

## ***Chaosmosis: to chaotize order, to sieve chaos***

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### **Abstract**

In this article we will take into account the notion of chaosmosis, showing its centrality to Deleuze's cosmology. Chaosmosis is a conceptual Pandora's box that unleashes the power of the cosmological, both theoretically and practically. The troubled relationship between order and chaos for Deleuze is the continuous process that composes the weave of immanence. Chaos and kosmos are a disjunctive synthesis, a chiasmatic relationship. The notion of chaosmos is an osmotic connector of two terms that are not dualistically separated, but constitutively hybridized. In this sense we will try to show how homogenesis and heterogenesis are complementary counter-effectuations that make an indissoluble alliance. For it is precisely in the midst of heterogenesis and homogenesis that the cosmogenesis of the universe takes place. Thus, a new cosmos(logic) of things is drawn: immanence is nothing but a mutual inflection of chaos and kosmos. If order sifts through chaos, chaos never ceases to chaoticize order, in an eternal big bang that happens everywhere and at every instant.

Assuming that we distinguished the disordered state from the ordered state, turbulence is a medium between these two states, it is a state, difficult to conceive, difficult to study scientifically, but at the same time a common, widespread, all but universal, exquisite state in which there is an order, an inchoate or a final order, and in which disorder and chaos are also to be found. Chaos appears there, spontaneously, in the order, order appears there in the midst of disorder.

Michel Serres

An illusion resulting from your anthropological perspective, which is to say dependent on coordinates proper to beings limited, discreet, defined, finite in space and time, according to linear, irreversible sequences. Ours is another approach to the cosmos, there being no reason to think in terms of a before and after your so-called Big Bang. If such a thing exists, then it

must be happening everywhere and at every instant.

Félix Guattari

### **Cosmic interferences: chaosmosis' Pandora box**

For Deleuze and Guattari<sup>1</sup> the universe is an osmosis of chaos and kosmos: *chaosmos* is the word that Deleuze and Guattari use to assemble linguistically and conceptually the intertwining of disparity and homogenesis. *Chaosmosis* is a “conceptual Pandora’s box” that unleashes the problem of a speculative cosmology and its practical effects.

The result is a merged and hybrid alliance between chaos and kosmos, i.e., a state of *turbulence*, a rhythm of dissonances and convergences, welded together in its impurity. Life is the structure of an oscillation, a suture between incompatible elements, which are nevertheless *com*-possible.

Turbulence is a medium between order and disorder, it is precisely *the middle* between regularity and chaos. In this perspective chaos and kosmos do not oppose each other, but interpose (Bartezzaghi 2017), as parts of a *continuum*. As Alain Beaulieu points out: «the notion of chaosmos, borrowed from James Joyce, points to another aspect of Deleuze’s cosmological sensitivity. Joyce’s neologism “chaosmos” expresses the fact that chaos and cosmos (disorder and order) are not opposites, but part of a larger continuum» (2016: 201).

Chaosmosis is the uncanny valley of vagueness and opacity, an equivocation of order and disorder, in the “universal blender” of immanence. What is interesting (literally from Latin *inter-esse* is a state of betweenness) for Deleuze and Guattari is the medium, the interference: «proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing» (Deleuze & Guattari 2005: 25).

The energetic power of immanence is stretched between multiplicity and univocity:

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<sup>1</sup> As is often the case with many of the most powerful conceptualities in the Deleuzian philosophy, they are the result of a theoretical and biographical alliance with Guattari. The word chaosmosis is indeed first and foremost the title of the book *Chaosmosis*, by Guattari (1995). The interest for the topic of chaosmosis urged Guattari lifelong. The problem of cosmology and in particular the structure of chaosmosis for him was not only a theoretical problem, but also the cinematic expression of an artistic tension that he wanted to capture. Guattari worked periodically on a science-fiction screenplay, which unfortunately was never realized, but whose conditional virtualities are still a path to be actualized. *A Love of UIQ* (Guattari 2016) is a tragicomic speculative adventure through chaos, with foreshadowings of contemporary trends such as «posthumanism, transhumanism, ecocriticism, genomic editing, collasology, surveillance capitalism, data mining, artificial intelligence, machine learning » (Maglioni & Thomson 2022: 45). What is at stake is the paradox of the cosmological in its open and heuristic contradictions. The question of cosmology for Guattari is therefore not a tangential interest, but the very beating heart of his intellectual production and represents an inescapable point of reference for Deleuze as well.

immanence is a *metastable*<sup>2</sup> tension without opposition between these two polarities, that merge into one another continuously. The cosmic play between chance and regularity is unlimited and unbounded, beyond any form of dualism. Indeed, immanence is the most radical paradox of sense, that is, a *disjunctive synthesis* or the convergent circulation of series in their irreducible divergences. Disjunctive synthesis is the relational mode of distance, the indiscernible power of heterogeneity. In this sense chaos and kosmos are not external and opposed elements, but intensive variation of the same refrain, different rhythms of a same path.

Chaosmosis is the *chiasmatic dispositive* of transcendental empiricism: it filters two polarities into their supposed opposites. Thus, chaos passes through order and order passes through chaos, as everything which is empirical is entangled with its transcendental genesis, and vice versa. Transcendental empiricism is a cosmic *monstrum* (Sauvagnargues 2010: 13), a chimeric assemblage: the “chaosmic immanence” (Guattari 1995: 75) of order and chaos produces a mutual interference between regularity and disorder; a “generalised connectivity” (Guattari 1995: 88) that has the structure of an open negotiation (or a relay race) between the Same and the Other, between complexity and chaos. The Deleuzian transcendental empiricism collects and agglutinates the paradox of a *chiasmatic machinism* that sieves every polarization – of empirical and transcendental, of chaos and kosmos and...and...and – into their opposites, making them constitutively hybridized by their conceptual counterpart. So, chaos is a line of flight for kosmos as the empirical is a line of flight for the transcendental. This route, of course, can be covered conversely.

It is therefore a matter of assembling “tychism”<sup>3</sup> and regularity, filtering chaos into the interstices of law, remaining in contact with the experimental oscillations of disparity. That is, it is necessary to get the law out of the groove, while sifting and distilling the infinite velocities that chaos traces. Ultimately the operationality of chaosmosis combines dissonances and consonances through a *disjunctive synthesis*.

*Chaosmos* is a word that appears like a luminescence in James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*<sup>4</sup> and which Deleuze and Guattari take up to designate the *osmotic connector* be-

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<sup>2</sup> The reference is to the term coined by Gilbert Simondon. With the concept of metastability Simondon paves the way for an ontogenetic ontology, placing the dynamic structure of the problematic at its center. In Gilbert Simondon’s philosophy, a metastable system is a system that is neither stable nor unstable, a becoming-in-between stillness and absolute disequilibrium; it is a system that is tense and suspended in an energetic state of equilibrium as long as an amount of energy disrupts its homeostasis. See Simondon 2005.

<sup>3</sup> I borrow the concept of tychism from the philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce. In Peirce’s cosmology tychism, i.e., a doctrine of pure chance plays an important part in the becoming of the universe. Chance and indeterminism are fundamental elements for the constant evolution and growth of reality, but they make no sense in isolation from law and its necessity. See for instance Peirce CP. 6.201, 6.202, 6.302, 6.322.

<sup>4</sup> The famous passage from Joyce to which Deleuze and Guattari refer is the following: «every person, place and thing in the chaosmos of Alle anyway connected with the gobblydumped turkey was moving and changing every part of the time» (Joyce 1999: 118.21-23). On the Joycean notion of chaosmos, ana-

tween order and chaos. The infinite-finite weave is a process of continuous folding. As Sullivan highlights: «each of the latter interpenetrates the other in a chaosmic folding – with the entities traversing the two fields» (2010: 265).

### **Homogenesis and heterogenesis: chaosmic grasping**

Homogenesis and heterogenesis thus are complementary counter-effectuations and compose an inextricable alliance: «the cursor of chaosmosis never stops oscillating between these diverse nuclei – not in order to totalize them, synthesize them in a transcendent self, but in spite of everything, to make a world of them» (Guattari 1995: 83). The universe is not a dialectical synthesis of chaos and kosmos, but rather the energetics released in their symbiotic interaction. Immanence is a metastable state of *chaosmic grasping* (Guattari 1995: 55), which establishes a “holding together” (Guattari 1995: 113) between regularity and disparity. This state of *inter-esse* is a “generative receptacle” (Mickey 2008: 41). Grasping means that every element of chaos is in a *prehension*<sup>5</sup> with order and vice versa that order captures every chaotic disparity. Chaosmosis is a double capture, a becoming in the middle. The assemblage between chaos and kosmos is an intensive variation of the same texture, i.e., immanence. Thus, chaos and kosmos are in a state of *coalescence*. There is no Manichean dualism between heterogenetic and homogenetic, they are two immanent polarities mutually enfolding:

an initial chaosmic folding consists in making the powers of chaos co-exist with those of the highest complexity. It is by a continuous coming-and-going at an infinite speed that the multiplicities of entities differentiate into ontologically heterogeneous complexions and become chaotized in abolishing their figural diversity and by homogenizing themselves within the same being-non-being. In a way, they never stop diving into an umbilical chaotic zone where they lose their extrinsic references and coordinates, but from where they can re-emerge invested with new charges of complexity. (Guattari 1995: 111)

The relation between homogenesis and heterogenesis is a metabolic one (Sullivan 2010: 259), a digestion of the two poles one into one another. There is a sort of a double cannibalism (De Castro 2017) of becoming: Otherness must be digested and incorporated by law, while law must be counter-effectuated by chaos. Becoming thus mobilizes four terms and not two, distributed in interwoven heterogeneous series: x enveloping y becomes x' while y taken in relation to x becomes y'. X does not become y without y in turn becoming something else. That is, each becoming forms a “block” of two mutually

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lyzed from a theoretical perspective see in particular Eco 1989.

<sup>5</sup> The term is by Alfred North Whitehead and expresses the idea that everything in the universe is prehended in mutual, unbounded, and infinite relations. See Whitehead 2010.

deterritorializing terms.

The chaosmos is an unlimited process that keeps happening and that is always in the making. It is a sort of generalized and eternal Big Bang that keeps returning back and forth. Chaosmosis is the coming-and-going movement of the middle, the event of immanence, or the *cosmo(genesis)* of the universe. The genetic process of differentiation takes place in between homo(genesis) and etero(genesis). Ultimately, according to the play of the universe, in a Nietzschean sense, divergence is convergence, homogenesis is heterogenesis:

The divergence of the affirmed series forms a “chaosmos” [...] It is the decentered center which traces between the series, and for all disjunctions [...] Nothing other than the Event subsists, the Event alone, Eventum tantum for all contraries, which communicates with itself through its own distance and resonates across all of its disjuncts. (Deleuze 1990: 176)

Heterogeneous complexions seek homogeneity and homogeneity produces spontaneously germinal chaotic elements:

It is by a continuous coming-and-going at an infinite speed that the multiplicities of entities differentiate into ontologically heterogeneous complexions and become chaoticized in abolishing their figural diversity and by homogenizing themselves within the same being-non-being. In a way they never stop diving into an umbilical chaotic zone where they lose their extrinsic references and coordinates, but from where they can re-emerge invested with new charges of complexity. (Guattari 1995: 75)

### **The sieve and the gadfly: consistency and disparity**

According to Deleuze, chaos is the element in which thought never ceases to float and which must continually be counteracted. Chaos is not merely the absence of order, but an affirmation that *chaotizes* and that dissolves the knots of consistency associated with regularity: «thus, unformed chaos, the great letter of Finnegans Wake, is not just chaos: it is the power of affirmation, the power to affirm all the heterogeneous series – it complicates within itself all the series » (Deleuze 1990: 260).

Chaos is a threat that must be digested and incorporated by law, but never fully overcome. It is therefore necessary to *sieve* chaos, giving it consistency: «the plane of immanence is like a section of chaos and acts as a sieve» (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 42). The *sieve-plane* is stretched over chaos and filters it, without falling back on it. The problem of philosophy is to acquire conceptual consistency without losing the infinite velocities in which thought is immersed. For Deleuze, in fact «the most closed system still has a thread that rises toward the virtual, and down which the spider descends» (Deleuze &

Guattari 1994: 122). In his view, chaos is not a synonym of disorder, it is not the opposite or the negation of order, but rather an affirmation, an affirmation that makes regularity vanish *intensively*, from within it. According to Deleuze: «Chaos is characterized less by the absence of determinations than by the infinite speed with which they take shape and vanish» (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 42). The eternal return of chaosmosis guides the intensive evolution of all the series (Piatti 2016: 51-58; Mickey 2008: 25-41), makes them communicate. Only against a *groundless ground* things can acquire consistency. Ultimately, the chaosmos is the eternal recirculation of all series in their convergent univocity:

It is always differences which resemble one another, which are analogous, opposed or identical: difference is behind everything, but behind difference there is nothing. Each difference passes through all the others; it must “will” itself or find itself through all the others. That is why eternal return does not appear second or come after, but is already present in every metamorphosis, contemporaneous with that which it causes to return. Eternal return relates to a world of differences implicated one in the other, to a complicated, properly chaotic world without identity. Joyce presented the vicus of recirculation as causing a chaosmos to turn; and Nietzsche had already said that chaos and eternal return were not two distinct things but a single and same affirmation. The world is neither finite nor infinite as representation would have it: it is completed and unlimited. Eternal return is the unlimited of the finished itself, the univocal being which is said of difference. (Deleuze 2001: 297)

For Deleuze it is necessary to always keep a slit on chaos open, to let «a bit of free and windy chaos» (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 293) seep through the folds of the plane of immanence and to tear open the umbrella of opinion to let through a breath of air generated by chaos. It is necessary to disrupt and chaoticize order by perpetually counterpointing it and putting it on the run.

Conversely philosophy needs at the same time to bring in a great sieve, «a formless elastic membrane, similar to an electromagnetic field, or the receptacle of Timaeus, in order to let something out» (Deleuze 1993: 72). The sieve is also a “screen”, a virtual filter. Chaos is what survives this process of screening, what passes through the sieve. The medium of all things is always a *chaosmotic vertigo*. Chaos and kosmos are thus indiscernible, inseparable, coalescent.

For Deleuze, the chiasmatic relation between chaos and regularity produces a paradox whereby it is *within* the domain of chaos that islands of regularity spontaneously develop and sprout. A Chaosmos is a composite chaos, a chaos that *orders itself* from within. As Davide Tarizzo notes about the Deleuzian conception of chaos:

Let us indeed define chaos as the absence of every rule: this, in turn, cannot become the rule of chaos. If chaos is indeed the absence of any rule, not even the absence of any rules can become a rule, the rule of chaos. That is why it is legitimate to say that

chaos spontaneously produces regularities. Chaos generates islands of regularity.  
(Tarizzo 2004: XXVI, my translation)

Chaos and kosmos eternally coexist: «chaos always coexists with non-chaos, spontaneously generating order, regularity, generating a cosmos, or rather, multiple cosmoses, at the same time sucking the cosmos, every cosmos, every island of regularity, into the sea of infinite irregularity» (Tarizzo 2004: XXVI). Laws are *intensively* produced *through* chaos and represent emergent properties of disparity. Chaos is the ungovernable that keeps overflowing, it is like a gadfly that urges and provokes regularity. Chaos is an enemy, but an enemy to *make kin with*, «an enemy that is at the same time also an ally, in terms of energy resources and reserve of potential» (Tarizzo 2004: XXVII). Ultimately, bubbles of regularity float in the sea of disparity, while chaos keeps urging the “*kosmic*” elements of the Real.

For Deleuze is no longer interesting to superimpose (like an hylomorphic mold) order on chaos, but rather what is relevant is to witness the germination of laws precisely *through* chaos. Against the voluntarism of an absolute reason that claims to be abstracted from the queerness of the Real, Deleuze makes the *aberrant* the fluid by which every island of regularity is lapped. It is precisely this that allows thought to regulate itself, to order itself or to assume a form that protects it from the formless. Thought is traversed by chaos, but it orders itself or assumes a certain order in function of the bit of order it finds in things themselves. Regularity is stratification, a battleship against the formless. Nevertheless, the vibration of a line of flight through chaos remains always open. As William James would icastically say, philosophy must keep its windows open (1979: 55).

### **A new cosmo(logic) of things: immanence, an inflection**

Ultimately Deleuze unleashes the power of the cosmological: immanence is a continuous act of cosmogenesis (Piatti 2021), which is in turn a chaosmotic process. Immanence is the global and transversal event that swims everywhere at every instant in its specifications: the complexity of the virtual is entangled with the infinite and unpredictable bifurcations of the actual.

The growth and evolution of thought is intensive and *continuous* in the sense that it keeps happening, like an eternal refrain: «the eternal return is not the effect of the Identical on a world that has become similar, nor an external order imposed on the chaos of the world, the eternal return, vice versa, is the internal identity of the world and chaos, the Chaosmos» (Deleuze 1990: 369). The coincidence of the actual and the virtual is intensive, an asymptotic process of mutual coalescence.

The cosmic machine is a blender. Immanence is a blender that assembles incessantly the virtual and the actual, kosmos and chaos, and and and... The figures of immanence

are vagueness<sup>6</sup> and continuity. The image of thought and the matter of reality are the power of entanglement, of *complicatio* (literally from Latin, a state of folding). For Deleuze there are no minima, no discrete points, but folds upon folds, *ad infinitum*: immanence is a tangled and continuous labyrinth. The rhizome in its overlapping folded state is thus a tangle of plastic forces, a “baroque machine” with no exterior parts, but only folds merging one into another, which is the case also for chaos and kosmos. Paradoxically the only atom is *inflection*, intensity, elasticity, deformation without tearing: chaos is a deformation of kosmos and kosmos is a deformation of chaos. In other words, inflection is the locus of cosmogenesis, the becoming in between heterogenesis and homogenesis. As Deleuze points out, recalling Leibniz: «the division of the continuous must not be taken as of sand dividing into grain, but as that of a sheet of paper or of a tunic in folds, in such a way that an infinite number of folds can be produced some smaller than others, but without the body ever dissolving into points or minima» (Deleuze 1993: 6).

For Deleuze, the atomic division leaves room for the light and shade of the folds and their continuous transitions, so that «the light always plunges into the dark and vice versa» (Deleuze 1993: 47). Immanence is a *topological* weave, i.e., the aberrant movement (Lapoujade 2017) of folding and unfolding between chaos and kosmos.

Chaos and kosmos are like the infinite life of the *Möbius strip*: they represent the merging of folds into folds, a rupture from discreteness and essential partitions, according to a logic of continuity.

Deleuze proposes a new geography of things, a new cosmo(logic) of hybridization, vagueness, and continuity: regularity sinks continuously into chaos whilst chaos emerges in the interstices and in the paths of complexity.

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<sup>6</sup> For Deleuze it is precisely the transaction between chaos and kosmos that must be constitutively vague. The essence of this relation is not a formal and perimetral essence, but a power to act. Ultimately, cosmology claims «essences that are vagabond, anexact and yet rigorous, distinguishing them from fixed, metric and formal, essences» (Deleuze 2005: 407).



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