something similar. Often these 'transferential relations' are encountered through feeling - "I feel like this is what my mother says".

What speaks, then? What speaks, for psychoanalysis, is the past, the way body and thought connected, the way a word or object was felt. The past over-codes the present and future. What speaks is the past, not the future.

How would we even be able to hear the future?

Perhaps this speaks to the 'why' of the abstract machine.

The abstract machine is the core of an assemblage, its nuclei. Guattari often compares abstract machines with Universals, or with Abstractions. Yet the comparison is disjunctive, one of comparison and distinction. The abstract machine is different from the Universal or the Abstraction in that it offers an open, rather than a closed, form of consistency.

This is no doubt an odd phrase, a form of consistency, but for now let's just think of this in terms of something like 'that which enables us to take an object as an object'. Out of the various elements and moments that make up a tree, for example, there is some kind of consistency that brings them together as the tree, like this tree. This binding together, this is a coming to consistency, a coming together or a being taken together. If we're thinking of trees, or tables (famously), we might talk about an Idea or Form or even a Concept of the tree, some abstraction that operates as a way of bringing together various specific things.

Now, the abstraction or Universal has been a long-standing strategy in philosophy to understand difference and diversity alongside sameness and unity. Traditionally we have those who think such things as Universals exist and those who think that they don't and that it's all in a name, one of the reasons the opponents of Universals are called Nominalists. The disagreement is around the question of whether Universals exist or not. Are they needed? Are they, as it were, "out there"? For the Universalist, the problem is one of explaining where this "out there" is. They can explain how we bind things together, making a unity out of diversity with abstraction, but they must assume something like a special realm of Universals - and mostly they don't want to go fully Platonist and declare that there's a realm of Forms, eternal and shining bright. On the other hand, the Nominalist doesn't need a special realm of abstractions that we have access to, they can rest on the fact that we just happen to call some things by the same name. The problem then is that these names are arbitrarily applied. We've no real grounds other than habit for thinking that there's a consistency between various things we think of as trees. In both cases, however, there's an inbuilt passivity here. We either recognise universals that already exist, or we submit to habits of naming things, habits that already exist. The past dominates the present. The form of consistency is thus a mode of passivity.

This is the why of the abstract machine - to produce an open form of consistency as opposed to a closed form.

One of the reasons for this openness is that the abstract machine organises the past as much as the future. This means that something like retroactive causation is being suggested, but that brings with it a whole bunch of problems. Let's avoid this for the time being. Instead, let's look a little at the 'how' of the abstract machine.

If the 'why' is that we have an open form of consistency rather than a closed (and we might want to explore in more details why we want an open form of consistency) then the 'how' is that the abstract machine produces consistency without causality and it does so, in part, because causality arises from consistency.

Consistency arises from a binding together of forms. This why Guattari was so fascinated, I think, with the way Hjelmslev had his four concepts - expression/content and substance/form. It meant that, at some point, there was a common formal moment that could be posed as the moment of constitutive consistency of both a form of content and a form of expression that produced substances (substances of expression and substances of content). This common productive space of forms - or rather of consistencies - is what's also embraced in Freud in terms of desire and in Marx in terms of labour.

## Session 5 – 28th June 2021 - The Threefold

*AI Summary: The text discusses the concept of the "abstract machine" and how it relates to the production of context. It argues that the abstract machine is the nucleus of an "enunciative assemblage," which is a space of expression that produces a context. The abstract machine allows for a dynamic understanding of context, as opposed to seeing it as a given fact. The text also discusses the importance of enunciation, rather than meaning, in the production of context, and gives the example of the phrase "I can't breathe" as a refrain that spreads and produces consistency across different contexts.*

I want to recap a little the talk of the abstract machine. Don't panic. The philosopher has a way of making us panic when they mention abstraction, the abstract often feels like a strange test. A weirdness. Something out of the everyday. There is something strange in the very act of philosophy that is closely connected to abstraction, to the capacity to abstract.

Anyway, let's just recap a little. The abstract machine is the name given to the nuclei of an enunciative assemblage. An enunciative assemblage is a name given to a particular space of expression, the enunciative assemblage is the production of a context. We encounter an enunciative assemblage each time we encounter a context. What these concepts are doing, therefore, is giving us the machinery of production. They can enable us to take something that we understand and use in everyday practise - a concept like 'context' - and enable us to begin to think about exactly what's involved in a context, how it develops, how it is constituted. They enable us to give dynamism to our thinking of context so that we are not trapped in the result and can instead begin to think about how a particular situation comes about.

Marx talked about the importance of such a process, it's a key part of his methodology. One of the ways he put it was to say that we cannot tell from the taste of the wheat how it was produced. In other words, we cannot tell from the experience of something how that experience came about. If we stop with the experience, stick with it, then the tendency is to become passive in the face of 'the given'. The experience is taken to be something like a fact - a given - and how we are given a particular fact is lost, forgotten. This is one of the differences between something like schizoanalysis and phenomenology for example. In phenomenology, we take the experience, the given, as it is and explore it, examine it, trying to track the forms of that experience. What we don't usually do - I say usually, because there are some key tensions in phenomenology around this point - what we don't usually do is focus on the genesis of the experience, on how it came about.

The other element of the concept of the enunciative assemblage is that it's not derived from meaning processes, it's not about what we mean. Often our encounter with the concept of context is one in which meanings are framed by their context. Remember the idea mentioned in an earlier session, about the strategy of escaping language. This is another key feature, this strategy of not getting trapped in language. So, this is a big part of why we might want to talk of enunciation rather than meaning. Still, it has strange connotations in English, this word enunciation. It reminds me of being told to speak properly, of issues with accents and speech differences. There's a normativity, in other words, a kind of moral order, attached to the idea of enunciation that I don't think is totally appropriate, nor is it a big feature of the way in which Guattari uses the concept, so this seems like it might be a connotation that derives from translation. What's more important is that enunciation refers to the way in which an expression connects what we might call a sender and a recipient. It's an act, not a meaning, in that sense. So, the enunciative assemblage is more than just context, it's also the dynamics of relation, the way in which the expression is operating.

An example, central to our project - the phrase 'I can't breathe'. Let's call this a particle or element of expression. It's expressed in a variety of contexts, but the form of any context in which it is expressed is one of suffocation. It becomes, in that sense, something like a refrain of suffocation, or perhaps more precisely, a refrain of the form of suffocation. It becomes a refrain as it spreads, as it becomes echoed, as it develops something like a life of its own. As it becomes a refrain, as it becomes something in the air, it begins to produce a form of consistency and at that point it begins to operate as an abstract machine, bringing disparate moments of life together in a consistency that suggests a wider process. Trying to encounter that process is pretty much what we began with when we started with that phrase, 'I can't breathe'. In trying to encounter and think this form of suffocation expressed in the elementary expressive particle encountered in the refrain 'I can't breathe', the specific form is crucial but more importantly that which isn't quite so specifiable, but which surrounds it is what's difficult to think.

The attempt is to think about the production of consistency. It involves a gamble, a speculative moment. Maybe the best way of understanding this is to ask about which context matters when we encounter a situation of the world. It's clear, for example, that Eric Garner's death takes place within the context of white supremacy, and how this has developed in the institutions of authority and control within the United States. The history of policing in the US, tied up as it was with the control of slaves and then with the maintenance of racial segregation, is plainly the central immediate political context of Eric Garner's death. It remains the context of further ongoing deaths, including that of George Floyd more recently. So, to begin from that incident and then go somewhere else, other than policing, is perhaps odd. In doing so we don't want to deny that context at all. However, what we wanted to do was feel a connection that was offered in that phrase, that refrain, of 'I can't breathe'. That connection was with a form of suffocation, a form expressed in Eric Garner's killing but that doesn't stop there, nor begin there.

This was the gamble in many ways, to connect the form of suffocation found at this moment with the ongoing climate crisis that we faced. And behind that with the sense of suffocation that might be sensed as part of a more general dynamic. In particular, the form of suffocation is not natural, it rather involves the imposition of force, what we refer to in the text as the chokehold, and imposition of force that has been naturalised, which has come to seem normal.

Fanon is famously quoted as saying that when we revolt it is because we cannot breathe. "We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we cannot breathe". As the refrain of 'I can't breathe' spread it was clear in so many ways that there was a resonance with air pollution, with the climate crisis, but also with being overwhelmed, a sense of drowning or rather, and this is a crucial difference, with being drowned. Deliberately. This is what we call the 'deliberate disaster'. Here we begin to shift the tone in which the refrain might be heard.

If I fall off a boat, I cannot swim and then I drown it is, of course, clear that I cannot breathe. Yet this is quite distinct from if I am pushed off the boat, and different again from a situation in which someone, or something, is holding my head underwater. It's this last sense that we feel is vital. This is not an accident, a natural disaster, rather it's a deliberate disaster - but one in which there is no simple subject doing the deliberation. Rather, and confusingly, there is something like a natural process taking place which is forcing our heads underwater, but this natural process isn't natural. Just as we are often called upon by Marxists to recognise the way in which capitalism presents as a natural process, and as such called upon to resist it in some small measure by trying to denaturalise it as a form of political economy, so too the civilizational process in which we are currently being drowned is not a natural process. There has been an attempt to recognise that process by ascribing it to enlightenment thought, or to instrumental reason, or to some other kind of thinking process,



but such attempts rest on the idea that it's a way of thinking that's at fault. This seems to be only a very small part of the story. It's undoubtedly true that a way of thinking develops from the enlightenment that codifies a particular image of the human, of reason and of that which is to be expelled or denied. This way of thinking is also part of the background to Fanon's attempt to think a different human, thinking that is radically developed by Sylvia Wynter in quite wonderful ways. Yet the emphasis on ways of thinking can too easily let ways of life slip away. Trying to retain multiple different dynamics as they weave together, reinforce, or resist each other and together constitute the braided reality of the Earth, this is what we want to do through the strategy of wrenching, bringing together in our thinking both the wretched of the earth (to use Fanon's phrase) and the wretched earth.

So, this refrain - I cannot breathe - is taken as an abstract machine, the nuclei of an enunciative assemblage that we call 'the Earth'. In it, we strategically connect incidents of institutional racist violence with a process of deliberate disaster encountered in the climate crisis. In doing so we try to learn lessons from the struggle against an anthropomorphic mode of thinking, to feel our way into some sense of the contemporary processes, the flows of desire to use a schizoanalytic phrase. Here we find Fanon and schizoanalysis combine to offer a series of vital lessons.

Fanon brings to the fore the experience of territory under colonisation, both physically and psychologically, or more accurately, both materially and existentially. Schizoanalysis brings to the fore the processes of production and, perhaps most importantly, of anti-production. Resistances, frictions, dynamics that reverse and repress. Both share a relationship to capitalism as, in some sense, the basic name of the process that dominates the flows of desire across the Earth. At the heart of this, as a kind of bad uncle, lies Freud and the dynamics of repression, dynamics that are immanent to the flows of desire rather than imposed from outside. The fascist within.

Colonisation and decolonisation, flows of desiring production and anti-production and an immanent dynamic of repression. We bring these moments of conceptual production together around the refrain, I cannot breathe, to try and re-organise the consistency that surrounds this expression. This is, in many ways, what the Breath text is trying to do, an attempt to encounter the consistency of the Earth as we live it in this time, at this moment, in this place. This place we call home, where we find ourselves so often homeless, this place of the play of the familiar and the strange.

The first responses to this thinking were mixed and perhaps rightly so. The mode of expression of that first text brings with it its own limitations. It is playfully building on the use of dates from A Thousand Plateaus, avoiding academic interpretation in favour of declaration, and trying to take sides in what seems clearly to be a conflict, avoiding any sense of a neutral 'universal thought'. Crucially, however, it is angry, upset, and expressive of that and as such it's one moment in a longer dialogue. After the deluge...

### *The threefold*

So, another moment appears. After attempting to articulate a consistency, what Guattari would perhaps have called an 'ethico-aesthetic' sense, the next moment is to move, to think through that consistency, not to simply stop with it facing us down, like a tidal wave about to crash. From within this initial Breath text, we found our conversations of how to move kept coming around to this figure of the threefold set of relations that we call the one-to-one, the group and the community. There are only a few moments in the text that indicate this development, so it might appear at first like a jump, a leap, but it's consistent with the ethico-aesthetic consistency that developed, the rejection of interpretation and the aim to mobilise desires, affects, senses and sensations. This aim to

mobilise desire is an attempt to respond to the ways in which our desires are already mobilised, constantly, and yet in a way that often only adds to our sense of suffocation. The World offers us a constant stream of inductions to anger, a dynamic that has increased as social media spreads, no doubt because anger offers engagement and activates the desires, engages the click that the machine tracks. The data tracking machines need an index of desire, an index or marker that can be registered or tracked, so the 'like' button develops, the 'share' button and a whole variety of ways to register clicks, those momentary engagements of desire with the representation that is offered to us in the form of the World. There's nothing more anathema to the data tracking machine than indifference. Yet indifference can only offer a momentary respite, precisely because there is in the flows of capitalism an incapacity to leave us alone. It cannot allow escape, it cannot allow another world to develop that it lets alone, not because of any moral dislike but because capital is driven by the flow to transform everything into a commodity, to make everything subject to exchange value. To paraphrase the old proverb, capitalism puts a price on everything and knows the value of nothing - and that 'everything' and 'nothing' are not metaphorical. It's an overwhelming process, which in large measure why the dominant affect it engenders increasingly becomes one of suffocation.

This framework offers us a way to begin to diagram the braided flows of desire that we try to bring into consistency around that refrain of 'I cannot breathe' - the flows of desire of colonisation and decolonisation, production and anti-production, and immanent self-generated repression. Again, as an abstract machine, there is a kind of refrain - in this case, the one-to-one, the group and the community. A triplicity, a threefold. These threes keep re-appearing. Perhaps this is the sorcerer's effect, or the psychoanalysts, or maybe even some curious effect of adding Fanon into the set of names so that it's no longer Deleuze and Guattari but now Fanon and Deleuze and Guattari ...and and and. The connections come through the writing, the thinking comes through the conversations and the writing - not before. So, whilst we write, it also writes, whilst we talk, it also talks - this it, this Earth, this life we are, we are not the privileged source of expression and in fact the more the Earth speaks the closer perhaps to the sense of being able to hear something. In every conversation, every attempt to think, every attempt to write or express there must be these momentary phrases, these particles of expression that are emitted not by a mind or a person but by an enunciative assemblage itself.

The threefold, thus, comes into play, offering a way to move. It develops from a thought about Fanon, about the different elements of his expression, the different modes, or moments in his texts. The angry revolutionary, the furious man encountering the racist colonialist, but also the lover, the sensual partner, the one whose skin is alive to the touch. And also, the thinker, the philosopher. And also, the doctor, the scientist, the psychiatrist aware of their complicity, encountering their complicity as part of an institutional failure of care that they must resign from. So, the threefold begins with thinking about these moments, moments that are first encountered in this doubling of experience expressed in the book Black Skins, White Masks. The doubled mode of existence that had already been noted by W.E.B. DuBois in his work on the 'doubled consciousness' of the black experience in the United States, the experience of an internal conflict within the colonised.

The first moment, of the one-to-one, is found in Fanon's discussions of love, in the move from mask to skin, in those relations of expanded capacity in which this one enables that one. This is the experience of love. The mode of relation here is encountered in psychotherapy, mobilised, and reorganised, but it's also encountered in sorcery, in devotional or dedicative work. In the revolutionary, this moment of the one-to-one is perhaps most encountered in the counter-revolutionary, in the moments in which the enemy is no longer human. This we called the movement from mask to skin - from role, image, representation, to intimacy, connection, affection.

Then comes the group, the movement we called the movement from skin to mask, that role in the group, the way we're seen, but more crucially perhaps the collective body, well beyond the human - the pack, the swarm, the gang, the moment of what's been called 'strategic identity'.

Then the third, the community, the place where these two dynamics weave together to produce demographics, ecologies, molarities.

Each of these moments is something like a form of relation. Together they are a generalised diagram of such forms of relation, constituting something like a 'model of the world' - cartography, to use Guattari's phrase - that is not aimed at accurately representing anything, but which is rather aimed at preventing forgetfulness. It's not that this threefold model is, as it were, the way the world is - rather if in each moment of analysis, we remember these three modes of relation, then our senses of the world are multiplied by thinking in each of these modes, then perhaps we can learn to remember the Earth.

*The rewired World, and the specific problem of capitalism.*

At one point in the Breath text (in section 8) we declare that "revolution is as simple and complex as this, new ways of organising one to one, group and community relationships and the ways of connecting overlap, producing unforeseen assemblages" (Breath, p.64). This is not a prescription for a future, or rather, it is a prescription but one that arises from a description. In other words, this is a way of understanding what has happened to the World to understand how another World can develop. To use an awful phrase that abounds in some social or political theory, this is a 'theory of change', of how change takes place, change that we might describe as revolutionary. For it must be remembered that capitalism was a revolutionary change, the revolution took place, and we live in its aftermath now. It was, of course, not the revolution of the wretched of the earth or the wretched earth, it was the revolution of the modes of relation that occurred as a particular process took hold. That process mobilised and colonised flows of desire, gradually producing transformations in the modes of relation of the Earth. It rewired the Freudian Spaceship, which is comprised of these modes of relation, these various flows of desire. Think of the advent of capitalism as a kind of recombination, a rewriting, a re-organisation. A viral epidemic, and one that has now spread throughout the body, slowly creeping up the limbs until it begins to fill the airways and the mouth, and the lungs and we begin to choke, producing the expressions of resistance we hear each time we encounter the refrain 'I cannot breathe'.

For Guattari, this rewiring occurs through a process of identity that is distinct from, and which subordinates a process he calls 'singularization'. He suggests that "identity is what causes singularity to pass from different ways of existing to a single identifiable frame of reference" (Molecular Revolution in Brazil, p.94). He goes on to offer a description of what he means by singularization:

What I call processes of singularization—simply being able to live or to survive in a particular place, at a particular time, and to be ourselves—has nothing to do with identity (things such as: my name is Félix Guattari, and I am here). It has to do with the way in which, in principle, all the elements that constitute the ego function are articulated; in other words, with how we feel, how we breathe, how we want to speak or don't want to, being here or going away. (emphasis added, *ibid* p.94-95)

The distinction between identity and singularity rests on this way of organising our relation to the world within either a single frame of reference or multiple elements of constitution. The single frame of reference, the uniform, control, has its roots far deeper than in capitalism. The State, the monotheistic God, the Platonic 'Good' - all these express this singular frame of reference - and the

attempt to impose it is the rewiring of the singularities of life into one great big consistency. On the one hand, this process can be seen as material control. When William the Conqueror colonises this land, he imposes control through those huge Norman castles and his militarized nobility, but also - fundamentally - through marking a single frame of reference for productivity, the Domesday Book, in which each productive singularity across the land is literally listed in a 'single identifiable frame of reference'. On the other hand, this process is existential, marking us as members of a single nation-state, with a single head, the one that wears the Crown, again a 'single identifiable frame of reference'. So, the process of identity rewriting singularity is not a process confined to capitalism, if anything it's a description of a more general dynamic of the human socius, or more specifically of what Guattari called the "productions of subjectivity". Yet what must be remembered is that these processes only take place as territories overlap and press on each other. There is no singular space of the World - or rather, there is no necessarily singular space of the World. There have been and will be many Worlds, even if there is still only one Planet.

As the Normans impose their World on the Anglo-Saxons, they do so through spatial domination, through the occupation and dominance of territory. The territories overlap, and conflict - and one response, one solution to the territorial conflict is to impose a single identifiable frame of reference. The difficulty is that in this image we can see the territory. We can mark the space. We can understand this movement of imposition, control, change. This is a difficulty because it is too easy, too visual, too representational. It is too easy to think of this as the way in which rewiring takes places, as the way in which change from one mode of relation to another occurs. It's archaic and speaks to a previous Earth, one in which that Earth was a limit to the human, in which it dominated us but as a background, in the way the weather dominates us but as a background, as a rhythm of production and existence. That Earth still contained many Worlds. One territory might be a site of conflict and domination between different Worlds, but the Earth itself sat and breathed in and out as the rhythms of the planetary movement ran through the year.

What occurs with the advent of capitalism is something more generalised. Rather than territorial conflict, rather than conflictual territorialisation, we begin to see radical deterritorialisation. This is the claim of schizoanalysis. The rewiring begins not as territories overlap but as new territories are integrated into a new logic, a new value system, one that is not tied to any specific territory, but which rips up all ways of doing things - those "singularisations" - and begins to mark them all under a new "single identifiable frame of reference". Capitalist value production refers to no head of government, no Crown or dictator, no community or place, it refers only to itself, in a self-reinforcing dynamic that produces a new kind of territory, an abstract territory, one that lays over all the Earth, no longer limited by the seasons as it has no temporal rhythms. Every day is just another day. Yet the Earth is still underneath this, still the great source of productive forces and desires, still the great rhythm. Guattari's conflictual dynamic between identity and singularity is focused on the way in which subjectivities are produced, human subjectivities, and yet the singularization/identity tension is also an interesting way to think about the tension between the Earth and Capitalism. The Earth is the great singularization process, Capital the great identity process, and as the monoculture of capital reached global densities the Earth began to be slowly choked. And we live now in the time of the last breath.

It's the abstract nature of this process that is vital to grasp if we are to be able to break the chokehold. It's for this reason that something like a concept of abstract machines is useful, it forces us to try to grasp the peculiar process that is capitalism. If we can begin to encounter the Earth as a singularization, we might begin to be able to hear it. More importantly perhaps we might be able to begin the process of cultivating singularization beyond the human. It is, moreover, as part of a

process of cultivating singularization that we think about the threefold modes of relation. Remember that description Guattari gives of singularization - being able to live or survive in a particular place, at a particular time, and be ourselves. He's focused very much on the human here, but the need for the Earth to live, to survive, in a particular place, at a particular time - even to "be itself", as it were, is a condition of the production of subjectivities.

The way in which the threefold could operate here is to take the Earth - in all its elements, all the flora, fauna and ecosystemic structure - as comprised just as much of the various modes of relation as the human socius, indeed, to reconfigure the socius as necessarily including all those non-human elements.

It might seem that we've come a long way from Eric Garner's killing to talk about rethinking our relation to the Earth. It may be too far, the connection may be tenuous - or, just perhaps, it might be a way to develop the "ethico-aesthetic" frame we need - the 'way of feeling' that the rewiring that will need to have in order take place, to develop the cultivation of singularization. This 'way of feeling' is like rewiring our intuitions, reorganising our instincts if you like, so that those basic intuitive, unthinking habits of living can escape Capitals capture of our drives.

## **Session 6 – 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021 - Dreamspace**

*AI Summary: The text discusses the concept of necessity in philosophy and how it relates to freedom. It argues that necessity is often associated with reason, and that this association can lead to a "compulsion to comply" with the necessities of reason. The text also discusses the role of poetics in creating new necessities through association, rather than simply recognizing pre-existing ones. It suggests that this allows for a different understanding of freedom, one that is not tied to compliance with the necessities of reason.*

Philosophy contains within its methodology a particularly potent desire, located often around the idea of necessity. Necessity, for Marx is in relationship to freedom, in a kind of inverse relation. For Marx the realm of freedom begins where the realm of necessity ends, which is in many ways in sharp contrast to philosophy, which often appears to present necessity as a kind of achievement of the intellect.

For example, it is common to find a distinction within philosophy between something contingent and something necessary, let's say between two types of linguistic proposition. On the one hand a contingent proposition - it's raining outside, I'm 5 foot 10 inches tall, I have a beard - all propositions about which it may or may not be the case. Facts, we might say, although that's a rather grand name for these trivialities. I have a beard, but it's just a contingent feature, accidental, it could easily be otherwise - I could have a shave, for example, and would no longer have a beard. So, on the one hand, something like a contingent fact, something that could have been otherwise, could be otherwise. That a contingency expresses this sense of 'could be otherwise' easily lends itself to being associated with something like a feeling of freedom. Freedom, as the sense that something is not necessary, as the sense that it - our response to the situation - could be otherwise.

On the other hand, we find that philosophy associates' necessity most often with something that seems peculiarly human, or peculiarly constitutive of the human, with reason itself. Reason as the realm of necessities, discovered in those things that get called 'a priori' statements, things known before experience, from within the logic of logic, immanent to and arising from reason itself, necessities that impose themselves on us, like an overwhelming sensation that possesses us,

occupies us. This realm of reason, this space of thought, with its laws and logics and necessities, somehow becomes the space of freedom - perhaps nowhere more insidiously than in Spinoza. Yet freedom is always a kind of acceptance, or to use a concept that is central to this project, a logic of compliance. Freedom is in this situation a little like the good bourgeois, it is demonstrated in the capacity to comply, in the capacity to be mature enough to know the limits of reason, but also being mature enough to know the limits of the human in the face of reason. For philosophy, freedom is too often bound into this curious compulsion to comply with reasons necessities.

So, these two subterranean senses of freedom exist in philosophy - on the one hand, as a kind of accident or contingency, on the other as a kind of compliance or submission to necessity. These senses aren't opposed, rather they operate as two sides of the same abstract machine, two modes of expression of the same machinery of thought, one in which the connections are to be, as it were, causal, where commitments and entailments run like lines of compulsion from one moment of a syllogism to the next, from one moment of an argument to the next. One of the strange reproaches to philosophy that arises from poetry is with regard this sense of necessity.

Poetics operates without the sense of causal connection that is deeply embedded within philosophical concepts of reason. It can do so because it can deploy the necessities of association, necessities that do not pre-exist the associations. If the necessities pre-existed the association, somehow making the association the result of a prior causal necessity, as though somehow the association between a ship and travel pre-existed the experience of travel on ships, then the association would be little more than the expression of necessary conjunction. We would associate one thing with another because all we are doing is recognising that they are associated by some more fundamental process in the world. By contrast, poetics produces necessities as the result of association, rather than producing associations because of necessities. If the poetics is powerful enough the necessity it produces in its association is necessary enough, sometimes so necessary as to be necessary enough.

Here we can glimpse another sense of freedom, one produced through association, one that is discovered as it is created, one that is in some sense an inversion of Marx in that the realm of necessity begins where the realm of freedom ends. Marx and poetics offer two ways of encountering necessity and freedom quite distinct from philosophy and its rationality. They offer a different abstract machine, one that is not searching for the causal connections, whether they be natural or rational, but one that is producing necessities from freedom, producing associations from creative conjunctions. This abstract machine is operating when the artist is struggling to find the right tone, or the right conjunction of tones. It is also operating when the worker is struggling to find the right tool or machine, the right assemblage. In both cases a kind of creative play of conjunctions isn't absent-minded, isn't idle, rather things are tried out to reach the point at which 'it works'. When 'it' works - and it's useful to remember that the *Id* is just a posh jargon name for 'the it' - then that 'it' that we refer to when we say something like 'it works' is the moment of necessity. The worker and the artist - and here I'm talking about these personae in their non-alienated state, in what might be an idealised image - the worker and the artist aim to make it work. They conjoin, disjoin, and re-join themselves with objects, marks, others, and networks, sometimes reaching momentary metastability where the machine just works, where it hits the sweet spot. Maintaining that balance, that flow, is to encounter the necessity of the machinic, the moment of necessity that flows from the active, creative forces of life.

For Marx, of course, there is a more basic sense to his formula that the realm of freedom begins where the realm of necessity ends, and it's something like, you cannot be free until you're needs are met. Needs, those things which must be met before something else - free activity - can begin, are

notoriously plastic, however. Even the basics such as food are subject to transformation, converted into technics of the body. Without touching on the complex role that food takes within our contemporary Western world, we only must note the roles of feasting and fasting to see how food is not a simple system of meeting needs but operates as a complex system of transformative technics. A transformative technic is perhaps the name of the abstract machine at work in Marx and within poetics, a particular mode of relationship with the world in which repetition and reproduction take second fiddle to difference and production. In both cases the question is more like 'what can the world be' rather than 'what is the world'.

What can the world be? If we talk of a 'new Earth', one that is not dominated and over-coded by the logic of capital and commodity, then this new Earth arises from a dream. Deleuze once offered insight in an aphorism that is relevant here - do not get trapped in the dream of the other. The first trap might be to feel the dream as insubstantial, as having no power, because it cannot be situated within a chain of causal relation that matters. This is a dream of the other, one in which the dream is an accident, a free contingency of surreal associations. Yet this is too crude a concept of the dream. It rends waking and dream states, offering the waking state as one of light, the dream state as one of darkness, operating with a distinction between the two that immediately devalues the dream in the hierarchy of waking and dreaming. We can see this logic at work in the calls to wake up, in the dismissive language of sheeple and zombies and stupidity, a language that speaks from a self-declared position of being awake, of seeing clearly, a language that explains the failure to make a new Earth as rooted in people having been nullified in their desires. The awakened speak of the rest of the Earth as though it were little more than dumb flesh. They prescribe thinking like them as the answer, although they couch it in terms such as 'education', as though self-destructive behaviours were a matter of bad choices and if we only knew more then we'd minimise such failures of reason. This is the dream of the other that has captured us, one in which we think that what we think is right. This is the dream of philosophy in too many of its forms, its major forms, a dream that is undermined by a thought from within no doubt but that still overwhelms thinking too easily.

Rather than being called to awaken, we need rather learn how to dream a necessary freedom and the freedom of necessity. These are the strange dreams of the sorcerer and the psychoanalyst and the revolutionary, the ones that they know are no longer dreams but that speak to them, that let them see that which they cannot see. Intuitions of the imperceptible. Such intuitions arise in the intervals, in the gaps, in the in-betweens and the transports between one space and another, between the face and the mask. Which is not to say between the authentic and the inauthentic, but rather between one mode of relation and another.

Let me just call to memory that refrain, the one-to-one, the group and the community. These three modes of relation, this legend for a map-making process, as a tool of disruption of the dreaming. There is a one-to-one relation to the dream, a relation of intimacy, a relation of the body with the personality, in which the dream is felt, lingering in the morning. Or where the dream returns, time and again, to the same point. Or where the dream is a screen through which the world retains enough to be liveable. I have my dreams and my dreams have me and the intimacy of this is never adequately expressed in any account I give. Yet the group dream also takes me, grips me, perhaps as a kind of shared family, perhaps as a shared game. Then there are the dreams that constitute a community, the imagined communities of nationhood or the communities of strategic identity.

To whom does the dream happen? Where is the dream? If the dreamer is thought as existing in some specific individual - you, me - then do we not have collective dreams? We dream. Whilst it might be a kind of intellectual game to talk about the dreamer being dreamed, and to wonder whether I'm a king dreaming of being a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming of being a king, the

volatility of borders within the dreamspace, the slips and slides, the morphing and mutating, all speak to the power of the associative dimension of production, to an acausal realm of necessities. Nothing is more necessary than the nightmare. Its imposition is precisely this awareness of being trapped in the dream of the other, but whilst that imposition might be most acutely encountered in the nightmare, its smell lingers across the dreamspace. It lingers in the materials of association, the elements and ingredients and already existing associations that make up the dreamspace. Adrift in the ocean of plastic waste, a dreamspace surrounds and sweeps below each island of waking.

William James says somewhere that each of us might be an island, but that what this implies is that our separation at the surface hides a deeper connection beneath the waves. The Earth. This Earth dreams, has a dreamspace, one in which I might dream as easily from the encounter with a viral companion that has taken up residence, as from the compressions and intensities of the singular libidinal economy that organises my body. The dreamspace is not an ideological or symbolic structure because it is primarily a flow of bodies and connections.

Take the example of the women who took up a protest for life at Greenham Common. They camped at the gates of the air force base, offering up bodies of resistance to the machinery of warfare. This singularity arose in part because of nightmares, shared nightmares of nuclear destruction, shared across letters in newspapers, words in conversation and poems of resistance. This shared nightmare took place across a moment and place, taking hold of the dreamers and, in doing so, shifting the tone of the waking world, transforming it, opening it, listening, and responding with a call to life. Maybe it needed a particular moment for the nightmare not to be dismissed as 'mine', as 'my reaction'. Maybe it needed a moment of collective consciousness-raising to prepare the ground, a Women's Liberation Movement to provide a network, and the political conjunction of two governments, the US, and the UK, having to find a particular place within the geographic distance of targets. Maybe it needed all these other factors, but it also needed this sense that the dreamspace spoke, that it was capable to hear, underneath the clamour for peace through strength, a kind of runaway machine and an Earth that spoke against it, that called for another World.

There is perhaps nothing more futile than asking someone who wants something done, something to change, to dream. Let's make a broad and overly sweeping claim here: most of the time the answer to the question 'what has to be done' is obvious. Only rarely is there actually a need to consider seriously various options. Usually, such considerations reveal competing forces at work, with each having its own 'obvious' responses. The difficulty is that this 'obviousness' is like an acquired taste. We have acquired it whether we like it or not. Its impact is felt across our bodies and within our social lives. Yet the obvious - that which is taken to be obvious - is not the result of conscious processes, in fact, it cannot be the result of conscious processes as it's one of the grounds of them. In the face of the obvious, we cannot help it. In the face of the obvious, we can resist and, via training - repetition and practice - shift some of the responses away from a kind of automatism. Yet the obvious itself is like an atmosphere. It is, to adapt Guattari's concept, the grounded content of an ethico-aesthetic domain. Within a particular domain - such as that of this Earth, this Earth in which capital has become the dominant logic - a field of obviousness arises as a kind of dreamspace, an ocean in which islands appear distinct but which still rest on the same Earth. So, the strategy of resisting the obvious that is part of a series of oppressive, divisive habits is a valuable tool. However, the need for a new field of obviousness remains and it's through the dream that the new obvious is to be created. This new field of the obvious is constituted via the associative power of the dream as a series of new necessities. What was once unimaginable now becomes the everyday.

Again, this sounds like a prescription for the future, for the new Earth, that rests on too flimsy a foundation. Where is power, where are the forces of production, the confrontations, and coalitions



that will must occur if this World is to be transformed? Yet it's not a prescription of some wishful thinking, rather it's a description of the capitalist revolution, that revolution we live in the aftermath of. Or rather it's a description of the flows which capital was able to parasitise to become the ubiquitous natural fact that it appears as.

## **Appendices**

### **Brief History of the Project**

**A short text written to introduce the seminar at FUB in May 2021, with minor amendments from the original and discussion with one of the seminar participants.**

This will be a slightly different course from most of my previous ones, in that I will be primarily focused on teaching my own philosophical research rather than merely teaching another philosopher. We will of course be looking at the other philosophers, but they will be part of a dialogue and critique.

The project I have been working on for the last five years and which is the subject of this course is entitled 'The Freudian Spaceship'. It is an attempt to think the contemporary situation of the human, developing a response as well as a possibility. That odd phrasing - 'an attempt to think' - is important here, as it refers to the fact that this is not a finished thought, but rather a still active, developing process. It's not yet failed or succeeded in its goal, it's still an 'attempt', still in the process of being born.

The project is one in collaboration with a psychoanalyst called Eric Harper. Dr Harper works as an analyst with The Site in London and is a lecturer in psychoanalysis at Goldsmiths University. We met at a Deleuze Reading Group in London and since then have been writing and talking together regularly. We share a common background in many ways - working class, politically active, interested in mental health. Eric is from South Africa and was a member of the South African Communist Party and the ANC (African National Congress). He went on to work with sex workers in Africa, with torture victims from apartheid and with the homeless on the streets of London. I grew up in a working-class socialist family, becoming involved in revolutionary politics at an early age and being imprisoned for 'violent disorder' following the 'Poll Tax Riots' of 1990. We both came to academia 'late', in my own case after being released from prison. We both come from 'political' backgrounds, but we have also both gone through a long process of engagement with philosophy and psychoanalysis as necessary complements - perhaps even as necessary 'correctives' - to anything we think of as 'political'.

The project is reaching the point at which we will be publishing work resulting from it. The aim of this course is to present some of the ideas that we will be publishing in the form of a book. It is also an attempt to engage in a process of something like 'collective production'. It's not that uncommon to read in the acknowledgements to a work a dedication to participants in a seminar where the ideas in the work were presented and it's in that spirit that this course is intended. This is a seminar where you will hopefully learn about some of the key ideas and thinkers at the heart of our research, as well as having a crucial and important contribution to the way the final research appears. As such everyone in the seminar will be credited in the acknowledgements and I'm hoping we might even be able to go further than that and be able to develop some co-produced work.

#### *Focus of the project*

As mentioned already, the central research problem is an attempt to think the contemporary situation of the human, developing a response as well as a possibility. It takes as it's starting point or

inspiration the work of schizoanalysis and the work of decolonisation, in terms of how they allow us to understand capitalism. In terms of 'key names' this means the thought of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Deleuze and Guattari and Frantz Fanon. These are the key teachers to whom we have turned and from whom we develop our own work. Just as in any relationship to a teacher, we neither simply agree nor disagree with these figures, rather we find that we can learn from them, sometimes through our disagreement as much as our agreement.

A wide range of other thinkers also play an important role but we also draw on our own selves, our own experience, and our own life. This is an attempt to do philosophy for ourselves, not simply to explain what some other philosophers have said. As such, elements of this will be unpolished, in flux and still to be completed. It's a little unnerving to do such a thing, as we are not able to present a confident, comfortable set of 'answers' and 'arguments', rather what will be presented here is a 'thinking in process'. The invitation is to participate in this process.

In practical terms our project is divided into three parts, called Breath, Body and Earth. We completed the Breath section a couple of years ago and are currently finishing the Body and Earth sections. The Breath section develops our 'response' to the current situation of the human on this planet, specifically beginning from the death of Eric Garner in 2014, whilst the Body and Earth sections develop possibilities for how the human and the planet could be encountered.

It is a harsh and angry text, furious about the world around it and records our attempt to face up to and think about the kind of world in which Eric Garner could be killed in such a brutal way. It locates the role of 'breath' as a fundamental category of this world, specifically linking it to the climate crisis and diagnosing our world as living in a 'time of the last breath'. I am asking participants to read through this text as we go through the course

Alongside this text I will be presenting some of the ideas that we are developing<sup>1</sup>:

- breath as the fundamental drive;
- homelessness as our contemporary way of being on the Earth;
- the intimacy of the connection between planetary and human life;
- the destructive dominance of an abstraction over life, in the form of capitalism;
- and the role of the interval as a condition of thought.

This all sounds like depressingly difficult stuff, but we are trying - fundamentally - to think about the possibility of life (joyous, beautiful, wondrous life). We take inspiration in large part from moments in Fanon and Deleuze & Guattari where they try to open a future world of joy and love from within this moment. Fanon's revolution, for example, begins not with violence but the movement of love. He says: "Today I believe in the possibility of love; that is why I endeavour to trace its imperfections, its perversions". Deleuze and Guattari, in their book *What is Philosophy* says something that we think connects to this - "It may be that believing in this world, this life, becomes our most difficult task, or the task of a mode of existence still to be discovered on our plane of immanence today." In both cases the thinking aims not at making us sad or showing us how terrible things are, rather they aim to make the world something we can believe in again. We aim to find a way to overcome our sadness, to overcome a sense of meaninglessness and nihilism in the face of the world around us. We try and do this through several means. First, we use a model or frame of connections on three levels, that of the 'one to one', the group and the community. Second, we try and think these connections beyond the human. Third, we conceive the breath as fundamental drive as the mode of

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<sup>1</sup> As the seminar progressed the major focus came to be the question of abstraction and life and so most of these topics were left for later.

common existence. Fourth, we explore what we call 'the interval' as the condition of thought. Fifth, we focus on the importance of the dream and dream space as a condition of freedom. We will be exploring what we mean by each of these things as part of the course.

Finally, 'the Freudian Spaceship'. What on earth is this? This is an image or idea that we came up with at the beginning of the project. We imagined the Earth as a Freudian Spaceship - in other words, as the home of life moving through space and which is not just alive, but which is also alive in a Freudian sense, that is, as 'driven', as comprised of drives and an unconscious formed by a moment of primary repression. It's a working tool, one that enables us to try and think beyond our own perspective as human, or animal and to try to 'become'. This use of an image or idea is also a key part of our methodology. We develop three figures ('conceptual personae') that we think offer modes of living that we affirm or that we can learn from - the revolutionary, the sorcerer, and the psychoanalyst. We try to allow our intuitions and a 'poetics' into our thought as a way of allowing our bodies to speak as well as our minds. We pay attention to 'signs' or 'symptoms' and try to assemble them together into something like a 'Body' as a way of thinking that doesn't dismiss rationality and yet doesn't deny the irrational. Above all we try to find a way to respond to the world around us with honesty, knowing all the while that this is never a simple matter, bound up as it is within own social, psychical, and physical needs.

Thankyou for reading this and for thinking about participating in this.

@doowat Sun May 9 at 8:06pm

This was a pleasure to read for several reasons: it flows nicely - its beautifully coherent; it speaks of my own personal doom and gloom moments but also what I intuit might be ways to live more joyous feelings. Thank you.

It contains some intriguing sentences. Firstly, "It may be that believing in this world, this life, becomes our most difficult task, or the task of a mode of existence still to be discovered on our plane of immanence today." Why can't we conceive of several planes of immanence today? Secondly, "the destructive dominance of an abstraction over life, in the form of capitalism." Is today's capitalism in any of its facets of no relevance to the plane of immanence today, and therefore the "task of a mode of existence"?

Mattlee Mon May 10 at 10:22am

Ty @doowat - in terms of the concept of 'plane of immanence', this is one of Deleuze's most famous thoughts but is also one of the confusing ones. I part I think this is because it's used differently in different places. On the one hand Deleuze will talk about 'the plane of immanence'. This is a way of saying something like 'the totality' or 'the universe'. The reason that he will speak of THE 'plane of immanence' instead of using concepts such as totality or universe is I think twofold (1) because 'immanence' is a process of becoming, not a static space or container - immanence is a self-generating process and the 'plane' is a way of describing the self-generated 'totality' of the multiple processes. At this level, when it's described in the definite article, it has an ontological content (i.e.: it's a name for existence). (2) on the other hand, he will refer to A plane of immanence, using an indefinite article. In this case it is something more like a specific context for a particular process.

Now in this case he and Guattari (from What is Philosophy?) are talking about OUR plane of immanence, so following the distinction just made, this might be thought of a something like 'our shared context / framework'. Your question is on the money in many ways, aren't there many of these?

Part of the reason I've been studying decolonial work is that this is one of the things these thinkers bring to the fore, often in terms of the concept of 'man' or the 'human'. They argue something like the following: the human is a concept constituted by an outside, and the colonised are placed in the role of the outside or other. What's interesting in this is to realise the divergence between perspectives depending on where you are placed in this - as a colonised person you are in some strange way placed 'outside' the human, but this is never possible since you still have the lived experience of being human as well, at least in some sense. So, the point there would be something like, if we think of colonisation as 'our plane of immanence', then it contains both colonised and coloniser, and it thus has this kind of self-destructive, inconsistency, this tension, a kind of internal incompatibility. Césaire's discussion of the rise of Nazism expresses this well, I think.

The point here, then, would be that the concept of human is, as it were, 'our plane of immanence' but the content of this plane of immanence cannot be found from one perspective since it is made up of this radical divergence. (I think something analogous is found in the relation between Marx's 'bourgeois / proletarian' divide that is central to the concept of capitalism).

So, the 'several planes of immanence' can exist (A plane), but the different 'perspectives' are also themselves nested or embedded in 'shared' or collective planes (OUR plane), which themselves are (in an ontological sense) nested in a 'totality' of THE plane of immanence.

OK, realised that this is a bit of a long answer...apologies. As to the second question, probably poor phrasing on my part, I think. I meant, in talking of 'an abstraction' that dominates life, to refer to capitalism itself (ie: an abstraction, in the form of capitalism, as distinct, perhaps, from 'an abstraction, in the form of the human'). Not sure if that clarifies.

@doowat Mon May 10 at 6:48pm

Thanks for the helpful clarification. The difference in perspectives between *Anti Oedipus* and *WiP*? is striking - the former articulates, without a note of doubt arising from a question of belief, a realm/plane of intensities which desire invests in a potentially limitless way free from Oedipal blockages, whilst the latter would seem to not include the same plane in its argument - "our plane of immanence" as you gloss it above seems to be populated by social machines/assemblages.

Regarding your Marx argument, what concept analogous to the concept of the human linked to the colonial assemblage is in play in Marx's thought? Civilization? Market society? I ask because I don't think the term "capitalism" had any currency in Marx's time. In other words, what was the concept the bourgeoisie and the proletariat held divergent perspectives on?

I'm going to take a look at Deleuze's essay "Society of Control" to see whether it uses any concepts relating to or analogous to "our plane of immanence".

Mattlee Tue May 11 at 9:50am

Yes, there's definitely some kind of shift from *Anti Oedipus* (AO) to *What is Philosophy?* (WIP) in the work of Deleuze and Guattari. I would want to push back a little on the idea that there is a freedom of desire in AO, as my question would be about how you see re-territorialisation coming in. To my mind the movement of desire in AO is something like 'upsurge/settlement/trace' - so desire never operates in a zone that hasn't already been formed by other desires. Life is messy, as it were, and life lives within life - in other words, there's always contours and shapes and dynamics already existing within which new upsurges and settlements take place, leaving traces. The opposition to Oedipus is an opposition to seeing life as being primarily constrained by one formation (nuclear family dynamics). In contrast AO wants to point to the diversity, plurality of such dynamics.

Regarding the Marx - the concept that proletarian/bourgeois hold different perspectives on is capitalism itself. One of the crucial insights that Marx articulates, I think, is that capitalism is a system that creates these two conflicting interests that are both inherent to it and at the same time incommensurate with each other. Both are needed / constitutive of capitalism but there is no possibility of common interest. There is a radical non-relation between the classes (no possibility of ever coming to agree, in principle - obviously we find 'agreement' in fact in terms of 'class compromise'). Whilst this might seem like a kind of obvious statement about Marx, it is a basic assumption that is put aside, ignored, or denied in almost all political discussion, including within much of the radical movement. Importantly I think that political and social analysis that takes power, domination, or hierarchy as its basic assumption - either by opposing it or upholding it - is distinct from this Marxist notion. Put bluntly, the existence of surplus value in principle prevents or blocks the removal of domination, hierarchy, or inequitable power.

@doowat Tue May 11 at 3:55pm

Thanks again for your helpful response. Your 'upsurge/settlement/trace' is a helpful rephrasing of AO's production - anti-production - recording cycle. Cycles of delirium live within cycles of delirium, as it were.

Agreed - that conflict between worker and boss is hard-wired into capitalism because of the imperative to achieve surplus value should have greater acceptance among analysts.

@doowat Thu May 20 at 4:33pm

You write: One of the crucial insights that Marx articulates, I think, is that capitalism is a system that creates these two conflicting interests that are both inherent to it and at the same time incommensurate with each other.

I think this system/structural view of capitalism leaves out workers' political culture and its role in mediating their response to capitalist working conditions. In many parts of Britain, deference to hierarchy inherited from pre-capitalist political culture, combined with factory owners' paternalism, prevented expressions of class defined conflict for two centuries. The pre-capitalist demand of "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work" often defined workers' interests, one which hardly ever portrayed owners as class enemies and where "class compromise" was on nobody's lips. Of course, this wasn't true in certain industries - railways, transport and coal - where work organization, not just wages, was contested.

Today, workers' views of their interests are much more mediated by their personal contract with the company and the lure of higher pay thru promotion. Today's capitalism, at least in Britain, is no longer solely the meat-grinder of labour of old but employers of intellectual labour who, thru the firms' micro-politics, are encouraged to identify with the firms' values and offered material perks to continue offering their "services". Annual strike rates are at an historic low.

I'm led to conclude that when a growing number of sectors, data processing in particular, don't view workers as use and dispose commodities but as contractual partners or an improvable resource, such is the extent of the convergence of interests that this is no longer capitalism.

@doowat Thu May 20 at 4:53pm

It's a different mode of production whose relationship to existing Fordist capitalism needs to be researched.

## May 2021 FUB seminar course outline

The May 2021 seminar at the Free University Brighton was divided into an initial session introducing the project followed by two parts. The first part was an overview of the Breath text and was structured to include important contextual readings that would help to constitute the space of thought within which the Breath text developed. The second part was developed in conversation with seminar participants as they focused on specific themes or questions. The reading list for the first part is included as a kind of alternative bibliographical note. In the second part we continued to read through the Breath text. Following the scheduled seminars, the sessions continued for another couple of months as a facilitated and public conversation space, recordings of which are again available.

The lectures were recorded and are publicly available online. What follows are the notes, scripts, and transcripts for the lectures. Sessions 1 is a transcript, Session 2 both some notes and a transcript, Session 3, 4, 5 and 6 are scripts.

### *Session 1*

On thinking the world - an introduction to the course

### *Session 2*

Theme: Frantz Fanon (Marx): Sociogeny

#### Readings

- A. TFS Chapter One, Part One -Breath; One - July 14, 2014, Staten Island
- B. Fanon - Introduction, to Black Skins, White Masks, Grove Press, 1967
- C. Gukira, Love in Fanon, <https://gukira.wordpress.com/2012/02/09/love-in-fanon/>
- D. Video clip - Lewis Gordon presents "What Fanon Said", <https://youtu.be/UABksVE5BTQ> (presented at Red Emma's Cafe in the US, 13 June 2015 <https://redemmas.org> )

### *Session3*

Theme: Sigmund Freud (Marx): Drive, Breath, Stern

#### Readings -

- A. TFS Chapter One, Part One -Breath; Two - September 13, 2015, Ali Hoca Point Beach
- B. Freud - Part 1 [The mind and its workings], An outline of psycho-analysis, in Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, Vol.23, pp144-172
- C. Whose drive is it anyway? Barry Watt, Sitegeist, Vol.9: Winter 2013, <http://www.the-site.org.uk/sitegeist/issue-9/whose-drive-is-it-anyway-aristotle-and-freud-on-tragedy-and-trauma/>

#### *Session 4*

Theme: Deleuze and Guattari (Marx): Labour, Desire, Abstraction (Trinity, Marx)<sup>2</sup>

Readings -

- A. TFS Chapter One, Part One -Breath; Three - November 18, 2016, Aleppo
- B. Extract from Anti-Oedipus, Deleuze and Guattari, Athlone Press 1983, pp291-296
- C. Chapter 1, Chaosmosis: an ethico-aesthetic paradigm, Felix Guattari, 1995, pp1-31

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<sup>2</sup> This session ended up focusing almost exclusively on Guattari, for a change it was Deleuze who dropped out of the picture.