

Schizoanalytical Theology: Deleuze and Guattari's Ecological Spirituality and Glissant's Postcolonial Critique

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1. Introduction

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari are a prolific duo in the world of French critical theory. In 1972 they began a two-part series *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* by publishing *Anti-Oedipus*, a polemic against modern psychoanalysis, which shook the foundation of psychiatry and rattled society's conception of desire.¹ In 1980 they published their follow up *A Thousand Plateaus*, a treatise with profound scope, which attempted to lay ruin to nearly every mode of theorizing before it. In between these, they published *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* which established a meta-critique of the very prospect of literature and writing. They finished their project in 1991 with a nostalgic reflection on their works and goals in *What is Philosophy?*

One may assume, based on these successes, that Deleuze and Guattari must have been a "perfect match." Yet, their seemingly seamless ability to work in tandem as co-authors was nothing of the sort. From the beginning Deleuze and Guattari were an unlikely pair, occupying two very different spectrums of French society and thought. Deleuze was raised in the style of an academic, writing books on the history of philosophy ranging from Hume, Spinoza, and Kant to Nietzsche and Bergson. While Guattari was raised in the style of praxis, organizing in the streets as a Marxist and studying with Jacques Lacan to do the everyday work of psychiatry. As François Dosse notes in his biography of the duo, *Intersecting Lives*, they grew up, from childhood, with different goals and backgrounds. Guattari, as a youth, mobilized gangs which made him notorious to his local community (23-24), revealing early on his preference for direct-action based politics. Deleuze, on the other hand, was an astute young academic who spoke highly of the primacy of concepts and theorizing (Dosse 90).

Deleuze and Guattari's correspondence during the period in which they wrote together makes this difference in approach even more evident. While Deleuze, from the beginning, possessed a singular interest in translating their

¹ In 2006 an addendum of sorts was published by Semiotext(e) entitled *The Anti-Oedipus Papers*. It includes various notes, drafts, and journal entries from Guattari recorded during the writing of *Anti-Oedipus*, and provides an underappreciated insight into Guattari's relationships and the development process for his work with Deleuze.



conceptual discussions into theorizing – books, articles, publications – Guattari was unfamiliar with these formats and skeptical of this desire (Dosse 5). Guattari was also deeply indebted to, and involved with, militant groups that shared his skepticism and limited his willingness to partake in such a project; for Guattari, concepts and ideas were at their best when deployed without delay, fermentation, or hesitation (Dosse 5). To make conditions worse, Deleuze demanded solemn work, oftentimes only through letters, and in groups of only one or two when in person, while Guattari, used to sociality, desired a lively group atmosphere (Dosse 7).

This biographical background begins the uncovering of two deeply conflicting observations about Deleuze and Guattari. There is, firstly, an inspirational component that gestures towards the realization of the conditions which make radical theorizing possible. Their theory is given a new depth with the realization that, in many ways, their collaboration exemplified their thesis that possibility lies in interactions across difference. However, there is also, secondly, a contradictory component that exposes the homogeneity of their cultural experience and foreshadows the position their work would come to occupy in the French philosophical tradition. Namely, that despite attempting to champion difference and pluralism, Deleuze and Guattari were markedly confined to their French cultural origins, engaging very little with thinkers outside of Europe, besides Guattari's interest in Japan later in life, including Francophone theorists whose thought provided models for resistance that would be useful for their transgressive project.²

It is in the tension between these two observations that I find the inspiration to engage in an unlikely maneuver with the work of Deleuze and Guattari by putting them into dialogue with, and in the context of, spirituality and ecology. As I will show, the problem of ecological destruction mirrors these observations, requiring radical solutions and theories while also maintaining the input and experiences of those minority voices who are most affected. Thus, in this paper I will argue that Deleuze and Guattari are uniquely situated for a project at the intersection of spirituality, ecology, and the overturning of dominant modes of thinking. Beginning with a speculative reading of Deleuze and Guattari's work to develop a "schizophrenic theology," I will then traverse the various deficiencies of their theories through a dialogue with the postcolonial Francophone theorist Édouard Glissant and conclude with a discussion of the similarities between Guattari and Glissant's views on ecological theory.

² Guattari was greatly interested in Japanese culture and frequently engaged in dialogues with intellectuals, artists, and activists in Japan. The result of these interactions was the book *Machinic Eros: Writings on Japan*. The influence this interest had on his theorizing is, however, largely debatable.



2. Schizophrenic Theology

Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical work becomes embodied in the figure of the schizophrenic. Analogous to Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Deleuze and Guattari's "schizo" functions as a vestibule from which they can speak and explore the material and everyday confines of their thought. Schizophrenia, for them, is a style of transformative becoming characterized by radical openness to affectivity, an inclination towards fabulation, and a continuous desire to transform and reimagine social normativity.³ Deleuze and Guattari describe the praxis of the schizophrenic, the process of deconstructing social parameters, imagining new futures, and exploring affective connections, as "schizoanalysis."

It is through this mouthpiece, the schizophrenic, that Deleuze and Guattari ground their notoriously abstract thought in a more conventional style, making it particularly ripe for studies that hope to derive everyday life-practices from their work. Their fullest expression of the schizophrenic is worth quoting at length:

A schizophrenic out for a walk is a better model than a neurotic lying on the analyst's couch. A breath of fresh air, a relationship with the outside world. Lenz's stroll, for example, as reconstructed by Buchner. This walk outdoors is different from the moments when Lenz finds himself closeted with his pastor, who forces him to situate himself socially, in relationship to the God of established religion, in relationship to his father, to his mother. While taking a stroll outdoors, on the other hand, he is in the mountains, amid falling snowflakes, with other gods or without any gods at all, without a family, without a father or a mother, with nature. "What does my father want? Can he offer me more than that? Impossible. Leave me in peace." Everything is a machine. Celestial machines, the stars or rainbows in the sky, alpine machines — all of them connected to those of his body. The continual whirr of machines. "He thought that it must be a feeling of endless bliss to be in contact with the profound life of every form, to have a soul for rocks, metals, water, and plants, to take into himself, as in a dream, every element of nature, like flowers that breathe with the waxing and waning of the moon." To be a chlorophyll- or a photosynthesis-machine, or at least slip his body into such machines as one part among the others. Lenz has projected himself back to a time before the man-nature dichotomy, before all the co-ordinates based on this fundamental dichotomy have been laid down. He does not live nature as nature, but as a process of production. There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together. Producing-machines, desiring-machines everywhere, schizophrenic machines, all of species life: the self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever (Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus 2*).

³ While certainly aware of medicalized interpretations of schizophrenia, Deleuze and Guattari's schizophrenic cannot be clearly mapped onto a psychiatric definition. They are interested in medical schizophrenia symptoms as an influence in style, but take the term in its original form, *schizēin* (split) and *phren* (mind), as their primary influence.



The most glaring relationship is that of the schizophrenic and his/her connections to the natural world. The schizophrenic considers everything, from the molecular process of photosynthesis, to flowers and rocks, to be imbued with a vitalistic capacity for life and self-organization. Pushing further, the distinction between the actual world, in its touchable and quantifiable grasses, waters, and metals, and the virtual world, with its abstract notions of aesthetics, togetherness, and cosmology, operate and interact together, in tandem expression. A clear example of this mixing is in the descriptions of rainbows and the moon, which despite existing as physical processes or entities are given a virtual tendency and strength to beckon certain inclinations and desires. The opposite of this, a movement from virtual to physical, occurs in the interactions between the body, in its fleshiness and sensation-based experience, and the abstract concept of nature, which the schizophrenic literally feels in the air around him/her. These interactions reveal Deleuze and Guattari's radical ecological thinking, not as an analysis of interactions between objects and persons, but rather as a study of relationships between machines. This focus falls on machines not fueled by oil, coal, or gas, but rather those powered by a quasi-spiritual force known as desire.

In *Gilles Deleuze: From A to Z*, a dialogue between Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, Deleuze describes his and Guattari's conception of desire in terms of a woman: "I don't desire a woman, I also desire a landscape that is enveloped in this woman...As long as I haven't yet unfolded the landscape that envelops her...my desire will not have been attained..." (1:07:33-1:08:35). This commentary highlights that for Deleuze and Guattari desire cannot be conceived of as having a singular object such as this or that person. Rather, desire must be understood as striving towards an aggregate landscape, both actual and virtual, which includes not only the person themselves but the emotions one tends to experience in their presence, the style of clothes they wear, the sound of their voice, and more. Desire, first and foremost, is a complexity, and is certainly not simplistic or formulaic. It is from this observation that Deleuze and Guattari break with traditional conceptions of linear, object-oriented desire, most of which arise through psychoanalysis.

Desire, as conceived of in the realm of psychoanalysis, is a force of repression, often arising due to an absence of the object of one's desire, which can never be fulfilled. In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari conceive of desire as a productive, creative, and generative energy; it is ultimately desire, this abstract, unintelligible force, which ushers forth in us images of possibility, fantasy, and variable realities. It arises like wildfire, out of nowhere, with a sort of vitalistic spirit, abundant in the world rather than internal to the subject, and compels us to explore and create, as a continuous process, motivating itself not towards



some end, or some woman, but rather towards a constantly shifting and compounding aggregation. It is these tendencies that compel Deleuze and Guattari to describe desire as a machine, as it operates as a site of production, transforming different inputs into new outputs. This conception of desire, as I will discuss in the register of religion, engenders both the capacity to engage with the natural world and the ability to understand our motivation and relationships as embedded in a spiritual framework.

The possibility of a non-anthropocentric application of this machinic view of desire becomes clear when contrasted with the Cartesian view of machines in terms of animals. In the Cartesian view, animals are entirely distinct from humans in their operations; because they act without reason and are devoid of a soul, animals are reducible to merely complex machines, called automata (Descartes 281-287), or what Derrida, in his critique of Descartes, calls animal-machines or *animots* (39-51). It is this view of machines, as merely passive receivers of information, that Deleuze and Guattari hope to overturn. Instead, the seemingly machinic is better theorized as alive, possessing a vitalistic character which enables its operation outside of the merely rational, both in terms of human created contraptions and living things. Such an approach invigorates the other-than-human world with the possibilities of volition, self-affirmation, and intrinsic importance, delinking it from a necessary attachment to the merely instrumental functionality imposed by humanity.

With an exploration of desire behind us, we can now explore the religious context of Deleuze and Guattari's description of the schizophrenic. They explain in the above passage that the schizophrenic, in untethering himself/herself from the psychiatrist's couch, may now walk unfettered in the world, and enjoy the free expression of desire, "...with other gods or without any gods at all..." This provides two avenues for understanding the religious experience of the schizophrenic. The schizophrenic could be an atheist, walking alone without any metaphysical entities to guide, bind, or influence him/her. Or, at the other end of the spectrum, the schizophrenic could fraternize with a multiplicity of different gods. For the purposes of sketching a theological argument, I will lay aside the atheistic schizophrenic and explore the theistic schizophrenic, and its connections to an earthly spirituality, instead.⁴

If we are to potentially see the schizophrenic's interactions with desiring-machines as sites of interaction with a plurality of gods, we must first understand, and then expand, what it means to be a god. In the Western canon, largely dominated by Abrahamic religions, God is a singular being of unmatched

⁴ An in-depth discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's thought, particularly the schizophrenic, in terms of atheism can be found in the work of F. LeRon Shultz.



immensity, power, and scope who exercises dominion over all of creation. In short, these religions are strictly monotheistic and transcendent. Yet, such an orthodox conception of God would make little sense in the context of the schizophrenic, as it demands the existence of a singular, omniscient, and transcendent being which limits the potential for a religious practice based in multiplicity, particularity, and grounded becomings.

An unorthodox source for theological commentary, Friedrich Nietzsche, provides insight into a new conception of godliness. Nietzsche states in *The Gay Science*, speaking in the context of the impulse to engage in self-creation, that “The wonderful art and power of creating gods – polytheism – was that through which this drive could discharge itself, purify, perfect and ennoble itself...” (127). Gods, in these terms, take a radically different form than the Platonic, idealistic, preexisting beings that occupy Western dogma. Rather, some gods may be dead, as Nietzsche famously stated, and some yet unborn. In such a framework, we can imagine gods as immanent constructions that are both here, in the now, amongst us, and still yet to come and be brought forth. Supplementary to this, gods need not only be beings, as they have been narrowly conceived in the West for thousands of years, but may instead be relationalities, intensities, concepts, inanimate things, and much more. In addition, this schizophrenic model of divinity, as will be discussed in a later section, begins to produce a framework by which Deleuze and Guattari’s thought may be opened to minority perspectives, particularly on religion, which were previously excluded.

This acceptance of a multiplicity of gods creates a metaphysical conundrum, ripping apart the homogeneous, self-enclosed fabric of the world described in monotheistic religions. It can no longer be claimed that the world is made up of the substance of the singular being known as God (pantheism), or that the world is merely God’s creation or dominion (orthodox theism). Such a metaphysics would be incoherent in the absence of a singular, sovereign God. Thus, I turn to another concept developed by Deleuze and Guattari: the plane of immanence. They describe this plane – a fundamental, monistic substance on which all other expressions operate – as follows:

In any case, there is a pure plane of immanence, univocality, composition, upon which everything is given, upon which unformed elements and materials dance that are distinguished from one another only by their speed and that enter into this or that individuated assemblage depending on their connections, their relations of movement. A fixed plane of life upon which everything stirs, slows down or accelerates (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 255).

This plane operates not as an immovable, static backdrop of all of reality, but rather as a porous, viscous, and vitalistic staging ground for existences both



actual and virtual. It itself is akin to a living, breathing, ecological meshwork, analogous to the planet Earth, or what Deleuze and Guattari call the “New Earth,” but in metaphysical form. The plane of immanence motivates vitalistic impulses that call forth creativity and prosperity, acting as the fertile soil through which machines and subjectivities can burrow, slither, crawl, and explore. To borrow a conceptual framework from Spinoza, this metaphysics postulates there to be a singular substance, in this case conceived of as a vitalistic fabric that beckons expression, from which arises a plethora of modes, in this case conceived of as desiring-machines and/or gods, with whom we interact in our everyday relations and processes.

The implications of these reconceptualizations are immense. This understanding, hereafter referred to as “schizoanalytical theology,” facilitates the recognition of a vast variety of previously destitute concepts, objects, and things, as having intrinsic value. The natural world, the landscape across which all of life necessarily crawls and interacts, with its newly sprouting saplings, budding flowers, roaring rivers, and scampering creatures, is a site of divinity, bustling with a plurality of gods. It holds in it a variety of virtual saints – creativity, friendship, togetherness – all of whom invoke in us a motivation for desiring possibilities that chart forth new, and better, worlds. This theology also asks us to consider not only the gods that we create, but the gods that are created by both other persons, and other things: the squirrel gods, the flower gods, the creativity gods, and so forth.

The last insight to draw from Deleuze and Guattari’s passage on the schizophrenic is regarding institutional religious practices. In the initial passage above they describe the schizophrenic as using his/her walk through nature to escape the demand to be “in relationship to the God of established religion...” Such a rejection of authority, established dogma, and centralized control is a consistent theme throughout Deleuze and Guattari’s work. They note, seemingly in opposition to the project developed here, that ecologically sensitive religions, when developed into stable tenets, rituals, and cultural practices, become totalizing and violent forces. In their view, these religions possess a tendency to compress complexity into narrow categories, taking the wild, chaotic forces of the world, from mountains and fish to affect and relationality, and confining them to processes of the Earth, rather than process that merely interact with the Earth and have a life outside of its territory (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 321-322).

This, I believe, reaches to the heart of the issue of religion and ecology and the power of the schizoanalytical project: religion has lost its ability to evolve. Religion has become a matter of mere reflection, a process of comparing what



one sees to what texts and ancient theologies declare to be correct or proper, all while being ignorant to the commonplace and spontaneous experiences of its practitioners. Doctrinaire reflection may only go so far before it begins to overreach the usefulness of its application to events, and mimesis can only refresh the antiquated so many times before there is a necessity to insert new material into the equation.

Schizoanalytical theology provides a method by which the orthodox confines of religion may be expanded and Deleuze and Guattari's skepticism overcome. This theology is developed on the move, as an errant wandering, rather than kneeling in the church, or through the pious studying of the text of a book. It, in many ways, makes itself up as it goes along, immanently producing its own territories, beliefs, and techniques, allowing a true realization of a religious praxis built for the circumstances of everyday existence. Schizoanalytical theology arises, in the epoch of the ecological crisis, as a way to return us to the path of a fundamentally egalitarian world without stifling its complexity; it is motivated by a radically immanent faith founded in the spirit of desire with its accompanying call for creative expression, interconnection, and mutual appreciation.

3. Problematizing Deleuze and Guattari

There arises a conundrum in utilizing theories that are developed by authors who, in their methodologies and actions, are revealed to have deficiencies in realizing their own project. While in some cases complaints of this type may be dismissed as mere ad hominem, it becomes a more serious concern when the deficiencies affect the composition of the theory itself. Unfortunately, it appears that the thought of Deleuze and Guattari may be subject to this criticism. Despite claiming to have produced a radically egalitarian theory that facilitated plurality and difference, they consistently undermined the capacity for these movements to be made with their thought. While in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari utilized a number of minority concepts and histories to shape their thinking, including the Dogon's (a people notably colonized by the French) cosmological origin story (164-165), indigenous animal spiritualities (126), and Chinese Taoism (157), they reverse these inclusions in their final work *What is Philosophy?* In this concluding book, they engage in a gatekeeping of their thought, constructing a vision of philosophy that is exclusive, curated, and sanitized. Philosophy becomes tied to the "concept," a virtual, speculative, and self-sustaining image of thought, which is used to dismiss wide swathes of critique and cultural nuances. In this view, non-Western constructions such as religions, traditions, and theories, do not meet the standard of a concept and



instead are part of the lower-class of “representations,” which operate as illusionary signifiers that impede immanence (Skafish 15-18).

Such an exclusionary effort, in conjunction with the overwhelmingly French character of Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking which will be explored further below, shows the necessity of interrogating their work from a variety of critical perspectives. If we are truly to use the work of Deleuze and Guattari to confront the ecological crisis then the schizophrenic’s response to difference cannot be a grimace and flight away from the challenges before them but must instead consist of a welcome and embrace. This move requires, then, the introduction of other schizophrenic figures who represent the variety of different perspectives, embodiments, and possibilities that the schizophrenic theologian may occupy. As Skafish says, stressing the need for comparative analysis: “The permanent mobility philosophy acquires from the concept therefore also entails, in principle, its permanent decoloniality: a constitutive inability to arrogate to itself unlimited intellectual authority, and an equally constitutive dependence on other ontological powers” (18).

4. Édouard Glissant, Another Schizophrenic

While a critique from a plurality of perspectives is necessary to truly understand the depth and nuance of the problems in Deleuze and Guattari’s theory, I will isolate and explore a particularly troublesome omission here: the work of postcolonial Francophone theorists. These theorists, with their keen understanding of cross-cultural dynamics and attempts to produce theories compatible with the experience of the colonized, enable a sharp contestation of the assumptions and French cultural context of Deleuze and Guattari.

Édouard Glissant provides a particularly crucial perspective of this type, both biographically and theoretically. Born in the French overseas region of Martinique, Glissant spent much of his life there before leaving for Paris, eventually spending the rest of his life moving between Martinique, France, and the United States. As a result, Glissant occupies a unique theoretical space, dealing with questions of French colonialism, brutality, and violence, while also being greatly influenced by the works of the French intelligentsia such as Bergson, Deleuze, and Guattari, in addition to other characters in European philosophy writ large including Hegel, Nietzsche, and Marx.

The cornerstone of Glissant’s thought is an attempt to construct an ontology, founded in the construction of subjects through socio-cultural interactions in a process he calls “Relation,” which is adaptive to the nuances of the Caribbean experience (Headley 71-72). At the center of this project is the concept of *tout-*



monde, which presents the world as containing a multiplicity of experiences, both human and other-than-human, which continuously interact, destabilizing and shaping one another (Headley 54). This conceptualization is part of an attempt to unsettle Western ontology, which Glissant understands to be constituted by the One, a basis in a foundational event or concept from which all other things derive their existence, in contrast to the immanent All of *tout-monde* (Headley 68-69).

Intuitively, this view reads as extremely similar to the methodology of schizoanalytical theology developed in the first section. The concept of *tout-monde* mirrors the image of an interconnected world, founded in a plane of immanence, which is structured through the constructive processes of machinic desire, affectivity, and spirituality. These processes, operating in a similar way to Glissant's theory of Relation, attempt to undo hierarchical and linear organizations in order to replace them with vertical and chaotic ones, akin to Glissant's attempt to disrupt the One in order to facilitate a movement to the All.

I would argue that this intuition towards similarity is largely correct. Glissant frequently cited, and borrowed, concepts from Deleuze and Guattari, situating his work in the same theoretical niches as their project. Schizoanalytical theology further accentuates these affinities, enabling a combination of Deleuze, Guattari, and Glissant in order to produce a unique cohabitation. Indeed, in the context of ecology and spirituality Glissant describes his project in extremely similar terms to the extrapolation developed here, arguing for a theology possessing a multiplicity of gods, many of whom are embodied in the natural world, which has as its primary aim the reestablishment of deteriorating connections between various becomings. As Valérie Loichot explains: "Glissant's religion is relation in its etymological sense of *re-ligere*, to link again the physical and the spiritual, humans and humans, humans and plants, or ideas and ideas... Glissant's religion, linkage, or relation is unpredictable, dynamic, and also linked to an ecological environment that is incommensurable and incomprehensible" (1024).

However, despite these many similarities, there are clear points of tension with Deleuze and Guattari which arise in a deeper interrogation of the nuances of Glissant's work. I want to explore, and attempt to resolve, two of the largest ones here: Glissant's defenses of identity and historicity.

Beginning with Glissant's theory of identity, he is, seemingly paradoxically, strongly influenced by both Hegel and Deleuze. For Glissant, personal identity is structured around a relationship to the Other, following from the classic Hegelian observation (Headley 80-81). Yet, Glissant, quickly departing from



Hegel, argues that this relationship does not necessitate the negation of the Other, as while identity does indeed require relationality to the Other, that relationship takes the form of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic structure (Headley 73). In this view, rather than constructing the Self through a negative opposition to the traits of the Other, one finds the Self becoming composed through an affirmative relationality to the multiplicity of traits and possibilities inherent in the Other's existence. This produces a modification of both initial influences, accepting the view propagated by Deleuze and Guattari that identity is rhizomatically constructed through an affirmation of difference, while placing a Hegelian constraint which confines the rhizome of identity to the realm of the Other.

Following this, Glissant's view, despite being influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, is quite distinct from the classical reading of their view in which identity exists as a representational schema, limiting expression, which is to be shattered and undermined at every turn (Massumi xi-xiii). Glissant, aware of this difference, forwards a pointed attack at this line of argumentation, arguing that while identity when expressed in particular ways, for example colonial Western subjectivity, may inhibit liberation, it does not follow that the identical, the schema which produces identity, should itself be thrown away as completely devoid of possibility (Headley 81).

This critique, in conjunction with Glissant's unique formation of identity, provides a way of including identity in the project of schizoanalytical theology without necessitating the sort of categorical exclusion seen in Deleuze and Guattari. As I will explore more in the next section, there are many instances, the ecological crisis being one of them, in which identity is a necessary tool for organizing resistance. Deleuze and Guattari, in their writing-off of various nondominant manifestations of identity, have perhaps gone too far into absolute denouncement. Glissant, for example, describes Caribbean identity in terms consistent with their work, arguing that it operates as a rhizomatic structure, having been constructed through the relationality born out of collective trauma after slavery, rather than being enforced through a nationalist or despotic signifier (Headley 73-74).

Yet, there are also dangers in permitting a focus on identity in an ecological spirituality, namely the possibility of reconstructing the distance between humanity and the other-than-human world. Glissant, though ultimately attempting to engage in a poetic relationality which connects humans back to the world they occupy, possesses hints of this danger, frequently limiting himself to the discussion of human Others, perhaps due to his skepticism of Caribbean culture, after colonialism and slavery, as having the toolkit for such connections



in its current mythology and grammar (*Caribbean* 127-132). However, Glissant provides a resolution to this conundrum in his conceptualization of a “poetics of Relation.” In similar style to the schizophrenic, Glissant utilizes poetics as a methodology which exceeds the strict binary categorizations created by language and culture. Glissant says, “What we call the world today is not only the convergence of the histories of peoples that has swept away the claims of philosophy of History but also the encounters...among these histories and materialities of the planet” (*Poetics of Relation* 195). It is through this line of thinking that Glissant’s defense of identity may once again join schizoanalytical theology in a denouncement of anthropocentrism, with the category of the Other expanding radically in all directions such that “The being of the world cannot be divided from the being of the universe and whatever imagines itself suspended in this whole” (*Poetics of Relation* 187).

Moving forward to the second point of tension, Glissant’s ontology, following from his views on identity, relies heavily on historicity which, for him, constructs a collective consciousness and culture (Headley 67-68). Influenced by the impact of colonialism and slavery on Caribbean subjectivity, he argues that Being cannot be separated from the historical timeline it occupies. In this view, certain events that impact a culture can fundamentally change the essence of its existence in the world. This runs heavily against the ahistorical ontology of Deleuze and Guattari, which vehemently resists the sort of confinement of becoming to a historical context presented in Glissant. In fact, Deleuze and Guattari view history as the ultimate grid of representation which is antithetical to the very existence of becoming, arguing that “Unlike history, becoming cannot be conceptualized in terms of past and future. Becoming-revolutionary remains indifferent to questions of a future and a past of the revolution...” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 292).

However, once again these two seemingly opposing views may be reconcilable. Glissant, breaking from Hegel, does not view history as a static object moving towards the Absolute. Instead, history operates as a rhizomatic structure, capable of being shifted and changed, moving chaotically towards creativity (Headley 73-74). In fact, Glissant views the acceptance of the belief in a singular version of history, progressing towards pure truth, to be an unnatural result of European domination and colonization (*Caribbean* 93). These observations remove the threat of Glissant’s historical ontology producing a transcendental view of subjects, in which they are trapped, existentially, into particular cultural categories or identities. Glissant’s view, though perhaps not entirely consistent, may therefore be able to cooperate with Deleuze and Guattari’s ahistorical view; both views engage in a deconstruction of history as an Absolute, but approach from different directions. Glissant approaches from



the inside, mutating the notion of history from within itself, while Deleuze and Guattari approach from the outside, destroying the very concept of history.

These formulations reveal an ability for collaboration without homogenization. In both accounts, one of identity and another of history, specificity is preserved in the movement to widen the perspectives included within the theory of Deleuze and Guattari. This project, particularly in the context of Francophone authors, gestures towards a methodology to repair the deficiencies in Western theorizing. Multiplicity once again becomes viable when one approaches scholarship in such a way as to enable authentic pluralities and mediation instead of exclusion and absolutism.

This is particularly important in the context of ecological denigration, which, as I will explore in the next section, requires a plethora of strategies and practices to be truly confronted. Persons, such as those subject to colonialism, who require identity and historically influenced communities are given those options in their personal politics. Those who exist otherwise and feel identity and history to be structures of repression may reject them in their personal politics. Ultimately, these perspectives converge on similar points and pursue the same ends, providing sufficient space to produce a network in which they may cohabitate and struggle together.

5. Guattari and Glissant, Ecosophy as Theology

If Gilles Deleuze may be understood as the philosopher of desire, then Félix Guattari might be best understood as the philosopher of ecology. Throughout his career as an academic Guattari had a keen interest in theories of ecology, dedicating much of his independent work, most notably *The Three Ecologies* and *Chaosmosis*, to the cause of what he termed “ecosophy” or ecological philosophy.

However, unlike his contemporaries, Guattari was hesitant to limit his scope to the valorization of the natural world and denounce humanity in pursuit of a post-anthropocentric thought. Instead, he hoped to problematize both of these tendencies, finding the merely natural to be an insufficient basis for a theory of ecology and humanity as a necessary piece in the puzzle. This, following the previous section, places Guattari’s individual work in close proximity to Glissant, as both attempt to preserve an analysis of, and status for, humanity in their theories of the ecological. It is with these facets in mind that I will explore how schizoanalytical theology may be conceived of as an ecosophy and be enhanced by a dialogue with the ecological theories of Guattari and Glissant.



Both Guattari and Glissant's interests in ecosophy did not arise out of nowhere, but rather were motivated by an acute awareness to the world around them, Guattari with a keen eye towards the structures of capitalism and Glissant analyzing the aftermath of slavery and colonization on his homeland. Guattari's analysis of the ecological crisis, written with a slant towards diagnosing problems and solving them, is a particularly useful one for the project of schizoanalytical theology which hopes to develop pragmatic techniques with which to respond to the crisis. Guattari succinctly explains his thesis in *Chaosmosis*:

The ecological crisis can be traced to a more general crisis of the social, political and existential. The problem involves a type of revolution of mentalities whereby they cease investing in a certain kind of development, based on a productivism that has lost all human finality. Thus the issue returns with insistence: how do we change mentalities, how do we reinvent social practices that would give back to humanity - if it ever had it - a sense of responsibility, not only for its own survival, but equally for the future of all life on the planet, for animal and vegetable species, likewise for incorporeal species such as music, the arts, cinema, the relation with time, love and compassion for others, the feeling of fusion at the heart of cosmos? (119-120).

The first insight to be gleaned from this passage is the immensity and depth of the ecological crisis. Ecological degradation, for Guattari, is merely a symptom of a larger crisis that extends throughout the modern world in society, politics, and the existential category of "humanity." These sentiments, albeit expressed in slightly different terms, are echoed in Glissant, who notes that the category of human has been created and structured around the European slave trade and utilized as a driving force of global violence through colonialism (Headley 70-71). An analysis of these complexities reveals the difficulty of formulating an adequate response that can address each of these categories and the nuanced problems associated with them. For example, imagine the sufficient development of renewable energy sources, such as windmills and solar power, to meet the energy needs of the status-quo. This could be seen as solution to carbon emissions and as an important step to thwart the ecological crisis, but through Guattari's analysis one sees a different picture. Socially, individuals may believe that consumption is now "clean" and increase their energy usage, eradicating the benefits of renewable energy. Politically, representatives are indebted to the fossil fuel industry and continuously pass regulations which thwart the implementation of the new technology. Existentially, individuals have an unconscious drive, substantiated by capitalism, to separate themselves from the natural world and establish supremacy, and may refuse sustainable technology.

In light of this, we are tasked with responding to a "crisis of crises" in which the very tenets of existence that constitute "humanity" are incompatible with homeostasis with the other-than-human world, thereby necessitating exploitation of that world. What arises, then, is the question of how we may



reclaim humanity. How the lifestyle, concept, and self-perception of humanity may be reorganized, retheorized, and reformulated so as to give us, as Guattari says, “a sense of responsibility.” This pursuit, in its willingness to negotiate humanism, is a break from other radical ecological traditions that are pessimistic and antagonistic towards the very prospect of humanity because of the revelations stated here. This places Guattari and, as I will argue, Glissant, in stark contrast with Les U. Knight’s demand for voluntary human extinction, John Zirzan’s call for a return to hunter-gather societies without technology, Donna Harroway’s cyborg posthumanism, and many more contemporary theorists of anthropocentrism and ecology.

Such an immense demand requires an equally immense response, which I believe comes by way of a return to religious spirituality. Schizoanalytical theology provides a methodology for such a “revolution of mentalities,” which I will discuss below, but also enables other benefits outside of the merely environmental. The movement to return to religion resonates as a refusal to capitulate to demands for linear progress, to see history as a monolithic dialectic in which we pass from premodern, to modern, to postmodern, and with this movement, from religious to secular. It returns to us the ability to look around, to speak not in quick absolutes, but rather in slow consideration of the nuances of theories that have long been disposed. This tendency refuses to “throw the baby out with the bathwater” and instead considers how theories that are at risk of extinction, such as humanism, mysticism, vitalism, and more, may continue to be utilized and explored.

In more direct terms, schizoanalytical theology, with the insight of Glissant, holds a unique ability to explore the depths of humanity, beyond the merely rational and outside anthropocentrically motivated concerns, and restore a sense of responsibility. Klein argues that the immensity of an extinction level event such as the ecological crisis cannot be conceived through purely rational means. Representation, as a precondition for its operation, requires a perception to transform into a conceptual schema, yet the possibility of a world entirely devoid of existence, completely unlike anything humanity has ever experienced, is a totality that exceeds our perception (Klein 83-85). The ecological crisis, then, exists merely as a fiction, as a phantasm, which can only be encountered through a sublimity which suspends reason and allows a fabulatory view of the world (Klein 84-86).

This need for a fantastical vision of the world can be met through Glissant’s theory of poetics. Poetics, for Glissant, is a form of expression that exceeds the merely linguistic and registers instead at the level of the body itself. In contrast to functional language, which denotes things such as commands and truth-



values, poetics is excessive and aesthetic. This project becomes innately tied, due to its descriptive nature, to ecology and the natural world, producing a way of articulating the sheer magnitude of the processes of the earth without dampening their impact (Hanneken 86-88). It is in this poetics, with its strange paradoxical status as both fictional and real, that we find a grammar to articulate the impossible and convey the magnitude of a fully realized ecological crisis.

These poetics fit neatly into Guattari's ecological project, which demands multivariable practices that enable escape from the clutches of the dominant tendencies of the status-quo. Viewing the world through the lens of poetics undermines the calculating logic of modernity and instead replaces it with the potential for an authentic view which can sustain the natural world as having intrinsic value (Hanneken 90). Poetics constructs new forms of subjectivity which communicate organic objects as having vibrancy and vitality, creating conditions from which we may reconnect to the natural world and restore our concern and care, creating an opening "toward the possibilities assemblage and becoming extend to the passive suffering of ecological objects" (Hanneken 88). Poetics, additionally, enables a mediation between the static figure of the human and the fluid interconnected structure of *tout-monde*, producing a new and improved rendition of the schizophrenic vision (Hanneken 91-92).

Having sketched the background of an understanding of the ecological crisis, we may now explore what exactly constitutes Guattari's vision of "ecology." Ecologies, closely related but distinct from the concept of assemblages developed with Deleuze, which figure as descriptions of arrangements of power, operate as functional spaces, described in terms of engagement, discovery, and liberatory theorization. Ecologies operate as sites of warfare, as battlegrounds between conflicting collective interests, and therefore can never be described in terms of an individual (Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* 35-36). These spaces are unbound sites of collective subjectivity, with no predetermined organizational tendency, acting as networks which facilitate togetherness to proliferate affectivity and mutations (Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* 34-41). Though possessing an infinite number of potential attributes and characterizations, these ecologies are best categorized in terms of a triad of social ecologies, mental ecologies, and environmental ecologies (Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* 41).

What is of particular note is Guattari's movement away from the environment as the sole basis for ecological theory. In fact, to be concerned entirely with the environment, with the greenery of the natural world, is to miss the point entirely, and is a grave misstep on the path to true solutions. What is of concern is not the restoration of what was before, a nostalgia for the natural world as it was prior to humanity, but what we might do with the reality that



humanity has irreversibly changed the natural world. As Guattari comments in an interview with John Johnson:

What interests me and disturbs me at the same time, is the development of an ecology centred entirely on nature, on the protection of species, a sort of identitarian vision then, which may end up in a very worrying conservatism, an authoritarianism. ... Instead of a reductionist vision of being as natural being, being that is already there, it is a matter of posing the horizon of a pluralist ontology. That is to say that human praxis engenders heterogeneous universes, it engenders practices (37-38).

This observation reveals that there are limits to the natural world, and although finding practices to reorient ourselves to its flow is both necessary and valuable, it alone is not sufficient to respond to the monumental tasks that the modern ecological crisis has imposed on us. Indeed, there is a compelling argument that nothing may be described as organic. The explosion of atomic bombs has changed the elemental makeup of the natural world, pollution has corrupted the air we breathe, and the fabric of the atmosphere has been ripped asunder. Many of these cannot be reversed, nor can they be ignored.

This thinking of ecology as outside of the merely natural world may be nourished further by Glissant. There exist, alongside the mental, social, and environmental ecologies, the ecologies of history and identity. It is difficult, if not impossible, to describe a space without having a keen understanding of both the constructions that exist within it and those that it engenders. While an entirely natural ecology may be able to express the material facts of a land, the types of plants and animals that occupy it, it is unable to articulate the metaphysics of that land, including the cultural impacts that processes such as colonialism have for indigenous persons and the land they call home. In the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari, territory, especially when tied to cultural attitudes and traditions, is an ecology that is a relevant piece of the larger ecological puzzle that conditions access to, and perspective on, the natural world.

In light of these observations, schizoanalytical theology, now informed by Glissant, emerges as a dynamic, relational, and shifting project, capable of responding to the demands of the ecological crisis. Humanity has weaved a plethora of webs, both actual and virtual, and while many of these have produced a great deal of good, expanding knowledge, curing deadly diseases, and more, others have caused degradation and violence, making us ignorant to the diversity of the world. Schizoanalytical theology, in both its style and substance, is oriented towards authentic dialogue with a plurality of perspectives, attempting to foster cohabitation. It recognizes complexity through an appreciation of the variety of productions, both human and other-than-human, that are possible. It asks for a decentered perspective that refuses to call itself



entirely human or speak in exclusive absolutes. This produces a necessary dialogue between the corporeal fleshiness of humanity and the incorporeal values expressed in the vitalistic fabric of the natural world, privileging openness, relationality, and friendship, both scolding humanity and providing solutions to its indiscretions.

6. Conclusion

We are increasingly confronted with crisis and catastrophe on previously unimaginable scales, necessitating, now more than ever, theoretical insights into the way humanity engages the world. These problems are at their core abstract, with their symptoms appearing materially; the ecological crisis is the culmination of a plethora of crises of society, politics, and subjectivity.

The work of Deleuze and Guattari provides a theoretical basis which meets many of the demands of this crisis. Through the application of their work to spirituality and ecology, described here as schizoanalytical theology, we may chart paths of resistance to anthropocentrism and theories which cast humanity as entirely distinct from the other-than-human world. However, their project, in its cultural and ideological limitations, must be continuously amended and interrogated to ensure that it is able to sustain its claims of egalitarianism and acceptance of plurality. These questionings must come from thinkers that occupy spaces outside of those which dominate the status-quo and have contributed to the crisis we hope to resolve. We must look outside of the European West.

Édouard Glissant is one such thinker, providing both critique and amendment so as to produce a more complex and inclusive vision of how Deleuze and Guattari's theory might be deployed by those outside of the European cultural context. The project developed here has as its aim not only the improvement of Deleuze and Guattari, but also, following the example of Glissant, the larger goal of highlighting how dominant theories may be made to acquiesce and respond to the demands of minority thinkers. It is only through movements such as these that we may begin to truly chart paths of resistance to not only the ecological crisis, but the variety of crises to which humanity must respond.



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