

Type the number of the topic AND the name of the author of the quotation here

4 – Tetsuro Watsuji

Start typing your essay here.

The introductory quote suggest the idea that a human being gains knowledge of its 'self', of its subjectivity from the framework of relations in which it assumes its place. Rather than solely analyze the conditions under which the human being can acquire this knowledge, I will try to understand how the knowledge of the 'self' is produced, how subjectivities are assigned to living beings and what insists at the borders of these processes. Following the line of thought from Nietzsche to Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Giorgio Agamben, my aim is to *excavate* and *decode* the relations between the environment, objectification and existence.

### 1. The moment

In *The Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche presents an idea, similar and yet different to that of Watsuji, that when a human being enters into a society, into a civilized environment, its animalistic, natural instincts are inverted – instead of being manifested, projected outwardly, they are suppressed, internalized. To objectify can be understood here as an opposition which results in the turning of the force. The outcome of this is the formation of *consciousness*, which in Nietzsche's opinion constitutes the human as an *interesting animal*. Through this, the human being does not gain a pre-given knowledge of itself, but rather a notion of consciousness is produced together with the goal of its discovery. The human subject is formed through an objection to its instincts. In Nietzsche's philosophy, however, this carries a negative connotation. An active, life-affirming force, which is separated from its goal, from what it can do, and is turned against itself, becomes reactive. What Nietzsche means by this is demonstrated in his metaphor of the bird of prey and the sheep. A reactive force of *ressentiment* will accuse the bird of prey of being evil because of its tendency to hunt the vulnerable, the weak, which are defined as good as opposed to this evil. But this accusation is based on the presupposition that the bird of prey has the capacity to act otherwise than to hunt. Nietzsche rejects this notion, arguing that the hunter cannot be separated from its force, its act of hunting – the bird of prey does not choose to hunt, it is the act of hunting. The goal of *ressentiment* is to make the active forces regret their own activity, to

reject it, which results in the formation of *bad consciousness*, a suppression of force and feeling of guilt.

As opposed to this, Nietzsche suggests a world of verbs instead of adjectives and substantives, and beings which are not subjects of their actions, but rather life-affirming forces. This means that they reject the notion of *ascetic ideals* and the *will to nothingness*, of unified, objective truths, which negate the plenitude of life. Life-affirmation for Nietzsche is the production, the excavation of a multiplicity of interpretations, subjectivities and representations. In relation to the introductory quote, when entering an environment, a relation of forces, the human does not discover a pre-given notion of 'self', but is rather subjected to an objection of the reactive forces to his own life-affirming existence. The very notion of a subject, a singular, objective knowledge of the self, which is supposed to be uncovered through the environment, is in the view of Nietzsche's philosophy a product of reactive forces prevailing over the active ones.

In relation to this, Nietzsche presents a scheme of the world as a battleground, a field of forces – active and reactive – striving for domination. The meaning of things, forms and signifiers is a result of a force, or better yet, a relation of forces, taking possession of signs and practices. In this concept, historical origins of values, meanings, things are replaced with historical *emergences*, stacked in plateaus of interpretations, produced through the continuous struggle of domination, which Nietzsche studies through the application of the genealogical method. The problem at hand is thus not how the human being gains understanding of his self through an objection of the environment to its existence, but how the notion, the knowledge of a subject emerges. In Foucault's terms – not how the subject is represented, but how it is *problematized*, how certain events, things and emergences are objectified into problems, and the study of practices, associated with the handling of these problems.

## **2. Objectification and subjectification**

When turning to Foucault, one must understand the previously presented battleground of forces as *power relations*. In his philosophy, every society, every environment is constituted through power relations and the knowledge that they produce. The former and the latter have an inseparable connection to one another, meaning that in every *discourse*, in every unit of knowledge, we can recognize traces of the power through which it is produced, while at the same time this discourse always affirms the maintenance of power positions that produce it. In relation to Nietzsche, when a force or set of forces succeed in dominating the other, taking possession of forms and attaining the capacity to produce knowledge, it will aim to preserve its position through *power-knowledge*.

What this infers is that the understanding, which the human being gains from having its existence objectified in an environment, is a form of power-knowledge. The subject, the

consciousness, the knowledge of self is a product of power techniques. To quote Foucault's inversion of the Platonic relation between soul and body in *Discipline and Punish*: "The soul is the prison of the body." Consequently, objectification here is not to be understood as an opposition between the environment and the human existence, but rather the formation of the body as an object of discipline through a production of power-knowledge of the 'self'. The techniques of power, described in Foucault's analysis of discipline, do not oppose the existing, but aim to reinvent it as a productive body – partition it, combine it, articulate its relation to objects, assign to it the most efficient gestures, etc. The being is not opposed, it is rather individualized (cultivated, trained in regards to its specific characteristics), exercised, gratified and punished in relation to its accordance with the norm, provided by the power-knowledge. The main technique of power in achieving this is *the examination*, which allows the examiner to exercise power over the *subjected*, while at the same time produce knowledge of the *subject*. The examination combines the practice of surveillance and normalization in the sense that it obtains details about the objectified being's individual qualities and quantities (measurements), while it at the same time assigns to the subject a knowledge of its own evaluation, position and accordance in relation to the norm. Through the examination, the *subjected* gains an understanding of him or herself in regards to what he is supposed to be, the normative truth of his existence.

Discipline through examination, however, is a technique which seems limited to institutions such as the school, the hospital, military camp, and so on. In order to understand the role these practices have in a society, in a framework of relations, we must connect them to the concept of *dispositive* (also written as: *apparatus* or *dispositif*), which was introduced by Foucault and furtherly expanded by Agamben. A dispositive, in Foucault's definition of it, is a heterogeneous mixture of discourses, practices, institutions, architectural formations, which aim to provide an *oikonomia* of the beings which exist in this composition. Or in Agamben's terms – the dispositive is anything which has the capacity to guide, orient, control, define, determine or otherwise affect the existence, practices and thoughts of beings. As this concept is devoid of any being, it must manifest itself through its relation to living beings, which is defined by Agamben in his text *What is a dispositive?* as a *subjectivation*. The result of this connection is the subject. A living being, an existence is thus assigned a subjectivity through its relation to the dispositive. Or, to refer to Watsuji, the human existence is not only objectified, but subjectified, it is assigned the knowledge of itself through its relation to the dispositive(s), which define its environment. A single being can be defined by many different subjectivities, as it can relate to many different dispositives.

To further elaborate this concept, we can compare it to Althusser's notion of *ideological interpellation*, a definition of which would be a process that occurs when an ideology, embodied in different social and political institutions, *hails* a being, which recognizes and

identifies itself in this ideology. It represents a ritual of ideological self-recognition. An example of this would be when a student sat in a classroom, staring, for example, at his desk, but when the teacher would say “You!”, he would turn. In other words, the student recognizes himself in the *hail*. By doing so, he is constituted as the subject of this call. Much like the dispositive, the ideology too needs subjects which are recognize and indentify themselves in it in order to exist. But at the same time, the subject is not constituted as such without its subjectivation, self-recognition in relation to the dispositive or the ideology found in it.

However, do these conclusions infer that the human being is powerless, determined only through a subjectivation of his existence in specific power relations? Turning back to Nietzsche, are life-affirming, active forces completely suppressed, inverted in the process of subjectivation? Or do they persists as an instistence of existence?

### 3. “We know what we are, but not what we may be” – Hamlet, Shakespeare.

For this, we must turn to a “new form of metaphysics”, as Gilles Deleuze defined his work, including that produced in collaboration with Felix Guattari. In order to understand the *potentiality of multiplicities*, which insists in living beings, universal, timeless ideas, must be replaced with *events*, structures with *machines* and fixed meanings with a neverending process of sense production, similar to the continuous state of flux, found in the concept of Heraclit’s river.

In *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari, relating to Spinoza’s *Ethics*, define human beings as *desiring machines*, which form *assemblages* by composing relations with other beings. These relations can either enter into a composition, or decompose the assemblage, the former representing ‘good’, while the later denotes ‘bad’ in Spinoza’s conception of ethics. What underlies these machines and the *encounters* through which they assemble is the process of *desiring-production*. This term does not, however, describe the goal of the desire in producing objects, but rather the capacity of desiring machines to open themselves to new sensibilities, new affections, new relations. The process of desiring-production evades producing anything but a differentiation of the *assemblage*, of the structure of relations. Desire does not aim to fill a lack, pursuing an object which is lost, but rather continuously evades representation and signification of what it wants as this want is always defined in a structure, which is incomplete because it is constantly differentiated by the process of desiring-production. In regards to this, the relation between desire and production is similar to that between *nonsense* and *sense*, found in Deleuze’s *Logic of Sense*. Sense, which is defined as both the expressed in the proposition and the attribute of the state of affairs, is produced by nonsense, rather than opposed by it. This nonsense, *paradoxical element*, *empty shelf*, *differentiality point* is at once the excess of the series of the signifier and the lack in the series of the signified, merging the two series in a state of *perpetual*

*disequilibrium*. It traverses the two series, rearranging the relations between them, which can be termed as *singularities*, producing events, donating new sense, or in other words rearranging and creating new singularities between the series which form the structure of signification. Consequently, this structure is always incomplete. It is defined by a lack not as its immanent trait, but rather as a consequence of constant differentiation and production of new sense – the lack as the other side of excess. The nonsense is both the empty shelf and the supernumerary, the occupant without the place and the place without the occupant. As Lacan would say – it is an entity, which never found where we look for it, it is displaced in relation to itself. As the singularities between the series are always determined in the relation to this excess-lack, they can never stay the same. The nonsense produces new sense, new events in “a time much smaller than the minimum thinkable continuous time”.

The paradox, the desire never moves or aims in an assigned, one-directional manner, but rather invokes a *process of pure becoming*, moving both ways at the same time. Thus, when Lewis-Carroll’s Alice says that she is at once growing and shrinking, this does not mean that she **is** at once taller and shorter, younger and older, but rather, that in the process of **becoming**, she is at once differentiated in two different relations of time – past and future. Paradox as a simultaneous movement in both directions, resists the one-directional *bon sens* and *sens commun* (good and common sense/direction), which are, as Nietzsche would say – reactive forces. The former aims to foresee, to present a past-future, cause-effect interpretation of events, to simplify complexity, unify multiplicities, while the later – common sense – tries to identify, recognize, organize beings. In this regard, desiring-production aims to resist organization. Instead of being identified, formed as an organism, as a *body with organs*, the paradoxical element initiates the process of *becoming a body without organs*, an open field of possibilities, capable of new sensibilities, open to new affections and relations. Through the paradox of pure becoming, Alice loses her identity - she cannot become, as she is constantly re-formed.

In regards to this, we can understand two conceptions of desire – one which is normalized, domesticated, recognized, represented, aiming to fill the lack of something that is missing in the presumably complete structure of the dispositives, while on the other hand, there is the process of *desiring-production*, which resists meaning, as it produces the two directional sense, rather than fixed signification. Desiring-production is a constant state of differentiation, which aims at *self-invention*, *self-actualization*, rather than self-discovery, presented in the introductory quote. Deleuze as a *transcendental empiricist* inverts Kant’s *transcendental idealism* – our experience is not made sensible by pre-given conditions of space, time and intellectual categories, these categories themselves are invented, actualized through experience, through a process of becoming, which takes place at the borders of the surface.

#### 4. Deterritorialization of environment

Dispositives, discipline and ideology are synonymous to what Deleuze and Guattari call a *territory* – a mapped area, consisting of a central point and borders. In relation to Foucault and Agamben, territories are also marked and mapped through discourses, norms and power relations. What resists this tendency of mapping, of identification of regions, is the *nomadic emergence* or the process of *deterritorialization*, which presents an unmapped, uncharted area, resisting normalization and domestication. Nomadic distribution, as opposed to *sedentary distribution*, is rhizomatic and not tree-like, it is a surface network, rather than a hierarchy of power. In other words, it is a *decoding of the coded*, a *murmur*, a *discontinuity*, as opposed to the discourse. It is the emergence of *puissance*, the nomadic, uninstitutionalized power of potentiality and plenitude of being, as opposed to the *pouvoir*, the power manifested through the dispositives. This nomadic emergence, deterritorialization is thus a way in which a being resists subjectivation, it rejects the understanding, the coding, the forming of a single truth of its existence. It is a *schizoid* process, an invention of a multiplicity of subjectivities. This does not mean that one becomes a *schizophrenic*, that the nomad is a *schizoid subject*, as this is already a clinical objectification, but rather that he/she deterritorializes itself by *becoming* mad. This infers a constant differentiation of the territorialized subjectivities. What Deleuze and Guattari introduce is thus not psychoanalysis in terms of rehabilitating a broken subject, of re-subjectivation, but rather a *schizoanalysis* – a break of subjectivations, a *schizoid process of self-invention*. In this sense, the introductory quote can be inverted – the suppressed life-affirming forces of differentiation and plenitude of being re-emerge, when existing objectifies (opposes) its environment as a territory.

Desiring-production, however, is halted when the schizoid process is interrupted and the being becomes a schizophrenic. In other words, a stop in the process of becoming mad results in madness. Existing, thus, can never escape its environment, the production of sense and events can never be interpreted outside of the structure they re-arrange and the desiring-machines are always defined in the assembly of their relation. Consequently, deterritorialization always implies the inverted process of *reterritorialization*, which can always happen in two ways. The first is that the nomadic emergence is mapped, objectified, examined, domesticated and normalized into the territory, losing its subversive element. The second, however, is that this reterritorialized area insists as a constant differentiation, a *counter-culture*, to the existing social order. It continues with the process of becoming in terms of resisting domestication and mapping, as an autonomous zone. In relation to this, beings as desiring-machines must constantly reassemble, shift between the normalized and schizoid desire. The goal is, as Deleuze himself proclaimed, “to keep the empty shelf circulating”, traversing the series of the structure, producing new sense.

In regards to this, we can again reinterpret and form a conclusion about the introductory quote, as both accurate and lacking. Referring to the concepts which I have presented, it is

correct to say that the environment objectifies (in both meanings – opposition and objectification), human existence, and that this indeed infers an ‘understanding’ of existence. But although this understanding represents a power-knowledge about the self, we can only oppose self-discovery with self-invention through the relations to our environment - by reassembling the singularities, opening bodies to new affections and creating compositions. Deterritorialization would be no more than an ‘autistic universe’ without reterritorialization – the effect which it produces in the assembled, objectified territory. However, understanding, as shown through the examples of discipline and psychoanalysis, is always related to a representation of a subject, which is or can be discovered, rehabilitated from its disappearance. In Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, a loss of identity is necessary for our active, life-affirming forces to emerge. It is thus through objectifying (opposing) objectification that we *invent* ourselves in a insistence of differentiating existence – a *potentiality* - at the borders of the territorialized environment.