
Grasping the Political in the Event

Interview with Maurizio Lazzarato, 27 November 2008

Maurizio Lazzarato: ML

Brian Massumi: BM

Erin Manning: EM

BM: I thought I would take as the point of departure a recent article I read in the *New York Times* (2008), where a certain kind of rhetoric – seen everywhere these days – was mobilized. This was an article about Morgan Stanley, one of the large financial institutions, which stated that the problem is that we consume too much. We are dying of consumption. The economic crisis was caused by an excess of consumption, and it's the fault of individual consumers who got themselves too indebted: it's a personal moral fault. You speak of debt as a technique that is an aspect of an ensemble of governmental assemblages. Could you elaborate on and react to this idea that the crisis was caused by the individual behaviour of consumers?

ML: I think that the financial crisis brings to the fore the governmental technique which is debt. I think that debt, therefore credit, is a governmental technique that is more widespread in the US than it is here in France. It is at once an economic technique and a technique for the production or the control of subjectivity. These things go together. It's interesting to see how governmentality produces itself at the crossing of different assemblages: the production of subjectivity and the economy.

We can see very clearly what was the neo-liberal project: generally speaking we can say that finance was a machine to transform rights into credits. Instead of getting a raise in salary, you would get a credit. Instead of having a right to retirement, you would get an individual life insurance. Instead of having a right to lodging, you would get the right to a mortgage. These are techniques of individualization.

Effectively rights are collective and must be recognized socially. Now there is individualization. Two mechanisms that seem contradictory have crossed: on the one side, we see a reduction of culpability of the individual with respect to debt. I am turning to Nietzsche here, from *The Genealogy of Morals*. At the beginning of *The Genealogy of Morals*,

Nietzsche underlines that debt and fault, in German, are the same thing: culpability (*Schuld*). To render the individual blameless with respect to individual debt is to render the individual culpable with respect to collective debt since effectively the people are responsible, as Nietzsche says, of all accumulated debt. We are trapped – as Deleuze and Guattari say in *Anti-Oedipus* – in an infinite debt: we are never finished with debt in capitalism.

This transformation of rights into debt or credit is absolutely contradictory because on the one hand neo-capitalism impoverishes people – it blocks salaries for years and reduces social services – and at the same time, it produces the illusion of enriching them through credit. It's completely crazy. It's a way of pretending to enrich people without changing the relation to property. This is somewhat the gist of the problem, I think. The political domain has effectively become a question of how to enrich people through access to credit. And so, the inflation that was previously tied to consumer goods has been transformed into finance itself.

We blocked salaries and destroyed public services, but we opened credit. Therefore it's not an individual crisis, it's a crisis of the political model that put this system in place, I think. As Bush used to say, this is the society of owners, of private property. This idea that everyone has to have individual property reaches a limit because the only way to make it come to fruition is to give access to credit. And then you have a veritable economic problem. In reality, it can't work for everyone to become a small property-holder without changing the concept of property – it's contradictory. So there is no real separation between real economy and financial economy because the real economy is the one that will end up blocking salaries and social services: they go together.

Since Marx, we know that finance is one of capital's metamorphoses, and the most important one because it's the most deterritorialized. What is new, I think, is that in this phase we have generalized access to credit. Human capital, as they say, refers to someone who has access to all the credit: credit for consummation, credit to be able to create oneself. In the US, there is always individual credit. So it's this system that is in crisis.

From an economic point of view, from the point of view of the production of subjectivity, we know since Nietzsche that debt is effectively the capacity of making a promise and therefore guaranteeing the fact that you will reimburse. It is the construction of memory, the construction of responsibility. And so it works profoundly on subjectivity since it's a mechanism of subject construction. What is credit? Credit is a promise of prosperity, capital's way of making/taking time. Time is stolen, not the

productive time of work, but social time. You indebt yourself today for 30 years, a debt for the house, for the car, for health insurance, etc. This is a technique that is present all the time that is not intermittent. When you have a debt, you get up every morning, as the American student I cite in *Le gouvernement des inégalités*¹ says, "living all the time with the problem of debt. I have to adapt my life all the time to the fact that I have to reimburse this debt. So I have to count, to see how much I am spending on the bus, how much I am spending for food. I have to calculate." So debt is a technique for the control of subjectivity which is very impersonal, that in actuality forces you to a whole other level of control because it's yourself that you need to control once you're in debt, it's yourself who needs to reorganize your life and all your spending with respect to the debts you have to pay back. These things go together perfectly – control of time, control of subjectivity, a projection into the future that is in a certain sense recuperated or captured by the debt. It's a mechanism that does not create what it seeks to create. And therefore it leads to a crisis. It's a story of the transformation of rights since, with Welfare, with Roosevelt, rights were distributed. And now, with this attempt to transform rights into credits – I think this is the deep logic of what is happening – we reach a limit.

BM: We say that debt is a technique of time. You say that it's a bridge between the present and the future. It's a line of continuity of time that is nonetheless broken by moments of doubt. You cite Deleuze and Guattari who speak of a macropolitics of society for which the inverse would be a micropolitics of insecurity. The rhetoric of the financial crisis revolves around security, investment, financing. Could you say a bit more about the production of insecurity by the mechanism of security?

ML: Now this is quite complicated, but I think that the term we have heard most, is confidence. We must re-establish confidence, and that's interesting. I think the financial systems transform confidence into security and substitute the problem of confidence with security. What does this mean? Marx says something very important about this, that effectively we have the impression that credit functions against the grain of the market and of the right to merchandise and the organization of work. Why is it that it functions at counter-current? Because, effectively, in the organization of work, in the market, relations between people pass through merchandise. Effectively the relation between people passes between objects. And so people are separated from themselves and from others through this Marxian dialectic. On the other hand, we have

¹ Maurizio Lazzarato *Le Gouvernement des inégalités : Critique de l'insécurité néolibérale*. Amsterdam : Éditions Amsterdam : 2008.

the impression today that it is no longer this type of relation that is in place since credit is founded on the promise I make to reimburse you, therefore I have confidence in you. We have the impression that there is a direct rapport, while it's the inverse.

And so here, we have the impression that we find ourselves in a world where we have confidence in each other, and where we must have confidence in those to whom we lend money. As though we had left the sphere of economic production and entered into the sphere of the production of values. Marx says that in fact confidence is the strongest mistrust and defiance. It's egotistical interest and individual interest at its best. As soon as we enter the sphere where people are no longer separated from one another through the assemblages of the market and merchandise, we are confronted with the human-as-such because we have to have confidence in him/her. In reality, this is the utmost defiance since debts circulate due to egotistical interests. So effectively the market itself produces insecurity since what we are facing is always a rival, always someone who is in some sense our enemy.

We have to limit. I have to limit my freedom, I have to limit my potential for action, I have to limit my capacity to act because effectively you are my enemy. You are my enemy, not my warring enemy, but a potential adversary. If we are moved by self-interest, the only way to gather and coordinate these egotistical interests is to introduce principles of security. And this is what happens. What Marx says is that we substitute confidence for mechanisms of security that are put into place even at the financial level.

EM: And if you went even further? I don't know if you've managed to think of how to continue this logic in a mode where what is happening with debt, borrowing, etc would be happening at a super-speculative level as we are now seeing on the global market. It's true that at a certain level, there is individual debt and borrowing from the bank, but there are also many levels of borrowing where it seems to me that the networks of the speculative movements of money are even more widespread. I don't know if you have thought about this at all in the context of the current economic crisis (2008).

ML: No, I haven't thought about this very much since it seems everyone else is focusing on it. I wanted to see what were the social relations at the origin of the crisis. Because everyone says it's speculation and all that. But in reality the origin of the crisis was not based on chance. The individual house is the symbol of individualism. Individual property is the house. Even symbolically, it's based on this. But effectively capitalism – once it's put

into place this mechanism – only works if this rapport is expansive. It has to be infinitely expansive. And that's why, according to me, it's all falling apart now. First, because it's an illusion to transform everyone into a small proprietor. Once this process is underway, it multiplies, since capitalism functions by enhanced reproduction, never by simple production. It's infinite deterritorialisation, as Deleuze and Guattari would say.

Everyone focuses attention only on the speculative mechanism, if you like, but this speculative mechanism, I think it's more useful to link it to reproduction. The enhanced reproduction of this mechanism refers to the enhanced reproduction of government, of its relations of power. And the incapacity of capital to develop this kind of government is what causes the system to go into crisis, I think. Everyone says that it's a problem of speculation, so once we regulate, everything will move back into order. I don't think that is the problem.

BM: They say that it's the end of neo-liberalism.

ML: But it's not at all the end of liberalism. What we see are all measures that are in reality neo-liberal. Everyone is speaking of the return of the State, but the State has always been there. We can't separate liberal policies from State intervention. They emerged together, it's banal to say.

EM: Would you say that what is happening today at the level of the economy and debt is impossible to understand "rationally": that there is no preconceived logic? That we are moving from speculative debt to a speculative logic?

ML: What we are seeing emerge, if we come back to what we've seen, is that there are three kinds of debt that are functioning. There is private debt, sovereign debt and social debt. This is what I tried to explain with Foucault. He says that liberalism is trying to solve the contradiction or the heterogeneity, rather heterogeneity since he does not use "contradiction," "heterogeneity" between the economic assemblage and the political assemblage. He says that we need a third element, and it's the social. And now, we see the same problem. We have private debt – effectively the economy – of entrepreneurs, and sovereign debt, the debt of the State, the State being the sovereign. And we need a third debt, the social debt, and it's through this social debt that we manage the Welfare State. The story that says capitalism that passes through the social to make different logics compatible – economic logic and political logic through the social – we find it again at the level of debt: private debt, sovereign debt and social debt. It plays itself out through different

types of debts, but always in a logic of debt that allows for an economic management as well as the management of subjectivity. This story of the mobilization of the three types of debt, I find very important. Today, I think, they will use the social debt once more but in a neo-liberal logic rather than a socialist one.

EM: Can you say more about what you understand by the “neo-liberal”?

ML: Let's take a look at what happened historically: there was a large phase of globalization that went from the end of the 19th century and open onto WW1. This is a very important phase of globalization, almost as important as the one that we lived until the 1980s. The level of socialization of the economy was lower than what we had achieved before WW1. And this led to the catastrophe of WW1, after the civil war in Europe, the Russian revolution, all this chaos. After there was the crisis of 1929, the crisis was resolved because elements of socialism were integrated into the politics of the state. At the time, even liberal thinkers were poised for an inevitable crisis and were convinced of the possibility of the success of socialism. And the crisis was resolved through the social debt that integrated elements of socialism and transformed what was a non-State common into a public State. It's the integration of the State, in moments of socialization, moments of becoming-common, moments of coordination that were outside the State. All these forms of solidarity, of mutuality that the workers movement had developed, were integrated into the public State. And the great revenge of liberalism was to destroy this same modality of capture of the social and of socialism that Welfare had integrated. So all these politics are politics of destruction of what was achieved in terms of rights: the rights to social security, the right to unemployment insurance. And that's what happened through the basic transformation of individual property rights: fundamental transformation of all into shareholders, fundamental transformation of everyone into small property owners.

BM: In France, you note the arrival of the force of neo-liberalism through the transformation of the consumer into shareholder during the 1970s through the government reform of pension funds. And you take a position that you call schizophrenic whereby you note that people, at one and the same time, are selling themselves on the work market and are shareholders in human capital, entrepreneurs of themselves. You also say that everyone, as entrepreneurs of themselves, become like molecules of capital. But given this rift and this becoming-capital of the individual, we must reformulate what we mean by self-interest. And it's wrong to understand neo-liberalism as that which predetermines interests. It is the market which responds to self-interest. Could you say something about

the anti-naturalism of neo-liberalism and about this complication in the concept of interest? It seems to me that we find here one of the entry points into creative and contestatory practices, in the mutation of what is interest.

ML: The history of schizophrenia is not difficult to understand since effectively we are at once a wage-earner and a shareholder. This introduces a schizophrenia since we are at the same time exploited and interested in exploitation. This schizophrenia moves through the interior of each individual since he/she is both at the same time. It's more complicated than earlier where effectively there was a scission between a proletarian and a capitalist. Today, in part, this is illusory, and in part it is the case, especially in the US where this process is far more advanced than it is in France. In the US, it's very evident that all these things are more widespread. This schizophrenia poses a problem of subjective mobilization. What does it mean where one is at the same time a wage-earner – therefore in a business – and one is in a situation of exploitation as Marx would say at the same time, one is a shareholder in the same business. How do we mobilize? I think this is one of the forces of liberalism.

The only way to accede to our rights was to organize, to have a social and collective dimension. Now we tell the worker/entrepreneur that this isn't it, it won't work; it has to go through an individual relation. We must no longer have confidence in collective action, we must have confidence in the market. This is an important subjective transformation that took a long time to come to fruition. But how do we destroy confidence? By saying: "you must invest! Don't expect the right to retirement from your political and social action in the union – you can get it from the market." This is a very important epochal shift that destroys the belief in collective action.

This has important effects at the level of mobilization. As regards to interest, there is indeed no natural interest since interest is like everything else in neo-liberalism, constructed. Liberalism is constituted on the basis of the presupposition of natural interest. And the problem was to defend individual rights against all State intervention. Now, I think that is no longer the problem, it's the construction of human capital. Human capital is not something that is already there, but something that must be constructed. It must be constructed with different assemblages, we must invest: individual investments, training, insurance. You are the one who must do it. It's your responsibility, and this depends on how you construct and mobilize these different things. Therefore, interest is constructed through a multiplicity of techniques that make you employable. To be employable, you have to be well-trained. To be well-trained, you have to follow good

courses. You have to make good investments. You are responsible for your human capital. This is another important dimension of subjectivity.

How do you transform wage-earners into capitalism's responsibility, how do you make them molecules of capital? It's a recuperation of the whole entrepreneurial side given over to the individual. In a certain way, there is a transformation from a passive to an active individual. It is an activation, but within the limits of a capitalist logic. The interest is not pre-constituted, it is constructed. It is constructed through this multiplicity of assemblages. Now this is really a micropolitical assemblage. And this is new. We didn't understand Deleuze, Guattari and Foucault's analysis in the 1960s and 70s, when they spoke of microphysics on the one hand, of power on the other, of micropolitics. This was a real grasping of the new configuration of capital. It was really techniques of power that were changing radically.

EM: When we began these interviews, we noticed that the concept of "micropolitics" has become problematic for some. For Isabelle Stengers and Bruno Latour, the micropolitical seems to remain too strongly linked to the macropolitical, instituting a dichotomized relation from the smaller to the larger. You, on the other hand, continue to mobilize this concept through Foucault's and Deleuze and Guattari's thought. You raise the issue of the micropolitical, for instance, in the 2nd chapter of *Le gouvernement des inégalités*. You speak of the loss of institutional power in the context of how political parties and unions are no longer capable of problematizing what is happening to society, to our everyday situations, to our social groups. According to you, they have lost all power of institution and "limit themselves to defending and managing what already exists, what has always been instituted." Could you say more about forms of resistance at the micropolitical level?

ML: It's a question of how you think the micropolitical – if you think politics, on the one hand, as more power and all that, or if you think politics as the capacity to ask new problems by making new subjects and objects emerge for politics. I think that classic political parties don't have this capacity for problematization, of creating and addressing new problems. We are still very tied to how things were problematized in the 19th century. The left is still tied to that kind of problematization; the problem was effectively the battle of the classes at that time. And afterwards, we lost the capacity for problematization.

This question of the relation between macropolitics and micropolitics is a very key problematization in Deleuze and Guattari and Foucault, in a

completely different way. They had to do it since it was necessary to understand power differently. Micropolitics was not simply micropolitics of subversion, but also and first and foremost the micropolitics of how power functions. Power functions as a network.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that micropolitics and macropolitics are inseparable. We can never separate them because micropolitics moves through macropolitics, and vice versa. The other day, during a meeting about the organisation of micropolitical techniques for seasonal workers, we discussed the fact that our everyday lives are made up of user-based activities: we go to school, to church, to the hospital, to the unemployment agency, we ask for help. What we are users, we are involved differently in an administration, in relations that are micropolitical. These rapports are assemblages that are, at the limit, heterogeneous, as Foucault would say. They are heterogeneous because each has its own logic. But in each of these relations, there are constraints, we are mobilized subjectively, we are pushed away by certain forces and attracted by others. I don't understand why this concept of micropolitics is not taken more into consideration. Because even in wage-earning work, there is a micropolitical dimension created by management which is quite formidable, especially since the 1970s. What is complicated is the mobilization of the micropolitical by the macropolitical and vice versa. We cannot ignore this complexity. Because 90% of the politics of capital move through the micropolitical.

EM: Exactly. The concept that Isabelle Stengers wanted to propose, instead, is mesopolitics – the emergence in and through the milieu. It's an interesting concept, I think.

ML: Mesopolitics, can you explain what this is?

EM: For her, mesopolitics refers to that which emerges through the engendering of a knot out of which a new political milieu is born – an instauration, as Souriau would say. The political becomes an event through a “becoming work” of the milieu that creates new networks of potential that in turn create new modes of expression.

ML: This could be true. What interests me, in the work of Foucault and even in the work of Deleuze, is really the description of techniques. That is what is fundamental. Techniques are specific: you have to invent and construct them. They are not given. You have to think them each time. So this question of techniques, of assemblages, of processes, is very very important. We need macro techniques, but especially micro techniques. These techniques – given that it's a process, and not something given,

that the rules of the process are immanent rules generated by the process itself – you have to pay them special attention. I am fully convinced that the production of subjectivity is a very important aspect of politics. Afterwards there are other techniques that are macropolitical. On the terrain of macropolitics, there are things that are still valid that come to us from what we have learned this last century. On the other hand we do not really know, we still have not really problematized, the micropolitical level, I think.

EM: You speak in much of your writing of forces and of the plasticity of the world. In the 2nd chapter of your new book (2008), you cite Deleuze and Guattari speaking of rigid and supple segmentarities. I cite: “Molecular escapes and movements would be nothing if they did not return to the molar organization to reshuffle their segments.” A little further on, you continue, “The illusion of synthesis and the reconciliation of these different planes underwrote the death of revolution itself.” I would like to return to these questions with plasticity in mind, or Souriau’s concept of “becoming work” (*faire oeuvre*). How do you see these concepts with respect to the micropolitical milieu that preoccupies you (the seasonal workers, for instance). How do you see these concepts with regard to microrevolution, or the recasting, the creation of the political? Where are we now?

ML: Well that I don’t know. The problem is that we are in a phase of experimentation without horizon. It is a phase of experimentation, and we can’t very well see the outcome. What interests me in the case of the seasonal workers, are their experimentations, their micropolitical actions. I don’t think we can abstract the problem itself.

EM: I can be more precise. You speak of the slogan “Neither inside nor outside.” Could you say more about the techniques implied in this “neither inside nor outside”? What resulted from the relations between the seasonal workers and the institutions? How did they find it possible to participate in the capture of events that are ontogenetic but not necessarily outside the institution? Did they invent techniques that put forth the plasticity of the political, the “becoming work” of the social?

ML: Exactly, these are techniques we use politically. This technique which was used for the organization of “Neither inside nor outside” signifies being radically external to the institution, that is to say, neither in complete discrepancy nor in interiority. It’s a political positioning that is hard to hold onto since either you have the impression of being captured inside, or you feel a complete lag with what is happening. It’s something that cannot be defined abstractly. You have to define it each time according to a specific case. It’s a pragmatism linked to what you’re doing.

It gave very interesting results for a whole series of things. This struggle lasted quite a long time, I think, because normally such a conflict lasts two weeks, a month. Here, there is an extended continuity because they applied techniques out of the usual as well as normal techniques and even older ones. Another of the techniques they used was to create moments of mediation with the institution. How? Through a follow-up committee conceived as an instrument of mediation from the inside of the institution. What might appear contradictory wasn't necessarily so. In reality, it puts into crisis the concept onto which politics is usually constructed.

Say you take the union, for example. When the organizing committee proposed to do an expert report, the union said that this expert report had to be done by independent experts. It's necessary for experts to come and to lead the inquest. The others would say: "no, no, the expertise must come from us." The union felt confident in the scientificity of economists and sociologists that would come from an outside point of view that would be neutral with respect to the forces at play. We can see here small shifts with respect to preconceived divisions: expert/non-expert, scientist/non-scientist, political/ non-political. The idea was to play with the divisions, to bring them back into question.

In order for the world to be plastic at a macropolitical level, there has to be potential for change. In the case of the seasonal workers, change was produced in the contradiction. This opened a space where the micropolitical dimension could express itself. On the other hand – well, it's complicated. Because normally you have the possibility of reacting on the micropolitical terrain, each has the opportunity for recasting the field. Well – everyone so to speak, shall we say. The problem is how to think the relation between conduct and counter-conducts, what Foucault calls molecular counter-conduct, that is to say the relation between the micropolitical and the macropolitical.

Let's give an example of a seasonal worker: the artist. It is artists, for example, that use unemployment insurance. Instead of using the money to soften the risk of being out of work, they use it to finance their artistic work. Thus, this is a subversion of the meaning of unemployment insurance. At the micropolitical level, everyone does this. It's a subversion that undermines the categories work-unemployment, juridical categories in the workplace, in the realm of social security. These categories are shifted because unemployment cannot be translated into inactivity (that can only be finalized/activated through the search for employment), but as a moment of artistic activity. Thus the message from the micro to the

macropolitical produces a change in subjectivity. That is to say that they play with the categories that are given, they shift them, creating an important subjective change. These conducts are very ambiguous. It becomes a question of how we can practically recast the code of work and of social security.

But generally "reform" means that the macropolitical is redefined such that it retroacts on the micropolitical level and closes it. This is how the micro and the macropolitical continue to act together. The "reform" closes down creative artistic spaces that had opened up, institutionalizing the management of time. The big problem, clearly, is the political struggle with respect to time: the plasticity of the political. We see how this plasticity that had been created because there were conditions for which the world could be relatively plastic, is now blocked, rigidified once more by macropolitical institutional choices.

BM: The micro and the macropolitical are all the more linked when the power of the security society, is no longer disciplinary. This can lead to confusion since when we say institution, we think discipline, when we say security society, we think surveillance, Big Brother. In fact, you describe how macropolitical management focuses on the proliferation of small differences, of differential normalities. And then, there is the return or the responses of these individualities, these created differentials now reappropriated by the system that reforms itself around the responses. You say that the mechanism of power is not inclusion/exclusion, is no longer the closure of the casting outside. Can you explain further the differences with respect to disciplinary power and the ways in which it continues in a certain way to function internally, in your theory of power?

ML: I called this form of governmentality "government of inequalities" because power plays through the almost infinite production of differences, or of inequalities rather than differences. How do we produce these differences? We produce them in different ways. In the past, there was the wage-earner and the unemployed. Now we have the [RMI](#), the unemployed, the intermittent, the part-time worker, the wage-earner, the contract worker: there is a multiplication of statuses, speaking of the workforce, which is almost infinite, if you like. Then, the government decided to reduce in a major way employment assistance, that is to say employment that earlier you find with the help of the State. Now, with the crisis, they put them back in, and they will create a new category. Thus they will continue to multiply the categories and no one will be excluded or included: we are all inside, in this spectrum of regulation. Sometimes, depending on availability, the government diminishes one category to bring up another, according to a given

project or else according to the conflictualities that develop in one sector or another. But that spectrum is really very open, and very available for the manipulation of the administration. Thus, there is no “inside” and “outside” in a clear-cut way as we might say of the disciplinary society. It’s the continuum of differences that is modulatable. Modulation, this is the best term. Inside this, there is the reproduction of disciplinary techniques. And this, Foucault explains clearly. The passage from a disciplinary society to a security society is not a replacing. It is that one system becomes predominant with respect to others at the same time that it recuperates the techniques of the others.

We see, for instance, that there are disciplinary techniques that are recuperated inside the management of the unemployed. Control that is almost disciplinary, augmented. But the general logic is not disciplinary. The general logic is securitary in the sense that it plays with the differences and at the limit, and in certain segments liberty is even introduced, as Foucault would say. They introduce elements of liberty. We can play on these differences of freedom, we can enclose them. We play at all levels, we play the responsabilization and the injunction to autonomy.

Today, with the seasonal workers – more than a million and a half of people that are RMI and have no resources – they attempt to create a sense of responsibility, an activation of the individual. And at each level, there is this injunction to autonomy: this injunction to autonomy is paradoxical since on another side, they block it. It’s a form of governmentality like the one we knew as part of the disciplinary regime. This is obvious with the seasonal workers since they are a workforce that isn’t assigned to a specific place. They work three days on a film, they work on a play that lasts some months. They do not have a workplace as such: this is a workforce that is entirely mobilisable. It’s a real mobile territory, and thus there is no anchoring as there was in the past for workers who always went to the same place and had the same employer. Now, the workplace changes all the time because the same actor, for example, can act in a play, can do voice-overs, can work on a film. He can change all the time. And this mobility is controlled through micropolitical assemblages, I think.

The problem is that the micropolitical has a bad reputation. It has been interpreted as though it were composed of techniques or assemblages that interest only marginals – the mad, the drugged. I think these are techniques not at all mobilized by marginals. These are securitary techniques that are very important. Especially since the micropolitical was already present in the security society with the injunction to autonomy,

the degree of freedom given and taken back, depending on the situation, and all that.

EM: I'd like to push this a bit further with one last question. I don't have the impression that in the North American milieu there is this problem with the concept of micropolitics (if there is any thought of the micropolitical at all!). You have a sentence here, I will read it to you: "Micropolitics is far from being a call to spontaneity, a simple call to movement, a simple affirmation of forms of life (a vitalism as Jacques Rancière or Alain Badiou would say with disdain). Micropolitics requires a very high level of organization, a precise differentiation of the actions and the functions of the political, a multiplicity of initiatives, an intellectual and organizational discipline." This is a wonderful sentence. I would like you to say more about this idea that micropolitics may be conceived as a vitalism or a force of life. Because just today when Brian and I were discussing micropolitics we realized that yes, it's certainly a force *for* life, but not a vitalism. Maybe you could trace the difference?

ML: I wrote this sentence because too often we understand the micropolitical as a form of spontaneity, a party, as Badiou would say. I think that Guattari talks about it, and says that it is not a question of spontaneity, a simplification, a collective celebration, even though evidently it is also all these things. Micropolitics requires an organizational rigour, and perhaps demands even more organization. For example, every time the organization committee needed to make a decision, needed to practice this "Neither inside nor outside," this demanded another level of internal organization, many debates and discussions, and an increased attention with regard to what we were saying. Since nothing was given in advance, we needed to live carefully amongst practices of experimentation, we needed to pay close attention to the processes, the internal processes, the external processes. With the micropolitical, you have to analyze effectively since it is always a different case. So, it's necessary at any given moment to make a precise analysis of the forces at play. How is it playing out on the inside? What is happening on the outside? Each time it's the analysis of a small event.

For each event, there are questions that are at once aleatory and that you must seize right away since at the next moment they will no longer be valid, or something will have changed. The micropolitical is a form of organization, a subjectivisation of the spirit that requires a certain intellectual rigour, even an organizational rigour, in order that new political expressions be produced. In the case of the seasonal workers, we saw this at a small scale. But this experience of organization was definitely

not an experience of spontaneity. It was an experience of daily work, created through each element.

BM: One last question that returns to your answer where you speak of grasping the aleatory through very precise and constructivist techniques to create the emergence of something at this interface where the macro and the micro meet and exchange some of their process. This activity of grasping the aleatory technically resembles an artistic or aesthetic activity. I know you move toward the thought of an aesthetic paradigm, but there are thinkers who completely refuse this path, Žižek, who says that capitalism that feeds on this creative dynamism itself becomes artistic to a certain extent. How would you respond to this way of thinking?

ML: I think it's a terrain of struggle. Like all such terrains, given that it's a struggle between different positions, it is not predetermined, not resolved. But we must agree on whether it is this particular locus of struggle or if it is another. I think that what you just described, the terrain of struggle, is this particular one and the stakes are these specific ones. So, we can measure them, we can win, we can lose. Or perhaps the forces at stake will make capital work better than before – this is not impossible. It depends, as it does in all struggles: there are those who win and those who lose. What is important is to define whether the terrain is this one or another. If it's another, we must act differently, but if it's this one, we must find techniques. I follow Guattari's intuition on the aesthetic paradigm: if the world is to be created, is becoming at the same time as it needs to become, if the world is incomplete and if it calls for subjectivity, we must make a transition from the scientific paradigm – as was the case in Marxism – toward the aesthetic paradigm, aesthetic in the sense of the production of the creation of something. This changes the point of view.

With Marx, it was still a scientific paradigm. Today, it's an ethico-aesthetic problem, ethico-aesthetic since the world is in the making. If we are implicated in a certain way in this making of the world, the impasse is not cognitive but ethico-political. How do we create this world?

Inside this world, there are powerful struggles. This won't happen without pain. We have to choose. I think that today we are moving toward forms of collective action and organization that will require an aesthetic paradigm, not in the sense of an aestheticisation of the social, nor in the sense that everyone must become an artist, but in this capacity of grasping the political in the event.

Translated by Erin Manning