

## ARTICLE

### **Freedom, Teleodynamism, Creativity**

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**ABSTRACT:** After presenting a critique of both negative and positive freedom this essay pursues the relation between creativity and freedom, drawing upon Foucault, Deleuze and Nietzsche to do so. Once you have understood Nietzsche's reading of a culturally infused nest of drives in a self, the task becomes easier. A drive is not merely a force pushing forward; it is also a simple mode of perception and intention that pushes forward and enters into creative relations with other drives when activated by an event. You can also understand more sharply how the Foucauldian tactics of the self work. We can now carry this insight into the Deleuzian territory of micropolitics and collective action by reviewing his work on flashbacks and "the powers of the false." If a flashback in film pulls us back to a bifurcation point where two paths were possible and one was taken, the powers of the false refer to the subliminal role the path not taken can play in the formation of creative action. As you pursue these themes you see that neither old, organic notions of belonging to the world nor do negative notions of detachment as such do the work needed. Deleuze's notion of freedom carries us to the idea of cultivating "belief" in a world of periodic punctuations. The latter are essential to creativity and incompatible with organic belonging. They are also indispensable supports of a positive politics today.

**Keywords:** Freedom, teleodynamism, drives, powers of the false, Deleuze, Nietzsche, Foucault.

In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault confesses his motivation to study how the early Greeks fashioned themselves as subjects of erotic pleasure: "It was curiosity—the only kind of curiosity, in any case, that is worth acting upon with that degree of obstinacy: not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what it is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself. After all, what would be the value of the passion for knowledge if it resulted in only in a certain amount of knowledgeable and not...in the knower's straying afield of himself? There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking

and reflecting at all." Again, the desire is to learn "to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently."<sup>1</sup>

The statement, often quoted, remains haunting. To me it expresses dissatisfaction with extant conceptions of freedom while nonetheless placing freedom at the center of Foucault's own concerns. It links freedom close to thinking, to perception, and, indeed, to getting free of oneself. It places freedom at the center without promising to provide a definition of it that fits neatly into preset conceptions of desire, agency, intention, and purpose. Somehow an encounter with a Greek tradition that links freedom to tactics of the self might spur our thinking about tactics and freedom.

Similar themes are discernible in Deleuze. He does not discuss his conception of freedom much, but one gets the impression that it is always on his mind. And he repeatedly says that thinking starts when there is an encounter between a habit of thought installed in us and an event of whatever type that shocks and disturbs that habit. You can hear a crossing between thinking and freedom here.

In Anglo-American theory, the contending traditions of positive and negative freedom stand out. Negative freedom, to give a cursory overview, focuses on the existing desires, wants and goals of people or "agents". It asks to what extent these desires are constrained or released into action. Freedom is identified with the second movement. The process by which desires are formed is shuffled into the background. On this reading a liberal society would be one in which most people have a fair degree of freedom in "civil society" to act on their desires. Such a reading fits best with a conception of the automatic rationality of impersonal market processes. The impersonal market processes reduce coercive controls by the state and release you from explicit coercion by other individuals. But, once again, critics, including Foucault, emphasize how modes of discipline, governmentality, and biopolitics infiltrate civil society and impersonal market processes, both channeling desires and actions and setting impersonal (rather than personal or intended) constraints within which desires can be fulfilled. I must learn the stock market to manage my individual retirement account once guaranteed pensions have been dismantled in favor of these accounts. The proponents of negative freedom often evade this charge by saying that none of these channeling processes is -(are) imposed by individuals upon other individuals. Negative freedom, the autonomy of individual desires, the impersonal market: each is wheeled out to protect the sanctity of the others in a circle of interdeterminations.

Positive freedom now comes to the rescue. It is usually set in the context of a communal, national or collective image of the good life. We are free to the extent that our desires—once they have been wound through complex loops of self-reflexivity and institutional reform—take the shape of goals and ends that will fulfill us in the long run. Once such a teleological transfiguration of desire and institutions has been installed, we can act effectively to promote those ends.

Foucault troubles both of these conceptions. Sure, he would include the ability to act upon your desires as *part* of freedom. But that does not get to the heart of it. He also prizes a

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. By Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), pp. 8-9.

degree of self-reflexivity. But he supplements reflexivity by “techniques of the self” by means of which you act experimentally upon those extant tendencies of agency, desire and action that are below direct regulation through recourse to the reflexive arc. (“I desire to smoke, but as I appraise that desire from the second order perspective of my deepest life goals, it is one that I seek to supersede. And yet the reflexive arc alone does not enable me to quit.”) Foucault supplements the reflexive arc because it does not reach deeply enough into the constitution of a self or institution. Tactics of the self (and micropolitics at the constituency and institutional levels) work on encultured habits and tendencies to action below direct conscious control installed in the soft tissues of life. Such tactics are not governed by a singular goal of intrinsic realization, however. For Foucault thinks that these goals both exceed the reflexive arc and periodically take surprising turns that are both essential to the idea of freedom and unamenable to being fitted into any conception of an intrinsic, final human end.

The negative and positive images of freedom, then, are both flat, even flat-footed, as Thomas Dumm has shown in his admirable chapter in *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom* with respect to Isaiah Berlin, negative and positive freedom, heterotopias and the politics of discipline. The tacit Berlin image of a normal agent of negative freedom, he shows, is constructed in part by disciplinary processes.<sup>2</sup> Both negative and positive freedom thus leave extant images of human desire, agency, intention, and purpose too intact. I add that neither speaks sufficiently to the strange role of *creativity* in freedom. This latter insufficiency, I think, is one that both Foucault and Deleuze would dramatize. Can the negative and positive images be reworked to incorporate these other dimensions? The idea of creativity needs first to be elaborated a bit further before that issue can be decided.

What is creativity? Where is it located? Are we *agents* of creativity or does creativity qualify the ideas of agency as mastery or autonomy? What role does *intentionality* play in it? If intentionality precedes creativity, does that precedence in fact deflate the latter, merely relocating the site (inside the formation of intentionality) where the mystery of creativity is lodged? Does the inclusion of creativity in freedom, then, subtract agency from freedom? How could that be? If coming to terms with creativity requires us to qualify traditional images of agency, what does it do to extant notions of causality? What is the relation, if any, between creativity in the human estate and variable degrees of creativity in several nonhuman processes?

Would it be better, after these questions have been posed, to return real *creation* to God and to subtract creativity from both the world and humanity? Or perhaps to drop both ideas from our image of the cosmos in order to project the possibility in principle of the consummate explanation of everything? If you refuse both gestures, is it incumbent upon you to *distribute differential degrees of creativity* between the human estate and a variety of nonhuman forces in order to make much sense of it *for* the human estate?

My sense, again, is that creativity is an essential element in any image of freedom that Foucault and Deleuze could embrace. Indeed, it forms a key part of Deleuze’s conception of the cosmos as a world of becoming set on several interacting tiers of temporality. I think for

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Dumm, *Michel Foucault and the Politics of Freedom* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996).

both Foucault and Deleuze, creativity is a process in which we participate in uncanny ways rather than one- over which we preside. It is therefore a process that upends the images of desire, will, agency, and intentionality often installed in negative and positive traditions of freedom. These images, as they now stand, help to render us unfree, while an embrace of creativity renders us neither masterful agents of negative freedom nor reflexive masters of positive freedom. Its inclusion makes the human adventure interesting, and it renders its dangers palpable.

### **Creativity and Teleodynamism**

Alfred North Whitehead introduced, I believe, the awkward locution “creativity” into late-modern philosophical thought. He probably thought that the more simple locution “creation” was too agent centered, in both its theological and humanistic uses. Creativity is an “ultimate term” in Whitehead’s philosophy, meaning that you can show when it occurs and point roughly to how it happens, but you cannot delineate the processes entirely. Creativity is a process within which we are embedded rather than the effect of an agent, and it is even tinged by an aura of mystery.<sup>3</sup> It happens within constraints. The constraints are explained in large part by the fact that at any moment in chrono-time the universe is composed of “actual entities” of innumerable types, which help to set preconditions for new events. An actual entity is any formation that has some tendency toward self-consistency, such as a rock, a cell, a liver, a tornado, a system of ocean currents, a continent, an organism, a civilization, a mist, or a human being. *Remembering that the human organism is itself composed of many interacting bodies of heterogeneous sorts—including viruses infused into organs, bacteria, and brain nodules inherited from reptiles—we can say that the creative process is lodged in the reverberations within or between entities which periodically arise, including the energized excesses that occupy and entangle them.*

It is through the periodic acceleration of “vibrations” within and between entities that novel formations emerge. As Whitehead says, “Newton would have been surprised at the modern quantum theory and at the dissolution of quanta into vibrations.”<sup>4</sup> When elements from one entity press toward another there is the issue of whether, and if so in what ways, it will “ingress” into it. And then there is the “conrescence” by which the entering element is reorganized to fit within the entity and the entity is modified to adjust to the entering element.

Two or more elements in tension; vibrations between them; the creative formation of the new through conrescence; theorists of thermodynamic systems in disequilibrium such as Ilya Prigogine have taken preliminary steps in showing how such a mode of self-organization could work. But more is needed to come to terms with the most complex processes. Drawing sustenance from Terence Deacon, the biologist and neuroscientist who embraces complexity theory, we can now think about complex vibrations that periodically display a “teleodynamic” character. They do not point toward a *telos* embodying a final purpose, but to a *teleodynamic* process irreducible to finalism. Deacon first clarifies the idea of teleodynamic activity by ref-

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<sup>3</sup> Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: Corrected Edition*, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1929, 1978), 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

erence to a *searching* process we pursue in a cloudy situation. “Teleodynamic activity,” he says, “is what we must engage in when trying to make sense of an unclear explanation...And it characterizes what is difficult about creative thought processes.”<sup>5</sup> We need, first, to appreciate how simple teleodynamic processes reach deep into the biosphere.

A paramecium, blocked from climbing the glucose gradient at which it aims, backs up and adjusts its route. A dung beetle, pushing dung toward a destination, makes more complex maneuvers to reach its end when it is blocked. So these behaviors are teleological, but the creative search merely involves the means to an end, not an adjustment of the end.

Sometimes, however, not only the means, but also the end alters through a process of self-organization. When a simple organism is disturbed or stressed it may enter a teleo-searching process. The end to be pursued is cloudy, and a process of condensation occurs if and as a new end becomes solidified. Note that it initially *pursues* a cloudy end rather than responding predictably to a blind cause.

Consider species evolution. When a mutation occurs in a complex organism, the noise that arises in the relation between the mutation and the unfolding embryo activates a searching process in the latter. As Deacon says “organisms are spontaneously emergent systems that can be said to act on their own behalf (although acting and selfhood must be understood in a minimal and generic sense)” What’s more, “organisms are both components and products of the evolutionary dynamic”.<sup>6</sup> Persistently incomplete in themselves in ways that require complex exchanges with the environment, and periodically facing new ingressions (e.g., a mutation triggered, say, by sexual exchange or sun rays or infection), they search and strive beyond the scope of their current organization without initially having a precise end in sight.<sup>7</sup> This is what Gilles Deleuze means, I suspect, by “involution”.

Teleodynamic activity folds a creative element into biological evolution, when, for instance, a searching dynamic is set into motion between a mutation that emits noise and an unfolding embryo that strives to read aspects of that noise as a sign or when two genomes find themselves in the process of becoming one through symbiogenesis. “Information” for Deacon is thus irreducible to a flat transmission process between mutation and replication; the transmission often triggers a teleodynamic process by which a new formation sometimes emerges from a creative interplay that translates noise into signs.

I am suggesting so far that the notion of teleodynamic activity is pertinent to at least some of the processes Whitehead identifies as periodically creative. And that, along with Whitehead, Deacon pushes variable degrees of teleodynamic activity and creativity deep into the biosphere. The longer story is that in order to redeem real creativity in human life it seems

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<sup>5</sup> Terrence, Deacon, *Incomplete Nature: How Mind Emerged From Matter* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012), p. 359.

<sup>6</sup> Deacon, *Ibid*, p. 273.

<sup>7</sup> Deacon’s account of the teleodynamic process may have some things in common with the discussion of *autopoiesis* in Bruce Clarke and Mark Hansen eds., *Emergence and Embodiment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009). The authors in some of these essays distinguish *autopoiesis* from more simple processes of self-organization. My tendency is to speak of differing degrees of self-organization.

wise to come to terms with its differential degrees of operation both below consciousness and beyond the human estate.

It is worth noting that the element of creativity is linked to a teleological component. For the creative process involves movement back and forth between at least two actants, say a genetic mutation and a searching response that translates part of it into a signal received, or an inner, searching dialogue between drives in the same self after a shock has been received, or, on another plateau, a fecund conversation between two people, in which the result that emerges was not implicit in the beginning, or, on yet another, a late night political meeting in a stressful situation at which the idea of holding the first teach-in emerges. (I, in fact, attended that teach-in, and nobody planned it before it emerged from the stressful give and take, in which the governor of Michigan had placed students and faculty under threat).

Such teleosearches occur in a cosmos assumed to be open to some uncertain degree. So you have teleo-searching processes without ontological finalism, and in some cases without consciousness. Moreover, the teleodynamic processes that contribute to *human* creativity are not themselves reducible to the conscious, intentional activities of molar human agents. They, rather, first flow into conscious agency from below, reflecting the partial upshot of activities in play below the dim searchlight consciousness shines on its own preconditions of being. Then it plays a modest role once those results are filtered into it. Creativity exceeds consciousness; it makes human freedom possible; and it renders agency and intentionality complex and uncanny. My sense is that Nietzsche already grasped much of this complexity. And since both Foucault and Deleuze were left Nietzscheans, a Nietzschean analysis of drives may speak to their appreciation of the creative element in freedom too.

### Drives and Tactics

Nietzsche understands the self to be a complex social structure consisting of a multitude of interacting drives with significant variations of completeness, complexity, and speed. A feeling of disgust floods over you quickly, because the line of communication between an olfactory perception and the thought imbued emotive response is very quick. Moral indignation moves more slowly. *Ressentiment* may slide into crevices and surface more slowly yet; it can even infect a noble feeling of indignation in the way a virus infects a lung. I read the theory of a nest of human *drives* below consciousness presented in *Daybreak* as a more complex version of what Deacon says about teleodynamic processes in simple organisms and the evolutionary process. To succeed in such an account helps us to discern how all these thinkers can be both naturalists and theorists of creativity within and beyond the human estate.

Consider a quote from *Daybreak*:

“However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of drives which constitute his being. He can scarcely name even the cruder ones; their number and strength, their ebb and flood, their play and counterplay among one another, and above all the laws of nutriment remain unknown to him.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, trans by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) #119, p. 118.

To Nietzsche, the self is replete with multiple, heterogeneous, culturally inflected drives, activated at different moments and periodically blocking, overwhelming, and infecting one another. A drive, indeed, is a section of the past contracted into a *tendency* of the present; sometimes it is implacable and sometimes weak, sometimes it is agreeable to a new union with others (the symbiogenesis of drives) and sometimes resistant to such a union. Drives form unions and conjunctions below the threshold of consciousness, influencing intentions and judgments. Semblances of some of these unions do reach consciousness, but the semblance is more abstract than the nest from which it is drawn. The “ego” to him is a thin membrane of consciousness that both expresses the effects of such unions and works upon them in modest ways. So far, so obvious. And Whitehead would agree to this point as well.

The word “drive” can function as a noun or a verb, or be ambiguous as in the word “arrest”. “You are under arrest; you are arrested.” The noun form thus contains a trace of the verb mode within it, as being placed under arrest speaks to a previous movement that would have continued until arrested. Same with drives: “You have a drive; it drives you.” A drive expresses movement, impulsion, pressure, even sometimes implacability. It contains more, too. Drives are not *blind forces* pushing forward as a billiard ball pushes another ball into a pocket. A drive, once triggered by an event, *is an affect-imbued mode of perception, intentionality, and interpretation on the way*. A drive’s powers of perception and intention may be simple, something like that of a spider when it aims at the fly in its web or, in a more complex and gentle instance, a humming bird when it sucks nectar from a flower. A drive may be cloudy as well, as when you are driven forward by erotic pressure but remain unsettled as to what mode of conjugation at which to aim or when we vaguely seek a new collective alliance but have little idea about what its terms might become. Here the cloudiness may be real, while the process is on the way, not merely an epistemological limitation that screens first person experience and third person observers from an object that is clear and simple in itself. The aim is consolidated on the way. Teleodynamism.

If you grasp Nietzsche’s drives in this way, you see more sharply why tactics of the self are so important to both Nietzsche and Foucault and why they carry some potential to be successful. You also see how micropolitics can work upon constituencies, deploying a mix of images, rhythms, soundings, and words to work upon collective drive complexes festering below the level of full conscious awareness and/or direct regulation by will-power alone. The character of drive complexes helps us to see *what* both tactics and micropolitics work upon; it also provides clues as to how they can do their work.

Heterogeneous drives wrestle with and infiltrate each other, particularly when a new human or nonhuman event triggers a specific nest of intersecting drives. That is why they are not well understood dialectically. They periodically combine or coalesce, sometimes creating a new result out of subliminal, teleodynamic exchanges between them. The new result is neither the result of an *aggregation* of blind causes nor is it the explicit rendering of what was *implicit* all along; it is neither efficient cause nor holistic purpose. Sometimes a teleodynamic searching process is triggered, in which several drives adjust to each other until a result bubbles up that was not there before. The teleodynamic process promotes the possibility of real

creativity in human life in a way both comparable to and more complex than how it proceeds in species evolution.

Both Nietzsche and Foucault think that the self-conscious regulation of drives is limited, partly because we only *know* imperfectly the drives that help to compose us and partly because the stubbornness of a drive or a drive complex may exceed the conscious power to regulate it directly. This, again, is where tactics of the self come in. A tactic of the self, on the reading advanced here, is an experimental strategy to touch and work on micro-perceptual/intentional processes beneath conscious regulation hovering on the threshold of conscious attention. This is the most powerful way the ego operates as a “fellow worker in the construction of our character and our destiny.” The accompanying problem, however, is that such tactics are experimental. You do not know for sure what will bubble up when you become a guinea pig of yourself.

Setting micropolitics to the side for now, consider briefly a few examples of tactics (or “techniques” or “arts”) of the self-applied to a nest of micro-intentional processes. You might engage in meditation, allowing this or that portal in the self to forge new affiliations with other portals or drives. You might prime your dream life before going to sleep, crystallizing, say, a stubborn strategic or intellectual problem in the hope that, after the dream work is done, a new idea, concept, strategy or theme will emerge at daybreak for further appraisal. *Daybreak*. You may go for a long slow run along the edge of a lake after first crystallizing a complex issue and then setting it aside, to see what thoughts or judgment candidates emerge—as if from nowhere—from the run. You might engage in neurotherapy, whereby a therapist encourages you to move this neuro-sign up on the wall and that one to the right, to see what changes in mood and thinking emerge. You might attend a film or listen to new music with numerous others, allowing, say, multimodal attention to films in the company of others to dramatize same sex affection to help modulate blocks in us against appreciating that mode. You might listen to the soundscapes of John Luther Adams to allow more refined sensitivity to the sound of birds, wind, or ocean currents to emerge and to increase the extent to which you receive them as active forces in the world.

Tactics of the selfwork work on a cluster of dispositions to perception, intention, judgment, and interpretation that are already installed in you. Those dispositions and judgments are things of this world, as Foucault says, that *may* be susceptible to change. As he says upon rejecting the spectatorial mode of optimism but refusing to adopt generic pessimism: “My optimism would consist rather in saying that so many things can be changed, fragile as they are, bound up more with circumstance than necessities, more arbitrary than self-evident, more a matter of complex, but temporary historical circumstances than of inevitable anthropological constants.”<sup>9</sup> Tactics and micropolitics work together.

Each tactic can be tethered to the kind of ethic of cultivation advanced by both Nietzsche and Foucault whereby you experiment with ways to accentuate gratitude for being and the excess of life over being and to appreciate our participation in the strange element of creativity that periodically courses through life. This is the point at which Nietzsche sets the stage

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<sup>9</sup> Michel Foucault, “Practicing Criticism,” in P. Kritzman ed., *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 156.



at once for Foucauldian techniques of the self, the tethering of those techniques to a positive ethos of cultivation, and a Deleuzian upscaling of both into the multi-modal micropolitics of media life.

One goal of such arts of the self, you might say, is to become otherwise than yourself as you engage blockages in and between us, doing so to better affirm a world of world of multi-dimensional pluralism and to become more attentive to fragility of late modern exchanges with a variety of nonhuman force fields. Of course, there is no necessity that the arts or techniques must move in this direction. So the question often chanted by NeoKantians, Straussians, deliberationists, rational choice theorists, and finalists, is *What* or *Whom* provides the authority, the criteria or the source of attempts to propel the arts or techniques in this direction. Will the effort not fall apart, those ask who might teeter on the verge of nihilism themselves unless they could locate an authoritative external or internal source? Don't we need either an external source of authority, or a settled telos of the world, or a compelling transcendental argument to provide its authoritative base? To Nietzschean and Foucauldian carriers of an ethos of cultivation in a world without a final telos, the living seed that encourages the initiation of ethical strategies of presumptive generosity is that strain or semblance of gratitude for the fecundity of life that is already festering in us if we are lucky—a seed that can now be amplified tactically. We present this as a contestable, earthy source of ethical life to be placed into competition with other sources.<sup>10</sup> We even suspect that the noblest versions of other ethical perspectives draw tacitly upon this source themselves. If such a seed is absent altogether in some, or if it has been overwhelmed culturally by the politics of *ressentiment*, we may face what Nietzsche would call a tragic situation. Deleuze and Foucault may concur at these points too. An ethic of cultivation rests upon contingent sources, and in a world of becoming it issues no guarantee against a tragic result if the energies available for mobilization in this or that fraught situation are insufficient to those needed.

As you come to terms with the complexity, layered character, and opacities that constitute the self as a rich assemblage of tendencies you are also on the way to a more refined grasp of how the politics of manifold pluralism works on a complex, social field. To explore the complexity of drives is to break with a culture of "individualism" set in the simplicity of a centered self, whose exchanges with other selves are organized only around a will, a contract, a schedule of fixed interests, a simple model of deliberation, or coercive engagements. Each

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<sup>10</sup> The kind of political activism I embrace requires the mobilization of a complex pluralist assemblage. In such an assemblage there will be multiple onto-orientations, including participants committed to a salvational God, those committed to a morality of transcendental principle, those adopting an ethic of cultivation, those seeking contact with an impersonal, nonsalvational God, and so on. In this essay I express the orientation I myself embrace in pursuing such a pluralist assemblage. What is needed for such an assemblage to work is that several parties come to appreciate, without existential resentment, how the source each engages is contestable in the eyes of others. So, as is made abundantly clear in other writings, the nontheistic ethic of cultivation I embrace is not advanced as a universal that all others must adopt; it is, however, presented in an invitational way here, for those who may find it tempting. The devil is in the attractions. The same holds for the notion of creativity advanced here. The idea is to seek relations of agonistic respect with those who reserve creative power to a God or deny it to humanity for other reasons. Deep pluralism.

drive within the social structure of the self is triggered by its relations with other drives within *and* with outside forces and triggers, intentional or otherwise. The formation of a generous ethos within a self communicates back and forth with a plurality of constituencies with which it is entangled through multiple modes of interdependence and communication. A rich self and a pluralist ethos. An ethos of pluralism and pluralization results from multifarious modes of communication, conveyed through gestures, postures, words, voices, images, rhythms, and the resonances back and forth between them. For drives find expression in facial expressions, unconscious gestures and behavioral patterns of insistence as well as in words. Of course, such an array can coalesce in destructive and dangerous ways too. Hence, Deleuze on the micropolitics of fascism, Foucault's preliminary attempt to chart the fraught relationships between neoliberalism and biopolitics, and my exploration of the dangerous emergence of an evangelical-capitalist resonance machine in the United States.<sup>11</sup>

The teleodynamic multiplicity of a self is thus always already entangled with larger social complexes or assemblages through innumerable threads, ties, and interdependencies. This is how Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, and Whitehead, disagreeing with each other in some important respects, all transcend the confines of both individualism and organicism, as well as any model of reflexivity that pays too little heed to tactics of the self and micropolitics. Doing so, they uncover clues about how creativity periodically emerges out of multiple entanglements.

We are perhaps now in a position to interpret an otherwise dark saying from Nietzsche, one, as we shall see in the next section, Deleuze would almost certainly endorse. Nietzsche has already repudiated both organic and mechanistic philosophies; he has now reached a point at which he hesitates to lodge his alternative in the language of chance. Chance, you might say, is the only counter to invoke against those who conceive the world in mechanistic terms *only if you yourself lack an image of creative process*. While opposing both the organic and mechanistic images with the theme of a world of becoming, Nietzsche says that we need "to recognize the active force, the creative force in the chance event—chance itself is only the clash of creative impulses."<sup>12</sup>

If you embrace the ideas of drives within the cultured body, of layered cultural entanglements between us, and of several nonhuman forces within and outside our bodies, then you see that they all express thought-imbued perspectives pitched at various levels of sophistication; now the "clash" between two impulse/perspectives can periodically issue in a formation that is new. It is reducible to neither that which was already implicit in it, nor to blind causality. Nor is it entirely reducible to chance. For the element of chance emerges from the *clash* of creative impulses. It is a creative event *expressing* an open teleodynamic that is not entirely reducible to the property of any pre-existing individual or collective agent.

Human freedom is precariously tied to creativity; a teleodynamic element of creativity flows out of simmering, entangled drives within the human body; multi-layered social rela-

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<sup>11</sup> See Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, edited by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), 673.

tions include transmissions of numerous sorts between drives; and we respond in multifarious ways to nonhuman forces, some of which themselves express differential degrees of teleodynamic activity. This is the preliminary account. A tacit dimension of it now needs to be brought into play.

### **The Powers of the False**

If creativity plays a critical role in freedom, for both good and ill, it is pertinent to explore its relation to agency and intentionality further. One way to do this is to engage Gilles Deleuze on the “powers of the false”, importing what I take to be the congenial notion of teleodynamic activity into his thinking as we do.

The false is not, in this sense, simply an untrue proposition. It is the outside that affects an inside. It seems to operate on more than one level of instigation. Let us call a “problematic” a loose complex of affect-imbued ideas in which each leans on others and some also ingress to a degree into others. Too loose to be a logical system, too interinvolved to be a mere heap or aggregate. Let’s say that now the carriers of a few interacting problematics encounter a dramatic event that throws them all into crisis.

Such a thing happened, for instance, during the Lisbon earthquake in 1755, killing thousands on All Saints Day through the triple whammy of a quake, a tsunami and a city wide fire caused by timbers in church roofs falling on candles lit to celebrate the day. Several established existential problematics were jolted. The event did not contradict each onto-problematic, for there were numerous ways to save each. It, rather, jolted each out of its slumber. John Wesley, the English protestant, responded to the event by *intensifying* his critique of the essential immorality of Lisbon and Catholicism. They deserved divine punishment, he said. Some Jesuit priests insisted that the punishment foretold the end of the world, which would arrive on the same day the next year. Lord Pombal, apparently attracted to a strand of the Enlightenment, responded by building the first earthquake resistant housing in Europe and by torturing and hanging the leading Jesuit who warned of the second coming. Voltaire responded, first by writing a heartfelt poem denying the desert of the afflicted and then by writing a biting satire entitled *Candide*, a story that satirizes both the theme of “the best of all possible worlds” and that of divine voluntarism and punitiveness. I imagine that Pombal’s vision of the Enlightenment would also have excited his ire.

Each of these figures, we can be confident, was initially the site of an internal struggle between contending drives, some of which pointed to a punitive response and others toward a more generous or beneficent one. The very *intensity* of the eventual modes of expression, once the internal struggles were resolved, intimates this. It was, for instance, conceivable that a simmering sense of empathy for the victims could have resonated in Wesley until he felt an overwhelming urge to allow previous doubts lurking in his official theology about the desert of divine punishment to surface. That moment of incipience was in fact resolved in another direction. But a new adventure of theological experimentation might have been triggered by the intersection between the event, his past, and the multiple drives incited by it. This is, indeed, how Las Casas had responded to comparable events at an earlier time, eventually calling (unsuccessfully) upon Spain and the Catholic Church to reconsider the conversion drive, with which they and he began when they encountered the “pagans” of the New World.

The Wesley turn not taken carries us to a subtle dimension or feature of “the false”. If a drive is a section of the past contracted into a purposeful tendency of the present, the false is the site of a bifurcation that simmered in the past but never became consolidated into action. *The false, on this register, is an incipient mode of affect-imbued thought that once festered as a cloudy drive or incipience on the way but was not in fact actualized in action.* It is the cloudy fork that was not taken. It is thus an element in the past that never was; too pluri-potential to be implicit and too active to be nothing or entirely erased. It is a potential turn not consolidated in clarity, action, or identity in the past because another mode of incipience did become consolidated.

This incipience that never was, however, may fester again in an individual or constituency under new circumstances that have enough affinities to the previous fork to call it up again. A creative conjunction can thus be formed between the false and a new situation. The protraction of the collective present thus periodically draws creative sustenance from reverberations between a new event, an incipience that never was, and the consolidation of a new action or judgment in the present.

We have now stepped onto the edge of the continent charted by Gilles Deleuze in *Cinema II*. I am not saying that an incipience not pursued is the only thing that Deleuze means by “the powers of the false.” But it is one of its dimensions. So when Deleuze explores the flashback, he is particularly interested in the type that *pulls us back to a previous bifurcation point that could have turned in more than one direction.* We are drawn back to a moment when a subliminal searching process was in motion from which one potential turn was drawn. The turn not taken continues to simmer, however, and it can be summoned at a later date to enter into conjunction with a new situation. This is the moment at which “the powers of the false” become active below conscious attention.

If you link what Nietzsche says about the nest of intersecting drives to Deleuze’s notion of the false, the latter becomes a pluripotential incipience on the way. (I use “incipience” to speak to virtual processes on the way towards actualization). An incipient potential that never was—the false—is triggered in a new setting. It can now enter into teleodynamic communication with both the event that triggers it and other drives, some of which are themselves cloudy.

A teleodynamic searching process is thus set into motion. Out of it, something new might emerge, for good or ill. The crystalline image in film brings us closer to such an uncanny process. In the organic image thought and action are bound together in a time that is linear and a space that is homogeneous; as when John Wayne knows what is to be done and does it. “But the crystalline image is completely different: the actual is cut off from its motor linkages. The virtual, for its part, then detaches itself from its actualizations, and becomes valid for itself. The two modes of existence are now combined in a circuit where the real and the imaginary, the actual and the virtual, chase after each other, exchange their roles and become indiscernible.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: The Time Image*. Trans. By Hugh Tomlinson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 127.

One way such a break in an organic image occurs is when a sound image and the visual image conjoined to it enter into a relation of dissonance, as, to take a simple example, when the images of rising mushroom clouds in the last scene of *Dr Strangelove* are joined to the light hearted music with which the film ends. We are now suspended in the middle of an “irrational cut”. This is a cut or dissonance that disconnects us from action oriented perception and judgment. Judgment now becomes suspended and you become exploratory. You may now, if you sink into the moment rather than angrily or derisively reacting to the experience of dissonance, become something like a seer for a time.<sup>14</sup> Your organic agency does not take charge of an action-oriented upshot already inscribed in you. Rather, you allow the shock to encourage subliminal communication between multiple drives installed within you that have been shaken. Several, thrown into turmoil by the micro-shock, are now experienced on one register as habits inadequate to themselves and on another as pluripotentialities that have previously been contained.

A searching process is launched during such a period of suspension. Here, an incipient moment blocked from actualization in the past now enters into uncanny communication with a new situation. Perhaps, if not today then after a night of dreaming, a new concept, tactic, desire, judgment, feeling, or pursuit will bubble up as if from nowhere. *The dream now functions as a tactic of the self more than as an object of endless interpretation.* In this case you may find yourself concluding that a new kind of satire is needed, as Voltaire found himself doing as he revised the earlier set of options he had entertained and then found that his heartfelt poem failed to dislodge a series of preset, competing, accusatory judgments brought to the shock of Lisbon. The powers of the false can help to foment creative thought on some occasions, in which thinking is neither entirely determined by antecedent events (the events never were) nor continues on the same train as before.

The false thus sets one condition of possibility for political participation in creativity. The powers of the false set into play the possibility of replacing the moral image of eternal judgment with that of more situational judgment set in a world composed of multiple interacting tiers of time and expressive of a mood of presumptive generosity.

### **Belonging and Attachment to a Punctuated World**

This fraught relation between the powers of the false and the possibility of periodic creativity, however, does not confirm a phenomenological vision in which belonging to the world would be automatic for us if only we delved more deeply into the layering of experience. By belonging in this sense I mean the feeling of comfort that comes with the image of a close, layered fit between self and world and between collectivity and world. That is why Deleuze appreciates Kierkegaard—the knight of a faith in divinity that can never consolidate itself into a steady doctrine—almost as much as he does Nietzsche, the non-theist who affirms an ungoverned cosmos and *prizes* those dissonances from which creativity periodically emerges.

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<sup>14</sup> I explore the relations of dissonance and interdependence between the theorist and the seer in chapter 6 of *A World of Becoming* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

The very preconditions of creativity are thus those that periodically *interrupt* the presumption of automatically belonging to the world. If we live during a time when neoliberal capitalism impinges more radically than heretofore upon more nonhuman processes with their own powers of metamorphosis such as climate, bacteria and viral flows, ocean currents, glacier flows, soil processes of self-renewal, and bee patterns of survival and pollination, we also live during a time that threatens to break the fantasy of belonging to this world automatically, without encountering sharp breaks or fault lines. The continued demand for such a mode of belonging conjoined to the historical sense that it is now lacking may constitute one source of those secular and religious fundamentalisms that now surge in and around us. As happened to John Wesley at another time, an existential demand is shaken by events. One response to such a shock is to reassert with new intensity and punitive thrust a doctrine that either promises to reinstate the organic experience of belonging or to compensate for its absence with transcendent guarantees or to punish those whose interpretation of the event threatens this sense of belonging. This is also often the most dangerous response and one that forfeits the experience of earthly attachment.

Another response is to value creativity and to appreciate dynamic processes of metamorphosis outside the human estate with which we intersect, while also admitting that creativity and belonging do not and cannot fit neatly together. Even more, creativity and following a train of thought do not fit neatly together either, since the former interrupts the train. And creativity and the quest for unpunctuated narratives do not either. Moreover, we can now see more closely how the exploration of creativity goes hand in hand with a sense of modesty about the very powers of humanity, since variable degrees of creativity are lodged in force fields outside the human estate too. Those mitochondria that infuse our cells were once independent microbes that later became part of us.

When Deleuze talks about “restoring belief in this world” he is talking, I think, about the need to translate the fantasy of either automatically belonging to the world or exerting consummate mastery over it into existential *belief* in a world replete with powers of metamorphosis and uncanny shocks that periodically jolt us from stupor. It is a world in process, with the pace of process sometimes slow in this zone and sometimes fast in that one. An event can be dangerous; it can also sometimes set conditions of possibility for real creativity. Often both occur at the same time. If in the crystalline image “the link between man and world is broken” the quest for automatic connection “can only be replaced by *belief*.”<sup>15</sup>

The breaks between thinking and narrative on the one hand, and the formation of the new on the other, may help to explain why many are so eager to subtract the element of real creativity from the very idea of human freedom. Some reserve *that* latter capacity to a single God who is its sole agent; others accept creativity, but cordon it within a domain of “art” carefully insulated from the cultural issues of identity, ethics, diversity, and politics; others appreciate creativity but restrict its legitimate site to entrepreneurs in an impersonal market; and, of course, yet others project a universe in which everything “in principle” is susceptible either to

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<sup>15</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema II*, p. 172.

a dialectic in which the implicit becomes more explicit or to deterministic explanation. If, however, you embrace the relation between periodic creativity and dissonance, then the need to break the organic sense of belonging now becomes acute, as does the corollary drive to *re-link* the world and us through the *artifice* of belief or faith. The latter becomes acute, in part because we can no longer treat nature as simply “the environment” in which we act.

The task now is to overcome existential resentment of the very idea of modes of dissonance that set conditions of possibility for the modest element of creativity you embrace. To do that, in turn, involves overcoming hubristic modes of explanation and sovereignty. Belief and attachment to this world certainly do not mean that you embrace every event that occurs, for you must resist some and fight radically against others. It means that you seek to become *worthy of the event* by affirming a world in which events punctuate history. This, to me, is where Deleuze and Nietzsche meet, amidst the significant differences between them.

If you prize the gift and risk in the element of creativity, if you conclude that it is worth affirming as part of life amidst the grave risks it brings, if you admit that we are often over-matched by nonhuman force-fields, then you may seek to overcome the existential resentment which is commonly formulated today as concern over the “lack” of automatic belonging to nature, or to God, or to culture, or to history. You will also become wary of the very idea of definitive, dispositive argument as a consummate power of human being. A speculative element now enters thinking, an affirmative element enters existential attachment, and an experimental element infiltrates into political activism. All three are needed together, since, if any is absent, you may not have become worthy of the event.

To affirm the creative element of freedom as gift and risk is to break with the demand to belong to the world automatically, or to be a bearer of the kind of judgment grounded in either a divine order or tight transcendental arguments. You will also admit that the density of language is important, but insufficient to creative thinking. Incompleteness, the insufficiency of argument and explanation, and time out of joint now lose their standing as mere lacks. They regain them as both dangers during the era of the Anthropocene and uncertain conditions of possibility for creativity in a cosmos that is open to an uncertain degree.

To affirm *belief* in this world is thus to come to terms more *positively* with a world in which gaps, breaks, dissonances, events, and messy intersections appear. Attachment to this world now becomes *tied* to incompleteness, belief, vitality, intrusive events, danger and creativity. Incompleteness and time out of joint lose their standing as mere lacks or losses to grieve; they regain them as *both* dangerous and ambiguous conditions for the vitality of being. They even become valued resources to draw upon as we finally engage the age of the Anthropocene and realize that none of the historical options we have struggled over is up to the task before us.

Again, periodic creativity definitely carries danger with it, particularly when it is attached to a vengeful or narrow spirituality. A new derivatives system, a new weapon, the rapid spread of a new disease, a new climate pattern, or a new vengeful social movement can be born out of it. There are no existential guarantees here. Many in the academy sense this. But they are then tempted to respond in the wrong way. They may seek to *quarantine* the creative process, reserving it to art alone, or to the will of God, or to impersonal markets. But such a

widely distributed process is difficult to quarantine. And creativity is needed during the era of the Anthropocene. It is better to embrace it cautiously.

Many, however, may still seek solace in promises of organic belonging, or existential fullness, or impersonal market rationality, or definitive modes of argument, or transcendent judgments, or the hubris of complete explanation, appealing to agendas that both put the squeeze on creativity and could recoil destructively upon life. It is not just the white working class that “clings to its religion and its guns”. And not all of them do that, anyway. Check out, for instance, the crevices in which some of your academic colleagues crouch.

I have purposely wandered a bit to place in conjunction several issues relevant to the inter-involved questions of freedom, creativity, danger, and attachment to this world. Reflecting upon the abundance of life over subjectivity, the nest of drives and teleodynamism, pluripotential incipience, an ethos of cultivation, the limits of explanation and narrative alike, the dangers of creativity, cultural drives to quarantine creativity, the importance of tactics of the self and micropolitics, the powers of the false in relation to a past that never was and a future yet to come, the elements of dissonance within thinking and being, the role of the event, and the shift from either primordial belonging or disengaged mastery to restoring belief in this world. To my mind all of these dimensions must be pursued together as we try to rethink freedom, danger, and possibility today.

Having initiated several connections across differences between Foucault and Nietzsche, I will now close with a few quotes from Deleuze in *Cinema II*. They may indicate both how the problematic pursued here makes contact with his enterprise and how he displays selective affinities to both Nietzsche and Foucault.

“But the good is outpouring life, the kind that knows how to transform itself, to metamorphosize itself, according to the forces it encounters.”

“The power of the false is delicate, allowing itself to be recaptured by frogs and scorpions.”

“But everything changes if in the perspective of becoming. What we can criticize in the forgers, as well as the truthful man, is their exaggerated trust for form: they have neither the sense nor the power of metamorphosis: they reveal an impoverishment of *élan vital*.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Deleuze, *Cinema II*, pp. 141, 147, 146.