



The body-without-organs: A user's manual

Manu Bazzano

ABSTRACT

An exploration of the Body-without-Organs – a notion first found in Antonin Artaud (1947) and later developed by Deleuze (1969/1990), and Deleuze and Guattari (1987/2004), 1972/1984) and of its implications for the practice and theory of contemporary psychotherapy. Compared and contrasted with the notions of the organism and the unconscious, found respectively in humanistic, existential, integrative psychotherapy and in psychoanalytic/psychodynamic practices, the Body-without-Organs is presented here as a potential step forward in psychotherapeutic theory and practice.

Der Körper-ohne-Organ: eine Gebrauchsanweisung

ABSTRAKT

Eine Untersuchung des Körpers ohne Organe – ein Begriff, der zuerst bei Antonin Artaud (1947) gefunden und später von Deleuze (1969/1990) und Deleuze und Guattari (1987/2004) 1972/1984 entwickelt wurde, und seine Implikationen für die Praxis und Theorie der zeitgenössischen Psychotherapie. Verglichen und kontrastiert mit den Begriffen des Organismus und des Unbewussten, die in der humanistischen, existenziellen, integrativen Psychotherapie bzw. in der psychoanalytisch-psychodynamischen Praxis zu finden sind, wird der Körper-ohne-Organ hier als möglicher Fortschritt in der psychotherapeutischen Theorie und Praxis vorgestellt.

El cuerpo sin órganos: manual de un usuario

RESUMEN

Una exploración del Cuerpo sin Órganos (CsO) – una mención encontrada por primera vez en Antonin Artaud (1947) y más tarde desarrollada por Deleuze (1969/1990), y Deleuze y Guattari (1987/2004; 1972/1984) y de sus implicaciones para la práctica y la teoría de la psicoterapia contemporánea, particularmente en relación con las ideas del organismo y el inconsciente presente en la psicoterapia humanista, existencial, integradora y las prácticas psicoanalíticas/psicodinámicas.

Il corpo senza organi: un manuale per l'utente

Un'esplorazione del Corpo-senza-Organ – una nozione trovata per la prima volta in Antonin Artaud (1947) e successivamente sviluppata da Deleuze (1969/

1990), e Deleuze e Guattari (1987/2004) 1972/1984) e delle sue implicazioni per la pratica e teoria della psicoterapia contemporanea. Confrontato e contrapposto alle nozioni di organismo e di inconscio, presenti rispettivamente nella psicoterapia umanistica, esistenziale, integrata e nelle pratiche psicoanalitiche/psicodinamiche, il Corpo-senza-Organismi viene qui presentato come un potenziale passo avanti nella teoria e nella pratica psicoterapeutica.

Le Corps-sans-Organes: Manuel d'utilisation

Une exploration du Corps-sans-Organes (BwO) – une notion que l'on trouve initialement chez Antonin Artaud (1947) et développée plus tard par Deleuze (1969/1990) et par Deleuze et Guattari (1987/2004; 1972/1984) et de ses implications pour la pratique et la théorie de la psychothérapie contemporaine. Comparée et contrastée avec les notions d'organisme et d'inconscient que l'on trouve respectivement dans les pratiques psychothérapeutiques humanistes, existentielles, intégratives et dans les pratiques psychanalytiques/psychodynamiques, la notion de Corps-sans-Organes est présentée ici comme un progrès potentiel pour la théorie et la pratique en psychothérapie.

Το σώμα χωρίς όργανα: Ένα εγχειρίδιο χρήστη

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Μια διερεύνηση του «σώματος χωρίς όργανα» - ενός όρου που αναφέρθηκε πρώτη φορά από τον Antonin Artaud (1947) και αργότερα αναπτύχθηκε από τους Deleuze (1969/1990) και Guattari (1987/2004) 1972/1984) και των συνεπειών του για το πρακτική και θεωρία της σύγχρονης ψυχοθεραπείας. Σε σύγκριση και σε αντίθεση με τις έννοιες του οργανισμού και του ασυνείδητου, που βρίσκονται αντίστοιχα σε ανθρωπιστικές, υπαρξιακές, συνθετικές ψυχοθεραπείες και σε ψυχαναλυτικές/ψυχοδυναμικές πρακτικές, το «σώμα χωρίς όργανα» παρουσιάζεται εδώ ως ένα πιθανό βήμα προόδου στην ψυχοθεραπευτική θεωρία και πρακτική.

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PALABRAS CLAVE Organismo; Inconsciente; Cuerpo-sin-Órganos; Deleuze

PAROLE CHIAVE Organismo; Inconscio; Corpo senza organi; Deleuze

MOTS CLÉS Organisme; inconscient; Corps-sans-Organes; Deleuze Οργανισμός; ασυνείδητο; σώμα χωρίς όργανα; Deleuze

Introduction

It is difficult to study the self – avowedly one of the tasks of the psychotherapeutic endeavour – while conceiving it as an entirely self-existing, solid entity. This is why, in a sense, to study the self is to decenter the self. The self cannot be truly examined without taking in the phenomenal field of experience. To solely focus on the violin soloist or the singer during an orchestral

performance is to miss the richness and intricate texture of the ensemble. The self-construct is that soloist or singer and the field of experience is the entire orchestra.

Striving to be more than a set of corrective measures to be administered to misfits and injured subjects alike, throughout its history psychotherapy (accidentally?) envisaged a *threshold*, a 'site' out of which subjectivity arises and to which it relates dialectically. Descriptions of the threshold vary as do its names and attributes; they vary according to the theoretical lenses adopted. I will look at two of them. The first is found in the humanistic/existential tradition, the second in psychoanalysis.

Neither of them succeeds in providing the necessary blueprint for a form of psychical investigation that is free of the current neoliberal diktat afflicting our strange profession. This is why I will then introduce a third notion, the brainchild of playwright and writer Antonin Artaud and one that was later articulated in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: the *body-without-organs* (Body-without-Organs). This ambiguous and pregnant notion presents us with a fluid map that may be useful in digging a way out of our newly refurbished, evidence-based prison. Within the extensive corpus of the philosophical *counter-tradition*, the Body-without-Organs represents an imaginative adjunct to the theory of the *affective body* instigated in the 17th century by Spinoza in his *Ethics* (Spinoza, 1677/1996). Like Nietzsche and Bergson, Spinoza too gives Deleuze an intermittently steady, quivering rhythm to his imaginative thought, particularly in relation to his 'treatment' of the body. We think of the 17th century as the age of Descartes. It took a little more than three centuries to construct a passable critique of Cartesianism now so *de rigueur* in academic psychology (to the point where one wants to find arguments *in favour* of Descartes, for instance: only a separated Cartesian subject can conceive of Infinity!) And to think that Spinoza, a contemporary, presented a thoroughgoing and radical critique of Descartes in 1663! In philosophy, as in the arts and in psychotherapy, the politically/morally compliant tradition inevitably grabs the headlines and calls the shots. The *counter-tradition* (Bazzano & Webb, 2016), that old mole (*ghost* of Hamlet's father in Shakespeare, *spirit* in Hegel, *revolution* in Marx) carries on, nevertheless. No primacy of mind over body is found in Spinoza. He convincingly refutes the mind/body divide: for him, a passion in the body *is* passion in the mind, and an action in the mind *is* an action in the body.

In *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1984), the Body-without-Organs is mentioned within a discourse that critically expounds on Marx's formulation of capital and Freud's articulation of the unconscious. But it is in a later work, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2004), that we are presented with examples on how to *make* a Body-without-Organs and it is on this text I will mainly draw below. *A Thousand Plateaus* also sketches

a line of flight, an important notion in Deleuzian thought. To give (psychical/political) transformation a chance, the actual (the ‘given’, the reality we often supinely accept, as in our obeisance to biology, instinct, and the presumed facticity of the existing order) is transcended: we ascend (and sometimes descend) to the virtual, the site of revolution, subversion, and innovation. A scandalous thought: could that mean that even the terrain, the obligatory, sensible, and sensuous ‘field’ can and must be evaded in order to create a new terrain? Could it be that terrains of conventional psychotherapy are not, properly speaking, thresholds? We shall see. Let us first examine these two: the *organism* and the *unconscious*.

The organism

With its expert melding of psychology and neurology, Kurt Goldstein’s classic study *The Organism* (Goldstein, 1939) instigated a minor paradigm shift in phenomenology, establishing some of the tenets of what was to become Gestalt and humanistic psychology. That he happened to be a philosopher too, and one with an enthusiasm for Goethe, meant that his scientific rigour was not tainted by scientism. His notion of the organism may be etched within a particularly stimulating trend within phenomenology: a keen interest in organic life, as found in the writings of Merleau-Ponty (1945/1989) and Canguilhem (2008). For those keen on keeping an arbitrarily clear-cut separation between disciplines, Goldstein’s approach can be baffling. Is it science? Is it philosophy? But then the category of organism was itself ambivalent from the start (Wolfe, 2010), as seen in the late seventeenth, early eighteenth-century debate between Leibniz and the chemist and physician Georg-Ernest Stahl, where the term emerges as a winning secular replacement for ‘semantic equivalents’ to the abiding notion of the soul. Implicit in the idea of the organism is the alluring promise of a ‘functional unity of a system of integrated parts’ (Canguilhem, 1989, p. 551).

It is no surprise that the notion would exert considerable influence on Carl Rogers (Rogers, 1951, 2008; Tudor & Worrall, 2006) who strived to harmonize spirituality and science. The clinical applications of ‘organism’ in the work of psychotherapy are clear. When linked dialectically to the self-concept (self-construct, ego-self etc.), it does the trick of keeping it from morphing into a walled, self-bound object whose actualization rest solely on vague prospects of cosmetic improvement and/or the repair of disturbances and obstructions. Thought in this way, it is useful in reminding us that there exists a wider domain of experiencing, a *threshold* from which transformation may occur. Cultural and political pressures to align psychotherapy with the prevailing neoliberal ethos and the agenda of our *societies of control* (Deleuze, 1992) sadly mean that the threshold becomes a terrain to be colonized instead of a source of learning and transformation. An example

of this is the dubious notion of an ‘organismic self’, a self that in *seizing* the complex and multiple life of the organism confidently proclaims full alignment (congruence) with it. This trajectory is probably delusional, but exemplifies the positivist ethos at work. Rather than becoming slowly and patiently acquainted with the darkness and multiplicity of the organism, we go in, as it were, bringing a light. This mode of understanding is not particular to person-centred or humanistic psychology but constitutes a widespread cultural phenomenon: “[T]he idea that ‘*to see is to know*’ so firmly grounds our current way of being in and understanding the world it is ‘hard to imagine otherwise’ (Rizq, 2019, p. 113).

The unconscious

The wish to colonize an unknown domain rather than learning from it happened in psychoanalysis too, this time in relation to another threshold, the unconscious. Here a positivist agenda crept in, arguably taking hold of a potentially transformative science. Already since Freud (approximately around the time of his abandonment of the generalized theory of seduction in 1897), a widespread tendency to give in to cultural pressure towards positivism meant that the unconscious was now understood as a terrain whose content, once deemed inaccessible via the conscious mind, is analogous to and retrievable by consciousness. ‘Making the unconscious conscious’ became the popular motto of positivist psychodynamic practice, intent at tracking down, interpreting and denouncing any semblance of transference phenomena, rewriting the unconscious in phylogenetic terms: as the ‘ground of being’, with humanity enthroned at its evolutionary peak, a move strangely reminiscent of Teilhard de Chardin’s metaphysics (De Chardin, 1999), unwittingly making the case for psychoanalysis as ersatz religion. The result is baffling: pathologizing the unconscious as something to be understood, translated, and properly cleansed from the conscious life of the subject, equipping the latter with the societal and relational skills which may enable it to live an incongruously good life in a bad world and, in the process, curtailing the opportunity for psychical transformation.

The body-without-organs

At this point of our investigation, one might suggest that the once transformative notions of organism and unconscious have been seized by what Deleuze (1962/2006) calls, after Nietzsche, *reactive forces*, i.e. ‘utilitarian forces of adaptation’ that prevent the body ‘from what it can do’ (p. 57). We may recognize how these notions have been hijacked by an epistemology rooted in fear (of the unknown, of the dark/multiple body; of becoming; but isn’t epistemology *as such* rooted in fear?). We may then ascertain how

domesticated and tame they have become within a thoroughly domesticated psychotherapeutic discourse – how thoroughly co-opted by the neoliberal agenda psychotherapy, psychology and psychoanalysis have become. It is at this point that another notion is called for.

Deleuze helps us understand that to speak of an organism is to speak of a body *narrowly* conceived holistically, as an organization of organs. The term ‘organism’ (and, increasingly, ‘body’ too) often refers to a integrated repository of knowledge and wisdom: the body is said to know and remember – it keeps the score, this body of ours, a book-keeping machine riddled with nostalgia and resentment. All we need to do, we are told, is increase our awareness, access a felt sense, tuning in to innate and real organismic evaluation, access a virgin domain untainted by cultural conditioning and disentangled from the various ways in which mum and dad fucked us up as children. This holistic, integrated body becomes a worthy candidate, a substitute for the soul. What this romantic, Rousseauian trajectory bypasses is the high degree to which the body is constrained and disciplined by societal forces – with prisons, hospitals, schools, and various other institutions regimenting and constricting the subject.

The body-without-organs is an appealing and difficult way out of the prison. It does not fall back on either the getaway offered by transcendence nor on the false immanence of reactive narcotic descent. It is difficult because it is not hope – the greatest of evil if we are to believe Nietzsche’s interpretation of Pandora’s tale. It is born out of despair, a tunnel at the end of light. At the psychiatric hospital in Rodez where Artaud was subjected to electroshock treatment and where the other inmates poured ink on his papers as he was trying to write, he nevertheless carried on writing.

The (Body-without-Organs) is not a concept referring to a distinct object. It demarcates a threshold, and it does so more convincingly than the organism and the unconscious. The Body-without-Organs is not necessarily an alternative to both the organism and the unconscious; it represents a line of flight which more accurately fulfils the failed promise implicit in the other two notions. It signals the *zone of intensity* emerging when the limits of what a body can do are extended. Even though it signifies a *transcendental* shift, it nevertheless occurs within the field of immanence. There is no capitulation to ready-to-wear transcendent narratives, be they coated in the literalist, bad poetry of institutionalized religion – the silent awe of mysticism or the objectifications of positivist science. Its ‘expression’ escapes the strictures of language, its hierarchical display of order words (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2004) to which the subject is subjected and by which it comes to be defined. It traces and encourages the fugue on a funny bone, the flow traversing warm flesh, pulsating organs, and the living breath. It sends oblique memos from the brink. It is a blueprint, animated by an aspiration to strip away those

practices which constrain the subject. It is an ambitious project at variance from the set of current practices which nowadays constitute and define psychotherapy. The term ‘body-without-organs’ was coined by Antonin Artaud in his never-to be aired 1947 radio play *To have done with the judgment of God* (Artaud, 1947). The last passage of this short play reads:

Man is sick because he is badly constructed. We must make up our minds to strip him bare in order to scrape off that animalcule that itches him mortally, god, and with god his organs. For you can tie me up if you wish, but there is nothing more useless than an organ. When you will have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom. Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out as in the frenzy of dance halls and this wrong side out will be his real place (ibid).

Certainly, anyone wishing to come anywhere near this sort of endeavour must proceed with caution, for the Body-without-Organs dismantles our conventional sense of what a body is and how it is used. It even encourages us towards a kind of escape, a line of flight that in finding new avenues creates reality anew. Mainstream culture and psychotherapy look down on escape; it is swiftly diagnosed as avoidance, denial, manic defence, not wanting to confront ‘reality’. But there is great value in escape. Following a line of flight, Deleuze teaches us, *creates* reality.

Riffing on Artaud, Deleuze first used the term body-without-organs in *Logic of Sense* (1969/1990), a book which Foucault (1998) greeted as the cheekiest and most impertinent of metaphysical treatises ever written. Among other things, the book is preoccupied with the dynamic genesis of sense in primary language. The *infant*, the one who is devoid of language, experiences a *weatherscape*, to use Daniel Stern’s (1985) memorable image, constituted of fluid successions of varying degrees of intensity: the shudder of a piercing noise and a dazzling light, the overpowering blast of hunger, the soothing tone of a voice. This pre-verbal life of intensities-in-motion evokes the atmosphere for approaching the body-without-organs.

The Body-without-Organs is developed further in Deleuze’s book on Proust (Deleuze, 1964/2008), in *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2004) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2004). The last two books are a triumph of subversion and erudition, the fruit of a rich amalgam of counter-traditional philosophy and antipsychiatry refreshingly free of the secular shadow of Christian morality arguably obfuscating mainstream psychotherapeutic discourse.

In Deleuze’s vision the organism is the first of three crucial strata or layers through which the subject becomes ensnared. Below is a brief step-by-step user guide through the three layers.

The first layer: The organism

The notion of the organism is vital in decentering and ‘updating’ the self-construct. Within the frame of organismic psychologies and experiential approaches such as Person-centred therapy, Focusing, Gestalt and others, the notion provides the practitioner with the first necessary step in the nomadic crossing towards the body-without-organs. I wish the same could be said for existential therapy, an approach dear to my heart. Unfortunately, what now passes for existential therapy, especially in the UK, has come to rely so heavily on the abstract notion of ‘Being’ and its attendant normative dictates, from ‘authenticity’ to ‘relatedness’, that its philosophical frame no longer properly belongs to the philosophy of existence heralded by Nietzsche and Kierkegaard and validated by Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Merleau-Ponty, but is more aptly situated within the domains of idealist and pre-Kantian philosophy, i.e. light years from Kant’s own near-immanent critique of reason (Deleuze, 1963/1984), let alone Sartre or Merleau-Pontian thought. I am not too optimistic about the possibility of change on that front, despite valiant attempts from a host of practitioners over the last few years to salvage a foundering and tenaciously parochial approach (e.g., Bazzano, 2017; Pearce, 2001a, 2011b, , , ; Greenslade, 2020; Harrison, 2020; Karyagina, 2020; ; Mackessy & Bazzano, 2020; Nicholls, 2020; Zarogiannis, 2020).

Even within the frame of the experiential psychotherapies mentioned above, misted over as they often are by naïve Rousseauian leanings, the organism ends up becoming little else than a secular surrogate for the *soul*. What was meant to be a name for a more expansive threshold – an uncertain terrain of education and transformation – morphs into a ‘thing’ duly outfitted with purpose, unity, and being – all three typical attributes, for Nietzsche (1967), of nihilism, a slant on life characterized by the infliction of strategies of control and consolation upon the ever-changing, multiple, and contingent world.

Giving pride of place to the organism or the body is evidently a necessary first step on the journey out of the venerable Cartesian mansion within whose redecorated walls psychotherapy still lives and breathes: think of the Kleinian seemingly autonomous psyche where others are mere introjects; or of Husserl’s notion of the *habitus* (Husserl, 1950/2013, pp. 66–67) and the chronic subjectivism impairing existential therapy.

All the same, the first step towards the organism is crucial. It helps reframe psychotherapy within a naturalistic appreciation of the body and of the complexity of its affects. The body is, after all, the *great reason* (Nietzsche, 1883/2006).

Using the terms ‘body’ and ‘organism’ interchangeably, as I do here, may well be an oversimplification. Certainly, unbounded appreciation (love, study) of the body/organism is an important step away from the Christian

doctrine founded on hatred of the body, a stance echoed in the 'objectivity' of medicine and science towards this unruly 'object', specimen, or enflashed robot. And yet, both terms are riddled with metaphysical assumptions. The body is itself an abstraction, a nominal simplification of multiple pre-individual assemblages and processes of subjectification. As for the organism, the notion is too driven by the positivist ambition to match the perceived certainties of theology to take into account the insubstantiality and sheer randomness of its coming-into-form.

The second important step implies a *dismantling* of the organism with the aim of restoring it to its ontology of becoming and unrest, of 'chaos' understood as 'creative self-genesis' (Babich, 2004, p. 144), devoid of a creator. One way of understanding the process we are invited to undergo is by perceiving the organism as nothing more than a particularly robust form of sedimentation or coagulation. The task is to work through the sedimentation and begin a delicate (and potentially dangerous) process of dismantling. In psychological terms, this is akin to the migration from individuation to *dividuation* – from *monad* to *nomad*, the journey from the necessary affirmation of one's subjectivity – a place of irreplaceability and ethico-political emergence – to the recognition of one's inherent multiplicity and subsequent refusal to chase a delusional, coercive 'integration'. This implies an understanding that the 'fundamentally divided, fragmented nature of the self does not require integration' (Bazzano, 2019, p. 69). Dismantling the organism means refusing, in Artaud's words, the judgment of God (Artaud, 1947) and of God's shadows – the hefty baggage of guilt and shame about bodily functions, the eternalist resentment towards this perishable and flawed existence, the tall shadow of sin cast on our modest joys during our brief transit on the Earth's crust. It means refusing to both suppress and crush the creative liberated body (Harris, 2016).

The above may sound like the familiar mix of Freud and Marx in the service of the starry-eyed, supposedly emancipated libido of the 1960s, but here we face a different tune, a different kind of fusion. Narratives of freedom from the 1960s kept the two economies – libidinal (desire) and political (interest and capital) – distinctly separated. It worked like a charm, though not in the way we expected. Desublimation triumphed: as a result, our current sexual liberty is politically ineffectual, soaking up a wide range of cyberporn products, freely acting out the fantasies emanating from them via dating apps and cheerfully allowing the latest reactionary blockhead to strut his stuff in government. No sir. They are not two: libidinal and political economy are one and the same; it is 'an economy of flows' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1984, p. xviii). Possible applications to some of these ideas were recently investigated in workshops and seminars (e.g. Bazzano, 2020a, 2020b) and some of these applications included sexuality, dreamwork and sharing experiences and attitudes in relation to psychotropic substances.

I will refer to these applications briefly, partly because of the limited space here and partly because this is still work in progress.

Within the domain of sexuality, the Body-without-Organs invites us to extend and radicalize *drive* over *instinct*, culture (in the wider sense) over biology. What happens in Taoist sex when the man does not ejaculate and the energy between the lovers is allowed to circulate and expand? What happens if the supposed goal of sex is put aside? What if we no longer conceive of desire as lack but are open to see what a body can do and experience, transcending the limits of biology without resorting to transcendence? Procreation is *merely* one possible direction: the direction of biological organisms, of State and family; the perpetuation of the species. What happens if the direction changes, if drive takes over instinct, if we reach the limits of what a body can do? We come near an *ecstatic* experience (from the Greek *existanai*, ‘to put out of place’), a *threshold*. And that threshold, that unmapped country is the Body-without-Organs. This does not mean that anything goes. Freedom needs discipline. We must work diligently towards our emancipation and engage the three domains ‘that most directly bind us: the *organism*, *signifiante*, and *subjectification*’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2004, pp. 176–177, emphasis added). On *each* layer, discipline (practice, dedication, *studium*) is needed:

You will [discipline] your body –otherwise you’re just depraved. You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted – otherwise you’re just a deviant. You will be a subject, nailed down as one, a subject of the enunciation recoiled into a subject of the statement –otherwise you’re just a tramp’ ().

Sexuality is culture, Merleau-Ponty reminded us (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/1989); it pirouettes effortlessly on the *necessities* of biology. This is not to say that biology is devoid of its own unabashed poetry. But Deleuze takes it one step further. In his critical study of Sacher-Masoch’s classic novel *Venus in Furs*, he points out that explicit in the text is found a ‘transcendence of the imperative ... toward a higher function’ ((Deleuze, 1991, p. 20); *Sex as theatre*: one more step away from biology and one step closer to that threshold of intensity that is the Body-without-Organs where this body gets a taste of what it can do. Kraft-Ebing, the Austrian psychiatrist responsible for coining the term ‘masochism’, pathologized this form of sexual theatre and with it the sacredness of mutual contractual vows. And there is more: ‘masochism’, Deleuze tells us, does not rest on the alleged centrality of the father. Instead, it regales us with a *cultured* view of eroticism, and it is not surprising that this heightened form of sexual expression ‘should seek historical and cultural confirmation in mystical or idealistic initiation rites’ (Ibid, p. 21).

The same applies to yet another form of creative divergence from biology and in favour of desire: *courtly love*: the stylized, stirring dance of glances and

gestures where ‘a caress is as strong as an orgasm’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2004, p. 173), a *spiritualization* (the original name for sublimation) that prizes our longing for love over love ‘itself’.

The second layer: Significance (not significance)

Merleau-Ponty (1945/1989) famously wrote of the distinction between ‘*le dit*, the common coin of social exchange and *le dire*, the newly minted, emergent language of a specific encounter’ (Harrison, 2020, p. 206). Plateau 5 of *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987/2004) takes us one step further: conventional language (*le dit*, or ‘the spoken’) is not quite a *neutral* entity but a form of comprehensive indoctrination. School teaches us *order words*, the social hierarchies implicit within them and how to ‘know our place’; this deep process of socialization grips our very soul. In *Anti-Oedipus*, capitalism is denounced as the main cause of mental illness and for the hindering of creativity in human beings. Failing to undergo ‘successfully’ the coercive process of indoctrination enacted by capitalist ideology, or simply struggling to obey and adapt to the dictates of capitalist society and its widespread commodification of living beings is at the origin, in *Anti-Oedipus*, of various degrees of mental distress. For that reason, *le dire*, a living speech, might take a little more than the good will of two individuals in the therapy room. It may require the dismantling of conventional language. The way out is experimentation, creating a world anew by fashioning a new language.

Art, poetry, literature, plus experimental forms of theatre and performance all provide us with tremendous inspiration so that (I am being optimistic) even the hackneyed world of research in psychotherapy may one day come alive. It may leave behind the jaded formulas of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The permission to roam freely, starting from a deep questioning of the speaking subject/researcher may push research towards a threshold: a tentative name for this is postqualitative inquiry (St Pierre, 2020; Bazzano, 2021)

The third layer: Subjectification

We become a subject (a ‘self’) through a difficult process of individuation, by accessing an internal locus of evaluation, a healthy ‘reliance upon our own experience’ (Rogers, 1951, p. 156). We become a subject through acknowledgement/recognition in an encounter with the other, whether through conflict or kinship (Hegel, 1807/1977). We become a subject against a backdrop that sees the ‘interpenetration of minds, conscious and unconscious’ (Benjamin, 2018, p. 1). All the above viewpoints are valid to a degree, but they bypass an essential factor, highlighted in *Anti-Oedipus*: we become

subjects through **acquiescence**. To be a *subject* – even the more sagacious ‘body-subject’ of phenomenology – is to be *subjected* to interpellation (Althusser, 1970/2014): the policeman calling my name in the street, demanding to verify my identity; the doctor holding the files of my clinical history; the psychiatrist charting the graph of my societal adaptation; the professional body regaling me with a membership number for a modest sum of money and the implicit promise to comply with the status quo; the theoretical parish in whose bosom I am truly welcome *if* I don’t abstain from faithfully chanting the names of the holy trinity – empathy, congruence, and unconditional positive regard – or the Capitalized Teutonic Abstracts – Being, Authenticity, Universal Relatedness – shadows of God all of them, homesickness for an Eden that never ever was, the holistic dream of harmony that twists and thwarts our sacrosanct struggle for liberation.

The way out, once again, is experimentation: nomadism of the subject, acknowledgement of the rhizomatic multiplicity which *constitutes* the self rather than going back to arboreal roots *within* the self. The latter view, found in several psychotherapeutic approaches, acknowledges multiplicity but *merely* as **attribute** of a substantial entity called the self. They all concur – whether they speak of parts, personifications, objects, configurations, or subpersonalities – in their describing what are essentially vassal epigones to the alleged sovereign, and usurper, of the psychical domain: the subject. It may be worth mentioning here, albeit only in passing, recent studies linking Deleuzian thought to the work of Fernando Pessoa (2006, 2020) and the latter’s use, in his writings, of *heteronyms* (Gil, 2008; Kennedy, 2019). *These* are entirely autonomous writers, with different names, different personalities and genders, different styles and worldviews. Each one *of them traces* a distinctive *line of flight*. Contemporary psychotherapy would no doubt want to ‘integrate’ these alleged ‘parts’, using its insights and expertise in the service of control and the constipated discontent of the civilization it *wants to* serve. But with Pessoa, as with Deleuze, the artist, philosopher or analyst chooses a different role: not the superintendent of psyche but a fellow traveller.

Concluding remarks

The Body-without-Organs presents us with the possibility and the challenge of coming closer to a threshold of intensity that gives a taste, however fleeting, of what a body can do. This is a taste of *power* in the Spinozian sense, as the power to be affected by this beautiful and sad world. The three layers are tentative maps drawn on sand; they give us something to work with in a potentially exciting journey. Could this be the very task of psychotherapy? Yes – if we take to heart Deleuze’s **teachings** and move away from the

narratives of conformity that have taken hold of your strange profession.

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