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Making Sense, Making Politics:

Towards a Political Theory of Sense with

Gilles Deleuze and Niklas Luhmann

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Abstract

This dissertation develops a political theory of sense against the background of a synthetic reading of Gilles Deleuze's post-structuralist philosophy and Niklas Luhmann's sociological systems theory. The aim of this exploratory theoretical project is two-fold: firstly, it seeks to provide an innovative "third way" perspective on onto-epistemological genesis designed to escape the ontological aporias of the linguistic turn and those of the new materialisms by identifying the production of the world as it can be made sense of as ungrounded and relationally immanent. Secondly, this perspective is to be made productive to analyse the functionality of contemporary politics. The arguments developed in this dissertation are grounded in and unfold from a conceptualisation of sense as an ungrounded, self-productive relationality which is always already composed of the creative singularities of both matter and signs.

Having established the synthetic quality of productive sense in Deleuze and Luhmann by retracing their respective uses of Leibniz's monadology, I suggest that this conception of sense allows both thinkers to subvert any strong notion of ontological foundationalism in favour of thinking onto-epistemological genesis as relationally self-grounding. Through Husserl and Nietzsche, on whom both Luhmann and Deleuze draw as philosophical sources of inspiration, I explore how sense is grounded in nothing but relations of time. These relations of time, on their part, also operate self-productively, relying on the eternal return of the event as a moment of rupture to transform circular time into a contingent, but continuous flow of past-future lines. While conditioned by its necessary position within the process of onto-epistemological production, Deleuze's and Luhmann's Whiteheadian event is yet a moment of creative complexity in which a particular future is opened in the relational nexus of sense.

Against this background, the relationally emergent decision which selectively continues a particular line of sense in the eternally returning evental rupture is identified as the operational hinge of a contemporary politics whose legitimacy is no longer based on effective steering power, but rather on the provision of self-observations in sense for society as a whole. It is argued that politics is tied to evental multiplicity in a double-bind: it needs the former to reproduce itself in the decision on the continuation of sense but it must also keep its threatening complexity at bay in order to make this decision possible

in the first place. Understood as the operational logic of contemporary institutional-democratic politics, I show how self-productive, recuperative sense-making functions in a way which not only mirrors the functionality of but is also socio-historically intertwined with the rise of capital identified as a mode of social relationality with Marx. Against this background, the proposed political theory of sense firstly makes it possible to critically unpack how the recuperative autopoiesis of a politics of sense functions through complexity-reducing forms such as the crisis. But it secondly also identifies the socio-politically conditioned sense-event as a realm of immanent openness which can be accessed and employed to actualise a different sense of the world.

Acknowledgements

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Note on Translations

This dissertation employs both Luhmann's original works in German and selected English translations. Direct quotations from the following works by Niklas Luhmann which appear in the following are taken from the German originals but translated by the author.

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Introduction

0. Sense as the Form of the World and the Medium of Politics

0.1 Sense: making the world, making politics

[F]or as long as the world was essentially in relation to some other (that is, another world or an author of the world), it could have a sense. But the end of the world is that there is no longer this essential relation, and that there is no longer essentially (that is, existentially) anything but the world 'itself.' Thus, the world no longer has a sense, but it is sense. In this sense, today anew it is precise to say that it is no longer a matter of interpreting the world, but of transforming it. It is no longer a matter of lending or giving the world one more sense, but of entering into this sense, into this gift of sense the world itself is. Karl Marx's concept of 'transformation' was still caught up - if not entirely, at least largely - in an interpretation, the interpretation of the world as the selfproduction of a Subject of history and of History as subject. Henceforth, 'to transform' should mean 'to change the sense of sense'. (Nancy 1997: 8-9)

Sense[1] exists only as sense of the operations using it, and hence only at the moment in which it is determined by operations, neither beforehand nor afterward. Sense is accordingly a product of the operations that use sense and not, for instance, a quality of the world attributable to a creation, a foundation, an origin. (Luhmann 1998a: 44)

[A]ll meaningful operations always reproduce the presence of what has been excluded, for the world of sense is a complete world, which can exclude what it excludes only in itself. Non-sense, too, can therefore be thought and communicated only in the medium of sense, only in the form of sense. (Luhmann 1998a: 49)

In *The Sense of the World,* where the first quote displayed above can be found, Jean-Luc Nancy sets out to explore the possibilities for political life and action under conditions which are fundamentally insecure, because sense has lost all stable foundation and absolute essence. Following Nancy, sense can no longer be regarded as an interpretation of the world which is secondary to it. Sense and world must rather be thought of as intertwined in a relation of reciprocal constitution which renders the expression "sense of the world" tautological (Nancy 1997: 8). Yet, for Nancy, it is for exactly this reason that a theoretical engagement with sense is not only ontologically but also politically necessary – sense is the medium in which the world is made, and can thus be made

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[1] In both quotes from Luhmann, the German "Sinn" has been translated as "sense", not as "meaning", as it is the case in the translated publication *The Society of Society* as well as for any other references to the concept throughout Luhmann's work. The translation as "sense" will be adopted throughout this thesis and discussed in more detail at the beginning of chapter 2.

differently. The second and the third quote stem from the first volume of Niklas Luhmann's *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* – the late magnum opus in which the sociologist most coherently and fully develops the theoretical underpinnings and practical-analytical implications of his social systems theory.

In line with Nancy's post-foundationalism, but more explicitly than the former, Luhmann develops an operative concept of sense as the medium in which the world we can observe is produced, but which is itself produced in the relations of its use, the making-sense of the world in consciousness and communication. Every encounter with this world, taking place as a connection within the relations of sense, reproduces the totality of the former, albeit in a possibly altered form, and thus makes sense – even if this sense takes the form of nonsense. Luhmann thus exposes what Nancy (ibid., 132-134) terms "nihilist" depictions of the contemporary world, its political governance, normative structures or cultural preferences as devoid of sense as profoundly misguided – all of the latter must be understood, and can only be critiqued, as particular relational formations of sense. Most interesting about these two short passages from Luhmann is however not their convergence with Nancy's philosophical account of sense, but that both excerpts, in the accompanying footnotes, reference a third philosophy of sense: Gilles Deleuze's *Logic of Sense.* Through the connection which Luhmann establishes, his idea that sense constitutes a relational totality which has no outside or foundation, but which is yet productive of the world as we can make sense of it, can be traced back to another source - Deleuze's philosophy.

While Nancy holds on to the Heideggerian notion that sense gives form to a productive force of being which precedes the former,[2] Luhmann and Deleuze converge on a theory of sense as an ungrounded, self-productive medium of onto-epistemological genesis.[3] The continuities or changes of this world are all located and must all play out in the productive medium of sense. I argue that this account of sense, whose contours have just about emerged from the statements by Nancy, Luhmann and Deleuze, entails the promise of two distinct contributions to political thought, one onto-epistemological, and one analytical-political. In this dissertation I aim to develop and make productive both of

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[2] The Heideggerian one-directionality of the productive force which sense unfolds in Nancy is the reason why his theory does not feature more prominently in this dissertation. For Nancy, sense is a constant movement of actualisation, becoming present and becoming embodied set in motion by a depth, a chaotic, aesthetic "madness" (Nancy 1997: 49) of Being as sense which is primary to and mysteriously detached from the sense-relations it conditions. Being presents itself, comes into being, in relations of sense.

[3] The choice of the term onto-epistemological over ontological or onto-genetic which is for now presumed as appropriate will be explained in chapter 3.

those contributions in a political theory of sense based on the works of Deleuze and Luhmann. To lay the groundwork for this attempt at theoretical genesis, this introduction will provide a short overview of the guiding questions that drive this project, which will clarify the two anticipated contributions I presented above. It will then outline the contours of the concept of sense which grounds the argumentation developed in this dissertation, lay open the methodological considerations underlying the way I will link Deleuze and Luhmann in the following and finally offer a short overview of the argumentative thread running through the chapters to follow.

Beginning with the anticipated contribution of this dissertation, I aim to make use of the numerous and extensive parallels between the writings of Deleuze and Luhmann unpacked in the following to generate a political theory of sense which is yet neither Deleuzian nor Luhmannian, but my own exploratory theoretical endeavour. As stated above, the political theory of sense I seek to develop aims to provide an innovative perspective firstly on the onto-epistemological genesis of the world as we can make sense of it, and secondly for how we can understand and analyse the functionality of contemporary politics. I identify those contributions from the perspective of post-structuralist political thought which situates the arguments presented in this dissertation.

Entailed in this post-structuralist perspective is a commitment to post-foundationalism and an analysis of political structures, actions and events which is focused on the critical unpacking of contingencies, which will be presumed in the following (Patton 2009). What will moreover be presumed, but shall be made explicit here, is the theoretical alignment of the ideas developed in this dissertation with a particular post-foundationalism present in both Deleuze and Luhmann, but which can already be found in Nietzsche, on whom both thinkers draw: a post-foundationalism which privileges immanence over transcendence, discussed in the following especially in the form of grounding. I believe that Nietzsche's famous proclamation of the death of God illustrates most clearly that such a theoretical privileging is always political, or ethical, at its core. It is "issued in response to a dissatisfaction with the way things are, and to a demand to produce a state of affairs, a future, that would be different" (Coluciello Barber 2014: 6) in such a way that the capacity for, and the onus of, actualising such change is at all times located on the inside and thus entirely within the grasp of an existent state of affairs with its events, relations and subjects.

The main contribution which this thesis seeks to make lies with the first, onto-epistemological dimension and will be developed as a response to the following research

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question: How can sense be conceptualised as ungrounded, self-productive and immanently open relationality which produces the world as it can be known? In the following I will draw on Luhmann and Deleuze to theorise sense as synthetic relationality comprised of material and linguistic elements which reproduces its own relations without absolute foundation in a way which is only grounded in a similarly self-productive order of time continuously deparadoxified in the event. The sense I will conceptualise operates in the mode of *always already*: forms of sense ground further expressions in the medium of sense, but they are themselves nothing but the synthetic products of past sense-expressions.

It is argued that a self-productive relationality of sense whose expressed forms continuously ground its expressions escapes and therefore undoes notions of both ontological and epistemological primacy whose remnants can be found in all those post-structuralist approaches which make a strong claim with regard to the location of creative force or agency (Derrida 1997; Kristeva 1984; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012). In this sense, the political theory of sense which will be sketched out in the following offers a "third way" between the discursive and the more recent new materialist approaches which span the field of contemporary post-structuralist thought. It seeks to establish a middle ground position between a discursive-linguistic structuralism which excludes or at least marginalises material creativity and the new materialisms which locate onto-genetic creativity in a force of matter primary to and untainted by the synthetic relations through which it affects subjects and societies, risking reintroducing a transcendental depth-ontology through the back door.[4]

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[4] The arguments developed in this dissertation are thus based on the presumption that both the discursive approaches and the new materialist approaches are insufficient as (onto)political theories because they tend to theoretically externalise and thereby obscure the grounding of generative force and agency rather than making it accessible. Starting with discursive approaches, these were decisively foundational for the post-structuralist theoretical movement. The theories of Derrida (1997), Jean-François Lyotard (1984), Julia Kristeva (1984) or arguably even the early Foucault (2002) are ideal typical examples of what Quentin Meillassoux refers to as "correlationism". Correlationist approaches, following Meillassoux (2008: 5), assume a necessary relationship between the world and the ideas we use to describe it, so that the world can never be accessed as such, but only in its expressive relationship to the latter. The theories of the linguistic turn however translate this Kantian relation between thought and being to the relation between signifier and signified, thereby situating it within the epistemological realm of language. As a consequence, epistemology is elevated to the status of a quasi-foundation because it is from its relations, rather than the ontic conditions of the world, that Being emerges not as sense, as in Nancy, but as iteratively productive meaning. In Derrida's reading of Heidegger (2016: 21-24), the "ontico-ontological difference" from which Being emerges becomes the difference between signifier and signified. The matter which constitutes the world, the only world which we can perceive, is here linguistic. Within recent years, this privileging of the discursive constitution and exercise of power by the philosophies of the linguistic turn has been "pressured from two sides: the ontological and the empirical" (Birns 2017: 308), particularly through the new materialisms. They seek to open-up the relationship between world and thought to shaping forces and constitutive moments which lie outside the realm of meaning and cannot be grasped by a theoretical

This theory of sense seeks to resist deflecting creativity to an epistemological or material outside, but rather seeks to think of it as immanent to and co-produced in the relationality of sense in such a way that conditionedness and creative openness can be thought together. I suggest that the political quality of this contribution should be understood in the sense of what David Chandler refers to as the "ontopolitics" (2018: xiii) of a theoretical framework: the "grounding … claims that form the basis of discussions about what it means to know, to govern and to be a human subject" (ibid.) which are established by a theoretical perspective, and the contingencies, alternative trajectories and possibilities for change in the above fields which are offered.

The second contribution which I aim to make with this dissertation is smaller in scope, but more directly political than this "ontopolitics" of sense. This second, political-analytical contribution is guided by the question: How can a political theory of sense provide understanding for the functionality of contemporary politics, particularly with regard to the reproduction of the current status quo of institutional-democratic politics? Having established a political theory of sense with the contours outlined above, I will use the former as an analytical perspective to unpack how contemporary politics reproduces the institutions, actors, events and structures it is comprised of on the level of sense. Adopting Luhmann's argument that contemporary politics is functionally differentiated, it will be argued that the self-reproductive mode of continuous sense-making is of

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approach which seeks to understand the world we perceive and the generative mechanisms behind it solely as textualities (Saarinen and Taylor 1994; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012). New materialisms reject the linguistic turn's prioritisation of the constitutive power of iterative meaning which institutes an – only thinly veiled – primacy of langue over matter which posits epistemology as the quasi-ground of the world, and the force which exclusively charges mutually constitutive relations to the socio-political realm. The retracing of all constitutive power to the human-made epistemological field of language reveals the linguistic turn of Continental philosophy, according to Claire Colebrook (2011) and Sara Ahmed (1996), as yet another iteration of humanism. It is unable to account for a non-rationalist, ecological subject which is shaped by and can respond to the material relations it is embedded in in a way that does not require mediation through, and is not determined by, relations of mind and meaning (Braidotti 2000: 150-158). New materialisms draw on insights from technological and ecological research to show how matter – in its micro-qualities and connectivities – functions creatively in a direct way. Its study thus does not necessitate the "continental reverence for dusty textual monuments" (Latour and Harman 2018). While I suggest that the new materialisms successfully dismantle the epistemological reductionisms which can be argued to ground the philosophies of the linguistic turn to a certain extent, it does so in a way that is problematic for post-structuralist political thought precisely because it institutes ontological aporias endowed with an essential creativity outside the relationality of meaning/thought and world. I argue that despite the recurring insistence that the former does not marginalise epistemological creativity but rather integrates it because meaning and matter "are inextricably fused together, and no event, no matter how energetic, can tear them asunder" (Barad 2007: 3), the new materialisms prioritise material creativity not only theoretically, but also ontologically – by situating it outside the correlationist circle. Through the exclusive focus on the creativity of matter and life, "the contemporary vitalisms, even if they deny or disqualify vitalism, lay claim to a disproportionate capacity of life to exceed determination and to incarnate contingency" (Noys 2016: 1). While the creative matter of the world was linguistic for the theories of the linguistic turn in Continental philosophy, it is exclusively material for the new materialisms which inverse, but do not resolve the reductionism of the former.

particular relevance for a politics with the functional responsibility to "hold ready the capacity for collectively binding decision-making" (Luhmann 2002: 84), but which cannot effectively steer the logics of sense other social realms are subject to and therefore needs to reproduce its decisional capacity by constantly establishing collectively binding societal self-observations in sense.

Giving a twist to the decisionist politics theorised by Carl Schmitt, Giorgio Agamben and Walter Benjamin, I will argue that contemporary politics reproduces itself through the decision on the selective continuation of sense in the event of sense-complexity. While politics thus needs the constant return of evental complexity as an opportunity to continue sense, it will be shown that the reproductive apparatus of evental complexity and structuring decision which underlies a politics of sense only functions insofar as the event, at all times, retains the rupturing quality of a genuine creative openness theorised as immanent to the relationality of sense. For this reason, a politics which functions through ungrounded relational self-production can only reproduce itself while reproducing the risk that its relations of sense are altered in the process.

0.2 Sense as medium and form: the dual quality of sense in Deleuze and Luhmann

It seems counter-intuitive to provide a definition of sense at the very beginning of a thesis designed to unpack this very concept in its onto-epistemological and political productivity. This section is thus not so much designed to produce a conclusive definition of sense as it is to clarify the cornerstones of the Deleuzian-Luhmannian conception of sense which this thesis will employ in the following. The main assumption underlying this concept of sense is that sense is both form and medium, both mixed product and the synthesising mechanism of its production. Substituting the idea of an absolute ground or foundation with the productive reciprocity between form and medium, sense is both the form which grounds the synthetic synthesis of material and linguistic singularities and the medium in which the onto-epistemological creation of forms takes place.[5] Beginning with

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[5] This dissertation will define singularities as the creative elements which populate the realms of language and matter in their virtual or complex, not yet actualised state in line with the definition offered by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense*, where he describes singularities as "anti-generalities, which are, however, impersonal and pre-individual" (1990a: 133). The term differential, constitutive of virtual difference, will be used as synonymous in the following. It is important to note that there is a second conceptualisation of singularity to be found in Deleuze's work, which is related to his use of the differential calculus. In *The Fold* and *Expressionism in Philosophy*, Deleuze refers to a "singularity" in the sense of an evental "singular point" which changes the course of a productive trajectory and is here opposed to ordinary points (Borum 2017).

Luhmann, many commentators on his theory view sense, not the system, as the conceptual core and the most innovative contribution of his social theory (Schützeichel 2013; Kirchmeier 2012; Arnoldi 2012; Stäheli 2000). Lamenting the lack of conceptual work undertaken in sociology, Luhmann (1971a) seeks to establish sense as the condition for the experience of the world.

The starting point for Luhmann's interest in sense seems thoroughly phenomenological (Arnoldi 2012: 29). Acknowledging his proximity to Husserl, Luhmann points out that any reflection on the subjective conditions of sense-making must include the other as co-constitutive of the – intersubjectively made – world which comes to be perceived in this way, introducing an immanent element of plurality and contingency (Moeller 2012: 46-47; Arnoldi 2012: 30-33). What follows is "nothing else but the social contingency of the world, which is the contemplation of the given from the perspective of other possibilities" (Luhmann 1971a: 9). However, contrary to Husserl, Luhmann does not resolve the complexity following from the multiplicity of worlds through the intuition employable by a transcendental subjectivity. Instead he replaces the figure of the subject with the entity of a "sense-using [sinnverwendendes] system" (ibid., 12) whose perspectivist relationality of sense is the world as it can be known for this system through a particular, path-dependent reduction of complexity which carves out this particular, contingent relationality of sense.

For both psychic and social systems, the reduction of complexity which allows for the perceptive production of a particular world must take place in sense. For this reason, sense is the necessary condition for the consciousness system – on its part socially made sense of as subject – to exist as sense-making entity in the first place.

> The basic concepts of a subject which engages with a contingent world must consequently be geared to this problem. They have to be exposed to it. Their suitability must be judged with different criteria, which is not in respect of the accuracy with which they reflect the given, but from the perspective of the grasping and reduction of this contingency of possible worlds. As key concept for the conscious (not just: physically existing or organically transforming) performance of this task [I] suggest 'sense'. (Luhmann 1971a: 26)

The idea that sense relations must function selectively to establish sufficiently secure conditions for perception and action can also be found in the sociological systems theory

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For the sake of coherence, the concept "singular point", constitutive of a "singularity-event", will be used in the following where Deleuze uses "singularity" in the second sense. This will also be the case for the discussion of Whitehead in chapter 4, for which reason Whitehead's own concept of singularity will be replaced with "singular point" in this dissertation.

of Talcott Parsons. Without doubt, Parsons' work has motivated Luhmann's academic endeavours and influenced their direction decisively. It is after a short study stay with Parsons at Stanford that Luhmann completes his dissertation, and fully abandons his administrative position within a local government to embark on an academic career (Baecker 2012). It is thus not surprising that Luhmann (1988: 127-128) emphasises his indebtedness to Parsons' "completely un-Weberian sociology" (1990: 255) which develops a post-humanist, general social theory where action is not the intentional product of a rational, autonomous subject, but the functional effect of systemic relations.[6] However, Luhmann abandons or at least radically modifies most of Parsons' main assumptions, adopting nothing but the general impetus and language of his systems theory.[7]

With regard to sense, Parsons further deducts the existence of ordering sense-structures such as roles and norms ex-post facto from the possibility of action for which these sense-structures are a necessary condition (Luhmann 1995: 105). On the contrary, Luhmann argues that orientation is only produced in the process of sense-making, in the form of sense relations, and remains meta-stable, subject to the productivity of sense. While Parsons' sense-structures must have ontological existence because of their observable functions for the order of society, Luhmann radicalises this functional perspective in a post-foundationalist fashion. Society, action or subject – all forms of order exist only in so far as they give themselves a function on the level of sense, constantly produce and reproduce themselves as functional entities in sense (Luhmann 1971a: 16-18). Sense in Luhmann is thus a limited, relational realm which allows for the perception of a particular world in accordance with a self-produced functionality. But which form does it take?

The concept of form is central to Luhmann's theory. Luhmann draws on George Spencer Brown's proto-mathematical calculus theory to replace Parsons' ontological positivism

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[6] Just as Luhmann will do later, Parsons breaks up social reality into a compound of different systems such as psychic, social or cultural. The medium of systemic organisation however is action, not sense, in Parsons - interaction systems relationally emerge between actor and situation or actor and object. Here, a system functions as "the structure of the relations between the actors as involved in the interactive process" (Parsons 1991: 15) and can thus be used as a focus point for the macro-analysis of social interactions in their characteristics, functions and the challenges they need to adapt to.

[7] A central point of divergence for Luhmann (1980: 7-9) is Parsons' positivism. He argues that Parsons cannot convincingly demonstrate why it is imperative or even adequate to think social reality as neatly subdivided into different interaction systems to "give an adequate account of modern society" in its "irritating realities" (Luhmann 1990a: 254). Parsons assumes that action systems can be observed as the actual entities of social organisation from a neutral, objective point outside these systems – which, for Luhmann, is indefensible. Discussed in more detail in chapter 2, Luhmann turns to cybernetic theory for an analytical lens suitable to study self-differentiating systems from the inside of the relations they produce in a non-foundational, epistemologically perspectivist way.

with the assumption of a continuous differentiation of the existent through its relations of sense (Moeller 2012: 83-84). In his short book *Laws of Form* (1969), Spencer Brown characterises the differential of the calculus with two mathematical laws: (I) the law of calling, according to which the infinite repetition of a distinction produces the same value as the first distinction and (II) the law of crossing, which states that a first distinction can always be altered or cancelled out by a second distinction. This differentiation implies that the existent to be made in sense must be differentiated from something. Through Spencer Brown Luhmann identifies form as the denominated existent differentiated from an outside which is co-produced in this process of differentiation.

Importantly, this differentiation does not take the form of the Parmenidean distinction between being and a defined non-being but leaves the other side of the distinction blank. The form of sense, which is the form this limiting differentiation takes in social and consciousness systems, is differentiated from an unmarked, undefined outside which is precisely not the constitutive other of the Parmenidean distinction (see Richter 2016). The process of selective differentiation takes place in the medium of sense and is performed by the operative form of the former, which is communication in social systems and cognition (as neuronal communication) in psychic consciousness systems (Luhmann 2008b: 30-35; Arnoldi 2012: 30-31). For Luhmann, epistemological and social order takes place on the grounding grid of differentiated forms of sense (Schützeichel 2013: 76-87). But sense not only emerges as a limiting meta-stability which grounds and guides the constant connective reproduction of social and psychic relations – it is importantly also the medium in which this reproduction takes place.

Social and psychic systems observe themselves and their environment in sense – and it is thus through its operative continuation that they differentiate themselves autopoietically as momentously stable forms constantly replaced by new, identical or different, sense-expressions (Luhmann 1990a: 90-91). The momentous character of this stability is a necessary part of the self-grounding, self-producing relationality of sense which allows sense relations to oscillate between stability and flexible openness. Sense is not the passive recipient of the creative force surfacing from a depth of being. It continuously opens itself to a complexity of its own quality and making, a multiplicity of alternative serial pathways for making sense, which are both creative resource and constitutive outside for forms of sense to be made anew on the inside of sense relations.

> Complexity […] is only bracketed, reduced differently from moment to moment and is therefore conserved as generally constituted realm of selection, the 'whereof' of constantly new choices – as

world. […] Sense is not a selective event, but a selective relationship between system and world, but with this it is still not sufficiently characterised. The actually particular quality of processing experiences through sense [sinnhafter Erlebnisverarbeitung] rather lies in the fact that it at the same time makes possible the reduction and the conservation of complexity. It ensures a form of selection which prevents the world from shrinking into and disappearing in a singular state of [systemic] consciousness in the act of the determination of experience. (Luhmann 1971a: 33-34)

The medium sense thus functions productive in so far as it continues relations of differentiation in time in a way that is grounded by nothing but the forms it produces. But are those forms of synthetic, mixed quality or do they implicitly privilege the productivity of either the linguistic or the material sphere? I argue that Luhmann's form of sense can indeed be understood as mixed in this sense, and this, I suggest, can be drawn from the way he discusses communication as the operative form of sense in social systems. Luhmann defines communication as "the synthesis of information, utterance and understanding. That is to say that communication happens when information that has been uttered is understood" (Luhmann 2010: 47). However, it is argued that Luhmann's communication is not anthropocentric. It is the operation of difference in sense which can connect to nothing but previous and future forms of sense. Communication operates in a manner that is selective and serialising in order to provide the actual ground for further differentiation; "communication means limitation (placing oneself and the other within limits)" (Luhmann 1995: 39). Communication selectively produces forms of sense to allow for the autopoiesis of social systems (Luhmann 1995: 59-60; Luhmann 1990a: 25-27).

I argue that it is important to not limit Luhmann's communication to the operative production of linguistic sense-forms in a variation of Derrida's iterative meaning. There is undoubtedly significant overlap between both concepts, which is well-explored in secondary literature (Moeller 2012; Stäheli 2000; Rasch 2000a). However, I caution against overemphasising the constitutive function of a purely linguistic meaning in Luhmann's theory. Luhmann himself states that he seeks to "correct the widespread overestimation of the role of language" (1995: 10) with his deliberately open definition of communication as self-limitation. Sense is the form of the world as it can be perceived, of which linguistic signs are just one particular expression, and the medium of its communicative or cognitive production, for which language is just one of its constituents. As Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos argues in his materialist reading of Luhmann's autopoietic theory, "materiality is, at least impressionistically, absorbed by communication" (2014: 395). Sense systems, constituted by the drawing of boundaries to

an environment, "dissimulate" their topographical character while they at the same time remain reliant on material constituents to achieve the constant, successful reproduction of these boundaries in sense.

For the legal system, Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos shows that legal communication includes "statutes, court decisions, fines, appeals, mediation, law school classes, lawyers, judges, research papers" (ibid., 396). While Luhmann (2004: 235) himself insists that the physical features of communication, such as writing, in fact belong to the environment of the system, Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2014: 396-398) offers an alternative perspective on the status of materiality in Luhmann's systems theory. Because the production of the environment, as it can be perceived on the level of sense, is thoroughly immanent to the sense system, an a priori epistemological exclusion of materiality seems implausible. While both matter and signs constitute communication, materiality is excluded from the forms of sense produced through it (Luhmann 2008b: 114-116). Very close to what Deleuze will argue, matter becomes an inaccessible, chaotic outside of non-sense against the background of which selective relations of sense are formed, but which nevertheless continue to inform the former.

The same line of argumentation can be applied to cognitive sense-making in the psychic system. Luhmann has been criticised for insisting that the former is separate from the material-organic system of the body (Dziewas 1992). This critique can be warded off if this "dissimulation" of the material is identified as a product of psychic sense relations whose constitution is nevertheless very much shaped by a neuronal communication which involves the body. While particular processes of sense-making can include linguistic and material constituents to unequal degrees, the mixed quality of operative sense which connects the forms of sense already made to new forms which are in the process of being expressed in the medium of sense shows precisely that Luhmann's sense is always synthetic. In *Social Systems,* Luhmann argues again in diversion from Parsons that a sharp distinction between sense systems and their bodily and physical environment is not possible. Physical systems do not operate on the basis of sense but are autopoietically closed off towards the relations of the former, thus "[w]hat the human body is for itself we do not know" (Luhmann 1995: 245). However, Luhmann employs George Herbert Mead's concept of "gesture" to show that bodies are involved in communication in multiple ways, stimulating linguistic and non-linguistic responses.

> Bodies reciprocally invite their possibilities of reduction. They do so by presenting their own complexity, especially as possibilities for spatial movement, and thereby hold out the prospect that

their self-achieved reductions can be conditioned. […] Corporeality is and remains a general (and to this extent, theoretically trivial) premise of social life. In other words, the difference between corporeality and noncorporeality has (at least for our present societal system) no social relevance. Thus one cannot display corporeality as relevant by opposing it to something else. One can only differentiate it as a specific condition, chance, or resource in the formation of social systems. (Luhmann 1995: 246-247)

To illustrate the synthetic quality of a sense whose constitution invlolves linguistic and bodily-material elements, this dissertation does not adopt the usual translation of the German "Sinn" used by Luhmann, which encompasses a variety of different connotations in German, ranging from the more narrowly linguistic "meaning" and "signification" to the more open "mind", "sense", "appreciation" and "use". While "Sinn" is translated as "meaning" in the English language editions of Luhmann's works, I argue that this translation precisely feeds into the "overestimation of language" which Luhmann sought to avoid. Instead, I will use the more ambiguous "sense" which allows for the inclusion of material constituents in line with the above discussion.[8]

I argue that the two dimensions of sense pointed out in Luhmann, sense as the grounding form produced in a process of differentiation and sense as the medium for this relational-differential production, are also present in Deleuze's conceptualisation of sense. Contrary to Luhmann's theory of sense, which is spread out over the entirety of his work, Deleuze's theory of sense is almost exclusively developed in *The Logic of Sense* published in the middle period of his writing, one year after *Difference and Repetition*, in 1969. The book unpacks the mathematical fiction of Lewis Carroll through thirty-four non-chronological chapters, which Deleuze refers to as "series", to explore how a sense of the world is made (Deleuze 1990a: xiii). Deleuze does not set up his philosophy of sense against the problem of contingent and unlikely onto-epistemological and social order, but directly zooms in

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[8] At this point the objection could be made that I carelessly abandon the established translation authorised by Luhmann himself in order to facilitate the theoretical connection to Deleuze's order of sense. I believe that this argument does not have much purchase for two reasons. Firstly, as I pointed out in the introduction, Luhmann himself references Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense* (in the French original) when developing his account of "Sinn" in *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*. Thus, it can be assumed that Luhmann himself saw at least a close relationship between his "Sinn" and Deleuze's sense, which attributes equal status to linguistic and material singularities in the production and productivity of sense. Secondly, there is evidence to suggest that Luhmann is not overly concerned with both the translation of his concepts and conceptual coherence in his own works and their reading. The editor of his translated works at Stanford University Press recalls that Luhmann regularly advised her not to "worry too much about the choice of words in the translation. I could always have chosen differently" (Tartar 1999: 88). A former student of Luhmann similarly recalls that Luhmann found it perfectly acceptable to connect his older with his newer writings, even if the change in concepts and their meaning is sometimes considerable (Thyssen 1999: 149). A number of Luhmann scholars who have known or worked with him thus insist that a creative use of his theory to "make other and very different texts … speak" (Esposito 1999: 66) is most in tune with his understanding of using and producing theory. "[T]o be a disciple of Luhmann you have to refuse to be a disciple" (Thyssen 1999: 146).

on the form which this order takes. He seeks to refute two philosophical perspectives on the order of sense: firstly, the assumption that there is a fixed – either material or ideational – identity to entities which underlies common sense and secondly the teleological directedness of an *a priori* directional, good sense (ibid., 3).

Deleuze turns to Stoic philosophy to reverse Platonism and show that it is not the "cause" of the idea, but instead the creative mixture of the "effects" or simulacra of language and bodies which generate sense. Beginning with the dimension of sense as medium, Deleuze reveals the former as *sui generis* creative force which both precedes and escapes the relation of linguistic determination set up between the idea of the speaker, proposition and object. Sense, thus, "ought to have something unconditioned […]. Sense is the fourth dimension of the proposition. The Stoics discovered it along with the event: sense, the expressed of the proposition is an incorporeal, complex, and irreducible entity, at the surface of things, a pure event which inheres or subsists in the proposition" (ibid., 19).[9] Sense is creative because it is excessive. It escapes every attempt of situating it in either the rationality of the speaker, the materiality of the person or object adressed or the logical relationship established between both through a proposition, because it always emerges from and connects to the in-between space between those. Deleuze thereby distinguishes this genesis in the medium of sense not only from Platonic idealism, but also from (the necessary ontological assumption of) deep causes located in existent bodies. Instead, sense is generated by the quasi-causes which are signs, matter, and bodies, which are already enfolded in the expressive relation in the medium of sense (Deleuze 1990a: 125-126; Widder 2003: 466-467).

> How can we maintain both that sense produces even the states of affairs in which it is embodied,
> and that it is itself produced by these states of affairs or the actions and passions of bodies (an
> immaculate conception)? The idea itself of a static genesis dissipates the contradiction. When we

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[9] What Deleuze briefly alludes to here are the three perspectives which characterise sense as it has been explored throughout the history of philosophy. The first perspective privileges the creative capacity of the epistemic realm, of minds and ideas. Spanning from the pre-Socratic thinker Parmenides to Plato, Augustine, Descartes and Kant, it consists of philosophies that identify sense as the product of a rational recognition performed by the mind in response to a sensory experience (Palmer 2013; Silverman 1990; Plato 1997; Miethe 1979; Descartes 2010; Kant 2008; Roche 2010). On the contrary, the second perspective situates the creative capacity to make sense in the realm of matter and the sensory impressions it creates. Important examples for thinkers who focus on the object that is made sense of, albeit under various different metaphysical preconditions, in this sense are Aristotle, Hume, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty (Graeser 1978; Aristotle 1987; Hume 2004; Mulligan 1995; Dejanovic 2012; Merleau-Ponty 2002). Mathematical-formal theories of sense attempt to do away with this ambiguity-inducing multiplicity. A third perspective is then provided by the analytical philosophies of Russel, Frege and Wittgenstein. They seek to analyse sense as the context-independent, objectively valid outcome of a logical, generalisable, formal relationship which does not rely on - and is not limited to - a singular sensing subject and its sensory encounters and ideational expressions but fail to account for the ground which gives sense to their logical rules (Livingston 2011; Russel 2001; Makin 2000; Wittgenstein 1981).

say that bodies and their mixtures produce sense, it is not by virtue of an individuation which would presuppose it. Individuation in bodies, the measure in their mixtures, the play of persons and concepts in their variations - this entire order presupposes sense and the pre-individual and impersonal neutral field within which it unfolds. (Deleuze 1990a: 124)

Like Luhmann, Deleuze (ibid., 20) credits Husserl in addition to the Stoics with having discovered this necessarily excessive quality of sense. But while Husserl's sense undoes the philosophical idea of a pre-existent form only to be discovered in the realm of ideas or filled with matter according to both Deleuze and Luhmann, Deleuze argues that Husserl fails to embrace sense as creative relation *sui generis* because he retains the assumption that creative sense is pre-ordered within the faculties of the transcendental subject (ibid., 94-98).

> It seems that Husserl does not think about genesis on the basis of a necessarily 'paradoxical' instance, which, properly speaking, would be 'non-identifiable' (lacking its own identity and its own origin). He thinks of it, on the contrary, on the basis of an originary faculty of common sense, responsible for accounting for the identity of an object in general, and even on the basis of a faculty of good sense, responsible for accounting for the process of identification of every object in general ad infinitum. We can clearly see this in the Husserlian theory of doxa, wherein the different kinds of belief are engendered with reference to an Urdoxa, which acts as a faculty of common sense in relation to the specified faculties. (Deleuze 1990a: 97)

Once this transcendental limitation is removed from the relation of excessive sense spanned between denotation and denoted object, sense becomes absolutely excessive. In order for a specific sense to be made (of a denoted object), sense must produce its own limitation. As in Luhmann, sense differentiates or stratifies itself against the background of the relational-synthetic multiplicity of nonsense, to which it nevertheless remains connected in every new instance of sense-making. Nonsense is the immanent exteriority excluded when a specific form of sense emerges from a process of sense-making – rather than having no sense, it is its immanently produced, constitutive "outside". But this exclusion is not permanent, because relations of sense are not permanent – they are made anew with every proposition. For this reason, nonsense further remains available not as passive reservoir, but as creative potentiality which can actualise sense in every new instance of sense-making – it is the driving force of Deleuze's philosophy of immanent, productive difference.

> Nonsense does not have any particular sense, but is opposed to the absence of sense rather than to the sense that it produces in excess-without ever maintaining with its product the simple relation of exclusion to which some people would like to reduce them. Nonsense is that which has no sense,

and that which, as such and as it enacts the donation of sense, is opposed to the absence of sense. (Deleuze 1990a: 71)

Sense and nonsense are not opposed but disjoined … Here we can see how Deleuze both completes and breaks with Hegel: the completion of a philosophy of immanence must move beyond the dialectics of identity and opposition, and so must move from a nonsense of contradiction that reconciles sense and its opposite to a nonsense of difference that constitutes sense in terms of divergence. (Widder 2003: 471)

Like in Luhmann, sense and nonsense are produced through the same process of differentiation, and their allocation on both sides of the distinction of sense is contingent and temporary. In Luhmann, this follows from the primacy of a distinction which can only produce an inside in so far as it also produces the outside which this inside is distinguished from, which Luhmann, as shown above, draws from Spencer Brown. Deleuze, for his part, describes this relational constitution of a specific form of sense and the nonsense it is distinguished from as the static logical genesis of a sense which functions productively in two directions. Sense is therefore "a doubling up […] defined by the production of surfaces, their multiplication and consolidation" (Deleuze 1990a: 125). Sense is productive of the world as it can be known, but only insofar as this productivity is grounded in previously produced forms of sense. "Sense is always an *effect*"; "It is never originary but always caused and derived" (Deleuze 1990a: 81; 95 as quoted in Luhmann 1998a: 44). The static logical genesis illustrates the ungrounded productivity of the medium of sense.

But Deleuze's sense entails another moment of genesis: a static ontological genesis, which constitutes Deleuze's take on how a particular form of sense is produced in this medium. The static ontological genesis which selectively produces a form of sense takes place through the series of signs and the series of matter. Importantly, Deleuze describes the allocation of the two series from which singularities are drawn as "unimportant" (1990a: 37). For him, we could just as well think of series "between events and states of affairs […] and inside the proposition between expressions and denotations" (ibid.). Deleuze thus replaces the relationship between signifier and signified, where the philosophy of the linguistic turn situated the production of the world as we know it, with a duality of matter and language which is always already present in, because it forms the basis of, sense-expression. Sense is produced through the disjunctive synthesis of already existent, serially ordered sense (the series of expression) with the two series of singularities, both linguistic and material, as they appear in this relational synthesis. As further unpacked in chapter 2, Deleuze's sense is a flat surface composed of creative

relations whose discovery Deleuze attributes to Stoic philosophy (Bowden 2011: 17-20). "It is no longer a question of Dionysus down below, or of Apollo up above, but of Hercules of the surface, in his dual battle against both depth and height: reorientation of the entire thought and a new geography" (Deleuze 1990a: 132).

The surface of sense populated by its forms escapes grounding in both ontological depth and epistemological height (Widder 2003: 465-466). Sense is always and equally both "a plane of thought and a plane of nature" (Zourabichvili 2012: 191). The second, ontological genesis of sense reveals how its synthetic forms emerges from always already mixed series of bodies and states of affairs and thus escapes the need to ground the productivity of sense in either realm. Like in Luhmann, it is thus the paradox of Deleuze's sense that it must always already be present. It has no genuine outside, because it produces its own outside. "Sense is like the sphere in which I am already established in order to enact possible denotations, and even to think their conditions. Sense is always presupposed as soon as I begin to speak" (ibid., 28). The theory of sense I draw from Deleuze in this dissertation, which is not only but strongly informed by *The Logic of Sense,* is based on an interpretive leap comparable to the translation of Luhmann's "Sinn" as "sense" discussed above.

Diverging from readings which emphasise the Lacanian psychoanalytic roots of the book and use them as an analytical lens to unpack its ideas (Światkowski 2012; Collet 2016), I read Deleuze's treatment of Lacan in the last passages of the book as a reiteration of the disavowal of (both materialist and psychoanalytic) depth in favour of a theory of productive surfaces where synthetic signs of sense spanning between linguistic and pre- or non-lingustic elements productively express the world (Widder 2003; Bowden 2011; Dejanovic 2014). For this reason, I argue that a conflation of the psychoanalytic dimension of *The Logic of Sense* is not only legitimate in the light of the analytical focus of this dissertation, but I believe that the emphasis on onto-epistemological flatness and social situatedness which this move entails corresponds to Deleuze's treatment of desire in his later works with Guattari. Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the productive but at the same time produced quality of a desire which is "not a theatre, but a factory" (1983: 311) in such a way that, as I will argue in chapter 5, desire can easily be translated into a concept of sense as ungrounded but self-grounding.

For the context of this dissertation, I thus propose a Deleuzian-Luhmannian concept of sense which is two-dimensional. I firstly suggest thinking sense as synthetic form, constituted by epistemic and material singularities and differentiated from a co-

constituted outside of sense-complexity or nonsense which grounds the onto-epistemological production of the world as it can be known. Secondly, this sense is always at the same time the medium in which this onto-epistemological genesis takes place and through which new forms of sense are therefore expressed. Sense is an ungrounded, but immanently self-grounding relationality.

0.3 The free and wild creation of concepts as theoretical method: thinking with Deleuze and Luhmann

As the title of this section indicates, I believe that the theoretical method used in this thesis is best captured by the subtitle of Isabelle Stengers' book on Whitehead, which I will return to as an important source for the arguments developed in chapter 4. Stengers defines her mode of using Whitehead's theory as thinking *with* Whitehead for the purpose of a "free and wild creation of concepts" which she relates to Deleuze and Guattari. In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari (1994) identify concept creation as the aim of a philosophy which itself must be understood as forming and re-forming habits on the plane of immanence, which is, as I will argue in chapter 1, the plane of sense. Philosophy, as Deleuze and Guattari understand it, must operate productively by adding to or altering the relational connections available to make sense of the world. To achieve such conceptual productivity, Stengers makes a case for thinking with Whitehead – for using Whitehead's thought in a creative fashion, for experimenting with the way Whitehead can be read, transgressing conceptual boundaries and pushing beyond canonised trajectories of interpretation rather than merely thinking about or through the theoretical lenses he provides (Savransky 2018).

For Stengers, "[t]he surest way to 'kill' philosophy is to transmit it in the manner of a science" (2011: 10) – methodological orthodoxy, conceptual sterility and controlled conditions for experimentation are not conducive to a discipline whose achievements lie in the new pathways it creates for thought. This does not mean that exactness, clarity and academic rigour should be abandoned – Stengers is clear that concept creation can never be forced and violent in the way that it treats the philosophical works it draws from. The aim of thinking *with* is rather "to place on the same level that is, *in adventure* - all of our judgments, or our 'as is well known,' and thus to separate them actively from what gives them the power to exclude and to disqualify" (ibid., 27; italicisation added). The exploratory interconnection of Deleuze's and Luhmann's thought in this dissertation

follows the principles of Stengers' wild and free concept creation. While it aims to be exact and thorough in the way both theories are explained in their key ideas and lines of argumentation, the interweaving of both theories which is performed at multiple points is neither Deleuzian nor Luhmannian, but a creative thinking *with* Luhmann and Deleuze in Stengers' sense.

I therefore want to be clear that this thesis does not aim at a comparison of Deleuze's and Luhmann's work which identifies and carves out their respective theories of sense and its political implications as a common ground. The theory of sense which will be developed in this thesis is rather my own attempt at conceptually creating a new trajectory in sense for political thought, and thereby a basis to think differently. This prioritisation of theoretical creativity is certainly in line with Deleuze's approach to philosophy. Referring to his readings of Hume, Spinoza or Nietzsche, Deleuze calls himself a traitor of his philosophical prophets, but insists that this treason is necessary (Kedem 2011; Bryant 2008) to produce new trajectories for thought *with* those thinkers rather than guarding the status quo as "interpretive priest" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 114). But I further suggest that this creative-experimental way of theorising is also coherent with the way Luhmann uses theory. As shown above, he draws on Parsons' social systems theory while radically altering it, and eclectically adopts the concept of autopoiesis developed by the neurobiologists Maturana and Varela for a social context not included in their considerations (Münch 1992; Klymenko 2012).

Turning to the way in which I will attempt to conceptualise a political theory of sense with Deleuze and Luhmann in this dissertation, I will not draw from both thinkers equally at the same time. Rather, I will interrelate their theories in such a way that this connection is most productive in response to the problem at hand – the problem of how to theorise sense as productive in a way that escapes the necessity for primacy and illustrates the functioning of contemporary politics. The theoretical encounter I create between Deleuze and Luhmann will thus take the form of a directed meandering. I will follow the stream of one body of thought for a while until a theoretical impasse or point of constriction is reached, where I will then demonstrate how a turn away from Luhmann to Deleuze or away from Deleuze to Luhmann can help to overcome a particular impasse by adding depth or nuance, or by widening the theoretical scope.

Deleuze and Guattari emphasise that in order to create a new trajectory of making sense of the world as a new habit for philosophy, old habits have to be broken first (Kedem 2011: 2). In order to break the philosophical habit which, as explored in more detail in

chapter 1, keeps the post-structuralist philosophy of Deleuze detached from Luhmann's sociological systems theory, each chapter will make use of transitional thinkers. Those thinkers, or at least specific elements of their work, are employed by both Deleuze and Luhmann and will therefore help me to draw out a particular point of convergence between their theories. In chapter 2, Leibniz and Husserl will allow me to illustrate the ungrounded but synthetic nature of sense in both Luhmann and Deleuze. In chapter 3, it is again Husserl and Nietzsche who make it possible to understand parallelisms in the evental self-production of time in both thinkers. This event will then be unpacked as two-fold through Whitehead in chapter 4 while chapter 5 will use Marx's theory of capital to understand the historical emergence and functionality of a self-reproductive relationality of sense in Luhmann and Deleuze.[10]

However, despite the theoretical aid of those transitional thinkers, I recognise that my habit-breaking linking of Deleuze and Luhmann does not happen without a certain amount of force. At times some theoretical pushing, interpretive pulling and analytical selectivity is necessary to make an encounter between both thinkers happen which is both significant and productive. While my reading at times certainly stretches or even transgresses the boundaries of what is deemed possible by more orthodox readers of Luhmann and Deleuze, I firstly would like to make it clear that the pretence of my claims is modest. For example, with regard to the concept of sense defined above, I do not suggest that it must be understood as completely or even to a large part identical in Deleuze and Luhmann. I merely argue that the conceptual parallels I identify are plausible, grounding a trajectory of argumentation which I suggest as theoretically productive, but which is certainly partial and perspectivist, driven by the aim of this dissertation, not by a pre-existent convergence of both thinkers. Against the background of Stengers' Deleuzian free and wild concept creation, I hope that the arguments presented in the following make a convincing case for my political theory of sense as a new habit of sense-making, retroactively providing legitimacy for occasional moments of theoretical violence which might be exercised on the bodies of Luhmann's or Deleuze's thought.

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[10] Other possible transitional thinkers and their conceptual bricks that are significant for both Luhmann and Deleuze but which are less central to their theories of sense and are therefore bracketed in this thesis or only discussed more superficially are Henri Bergson's theory of time and memory, Baruch Spinoza's synthetic but immanently totalised monads, Gabriel Tarde's theory of repetition and Gregory Bateson's plateaus.

0.4 Chapter overview: towards a political theory of sense with Deleuze and Luhmann

Chapter 1 will lay the ground for the political theory of sense I develop with Luhmann and Deleuze in this dissertation by drawing out a conceptual map of the key ideas of both thinkers. Against the dichotomous reception of both bodies of work, which will be traced back to the empirical-analytical (mis-)classification of Luhmann's theory in its Anglo-American reception and the strong backlash it received from (Frankfurt School) Critical Theory in Germany, I will reveal their frequent and extensive parallels, their theoretical overlap and the analogous implications that can be drawn from them. In the chapter it will firstly be argued that the thought of both Luhmann and Deleuze is characterised by a functional combination of theoretical sobriety and a certain anarchic humour, which allows both thinkers to explore the unlikely production and stabilisation of path-dependencies in sense while always pointing to their contingency against the background of a multiplicity of alternative sense relations. Secondly, turning to the concepts which will be interconnected here, I will show that Luhmann's meta-stable autopoietic system, which must constantly keep at bay the complexity it distinguishes itself from, is theoretically analogous to the constant oscillation of different/ciation between virtual and actual in Deleuze.

Having demonstrated a certain congruence between the works of Luhmann and Deleuze in chapter 1, I will show how sense can be understood as an ungrounded but self-grounding onto-epistemological relationality which fully escapes the notion of primacy in chapter 2. Employing Leibniz's philosophy as a common point of reference for both Deleuze and Luhmann, I will propose to understand sense as a surface containing the currently existent as well as all possible alternative worlds, which is prior to their ontological and epistemological actualisation. However, this primacy is not absolute, because the surface of sense is at the same time always already the product of serial genesis. Drawing on Husserl, who significantly influences Luhmann's conceptualisation of systemic sense-making and Deleuze's *Logic of Sense*, I will conceptualise sense as a relationality of infinite expressive regress emergent from the synthesis of material and epistemic singularities. This synthesis is grounded in nothing but the forms produced by previous syntheses of sense. While the post-ontological gesture which this concept of sense implies sits comparatively comfortably with Luhmann's work, it will be shown how Deleuze's thought can indeed be read as subverting both epistemological and ontological primacy in a similar way.

But in the absence of a stable foundation, what is the ordering scheme which continuously allows the relations of sense to be made? In Husserl, and in Deleuze and Luhmann, the synthesis of sense stands in a mutually constitutive relationship with the order of time. Chapter 3 will unpack how both Luhmann and Deleuze situate sense-making in a relationality of time which produces its own linearity, but which, importantly, deparadoxifies its auto-logical functioning in an event of emergent complexity which ruptures existing relations so that the circle of time can begin anew. In Deleuze, sense is conditioned by a time which itself emerges from three syntheses: (I) the compressing synthesis of the passing present, (II) the complexity-reducing synthesis of the past and (III) the extensive evental synthesis of the future. While the first synthesis is necessary to provide sense-making with a linear direction in time, the second synthesis selects the particular past-future trajectory to be actualised in the first synthesis from the multiplicity of alternative lines of sense which constitute Bergson's memory. The first two syntheses therefore condition each other, but it is the third synthesis of the future which, in Deleuze's (1990a: 55) words, holds time in motion as a de-centred circle.

With reference to Nietzsche's eternal return as a moment of constitutive chaos which informs Deleuze's and Luhmann's theories of time, I will conceptualise the event as the re-entry of productive openness to the relations of sense in time which allows for their reproduction in an either identical or altered way. It will be shown that the relations of sense therefore stand in a mutually constitutive relationship with the relations of time: sense-making requires temporal order, but the relations of time are themselves reproduced in the creative rupture that is each event of sense. In this juncture, it will be argued that it is Luhmann who draws attention to the fact that the complexity-inducing event is necessary for the continuous self-production of sense in time and should therefore not be understood as the effect of a creative, external ontological force but rather as a functionally conditioned product whose emergence is immanent to both relationalities. The event returns because we need it to make sense in time.

In chapter 4 I will then further hone in on the event to explain how it can be understood as a conditioned moment of genuinely creative openness which can reproduce or change the logic of sense from the inside of its relations, which will be shown as congruent with both Luhmann's and Deleuze's thought. Such an immanent theory of the event further resolves a problematic tendency in Deleuzian literature which François Laruelle (2000: 178) terms the reliance on a Other-as-One event of ontologically or materially-subjective externality. To theoretically reconcile the ideas of conditionedness and openness I will

turn to Whitehead to show how the event in Deleuze and Luhmann is two-fold, consisting firstly of an evental singular point emitted by a material object and secondly of the synthetic Evental nexus of previous sense/event-relations. While both evental singular point and nexus-relations of sense are necessary conditions for an event to take place, Whitehead's philosophy shifts the philosophical perspective on the event away from a narrow focus on the singular encounter with an – often materially situated – novelty to emphasise that it is on the level of sense relations in the nexus of past events and their perception that the singularity-event becomes meaningful and thus becomes event as such.

The decision between identical reproduction and change thus takes place in the nexus-relations of sense – it is the selective decision over the continuation of sense relations in the event, produced by the interplay of structuring forms and the openness they allow for in the productive medium of sense. With Luhmann I will situate this decision over the continuation of sense in the theoretical lineage of decisionist politics from Schmitt to Agamben and Benjamin to show how the political theory of sense developed so far can be used to understand the functioning of contemporary politics. It will be argued that the decision over the selective continuation of sense in the event which provides orientation for society replaces effective political steering and allows politics to reproduce itself under the conditions of functional differentiation which it cannot control.

In chapter 5 I will then fully turn to an analysis of contemporary politics as operating in the mode of ungrounded self-production in sense through the theoretical lens of the political theory of sense I have developed. I will employ Luhmann's theory of autopoietic politics to show how relations of political sense make use of a network of algorithmic programmes and codes to build expectations which reduce complexity and allow the selective, reproductive decision to take place. However, it will be argued that the analytical purchase of Luhmann's theory is hampered by its overly descriptive nature, its lack of analytical abstraction and its structural rigidity. Turning to the socio-historical theory of abstract machines developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983), I will show that the retroactive coding of the despotic machine through which the former reproduces its status under the conditions of free-flowing capital relations firstly allows for a looser, Deleuzian understanding of the algorithmically ordering code. It secondly provides an overarching theoretical perspective on a self-reproductive politics of sense because it is grounded in Deleuze's and Marx's theory of capital as a particular,

historically emergent mode of social organisation which totalises relational self-production.

Having embedded James William's Deleuzian conception of the code as synthetic, multiple and contingent framework for territorialisation in Luhmann's theory of political self-production in sense, I will analyse the "crisis" as exemplary of a code which facilitates self-production within contemporary politics. As a form of sense, the crisis constitutes an alarm signal which codes complexity-events in such a way that they become decisional opportunities. At the same time, it leaves the resolution or course of action in sense radically indeterminate so that a genuine contingency remains available for the flexible adaption of what is reproduced as political through coded structuration. But what is the scope of this indeterminacy – does it always lead to a recuperative re-stabilisation of the order of sense that is functional differentiation or axiomatic capitalism, or can the openness internal to self-productive sense bring about a different functionality of social relations? In the last part of chapter 5 I will finally draw on Marx's theory of capital as a social relationality which underlies Deleuze and Guattari's machinic theory of society to further unpack the relationship between self-extensive closure and contingent openness in a politics of sense-making.

Against the background of strong parallels between Luhmann's social evolution towards functional differentiation and Marx's materialist history, I will firstly point out that both modes of organisation are the products of a path-dependent social evolution. Functional differentiation is hence distinct from sense as the medium and form of onto-epistemological self-production, which is ahistoric in Luhmann, and can produce relational entities other than functionally differentiated systems. Such other modes of social organisation in sense must remain "blind spots" of Luhmann's theory and Deleuze's explicitly political thought, which, like Marx's ideational superstructure, remain perspectivist and reproductively tied to the particular socio-political order of sense they emerge from and observe. Nevertheless, thought with Luhmann and Deleuze beyond Marx, a relationally self-productive oder of social sense must remain vulnerable to the immanent openness of sense because it must constantly be actualised in its micro-relations, which always remain external to their terms. In the conclusion, I will suggest free, exploratory concept-creation as a way to access this immanent openness in the continuation of sense on the part of political theory, and Luhmann's use of the *Zettelkasten* as a conscious attempt to achieve such concept creation.

Chapter 1

1. Difference, Immanence and Contingency in Luhmann and Deleuze: A Theoretical Encounter

1.1 Towards a critical Luhmann? Deleuze's sobriety, Luhmann's humour

This thesis, and the political theory of sense I propose in it, is based on the assumption that a synthesis of Deleuze's and Luhmann's ideas is not only theoretically productive, but even more fundamentally than that, plausible in the first place. This basic assumption is however a contentious one, particularly from the perspective of (post-structuralist) critical thought in which Deleuze's theory is situated, read and applied. From the time of Luhmann's early publications in the 1960s and 1970s up to the contemporary reception of Luhmann's thought, the relationship of his systems theory to critical thought is, for the most part, characterised by tension, rejection and outward conflict. In this chapter I will build the foundation for the theoretical synthesis attempted in this dissertation. It will be demonstrated that a connection of Deleuze and Luhmann might not be a meeting of like-minded thinkers, but is an encounter of compatible *conceptual personae*, as Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 62-64) define the creative force which emerges from the ideas, aims and interests which span a philosophical work.

In the first part of the chapter it is shown how the duality of both theoretical sobriety and rupturing humour is common to both Deleuze and Luhmann. Both thinkers make use of this peculiar combination to target the reproduction of a particular, contingent order against the background of a multiplicity of alternatives. The second part of this chapter will then revisit the concept of sense as thought *with* Deleuze and Luhmann, which I sketched out in the introduction. On this basis, I will then rethink Luhmann's system with Deleuze's terminology to show not only the extensive theoretical parallelism of both of their bodies of work, but also reveal that, against misconceptions of Luhmann's theory as deterministic, the balance between necessity and contingency in Luhmann is equivalent to Deleuze's account. The third part of the chapter is focused on the quality and role of difference in both theories. I will illustrate how Deleuze and Luhmann develop an onto-epistemologically productive, contingent but path-dependent idea of differentiation as the relational mode through which entities are produced in sense. In the fourth part of the chapter, I will connect Luhmann's concept of autopoiesis to univocity and immanence in

Deleuze to show how both view immanence, which is the mode of this differentiation, as necessary. But at the same time, the immanent order of social systems or strata reproduced is radically contingent.

In his lifetime, Luhmann encountered critical theory most directly in the form of Frankfurt School thinkers, most notably his contemporary Jürgen Habermas. Regarded as the two great German sociological theorists of their generation, Luhmann and Habermas clearly and fundamentally disagreed with the direction of each other's theoretical projects, but amicably recognised their scope and quality. The theoretical debate between Luhmann and Habermas was, as noted by a contemporary, "far from being the kind of trench warfare that the Adorno-Popper controversy certainly was. […] Habermas and Luhmann make every effort to listen to and learn from what the other has to say" (Sixel 1976: 185). Early in their respective careers, Luhmann and Habermas published the volume *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie: Was leistet die Systemtheorie?* Together in which they discuss the theoretical potential and limitations of a systemic account of society. Obviously against the background of his own critical theory of communicative action, Habermas accuses Luhmann of functional determinism in his contribution to the volume. For Habermas (1971: 238-278), Luhmann theoretically excludes the possibility that communication can inspire deliberative emancipation and transformation beyond the path-dependent, uncritical reproduction of the constructions of its own making.[11] Ultimately, Habermas cannot accept that Luhmann's "theory need not and does not sell itself to praxis via legitimation nor does it reflect on it" (Sixel 1976: 194). However, as Luhmann himself acknowledges, Habermas' critique is "pointed, nuanced and very differentiated" (1971b: 291).

It is not directed towards Luhmann's systems theoretic approach itself but targets particular ideas and arguments. Luhmann himself certainly did not save on mocking critique towards Critical Theory which he - with exceptions such as Habermas, but also Louis Althusser and Karl Marx himself (Lauermann 1999) - viewed as theoretically simplistic, exemplified by the "confident provinciality of the Frankfurt School" (Luhmann 1992: 51 quoted in Dammann 1999: 27; see also Luhmann 1991b). Whether it is as a result of such statements or fuelling the former, Luhmann was, on his part, attacked for his technocratic manner and dry aloofness towards pressing social issues from the side

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[11] Especially chapter 5 of this thesis will show Luhmann's functionalism in fact not only includes but necessitates openness and change as part of a systemic re-production which is not, as Habermas assumes, narrowly focused on a specific systemic programme, such as a form of governance or economic order, but merely on the autopoietic operationality of the respective system itself.

of Frankfurt School scholars and students (Brunkhorst 2012; Brunczel 2010: 220). Friends and colleagues recall empty classrooms for Luhmann's seminars in the politicised early 1970s, recurring attacks – verbal, but also physical, with flour and eggs – as well as enduring gossip about the conservative, reactionary political position of Luhmann (Kruckis 1999).[12] Avoiding party-political associations throughout his lifetime, Luhmann's judgement of the strand of social theory which identifies itself as critical was harsh. Producing a second-order observation of the functional role of critique as a trajectory of sense-making, he argues that the know-it-all attitude of Critical Theory is the true conservatism. It reproduces notions of normative certainty, absolute judgement and ontological security which are no longer useful to theorise contemporary society, blocking theoretical innovation towards a social theory fit for a functionally differentiated society, one which recognises its functional embededness and epistemological limitations (Luhmann 1991a; Esposito 2017: 23).

While Luhmann explicitly advocates for abandoning the notion of critique in favour of a theory of second-order observation (iLuhmann 1991a: 4), he does so by being critical. Luhmann criticises a narrowly defined Critical Theory with strong normative undertones and a lack of epistemological questioning in a way which is in fact similar to how post-structuralist thinkers such as Foucault and Deleuze (1977) discuss Marxist theory. At the end of *Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie?* Luhmann comes closest to making explicit the critical potential of his own theory. Here, Luhmann makes a case for embracing contingency and ontological insecurity in its political consequences. Abandoning the secure philosophical ground of Habermas' subjective emancipatory agency, Luhmann argues for a theory which tries to grasp and make use of an open-ended creative potentiality:

> I believe that the better option is to keep hold of theoretical insecurity in terms of approach and methodical proceedings. This might be the condition for all possibilities of controlling political implications. Habermas' remarks which target such shortcomings, for example his criticism that I fail to work out methodical criteria for a functionally comparative analysis on an abstract level, accommodate my own needs for orientation as far as possible. I do regard them as critical, even if the function of insecurity for the endurance of the theory remains unclear. (Luhmann 1971b: 404-405)

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[12] In 2009, the publication of Luhmann's membership card for the German National-Socialist party (NSDAP), together with those of several other prominent German intellectuals, received much attention. However, neither the authenticity of the document nor the fact whether Luhmann, who was a teenage soldier in the Second World War, knew about a possible party membership, can be sufficiently verified (Steinbacher 2009).

In exactly this sense, Elena Esposito identifies Luhmann's theoretical perspective as critical observation which:

> looks for the contingency (improbability) of what evolution led us to regard as normal and not surprising – be it the possibility to communicate with persons that are unknown or even dead for centuries (with press and communication media), the existence of a complex apparatus that guarantees the possibility of refusing to learn from experience (the law), the commitment of society in general to grant to individuals the capricious use of resources (private property) or many other examples. All this is far from obvious, was once different and could have evolved in a different way. What is familiar to us could not be there or be different, depending on social conditions that can themselves be observed. Critical observation, which looks for the conditions that make these improbabilities normal, does not happen in a vacuum but is properly sociological. It is observation of society within society. From this perspective, sociological systems theory could be seen somehow provocatively as the most accomplished form of the critical attitude – a reflexive form of critique. (2017: 24)

Contemporary critiques of Luhmann's work are less politicised. They often focus on how Luhmann's theory remains "up to its ears stuck in the covert which is the problem of subjectivity" (Ternes 1999: 131) and other Enlightenment remnants, but chooses to ignore the questions of power, legitimacy and resistant agency associated with these. However, in recent years a small, but significant body of work has been established which explores the critical potential of Luhmann's work in the wake of a certain "post-structuralist turn" in Luhmann scholarship (Rasch and Wolfe 2000; Rasch 2000b; Amstutz and Fischer-Lescano 2013; Moeller 2012; Möller and Siri 2016; de Coeur and Philoppopoulous-Mihalopoulos 2013; Stäheli 2000). These works unpack relations of kinship between Luhmann's ideas and the thought of different post-structuralist thinkers, emphasising the theoretical productivity of exploring these connections further.[13] Such in-depth explorations of a possible theoretical common ground have not yet been made for Deleuze and Luhmann, even though a few recent publications have suggested a productive connectivity between individual concepts, such as Deleuze's fold and Luhmann's

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[13] Noteworthy are parallels drawn out between the theories of Michel Foucault and Luhmann, who both historically retrace the variation and stabilisation of particular communicative/discursive structures and explore how these structures function constitutively for the epistemological and practical-material order of society (Opitz 2013; Borch 2005; Pottage 1998; Rempel 1996). In his compelling analysis of the impossibility of establishing stable meaning foundations in Luhmann due to the iterative, processual nature of sense, Urs Stäheli (2000) reveals the close proximity of Luhmann's post-foundationalism not only to Jacques Derrida, but also, in the socio-political pragmatism which follows, to the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Similarly, William Rasch (2000a; 2000b; 1997) has worked out points of connection between Luhmann's work and Laclau and Mouffe as well as François Lyotard with a focus on the creative role of communicative transmission, and the conflicts of meaning it constitutively implies.

autopoiesis or the concepts of power in both theories (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2006; 2013; Pottage 1998).

However, in the comprehensive *Luhmann Handbuch*, several authors emphasise the potential fruitfulness of the "virtually unresearched" (Müller 2012a: 268) connection between Deleuze and Luhmann – especially regarding the way in which both thinkers develop an operative conception of sense as both differentiated/differentiating and temporalised/temporally ordering (Müller 2012b: 74). While the link between the works of Deleuze and Luhmann which this thesis attempts is thus not completely unprecedented, this comparatively small amount of literature on a "postie Luhmann" certainly does not belie the obvious distance between Luhmann's sterile, highly formalistic account of a society comprised of functionally differentiated systems and Deleuze, the post-structuralist philosopher who postulates the benefits of being "a little alcoholic, a little crazy" (1990a: 157) to escape the socio-economic confinement of thought, and whose philosophy – especially in his collaboration with Guattari – unfolds in colourful images, narratives and occasional vulgarities.

Beginning a rapprochement of the thinkers Luhmann and Deleuze, various passages of Deleuze's work with Guattari emphasize the value of sobriety for critical-transformative thought. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari insist that linear, arborescent social and epistemic structures cannot be distorted through mere "typographical, lexical or even syntactical cleverness" (1987: 6). To stimulate transformation, a dynamic multiplicity "*must be made,* not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest way, by dint of sobriety" (ibid.). Thus, "[s]obriety, sobriety, that is the common prerequisite for the deterritorialization of matters, the molecularization of materials and the cosmicization of forces" (ibid., 344). Deleuze and Guattari (1986: 19-34) emphasise this link between sobriety and creative deterritorialisation with regard to the writings of Franz Kafka and Samuel Beckett. Here, sobriety is a literary means of de-personalisation, a device to stimulate a becoming-other in order to escape the machinic subjection to socio-economic modes of production (Bogue 2003: 10-11).

What could be more suitable to describe Luhmann's tone of expression than the term sobriety? On the one hand, there is Luhmann's public persona, recounted by his contemporaries in the retrospective *Gibt es eigentlich den Berliner Zoo noch?* (Wimmer 1999; Wehrsig 1999; Kieserling 1999). They paint the picture of a theorist who works with "assiduity beyond every tiredness" (Souto 1999: 55; own translation) but who "was

not one of those figures who made it easy for their environment to find, beyond their professional role, access to a more personal background. On the contrary. Great personal distance and aloofness, the consistent narrowing of conversations to more general topics characterised his nature" (Kieserling 1999: 45; own translation). The thinker Luhmann who emerges from those and similar accounts is dry, technocratic, always friendly, but strictly professional in his exchanges with students and colleagues. One of these former colleagues recounts an episode where Luhmann was notably appalled by the imputation that his writings contained "funny examples" (Rammstedt 1999: 19; own translation). "Where are they? Something like this must be removed immediately" (Luhmann quoted in ibid.; own translation).

This image of Luhmann sits well with the style of his writing, (in)famous for its lifeless technicality. In *The Radical Luhmann,* Hans-Georg Moeller dedicates a whole chapter to the question "Why he wrote such bad books", unpacking Luhmann's "extremely dry, unnecessarily convoluted, poorly structured, highly repetitive, overly long, and aesthetically unpleasing texts" (2012: 10). The central explanation which Moeller offers "for the forbidding nature of Luhmann's style" (ibid., 12) is the peculiar nature of his theoretical project. While explicitly formulated as a sociological theory,[14] Moeller (ibid., 12-14) argues that Luhmann's work is in fact – and is intended as – a philosophical super-theory in the tradition of Kant and Hegel, whose stylistic formalism and propensity for length and theoretical heaviness he therefore adopts (see also Rasch 2013). I would like to propose a different, more Deleuzian explanation for Luhmann's "bad" writing here: a methodological sobriety which functions in combination with Luhmann's rupturing humour.

Most accounts of Luhmann's personality and his writing are of a certain schizophrenic quality. They illustrate the aforementioned dryness, but in combination with a decisive portion of humour, an "enjoyment of political incorrectness or even joyful cynicism" which spanned "the complete scale of humorous communication from the mocking of classical references which suppose an educated audience to the merciless dullness of the corniest jokes" (Kruckis 1999: 48-49; own translation). An example which is famous

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[14] Luhmann persistently refused to identify himself as a philosopher – or classify his work as philosophy. This refusal of explicit alignment (despite Luhmann's obvious philosophical ambitions) seems, to an extent, rooted in Luhmann's disdain for what he perceived as the arrogance of the discipline and the high-brow attitude of philosophers. An example is Luhmann's derisive remark, borrowed from Jean Paul, which he included in a lecture on Husserl: "[T]he analysis just presented […] was neither intended as a 'critique' nor […] as a philosophy. For a sociologist, the windows are located too high above in philosophical auditories" (Luhmann 1996: 56).

amongst Luhmann scholars is the way he described his research project upon request when joining the newly founded faculty of sociology at the University of Bielefeld in 1963: "theory of society; duration: 30 years; costs: none" (Luhmann 1998a: 11). It almost seems as if the theorist Luhmann deliberately endowed his social systems theory with a corresponding academic persona, which bracketed other parts of his personality, but from which he occasionally distanced himself. Another facet which fits with this emerging image is the presence of comic anecdotes and mocking remarks in many of Luhmann's books (which calls into question how serious the outrage was which Rammstedt recounts above).

Often hidden in footnotes or made as passing remarks, these interjections reveal Luhmann as a sharp, derisive and sometimes indeed critical observer of, and commentator on, theoretical doxa and philosophical idiosyncrasies, as well as the socio-political conditions of his time.[15] For instance, Luhmann chose to begin an invited talk on business ethics with the words:

> I have to say it right at the beginning: I did not succeed in finding out what I am actually supposed to talk about. The thing has a name: business ethics. And a secret, which is its rules. But I assume that this phenomenon is similar to the raison d'état or the English cuisine, which appear in the form of a secret because they need to hide the fact that they actually don't exist. (Luhmann 2008: 196)

On the function of religion, Luhmann observes in passing that

> [i]n order to reach the functional position of religion it would be necessary to combine Marxism with drug addiction but attempts at this have not turned out convincing so far. (Luhmann 2000: 127)

The addition of this humorous side to the person – and the theorist – Niklas Luhmann opens up the possibility to view the dry aloofness of his writing and public persona as consciously crafted; a humorously deconstructed artificiality which opens up alternatives – which functions deterritorialising in Deleuze's terms. This account fits in with André Kieserling's recollection of Luhmann's style of lecturing, where he "cultivated the artificiality of his whole project so clearly that nobody would be deterred from disagreeing by the lecture itself" (1999: 57; own translation). Like in a piece of Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre, I argue that Luhmann's dry technicality performatively reveals the artificiality, contingency and variability of all social institutions and structures which lies at the heart of his theory. This performativity, which only works through the combination

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[15] Beyond the examples provided here, the Facebook page *Luhmanns Humor* contains numerous examples of humorous or absurd remarks from Luhmann's writings and his personal as well as professional correspondence compiled by the sociologist David J. Klett (2018).

of Luhmann's sobriety and his deconstructing humour, exhibits a functional proximity to Deleuze's method of conceptual dramatisation which aims to enable

> access to the 'dynamic spatio-temporal determinations' (the differential relations) that constitute the terrain of the Idea and … requires the creation of difference within the Idea itself in order to capture the dynamics within that terrain (the results of Ideal events). (MacKenzie and Porter 2011: 489)

Understood in this sense, Luhmann's *conceptual persona* dramatises the concept of order.[16] Nothing in Luhmann's order of systems can be taken for granted because it is ungrounded and self-produced or self-affirming in Deleuze's (2006b: 78) Nietzschean language. Every particular order, which this dissertation will unpack as produced and upheld in sense, is the fundamentally contingent product of a chaotic multiplicity of alternatives to which it is connected in a constitutive relation of constant, differentiating oscillation. But while it takes a second glance to recognise the humorous quality of Luhmann's work, which exposes the artificiality of systemic order (in sense), Deleuze explicitly engages in the purchase of humour for a critical philosophy which aims to theoretically open and practically actualise a different world.

In *Coldness and Cruelty,* Deleuze opposes the humorous, connective contractualism of the masochist to the ironic, dissective legalism of the sadist. Both seek to overcome the realm of conventional law. But due to its ironic functionality, the anti-legal anarchy which the sadist desires ultimately functions as an exceptionalist, constitutive outside which reproduces the validity of the law and its ordinary realm of governance. "Sade often stresses the fact that the law can only be transcended toward an institutional model of anarchy […] anarchy can only exist in the interval between two regimes based on laws, abolishing the old to give birth to the new" (Deleuze 1991b: 87). On the contrary, the humorous logic of masochism is chaotic and innovative, "the art of the static genesis" and "of nomad singularities" (Deleuze 1990a: 141). "[I]nseparable from an attempt to overturn […] authority" (Deleuze 1991b: 130), humorous masochism does not just invert the dialectic relationship between master and slave while leaving its logic intact. It rather dissolves the dialectic itself by creatively opening up alternative relational connections in its dramatising enactment.

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[16] In a radio interview with the broadcaster *Radio Bremen,* Luhmann reveals a deeply rooted and rather personal interest in the idea of order and its relationship to chaos. He reflects on the origins of his academic interest beginning with his studies of law after the Second World War, which he attributes to a commitment to "ordering all the chaos" (Luhmann 1997a).

For Deleuze, irony operates on the basis of an accurate common sense, ridiculing false diversions through exaggerated inversion to reproduce the former. But humour does not require or entail assumptions of "rightness". It opens up the rupturing intensity of chaos, freeing singularities from their representative confinement by distorting the dialectic opposition between sense and nonsense. "[I]f irony is the co-extensiveness of being with the individual, or of the I with representation, humor is the co-extensiveness of sense with nonsense" (Deleuze 1990a: 157). What becomes evident here is that the opponent Deleuze (1994: 171-189) targets with his humorous philosophy is Hegel and his synthetic resolution of contradictions. For Deleuze, dialectic synthesis reproduces the philosophical – or political – status quo in the problem that outlives its solution, and eradicates every possibility of genuine change.[17] Deleuze continues this line of thought in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (2006b)*,* and then later in *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) with Guattari where the dialectic annihilation of difference is opposed to a philosophy of humour which "does not attempt to resolve contradictions, but to make it so that there are none, and there never were any" (ibid., 11).

For Deleuze, humour dismantles the dialectic functionality of philosophical, economic and political machines to open up the chaotic multiplicity of alternative relational connections which exceed the established binaries they produce (Ionica 2016: 101-102). Like in Luhmann, humour frees an excess of alternative possibilities which, if brought into contact with epistemic or social relations, can act as a creative potential to rupture and change them. Importantly, the chaotic excess of humour is an excess of sense; it is a multiplicity of non-sense or sense which has not (yet) been, but can be, made. The dramatising connection of sobriety and humour culminates in the exposure of a double quality of sense: sense is both a limited realm contingently differentiated from the multiplicity of chaotic, noisy non-sense and at the same time the relational mechanism which performs this complexity-reduction from non-sense to sense; "sense … gives indication to its determinacy" (Ford 2016: 95) and thereby performs its own deparadoxification.

However, there is certainly a difference in emphasis and perspective with regard to the way Luhmann and Deleuze explore contingency. Luhmann seems content to explain and humorously highlight the unlikeliness and contingency of order, in an indirect and

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[17] As hinted at in the introductory conceptualisation of sense, it would be wrong to assume Deleuze's rejection of Hegel as absolute. As Nathan Widder unpacks in "Thought after Dialectics: Deleuze's Ontology of Sense" (2003), Deleuze's theory of a sense which functions generative through self-differentiation can be understood as an iteration or even completion of Hegel's productive dialectic.

implicit way, emergent from small, humorous cracks in the sobriety of his writing and his public persona. On the contrary, Deleuze explicitly weaves the combination of humour and sobriety into his theoretical work from *Coldness and Cruelty* to his writings with Guattari. At this, his aim is always the creative challenge and change of this order. The "writing machine[s]" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 32) of Beckett, Burroughs and Kafka "plug into" (ibid., 48) the multiplicity revealed behind every order to rewire the machines of sense-making which have produced the former. But in both Deleuze and Luhmann, the methodical combination of sobriety and humour reveals the contingency of order as nothing but a particular relational connection produced and open to variation and change in sense.

1.2 Re-thinking Luhmann's system I: autopoiesis as repeated different/ciation

While I have now established a certain common ground between the thinkers Luhmann and Deleuze, there are still vast differences between the conceptual worlds created by both. The central challenge which a theoretical intertwinement of Deleuze's and Luhmann's ideas needs to meet is the translation between the languages in which they are formulated. Both bodies of work are rich particular jargons which to a certain extent closes them off towards their theoretical outside. On the surface, the philosophical systems (a term which Deleuze (2015: 126-128), as his early lecture series *What is grounding?* shows, was not opposed to) of Deleuze and Luhmann are disparate. What do Luhmann's self-producing systems, seemingly aligned with a positivist biological-physical mechanism, have in common with Deleuze's nomadic philosophy of becoming centred on the metaphysical concepts of the virtual, difference and immanence? In the second half of this chapter I will show that even beyond the concept of sense, there is a close theoretical kinship between the theories of Luhmann and Deleuze.

This kinship becomes visible once the concept of the system, the most obstinate obstacle for a general philosophical recognition of Luhmann's work, is re-read in a more open and accessible theoretical language which nevertheless leaves its conceptual core intact. This re-thinking of Luhmann's system does thus not constitute an attempt at removing the idea from Luhmann's systems theory – which would seem not only misguided, but also impossible without instigating the certain collapse of Luhmann's theoretical framework. On the contrary, I seek to demonstrate that Luhmann's system is not at all as foreign to

philosophy in general, and Deleuze's post-structuralist thought in particular, as it seems.[18] This act of re-thinking will be based on the central assumption that Luhmann's system is, first and foremost, a particular theoretical perspective on onto-epistemological genesis. In the following it will be shown that the onto-epistemological genesis of everything that can be made sense of is, in both Luhmann and Deleuze, a process of distinction (Luhmann) or different/ciation (Deleuze) which importantly precedes the attribution of sense to either the ontic or the epistemic realm. As the source of creative emergence, difference thus forms the nodal point of both bodies of thought.

Contrary to classical sociological analyses of difference as an emergent feature of social life, such as Émile Durkheim's famous study of criminal deviance (2002), Luhmann is not interested in measuring the degree to which action diverges from a presumed normal state to identify socio-structural causes. Luhmann's concept of difference is more fundamental and, belying his strong identification with the discipline of sociology (1996a), more philosophical. For Luhmann, difference is the dynamic of self-production which constitutes systems, both their actuality and the environment which they perceive as external to them but whose genesis is in fact immanent to the sense of the system. Systems are differential entities in which "the distinction between system and environment replaces the traditional emphasis on the identity of guiding values. Differences, not identities, provide the possibility of perceiving and processing information" (Luhmann 1995: 179). In contrast to other systems theoretic approaches in information theory, cybernetics or Talcott Parson's sociology, which focus on the processing of input by an ontologically given systemic entity to generate output, Luhmann – as discussed above – uses Spencer Brown's mathematical theory to define his systems primarily through difference (Moeller 2012: ix).

> System differentiation, then, *means creating an internal environment* for further system-building. The concept of a self-referential system reconstructs the difference between system and environment as part of the internal process of self-reference. The system continuously refers to itself by distinguishing itself from its environment. This is done … by drawing and maintaining boundaries […]. The self-referential system is a self-producing or 'autopoietic' unit, itself producing the

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[18] Because this re-thinking aims at an opening up of Luhmann's thought beyond its conceptual idiosyncrasies, Luhmann's ideas will in the following be read against the background of the more "open system" (Massumi 1987: xiv) of Deleuze's philosophy and not the other way around. Reading Deleuze in the conceptual world of Luhmann's technical, sociologically rich theory seems like an infinitely more difficult task, not only because its tightly knit framework closes itself off towards other philosophical second-order observations, but also because it encompasses a level of descriptive detail which simply cannot be found in Deleuze. On the contrary, I suggest that a conceptual reading of Luhmann with Deleuze can be understood as a theoretical-metaphysical zooming out to the status and implications of Luhmann's ideas within philosophy in general.

elements which compose the system, and this requires the capacity to distinguish elements which belong to the system from elements which belong to the environment of the system. The distinction between system and environment is, therefore, constitutive for whatever functions as an element in a system. It is not the actor who produces the action. The meaning of the action and therefore the action itself is due to the difference between system and environment. (Luhmann 1983: 992-993)

An autopoietic system produces itself through the continuous differentiation from its environment. The ontic constituents located on either side of this grounding distinction – inside or outside the system – are hereby, just like the meaning attributed to them, secondary to this differentiation, and thus product of the systemic inside.[19] The assumption of autopoiesis, Luhmann admits, "contains a significant statement, for it maintains that unity can come about only through a relational operation, that it must be produced and that it does not exist in advance as an individual, a substance, or an idea of its own operation" (1995: 33).[20] At the beginning of *Social Systems,* Luhmann introduces his theory as a theory of difference, not unity, which will explore "the difference between identity and difference, and not their identity" (1995: 11n19). Here, Luhmann draws on Spencer Brown's (1996: 69-70) second law of forms – the assumption that a first distinction can always be altered or cancelled out by a second distinction – to insist that unity is always the contingent product of a differentiation which could be otherwise – could perform an alternative differential distribution between distinguished inside and the corresponding outside left unmarked. The basis for this distinction is nothing but the always already split, partial outcome of a previous distinction which re-enters the process of differentiation (Luhmann 2010: 40-48; Schönwälder-Kuntze 2009: 194-197).

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[19] It is important to clarify the difference between sense and meaning here – the self-grounding, onto-epistemologically productive relationality of sense brings forth expressions of meaning and ontological essentialisation. While singularities from both realms are employed in this process of genesis, the distinction between these is itself a product of sense-making and thus secondary to the former.

[20] Against the background of this relationship between unity and difference, Moeller points out a significant parallel between Luhmann and Hegel, whom he deems "the most important philosophical influence on Luhmann" (2012: x). Both thinkers turn to science for the purpose of developing an all-encompassing "grand theory" which unpacks the production of the world in its totality and both try to understand the systemic quality of thought in a way that encompasses their own theories (ibid., 38-44). However, Moeller's argument is not as straightforward as it seems, because, as he continues, this influence manifests itself insofar as "Luhmann attempted a Hegelian Aufhebung (sublation) of Hegel's philosophy" (ibid., x-xi). The world emergent on the inside of the system (of thought) is subject to the order of necessity in Hegel, but fundamentally contingent in Luhmann. "Hegel wanted to tell the narrative of spirit. By transforming contingency into necessity, we end up with a coherent story, with a unified whole. […] For Luhmann, science is the opposite of what it was for Hegel; it is the transformation of necessity into contingency. It is the discovery of the unlikely within the familiar" (ibid., 45). Hegel attributes primacy to the necessary, resolving unity of the spirit towards which the dialectical order of things is oriented. In Luhmann, on the contrary, the relation of differentiation is primary, the antithetical order it produces not essential but contingent and always subject to possible change. In this sense, the core of Luhmann's thought "can be classified as 'postmodernist' precisely because of this break with the traditional philosophical preference of the one over the many" (ibid., 82).

Luhmann's argument does not amount to a definitive refutation of foundational primacy in the sense of a strong philosophical claim. On the contrary, he suggests that the existence of a foundational origin is irrelevant for the difference of Spencer Brown's calculus whose value depends on the specific terms fed into the process of differentiation through previous distinctions. Luhmann's difference only exists in its processual form. It is an operative distinction which produces concrete forms and thereby shapes the ground for future distinctions; it maintains systemic unity and shapes the structures and elements it entails. As outlined above, in sense systems, consciousness and social systems, differentiation takes place in the operative form of sense. The observing system is thus a unity always already put into operation. It has no access to the instance of its emergence - an original differentiation – because every epistemic distinction produced within the system contains this previous differentiation. Because difference and unity can only be observed *ex post facto*, Luhmann, rather than speculating about an ontological ground which precedes this differentiation, argues that the former can be disregarded (Luhmann 1998a: 186-188; Luhmann 2010: 44; Moeller 2012: 80-87).

According to Luhmann, such a ground is irrelevant for the task of trying to understand processes of epistemic and social production through expression in sense, because these are shaped by the path-dependencies of previous differentiations whose ground and medium is always already mixed and never accessible in any supposed original constituents. This is the case because observation must take place on the ground and in the medium of sense, and thus from a position which is always produced, contingent and unobservable. The immanent position of observation always remains a "blind spot" to the sense-making system. It can be observed from the outside, by other systems, but only as immanent to their respective logics of sense (Luhmann 1998a: 198-199; 1995: 109; 265). Wilhelm Rasch uses the example of the "unseeable" eye to illustrate Luhmann's position: "I see right now the room before me, the computer which I use to produce this text, the desk on which it sits, the hands that do the typing, but I cannot see the object that does all this seeing, namely my own eye. In the act of describing what I see, my eye remains hidden to me; I cannot see it seeing, therefore it slides into nothingness" (2013: 42).[21]

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[21] The way in which Rasch frames Luhmann's (post-)ontological position as a consequence is slightly different from the Luhmannian post-foundationalism I will develop in this dissertation, albeit in nuances. As further discussed in chapter 2, Rasch (2000a; 2013) emphasises the Kantian quality of Luhmann's ontological argumentation in terms of an insistence on a reality "out there" which remains unobservable, unknowable, but can be accurately described in its production through a theory of perspectivist observation creative of multiple worlds (depending on the unobservable observer position). On the contrary, I argue that Luhmann is not only not at all concerned with the ontological "accuracy" of his descriptions and their equivalence with an unobservable reality, but only with the social scientific – and social – "usefulness" of

Luhmann thus replaces solid, static foundations with a dynamic of constant differentiation which takes place as operative sense-making in cognitive or communicative observation. I will now show how Luhmann's theory of difference shares a common core with difference as conceptualised by Deleuze: the idea that an ungrounded, processual difference precedes any particular, contingent unity produced through differentiation. Together with Derrida's thought, Deleuze's philosophy is widely recognised as one of the great post-structuralist theories of difference (Vattimo 1993; Bearn 2000). In a post-Heideggerian fashion which places difference at the heart of the relationship between being and thought as a realm which, unthought in itself, can unlock its essence as non-identical with and prior to thought, both Deleuze and Derrida (albeit in very different ways) turn to difference to advance "against a common enemy: the philosophies of self-identical origins and subjects, of the model and the copy of the One prior to the Many" (Baugh 1997: 127).[22]

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze conceptualises pure difference in opposition to what he identifies as the four dominant philosophical modes of thinking difference. Against Plato, he proposes a difference which is not secondary to an original, eternal and immobile idea. Against Aristotle, Deleuze's difference does not characterise a certain quality of being. It rather is the dynamic ground which produces this being – and the very possibility of capturing it in ideas or sensation - in the first place. Against Kant, Deleuze distorts the transcendental illusion that difference is identical with any concept which the rational subject might develop to account for it. On the contrary, difference is an indefinite, constantly changing multitude which – finally against Hegel - cannot be cancelled out through dialectical synthesis (Deleuze 1994: 38-76). For Deleuze, the orthodox discriminate, secondary, identical and negative conceptualisations of difference

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the observational lenses he creates. I also believe that Luhmann consciously and explicitly included his own theory in the assumption of general contingency, and that the first sentences of *Social Systems* must be understood in this sense. When Luhmann states that "[t]he following considerations assume that there are systems. Thus, they do not begin with epistemological doubt" (1995: 1), I argue that what he points out is the necessarily fruitless character of the search for ontological foundations and thus of any strong Kantian epistemological doubt which its failure might induce. As argued above, Luhamnn's theory analytically abandons ontological foundations rather than making this rejection a quasi-foundation. Luhmann instead focuses on how the contingent descriptions of his theory are useful to understand the functioning of contemporary society.

[22] While I emphasise the common ground and shared direction of Derrida's and Deleuze's respective theories of difference here, they importantly differ in the status they attribute to the dimensions of signs, the respective focus on iterability (in Derrida) and immanence (in Deleuze) as the modes of differential genesis and, as a consequence, in their divergent conceptualisation of time as the operational mode of difference. While time spans a phenomenological, displaced linearity in Derrida, it constitutes a continuous, Bergsonian differentiation which endures as processual middle ground in Deleuze (Bearn 2000; Baugh 1997).

set up the "site of transcendental illusion" (ibid., 334) which allows philosophy to dogmatically claim absolute validity for particular ideas.

Against this "majoritarian" philosophy where difference is cancelled out by dialectical synthesis, subordinated to or harmonised through identity, Deleuze draws out an alternative philosophical lineage of minor philosophy which spans from Duns Scotus' univocity of being to Nietzsche's eternal return. This line of thought starts with pure, irresolvable difference as an infinite potentiality which is primary to both specific difference and identity, since it produces all forms of being as its differential modes (Williams 2003: 75-80; Massumi 2002: 5-6). In Deleuze, "the principle of 'difference-in-itself' is made to function as the genetic element of real experience; difference is the principle from which all other relations (identity, analogy, resemblance, opposition, contradiction, negation) are derived" (Smith 2012: 68). As infinite and indefinite resource for genesis, difference takes the place of a stable, determinable ontological foundation in Deleuze's philosophy. It is for this reason that, as James Williams argues, Deleuzian "difference is cruel" (2003: 59) in the sense of Antonin Artaud's dramatic theory. It is not a secure foundation, but a deep, chaotic ground of pure, creative intensity which cannot be grasped in its entirety by the rational mind.

Difference is virtual. Importantly, this does not mean that difference is not real – Deleuze posits his concept of the virtual in explicit opposition to the philosophical idea of the possible as something "less than", not yet real. On the contrary, the virtual is "too much" of the real. It escapes rational comprehension because it entails multiple, both actualised and non-actualised, realities which exceed the limited realm of objects, structures or ideas we perceive as epistemologically defined and/or materially present (Smith 2009).[23] As a consequence, difference can manifest itself and function creatively only in its processual form – through the different/ciation of concrete entities from virtual difference. Following Deleuze, this processual movement of genesis has two layers, which can, but do not have to, succeed each other. Firstly, differentiation is the process of limitation through which clear and distinct ontic and epistemic demarcations are drawn from the virtual multiplicity. Differenciation is then secondly the actualisation of those entities in particular singularities (Deleuze 1994: 349-353).

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[23] As I will show in more detail in chapter 3, there is an important temporal dimension to Deleuze's virtual influenced by Bergson's idea of a not just inter-subjective, but post-humanist memory (Ansell-Pearson 2005). The multiplicity of the virtual is grounded in the fact that it contains and is constantly charged by the past-future connections opened up, but not necessarily actualised, in the compressive synthesis of the present.

In a slightly simplified way it could be said that differentiation makes it possible to make sense of something, while differenciation produces corresponding actualities. Like Luhmann, Deleuze employs a particular type of differential calculus, here as developed by Lautmann and Weierstrass, to conceptualise different/ciation. He does not employ on mathematics to endow his thought with some form of superior, mathematically grounded truth. Rather, Deleuze draws out his theory of difference through a theoretical lineage different from the "major philosophy" and its dogmatic image of thought, which he thereby reveals as contingent, even in the presentation of mathematical rules (Smith 2012: 302-303; Duffy 2006: 218-219). Explored in more detail in chapter 2, Deleuze draws on the differential calculus to show the mutual dependence of and productivity between a philosophical problem and a particular solution which is differentiated from the former. Every solution reproduces the problem as the unity it differentially emerges from (Deleuze 1994: 158-160).

But at the same time, any change in the terms of the calculus can never be purely one-directional, because it always simultaneously changes the value of the calculus as such. While every version of a differential problem or idea persists in the actualities it produces, this actualisation takes place as a reciprocal process of individuation and alteration of the differential field its multiplicity resides in. As a consequence, ideas are problematic not only in the sense that they exceed any concrete solution, but also because their actualisation shapes the differential ground on which future solutions can be created (ibid., 222-236). Deleuze reverses the order of problem and solution. Solutions are not secondary to problems, but also produce the former – identically, or in altered form. The virtual realm of pure difference is thus shaped and structured in the same process of different/ciation which draws concreteness and ultimately actuality from the former.[24]

For this reason, I argue with Williams (2005) and Somers-Hall (2011) and will further unpack in chapter 2 that it would be misguided to understand Deleuze as claiming absolute creative primacy for his virtual difference. On the contrary, "neither the virtual nor the actual are of particular importance in-themselves. This suggests that what is important is the role that each plays within a system that is 'always-already' involved in the reciprocal process of creation" (Clisby 2015: 133). This is exactly the same "always-already" which Luhmann draws from Spencer Brown's distinction. Neither complex multiplicity nor the actualities made possible through a distinction from the former are

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[24] The reciprocity of onto-epistemological genesis in Deleuze is strongly influenced by the work of Simondon and will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

primary because both are co-constituted in the process of different/ciation which draws on and interrelates both. This different/ciation is thus primary, but only insofar as it is produced against the process of previous processual distinctions – it is self-grounding, but without absolute foundation. Against this background, I argue that Deleuze, like Luhmann, was not primarily interested in ontological speculation about creative primacy – both thinkers wanted to unpack the particular, contingent problem-solution relations produced by different/ciation.

Luhmann's theory of differentiation has no equivalent for the Deleuzian pure difference of the virtual which is real, but never actual in its indefinite multiplicity. In Luhmann, difference exists only in its operational form. However, I suggest that there is an equivalent to Deleuze's difference in Luhmann's thought – the outside against which the system autopoietically constitutes itself through differentiating sense-making. In Luhmann, the ungrounded, productive process of differentiation takes place with the help of and against the background of complexity understood as informational noise – a conceptualisation he adopts from cybernetic theory. Here, noise describes the fast, chaotic movement of signals - informational entropy – which cannot be processed by the rules and structures available on the inside of a system (Pierce 1980: 22-24).

While cybernetic theory assumes that the information-processing system is primary to, and ontologically independent from, the informational noise on its outside (Geoghegan 2011: 124-125), systems theory assumes that systemic order emerges as *deus ex machina* from noise through a productive, self-grounding process of differentiation – a line of argumentation which Luhmann, as shown above, theoretically solidifies with Spencer Brown's mathematical theory. The system requires a persistent difference in complexity to its outside to reproduce itself as a sphere of relative order. Complexity must constantly be present as the constitutive outside of systemic order in its selected sense-structures and reduced complexity.

> The unity of the difference is and remains the basis for operation. This cannot be emphasized strongly enough. A preference for meaning over world, for order over perturbation, for information over noise is only a preference. It does not enable one to dispense with the contrary. To this extent the [sense-making] process lives off disturbances, is nourished by disorder, lets itself be carried by noise, and needs an 'excluded third' for all technically precise, schematized operations. (Luhmann 1995: 83)

Complexity is thus not only a passive background against which the system differentiates itself. It must "become active" within the system to provoke the differentiating decision

between inside and outside, system and environment constantly anew (Moeller 2012: 127-129). Complexity, like pure difference in Deleuze, is a dynamic force, and the necessary condition for autopoiesis, because it allows for the systemic inside/complex outside distinction to be drawn anew. But it is important to recall here that Luhmann's sense systems produce their own environment as immanent to their relationality of sense. This can now be understood better: systems produce their own environment because it is functionally necessary to persist through autopoietic differentiation. But this has consequences for the quality of environmental complexity in Luhmann, which can no longer be thought as an absolute outside of pre-existent, ontologically real informational noise. It is rather complexity immanent to the relationality of sense – the multiplicity of nonsense discussed as the constitutive outside of sense in the introduction.

In Luhmann, complexity plays an active role in the constitution of order in sense because it is a multiplicity of potential sense relations which are not actual but remain available to the system for actualisation. But while autopoiesis requires chaotic complexity to constantly produce order in sense, its rupturing potentiality at the same time poses a genuine threat to the relational reproduction of the system which encounters it. Under conditions of high, entropic complexity, "it is no longer possible at any moment to connect every element with every other element" (Luhmann 1995: 24) to continue the synthetic relation of sense which differentiates the autopoietic system. Within the process of onto-epistemological genesis which produces the inside of sense relations, Luhmann's complexity functions analogous to Deleuze's pure difference. Both are chaotic intensities which are real, but imperceptible in their multiplicity (ibid., 28-29). They charge every emergent movement of differentiation which produces actuality within the relations of sense, but only in so far as both complexity and difference are co-emergent from this process of distinction and shaped by the path-dependencies it is subject to.

In order to reproduce themselves autopoietically, Luhmann's sense systems require complexity, but must also limit and order it in such a way that the connection of particular singularities to existing sense-series becomes possible. Luhmann somewhat mystically refers to complexity as "the Midas touch of modernity" (Luhmann 1998b: 45) in this sense. Complexity is the force which drives the solipsist self-production of the system – but contact with unlimited complexity would prove fatal for the former. But does this weariness of rupturing complexity clearly present in Luhmann not constitute an important difference to Deleuze, the thinker of opening up virtual difference as a creative potential through lines of flight and becoming-other in order to change the status quo of relations

in thought and social practice? I believe that the difference between both thinkers detectable here is mostly a difference in perspective, albeit illustrative of their divergent (theoretical) aims and politics.

As argued above, it is certainly the case that the political thinker Deleuze was ultimately interested in actual change – be it a change on the pre-philosophical plane of immanence through concepts (*What is Philosophy?*), a change of social relations through de-territorialisation and divergent re-territorialisation (*Capitalism and Schizophrenia*), or of sense relations through the counter-actualisation of events (*The Logic of Sense* and *Nietzsche and Philosophy*). However, I believe that there is a case for arguing that Deleuze was more interested in unpacking the genesis and functioning of contingent order to understand how a change of order can become possible than in theorising a chaotic epistemic or social reality without order. The centrepiece of *Difference and Repetition* is Deleuze's exploration of the dogmatic image of classical philosophical thought in its self-reproducing nature.[25] "Deleuze makes his case for focusing on questions of desire rather than power by arguing that the manifestations and machinations of power are obvious. What isn't obvious, he argues, is why we collectively tolerate it" (Buchanan and Thoburn 2008: 7).

What is not obvious and therefore in need of philosophical exploration is, for Deleuze, how a particular set of power relations persists against the background of multiple alternative ways of relational organisation. However, Deleuze does not oppose the contingent order exposed as such with complete chaos. His change is a change in, and not the end of, order. I believe that Deleuze would be misunderstood as a philosopher who envisions a state of complete, differential deterritorialisation as socio-political ideal – or even ontological possibility. His theory favours incremental, gradual alterations which collapse the distinctions between smooth and striated spaces, change and reproduction, nomads and the State (Lundy 2013a). The ambivalence characterising Deleuze and Guattari's position towards the deterritorialising war machine in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) illustrates this scepticism towards the possibility of radical change. A nomad invention, the war machine functions as politically rupturing (Negri 1995: 1190). However, the war machine cannot be thought without some form of social assemblage.

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[25] Jonathan Sholl (2012) shows how Deleuze's idea of repetition, to which he attributes equal weight in the book, but which, as he argues, remains curiously under-researched within Deleuze Studies, illustrates that Deleuze's main interest is not the development of a new ontology of difference, but to understand how closed structures can reproduce themselves through identical repetition and how change can take place within processes of repetition.

In analogy to the necessity of having two poles, the virtual and the actual, spanning the differential relation of onto-epistemological genesis in *Difference and Repetition,* it seems that the war machine can open up the multiplicity of the virtual to allow for a different production of social order, but it cannot ground the relations of individual or social life. Creative production against theoretical doxa and social axiomatics can only take the form of a constant oscillation between the deterritorialisation brought about by the war machine and reterritorialisation towards ordered, striated spaces (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 223-224; Zourabichvili 2012: 218). If we think of Deleuze as a thinker fundamentally interested in understanding the production of contingent order to theorise how it can be momentously ruptured to produce a different order, he is now very close to Luhmann and his interest in exposing the peculiar unlikeliness of every systemic order (Müller 2012b; Knodt 1990: xxvi-xxix). The only, but important difference which remains is Deleuze's explicit endorsement of a "war machine directed against the State apparatus" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 118) as the advocacy for a radical political change that is completely absent from Luhmann's work.

1.3 Re-thinking Luhmann's system II: autopoiesis as becoming, univocity, immanence

The concept which Luhmann's theory is probably known best – and misunderstood most - for is autopoiesis, introduced to his work in *Social Systems* in 1984 (Klymenko 2012: 69). The concept of autopoiesis theoretically radicalises and completes an idea which Luhmann had been working on since the beginning of his career: the self-referential mode in which (biological, psychic and) social systems operate. Maybe best understood through the organisational studies in which his theory is rooted, Luhmann's social systems are functional entities which – just like bureaucratic departments - exist to fulfil, and only as long as they do fulfil, a specific purpose (Luhmann 1958: 102-105). They can be understood as operating teleologically, but only if we accept the complete inversion of Aristotelian teleology which Luhmann undertakes. The self-referential functioning of social systems is not the consequence of a pre-determined ethical or natural-physical law, but the contingent product of institutional, organisational and interactional evolution towards gradually more complex societies (Luhmann 1990a: 145-146).

Modern societies are characterised by a complexity so profound that it threatens the reproduction of social relations because it makes it impossible to process the totality of

alternatives available for the differentiating continuation of sense, both for the social system as a whole and the sense systems which populate it. Against this background, functional differentiation emerges as a mode of social organisation which allows for the secure allocation of references. Through the focus on a specific, functional role, self-referential systems reduce the complexity of information to its form within the order of sense which corresponds to the systemic functionality (Luhmann 2009a: 9-19). For Luhmann, self-reference "designates the unity that an element, a process, or a system is for itself. 'For itself' means independent of the cut of observation [sic] by others" (Luhmann 1995: 33). The teleological nature of self-reference thus further consists in the fact that systems only direct purposeful operation towards the goals they set themselves through path-dependent differentiation and which do not exist in advance as forms, substances or directions. They are present imaginations of future states which take into account that *future presences* can be different (Luhmann 2009c: 16-20).

Luhmann's teleology of purposiveness unfolds a circular process of self-referential production – autopoiesis. As already shown with regard to sense as its medium and form, the difference between what grounds production and what is produced is only temporal. Time deparadoxifies the tautological character of self-production (Luhmann 1982: 44-47; 2000c: 122-125).[26] Luhmann encounters the concept of autopoiesis in biological and neurophysiological scholarship in the early 1980s, particularly in the works of the biological systems theorists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (Klymenko 2012: 69-72; Rasch 2000a: 128-130).[27] Exemplified by their early essay "What the Frog's Eye Tells the Frog's Brain"*,* the constructivist neuroscience of Maturana and Varela shows how sensation does not connect an external stimulus to a mental image in a linear fashion. On the contrary, it is the result of a complex, internal process of second-order production which happens in the sensory organ itself independent from the control of the brain (Lettvin at al. 1959).[28]

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[26] This will be explored in more detail in chapter 3.

[27] Interestingly, Maturana and Varela disagree on whether their ideas are suitable for an application to social organisation (Beer 1980). This disagreement is perhaps due to the fact that, in contrast to Luhmann, especially Varela bases his analyses of neurological systems on a constructivist-realist ontology. He argues that, while perceptions and knowledge are variable and constructed, systems must be empirically detectable as existent within a certain domain in order to be studied through the theoretical lens of systems theory (Luhmann et al. 2000: 114-115).

[28] At this point it should be noted that Guattari (1995: 16-28) also employs Maturana and Varela's notion of autopoiesis to describe the self-productive subjectivation in the unconscious as a relational system synchronised with and modulated by the refrain of capital flows. While Guattari's work, particularly his *Chaosmosis: An Ethicoaesthetic Paradigm* reveals a certain conceptual overlap with Luhmann's systems theory which appears as a fruitful starting point for further exploration (Guattari 1995; Guattari and Alliez 1984), Guattari's work is bracketed in this dissertation because it is of minor relevance to Deleuze's theory

Neuronal networks do not react to external stimuli as they originate in the environment – they react first and foremost to themselves, according to rules which are internal to and generated by the autopoietic neuronal system.[29] In contrast to an allopoietic, externally produced and static machine, an autopoietic system

> continuously generates and specifies its own organization through its operation as a system of production of its own components, and does this in an endless turnover of its components […]. Therefore, an autopoietic machine is a homeostatic (or rather relations-static) system which has its own organization (defining networks of relations) as the fundamental variable which it maintains constant. (Maturana and Varela 1980: 79)

Luhmann (1995: 119) insists on the qualitative difference between Maturana and Varela's biological systems which reproduce life, and his psychic and social systems which perform their autopoiesis in the medium of sense. But he adopts their concept of autopoiesis to radicalise his assumptions on relational self-production towards self-given purposes developed earlier in his organisational studies. It is only through the introduction of autopoiesis that the powerful onto-epistemological implications of Luhmann's theory become fully apparent. Luhmann now argues that autopoietic systems constitute not only the sense-structures which mark their self-produced and constantly re-produced functionality, but importantly also the events which they consist in. Autopoietic systems are thus completely closed off towards their environment – they produce all elements necessary for their reproduction autonomously on the inside of the system (Luhmann 1990a: 2-35).

However, Luhmann's theory of autopoietic systems should not be misunderstood as assuming a society in which psychic and social units exist in complete isolation without any contact to each other (Luhmann 2010: 53-54; Luhmann 1995: 29-37). In order to function self-referentially,

> systems must create and employ a description of themselves; they must at least be able to use the difference between system and environment within themselves, for orientation and as a principle for creating information. Therefore self-referential closure is possible only in an environment, only under ecological conditions. […] The (subsequently classical) distinction between 'closed' and

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of sense and emphasises the psychoanalytic dimension and the role of desire in the thought of the former which I abandon here in favour of a focus on sense as ungrounded, self-productive and socially situated medium of production.

[29] The term poiesis designates the capacity for creation and is opposed to praxis as a merely shaping, exhaustible force. As Maturana recounts in his introduction to *Autopoiesis and Creation*, it is with reference to Don Quixote and his actions which are circular and tautological, but merely practical-repetitive and therefore unable of poiesis that they chose the term to desribe self-reference as creative autonomy distinct from static existence (Maturana 1980).

'open' systems is replaced by the question of how self-referential closure can create openness. (Luhmann 1990a: 9)

Autopoietic reproduction relies on the event of information, a singular point not yet made sense of, to constantly re-introduce the difference between inside and outside, system and environment. Systems must be informationally open to be able to operate as functionally closed. They rely on information to "make a difference" which renews the circle of autopoietic reproduction (Wolfe 2000: 174-182). Importantly, however, information is always an event produced within the system because it only becomes information once enfolded in the systemic relations of sense.

Autopoiesis is the organisational mode in which Luhmann's difference operates to onto-epistemologically generate sense and thus organise the reproduction of psychic and social sense systems. I suggest that there is a conceptual kinship between Luhmann's concept of autopoiesis and Deleuze's idea of becoming. In *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (2006a)*, Deleuze draws on Nietzsche's eternal return to expresses most clearly what he understands as becoming.[30] Just as autopoiesis characterises the framework of differentiation, the way in which individual differences follow and relate to each other to produce psychic or social reality in Luhmann, the becoming of the eternal return "serves as an explanation of diversity and reproduction, of difference and its repetition" in Deleuze (2006b: 49). Becoming is not a passive process of identical repetition - it is not just a return of the same, or a return to the same. For Deleuze, the eternal return is a duration which is constantly re-activated to produce both sameness and difference, both stability and change as contingent forms within the univocity of being (Deleuze 1994: 123-124; Zourabichvili 2012: 212-213). Becoming is directed towards the production of difference, but not as the actual, measurable distinction between two objects, but as a different/ciation which continues its own process – it is self-differentiating (Deleuze 2006b: 51-78).

As argued above, the becoming of difference takes the place of being as a ground for the production of ontological and epistemological forms, but it is not their stable foundation. Rather, Deleuze's eternal return in which "there is no being beyond becoming" (Deleuze

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[30] It is important to point out that there are two closely related, but distinct dimensions to Deleuze's eternal return which are discussed separately in this thesis. Firstly, the eternal return is the mode of relational production and an alternative to Being as the ground and source of things; it is in this sense that the eternal return is discussed here and related to Luhmann's autopoiesis. Secondly, every moment in which a relational connection is established anew – identical or different – is also a moment of eternal return, in the sense of its actual return. I will explore the eternal return as evental moment which ruptures the relations of time that ground sense in chapter 3.

2006b: 23) unfolds the dynamic of difference and repetition through which material and epistemic grounds emerge, solidify and change in the absence of any ground other than their previous differentiation. Closely related to becoming is the idea of a "univocity of being", which is often offered in defence of a strong ontological reading of Deleuze. But at this juncture, it can be placed back in the theoretical context in which Duns Scotus formulates it – the idea of contingency as the second focal point of Scotus' philosophy. His univocity dissolves being in its manifest multiplicity, concrete differences and individuality from the (theological) necessity to be traced back to a foundational, divine unity. Scotus turns his philosophical gaze on the self-identity of existent being as the carrier of divine dignity and opens up the possibility to think being, dissolved from the necessity to mirror a foundational unity, as contingent and open to change (Perrier 2005: 621-623; Pickstock 2005: 547-551).

Univocity thus must be thought together with contingency, subverting the notion of a primary ontological unity – rather than, as Badiou claims, supporting it (2007a: 44). It describes a unity which is the contingent result of a constant process of selection: a unity which, just like Luhmann's autopoietic system, constantly must be made. As Nathan Widder pointedly formulates in his response to Badiou's charge that Deleuze is a philosopher of (an ontologically primary) unity:

> In this way, univocal being is said no longer indifferently of fully-constituted beings that 'share nothing in common', but of the difference immanent to them that escapes representation and compels their self-overcoming. It is said, in short, of difference itself. (Widder 2001: 446)

> [U]nivocity, far from designating the power of the One beyond representation to produce an unreal simulacrum, is rather what makes simulacra real by virtue of an unrepresentable difference. And this is precisely what makes Deleuze a thinker of both immanence and multiplicity. (ibid., 449)

What Widder seems to allude to here is the inseparability of becoming, univocity and immanence. Becoming and univocity closely resemble Luhmann's autopoiesis if we split the latter into its processual quality of ungrounded, path-dependent evolution and the character of the unity it produces, which is closed off in terms of its self-productivity, but open in terms of the contingent, self-produced singularities the former draws on. The ideas of univocity and immanence are further closely related. While univocity describes the quality of a becoming totality, the idea of immanence makes it possible to grasp the relations within this univocal totality which, always both produced and productive at the same time, allow the univocal totality to become without external causation (Thiele 2016). Deleuze's concept of immanence is centred on the self-reproductive "relation

between determinate production … and the unconditioned power of production" (Coluciello Barber 2014: 46). Immanence, in this sense, extends and develops the idea of univocity as the totality of differentials contained in the continuous return of a becoming which is autopoietic in the sense that it "produces nothing other than itself" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 238).

While univocity is equivalent to the introversive totalisation of Luhmann's system, immanence describes the autopoietic onto-epistemological self-causation which is the functional mode of this totalisation. Deleuze draws the idea of immanence from the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza. In *Expressionism in Philosophy* (1992a)*,* Deleuze states that Spinoza's immanence "is the new figure which the theory of univocity takes on in Spinoza" (ibid., 166). Adding precisely this element of relational self-causation without external foundation, immanence "expresses the double univocity of cause and attribute, that is, the unity of efficient and formal cause, and the identity of an attribute as constituting the essence of substance, and as implied by the essences of creatures" (ibid., 165). This insight makes Spinoza, for Deleuze, the "prince of philosophers" (ibid., 11). There is evidence to suggest that Luhmann, on his part, might have been sympathetic to Deleuze's judgement. Of all things, he chooses a quote from Spinoza's *Ethics* to head *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* which precisely seems to play at immanent becoming as the logic of the world, and the way in which it must be theoretically unpacked: "Id quod per aliud non potest concipi, per se concipi debt" (Spinoza as quoted in Luhmann 1998a: 10) – what cannot be understood through other must be understood through itself.

Turning back to Deleuze, he develops the concept of immanence further in his work with Guattari. Here, immanence describes both the set of productive relations and the (produced) ground of productivity in a way which, I argue, now makes it the conceptual analogue to Luhmann's autopoietic system – the mode and unity of onto-epistemological production. If immanence is a relational logic which accounts for the self-production of the immanent without external, stable foundation, it must be two-faced, both necessary and contingent (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 36-40; Zourabichvili 2012: 194).

> The doubling of immanence – that is, the immanence of expression and what is expressed, of modes and substances, of determination and the unconditioned – can also be parsed in terms of explication and implication. Effects are explications of the cause; they expressively unfold, or give determinacy to, the unconditioned. At the same time, this explication is never separated from the cause, it remains in the cause just as much as the cause remains in itself. (Coluciello Barber 2014: 47-48)

Deleuze and Guattari's plane of immanence unfolds this double quality of immanence which is implied, but not developed in Spinoza's account of monistic, self-causing expression. While it dissolves any sharp distinction between cause and effect, it lingers on the side of the cause, which is God, or nature. In Deleuze, immanence is the meta-stable, self-referential image of thought, the "image thought gives itself of what it means to think" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 37). Immanence draws from the multiple creative singularities of both thought and nature, operating at the juncture between both, where it introduces a contingent, but ordering line between their realms.

Functioning as "a section of chaos" and "a sieve" (ibid., 42), immanence reduces chaotic entropy to establish the temporary and contingent, spatial stability which conditions the possibility of thought. For this reason, the plane of immanence is necessary in order for philosophy to create concepts, for thought to produce reality (Thiele 2016). Immanence is "prephilosophical" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 40) in so far as its relations ground concept creation, the expression of sense in thought. At the same time, the plane of immanence is not caused by or founded on anything but the immanent relations between matter and thought, affective chaos and conceptual clarity, itself. Immanence "does not exist outside philosophy, although philosophy presupposes it. […] "Immanence is immanent only to itself and consequently captures everything, absorbs All-One, and leaves nothing remaining to which it could be immanent" (ibid., 41-45). [31]

I argue that the two faces of Deleuze's immanence now allow me to separate the necessary from the contingent dimension of Luhmann's system. As a logic of onto-epistemological self-production without foundation and to which everything, all theory, is immanent and thus relative, the system is necessary in and to Luhmann's theory – and it would be nonsensical to ask whether and how this systemic logic of autopoiesis can be overcome. However, as I have shown, such an overcoming is not a theoretical imperative, even if we read Luhmann from a post-structuralist perspective. As a post-foundationalist account of relational self-grounding, Luhmann's system is precisely not a dogmatic claim which amounts to the determinism of a particular onto-epistemological order. As an onto-epistemological perspective, Luhmann's system produces a path-dependent, but absolutely contingent and always instable world as it can be made sense of – which

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[31] As Deleuze argues in his essay "Immanence: A Life", immanence must be thought as a collective, pre-personal field, "a qualitative duration of consciousness without a self" (Deleuze 2001: 25) which is filled with the creative singularities of, but transcends the individual lives it emerges from. "Absolute immanence is in itself: it is not in something, to something. It does not depend on an object or belong to a subject […]; rather, substance and modes are in immanence" (ibid., 26).

includes Luhmann's systems theory as one of its constructions. Luhmann's system is a construction of sense for which he claims productivity and necessity immanent to his theory - but never absolute ontological reality or onto-epistemological stability.

In sum, this chapter has established that the both humorous and sober *conceptual personae* of Luhmann and Deleuze can both be understood as interested in the unpacking of contingent order and the processes of its relational reproduction against the background of a complex multiplicity which contains countless alternatives. Both Deleuze and Luhmann conceptualise the production of the world as it can be known as the outcome of a repeated, contingent differentiation. This process of differentiation takes place as self-grounding oscillation between chaos and meta-stability and is necessary in so far as all constructions of sense, including its theorisation, are immanent to the former. Luhmann's system is, in this sense, nothing but the insight that all thinking, observing, acting entities are onto-epistemologically limited to and self-productive of the contingent relations which structure their sense of the world against the background of what they cannot make sense of. However, while all sense-making is immanent to the autopoietic functionality of systemic sense, it is also fundamentally open in the particular, contingent way that it establishes meta-stable relations within or between systems. In this sense, the sense relations which structure reproductive immanence condition either identical or different repetition, reproduction or change – and it is through these relations that the making of political continuity will be further unpacked in the following chapters.

Chapter 2

2. Immanent Openness to Incompossible Worlds: Sense as Grounding Form and Excessive Medium

2.1 The ground of sense

In the last chapter I have shown how both Luhmann and Deleuze can be viewed as theorists who seek to understand the presence and permanence of order in a world of self-producing (realms of) immanence. Sense, defined in the introduction as form and medium, is both the content of this order and the medium of its constant re-production. This chapter will turn back to sense and zoom in on the relationship between both, exploring how forms of sense function as limited, grounding bodies which are however continuously transgressed in the excessive expression of sense which is the creative medium conditioned by the former, but at the same time productive of new forms of sense. This chapter will thus revisit my introductory claims about the nature of sense in Deleuze and Luhmann to unfold them further, situate them in their respective theoretical works and explore their (post-)ontological implications. Against any assumption of ontological primacy, foundational stability or original creativity it will be shown how the ground of sense is synthetic, as always already containing matter and signs interconnected in a previous instance of sense-making.

The production of the new in sense is not just creative expression which transcends the boundaries of the expressed statement or expressing entity, not just unfolding, but, in order for the former to take place, I argue that it draws on a sense which is itself a folded, synthetic, partial surface. I will complement the focus on creative production as expression which dominates Deleuzian literature with an unpacking of this expression as ungrounded, synthetic, but self-making, autopoietic Luhmannian ground. I argue that the central theoretical elements necessary to understand a self-production which is immanent, but creatively open rather than circular can be drawn from the philosophy of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz as read by Deleuze in his early seminar series *What is Grounding?* (2015)*, The Fold: Leibniz and The Baroque* (2006a) and his lecture series on Leibniz, namely Leibniz's theory of perception in the *Monadology* and his differential calculus. In *What is grounding?* Deleuze introduces the question "can we have a body?" (2015: 72) as illustrative of the paradox of existence – philosophy's confrontation with the necessity

to think beyond itself – which drives the philosophical attempt to find or establish the metaphysical, empirical or logical-methodological ground of its own operations.

The answer, Deleuze shows, is then nothing other than the particular, philosophically proposed ground. Following Deleuze, it is Kant – of whom he still speaks fondly here, and who has not yet become the "enemy" of *Kant's Critical Philosophy* (1984) – who revealed that this ground must be partial and finite in order to function as such. The finitude of (philosophical) thought allows us to perceive, and is thus its necessary condition. "Kant is the first to make finitude the most profound [aspect] of reason itself, the very constituent of the reasonable being. […] The human being has a body because it is finite" (Deleuze 2015: 152). We can exist, both materially and in the realm of thought, because we are finite. While Kant critically draws attention to the conditionedness of thought's limitation, a potentially even more radical move happens, for Deleuze, in Leibniz's philosophy.

In *The Fold,* Deleuze draws on Leibniz to introduce the postulate "I *must* have a body" (2006a: 97) as the ground of both thought and sensation. The body determines what can emerge as perception or idea, what can be expressed within the singular point of view which it delimits. "[W]e must have a body because something obscure lives in us […], we must have a body because our mind possesses a favoured – clear and distinct – zone of expression" (ibid.). Without making a direct reference, Deleuze here seems to pick up the line of thought from his early lectures on the nature of grounding. He suggests, now more specifically, that the body is necessary as a distinct and clear zone of expression, a ground, for the relations of thought created in the mind. But the necessary existence of the body is here relative to and follows from the expressive, creative functionality of thought – the limited, expressive ground that is the body seems to be made, precisely because it is necessary. But how can Deleuze's ground be both grounding, function as a basis for expression, and ungrounded, itself produced?

In the introduction I sketched out a concept of sense with Deleuze and Luhmann which escapes any attempt of final situating because sense is synthetic, transgressive and thus creative; it is always both constituted form and constitutive medium. In this chapter I will zoom in on the onto-epistemological conditions for and consequences of this dual quality of sense. I will argue that the sense produced in the continuous synthetic expression which is sense-making can function as a philosophical ground in Deleuze's sense – it can function as a stabilising basis for new sense-expressions. But it is a ground which is itself ungrounded, itself produced in the process of sense-making, and functions without

notions of ontological or epistemological primacy. In the following, I will firstly draw on Leibniz's theory of perception and his differential calculus as used by Deleuze to show how the closure of the monad, which makes its relations of sense partial and immanent, does not lead to a deterministic circularity of sense-perception. On the contrary, it necessitates absolute creative openness to a multiplicity of possible worlds. Leibniz, the "'founding father' of the systems approach" (Pieters 2010: 31), anticipates Luhmann's argument about the reciprocity of openness and closure.

The openness of the monad requires a monadic body as a resource for creative sense-perception and as a grounding zone of expression. But, as I will show, both cannot be separated from and thus cannot be seen as ontologically primary to the epistemic inside of the monad. Secondly, I will turn to the cybernetic theory of two-directional, reciprocal constitution present in Deleuze's philosophy in the form of Simondon's thought, but post-ontologically radicalised by Luhmann, to replace Leibniz's determinism of compossibility with a path-dependent, but fundamentally open relationality of sense. Here, other possible worlds always remain co-present, and the decision about which world to express constantly has to be made anew. Thirdly, I will reflect on the effects of those insights on the ontological stance of a theory of sense developed with Luhmann and Deleuze. I will make the case that strong defences of a Deleuzian ontology overlook the relativisation of grounding through Deleuze's identification of the ground with sense itself, which locates his thought in immediate proximity to Luhmann's clear refutation of ontology as the level of philosophical investigation.

2.1.1 Immanent creativity in Leibniz's monad

In *What is Grounding?* Deleuze identifies three distinct notions or functions of a ground developed, emphasised and interrelated differently in different philosophies. The ground is firstly the generative source of the world, ontologically creative, secondly the basis of thought and thirdly that what limits knowledge, epistemologically conditioning (Deleuze 2015: 35-36). While metaphysical or logical laws are designed to align the force constitutive of the world with the basis for philosophy, and open it up to the latter, the third dimension means that this alignment is problematised against the background of a situated, finite knowledge. The revolutionary aspect of Leibniz's philosophy, Deleuze argues, lies in the radicalness with which he embraces this positionality. Leibniz flattens the multi-dimensional world of philosophical grounding by identifying the expression

from the point of view of a singular monad as the constitutive force which unfolds both the world and the knowledge we can have of it.

But as it will be shown, it does so in such a way that neither the monad's perspective of perception nor the surrounding material conditions of compound bodies are absolutely primary. Rather, Deleuze's Leibniz opens the possibility of replacing external foundations with a conditioned ground which is both constitutive of and relative to an internal creative multiplicity. For Leibniz, all creative relations in the monad are relations of perception, and all relations of perception involve physical sensation (Jorgensen 2015; Brandom 1981). On this basis, Leibniz's *Monadology* seems to present a strong materialist argument. Indeed, Deleuze's engagement with Leibniz is mostly interpreted in this manner.[32] "Leibniz provides Deleuze with the technical facility to zoom in on the micro-level of material sensation in perception and zoom out in terms of their immaterial affects" (van Tuinen and McDonnell 2010: 10). In line with Deleuze's more extensive, and more widely discussed readings of Spinoza and Bergson (Duffy 2010; Duffy 2006), his "Leibnizian moment" is understood to draw out the particular materialism of Baroque mannerism (Lærke 2015; van Tuinen and McDonnell 2010). It is read as a theoretical unpacking of the material realm of bodily sensation in its primary importance - if not ontologically, then at least theoretically - for perception, creation and change.

I would like to propose a Deleuzian engagement with Leibniz's ideas in which the materialist aspect of bodily sensation and expression is more nuanced, and which has a slightly different focal point. I suggest that Leibniz's ideas firstly form the basis for thinking the simultaneous possibility of complete closure towards the outside and complete creative openness on the inside, which is central to Luhmann's systems theory, from a Deleuzian perspective. But secondly and more importantly, the ideas of Leibniz carved out through Deleuze's reading make it possible to zoom in on the (post-)ontological conditions and consequences of this absolutely internal, creative openness. It reveals, I argue, that the creative unit, the monad or the system, does need a body as material resource for sense-perception and limited zone of its expression. However, in both cases, the status of the grounding body cannot be assumed as ontologically primary:

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[32] An exception constitutes Gary Banham's essay "Perception, Justification and Transcendental Philosophy" in which he proposes, similarly to the argumentation developed here, to translate the monad as the concept or particular plane of thought in Deleuze and Guattari: "The key point concerning it however and what would orient the Leibnizian move of understanding the concept would be the claim, mentioned in an earlier chapter by Deleuze, that 'only the individual exists, and it is by virtue of the power of the concept' (Deleuze 2006a: 64) where however the concept is then simply identified by Deleuze with the monad" (Banham 2010: 117).

the singularities of physical sensation are always already mixed with those of thought. The body itself is a perceptive perspective relative to the relations of sense it expresses in the clear, but obscure folded surface of sense.

It is important to stress that the *conceptual persona* who allows for this dissolution of grounding is indeed Leibniz as read by Deleuze, not necessarily Leibniz, the canonised universal thinker.[33] The first central dimension of Leibniz's philosophy which Deleuze's eclectic reading is focused on is his concept of the monad. In his *Monadology,* Leibniz sets up a series of propositions which define the monad as the unit of perception. Indeed, Leibniz's monads consist of nothing but creative, self-continuing relations of perception (Strickland 2014: 72). For Leibniz, the material entities of simple monads, animal souls and human minds are all monads with different capacities, but they are all constituted by a single, indivisible monadic substance, as specified in the first proposition (Leibniz 2004: 1). This simple monadic substance is, even in the moments of its genesis and its death, completely closed off from the outside which surrounds it (Strickland 2014: 14). On this basis, Leibniz rejects the mechanist assumption that perceptions can be explained by compounds outside of the simple substance of the monad. On the contrary, they are the product of a creativity internal to the monad, whose ever-changing perceptions constitute this monadic substance itself. "And that is all that can be found in a simple substance - perceptions and changes in perceptions; and those changes are all that the internal actions of simple substances can consist in" (Leibniz 2004: 3).

As famously specified in Leibniz's seventh proposition of the *Monadology,* the monads are without windows to the world "through which anything could come in or go out" (2004: 1). Consequently, the perception of the monad is not the inner reflection of an environment to which it is connected and from which it receives impressions. It rather is the representation of the external world independently and creatively generated by the monad in the absence of such receptive connections (Strickland 2014: 68; Bredekamp 2008: 106-112). The monad is the "intrinsic psychic causality which goes from each monad on its account to effects of perceptions of the universe that it produces spontaneously, independently of all influx from one monad or the other" (Deleuze 2006a: 111). Not only does the monad therefore create the world it perceives. All changes it is subject to are also the consequence of its own, internal, creative force. "It follows from what we have just said that the natural changes of monads come from an internal principle

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[33] This distinction will become especially apparent when I will turn to the role of bodies and their creative potential (Hammond 2010).

[that may be called active force], since an external cause would not be able to influence a monad's interior" (Strickland 2014: 16).

Leibniz (2004: 3) calls the constant striving for new perceptions that characterises the monad and which is thus not a striving for external affection, but for internal creativity, the appetite of the monad. Their complete epistemological closure towards the outside, together with their internal appetite for constant perceptive creation, renders monads "self-sufficient automata" (ibid.). The monad constantly produces both the world it is situated in and the self it expresses in relations of perception. The forms of these perceptions are logically completely contingent and without absolute ground. Detached from the environment which is sensed, the world perceived by the monad is just one of several possible worlds. This creative, processual opening of a plurality is, for Leibniz, the central characteristic of perception. "The passing state that incorporates and represents a multitude within a unity - i.e. within the simple substance - is nothing but what we call perception" (Leibniz 2004: 2).

Within the context of Deleuzian philosophy, Leibniz's movement from several possible worlds to one actual world appears problematic. The possible is the very idea Deleuze sets out to deconstruct in *Difference and Repetition* with his concept of the virtual. As outlined in the last chapter, the virtual is pure difference which unfolds real productive and disruptive consequences in a direct way and is therefore not the imperfect secondary defined retroactively according to the standards of a manifest reality (Deleuze 1994: 254-258). For this reason, secondary readings of Deleuze – strangely overlooking the Leibnizian discussion in *The Fold* – usually account for the possible as the great limitation of Kantian, subject-centred transcendental philosophy which Deleuze overcomes with Bergson by instituting the dynamic virtual as productive non-ground. "For Deleuze, the transcendental does not serve to define the 'conditions of possible experience' for a subject; on the contrary, it is a virtual field that serves as the genetic or productive condition of real experience, and that exists prior to the constitution of the subject" (Smith 2009: 34).

I argue that the possible in Deleuze's Leibniz is however not the possible he seeks to overcome with his concept of the virtual. It functions in a different way, yet again distorting the Kantian lineage's possible/real dichotomy. Here, the possible is not an *a priori* transcendental limitation on the level of representation. It rather is an emergent space of potentiality situated between differentiated form of sense (Idea in Leibniz) and actualised difference which charges differenciation. "Every time Leibniz speaks of Ideas,

he presents them as virtual multiplicities made of differential relations […]. However, that in which Ideas are actualised is rather conceived as a possible, a realised possible" (Deleuze 1994: 256). In this sense, Leibniz's multiple worlds constitute a "field of the possible" (2006: 233) in the way it is framed in a positive manner, as an open-ended focus point for creative political action, by Deleuze and Guattari in their essay "May 68 did not take place". The possibility to think the possible with Deleuze in a way which complements the virtual as multiplicity not to be drawn on for creative actualisation, but instead to be opened through creative action is also pointed out by François Zourabichvili in his only recently translated article "Deleuze and the Possible: on Involuntarism in Politics" (2017).

As is the case with regard to Deleuze's (post-)ontological stance which I will turn to later in this chapter, Zourabichvili reads Deleuze against the grain here. While he acknowledges that Deleuze seeks to overcome the possible as pre-formed potentiality secondary to an existing reality, he points out that "the notion of realization [following Deleuze] must be replaced by two words: to actualize [actualiser] and to accomplish/fulfill [accomplir]. To actualize the virtual, or to accomplish the possible" (2017: 161). Like Leibniz, Zourabichvili points out that the creative potentiality which resides in the field of infinite possible worlds lies in its interconnection with relations of perception. "The opening of a new field of the possible is linked to these new conditions of perception: the expressible of a situation suddenly irrupts" (ibid., 157). While not yet further unpacked here, Zourabichvili's remarks serve as a useful reminder of the political character of these considerations on grounding, unity/multiplicity and possibility. The radically creative relations of perception, which will be shown to correspond to the relations of sense as conceptualised in chapter 1, are themselves the location of the creative openness able to change the direction of sense-expression, and open up new possible worlds in sense.

Turning back to Leibniz's multiple possible worlds which reside within the creative monad, it might be surprising that Luhmann, contrary to Deleuze, does not reference Leibniz as an important influence on his work. However, the kinship between Leibniz's self-sufficient automata and Luhmann's autopoietic systems is obvious. Systems theory can be tied back to Leibniz's thought as a philosophy of perspectivist continuity in a spatial sense. In Leibniz, individuals continue infinitely as natural machines, self-reflexive unities which can "only begin and end as one" (Leibniz 1890: 218). They create the world they express internally, detached from the outside of "confused sensible"

(Leibniz 1890: 351) matter. In the absence of connective access to material or epistemic relations in their environment, the creative freedom which is internal to both monad and system must be absolute – they must form complex and ever-changing possible worlds on their inside. The continuous processes of self- and other-perception constitutes the life-force of system and monad, which generates everything they need for their continuation – including a ground for expression. For both Luhmann and Leibniz, perception requires nothing but the perceiving entity itself in its capacity and its appetite to form perceptive relations.[34] And in both Leibniz and Luhmann, the absolute immanence of the creativity unfolded in those relations detaches the production of the world not only from the perceived environment, but also from the determination of historical lineages. As Jaap de Hollander (2010) argues in his linking of Leibniz's and Luhmann's works, both achieve the *Aufhebung* of historicism. The immanent creative freedom they theorise is perspectivist and contingent, but absolute.

In "The Autopoietic Fold", Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos draws out theoretical parallels between Deleuze and Luhmann through what he terms Leibniz's "autopoietic monad" (2013: 64). Both monad and autopoietic system replace openness to an outside with infinite internal creativity, which thus becomes the necessary condition to persist for monad and system.

> The autopoietic monad is not *in* the world, but *for* the world: 'closure is the condition of being for the world' …, guaranteeing the world's infinity through the monad's own finitude. … Autopoiesis embodies – is the body of – an 'internal destiny' that makes the system 'move from fold to fold, or what makes machines from machines all the way to infinity' …. Autopoiesis is the continuous inclusion of the outside as a guarantee for the outside to carry on. To take an example, politics exists so that society can carry on. … As the space of absolute immanence, the monad contains the world but remains without a world. In the same way, the autopoietic task is to be for the world but without the world. (Philippopoulos-Mihaloupolos 2013: 64)

As creative, dynamic entities, Leibniz's monads are constantly changing. But because this change is an unfolding of the substance of the monad, already pre-given as possible state in the former, every monad is, for Leibniz, a multiplicity of actual and non-actual worlds – an enlarged, swollen "present is pregnant with the future" (Leibniz 2004: 4); it

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[34] Luhmann himself obviously does not refer to systemic relations as relations of perception, but rather focuses on the concepts of event, observation and especially sense. However, I believe that this slight conceptual conflation is justified here because Leibniz's perception will be revealed as parallel to Deleuze's and Luhmann's sense in important respects in the course of this chapter.

"must be incapable of limits and therefore must contain fully as much reality as is possible" (ibid., 6).

The alternative, possible worlds which can be actualised in perception form a multiplicity which is always co-present in addition to the actual perception in the monad. The parallelism of physical sensation and creativity in thought which underlies Leibniz account of an open multiplicity internal to the monad situates him, on this point, in close proximity to affective expression in Spinoza. In *Expressionism in Philosophy* (1992a), Deleuze indeed reads Leibniz and Spinoza in an aligned, dynamically interconnected way to argue for expressive becoming, not stable being, as the appropriate account of the world that can be experienced. In order to link both theories of expression, I argue that Deleuze does read Leibniz with a certain Spinozist bend. The necessity of the body as charging creative perception and supplying it with a ground for expression to become actual, which Deleuze emphasises in both *The Fold* and *Expressionism in Philosophy*, can certainly be inferred from the central status of physical sensation in Leibniz's work in general, and his account of monadic perception in particular (Jorgensen 2015: 50-70; Jolley 1998: 600-604).

However, Deleuze's reading of Leibniz goes beyond this; he attributes Spinoza and Leibniz with a "common project … a new 'naturalism'" (Deleuze 1992a: 227) to counter Cartesian rationalism. Following Deleuze, Leibniz seeks to "re-establish[] the claims of a Nature endowed with forces or power" which "are no longer virtualities referred to occult entities, to souls or minds through which they are realized" (ibid., 228). Deleuze's take on Leibniz as advocating for a materialist turn however peculiarly seems to bracket the role of the monadic mind, the creative entity which generates all perception, self and world, which is usually emphasised in Leibniz scholarship (Duncan 2012; Jolley 1998). Leibniz, the theorist of the necessary body, appears as the Leibniz of a Spinozist Deleuze interested in "what a body can do" (1992a: 218) to shape and change the ordered, systemic relations of reason. He seems to read Leibniz with an interest in the physical dimension of his theory which exceeds Leibniz's own valuation of the material realm.

In the *Monadology,* Leibniz innovatively attributes material monads with an independent creativity which, equivalent to the creativity of the human mind, is completely immanent to their simple substance. However, for Leibniz (2004: 3), not all monads have the same creative capacity, as he specifies in proposition nineteen. Only the human mind is firstly able to form distinct perceptions, to move from perception to idea with the help of reason. Secondly, for Leibniz, only the human mind can memorise perceptions so that possible

worlds can be built in the order of perception alone, which can, but does not have to, involve new sensation. "In human beings, the perceptions often follow from other perceptions under the influence of memory" (ibid., 4). In other words, while all monads are autonomous automata of perception, only the mind forms expressions (Jorgensen 2015: 53-54).[35] Against this background, it seems that the capacity to express distinct ideas and form different worlds as epistemological structures is tied to the capacity to generate expressions of clear perceptions which is unique to the human mind.

Compared to Deleuze's reading, the importance of bodies seems less distinct in Leibniz himself. Bodies, in Leibniz, are always compounds of simple substances – monads. But because, for Leibniz, "influence between monads is only ideal" (Strickland 2014: 128), neither compound bodies – nor the material or organic monads they are comprised of – can actively influence creative perception in the mind. Leibniz himself famously uses the mill example at different points throughout his work to refute the materialist claim that perception is caused, or in any way shaped, by material, bodily, external forces. "Even if we had eyes as penetrating as you like, so as to see the smallest parts of the structure of bodies, I do not see that we would thereby be any further forward. We would find the origin of perception [in the environment] as little as we find it now in a watch, where the constituent parts of the machine are all visible, or in a mill, where one can even walk around among the wheels" (Leibniz 1997: 129). The creation of perceptions, according to Leibniz, must be explained from within the monad.

So what does Deleuze, having discovered bodily affection between body and mind in Spinoza, find to add to his theory of creative, expressive becoming in Leibniz? Here, I suggest that Leibniz's monad firstly allows Deleuze to think an immanent creative freedom which is more radical than the one to be found in Spinoza. In Spinoza (2005), the shaping power of external affect is necessary - and absolute. External affect, which increases or diminishes the body's creative power, creatively stimulates the genesis of ideas and thus allows us to think. While open-ended, the ontological reality of the affective relationship between the body which supplies the mind with information to be known and the knowledge-creating mind is without escape. Politically, this is the reason for Spinoza's fear of the - affected – masses which always accompanies his democratic optimism, rendering his discussions of the democratic multitude decidedly ambiguous

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[35] This claim however should not be taken as absolute – Wilson's (1999) article "Confused vs. Distinct Perception in Leibniz: Consciousness, Representation, and God's Mind." convincingly shows how perceptions in other monads can also vary in degree of distinctness.

(Balibar 1989). While complete affective manipulation is impossible for Etienne Balibar's "Anti-Orwell" (ibid., 104) Spinoza, so is not being affected, becoming without affect.

As further unpacked in chapter 4, this reliance on an external, affective force for internal, human creativity is, I believe, at least residually carried forward in many new materialisms. Inherent to their account of creativity is the necessity for an external event or force to be affected by, and to prove worthy of by creative response (Braidotti 2013: 131; 136). In contrast, the creative freedom in Leibniz's monad is without qualifier. Closed-off from the possibility of external affection, the monad must itself produce the perceptive creativity, which provides it with a self and a world to live in, constantly anew *on the level of perception*. Secondly, the specific power that Deleuze is interested in with regard to Leibniz's body is not the extent of its capacity to act, but rather is its passive force.

> [O]n a deeper level Leibniz asks: should passive force be conceived as distinct from active force? Is its principle autonomous, does it have any positivity, is it in any way assertive? The reply is that only active force is strictly real, positive and affirmative. Passive force asserts nothing, expresses nothing but the imperfection of the finite. It is as though active force had taken up all that is real, positive or perfect in finitude itself. Passive force has no autonomy, but is the mere limitation of active force. There would be no such force without the active force that it limits. It amounts to the inherent limitation of active force; and ultimately to the limitation of an even deeper force, that is, of an *essence* that asserts and expresses itself solely in active force as such. (Deleuze 1992a: 223-224)

The body is the limiting, grounding zone for the perceptive expression creatively made on the inside of the monad. Here, Deleuze yet again rephrases the idea he has formulated in *What is grounding?* and *The Fold*. The power of the body lies in its capacity to limit and thereby ground the active, expressive force of the perceptive relations on the monadic inside. It is only on the basis of this relationship between internal, active force and grounding in the limited, expressive zone of the monadic body that the expressing entity can have ontological substance. At the same time, the bodily perspective also relativises the perceptions generated by the monad since they are contingent upon this limited zone of expression. Both dimensions are echoed in Leibniz scholarship: "the body mediates the expression of the universe in a way that provides a substance with a particular point of view, a perspective, on the whole" (Jorgensen 2015: 74).

2.1.2 The body as ungrounded ground: matter, thought and sense

What Deleuze seems to hint at here is a reciprocity between grounding body as zone of expression and grounded perceptive force of expression. The monadic relations of perception require the body to ground their expressions. But at the same time, the passive force of the grounding body only becomes effective, only exists as such because it functions limiting with regard to creative perception. But how does this reciprocity work in Leibniz – and what are its ontological implications? For Leibniz, monads clearly possess ontological existence. The necessity of the monadic substance is the core of his first proposition (Leibniz 2004: 1). This ontological necessity, which cancels out the logical contingency of possible worlds, is a direct consequence of the divine creation of this world, in its monadic constituents, as the best possible of worlds. In Leibniz's argument, its actual existence makes this world the best possible one, because it must be presumed as the selective result of divine creation (Deleuze 1980a).

In theory, as Leibniz points out with this famous example, a world in which Adam would not have sinned in the Garden of Eden is possible. However, the actualisation of our particular world is not the contingent consequence of perceptive creativity. This world rather has been chosen by god as the best possible world. Adam's sin is thus theoretically avoidable, but its absence is incompossible – Leibniz's term for something which is theoretically possible, but logically inconsistent - with the holistic unity of this best, chosen world (Bowden 2011: 58-71; Deleuze 1980b). It is on the ground of this *a posteriori* concluded, *a priori* assumed divine choice that all future actions and happenings have to unfold as compossible parts of this best of all possible worlds in Leibniz.

> [I]t must then be said that God created the soul, or every other real unity, in the first place in such a way that everything with it comes into existence from its own substance through perfect spontaneity as regards itself and in perfect harmony with objects outside itself. (Leibniz 1890: 77)

For this reason, monads are, in their concrete actuality, necessary; the way their open creativity is made use of is pre-directed by divine creation. However, the only way the necessary becoming of the monad can be expressed and actualised is through its self-created relations of perception.

Thinking creatively with Leibniz and Deleuze rather than reading their ideas in a way that is contextualised and limited by their body of work and its canonisation, I suggest that there is therefore a second dimension to this ontological necessity – it is dependent on the

creative perception in the monad. The being of the monad, not in its continuous substance, but in its ever-changing form which can be perceived, is relative to the state of self-creating monadic perception. Deleuze's three times reiterated necessity of the monadic body points exactly at this dependency. He shows that Leibniz opens the possibility to think material ontological existence as necessary, but at the same time as conditioned by and relative to the perceptions created actively inside the monad and only expressed on the zone of the body. "[W]e must have a body because our mind possesses a favoured – clear and distinct – zone of expression" – material existence is necessary because thought requires a limited realm of expression which grounds it; and because this grounding is necessary, the monad, as the expressive unit, does make this ground available through its own creative perceptive processes.

"[W]e must have a body because something obscure lives in us" – the material ground, the limited zone of expression which is the monadic body, is the necessary counterpart to the creative, obscure multiplicity which lives on the inside of the monad (Coluciello Barber 2014: 50). The open self-creation of the autonomous automaton which is the monad only works because it finds its ground in the bodily zone of expression. Read in this way, it is not surprising that Deleuze centres his reading of Leibniz on the body; what he draws from Leibniz's thought is a highly innovative "middle ground account" of not only materiality, but ontological existence as both necessary/actual and conditioned. According to Deleuze, "Leibniz considers absolute necessity the enemy" (1992a: 79). With Deleuze and Leibniz I argue that the body is both resource and expressive ground for the perceptions created on the inside of the monad – in the first case the perceptions inside the material and organic monads themselves, in the second case the creation of multiple worlds in the monadic entity.

But importantly, this body is always relative to and not independent from the previously generated, existing relations of perception inside the monad. The body of the monad is not just material ground, but epistemological perspective dependent on the continuation of creative perception inside the monad. "But what is this empirical body? It is nothing but the expression of the monad's point of view" (Deleuze 2006a: 104). At this point it needs to be recalled that Deleuze does suggest that the body has active force in addition to its passive, grounding quality. This active force lies in its capacity to sense, to supply the monadic perception with singularities, micro-sensations which form the resource for creative perception (Deleuze 1980c). How can this active quality of the body, its

constitutive role in producing sensations, be reconciled with the conditioned status of the bodily zone of expression?

With Leibniz I argue that physical sensation can claim no primacy or exclusivity as resource for the genesis of perceptive ideas inside the monad. The conditioned nature of material existence which provides no secure ontological foundation finds its correspondence in a perceptive genesis which, as I will show in the following, is itself synthetic, and thus requires no such material ground. Firstly, while Leibniz mainly discusses creative perception as charged by physical sensation, he importantly also considers thought as an independent creative force. Both can generate world and self within the monad independent from the monadic outside. In proposition thirty Leibniz insists on the monadic possibility to generate adequate "knowledge of necessary truths, and our grasp of the abstractions they involve" (2004: 5), even though these cannot be drawn from sense-experience. For Leibniz, this means that these truths are pre-given as potential, innate knowledge in the monad, awaiting their discovery through thought (Strickland 2014).

Without upholding the assumption of pre-given truths, what can be drawn from this when again creatively thinking *with* Leibniz in Stengers' sense is that the singularities of thought and sensation are not clearly separated as resources for the perceptive actualisation of particular ideas out of a multiplicity of possible expressions inside the monad. I suggest that in order to create a perception, both the guiding, ideational expressions of previously actualised perceptions and new singularities (either produced by thought or by physical sensation) are interconnected. They only become distinct perceptions once integrated in the creative processual series of perceptions – but from this expressive perspective, every ascription of the singularities to matter, body or soul is secondary and can never be conclusive. "The motions of the object which cause the color, the warmth, the pain, etc.; or—what is the same thing—they express the object through some rather precise relationship; though this relation does not appear distinctly to us, because we cannot disentangle this multitude of minute impressions, whether in our soul or in our body or in what lies outside us" (Leibniz 1996: 132-133).

I believe that this synthetic quality of perception which I draw from Deleuze's Leibniz, together with the complete creative freedom of its relational creativity, helps to further unfold the concept of sense I began to develop in the introduction. Leibniz's perception is, like sense, always both form and medium. The monad is filled with nothing but perceptive forms which constitute both monadic self and outside world – not

ontologically, but *as they can be perceived*. But perceptions are also creative medium, since new perceptions can be caused by nothing but the relations of previously made perceptions in the inwardly closed monad.[36] With the help of Leibniz's *Monadology*, the relationship between soul/thought and body can be translated into a diachronic constitution of forms of immanent, synthetic perception against the background of the grounding, bodily form of expressed sense without positing either as primary or originally constitutive.

I have shown how Leibniz's theory of the monad makes it possible to think closed unity and internal, open multiplicity as compossible and distort the notion of ontological primacy because both material and epistemic singularities constitute relations of sense to which any perception of an ontological ground must be relative. However, the openness of the creative process of sense-making, both in terms of the selection of the world it actualises, and the relationship between material and epistemic singularities drawn on in this process of actualisation, remains ambiguous in Leibniz. I argue that some of this ambiguity can be resolved with the help of Deleuze's concept of the fold, lending its name to his book on *Leibniz and the Baroque*. For Deleuze, the folded surface between soul and body, epistemic and material singularities, is the location of sense-making, and its topological character the source of its creative openness.

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[36] The radical creativity which Leibniz however attributes to his perceiving units becomes evident when his theory of sense-making is compared to another, later critique of Leibniz – Kant's intuitive synthesis of material sense-experience in space and time. Sense-making, in Kant's *Critiques*, embraces material force, it begins with physical affection. Like Leibniz's perception, it draws philosophy inwards, replacing the analytical investigation into the ontological nature of objects as highest theoretical aim with the exploration of the sense – or non-sense – of their perceptive appearance (Kant 2008: 29-30). Sense-making in Kant becomes the focus point of an immanent critique which targets the conditions under which the multiplicity of sensible affection interacts with the subjective faculties (Deleuze 1984: 3-4). Kant removes sense-making from the confines of a stable *a priori* ontology which presumes the smooth and linear transition from material affect in the world of objects to its appropriate reception by the subject – and opens up this transitional space as problematic field of investigation. It is in this respect that Deleuze acknowledges that "we are all Kantians" (1978). However, Kant's introversive shift goes too far. It encloses sense in a pre-established harmony which is indeed not external-ontological, but rational and infra-individual. The Kantian subject is not free to respond to sensible affection in an entirely autonomous way – which would make the domain of sense the synthetic, creative force that it is in Leibniz. Kant's sense-making remains enshrined, homogenised by the *a priori* intuitions of space and time as transcendental conditions of sense-experience (Deleuze 1984: 46-67). While Kant's critiques are directed against Leibniz's understanding of the world unfolding in sense-perception as pre-established harmonious series, it is thus indeed the latter who theoretically opens up the possibility to explore sense-making beyond a passive filling of the pre-established vessels of space and time.

2.2 Infinitesimal difference and the clear, confused space of the fold

In order to conceptualise folding at the surface as continuous, open genesis, Deleuze connects Leibniz's *Monadology* to his mathematical calculus theory. Deleuze's engagement with Leibniz's calculus is not actually mathematical. He rather uses the differential calculus as a philosophical tool to counter and develop an alternative to the theoretical orthodoxy of the Hegelian dialectic always resolved in unity, as briefly mentioned in chapter 1. "The aim of the project is to construct a philosophy of difference as an alternative speculative logic that subverts a number of the commitments of the Hegelian dialectical logic which supported the elimination of the infinitesimal in favour of the operation of negation, the procedure of which postulates the synthesis of a series of contradictions in the determination of concepts" (Duffy 2010: 134). Leibniz's thought already proves a fruitful resource for Deleuze's project because his monad, as shown above, is a unit which is closed in terms of the epistemological processes of sense-making internal to it, but radically open, not dialectically bound to a reproductive circularity, in terms of the expressions generated in these processes.

Through the mathematical calculus, Deleuze now isolates the differential multiplicity which allows for this openness inside the monad in order to integrate it as yet another layer into his theory of creative differenciation (not differentiation, since it is located not between the virtual and the forms to be drawn from it, but between ideas and material actuality). Leibniz himself (1890: 34-37) situates his differential geometry in opposition to static, dialectical mathematics. He proposes a dynamic duration with infinitely small changes as the best representation of truth. Leibniz's differential calculus dy/dx describes this changing duration as the variable gradient of a curve which expresses a triangle with the terms dy and dx as its sides. Continually increasing (or decreasing) in incremental steps, the calculus is not bound to the contingent form of a particular triangle – a static curve momentarily frozen in passing through specific points. It rather captures the becoming of the curve whose differentials are independent from an original (formal) starting point and defined by nothing but their differentiating relation, to which the contingent and ever-changing forms it expresses are always secondary (Duffy 2006: 71-74).

Dy and dx become reciprocally, they create and individuate each other within the figure of a dynamic fold. Each side of the relation cannot be grasped without the other. Reversing synthetic mathematical dialectics, the calculus maps the movement of the

curve as pure and primary change where nothing but the relational difference between dy and dx remains constant, independent from its content, the specific mathematical forms actualised (ibid., 50-52). The pure differential relation *dy/dx* creatively expresses a particular, variable but finite quantity *z* as the gradiant of a curve. What Deleuze extracts from Leibniz's calculus is that something finite is always extracted from a constantly changing infinity through a particular relation of differentiation. Infinite multiplicity, not directed finitude as in Spinoza, is the quality of Leibniz's creative expression. Because this relation is dynamic and creative in a way which precedes, and is independent from, its terms, all actual, finite numbers and geometric forms expressed are nothing but the contingent products of an infinitely creative difference (Duffy 2004: 203).[37]

To conceptualise the infinite multiplicity opened in the creative fold of matter and thought, I believe that it is useful to employ yet another passage from Deleuze's work. In *Difference and Repetition* (1994), Deleuze makes reference to Leibniz in his critique of the coupling of clarity and distinctness as a philosophical orthodoxy conventionally used to describe the generative process from which ideas emerge. He argues that the "clear and distinct" is the notion underlying truth claims and a teleological orientation towards the good which exclude the contingency of sense. They found a notion of sense which is lifted up to the height of rational clarity, concealing the two-directional, always produced and excessive character of sense. "It is in effect with Descartes that the principle of representation as good sense or common sense appears in its highest form. We can call this the principle of the 'clear and distinct', or the principle of the proportionality of the clear and the distinct: an idea is all the more distinct the clearer it is, and clarity-distinctness constitutes the light which renders thought possible in the common exercise of all the faculties" (Deleuze 1994: 213).

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[37] For Deleuze, both Leibniz and Spinoza seek to dissolve the dialectical opposition of finitude and infinity in favour of a relational logic that connects both in a creative fashion – in the form of two very different theories of expression (Deleuze 1992a: 108-111; Duffy 2006: 28-29). Deleuze reads Spinoza's letter XII on infinity as proposing an infinitesimal calculus which approaches the process of integration not as a problem of synthesis, but as a problem of the infinite summation of differentials in the expressive becoming of the finite from the infinite (Duffy 2006: 50-54). For him, Leibniz distorts the linearity in the relation of finite and infinite which does ground expression in Spinoza (Deleuze 1980a). In Spinoza (2005), expression moves from the infinity of the one substance to the finitude of the mode; the way in which the differential multiplicity of the calculus can unfold in actuality is limited and directed. But in Leibniz, the order of movement is reversed. Leibniz's creative unfolding through independent differentials begins in the finitude of the monad but is directed towards an infinite multiplicity of possible differential relations of sense to be actualised in sense-expression in a way which exceeds the ground of sense on which their expression is based. "[W]e will see that Leibniz's 'expressive' model is always that of asymptote or projection. The expressive model that emerges in Spinoza's theory is quite different: a 'parallelist' model, it implies the equality of two things that express the same third thing, and the identity of this third thing as expressed in the other two. The idea of expression in Spinoza at once brings together and grounds the three aspects of parallelism" (Deleuze 1992a: 109-110).

Deleuze employs Leibniz's statements on the "'the confused murmur that people hear when nearing the sea shore" (Leibniz 1989: 325) which yet produces a clear sense-impression to suggest two alternative conceptual couplings: clear-confused and obscure–distinct. Because, as shown, material bodies are compounds for Leibniz, their clear perception is only possible because of the confused accumulation of their constitutive monads. Distinct is only the singular monad, but, ever unfolding from an internal multiplicity, it is never clear. In Deleuze's words, the multiple differential relations between singularities present in the murmuring of the sea as possible perceptions are "distinct because they grasp differential relations and singularities; obscure because they are not yet 'distinguished', not yet differenciated" (1994: 213). Those possible perceptions "then condense to determine a threshold of consciousness in relation to our bodies, a threshold of differenciation on the basis of which the little perceptions are actualised, but actualised in an apperception which in turn is only clear and confused; clear because it is distinguished or differenciated, and confused because it is clear" (ibid.).

I argue that this threshold of differenciation can be understood as the differential fold of sense on the monadic surface where the directed expression of the body is constituted out of the confused sense relations on the inside of the monadic soul. The confused character of sense-perception points to the synthetic quality of its relations. Comprised of an internal multiplicity of differential relations, perceptions are fluid and cannot be dismantled to distinct, constitutive – either material or epistemic – elements which are distinct only as long as they are not yet drawn into the process of expressive actualisation in the perceptive fold. What seems (never: is) clear and distinct is mere surface appearance which disregards the both conditioned and creative nature of sense-perception. It is only the limited expression of sense produced in this creative process of enfolding, and only for a moment, because it always exceeds its expression to make new sense. As Deleuze writes in *Expressionism in Philosophy,* "as long as we remain with clear and distinct ideas, we have knowledge of effects only" (1992a: 133-134).

2.2.1   The folded surface of sense

While Leibniz stresses that the calculus does not provide a model for psychological or social construction (Deleuze 1980b), the dynamic curve bending and folding between two dimensions clearly seems to inspire his account of monadic life and perception. Leibniz's process of folding begins in the ambiguous multiplicity of matter – with the qualifications

detailed above - but is oriented towards dx as the enumerator of the differential relation, the singular form that is the soul of the monad. The material singularities enfolded through physical sensation become effective in the reciprocal process of folding within the monadic soul, informing what can be realized as expression in the latter (Lærke 2010: 27-29). The creation of everything that is, of both forms and substances, perceptions and expressions, takes place in the creative fold (Duffy 2010: 134). But this creation is always at the same time an unfolding of the creative capacity residing in the singularities of matter (and thought) and an enfolding of those through a monadic inside which, filled with previously constituted sense-perception, precedes these singularities in the differentiating creative relation.

In his second lecture on Leibniz, Deleuze (1980b) argues that the differential calculus provides philosophy with a tool to analyse not the indefinite but the infinite. It mirrors the creative multiplicity of singularities, micro-sensations and micro-signs, within the fold. "But with differential calculus, it happens that we have the artifice not to make ourselves equal to God's understanding, that's impossible of course, but differential calculus gives us an artifice so that we can operate a well-founded approximation of what happens in God's understanding so that we can approach it thanks to this symbolism of differential calculus" (ibid.). Micro-sensations express the subjective perspective of the monad as local integrations, but only insofar as these belong to the monad, and are dominated by the power series of its global expression as their spatio-temporal interlinking (Duffy 2006: 229-230). On the other hand, the global integration of the monadic soul dx, the plane of thought or possible world, can as well not be thought as detached from its differenciation, its expression in the specific differential relations which forms the system of its genesis and its duration (Deleuze 2006a: 171-174).

In this sense, I argue that the creativity of monadic perception can be located on the liminal space of its differentially curved, folded surface. Here, the new singularities are enfolded by the monad in an introversive manner in such a way that creative expression unfolds, but a creative expression which is itself synthetic, without fixed source or origin (Flanagan 2010: 60-64). It originates in the differential curve of the fold where difference is incremental, fluid and ambiguous. Everything happens at the folded surface, the philosophical turn to the depth of objects or the height of metaphysics is erroneous for Leibniz: "We are ordinarily like boys who are persuaded that a golden pot is to be found at the very end of the rainbow where it touches the earth" (1890: 58). What Deleuze draws from Leibniz is how creation happens on a flat surface, along a differential line. The

differential fold marks the moment of transition where the sense synthesised in the creative perception of the monad from "pleats of matter" as well as "folds in the soul" (Deleuze 2006a: 4) becomes form and thereby bodily ground on which sense can be made anew. Creation in the fold neither moves in a linear fashion from external, physical stimulus to sense-expression nor from grounding body to grounded creativity on the monadic inside. On the contrary,

> every fold originates from a fold, *plica ex plica.* If Heideggerian terms can be used, we can say that the fold of epigenesis is an *Einfalt,* or that it is the differentiation of an undifferentiated, but that the fold from preformation is a *Zweifalt* [sic], not a fold in two – since every fold can only be thus – but a 'fold-of-two', an *entre-deux*, something between in the sense that a difference is being differentiated. (Deleuze 2006a: 11)

> [T]he Baroque Leibniz does not believe in the void. For him it always seems to be filled with a folded matter, because binary arithmetic superimposes folds that both the decimal system – and Nature itself – conceal in apparent voids. (ibid., 41)

The fold is differential. Material-sensory singularities do not disappear in a synthesis, but are understood as serialised into a productive force which drives the process of creative folding as the "art of combinations" (Leibniz 1989: 73). The generative synthesis in the monadic soul is no more originary to the creation of sense than the expressive perspective of the body. Both are concurrent in the unfolding of the world-to-be-realised which "undermines the logic of opposition grounding receptivity as a passivity and the spontaneous representation of thought as an activity" (McDonnell 2010: 66). Situated between the one of the soul and the multiplicity of constitutive differential singularities, the Leibnizian fold thus opens up the possibility to explore the unfolding of reality as constituted and contingent, perspectivist bodily unity. While the surface of bodily perception allows for the expression of a particular world through the individual monad, the context of this particular world at the same time not only shapes bodily experience, but makes it recognizable, *makes it* as such (Leibniz 1890: 356-358). Edwin A. Abbot illustrates exactly this reciprocity between the monadic body which constitutes its point of view and the expression of a world in his mathematical fable *Flatland*:

> I saw before me a vast multitude of small Straight Lines […] interspersed with other Beings still smaller and of the nature of lustrous Points—all moving to and fro in one and the same Straight Line, and, as nearly as I could judge, with the same velocity. A noise of confused, multitudinous chirping or twittering issued from them at intervals as long as they were moving; but sometimes they ceased from motion, and then all was silence. Approaching one of the largest of what I thought to be Women, I accosted her, but received no answer. A second and a third appeal on my part were equally ineffectual. Losing patience at what appeared to me intolerable rudeness, I brought my

mouth into a position full in front of her mouth so as to intercept her motion, and loudly repeated my question, 'Woman, what signifies this concourse, and this strange and confused chirping, and this monotonous motion to and fro in one and the same Straight Line?' 'I am no Woman,' replied the small Line; 'I am the Monarch of the world. […] Until the moment when I placed my mouth in his World, he had neither seen me, nor heard anything except confused sounds beating against— what I called his side, but what he called his inside or stomach; nor had he even now the least conception of the region from which I had come. Outside his World, or Line, all was a blank to him; nay, not even a blank, for a blank implies Space; say, rather, all was non-existent. (Abbott 2006: 69-70)

The travelling protagonist who leaves his two-dimensional homeland of geometrical forms to visit the land of lines and points doesn't recognise the foreigner he encounters as its king. Instead he identifies the line – applying the logic of sense familiar to him from his home country – as a woman. The misconceived king himself, on the other hand, does not fare better. Only able to make sense from his linear point of view, he is unable to perceive the square foreigner at all until the latter comes into existence as part of his own body, emerges on his line and thus within the king's reality, his horizon of sensation and thought. The limited expressive zone of the monadic body which is its point of view determines what can be made sense of from the inside of the monad. However, a change in this expressive surface – which is the liminal zone that separates the perceptive space of the monad from its environment, alters the multiplicity of possible worlds to be made sense of inside the monad.

The folded surface is a ground in Deleuze's (1994: 49) sense: every fold is a limited zone of expression which provides the sense expressed with a supporting basis. But the folded surface is no foundation or depth from which possible being rises to actualisation. Its grounding stability is a product and consequence of the genuine creativity of the obscure differential relation between thought and matter which constitutes every fold. Because the differential relation is constantly changing, constantly unfolding, the grounding stability provided by every fold expressed – made – in sense can only be momentous. In its autopoietic creativity and its synthetic, always material and epistemic genesis, the perceptive fold is, in its most important aspects, congruent with the concept of sense sketched out in the introduction.

Turning from a Deleuzian Leibniz to Luhmann, I will show how the same idea of a differentially creative liminality also lies at the heart of how sense is developed in his system's theory. However, more than in Deleuze's Leibniz, it is clear that the synthetic fold between material and epistemic singularities is thoroughly internal to the closed,

monadic inside of Luhmann's system itself. Liminal openness, which takes place in the moment when new sense is made on the grounding surface of constituted sense, is, like everything else, a product internal to the functional logic of the system. In *Laws of Form*, George Spencer Brown (1969: 24-26) refers to the differential calculus to show how mathematical forms constitute movements independent from their terms, but dependent on the particular mathematical system, the inside towards they unfold a particular world.

> It becomes apparent that if certain facts about our common experience of perception, of what we might call the inside world, can be revealed by an extended study of what we call, in contrast, the outside world, then an equally extended study of this inside world will reveal, in turn, the facts first met within the world outside: for what we approach in either case is the common boundary between them. (Spencer-Brown 1969: xvii)

Spencer Brown argues that the liminal realm which separates an entity from its environment constitutes both realms simultaneously within the order of sense emergent on the inside. This functionally constituted, differential liminality can be found in Luhmann's system as well: it creates its own duration by reproducing the differential relation which generates it (Luhmann 1995: 176-177; Luhmann 1998a: 60-62). Luhmann replaces Leibniz's a priory necessity to unfold a specific world as the only one possible with the functional-pragmatic necessity of a contingent space of reduced complexity as ground for psychic and social organisation. What is reproduced through the selective boundary of sense is simply the duration of the in-between fold of complexity and order, the very possibility to actualise a specific world, but in complete independence from its content (Luhmann 1990a: 15-16).

Analogous to Deleuze's differentiation of the virtual, the surface of sense orders the pure chaos, "grasping and reducing this contingency of possible worlds" (ibid., 22) in preparation for its psychic or social processing in sense-expression. It is on the surface of sense that actualisation occurs for Deleuze and Luhmann, that the ideas, individuals and activities of distinct real worlds are produced (Schützeichel 2003: 103-107; Deleuze 1990a: 141-143). While the constitutive medium of sense is common to all social and consciousness systems in Luhmann (1990a: 24), sense is made distinctly within every entity that expresses its own Leibnizian point of view without windows to the world. Integrating singularities from both dimensions of the fold, perceived as either external or internal, sense functions as both selective and productive. It reduces complexity through the integration of these singularities into the logic of sense existent within the entity

enfolding them, but as contingent sense-constructions of this entity (Schützeichel 2003: 55-59).

Luhmann captures this continuous process of self-enfolding with his concept of re-entry. In "Observing re-entries" (1993) Luhmann argues that observation is only possible on the basis of a distinction in sense which continuously re-enters itself, e.g. the description between *oikos* and *polis* re-surfaces in every description of the political in Aristotle (ibid., 5). But in any autopoietic sense system, the multiplicity of past distinctions which re-enters every new instant of differentiation is a distinction at the limit of complexity. It is thus "the re-entry of the distinction between high complexity and low complexity into low complexity" (ibid., 13) which supplies creative genesis on the inside of sense with access to environmental complexity in order to make sense – Aristotle could develop a new understanding of politics which incorporates aspects of *oikos* – but in a way which is internal to the unity of systemic sense.[38] The folded surface of sense thus constitutes a basis for the connectivity and the duration of psychic and social operations as sense-expressions. It allows for the connective selection of responses (within the medium of sense) to produce and reproduce a contingent, but specific social order (Luhmann 1998a 55-56).

The concept of re-entry highlights that sense-making is introversively closed in terms of its functioning, but at the same time open to draw on the dynamic outside of material and epistemic singularities excluded from the systemic order of sense as environment. The processual fold of sense is the operator of duration through (the continuous making-available of the possibility for) differential change which

> achieves both the reduction and preservation of complexity by filling immediately given, evident experience with references to other possibilities and with a reflexive and generalizing negation potential, thus equipping it for risk-laden selectivity. (Luhmann 1990a: 29)

Sense is thus the ground on which Luhmann's systemic entities gain their complete internal autonomy, making-sense in a way which can only be relative to the point of view of the specific entity which constitutes it. In contrast to Leibniz's account of introversive

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[38] As mentioned in the introduction, environmental singularities re-enter a system in the form of information. Luhmann defines information not in terms of content, but on the basis of its functionality. Information triggers the selection of inner systemic stages and thus "actualizes the use of structures" (Luhmann 1995: 67). It is not, however, simply a linear, external alteration of entities from the outside of pure complexity. Information can only be accessed as internal construction of the interpretative domain which enfolds it. It is "a selection from a domain of potentialities that the system itself devises and holds to be relevant; but it appears as a selection that not the system but the environment carries out. It is experienced, not enacted" (ibid., 68).

construction, Luhmann's sense-making is not limited by the assumption of a pre-given harmony. Both the self-closing, autopoetic entity itself and the sense it generates are meta-stable, but completely contingent.

2.2.2   Towards a geophilosophy of sense

If sense is both ungrounded ground and creative resource which re-enters to remake this ground, and the world it grounds, anew, the Deleuzian question to follow is how this creative resource can be accessed. While I have already shown that physical sensation and representation in thought have per se equal status within the process-of sense-making as conceptualised in the introduction, I believe that it is important to quickly return to this issue here. Against the background of Leibniz's ideas outlined above, it can be specified that this is the case because sense-making is a process of continuous introversive enfolding on a surface of (previously made) sense which is populated with a multiplicity of differential relations. Differentials are unfolded to reproduce a monadic point of view or body whose synthetic sense relations pre-exist this moment of unfolding – every ascription of a distinct material or epistemic quality is always contingent upon those sense relations (Deleuze 2006a: 125-128). This perspective, or rather the world of this particular monad, is expressed continuously and thereby instituted in its duration (McDonnell 2010: 78-79). It has been shown how this introversive movement of sense-making clearly corresponds to the genesis of sense in Luhmann.

Here, sense separates a contingent inside from its differential environment so that "the double structure of complexity and contingency" (Luhmann 1990a: 26) grounds order in sense. But is the idea of such an introversive enfolding really coherent with the account of sense-making Deleuze develops explicitly? At a first glance, Deleuze seems to privilege the constitutive quality of matter. In *The Logic of Sense,* he states that "[e]verything starts out from the abyss" (1990a: 217). The singularities which charge the continuous making of sense arise from the chaotic depth of matter which is here identical to the virtual of pure difference. So what balances out the apparent primacy of materiality in Deleuze's theory of sense? *The Logic of Sense* engages in depth with the possibility to access the primacy of matter through Antonin Artaud's dramatic theory. Deleuze discusses Artaud's schizoid depth of bodies and matter as chaotic reservoir for the genesis of sense. For Artaud, "everything is physical" (ibid., 87). The ontological depth of chaotic matter where the surface order of sense collapses into non-sense is the sole resource for

creative production – and thus must be accessed by those aiming to create actually new sense. For Artaud, there is nothing new to be found in Lewis Carroll's language-games of the surface.

He "considers Lewis Carroll a pervert, a little pervert, who holds onto the establishment of a surface language, and who has not felt the real problem of a language in depth - namely, the schizophrenic problem of suffering, of death, and of life" (ibid., 84). Deleuze is clearly taken by the radicalness with which the "genius" (ibid.) Artaud turns to the creative capacity of the material depth – he "would not give a page of Artaud for all of Carroll. Artaud is alone in having been in absolute depth in literature, and in having discovered a vital body and the prodigious language of this body" (ibid., 93). However, Deleuze at the same time does not advocate following Artaud's path – which is risky, inaccessible, the path of schizophrenia. In the depth of matter, Artaud encounters "[b]eing, which … has teeth" (ibid., 102). For this reason, Deleuze ultimately aligns with Carroll's turn to the surface. Due to the twofold nature of sense, the material depth of bodies becomes accessible on its surface, where it is always already linked to its epistemic-linguistic counterpart.

> Structuralism is right to raise the point that form and matter have a scope only in the original and irreducible structures in which they are organized. Psychoanalysis must have geometrical dimensions, before being concerned with historical anecdotes. For life, and even sexuality, lies within the organization and orientation of these dimensions, before being found in generative matter or engendered form. (Deleuze 1990a: 92)

For Deleuze, even Artaud's schizophrenic alternative, if it aims to reveal the logic behind the production of novelty beyond its expression in sense, must in the end turn to the surface. "Psychoanalysis cannot content itself with the designation of cases, the manifestation of histories, or the signification of complexes. Psychoanalysis is the psychoanalysis of sense. It is geographical before it is historical" (ibid., 92-93). Deleuze thus moves away from Artaud's materialist experiment of the depth and interconnects the linguistic theory of Jacobsen and Levi-Strauss with Lacan's psychoanalysis, stating somewhat ambiguously that it is only with the help of the "high object" (ibid., 219) that the chaotic depth of matter and bodies can be synthesised in the genesis of sense. As noted by Sean Bowden (2011: 165-168) in his analysis of *The Logic of Sense,* Deleuze uses several analogous concepts to account for the Lacanian high object, which are all drawn from the linguistic register to describe a sense that has already been made, already been socially established as meaning and thus placed within an epistemological order: the "zero

phoneme" in Jakobsen's linguistic theory, the "mana" in Levi-Strauss or the "empty square" in the fiction of Lewis Carroll.

While he clearly seems to situate the high object in the realm of constituted expression based on already made sense, Deleuze does not actually provide a clear conceptualisation of what this high object is. It appears as a point in the series of signs contextually endowed with specific significance which re-orients the synthesis between matter and thought to produce new sense. I suggest unpacking Deleuze's somewhat mysterious high object further through Leibniz's differential perceptive fold. The high object then appears as a point of openness within a particular monadic point of view, as a singular point where the unfolding curve can change its direction, where it can be reproduced as both continuous or divergent (Deleuze 2006a: 103-105). The singular point of the high object brings about the event of sense-making itself, interlinking differential series to constitute both language and being (Bowden 2011: 269-273). Through Leibniz, it is possible to understand how the high object can at the same time be constituted, be part of sense-expression, and open-up a genuine creativity: every sense-expression which generates perception can only do so by passing through the infinity of possible differential relations, possible worlds, in the creative fold.

Understood in this sense, there is nothing *a priori* specific about the high object. Its significance is *a posteriori*: it is the sense-expression which succeeds in drawing on the re-entered differential multiplicity of the fold of sense in such a way that sense becomes an event. It is an empty square which succeeds in detaching itself from the expressed sense-content it is filled with. Deleuze's high object constitutes a point of inflection which changes the direction or degree of the folded curve on the surface of sense, generating an actuality of sense which is genuinely different. This Leibnizian perspective also makes it possible to understand how Deleuze situates the emergence of the high object in the series of signs, but without arguing for a creative primacy of the epistemic realm – what he wants to draw attention to is that genesis is not fuelled by an unconditioned depth but takes place on a surface which is always already expressed – the surface of sense.

Against the background of Deleuze's commitment to a folded surface, his sense can be conceptualised as topological. It is a liminal surface with multiple pleats of matter and signs, unfolding a creativity which is charged by and yet distinct from both the depth of physicality and the height of ideas. Sense is a surface of "two sides without thickness" (Deleuze 1990a: 22), which reveals the ground of sense as itself produced, ambiguous and without secure foundation in either the realm of matter or signs. Its grounding quality

is momentous, in constant need for re-production through new sense which always exceeds what it expresses – the ground of sense is meta-stable. It grounds arborescent structures of existing sense while constantly making available possible high objects with the evental power to change them (Deleuze 1990a: 29-32; Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 49-58).[39] This topological conceptualisation of sense again draws attention to the fact that sense is form and medium of Deleuze's (and Guattari's) immanence – which is a plane of immanence. It is prior to thought and philosophical conceptualisation, conditions both psychic and social-epistemological structures,[40] but is nevertheless shaped by the expressions of the former.

An analysis focused on the surface of sense, and its ungrounded conditioning of the political realm, is thus coherent with the "geophilosophy" (1994: 86) which Deleuze and Guattari develop in *What is Philosophy?* In an interview following the publication of *The Fold,* Deleuze explicitly connects the two projects, stating that it "leaves me in a position [me rend libre] ... to write a book on *What is philosophy?*" (Deleuze cited in Gasché 2014: 6). The perspective on philosophical thought Deleuze envisions in his work on Leibniz already appears to focus on pleated, constructed space as the emergent ground for both actuality and philosophy alike. "Everything folds, unfolds, enfolds in Leibniz; it's in the folds of things that one perceives, and the world is enfolded in each soul, which unfolds this or that region of it according to the order of space and time" (ibid). Geophilosophy – which Deleuze and Guattari conceptualise as the philosophical pendant to Ferdinand Braudel's perspectivist geohistory (ibid., 15) – aims to understand and make productive the situatedness of thought within a particular territorial surface.

The particular territorial world actualised is contingent for Deleuze and Guattari and can be altered through the deterritorialising movement of philosophy and the *conceptual personae* who put it into practice. But the groundedness of thought, both individual and collective, in a liminal surface or earth that covers pure complexity or virtuality with a meta-stable surface of actualisation on which epistemological structures can be produced,

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[39] While Luhmann does not employ a spatial vocabulary to describe sense, I argue that the Deleuzian conceptual framework can readily be synthesized with his idea of sense due to its analogous functioning. In Luhmann, we find the same conception of sense as a liminal. It constitutes "the link between the actual and the possible, it is not one or the other" (Luhmann 1990a: 83). As for Deleuze, sense is locus of different/ciation as the transition from pure difference to its ordered actualisation. Sense interrupts the differential virtual chaos in Deleuze (1990a: 260) – or pure complexity, noise in Luhmann (1990a: 113) – through its momentously emergent stability.

[40] Importantly, the processing of experience as sense which relates sensation to communicative expression as its shared realisation is what links units of consciousness to social-epistemological structures in both Luhmann and Deleuze.

remains constant (Deleuze and Guattari 1978: 96-102).[41] The actual ground for realized thought it is thus always a specific surface of sense, grounding, but itself ungrounded, folded but always creatively unfolding. But for the identification of sense as ungrounded, self-grounding folded surface of Leibniz's monad, an issue remains which has not been fully resolved so far: in Leibniz, the creative openness of the differential, folded surface of the monad remains stalled. It can only path-dependently unfold this best possible of worlds and not open-up the past-future lineage of a different world where a different history conditions alternative futures.[42] While it has been shown that Deleuze thinks immanent creative expression as unlimited beyond Leibniz, the alternative he proposes to the ordered compossible monads of Leibniz has not been specified. In the following, I will now firstly turn back to Deleuze's reading of Leibniz and then secondly to Luhmann to resolve the directional linearity of Leibniz's unfolding at the monadic surface, so that it indeed matches the assumed creativity of sense.

2.3 Autopoiesis as non-teleological individuation on/of the surface of sense

In Leibniz, the point of view which orders the differentials of the material depth and guides the folding and unfolding of sense accounts for the spontaneity of the creative process, but only within the refrains of an *a priori* harmony which needs to be expressed by each fold in complete determination. As Deleuze concludes pointedly in his first lecture on Spinoza:

> If everything that happens to Caesar is encompassed in the individual notion of Caesar, if the entire
> world is encompassed in the universal notion of Caesar, then Caesar crossing the Rubicon only acts
> to unroll […] something that was encompassed for all times in the notion of Caesar. You see that
> it's quite a real problem. (Deleuze 1980a)

Transferred to the context of Deleuze's philosophy, this external, pre-established harmony binds the free, unstructured actualisation of the virtual to the existent world as chosen by god – the realm of the possible as the horizon of the particular world to be

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[41] It seems that this territorialised sense surface can further be linked to the striated space Deleuze and Guattari introduce in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). It is the durational assemblage produced and reproduced through a particular abstract machine, but this duration is subject to and limited by the meta-stability of surface-sense as constantly enfolding and unfolding, territorialising, deterritorialising and reterritorialising (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 407-423).

[42] "Memory provides souls with a kind of following from" (Leibniz 2004a: 5), but in contrast to animal monads, this "following from" in the soul is not completely contingent and conditioned by nothing but memory, but rather guided by a reason which is grounded in a divine will and directed towards the true knowledge of the one world it has conceived for souls to unfold (ibid.).

realised. But where does that leave the "well-ordered dreams" (1890: 77) of Leibniz's folds I seek to employ as the mechanism of a genuinely creative sense-making within the context of Deleuzian philosophy? In the concluding remarks of *The Fold,* Deleuze seems to address this question himself.

> Leibniz's monads submit to two conditions, one of closure and the other of selection. On the one hand, they include an entire world that does not exist outside of them; on the other, this world takes for granted a first selection, of convergence, since it is distinguished from other possible but divergent worlds, excluded by the monads in question. (Deleuze 2006a: 157)

Removed from the *a priori* assumption of divine order, Leibniz's harmonious world of infinite compossible parts collapses into a Deleuzian chaosmos. Exposed to the unconstrained creative potential of the fold, Leibniz's static, determined monads become flexible, open Deleuzian nomads. The introversive closure of the intensity of matter and soul, object and sign in the monad is replaced by the multi-dimensional, nomadic movement across smooth and non-enshrined spaces of sense and non-sense (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 418-423).

While the folded nomads of ontic and epistemic differentials no longer need to express a single unity, Deleuze still ponders that we "all remain Leibnizian because what matters is folding, unfolding, refolding" (Deleuze 2006a: 158). This ambiguous conclusion can easily be interpreted as the proclamation of a utopian state subject to a continuous dynamism of folding and unfolding without order in a way which grants complete freedom of sense-making to all human and non-human nomads. But in this dissertation, I seek to think with Deleuze and Luhmann, leaving the well-treaded paths of reading both thinkers in order to conceptually create a theory of sense which offers a novel analytical perspective that employs, but goes beyond, dimensions of coherence identified in the works of both. Against this background, I suggest a different reading. "We all remain Leibnizian" for Deleuze because the transition from monad to nomad remains inhibited, incomplete. The monadic unities of folding are merely "half-open" (Deleuze 2006a: 157) in Deleuze, the surface of sense can only momentarily exist as smooth space without falling back into stratification.

Deleuze frees synthetic creation from both subjective-internal and external *a priori* harmony. But if Deleuze's sense-creation is not completely without order, what form of ordering restraint can persist as ungrounded, neither universal nor subjective, on the basis of the Deleuzian chaosmos? At this point I suggest that it is necessary to turn back to Luhmann's systems theory. So far I have proposed the Leibnizian fold of ontic and

epistemic matter as the pleats which make up the surface of sense which is confused in its indefinite potentiality, but clear as the constructive realisation of a distinct possible world. On this basis, I will now turn to Luhmann's thought to explore the process of enfolding further, suggesting sense as liminal systemic boundary suitable to re-institute a non-ontological, constructed possible within Deleuzian philosophy as the ground for psychic and socio-political order. Above I have already highlighted how Philppopoulos-Mihalopoulos uses not only Leibniz's monad, but more precisely its folded surface to draw out important parallels between the theories of Deleuze and Luhmann.

On the inside of the monadic system, "Luhmannian contingency … folds snugly in Deleuzian virtuality" (Philppopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2013: 70), while on the other hand "[t]he systemic environment folds in the Deleuzian outside" (ibid., 71) as both conditioned, limited body or ground perceivable only as a product of the inside and as complex, creative resource enfolded at the surface of sense. But I suggest bringing in yet another thinker to show how Deleuze and Luhmann not only converge on the issue of conditioned monadic creativity, but how indeed Luhmann can be an ally for a reader of Deleuze to think its radical implications for the possibility of ontological grounding: Gilbert Simondon. Simondon's process of individuation shares a large common ground with systems theory. However, as I will show, Deleuze is in fact closer to Luhmann in terms of the radicalness of the ontological ungrounding undertaken which removes sense-making from all notions of origin and teleology.

Gilbert Simondon's techno-biological theory of individuation constitutes a more obvious perspective to explore the ground of creative genesis with Deleuze. It demands careful consideration within the context of this dissertation considering its rising popularity with Deleuzian theorists of divergent orientations (Hui 2017; Scott 2017; Alloa and Michalet 2017; Illiadis 2013; Del Lucchese 2009). So how does Luhmann's systems theory go beyond what has already been envisioned by Simondon? Providing a short overview of Simondonian individuation, I will show in the following how Simondon's influence on Deleuze's theory provides valuable points of contact for a theoretical dialogue with Luhmann's ideas. However, retaining linear progression and the notion of a primary origin I believe that it is ultimately unsuitable for the task essential to this project: the creation of a theoretical perspective to understand sense as a productive but itself ungrounded ground which makes the world as it can be known, and provides an analytical perspective to unpack contemporary politics as operating through self-reproductive sense-making. I therefore suggest Luhmann's systems theory as a point of contact to

employ the Simondonian influence in Deleuze's philosophy in a productive way, further developing "the new distribution which it imposes on beings and concepts" (Deleuze 1994: 7) - Deleuze's own benchmark for a philosophy which is worthwhile pursuing.

To understand the theoretical-conceptual intersections of Luhmann's and Simondon's theories, it is useful to link them back to their shared origin – cybernetic theory. Headed by Norbert Wiener, the cybernetic theoretical movement of the 1940s and 1950s used systems theory to explore how information systems stabilise and reproduce themselves as second-order machines. Second-order systems are capable of including their own, constantly changing position in the calculation which transforms input to output – they are subject to the constant re-entry of their grounding distinction. Cybernetic theory – which owes its name to the ancient Greek term for steersman – seeks to understand how such second-order systems manage to protect their responsiveness from the white noise of increasing informational entropy which follows from the system's adaptive inclusion of its own history as part of the ground on which (re-)actions are calculated (Rasch and Wolfe 2000: 10-12; Pierce 1980: 124-172; Wiener 1985: 42-44).[43] However, Wiener's cybernetic theory analyses systems as ontologically pre-existent, structural entities in the sense of Leibniz's monads. Disconnected from the position of the observer, they can be objectively accessed in their productive processes and constitutive elements (Weinbaum 2014: 285-286).

Luhmann dissolves the system from its ontological status to unpack onto-epistemological constitution as itself inner-systemic. Luhmann's system is a machine "effectively coupled to the external world […] by a flow of impressions, of incoming messages, and of the actions of outgoing messages" (Wiener 1985: 42). But beyond classical cybernetic theory, Luhmann draws on the writings of Heinz von Foerster to zoom in on the consequences of a general systems theory in which the boundaries between inside and outside are not given, but contingent and self-produced as functionally necessary for the theorisation of creative emergence.

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[43] In this juncture, Wiener interestingly argues that cybernetic systems theory resolves the sharp distinction between mechanism and vitalism on a temporal level. On the one hand, the advancement of cybernetic theory constitutes a clear victory of mechanism against a normative vitalism "from every point of view which has the slightest relation to morality or religion" (1985: 44) for Wiener. But on the other hand, systems do not exist in Newton's external, continuous flow of time which governs physical laws. Temporal relations are rather constantly produced within and thus relative to the system. Both the affective environment and the systemic inside which is reproduced through its response can only be perceived by the system, and thus persist, as constantly evolving durations (ibid., 37-38). The Bergsonian quality which is hereby attributed to the past as active field of creation for Wiener's systems will be further explored as a common ground shared by Deleuze and Luhmann in chapter 3.

With this observation the question of where to look for memory and learning is turned into the opposite direction. Instead of searching for mechanisms in the environment that turns organisms into trivial machines, we have to find the mechanisms within the organisms that enable them to turn their environment into a trivial machine. (von Foerster 2003: 153)

All processing of information takes place as the self- or other-observation from within a particular system. Observations are hence endowed with relevance, but remain relative to the system which produces them. Luhmann thus turns to cybernetic theory in order to unpack systemic productivity in a way which is both onto-epistemologically generalisable and particular and relative to the context of a particular system and its logic of sense.

Like Luhmann, Simondon draws on cybernetic theory to understand the conditions and operational mode of emergence of technological objects. In his terms, he explores the ontogenetic individuation of singular and collective entities from a pre-individual field containing energy, intense flows of matter and information as a process *sui generis* (Simondon 2012: 2-3). Simondon's process of onto-genesis is thus materialist, but does not propose matter as a stable, ontological ground which precedes individuation. On the contrary, individuation is conceptualised as essentially relational – both the emergent entity and the preindividual milieu of intense matter are secondary to the process of reciprocal evolution that is individuation (Bardin 2015: 51-55). They cannot be thought prior to or detached from the ontogenetic process of individuation, because any knowledge of it can only be material and experienced, can only be formed within the ontogenetic process – and is thus relative to its relation; "the operation of individuation does not admit of an already constituted observer" (Combes 2013: 7).

Simondon's theoretical project, as specified in *On the Mode of Existence of Technological Objects* (2016), shares a number of similarities with my turn to Leibniz in order to understand ungrounded creative emergence in general, and the productivity of cybernetic systems theory for such as task in particular. I believe that these similarities lie in the radically open creativity of technological or systemic production, the role of information and its evental character and the necessity to understand grounded form and grounding medium as emergent from one and the same productive process. Firstly, Simondon sets up his theory of individuation against a humanist science which seeks to grasp processes of genesis retrospectively beginning with the formed individual as the starting point. He proposes to approach individual being not as ontologically primary in its solitary status, but as only comprehensible in its specific and shared features situated in an ongoing process of individuation from a pre-individual field.

Individuation corresponds to the appearance of stages in the being, which are the stages of being. It is not a mere isolated consequence arising as a by-product of becoming, but this very process itself as it unfolds; it can be understood only by taking into account this initial supersaturation of being, at first homogeneous and static [sans devenir], then soon after adopting a certain structure and becoming - and in so doing, bringing about the emergence of both individual and milieu - following a course [devenir] in which preliminary tensions are resolved but also preserved in the shape of the ensuing structure; in a certain sense, it could be said that the sole principle by which we can be guided is that of the conservation of being through becoming. (Simondon 1992: 301)

In alignment with systems theory, Simondon identifies all - not just human-subjective - unity as the effect of a constant, self-organizing emergence which subverts the *a priori* distinction between matter and form. Any individuated unity is thus always spatially relative to the totality of being, the field it individuates from, and temporally relative to its own ontogenetic becoming (Bardin 2015: 3-9). In analogy to Luhmann, the process-dimension of genesis is prioritised in contrast to both a mechanistic-cybernetic and a hylomorphic assumption of pre-existent forms and qualities which only need to be filled. Rather than uniting forms which already exist in the pre-individual field, Simondon shows how it is only through the dynamic process of becoming that these come into being, become graspable and accessible as such (Simondon 1992: 304; Bardin 2015: 22-24). The complex multiplicity of the individuating milieu to which the emergent individual is relationally connected, to which it is immanent, does not spatially lie outside the individuated object, but is rather a temporal, processual openness immanent to the former which corresponds to the perceptive openness of Leibniz's monad.

But like Luhmann, and beyond the teleologically ordered dreams of Leibniz, Simondon insists on the openness of this process of individuation, which is freed from what he perceives as the closed directedness of a humanism that remains bound to the telos of human advancement or emancipation. "Cybernetics … frees man from the unconditional prestige of the idea of finality" (Simondon 2016: 120). Secondly, Simondon recognises the profound importance of informational differentials as charging an immanent creativity. Similar to Luhmann, he here diverges from the classical cybernetic scenario where a particular piece of information is received by a given systemic structure. Instead, what counts as information is determined by the relationship spanned between particular individuating entities which constantly produce and reproduce inside and outside relationally (Bardin 2015: 25-27). Information is evental to the closed, creative unit – from the perspective of existing creative relations, it is enfolded as external novelty (Simondon 2016: 147-149). Thirdly, with regard to the epistemological processes that

accompany Simondon's technical evolution, he recognises that the individuation of specific technical objects as forms must always be accompanied by the simultaneous emergence of a ground to support their existence. In *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects,* Simondon (2016: 185-190) attributes religion with this grounding, totalising function complementary to technical individuation.

So why is Luhmann necessary – what can he add to an understanding of immanently creative, self-grounding units with Simondon? I argue that only Luhmann carries the implications of reciprocity and processual contingency forward to an ontological level, embracing the productivity of sense as radically undirected and ungrounded. Simondon, on the other hand, does not completely dissolve his theory of individuation from the notion of ontological primacy. In a sense akin to speculative realism, his understanding of onto-genesis is based on the assumption of intensities and potentials pre-existing their individuation - which is therefore more actualisation than genuine production - within the pre-individual field. These intensities constitute an ambiguous, but still ontologically pre-given "*technical essence*" (Simondon 2016: 45) from which technical individuation begins as a process of clarification and perfection. "*Form, matter and energy* preexist in the system […]. The true principle of individuation is mediation" (Simondon 1992: 104).[44]

Andrea Bardin identifies Simondon's pre-individual as "the mark of a problem rather than its solution: a hypothesis still too closely connected to Simondon's phenomenological legacy" (2015: 47). Simondon turns away from the idea of ideal ontic forms which pre-exist their subjective perception – and the conviction that these forms can be philosophically grasped. However, he argues that certain potentials of energy can be assumed to be present in the pre-individual field in advance of, and one-directionally shaping, the individuation which follows from it. While these are themselves transformed through and influenced by previous processes of individuation, and therefore do not constitute universal philosophical *a prioris*, they are not themselves constructed through the former (Simondon 2005: 205-211). As Bardin (2015: 46-57) notes, a Kantian problem further persists in Simondon's theory of individuation which strangely oscillates between post-structuralist and positivist moments with regard to the way it reflects on its own analytical capabilities. Simondon ultimately insists that processes of individuation are not

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[44] Simondon's insistence on pre-individual potentials on the level of being prioritises the direction of emergence which moves from pre-individual field to individuated entity in the sense of a coming-into-being underlying the phenomenological account of creative sense-making in Nancy.

just philosophical models, they approximate the actual genesis of being and knowledge even though the latter can never be directly witnessed as such.

From the intensive multiplicity of the pre-individual field, individuals then unfold through a linear process of "*transduction*" (Simondon 1992: 313), passing through several stages of being. Simondon (2010: 230-234) objects to universal progress on the basis of his relativism of self-organising entities – subjective as well as social. Yet his theory seems to retain the notion of teleological enfolding as non-arbitrary and irreversible movement – closer to Bergson who Simondon read with interest (Chabot 2013: 149-153) than to Leibniz - with regard to the singularities individuating from the pre-individual field in a transductive operation that affects both entities. Exemplified by the continuous growth of a crystal on its edges, becoming-individuated does not follow the multiple curves of a fold, but unfolds in a linear way from a seed or core as its material-ontological origin (Simondon 2005: 33). The differentials which charge the process of individuation from its milieu are ontologically energised. "The energy that serves as information carrier" (Simondon 2016: 147) emerges on the level of being external to the creative process which is synchronising, not synthetically enfolding.

For Simondon, information must constitute a genuine discontinuity between the inside of the – permeable - perceptive system and its outside. This informational discontinuity is relative to the former, but not produced by it. If the individuating unit were "truly incorruptible like Leibniz's monad … there would be nothing to synchronise" (ibid., 149). The dynamic relationality which Simondon identifies between an individuated being and its milieu replaces neither ontological essence in Simondon's theory nor the metaphysical need or possibility to grasp the former. Understood in the context of Simondon's larger theoretical aim to create contact between the positivist sciences and the phenomenological humanities of his time, his theory of individuation must be understood as an attempt to ground social philosophy in its own, axiomatic truths (Bardin 2015: 6-7).

In his short review of Simondon's theory of individuation, however, Deleuze interestingly praises precisely the completely reciprocal nature of Simondonian onto-genesis as non-directional process which unfolds as the differential relation between "two disparate levels of reality" (2004: 87) without a ground which is external to it. I believe that Deleuze's reading of individuation goes beyond Simondon's own conceptualisation of the process. In Simondon, it is a transductive, double-sided, but one-directional becoming with distinct "phases or steps through which the genesis of the individual being passes"

(1992: 309-310). While becoming is here partial, but in the end objective and "nonrelational" (ibid., 310), Deleuze pushes it further in the direction of what I will show to be the one of Luhmann's systems theory. Simondon's assumption of a linear transduction through different, externally identifiable stages cannot be maintained within a theoretical perspective that takes relativity to the point of view of the individuated system seriously as the basis of all onto-epistemological genesis, which includes theoretical observation.

Luhmann makes this very clear in his explicit rejection of any trans-systemic grounding "in which knowledge could find an ultimate foothold and secure correspondence with its object" (1995: 35). He radically replaces any form of ontological grounding with the self-referential, reciprocal genesis of inside and environment. As surface of sense-making where the production of the individuated entity, or Leibnizian world, takes place, the pre-individual field is here not just passively altered, but actively constructed from the inside of the entities it enfolds, from inside the relations of sense which precede both ontic matter and epistemic structures as they can be made sense of. Exactly in this sense, Deleuze credits Simondon with overcoming the doxa of both ontological and epistemological origin by revealing that both are secondary to and shaped by a problematic, solution-generating system of relations (Deleuze 1994: 131-132).

> The category of problem acquires in Simondon's thought tremendous importance insofar as the category is endowed with an objective sense: it no longer designates a provisional state of our knowledge, an undetermined subjective concept, but a moment of being, the first pre-individual moment. And in Simondon's dialectic, the problematic replaces the negative. Individuation is thus the organization of a solution, the organization of a 'resolution' for a system that is objectively problematic. (Deleuze 2004: 88)

Both Simondon and Luhmann replace social-technological progress as well as normative teleology as the driving forces of production with a contingent, functional relationship between problem and solution. Simondon broadens his theory of individuation to include collective, social entities, specifically investigating labour, belief and language as quasi-social systems.[45] He notes how, in the evolutionary process of social transduction, these realms have become increasingly differentiated and independent from the rest of society as their milieu of individuation (Bardin 2015: 98-99). While not further developed by Simondon, this resonates with Luhmann's evolutionary account of the gradual

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[45] Against the background of Luhmann's theory, the assumption of language as a distinct, autonomous social realm appears difficult to uphold.

development of functional differentiation in modern societies through the preliminary stages of horizontal and vertical-hierarchical differentiation (Luhmann 1998a: 634-750), which will be unpacked in more detail in chapter 5. Importantly, Simondon here moves away from the descriptive-essentialist glance of Durkheimian sociology. With reference to Gabriel Tarde, he argues for a functional role of language, labour and belief. Being themselves contingent activities, they constitute technical extensions that link the individuations of several psychic and social unities and thus allow for the gradual enfolding of culture (Bardin 2015: 101-109).

In obvious similarity to Luhmann, internal functionality here – socially, but not onto-genetically - replaces a simplistic understanding of transduction as deterministic progress. Normativity is viewed as necessarily enfolded, its theoretical status transformed from an external ascription or demand to a system-internal functionality. Morality is the emergent technical – or techno-aesthetic, as Simondon (2012: 3-5) specifies in a letter to Derrida – solution to a problem which is social-evolutionary, not ethical-philosophical. He defines this problem in relation to Wiener's cybernetic theory as the maintenance of the system-internal status quo of entropy against a milieu where the level of entropy is relatively higher, which necessitates a technical mechanism of selection, allocation and specification. Doing so, Simondon sketches out a relation between differentiation, complexity and the constant, contextualised production of an entity which mirrors the one theorised by Luhmann (2009b: 212-219), proposing individuation as continuous process of selective differentiation from a milieu of pure potentiality.

But the perspective on production as contingent and fundamentally indeterminate and merely directed by functional path-dependencies is at odds with the directed, progressive character of Simondon's onto-genesis. Luhmann's constructivist stance identifies all (philosophical) observations of the social world as the creative production of a particular possible world (Luhmann 2009a: 128-137) – a position essentially at odds with Simondon's desire for an axiomatisation of social theory. The onto-epistemological individuation of psychic and social entities in Luhmann does not found on a shared, immanent retaining of pre-individual qualities. It becomes the contingent, political product of coordination between different, distinct surfaces within the domain of sense. Luhmann's claim for contingency on the creative surface of sense is radical and far-reaching. It does not stop at ontologies and epistemologies, but includes life itself, even though, as Luhmann laconically observes, "[t]he evolutionary one-off invention of life has proved remarkably stable" (Luhmann 2004: 466).

2.4 Beyond ontology in Luhmann and Deleuze

So far I have explored the content of the fold of sense as both material and epistemic, and the process of its continuous enfolding as the formation of a meta-stable, grounding but ungrounded surface of sense. On this basis, a conclusion remains to be drawn regarding the ontological status of the resulting conception of sense – and the way in which it can be accessed in the context of the Deleuzian-Luhmannian theory of sense I develop here. As already sketched out above, Luhmann's systems theory embraces the constructivist conditions of knowledge formation in a radical sense. Knowledge is aggregated from the observations internal to the point of view of an entity. Without an Archimedean point which removes the observer from her systemically situated position, it can neither be generalised trans-systemically, nor generated in a neutral, objective way. Luhmann's turn away from external ontological foundations in favour of an interest in the functional conditions of genesis is widely recognised in secondary literature (Rasch 2000b; Phillippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2013; Moeller 2012; Stäheli 2000).

For Luhmann (1990a: 127-130), the both selective and productive relationality of sense constituted by each consciousness and social entity in a partially shared, but distinct way replaces the necessity for ontological grounding and erases the very possibility of any investigation which goes deeper than this surface of sense. At the beginning of *Social Systems,* Luhmann insists that social systems do exist. But it is important that this insistence constitutes an observational expression on the level of sense – it forms part of the system of sense relations which is Luhmann's theory, and whose observations are contingent on and radically immanent to this relationality. Within Luhmann's theory, the existence of the system is a functionally necessary but self-produced description alternative to, but of the same quality as other theoretically encompassing self-observations of society such as religion or Enlightenment rationalism (Rasch 2000b: 70-83). Systems are real – *es gibt Systeme* – but only in the sense of Luhmann's de-ontologised reality of ungrounded, self-grounding sense relations (Moeller 2012: 78; Luhmann 2002: 132-133). Luhmann's realism must be understood as coupled with a relational immanence that replaces ontological foundations.[46]

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[46] While Hans-Georg Moeller, in *The Radical Luhmann,* in this juncture still uses the terms "realistic ontology" (2012: 79) and "immanent ontology" (ibid., 81), I suggest that the radical difference of Luhmann's conditioned, meta-stable ground of sense from an ontological foundation – as conventionally understood – is obfuscated by any attempt to ascribe an ontology to Luhmann's theory.

Luhmann does not theorise an ontology, but rather produces a second-order observation of the functional role ontologies have played for the epistemological cohesion of modern societies until they became fragmented by functional differentiation. Luhmann's analysis reveals functional differentiation as "the condition of possibility for both the development of modern science and the non-realist philosophy used to describe it" (Rasch 2013: 53). Importantly, the constructivist turn, which Luhmann (2009e) affiliates his theory with, here appears itself as a conditioned shift in the mode of sense-making. It is conditioned by the phenomenon of functional differentiation which includes both manifest changes of socio-economic structures and respective changes in their epistemological representation on the level of social self-observation. In this sense, "social constructivism, is not merely an epistemology - it not only explains how cognition works but is also an ontology: it explains how reality is produced" (Moeller 2012: 8).

Luhmann therefore rejects the possibility of ontological grounding as a second-order observation appropriate to and possible in a present where society consists of functionally differentiated social systems. The disparity of their distinct logics of sense is experienced by the psychic systems participating in them and can no longer be unified by a totalising ontological form of sense. But I argue that Luhmann importantly also opposes any certainty that epistemological singularities are constitutive of the world as we can make sense of it. Firstly, as argued in the introduction, the materiality excluded from sense systems re-enters them in every new instant of sense-making where it becomes available for the constitutive distinction of systemic relations in sense again. Secondly, the distinction between epistemic and extra-epistemic constituents takes place on the ground and in the medium of sense and is thus secondary to and conditioned by the relationality of systemic sense itself. As demanded by Deleuze and Guattari, Luhmann's theory of self-productive sense proceeds "from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing" (1987: 25).

But is this really all there is to say about ontological grounding in Luhmann? As Rasch points out, Luhmann at times uses phrases "with a distinctively Kantian and perhaps especially neo-Kantian flavour" (2013: 38): in his essay "Das Erkenntnisprogramm des Konstruktivismus und die unbekannt bleibende Realität" Luhmann insists that "there is an external reality, which is already evident in the fact that the self-produced operation of knowledge [Erkenntnis] can be executed at all" (2009e: 32), albeit "an external reality which remains unknown" (ibid.). How does this insistence fit with a post-ontological reading of Luhmann? The fact that Luhmann does not deny the ontological existence of

an outside reality leads Rasch to conclude that Luhmann theorises "on the cusp of a reality that remains unknowable to all of us" but of which, "perhaps, out of the 'corner of our eye' we occasionally catch a glimpse of" because, even though unknowable, it "makes our well-ordered world possible" (Rasch 2013: 56).

Different from Rasch I believe that such speculation about an ontological outside force which would be akin to the spark of divine creation in Leibniz's monad is ultimately foreign to Luhmann's theoretical project. Luhmann's systems theory is a second-order observation which is indifferent to the question of foundationalism vs. anti-foundationalism. Luhmann does not speculate about an originary source or quality of what there is before it emerges on the level of sense and thus can be made sense of, because the very structure of his systems theory precludes the possibility of insight into the former in the form of first-order observation – everything that a system observes is its immanent creation in the relations of sense it is comprised of. His constructivism aims at a "de-ontologisation of reality" (Luhmann 2009e: 35) which merges the recognition that reality is real because we can make sense of it with the insight that it is only real to the knowing entity because it makes sense, because it produces an immanent actuality in sense in the absence of every possibility to access an outside or depth of being (ibid. 34-39).

Stefan Rossbach (2004: 51-54) suggests that Luhmann's argumentation here is in fact mysticist: the reality outside of the system does not ground or in any way shape its internal relations, but because its absence within the process of knowledge-production paradoxically conditions immanent sense-making - "only non-knowing systems can know; or: you can only see because you cannot see" (Luhmann 2009c: 35) - it is nevertheless a productive or at least positive "nothing". I propose a different route of tackling the status of external reality in Luhmann, which does not lead towards a theoretical pinning down of the former, but instead emphasises the radical quality of Luhmann's turn to the inside of sense. Akin to Deleuze's discussion of Artaud's dive into the depth of matter and being where nobody can follow, I suggest that Luhmann seeks to emphasise the fruitless, unproductive character not just of ontological speculation, but of any attempt to classify the source of knowledge beyond the systemic relations which create knowledge – the relations of sense. "[H]ow can you escape the circle of self-grounding knowledge [Erkenntnis]? And why is this necessary at all? Can we not just say: knowledge is what knowledge considers to be knowledge? The foil which makes this

possible is provided by the distinction system/environment, and by a systems theory developed in its context" (ibid., 34).

Against this background, I propose to read Luhmann's insistence on a reality external to the system as drawing attention to the fact that exactly this distinction between inside and outside produces being on the level of sense, so that any insistence on external reality cannot be detached from this self-productive motion (ibid., 38-39). When Luhmann states that "[t]here is no doubt that an external reality exists, and equally no doubt that contact to it is possible as the condition which gives reality to the operations of the system" (ibid, 39), I suggest that every affirmation of a reality is intrinsically intertwined with multiple levels of sense relations – not just of those entities making sense in the absence of a reality, but also of the second-order observer observing them. In this sense, an external environment cannot *not* be observed because it is *a priori* excluded from the sense-relational gaze of the system, but because it does not exist as distinct from the former, has to be made such through a particular system/environment differentiation. Luhmann provides the example of social reality as that which gives a shared world to different observers because it can be made sense of, and is thus treated as given (ibid.), by all of them. But this reality is importantly not detached from their sense-making processes, but itself produced, shaped and changed not only, but also through their expressions of sense.

I argue that for every instant in which the system/environment distinction is performed, the external reality which remains inaccessible is the outside of nonsense filled with material and epistemic singularities not currently used for but available to sense-making. Using the distinction which Deleuze draws from Leibniz, this external reality, like Deleuze's virtual, is clear, but not distinct. For Luhmann, the analytical advantage of constructivism lies in the fact that it allows for thematising the conflation of ontological and epistemological production in sense. The constructivist perspective opens the foundational paradox of a relationality of sense which consists in nothing but a process of onto-epistemological genesis in the medium of sense which is based on the previous distinction of a form of sense from (the external reality of) nonsense. "When generating knowledge [erkennen] requires sense and sense on its part requires distinctions, then a final reality must be thought as devoid of sense" (ibid. 47).

In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze explores exactly this paradoxical nature of self-producing, self-distinguishing sense as driving the production of actuality. But is Luhmann's nuanced turn to the inside of sense-making in favour of a strong rejection of ontological grounding or speculation compatible with Deleuze's philosophy? The question whether

Gilles Deleuze develops, argues for or holds on to any form of ontology, identifying a specific state of being as the primary locus of genesis (regardless of whether this ground is accessible as such) is, I believe, more difficult to answer. The first reason for this is the somewhat conflicting way in which Deleuze himself uses the term ontology. On the one hand, he refers to the univocity of being as *the* philosophical ontology at different points throughout his work (Deleuze 1994: 44; Deleuze 1990a: 205-206; Deleuze 1988: 110-118). But on the other hand, together with Guattari he formulates an (anti-)ontological programme for his rhizomatic philosophy in *A Thousand Plateaus* which couldn't be clearer: "move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings" (1987: 25).

The larger part of Deleuzian secondary literature - which rallies behind the ontological flag - seems to make sense of this perplexing contrast by bracketing the writings Deleuze has produced with Guattari (Bowden 2011; Livingston 2012).[47] Deleuze is identified as developing a "differential ontology" which confronts and undermines the unitary image of thought which dominates philosophy. Against this dominant ontological reading of Deleuze, Francois Zourabichvili is the lonely advocate for a Deleuzian philosophy in which "there is no 'ontology of Deleuze'" (2012: 36). While I ultimately agree with Zourabichvili's characterisation of Deleuze's writing as exploring ontology – on the same level as all other phenomena and similar to Luhmann's unpacking of the former as second-order observation – in its not founded, but grounded emergence, doing so requires careful explanation.

Zourabichvili rejects the assumption that there is such a thing as a Deleuzian ontology on the basis of two arguments. He firstly argues that Deleuze is not an ontological theorist because he is not majorly concerned with the concept of being. Secondly, he inverts a passage from *The Logic of Sense* often used to argue in favour of the ontological nature of Deleuze's thought where Deleuze argues that "ontology merges with the univocity of Being […] [which] does not mean that there is one and the same Being; on the contrary, beings are multiple and different" (1990a: 179). Zourabichvili argues that Deleuze's

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[47] In order to do so, clear differences are drawn between the writings of Deleuze as an "interpreter" of key thinkers such as Leibniz, Nietzsche and Spinoza, the Deleuze of *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* as a "philosopher" in his own right and finally the "political activism" running through the more radical writings co-authored with Guattari. This is a line of Deleuzian scholarship which I, however, do not want to follow as I think that it does not do justice to the ensemble of Deleuze's oeuvre which is as much a multiplicity of different concepts and focal points as it constitutes a unity held together by an overarching interest in the rules and restraints of immanent production. I believe that it has been, just as the persona Gilles Deleuze himself, very much radical and political from the start (Crockett 2013: 7-8; Zourabichvili 2012: 35; Buchanan 2008: 13-15)

interest in ontology does in fact not take the form of a proposition of how Being emerges from an ontological ground, but rather unpacks the constitution of a particular, historically situated plane of thought in its problematic nature.

> If there is an orientation of the philosophy of Deleuze, this is it: *the extinction of the term 'being' and therefore of ontology* […] Nevertheless, one might object, didn't Deleuze himself explicitly write that 'philosophy merges with ontology'? Let us assume this – the apologist for the term 'being' must then explain how, in the same work, a concept of the transcendental field can be produced. We may begin by restoring the second half of the statement, intentionally ignored or poorly weighed: '…but ontology merges with the univocity of being'. […] It is not ontology in itself that interests Deleuze; as he indicates in the latter half of the statement cited above, it is the moment of its history where the thesis of univocity arises, and the secret posterity of this statement, well beyond the Middle Ages. (Zouribichvili 2012: 37-38)

Upon closer examination, Zourabichivi's first argument does not seem particularly powerful. It only takes effect against a reading of Deleuze as a pre-Heideggerian ontological theorist who assumes a stable, accessible essence of all things. There are indeed a few readings of Deleuze as a "strong" ontological philosopher holding on to a certain fixed identity in things, subjects or even events in themselves in this sense (Conolly 2011; DeLanda 2006). This essentialist ontological reading of Deleuzian thought seems however particularly unconvincing, since it presupposes an external grounding of thought (in subjects or objects) which Deleuze seeks to undermine as part of the philosophical dogmatism privileging specific images of thought (Deleuze 1994: 176-180).

But there are alternative ways to extract a Deleuzian ontology from his writings, which are more in tune with his philosophical project. While divergent in emphasis, I believe that these approaches can be subsumed under the label of a "differential ontology of becoming". "Deleuze's ontology is a rigorous attempt to think of process and metamorphoses – becoming – not as a transition from one point to another, but rather as an attempt to think of the real as the process" (Boundas 2005: 191-192). In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze develops his concept of pure, virtual and irresolvable difference to attack an orthodox philosophy which posits truth as both the origin and the teleological end point of thought. He opposes the external grounding of creative genesis to a logic of radical immanence where thought, sense and being are produced within an ungrounded and ongoing process of differentiation to which both signification and material actualisation are secondary (Massumi 2002: 7-14). Deleuze's difference is not bound to concrete objects essentially differing from each other. It is not a negative surrogate for

being, but instead a force of becoming, of production and invention (Deleuze 1994: 59-77; 222-230).

As briefly discussed in the last chapter, it is partially this pure and productive difference itself which readers of Deleuze identify as ontologically primary ground for a reality which is inherently processual (Bryant 2008; De Beistegui 2004). In other accounts, primacy is attributed to the event which brings the heterogeneous series of signs and objects into communication to constitute sense (Badiou 2007a; Bowden 2011; Massumi 2002). The event is here the "objective ontological ideality" (Bowden 2011: 46) which sets in motion a process of reciprocal determination and thereby constitutes thought, makes sense. But at this point it is necessary to look closer at the way in which both the event and virtual difference can be understood as ontologically grounding in Deleuze – and in which way they cannot. Beginning with the event, it is not just a material force, not just a "non-place" (Badiou 2007a: 168) which ruptures representation. As sense-event which is "of the order of the problem" (Patton 2008: 26), it is itself also effect, also immanent expression which does not transcend the context of its empirical actualisation (Deleuze 1994: 192-194).

Bringing the series of bodies and happenings into communication with the series of signs, the event constitutes the middle ground between both, but does not prioritise either ontologically. It is a productive force of becoming, but not an Aristotelian unmoved mover. It unfolds on the very surface which it simultaneously shapes through its emergence and thus, as in Luhmann, does not escape the point of view which grounds its creative potential (Zourabichvili 2012: 71-75). Regarding the concept of difference, Deleuze replaces the conventional philosophical account of difference as an externally resolvable negativity with a difference that is immanent and relational, shaped by the differential relations it constitutes (Deleuze 1994: 87-88). "The given expression of immanence (the actual) is implied in an intensive difference (the virtual) … when it conditions the actual it does not do so as some kind of undifferentiated reservoir of oneness that transcends the world" (Coluciello Barber 2014: 53).

Thus, both event and difference can only be given ontological primacy insofar that they are said to emerge as subject to the epistemological conditions they themselves affect; they do not transcend their expression within these conditions. Again, everything emerges from the multiple Leibnizian folds of the pleated surface, a mutual construction and transformation within a perfectly immanent, continuous process of genesis. In this sense I argue that Deleuze – rather than actually proposing a philosophical ontology – reveals

ontology as a hollow, paradoxical figure with a philosophical function which it however fails to achieve: to cover up the ungrounded process of genesis from which it emerges. Deleuze shows that it is impossible to account for differential becoming and event in a way that is unrelated to their situating epistemological conditions, the image that they are assumed to reproduce or rupture.

In his review of Jean Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*, which is usually cited as supporting an ontological reading of Deleuze (Cisney 2014), Deleuze identifies the following central claim of the book: "[p]hilosophy must be ontology, it cannot be anything else" (Deleuze 1954). Deleuze does not drop the concept of ontology, even in passages where he appears to develop his own ideas. He rather seems to push Hyppolite's ontology beyond itself, erasing the boundaries between being, sense and knowledge within a philosophy of difference.

> But if Being is sense, true knowledge is not the knowledge of an Other, nor of some other thing. Absolute knowledge is what is closest, so to speak, what is most simple: it is here. […] It is indeed thanks to Hyppolite that we now realize philosophy, if it means anything, can only be ontology and an ontology of sense. In the empirical realm and in the absolute, it is the same being and the same thought; but the difference between thought and being has been surpassed in the absolute by the positing of Being which is identical to difference, and which as such thinks itself and reflects itself in humanity. (Deleuze 1954)

I think that the specific way in which Deleuze proposes an ontology which can only undermine itself is even made clearer if we link it back to his reference to the univocity of being as situated in its theoretical context. In a difference-philosophical alteration of the concept of univocity introduced by Duns Scotus, Deleuze argues that "the essential in univocity is not that being is said in a single and same sense, but that it is said, in a single and same sense, of all its individuating differences or intrinsic modalities" (Deleuze 1994: 36) - that it is said of difference.

This statement is often read as Deleuze's endorsement of an ontology in which pure difference is the form, and is thus endowed with the status, of being (Badiou 2007a: 67-71; Crockett 2013: 12-20). However, what this reading overlooks is the fact that in both *The Logic of Sense* and the Hyppolite review Deleuze performs the linking philosophy-ontology-being only in the context of a fourth dimension: sense. Rather than making a claim about the ontological revelation of being, I suggest that Deleuze points to the impossibility of differentiating ontological experience from the image of thought and its expression in sense. The univocity of being collapses the boundary between

event/empirical encounter and thought/knowledge in the process of their reciprocal constitution, their simultaneous becoming (Aarons 2012: 3-4).

Deleuze's being emerges not from an ontological foundation, but from the conditioned ground of sense – like Luhmann, he is a second-order observer of ontology. His turn away from ontology as prior to and detached from thought and the sense-expression which constitutes it, but more importantly his pointing to the impossibility of thinking any form of primacy independent from the conditions of constitution in sense allow me to conclude that Deleuze is not an ontological thinker in any established sense of the term. Deleuzian thought is neither focused on ontology nor on epistemology. Ungrounded construction presented as foundational ground is never just "an ontological problem; it's just as much a problem of statements" (Deleuze 1974 in Aarons 2012: 2). "*Eudoxus* and *Epistemon* are one and the same misleading figure who should be mistrusted" (Deleuze 1994: 130; italics in original). By contrast, what Deleuze seeks to explore is the reciprocally conditioned emergence of both ontological and epistemological entities, their events, ideas and subjects, in the onto-epistemological middle ground of sense (Massumi 2002: 68-73).

In this chapter I have drawn on elements of Leibniz's philosophy to enfold the thought of Deleuze and Luhmann with regard to the grounding quality of sense as a form. I have shown how both thinkers make it possible to understand sense as a ground for the expression constitutive of signs, ideas and thought. But this is possible only in so far as sense is at the same time understood as firstly itself conditioned by previous processes of sense-making, and secondly as synthetic, connecting material and epistemic singularities in every process of expression without the possibility to identify either domain as originary location or source of creativity for the always-already made ground of sense. Moving the theory of sense which I seek to develop here away from the Spinozist Deleuze and thinking it instead through the theoretical trajectory Leibniz-Deleuze-Luhmann, it has been shown how a productive sense-expression which is conceptualised as grounded in sense itself makes it possible to think onto-epistemological creativity as radically immanent to the relations of sense. Thinking the nature of this relational creativity beyond the Simondonian Deleuze through the same theoretical lineage, I showed how it is genuinely open without any remnants of onto-genetic directedness which, as I have argued, makes both Luhmann and Deleuze analysts of the immanently self-grounding order of sense.

The order of sense closes and directs itself through path-dependencies in the transition from grounding forms of sense to creative expression in the medium of sense which then

generates further, contingently limited grounding forms or bodies of sense. But how does a sense-making entity, subject or system, deal with the paradoxical condition that it is the creator of its own structures, qualities and limitations in sense? How does it deparadoxify and conceal the fact that the particular world produced on the surface of sense is only distinguished from possible other worlds through this very process of production? The tentative answer which Luhmann (2009e: 40-41) provides in "Das Erkenntnisprogramm des Konstruktivismus" is – through time. Time gives direction to the ungrounded synthesis of sense, rendering its contingent products irrevocable. In the following chapter, I will further zoom in on the synthesis of time which brings the ground of sense into existence and makes it possible that directed sense-expressions can take place on its surface. I will argue that the synthesis of sense must be understood as itself conditioned by relations of time and that these relations of time hold the key to understand how a fundamentally open and undirected, but practically limited and path-dependent relationality of sense operates as the ground of the world as it can be made sense of.

Chapter 3

3. Making Sense in Time: The Present that has to Pass, the Event that has to Return

3.1 Diachronicity, acceleration, emergency: the time of contemporary politics

So far, a theory of sense as the surface form on which all perception, affection and construction takes place has been developed as the basis of a relational constructivism of radical immanence. Assuming an equal ontogenetic status and capacity for matter and epistemic signs within sense as the meta-stable surface of all production, it was demonstrated how this theory of sense constitutes a viable third way between a discursive-linguistic structuralism which excludes the possibility of material creativity and a (new) materialism which isolates such creative force in a depth outside of and primary to the synthetic relations through which it affects subjects and societies, risking to re-introduce a modified version of the depth-ontology of transcendental philosophy. But how, or rather - on which basis - can the grounding form of sense, as discussed in chapter 2, persist as ungrounded, but self-grounding in its constant, expressive transgression by the productive medium of sense, which then generates new forms? What is the medium which makes this constant transgressive transition from form to medium to form possible, while ensuring that the form of sense remains available to ground further processes of sense-making?

This chapter locates the answer to those questions in the dimension of time. It will be argued that in both Luhmann and Deleuze, the temporalisation of the complexity or virtual multiplicity inherent to sense ensures that it can always be ordered, but also always remains available for the production of new sense. The first part of the chapter will move from Deleuze to Luhmann to show how time constitutes itself through a constant movement between rupture and closure. Historical structuration and evental openness condition each other as the two sides of one and the same movement of a temporal becoming which is, like the relational self-production of sense, autopoietic because it requires no grounding materiality or transcendental subjectivity to reproduce its events and structures. The self-displacing motion of time allows the groundless emergence of sense to take place, but at the same time deparadoxifies – conceals – the groundlessness of both its own self-production, and the productions of sense relations.

The last chapter established a geophilosophical perspective on sense as a meta-stable, groundless but self-constituting surface on which all expressive production takes place. This chapter zooms in on the moment of constitution itself to suggest that this constitution takes place within the form of time. Deleuze's philosophy of time picks up on Hamlet's famous declaration of "a time out of joint" to dissolve time from a fixed point in space, from being a dependent variable of spatial movement.

> The pure line of time has become autonomous ... Time has shaken off its dependency on all extensive movement, which is no longer the determination of objects but the description of space, a space we must abstract for time to be discovered as the condition of action. Time also does not depend on the intensive movement of the soul - to the contrary, the intentional production of a degree of consciousness within the moment is what depends on time. With Kant, time ceases to be originary or derived, to become the pure form of interiority. (Deleuze 1996: xii)

For Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy – and my geophilosophy of sense – this means not so much that time must be understood as a dimension independent from – or primary to - territorialised spaces. Rather, Deleuze philosophically solves the equation that relates time, space and movement by beginning with space and moving towards time. The movement of social territorialisation or structuration follows the coordinated rhythm of a temporal mechanism of organisation. But while Deleuze sides with Kant to identify time as inherently productive, his temporal production does not rely on a transcendental *a priori*. It rather is itself conditioned by nothing but the temporal, territorially hardened but ungrounded, relational path-dependencies it establishes.

3.1.1   Speed politics: accelerated time and political passivity in Paul Virilio

I suggest that the unpacking of temporal productivity in a way that is structurally conditioned, but not determined makes Deleuze's theory of time – beyond its importance for the unravelling of sense attempted here – an important addition to contemporary socio-political thought on time. Introducing her edited collection on Deleuzian theories of time, *Becomings* (2004)*,* Elisabeth Grosz notes that while there is an extensive body of literature reflecting on and employing the concept of space, "[t]ime and becoming remain unreflected and undertheorized, except in rare and isolated cases, in the history of Western thought" (2004: 2). Grosz' statement could be challenged with a view to some developed theories of time in the classical philosophies of Aristotle, Kant or Husserl.

However, she is right to note that a growing interest in time, its perception, historical presentation and political relevance seems particular to contemporary philosophy and social theory. Indeed, the notion of time, in its changing epistemic forms and its role within the making of power relations is of vital importance for both the theorists of the linguistic turn, such as Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilio (Docherty 1990: 9-10), and for succeeding contemporary Continental theories. Against this background, is it even necessary to add yet another political theory of time to this growing body of work? What ground can it cover that has been left unexplored so far? In the following, I will briefly sketch out the thought of Paul Virilio and Giorgio Agamben as containing two of the most prominent, but also most developed post-structuralist political theories of time as a background against which the contribution of my Deleuzian-Luhmannian theory of time will be demonstrated.

Both Virilio and Agamben go beyond the deconstruction of historical origins as situated within present power relations which can be found in Jacques Derrida (2016), Michel Foucault (2008; 2002) or more recently Roberto Esposito (2010). They explore the enfolding of socio-political and temporal structures and thereby shed light on the way in which time, while being shaped by particular discursive conditions, is also at the same time productive. Here, time conditions the possibility for political action. The two bodies of work provide points of contact for the engagement with two timely lines of thought which draw on Deleuze – accelerationism and vitalism – and which I will use as a comparative background to work out the specific characteristics of Deleuze's and Luhmann's thought on time which form an important part of the theory of sense developed in this dissertation. Virilio's and Agamben's theories both essentially operate through the diagnosis of a temporal diachronicity and orient themselves towards possibilities of synchronisation.

However, I argue that the theorisation of time they offer, viewed from a post-structuralist perspective, remains unsatisfactory for two reasons. Virilio and Agamben treat the diachronicity of time as either technologically or epistemologically determined. I argue that their structuralist tendencies on the one hand prevent them from exploring the genuine productivity of a time which is conditioned by, but variable with regard to (the perception of) those epistemic-social structures. On the other hand, the diagnosis of this diachronicity seems to be endowed with an objective status and therefore fails to engage in the intertwined, mutually constitutive relationship between temporal conditions and a – philosophical or political – making sense of these, which is always immanent to time.

Beginning with Virilio (2012: 304), he argues that the technological innovations of the 20th century, especially the rise of audio-visual media, catalysed a general acceleration which affects all areas of socio-cultural life. Expanding on Heidegger's (1977: 3-37) assessment of technology as a nihilistic force which prevents a genuine human interaction with the world, Virilio argues that the speed of audio-visual transmission, which is diachronous with the slower time of experience and reflection, leads to a permanent state of temporal insecurity, of being out-of-sync with the pace of contemporary happenings. The consequence for the individual subject is a "monastic autism in the very nature, time, space, and social and human organizations that he relinquishes, his renunciation of personal tastes and identity" (Virilio 2006: 110).

In *Speed and Politics,* Virilio suggests that both military and social conflicts are no longer shaped by geographical-spatial conditions. Under conditions of general social acceleration, they are increasingly subject to the movements of time. In *The Great Accelerator,* he develops an analogous interpretation of economic development where value becomes increasingly detached from the materiality of labour and goods, conditioning an economy of accelerated stock market trade where nano-seconds determine gain or loss (Virilio 2012: 11-19). Where spaces are dissolved in nano-meters, the tripartite division of time into past, present and future is replaced by the nano-chronology of an infinitely extended "time now passing" (ibid., 22) which provides no orientation for social, political or even revolutionary action. The political scope of motion is limited to passive, "choreographic" (Virilio 2012: 56) action. It can only regulate the bodies subject to it in tune with the speed of the accelerated technological-social reality without shaping, altering or interrupting its flows. At "the end of time" (ibid., 80) with a history to draw on and a distinct future to envision, a diachronous politics has reduced

> to little or nothing the time for human decision to intervene in the system. … Contraction in time, the disappearance of the territorial space, after that of the fortified city and armor, leads to a situation in which the notions of 'before' and 'after' designate only the future and the past in a form of war that causes the 'present' to disappear in the instantaneousness of decision. (Virilio 2006: 156-157)

Virilio's diagnosis of a politics which is rendered diachronous-reactive by a socio-culturally accelerated, extended present which dissolves the past-future chronology of orientation is supported by both analytical and critical social theorists such as Ulrich Beck, Hartmut Rosa and Wendy Brown.[48] But how can political resistance take place in

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[48] For Beck, the "de-bounding of uncontrollable risks" (1992: 41) under contemporary, post-industrial conditions produces a global risk society where political organisations must react by instituting mechanisms of control, surveillance and constant assessment in all areas of social life (ibid., 44-47). Beck's less

a political present which continuously escapes its actions from within a "daily life, now so exhausted, so deprived of the intervals of time needed for reflection and responsible action" (Virilio 2012: 29)? Virilio, only half-jokingly, states that "a Ministry of the Times" (ibid., 22), while certainly completing the politicisation of time, might make it possible to identify *Kairos,* the right time for an action which can be genuinely transformative instead of merely being reactive. However, he does not develop a theoretical or political proposal for re-seizing the motion of time in this sense.

Virilio's theory differs from accelerationism as defined in the "Accelerationist Manifesto" (Williams and Srnicek 2013) in important respects. He seems sceptical towards the possibility of repurposing technological and neoliberal structures to produce genuine change, whereas accelerationists argue that feeding into and speeding up the relations of techno-capital can incite "the accident to end all accidents […] the big crunch of turbocapitalism" (ibid., 82-83). But like accelerationism, I argue that Virilio's theory seems to fall victim to a certain structural determinism. The conditions of technologically and economically accelerated social life are understood as shaping the perception of time, and thus the scope available for political action. Problematically, time is here treated as a determinate given. It is nothing but the dependent product of particular social conditions. The structure of time, and the political action situated within it, cannot initiate an alteration of socio-cultural conditions because both change automatically with these conditions. Virilio's theory firstly falls back to the pre-Kantian fixation of time in (social) movement which both Deleuze (1994: xi) and Luhmann (2009c: 143) criticise for failing

philosophical, more analytical account identifies emergency governance not as an intentional change in the mode of political governance, but as the consequence of an actual change in the conditions of social life which have become more complex and intertwined. While he thus analyses the role played by time and its conceptualisation in a less explicit way, it undergoes an analogous transformation. The present is totalised; inflated with accounts of potential futures-to-prevent, it replaces the future which has become incalculable. It thereby legitimises political action: "the time bomb is ticking" (ibid., 33). While situated within Frankfurt School critical theory, Hartmut Rosa's writings on speed and the time of modernity reach a very similar conclusion. Due to a combination of economic, social-structural and cultural catalysers, we live in a present which is radically accelerated so that the temporal distinctions between past, present and future have lost all meaning - and all power of delimitation (Rosa 2013: 428-441). Within the context of multiple, desynchronised temporal structures, active political steering as well as meaningful democratic participation are no longer possible. Politics must incorporate more and more political tasks within the shorter time of a compressed, accelerated present. It reacts through further acceleration in the futile attempt to 'keep up with' the speed of technological innovation and economic transaction it should regulate (ibid., 402-405). As a consequence, Rosa pessimistically concludes that "the time of modern politics […] is up" (ibid., 415; own translation). While it once was the "pacemaker" (ibid., 416; own translation) of social developments and the course of history, contemporary politics can only react to the requirements of other, faster-paced areas of social life – and thus use speed as explicit political argument to justify this reactive political decision-making. Wendy Brown, who draws on Rosa in *Politics out of History* (2001), reflects on the consequences of this "unprecedented" (2001: 138) acceleration for individual democratic participation. She concludes that as a result of the speed of social movement, not primarily political actors but especially the democratic public experiences "a greater political impotence than humans may have felt before" (ibid., 139).

to illustrate how time, always both socially conditioned and indeterminate, can unfold a genuinely open productivity which holds the potential to alter socio-political relations.[49]

3.1.2 Messianic time: temporal displacement in the ontologico-political machine of sovereign power in Giorgio Agamben

Turning to Agamben, he also theorises the time of contemporary social life as a diachronous, constantly displaced present which feeds into and maintains the biopolitical mechanism of sovereign governance. In Agamben (2005a: 33-59), time plays an important role in the mechanism of emergency governance which, for him, characterises the functioning of contemporary politics. He shows how the political-legal apparatus can ground – or extend - itself in the present of the state of emergency. It allows the state to momentarily transcend its boundaries through the extraordinary decision of the political sovereign and reproduce these from this constitutive outside. Because the present emergency is unprecedented, outside of recorded time, "it is a question of a particular case in which the *vis* and *ratio* of the law find no application" (ibid., 23).

Agamben's emergency governance provides a powerful tool to account for the way contemporary politics seems to operate from (threatening) present to present, crisis to crisis, relying on situationally emergent law-making instead of attempting long-term political governance (Dean 2009; Aradau and van Munster 2007; Dillon 2015). Serialised, the exceptional events set in motion a political mechanism which draws the future into the totalised present where even potential threats and risks must be governed pre-emptively through monitoring and controlling.

> The hyper-security of liberal politics today is marked by the very refusal of law and the emergence of the event as something more than foundational. The event is constantly operative as the perverse and revolutionary form or authority of governance, an event that authorises itself as a response to the 'ever-becoming-dangerous' presence of an evil that engenders trauma and threatens catastrophe. (Dillon and Fletcher 2008: 295)

For Agamben, the political mechanism of emergency governance can unfold its eschatological functioning because it is situated within an order of time that is itself diachronous and displaced. He argues that the event of language has separated the

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[49] Beyond this, to notice social acceleration as objective state of contemporary social life, the academic observer must find herself outside of, and detached from, the temporally accelerating social relations. This reveals a remarkable lack of regard for the constitutedness of general acceleration as philosophical observation – and its relationship to the socio-political conditions observed.

experience of time from the possibility of its discursive representation. As a consequence, chronology becomes indefinitely extended towards a future of re-unification and stability in time which never arrives (Agamben 2011).

The eschatological operativity of time provides the framework for a political theology in which sovereign power can continuously reproduce itself as the institutional saviour whose exercise of force works towards undoing the displacement in time. But in *The Time That Remains* (2005b)*,* Agamben develops a theory of messianic time as the time which can both reproduce the eschatological functionality of time and entails the political potentiality to overcome it. When messianic time is "caught up" (Agamben 2005b: 68) in the workings of the representational eschatology, it continuously displaces the chronological representation of time from the way time is experienced in the present. It is the time of perpetual temporal insecurity similar to Virilio's conception of the present, the time of emergency governance legitimised by and reproductive of the collective understanding of temporal displacement.

But the messianic time which Agamben (ibid., 65-68) develops with reference to the dimensional linguistic theory of Gustave Guillaume, is the space between the experience about to become past and its representational preservation for the future. It "measures [the] disconnection with regard to it, [the] being out of sync and in noncoincidence with regard to [the] representation of time. But precisely because of this, [messianic time] allows for the possibility of […] achieving and taking hold of it" (ibid., 67). As liminal form which marks the withdrawal from all representation, messianic time undoes the event of language and reveals the potential to escape its political realisation. For this reason, messianic time can be a *Kairos,* a right time, which allows the subject to seize *Chronos* and reconnect it to temporal experience (Doussan 2013: 187-193; Agamben 1993: 102-105). But while Agamben unpacks the sovereign realm as reproduced in time, the solution he offers is again spatial (Johnson 2007: 277-279). Messianic time does not rupture chronological relations, does not interfere with or alter them. It rather is the liminal realm which escapes representation and therefore not only undoes the distinction between experienced and chronological time, but every dialectic productivity. The representational void reveals messianic time as the original time of human existence in which both being and language can be experienced in their true, undisplaced form (Sharpe 2009: 40 7-8; Britt 2012: 283-287).

In *The Use of Bodies,* Agamben (2016: 111-112) passionately criticises foundations and *a priori* relationships as charging the ontologico-political dispositif of biopower. But

Agamben himself fails to provide a satisfactory account of temporal productivity because he does not detach himself from a certain *a priori* dialectic. On the one hand, he seems to assume a sovereign realm in which eschatological governance deterministically reproduces itself in time, uninterruptable by the chronogenetic power of messianic time. Similar to what is argued by Virilio, time is here not genuinely productive, but merely conditions eschatological politics in so far as it is itself determined by the self-displacing epistemological structures of linguistic representation. On the other hand, messianic time opens a free space of ontological revelation to which the subject of biopolitical relations can withdraw to escape her ontologico-political conditionedness. Here, time appears to entail a genuinely creative potentiality. However, this potentiality is only opened in the revelatory moment of true ontic experience on the absolute outside of representation.

The possibility of such an unmediated, transcendental experience of being, which easily transcends linguistic structures to alter them, seems at odds with the relational (post-)ontology of Deleuze and Luhmann as developed in the previous chapter (Clisby 2015; Thiele 2016; Moeller 2012; Luhmann 2002), and a post-structuralist project which seeks to overcome ontological and subjective primacy as the driving forces for (political) action and creativity in general. However, it is important to stress that both Virilio and Agamben provide important insights into the political productivity of time which this chapter will connect to, the way in which time is both itself conditioned by socio-economic structures and at the same time shapes the possibility for political action and decision. Beyond this, their critical unpacking of contemporary political conditions offers a basis and blueprint for the analysis of contemporary politics as self-producing in sense which will be undertaken in chapter 5 of this dissertation and which will echo some of Virilio's and Agamben's findings, particularly on the necessity of a political extension of time and auto-logical, relational production.

Beyond historical structuration, both Virilio and Agamben highlight the role of an extended, evental present in unfolding this political productivity. But in both of their theories, the political potentiality of time is always linear and mediated. It only unfolds as already directed and thus essentially passive, either by certain epistemic or technological structures or through an instant of ontological revelation which it can only receive and channel. The productivity of time ultimately originates from an outside which is in some form *a priori* to time itself. Against this background, I will now turn to Deleuze and Luhmann in order to understand time as politically productive in itself. They theorise time as a relational mechanism to which all observations in sense are immanent, and

which explicitly includes the philosophy of time amongst the conditions and products of this temporal-social constitution. Relational time is self-grounding because it hides or "deparadoxifies" its paradoxical lack of origin through displacement in time (Teubner 2001: 16-18). Its ungrounded relations operate through structural contraction and evental extension. They are always conditioned by their own path-dependencies which are intertwined with political and economic territories of sense. But, as the makers of the history which grounds these spatial surfaces, it will be shown that their continuous self-grounding requires an evental openness which is genuine, and entails the potential to open new territories in sense.

3.2 Deleuze's theory of time

3.2.1 The circle of time: contracted present and conditioned past

Deleuze's theory of time for once explicitly sides with Kant's in removing time from the stable, passive, representational order of succession which characterised its status in ancient and pre-Enlightenment philosophy. Deleuze identifies time as the form of interiority which actively produces perceptions - and thus conditions the making of sense (Moulard 2002: 328). But he proceeds to remove time from a second joint – Kant's re-stabilisation of subjective time as the location of sense-making through the identification of time as an *a priori* transcendental intuition (Voss 2013: 195; Somers-Hall 2011: 58-63). Beyond Kant, Deleuze shows that productive time is not readily accessible through the transcendental-psychological intuition of the subject. Instead, time is always synthetic. It must always be made through extensive becoming and evental contraction. So what then is Deleuze's philosophy of time? Throughout his work, Deleuze develops not one, but three different iterations of a theory of time in relative isolation from each other. In *Difference and Repetition*, time is the product of three syntheses while time comes into being through the intersection of the durational lines of *Chronos* and *Aion* in *The Logic of Sense*. Finally, the crystallised time-image is contrasted with the movement image in the two *Cinema* volumes.

Within secondary literature, I suggest that there are two dominant ways of dealing with the heterogeneity of Deleuze's theory of time. Time is on the one hand explored as creative force and motor of becoming beyond representation. Here, the focus lies on the influence of Bergson on Deleuze's conceptualisation of time, which becomes evident

especially in *Cinema 2,* and which is then linked back to the second and third synthesis of time in *Difference and Repetition* to emphasise the productivity of time as a holistic totality (Angelucci 2014; Deamer 2011; Moulard 2002; Grosz 2004). A second reading of Deleuze's time focuses on its synthetic quality in its different iterations, which Deleuze draws out in *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* (Voss 2013; Williams 2011; Widder 2008). This dissertation mainly follows the second approach in terms of its analytical focus, but does not assume a strong opposition to Deleuze's cinematic discussion of the crystalline time-image.[50]

As suggested by James Williams (2011: 145-150), I argue that the three syntheses of *Difference and Repetition* can be read as complementary to the connection of *Chronos* and *Aion* in *The Logic of Sense.* They describe the same course of temporal production but focus on opposite ends - and are situated on different levels of argumentation. I propose to understand Deleuze's more extensive, theoretically more thorough unpacking of time in *Difference and Repetition* as developing a philosophy of time. It is a theory of how time makes time. In Deleuze's philosophy of time, "time becomes prior to thought and existence …Both thought and existence are suspended by the milieu of time, a milieu of which their relation depends, and in relation to which their relation is undetermined" (Coluciello Barber 2014: 65). On the contrary, the synthesis of time developed in *The Logic of Sense* is designed to show time in its operationality, instituting sense as the quasi-ground for epistemic and ultimately social relations produced through the evental contraction between two durational extensions. Here, Deleuze shows how the self-grounding time of *Difference and Repetition* becomes effective to condition the synthesis of sense which was unpacked in chapter 2.

Beginning with the time of *Difference and Repetition,* Deleuze identifies his first synthesis of time with reference to Hume as the formation of habit. The habit he has in mind here is however quite different from the memorised, automated activity which we usually understand as habit. Here, to use one of his famous examples, Deleuze (1994: 265) is not talking about learning how to swim. The habit of the first temporal synthesis is a habit of the mind, a cognitive habit. Produced "through contemplating" (ibid., 73), it generates the conditions for thought. The first synthesis of habit takes place as the contraction of a living present which involves a reduction of multiplicity. "[A]scribing an

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[50] On the contrary, James Williams brackets the *Cinema* books in his discussion of Deleuze's time due to the emphasis they place on the representational category of cinematic images which, for Williams, makes for a considerably more "uniform and traditional" (Williams 2011: 160) depiction of time compared to Deleuze's other works and does not show how time must be made within time itself (Shores 2014: 200).

arrow to time" (Williams 2011: 28), the first synthesis establishes past and future through, and as secondary to, the present serialisation of distinct perceptions. Thus, the first synthesis creates the conditions which allow the mind to recognise the distinct elements of the sequence AB AB AB as serial repetition, to project their connection into the future – and therefore, to think in terms of sameness and difference, change and continuity (Deleuze 1994: 72). Past and future, as a particular serial connection, are made in the contraction of the present and change simultaneously with it. Deleuze's time is therefore a time in which not only the future, but also the past – as we can think of it – unfolds in relations from a particular lived present.

> Your incautious slip does not change the outcomes of the past but the past itself, which has no existence independent of its contraction in the present. The slip does not set off a causal chain. It contracts all of the possible chains in the future in a different way. (Williams 2011: 10)

The relational serialisation of past and future is external to the terms it serialises – and to the mind in which this serialisation is performed. While time is thus subjective, it is the time of a passive subjectivity which relies on the temporal serialisation of habit in order to develop specific structures of thought – to think – in the presence of incomprehensible, differential multiplicity. The temporal contraction of "[h]abit draws something new from repetition - namely, difference (in the first instance understood as generality)" (Deleuze 1994: 73). I argue that this passivity sets Deleuze's first synthesis of the present apart from a different, but with regard to the present strikingly similar, theory of time which seems to underlie Deleuze's argumentation as both a line of orientation and a point of contrast: Husserl's phenomenological time-consciousness (Shores 2014: 199). The sparseness of explicit references which could reveal any indebtedness of Deleuze to Husserl certainly reflects Deleuze's general scepticism towards the subject-centred phenomenology of Husserl. However, with regard to the concept of time, I argue that there are some important parallels between Deleuze and Husserl which need to be explored to show what Deleuze's theory of time contributes beyond a Husserlian phenomenology of time.

Against theories which assume an externally given linearity of time, Husserl's phenomenological analysis of time reveals temporal linearity as the secondary product of an "intuition of an extent of time [which] occurs in a now, in one time-point" (Husserl 1991: 20). This living present is the generative, operational heart of the totality of time as it presents itself within human consciousness. As in Deleuze, the intuition of the living present makes time, both with regard to the future and the past. As retention of a "primal

impression" (ibid. 31), previously perceived objects can be recalled here to provide points of contact for serial connections before they fade into the past relative to their constitutive time-point (Finlayson 1975: 9-10). In the same way that this retention allows the present time-consciousness to retrieve a succession of past events, it constitutes itself as durational unity towards the future through a protention which generates expectations on the basis of the retained past within the living present.

Retention and protention are not identical with the multiplicity of perceptions in the living present but must be understood as selective representations of the former. Importantly, however, this does not mean that Husserl views them as merely secondary, dependent qualities. Correcting what he identifies to be a mistake in Hume, Husserl insists that retention and protention are not just "a poor imitation of a perception or a mere weak echo of it" (2001: 613). Rather, they institute "a new fundamental type of consciousness" (ibid.) which makes subjective understanding possible in the first place. While immanent time is made through a productive intuition in the living present, this present production always depends on the possibility of retention and protention, the possibility to situate this present between a past which makes it pass, and a corresponding future which follows (Murphy 1980: 110-111). In this sense, Deleuze's theory of self-producing time where, as we will see, present and past reciprocally condition each other seems at least as much indebted to Husserl as it is to Hume. Husserl illustrates the way in which his time-consciousness operates with the example of what happens when we hear a melody:

> Let us take the example of a melody or of a cohesive part of a melody. The matter seems very simple at first: we hear the melody, that is, we perceive it, for hearing is indeed perceiving. However, the first tone sounds, then comes the second tone, then the third, and so on. Must we not say: When the second tone sounds, I hear it, but I no longer hear the first tone, etc.? In truth, then, I do not hear the melody but only the single present tone. That the elapsed part of the melody is something objective for me, I owe - or so one will be inclined to say - to memory; and that I do not presuppose, with the appearance of the currently intended tone, that this is all, I owe to anticipatory expectation. (Husserl 1991: 24-25)

Like Deleuze's first synthesis, Husserl's phenomenological time reveals how memory and expectation are immanent to a living present of perception which conditions thought. Within the living present, both past and future are created as relations within time, detached from any external grounding, as the necessary condition to make sense of the world (Husserl 1991: 56-58; Nassehi 2008: 69-70). The central emphasis which Deleuze, Husserl and – as I will show - Luhmann place on the present as the productive, but not ontologically anchored realm of temporal constitution will be important to connect their

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theories of time. But for now, two central points of divergence remain between Husserl and Deleuze. While Deleuze's synthesis of the present is passive, neither controlled by, nor readily accessible for, the mind subject to it, retention and protention are tools of active, intentional perception in Husserl. The intentional time-consciousness is able to produce an "adequate perception of the temporal object" (Husserl 1991: 40) in the living present which is different from the re-presentation of past and present in memory and expectation.

Husserl thereby firstly encloses time in the present consciousness as the ultimate horizon of an actively, consciously generated past and future which take the form of retention and protention. By contrast, Deleuze's relational time precedes the subjective thought it conditions as the passive synthesis of habit. It thereby opens the possibility to understand the connective productivity of time for subjective perception explored by Husserl while not ignoring the wider social-structural situatedness of this perception as analysed by Virilio and Agamben. Secondly, Husserl seems to endow his purposive "intuition of an extent of time" in the living present with the absolute validity of a transcendental *a priori* distinct from its representations to which these are always secondary (Wood 2001: 81-90). What Derrida refers to as the "uneasiness" (1973: 67) which follows is the incongruence between Husserl's Kantian conceptualisation of the living present and his insistence that present perception and past-future series condition each other reciprocally – as in the example of listening to a melody.[51]

Turning back to Deleuze, his theory of the contraction of the present which produces past and future has left us with a paradox concerning the status of the past. In so far that it is generated in the present synthesis of habit, it is secondary to the present. But, at the same time, the past is generated as that which precedes the present and causes it to pass. Deleuze (1994: 80) resolves this paradox with reference to Husserl's distinction between retention as the past which is retained within present representation and reproduction as the underlying movement of the memory which singles out the particular past to be represented.

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[51] It should be mentioned here that, within secondary readings of Husserl's complex and not always consistent theory of time, this ambiguity is sometimes resolved in favour of a relational understanding of time in Husserl which places him even closer towards the theory of time developed through Deleuze and Luhmann here (Nassehi 2008; Wood 2001). In this sense, Derrida's critique of Husserl's failure to establish a pre-linguistic understanding of time which is at the same time not metaphysical might be misguided (Wood 2001: 107-133). Understood in the sense of a self-grounding, relational theory of time, Husserl's temporal flux would always both precede and exceed its linguistic confinement – similar to his sense discussed in chapter 2.

> This is the paradox of the present: to constitute time while passing in the time constituted. We cannot avoid the necessary conclusion - *that there must be another time in which the first synthesis of time can occur.* (Deleuze 1994: 79)

Deleuze thus resolves the paradox of the past by theorising a synthesis of the past which is two-fold. On the one hand, there is the pure past which Deleuze develops with reference to Henri Bergson's theory of pure memory. As the "time in which the first synthesis of time can occur", the pure past unfolds the paradox of the contemporaneity of present and past through a second paradox. If each past is simultaneous with its former present, then every new present must have all of the past as its coexisting counterpart (Deleuze 1994: 81). In this sense, Deleuze argues that a pure past is the ground or "the form of interiority" (ibid., 82) to which all presents are immanent as its most contracted forms (ibid., 98-99). But each present produced through the contraction of the first synthesis is always generated as about to pass. The past which is produced simultaneously as preceding instant which makes it pass however does not perish together with its present. On the contrary, "the past is the form by which a former present remains visible" (Lampert 2006: 39).

It is retained in the pure past as inter-subjective memory of the temporal relations which change with each new synthesis of the present, and always exceed the selective connections which are represented as the past in accordance with each particular synthesised present. In this sense, Deleuze's pure past is self-constitutive. Growing from the inside, it "splits itself into present and past, present that passes and past which is preserved" (Deleuze 1994: 80). Bergson develops this theory of a pure memory which is a-psychological, intersubjective and anti-anthropocentric in order to "correct […] the element of exaggeration in our conclusion" (1991: 65) which phenomenology falls victim to when instituting subjective perception as the sole source of time. This pure memory, the unity of all pasts, is fundamentally non-representational: "any attempt to derive pure memory from an operation of the brain should reveal on analysis a radical illusion" (ibid., 73). This is the case not because pure memory precedes or escapes representation, but because its intense multiplicity of temporal connections between bodies, matter and signs exceeds all representation (ibid., 50-61).

The past of pure memory can function as the location of the first synthesis of habit because it charges the flows of sensations, perceptions and signs which are temporalised through the ordering contraction it performs. In this sense, it would be inaccurate to understand the passivity of the pure past's synthesis as highlighting its secondary, inactive

quality. The pure past rather has a virtual quality. In Deleuze, it is not *a priori* in a transcendental sense, since it does not precede the relations of its becoming-active, but it is itself produced and changed through the contractions of present habit and active memory. However, at the same time, it provides these relational syntheses with a multiplicity of flows to synthesise. As Jay Lampert pointedly puts it, "[t]he metaphor of the past as a storehouse is no longer adequate (except for the tale of the department store whose mannequins come alive at night)" (2006: 50). The pure past is a productive resource which can never be accessed in its totality but contains a multiplicity of alternative historical lineages which can be opened-up and actualised through the temporal rupture which Deleuze's third synthesis introduces to the logic of time. This is the meaning of Deleuze's crystal of time. It does not project a particular future. Instead, its sheets, lines and edges provide multiple points of contact for future becoming (Al-Saji 2004: 204-205).

Now that the pure past has been established as what makes the present pass and what conditions the synthesis of habit, what is the past which is produced in the second synthesis? We have seen that Bergson's pure past conditions the activity of thought by allowing it to form habits, but it can never itself become grasped by and represented within a present habit of thought. For this reason, Deleuze's passive synthesis of the pure past needs to be accompanied by an active synthesis of memory. Instead of producing a totality of coexisting pasts, it constructs a succession in which each past is the form in which the former present is preserved as representation (Lampert 2006: 20-22; Deleuze 1994: 80-83). The past produced through the active synthesis of memory is thus Deleuze's version of Husserl's retention, a limited, selective past in line with a particular present of perception or action. While this active memory is clearly conditioned by the pure past, the pure past itself should importantly not be understood as foundational.

While Deleuze (1994: 79) refers to pure past as the "ground" of time when introducing his three syntheses, he later specifies that it is simply "a substantial temporal element (the Past which was never present) playing the role of ground" (ibid., 82). The pure past is only "playing the role of ground" because the first synthesis of habit is "truly the foundation of time" (ibid., 79). While the pure past conditions the synthesis of habit, the pure past at the same time only comes into existence through the first synthesis of the present. As it becomes apparent now, the paradox of contemporaneous, co-existent past and present has not actually been resolved. Neither the first nor the second synthesis of

time can be understood as primary, grounding/foundational or, on their own, sufficient for Deleuze. Instead, the

> second synthesis of time points beyond itself in the direction of a third which denounces the illusion
> of the in-itself as still a correlate of representation. The in-itself of the past and the repetition in
> reminiscence constitute a kind of 'effect', like an optical effect, or rather the erotic effect of memory
> itself. (Deleuze 1994: 88)

3.2.2   The displacement of the circle: the eternal return as evental synthesis of the future

In his third synthesis of time, Deleuze turns to Nietzsche's eternal return or recurrence to theorise temporal constitution in a way which does not erase, but keeps at bay the paradox of past and present by ensuring their continuous separation. It is the third synthesis of the eternal return which stabilises the chronological succession of past and present – on the level of representation – and allows the circular, reciprocal grounding of present and past to move on, and make time. Beginning with the living present which forms habit in Hume and then turning to Bergson's pure memory as durational past, Deleuze shows how each time is, on its own, insufficient to understand the ungrounded, self-grounding nature of contracted time until they are brought into contact with Nietzsche's eternal return in the third synthesis. Together, the three syntheses form Deleuze's theory of repetition. While difference "in itself" is the direct source of rupture and creation for Deleuze, repetition in time establishes the possibilities of its onto-epistemological integration and use – to make sense.

Deleuze's theory of differentiation in sense is therefore also always a theory of open structuration through serialisation in time which avoids "claiming that instants either somehow imply one another or are somehow contained in a larger entity that they are a subset of" (Williams 2011: 24). The present provides the content for repetition on the ground of the past. But the third synthesis of the future guides the selective-serialising connection between present and past (ibid., 95-96). The eternal return is the "divine game" of a "child-player". Following no pre-established logic or pattern, it is a constant temporal displacement which re-introduces pure difference as chance and openness into the otherwise "too well centred natural or physical circle" of time (Deleuze 1994: 115).

> [Nietzsche] understood the synthesis of forces and thus found the reproduction of diversity at the
> heart of synthesis. He established the principle of synthesis, the will to power, and determined this

as the differential and genetic element of forces which directly confront one another. (Deleuze 2006b: 52)

It concerns […] excessive systems which link the different with the different, the multiple with the multiple, the fortuitous with the fortuitous, in a complex of affirmations always coextensive with the questions posed and the decisions taken. (Deleuze 1994: 115)[52]

Deleuze thus reads Nietzsche's eternal return not as an identical repetition, as a return of the same, but rather as a mechanism of continuous temporal rupture, a cut, which reintroduces action and movement to time (Deleuze 2006b: 25). What returns to the process of temporal constitution in the eternal return is difference itself. Through distorting and re-opening the serial connections of past-future established in a particular present, the eternal return allows the foundation of the present and the ground of the past to condition each other in Deleuze. The eternal return charges the continuous movement of time as "eternally decentred circle" (Deleuze 1994: 115) and therefore creates the conditions for both the reproduction of the same and the actualisation of difference (ibid., 117-120). But how does the eternal return re-introduce difference? In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* Nietzsche pairs the eternal return with a second concept of time which is not an eternal flow detached from the happenings of the social world, but thoroughly practical.

It is again *Kairos,* the right time, which both Virilio and Agamben had already employed to theorise the moment in which productive time can realise its transformative potential. In Nietzsche, the right time is always particular to a philosophical, political or social order (Nietzsche 1999: 18-23; 33-34; 93-110; 2002: 168). In a Deleuzian sense, it is "right" for, and can make difference return to, a particular plane of immanence, or sense. The right time functions as the joint of a specific order of sense, but it is also the point where this order can be changed: after Zarathustra's rupture of time, the world will be different (Nietzsche 2002: 167-169). What happens in the right time is the evental actualisation of the will to power as "the genealogical element of force" (Deleuze 2006b: 52). Following Deleuze, Nietzsche's right time does not create events, but rather "interprets" them in so far as it channels the actualisation of a particular – affirmative or negative – force. While, for Agamben, *Kairos* conditions the revelation of the messianic event, it is here a time of

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[52] Deleuze's use of the concept of system is peculiar here. The systems he refers to are the mathematical systems of Richard Dedekind who developed the idea of the 'cut' which Deleuze employs for his third synthesis of time. The cut allows Dedekind to produce a system of numbers which is completely detached from empirical relations – it is self-grounding. Cutting between the distinct elements of a series of real numbers, it connects these and thereby grounds the continuity of the series in a purely arithmetic-logical way (Voss 2013: 199-202).

selective production which gives meaning to the event of time itself (ibid., 55-56) in the momentary rupture which is the will to power as read by Deleuze (ibid., 53).

The right time situates the evental actualisation of forces and thereby complements Nietzsche's thought of the eternal return (Stegmaier 1987: 225-226). Within Deleuze's theory of time, this channelling of rupturing or reproductive, affirmative or negative forces introduces a cut to the circle of time and makes the paradoxical self-grounding of temporal relations possible through "displacement" (Deleuze 1994: 124). Importantly, however, the genealogical will to power which becomes active in the eternal return does not derive its chronogenetic potential from an ontological revelation outside of the existing, representational order of time, as it is the case for Agamben's messianic time. Its productive potentiality is not the potentiality of a creation *ex nihilo*, but rather the creativity of a relational, selective actualisation emergent from within the multiplicity of differential temporal relations which are changed, displaced through this process. Past and future change simultaneously in the productive present which is the evental moment of the eternal return (Williams 2008: 125-129).

For this reason, the third synthesis of the future is always connected to and charged by the pure past and has the potential to realise a different history from it. "[W]hat returns is …the disequilibrium of forces relating through an internal quantitative difference [of virtual memory] that includes both power and resistance" (Widder 2003: 265). I will not go into more detail regarding the character and effect of the event of the right time here, which will be further unpacked in chapter 4. However, its importance for the genesis of a time which can be thought – and made sense of – can be illustrated even further with reference to Deleuze's theory of time in *The Logic of Sense*. While *Difference and Repetition* explores how a Nietzschean evental becoming makes time itself function, *The Logic of Sense* approaches temporal constitution from the other side – the side of its operational social function. It reveals how a relationally self-productive time, in the above sense, can ground the production of actualities in sense. It is suggested that Deleuze's discussion of time is here focused on how the event produces resonance between the two mutually exclusive durational series of *Chronos* and *Aion* to allow for connections on the surface of sense (Williams 2011: 138).

The first duration is the living present of *Chronos* which "measures the action of bodies as causes" (Deleuze 1990a: 61). As the limited, directional time which passes, it is the time of social life, the time of actual occurrences and action where ordering through causal relationships can take place (Williams 2008: 4). While *Chronos* is similar to the

living present of the first synthesis in so far as it is the limited, passing time of present activity – it is however not contracted. Associated with the depth of materiality, *Chronos* is intense, but instable and unrepresentable, and therefore unsuitable to establish relations of sense on its own. In order for *Chronos* to be transformed into the serialised time which conditions the habit of thought, it must connect and expose itself to the eternal present of the *Aion*. A "labyrinth made of the single straight line which is invisible and everlasting" (Deleuze 1990a: 63), the *Aion* contains a differential multiplicity of presents subdivided into futures and pasts (Deleuze 1990a: 78).

Leibniz's incompossible worlds of sense are all present in their temporal conditions on the neutral line of the *Aion*, all equal in their chances of connective actualisation (Coluciello Barber 2014: 59-65). Referenced as the time of Heraclitus in Deleuze's *Nietzsche*, it seems appropriate to establish a close connection between the *Aion* and the eternal return as described in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *Difference and Repetition*. Again, Deleuze emphasizes the metaphor of the game here:

> *aeon* (time), says Heraclitus, is a child who plays, plays at draughts. (Deleuze 2006b: 24).

> The Aion is the ideal player of the game; it is an infused and ramified chance. It is the unique cast from which all throws are qualitatively distinguished. It plays or is played on at least two tables, or at the border of two tables. There, it traces its straight and bisecting line. It gathers together and distributes over its entire length the singularities corresponding to both. (Deleuze 2006b: 64)

The closed, chaotic time of *Chronos* intertwined with the materiality of a particular world and the neutral line of the *Aion*, comprised of a multiplicity of separate past-future connections to condition all possible worlds, mutually exclude each other. But the event forces an intersection between both presents. It establishes relations of quasi-causality – a contingent causality secondary to this connection in time – by providing the past-future of the *Aion* with matter to serialise, and the physical mixtures of bodies and matter with a past and a future to make them representable in the habit of thought.

The event of connection allows for any outcome between the continuation of existing temporal series and the complete reorganisation of the way time is ordered in the living present (Williams 2008: 123-124). Synthesised, both forms of time constitute the surface of sense where habit (of thought), representation and politics are situated and take place – are serialised into relationships between "quasi-causes" (Deleuze 1990a: 6) and the effects attributed to them in temporalised sense. But what is important here is that the event which creates resonance between *Chronos* and *Aion* is, in *The Logic of Sense*, always a sense-event. The synthesis of time coincides with the synthesis of sense

unpacked in chapter 2. The singular point, the dark precursor which resides in the excessive nature of sense and marks its inherent doubling with non-sense, incites the event of synthesis between both realms of time (Deleuze 1990a: 175-176).

On the one hand, we can now see that the eternal return which follows the event is in fact two-fold. On the level of bodies and matter, within the order of *Chronos,* it opens a "chaosmos" (ibid.) to re-organise their relations. But on the level of the *Aion,* the event perpetuates the displacement of time which charges Deleuze's self-producing, "eternally decentred circle" of time. It is the eternal return of the evental rupture itself in which "[n]othing 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 1990a: 176). On the other hand, this suggests that Deleuze's potentially transformative evental moment does not only emerge from within the order of time which it re-charges, but also from within the logic of sense which it conditions.

3.3 Luhmann's temporal autopoiesis: self-implication, orientation, necessity

So far, Deleuze's theory of time has helped to unpack the present which Virilio and Agamben theorise as conditioning socio-political reality and the scope of action and change in the former as the productive temporality within a self-producing, self-extending order of time where present and past condition each other. Temporal productivity is here not determined by epistemic or technological structures, but the order of time itself conditions the possibility for novelty, difference and change in thought and action. It is within the eternal return that repetition plays out as either identical or divergent reproduction. However, I argue that two ambiguities remain within Deleuze's theory of time. Firstly, the status of the event and its emergence in time remains unclear. The continuous becoming of ungrounded, synthetic time operates through the event as cut and instant of displacement. The event is thus the necessary condition for the continuous making of time as the condition for the individual and social making of sense.

Secondly, the timely political analyses of Virilio and especially Agamben have shown how the evental reproduction of a particular order of time can become a political necessity. Deleuze's writing on the eternal return as unfolding the right time of the event does not explicitly consider evental emergence as response to a metaphysical, cognitive or socio-political necessity. In *Nietzsche and Philosophy,* Deleuze strongly emphasises

the openness and rupturing potential of affirmative forces within the eternal return. Against the background of his work as a whole, Deleuze seems closest to a normative theory with concrete ethical implications here, as developed amongst others in Michael Hardt's (1993) and Rosi Braidotti's (2013) versions of a Deleuzian affirmative philosophy. Here, the event becomes something like an ethical imperative – it demands creative actualisation against the passivity of ressentiment which gears a socio-political order towards identical reproduction.

Reading the eternal return of difference as an ethical demand is certainly possible, especially if – as both Hardt and Braidotti do – it is interpreted as closely connected to Deleuze's (1992a) Spinoza where becoming takes place through the joyful affirmation of external affects. However, I believe that such an affirmative understanding of evental openness as ethical imperative involves a certain risk. It neglects the fact that the right time of the event does not emerge from a free potentiality of being in Deleuze, as it does in Agamben. Its potentiality is an opening to the multiplicity of past-future relations available in the pure past. These exceed and contain alternatives to, but are not independent from already actualised timelines, and can only become event on the level of sense – once it has come into contact, even if this contact is of the nature of rupturing opposition – with existing relations of sense. As shown above, the evental conflation of temporal- and sense-series in *The Logic of Sense* opens the possibility to think epistemic or socio-political conditions of evental emergence which are not completely determining, but potentially limiting, as the necessary underside to evental openness in Deleuze.

I argue that the theories of evental affirmation lack a critical examination of this underside – of the constitutive context of evental openness, the points which connect it to existing historical lineages in sense to the effect that affirmation can always also strengthen these, and the relations of power they ground. As a consequence, a Deleuzian political theory of time which is able to understand how a particular, temporally conditioned order of sense shapes the political present without falling back to the simplifying structural determinisms of Virilio and Agamben must be able to account not only for the indeterminate quality of evental emergence, but also for its conditionedness. While such a critical exploration of the conditionedness of evental emergence opens up as a possibility in Deleuze's theorisation of time because it is closely related to always-already conditioned sense in *The Logic of Sense*, it is not actually developed by Deleuze.

In addition, a certain ambiguity remains in Deleuze's theory of time regarding the unit of the temporal synthesis of the habit of thought, the level on which – or entity in which – it

takes place. Is it subjective consciousness, as in Kant, Hume and Husserl? If so, how can Deleuze on his part escape the phenomenological danger to totalise and close off the subject as the horizon of time, making it impossible to account for the synchronicity and grounding functionality of time in social relations of sense? Deleuze's reference to the material constitution of Bergson's pure memory in *Difference and Repetition*, the production of *Chronos* in the depth of bodies and their mixture, as well as the connection between the making of time and the synthesis of the series of signs and objects in *The Logic of Sense* suggest that his theory of time exceeds the domain of subjective consciousness.

Time seems to condition the possibility of subjective thought while itself being intrinsically connected to the relations of matter, signs and social life.[53] In order to resolve these ambiguities and explore how the emergence of evental openness, which makes time function and conditions the connection of sense relations, can itself be understood as conditioned, I will now turn to Niklas Luhmann's theory of time. While certainly philosophically less developed, I argue that it unpacks temporal constitution as paradoxically self-grounding, but more importantly as deparadoxifying with regard to its function in autopoietic sense systems. Against the background of this functional role of time, it will be possible to understand the event as emergent in a way which is not completely free, but rather forms part of this systemically developed mechanism of deparadoxification.

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[53] While Deleuze's relational theory of time is read in this sense within the context of this dissertation, it is not quite clear that this is how Deleuze himself situates his relations of time. When he introduces the three syntheses of time in the context of his theory of difference and repetition, he identifies the repetition (of time) as the "role of the imagination, or the mind which contemplates in its multiple and fragmented states" (Deleuze 1994: 76). In the following he repeatedly refers back to the mind as the unit of his philosophical investigation (ibid., 84; 97; 133). In *The Logic of Sense,* Deleuze (1990a: 186-198) retraces his investigation of the dark precursor which incites the syntheses of time and sense to the Lacanian partial object and the way it conditions thought. Here, time appears to be explored as the generative location of subjectivity situated within the cognitive realm of the mind and its affects (Lampert 2006: 14-15). However, in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987)*,* Deleuze and Guattari develop a theory of history as the relationship between virtual-synchronous and social-chronologised dates. The latter are always incorporated in machinic assemblages, since abstract machines reproduce themselves through dating, the making of their own history. Deleuze and Guattari's theory of dates in this sense connects time to socio-political conditions. As Jay Lampert points out, "Deleuze and Guattari do not want to say tout court that any event whatever can occur at any time in history" (2006: 10). So why do I not consider Deleuze and Guattari's thought as a viable alternative to Luhmann for the purpose of "politicising" the conditions of evental emergence in Deleuze? Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 86-117), I argue, produce a theory of history, of the necessity and the possibility of reorganising its arborescent structure. What they explore are the conditions for evental rupture – the conditions for a political seizing of the event – not for its emergence in time. They produce a political theory of the evental moment distinct from Deleuze's philosophy of time (Lampert 2006: 83-94). But in order to understand the continuous emergence of evental openness within the self-producing relations of time, and within their social situatedness, I will prioritise Luhmann's much more refined theory of time which seamlessly fits with the framework of Deleuze's philosophy of time to which it is in many ways analogous.

Luhmann's theory of time will be developed through the theoretical influences of Husserl and Nietzsche which Luhmann has in common with Deleuze. Luhmann is neither interested in the origin of time – nor does he believe that it is possible to retrace such a point of origin theoretically. As a philosophical concept, temporality is the contingent, functional consequence of cognitive and communicative sense relations which autopoietically close themselves off in the way they produce observations of themselves as well as of the world which surrounds them (Luhmann 2009c: 144). "In other words, time is the construct of the observer as system" (Tang 2013: 42). While time - as we perceive it - is thus an observational form relative to the system which produces it, it nevertheless fulfils a particular functional requirement which is common to all autopoietic systems. As shown in chapter 1, systemic relations produce themselves against unprocessable complexity as their constitutive outside by constantly reproducing their internal relations. They do so in the form of a continuous differentiation which responds to new events through the selective relational continuation in sense. Under the conditions of high complexity, the precarious connectivity of systemic relations presents itself as a problem of selection in time. (Luhmann 1995: 42-45)

> As soon as systems close themselves off from their environment through differentiation, they are confronted with the problem of time. This firstly means a deferral of the processes which maintain differentiation to a succession. This is the case since not all relationships between system and environment can take the form of momentous point-to-point correlations. For complex systems, the preservation of differentiation rather necessitates detours which take time. They react to environmental events [events attributed to the environment] partly not at all, partly belated, partly anticipatory – and only to a small extent immediately. (Luhmann 1971a: 9)

Thus, every system must adapt itself to time "in whatever operatively graspable form this requirement takes" (Luhmann 1995: 41). For both social and psychic systems, time must ensure continuation in sense. But more specifically, it must provide the ground for the oscillation between change and duration for a particular system in a way which ensures a basic synchronicity with the relations of other sense systems which it is coupled with in multiple ways. In *Social Systems,* Luhmann begins his discussion of time by insisting that "[e]very systems theory that claims to relate to reality must begin with the fact that nothing remains as it is. There is change" (1995: 41). On the other hand, Luhmann argues with reference not only to Husserl, but also to Bergson that the reflective experience of time must be based on a – cognitive or social - experience of duration which defies this constant change. The necessity to be able to perceive both change and duration as well as their relation to each other to make sense of social reality gives rise to the constitution of

an "objective" time. Spanning cognitive as well as social relations, this order of time is able to ground and orient social life within the temporal continuum it institutes (Luhmann 1971a: 9).

The production of irreversibility as "the arrow of time" which fulfils this necessity for orientation takes place in a living present where connectivity is precarious (Stegmeier 2016: 104-106). More explicitly than Deleuze, Luhmann conceptualises his multi-layered, productive present on the model of Husserl's phenomenological time-consciousness – albeit with a system-theoretic, post-anthropocentric twist. For both Luhmann and Husserl, time is fundamentally operative. It is the functional product of a closed-off entity, established as the domain in which relations of sense (or rather perception in Husserl) can be established. Luhmann's self-reference in time is equivalent to Husserl's retention: a present connection happens on the basis of nothing but the self-produced path-dependency unfolded by a former present which continues to be effective. But here, Luhmann dissolves the monopoly which subjective consciousness holds for closed-off, perspectivist temporal constitution. As a mechanism to produce connectivity and shared orientation, the relations of time must be situated between social and consciousness systems and transcend their boundaries (Nassehi 2008: 191-195).

Time, like sense, is immanent in Luhmann. But rather than being a form of interiority, as it is the case for Husserl, it is a form of exteriority, the condition for structural coupling, which allows this interiority to persist, and make sense of itself as well as its environment.[54] The way time is conceptualised by Luhmann already suggests how his theory resolves the ambiguity regarding the unit of temporal synthesis in Deleuze: temporal relations connect the thinking mind to the world it thinks, rather than allowing for its closure towards the latter, as in Kant and Husserl. Both the psychic consciousness system and the social sense relations it is situated in need time to function. The construction of time as the shared ground for observation in sense takes place in response to a shared necessity – the necessity for orientation. Like the formation of habit which

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[54] Psychic systems participate in this socially constituted time because they are connected to social relations in a relationship of reciprocal constitution which Luhmann calls structural coupling (Luhmann 1998a: 100-103). Structural coupling is the underside of autopoietic closure as the way in which closed systems perceive and manage the complexity of their surrounding – by excluding it as the functional responsibility of other systems. A particular psychic system in this sense does not worry about the continuation of its bodily functions, about what happens with the money stored in her bank account or about how her children best learn structured writing and calculation because other systems take care of these functions. The complexity of structurally coupled systems cannot be accessed, but their output can be accessed – understood – on the condition of their shared temporality. Structurally coupled autopoietic systems remain environment to each other and are therefore contemporaneous, because the perceived environment is always constituted together with the system through one and the same process of introversive differentiation (Nassehi 2008: 170-175).

draws repetition from difference in Deleuze, social relations need particular forms of temporal ordering which reduce complexity to ensure connectivity. Most fundamental is here the adoption of temporal irreversibility, which allows autopoietic systems to establish chronological structures that serialise events in time (Luhmann 1995: 47). Irreversibility translates the constitutive oscillation which takes place between openness towards complexity and reproductive closure at the limit of the systemic relations into autopoiesis in time.

As in Deleuze, time is not per se chronological for Luhmann, it is made chronological within a particular present. But in Luhmann, this chronological ordering takes place as the direct functional response to the problem of selection and complexity within an autopoietic entity. Without a past and future consolidated through temporal synthesis, Luhmann argues that the present could not fulfil its function to renew social relations – it would pass and nothing would follow (Luhmann 1995: 289; Luhmann 1971: 10-12). In Luhmann, the consolidated time of the social system is spanned between temporalised sense relations and events as the elements which these relations connect to in order to achieve autopoiesis. Through the temporalisation of sense in a constantly fleeting present, complexity itself is temporalised – it emerges within the system as evental rupture in time, but in such a way that the connective enfolding of complexity-events in existing relations of sense can overcome it (Luhmann 1995: 303-311). Luhmann notes on the relationship between the two ends of the temporal continuum that

> the concept of structure complements the conceptualization of elements as events. It indicates a condition of possibility for basal self-reference and the system's self-referential reproduction. Therefore, structure can – as the verb 'complement' indicates – never be conceived as a sum or mere collection of elements. The concept of structure indicates a level of order in reality different from the concept of event. (1995: 289)

For Luhmann, there is thus no essential difference between temporally structured sense-relation and the connective event in time (Tang 2013: 48-49). Temporal relation and event are merely located on different "levels of order" within a social-communicative reality that is itself temporal. In relation to the present event which passes, the passed present becomes part of a temporal lineage which provides orientation for the future and can guide the continuous making of sense. The temporal order which emerges thus functions through perpetual, paradoxical self-displacement in time in a way which is analogous to the eternal return in Deleuze (Luhmann 2009c: 144). Again, we can see that Luhmann goes beyond Husserl and moves very close to Deleuze here. He does not endow the

systemic present with an *a priori* status that grounds sense-making and resolves its tautological circularity. On the contrary, he explicitly embraces the paradox of temporal self-constitution in a theoretical gesture which highlights both the contingency and the cognitive and social necessity of a temporal structuration of sense.

I believe that it is useful to link the way Luhmann deals with the paradox of temporal self-implication back to Nietzsche, who proceeds similarly. In his recent book *Orientierung im Nihilismus – Luhmann meets Nietzsche* (2016), Werner Stegmaier draws out the intellectual kinship of both thinkers which becomes particularly evident in the productive role which the paradox plays in both of their theories.[55] For him, both Nietzsche and Luhmann seek to understand how processual relations – communication, thought, life – can continue without any stable ontological or epistemological grounding. Following Stegmaier, both thinkers develop perspectivist theories of a meta-stable ad-hoc orientation – which takes place in time. The affirmative nihilism which Nietzsche posits against Arthur Schopenhauer and Luhmann's epistemologically closed systems both build on the anti-realist insight that structures of experience and thought cannot be separated, that all structures of sense are perspectivist, self-referential and fluid (Stegmaier 2016: 70-87). "The form is fluid, the 'sense' even more so" (Nietzsche 2006: 61).[56]

As a consequence, Nietzsche diagnoses a philosophical problem of self-implication in his characteristic stylistic mixture of philosophical statement, critique and deconstructive irony. With regard to sense-perception, Nietzsche (2002: 29) argues in *The Birth of the Tragedy* that sensory organs can indeed be identified as causes of these perceptions, but only insofar as the environment they sense – and the organs which we identify as places of perception – are at the same time conditioned by these sensory perceptions (Landgraf 2013: 480). The optimism of the Socratic paradigm is ruptured at the point where philosophy realises the generally self-implicating functioning of all logical insight which, sooner or later, "bites its own tale" (Nietzsche 2002: 56). Nietzsche however does not aim to resolve the perspectivism which follows, but rather explores its philosophical-

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[55] Apart from Stegmaier's monograph, a few parallels and even direct points of contact between Luhmann's and Nietzsche's works have been worked out within secondary literature (Cesaratto 2013; Landgraf 2013; Stegmaier 1987). For instance, both thinkers, unified in their scepticism towards both philosophical truths and the subjective consciousness as its ultimate horizon, turn to scientific accounts of biological and informational networks as sources for theoretical innovation (Landgraf 2013: 473-474).

[56] Similar to Luhmann's "Sinn", "Sinn" in Nietzsche is here usually translated as "meaning". However, the context of the quote where Nietzsche discusses contingencies and continuities in the function of punishment suggests that Stegmaier's functional, Luhmannian reading of the passage is actually closer to Nietzsche's original text and justifies a translation as "sense".

political productivity when transferred to the domain of time. Read against this background, the eternal return is not the maker of a time with constituted, but quasi-ontological status. Nietzsche's conceptualisation of time points to the general impossibility of a stable, grounded temporal order which he substitutes with the ad-hoc self-production of a sequential time through events which orient the temporal relations which give rise to them.

Nietzsche replaces ontological grounding with orientation in time – with clear political and ethical implications. Orientation in time can only function in so far as the point of orientation is perceived as not only always changeable, but also always in the process of changing, unfolding a condition of thought and perception which Deleuze on his part seeks to capture in his concept of becoming as the becoming of difference.

> Could Nietzsche, with his thought or his idea of the eternal recurrence of the same, aim at the failure of conceptions and their schemata as conceptions? In this sense, the idea of an eternal recurrence of the same would not be a conception which represents something, but a strategic concept, the conception of the *failure of all conceptions.* It is only through it that a different time of times emerges. The conception takes itself down and gives way to the alternative time of times. (Stegmaier 1987: 226; own translation)

> We therefore not only live with time and its nothingness, but also through time and its nothingness. Orientation is the most primary and deepest art of life: to find stability within instability. With Nietzsche and Luhmann this is easier to think. (Stegmaier 2016: 59).

The eternal return makes orientation in time possible because it, on the one hand, operates selective. The eternal return always introduces a difference – Deleuze's cut – to time, it always realises a particular time to condition the making of sense in the form of a new, directed, expressive connection. But on the other hand, the eternal return is at the same time the – differential – unity through which the contingent making of this distinction, the actualisation of a particular time, takes place. It is an eternally failing structure which only provides a point of contact for a new will or creation, instituting a new time which must then itself fail to give way to yet another attempt at temporal ordering.

What Luhmann draws from Nietzsche is the idea of a self-constituting time which does not need a creator or origin because it is made in the very moment a problem of orientation becomes apparent – and always already fulfils the necessity for orientation through its translation into the order of temporality. In both Luhmann and Deleuze, time functions in a deparadoxifying manner - in a double sense: it unfolds the paradox of ungrounded self-reference of sense relations by conditioning these in a directional sense. But at the same

time, temporal relations then also unfold their own, ungrounded existence to which the paradox of sense has been displaced. They do so, in both Luhmann and Deleuze, through the inclusion of a continuous, rupturing openness. But only thinking time with Luhmann makes it clear that this continuous rupture is accidental only in terms of the content, the temporalised sense-structures emergent from it, but not in its occurrence. Time emerges as functional response to the systemic problem of emergent complexity – it provides structuring orientation for an autopoiesis in sense which must constantly grapple with and overcome the re-entry of environmental complexity. Openness is thus the necessary condition for the orienting relationality of time to continue (Stegmaier 2016: 105-106).

As a consequence, the emergence of evental openness which has been left ambiguous in Deleuze is necessary in a double sense in Luhmann's theory of immanent, relational and self-producing time. On the one hand, the re-introduction of complexity and openness in the event is necessary for the structural continuation of temporal ordering. Once made irreversible and thus transient, time requires the constant connection to new events to uphold the structuring temporal series and prevent the collapse of its self-constitutive functionality.

> [T]he temporalization of elements requires […] a constant change in relational models. An action does not remain an information; an event does not remain an event. Temporalized elements cannot be reinforced by repetition; they are determined from the outset to connect to something *different*. They can only actualize 'current' connections, and therefore from moment to moment they create new situations, in which the system must choose between repetition and change. Systems of this kind are immanently restless, exposed to an endogenously generated dynamic and compelled precisely by this dynamic to themselves learn structures compatible with it. […] The theory of temporalization's most impressive consequence is that a new *interdependence of the disintegration and reproduction* of elements results. Systems with temporalized complexity *depend on constant disintegration.* (Luhmann 1995: 47-48)

But the event is not only the motor of continuous structuration into past and corresponding future. It also must be a moment of genuine rupture which conceals how the temporal structure which orients the transient, fleeting present – and the observations taking place within it – is always functionally emergent from this present need for orientation. Evental present and temporally ordered present always co-exist within a particular past-future relation in the sense of Husserl's retention and protention. "One present appears as punctual … the other present endures and thereby symbolized the reversibility that can be realized within all [sense] systems" (Luhmann 1995: 78). But their contemporaneity

and reciprocal dependence is concealed by their divergent positioning as passive-collapsing vs. active-productive achieved through structuring, orienting temporalisation.

As Luhmann shows, one way in which this distance is ensured is through the ontologisation of a historical, scientific or metaphysical origin or future. When time is perceived as objectively measurable *a priori* of material and social relations independent from the observation of time, the fact that this time is the contingent, functional product of a sense system which must ensure continuous observability – and is produced simultaneously in the present observation - is displaced (Nassehi 2008: 192-194). Luhmann's systems deparadoxify the tautological character of their temporal mechanisms through this displacement in time. In this sense, the contracted present which passes and thereby allows systemic relations to reproduce themselves can be connected to the extended present of past and future, but without exposing it to the multiplicity of all other possible connections, the multiplicity of pasts and futures whose complexity would endanger the duration of systemic relations (Tang 2013: 43-44). Beyond Deleuze's argument in *Difference and Repetition*, this displacement is not only a logical requirement to create the conditions for subjective thought. It is also a practical requirement for the continuation of social life (Voss 2013: 210-219).

If laid open, the tautological circularity through which structures of temporal ordering emerge would dissolve the binding effect of temporalisation which orders connective processes.

> The production of irreversibility is the achievement of the present. When an action system can produce, but can also interrupt irreversibility, it consequently has to have available two different forms of present: a punctual present in which future continuously and inexorably becomes past, and a specious present which distances future and past more effectively, in which one can remain and possibly mediate what is about to happen. (Luhmann 2009c: 151)

As requirement for the continuous autopoietic making of sense in time, Luhmann's systems not only produce the order of past and future which orients selective connection in the face of re-emerging complexity. Importantly, they also produce their own events, which are the form in which Nietzsche's eternal return makes complexity and contingency return to the system – as information attributed to the outside of the system – but in a temporalised way which holds the key for overcoming informational rupture, because events are at the same time the elemental constituents of the system which relational autopoiesis draws on and processes (Luhmann 2009c: 145).

Interestingly, and with an uncharacteristically philosophical air for Luhmann, it is with reference to Marquis de Vauvenargues – also referenced by Nietzsche (1988: 646-647) as one of the philosophers with "real thoughts" (Broisson 2009: 34) – that he argues that the intersubjective time of modernity itself incites events. Vauvenargues' present, similar to Deleuze's *Chronos,* is restless and limited. It is the time where action takes place as a movement which allows for connecting present to present against the annihilation of social life within transient time. The event of action here functions as "counter flow principle" (Luhmann 2009c: 127) that moves against the passing of time within a consciousness or social system that perceives time as irreversible. "If you understand time, with Vauvenargues as the self-annihilation of reality, the temporal binding is exalted to the saviour of reality" (ibid. 134). Neither temporal order – such as irreversibility – nor the event that ruptures and continues it are primary.

The punctualised present is the condition for the serialisation of time, but only in so far as future and past on the other hand provide the background which this contracted present can be distinguished from as something no longer potential, but actual and yet to pass. What emerges is a temporal autopoiesis which ensures the connective continuation of sense relations in time. It does so through the constant oscillation between a time which functions ordering – which includes both contracted and extended presents – and the event as moment of openness which must be continuously supplied as the "content" to be ordered. Within social and psychic systems, this ordering connection between event and temporalised, ordered sense takes the form of an observational sense-expression. This explicitly includes the self-observation of society – for example through a particular theory of time produced by the academic system. Against the prevalent misclassification of Luhmann as positivist-realist thinker, this quote from *The Future Cannot Begin* shows how acutely aware he is of the productivity unfolded not only by philosophical and political observations in general, but also by (the conceptual foundation of) his own theory.

> The transformation of time perspectives began by reconceptualizing the present. It led, then, to a series of relief measures: to the concept of system, to increasing interest in mechanisms and in security, and, during the eighteenth century, to the interpretation of existence as sentiment. But only the economic and political breakthrough of the bourgeois society provided the background for solving time problems by temporal means: by extending the time horizons of past and future and by orienting the present toward their difference. (Luhmann 1976: 133)

As it was the case for the ungrounded self-production of sense as form and medium in chapter 2, Luhmann adds clarity at a point where Deleuze's theory of time remains

ambiguous: the origin and status of the event. Luhmann's theorisation of a relational time which oscillates between structuration and evental openness resolves Deleuze's various temporal syntheses – in particular the becoming of the eternal return – from their "existentialist, human- or subject-centred" (Voss 2013: 255) residues. It problematises a reading of the evental rupture as *deus ex machina* moment which creates novelty through accessing, or being fuelled by, an ontologically primary, pre-epistemological and pre-temporal outside. The "eternally decentred circle" of Deleuze's temporal constitution can, with Luhmann, be understood as a socially developed, functional mechanism of temporal auto-decentring necessary to make sense in time under conditions where the available points of connection for relations of sense are multiple and complex, and the continuous making of sense – the ground for the continuation of thought and social life – is uncertain, and in need for orientation in time.

This orientation in time requires both temporal structuration, to extend itself towards an open future and make the continuation of sense relations possible, and directed contraction in the indeterminate moment of the event to perform a particular connection which either reproduces or alters the existing order of time. With Deleuze, Virilio's and Agamben's respective social-technological and epistemological determinisms, which leave no room for a genuine, but immanent socio-political creativity, were dissolved. They were dissolved within Deleuze's immanent relationality of time, which is both conditioned and open because conditioning is always relational, and thus itself contingent and meta-stable, not foundational. Through Luhmann, the present extension of temporal openness and the present structuration into past and future were exposed as two sides of the same temporal distinction which provides orientation for the making of sense on both the cognitive and the social level.

The event constitutes a re-entry of the form into the form in Spencer Brown's sense – time re-enters time (Luhmann 2012: 150-151). This re-entry induces a state of indeterminacy which is functionally necessary for the continuation of time – and sense with it. This indeterminacy is then resolved in an instance of selective connection which continues time towards a particular future and thus actualises a particular past-future lineage. Both evental indeterminacy and the selective continuation of sense in time co-emerge as functionally necessary from one and the same, autopoietic organisation of time. However, to fulfil its resolving functionality, the moment of the extension of a particular lineage in time must achieve a connection in sense, which happens with the help of a selective memory. Luhmann argues that memory guides orientation towards the future

through a complexity-reducing structuration of the past (Nassehi 2008: 197-203). Time, as the condition of possibility for the continuation of sense, is shared by all social and psychic systems. However, the memory they access to connectively overcome the indeterminacy of the evental moment is, for Luhmann, particular to each system.

Memory is necessary for all sense systems which must constantly reproduce the relations which constitute them through relational extension. However, for this extension to be successful, sense relations must find points of connection within a particular order of sense – the communicative expressions they condition must be understood. For this reason, sense relations must be oriented towards the possibility of understanding by the system which produces them – the system must remember what is known and can be understood by whoever their expression targets (Luhmann 2012: 170-172). As Luhmann formulates in *Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft,* "it is not necessary to know how the world really is. What is necessary is only the possibility to record experiences and (as always selectively and forgetfully) to remember them" (Luhmann 1990b: 136). Because memory must be selective to guide connectivity under conditions of complexity, Luhmann argues that the primary function of memory within autopoietic systems is forgetting.

With regard to the nature of the past and memory, we can again see how Luhmann's and Deleuze's theories come very close to each other, but have opposite focus points. Deleuze draws on Bergson to show how the past we produce in the present synthesis of habit is only one of multiple possible pasts. The multiplicity of the pure past can be re-accessed in the eternal return to change not only the future, but also history when a new past-future lineage is drawn. Luhmann, on his part, shows how the forgetting of the temporal multiplicity of the past, as everything which could be remembered, and the superimposition of a selective, active memory is necessary in order to allow for and guide the processing of evental information in a present instant of sense-making. "In this sense", Luhmann points out, "every memory [works] with a reconstructed, if not fictional past" (2012: 172). Memory selects content to be remembered and thereby orients the reproduction of systemic sense relations towards the future.

While temporal relations are made between evental extension and temporal structuration in the present of systemic autopoiesis, the particular historical lineages, the particular chronology in which self-producing time is stabilised and becomes effective to guide future sense-expressions depends on the available structures of memory. It is in the threshold between these – not determining, but orienting – relations of memory, and the

rupturing complexity of the event, that the difference between identical continuation and change must be explored. This resonates with Deleuze's claim – made in both *Difference and Repetition* and *Proust and Signs* – that active forgetting can function as resistance.[57] In the following chapter, I will therefore unpack the event as moment of conditioned openness resolved by a political decision in Luhmann and Deleuze to understand how the eternally returning event can unfold an immanent creative force which can play out as both identical repetition and change of direction in the relationality of sense conditioned in time.

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[57] This further resonates with the theory of history developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). While the book develops a lineage of human history distinct from all established accounts – and lacking all of its canonised major events – they importantly do not completely replace history with unconnected events. Jay Lampert (2006: 4) here interestingly uses the formulation of the historical fact which "produces/is produced autopoietically." History, Deleuze and Guattari declare in the introduction, is always written from the perspective of the state apparatus and for this reason must first be opened to alternative trajectories through a nomadology which works anti-historical (ibid., 23-24). On this basis Deleuze and Guattari proceed to retrace and undo the majoritarian territorialisations which shape conventional historical understandings of the formation of language, subjectivity, political organisation or biological evolution (ibid., 40-250). Against the linear organisation of time in history, which Deleuze had already done away with philosophically, Deleuze and Guattari propose to understand history as an indeterminate, self-organising and importantly variable succession of emergences which can be altered with every succeeding event. This is the contingent history which Deleuze and Guattari oppose to the chronological necessity which is always tied to a functional role within a particular socio-political order. "The tree is given in the seed, but as a function of a plan(e) that is not given." (1987: 266). Importantly, it seems that, like Luhmann, Deleuze and Guattari view an alternative rhizomatic history not as completely devoid of guiding linear structures, but rather as oscillating between structuration and openness. "Is it not necessary to retain a minimum of strata, a minimum of forms and functions, a minimal subject from which to extract materials, affects, and assemblages?" (ibid., 270).

Chapter 4

4. The Twofold Event: Continuity, Connectivity and Decision in Whitehead, Deleuze and Luhmann

Luhmann's theorisation of a conditioned, functionally necessary event which was outlined in the last chapter constitutes a challenge – not just for a Deleuzian theory of the event, but for the philosophical possibility to grasp the event in general. How can the event, conventionally understood as a moment of creative openness, at the same time be thought as conditioned by and part of an existing relationality of sense? How can free emergence be thought together not just with Luhmann's functional necessity, but in harmony with relational conditionedness more generally? In order to achieve such a theoretical harmonisation, it is necessary to turn back to the element which, at least so far, seems to resist it, Deleuze's event, and zoom in further. This chapter will employ the evental philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, used by Deleuze as well as referred to more sparingly by Luhmann, in order to show that in fact both theorists explore the event as an interplay between continuity (in the Event) and singular point (in the event). I will argue that such a two-fold event always has the potential to initiate a change of direction on the level of sense – to become event in a third sense. This third sense of the event aligns with how the concept is usually theorised as a moment of rupture in post-structuralist theory.

With Whitehead, this third type of event must however be seen as only a specific form of the two-fold event whose general quality lies in the fact that it produces relational continuity through connectivity, regardless of the form which this continuity will take in the relations of sense continued through the event. The linear, unchanged duration of Cleopatra's Needle on the London Embankment or of the Great Pyramid are also events. Whitehead allows for shifting the philosophical perspective on the event away from the idea of a singular rupture or encounter with novelty to the connectivity between the singular point of the event and the series of past events which need to enfold the former for it to appear on the level of sense, to become perceivable, to become event. While both evental singular point and Evental relations are necessary to produce an event, the decision between identical reproduction and change takes place in and is due to the composition of the latter. I will show that Whitehead's two-fold event which focuses

evental philosophy on the relations of the Evental nexus can be retraced in both Deleuze and Luhmann, catalysing a harmonisation of their concepts of the event.

While Deleuze discusses Whitehead's two-fold event in *The Fold*, I will show how it further comes into effect in the *Logic of Sense* where the sense-event/Event enfolds evental singularities in such a way that they can cause both change and continuity. This moment of enfolding, rather than the "quasi-causes" of bodies and matter, determines the effect of the event. In Luhmann, Whitehead's double event takes the form of an evental information singularity enfolded in the Evental relations of systemic sense. The connective decision which links every new informational singular point to a selected relation of sense has to be accomplished by every autopoietic system because this connectivity is the motor of relational self-reproduction. Every system therefore develops particular structures of expectation which function selectively, reduce complexity and facilitate the connective decision in the instant of evental enfolding.

However, in Luhmann, continuous decisional connectivity has a double relevance for the political system. It is not only the necessary condition for the autopoietic continuation of its political sense relations, but the provision of connective decisions is also the specific functional responsibility of the political system. I will unpack how Luhmann here echoes not only Carl Schmitt's decisionism, but also its deconstructive turn in Agamben and Walter Benjamin where the decision on the emergency dramatically reproduces a political sovereign without ontological foundation and actual power. However, I argue that Luhmann adds to these theories insofar as he firstly allows thinking the decision on the emergency as nothing but one example of a structure of expectation developed by the political system to exclude the complexity of the event. Secondly, while the other theories of political decisionism imply either a determinism of self-productive power relations or the catastrophic collapse of the political, Luhmann conceptualises connective instability as a necessary part of the autopoietic mechanism consisting of expectational structure, event and sense relation which allows politics to maintain continuity by adapting to new situations.

4.1 The event as One-Other: absolute externality and ontologisation in existing readings of Deleuze's event

Deleuze's event seems to resist connection to Luhmann's functionally conditioned event. But I argue that understanding Deleuze's event with Luhmann can actually resolve a

problematic ambiguity which not only surrounds the former but is characteristic for how the event is thought in post-structuralist theory more generally. This problematic ambiguity is brought to light by François Laruelle in his essay "Identity and Event" (2000). Here Laruelle observes that the event which "has become a theme allowing one to gather together and situate almost all of French philosophy after the period of structuralism" (2000: 175) sits uneasily between immanent conditionedness on the one hand and the event as moment of radical openness and outside emergence on the other hand, which re-introduces exactly the kind of foundational speculation which post-structuralism has originally sought to overcome.

> [T]he event corresponds to another articulation, one which is emergent relative to that of the transcendence of Being. It can constitute a rupture within Being, History, Time, only if it exceeds horizontal depth as well as the merely horizontal interval; only if it constitutes an emergence at the same time as a rupture; a rupture in excess of horizontal transcendence. It is the One-as-Other and sometimes, but then more Judaically, the Other-as-One. […] Whatever the case, the event is not merely the result of superimposing an ontology onto a history, but rather, it introduces a new order. It does not even merge with Being, whether Being is presence, or a pure multiple without presence, or regularity once again. It appears whenever there is a repression, a cutting, or a collapsing of Being. The event thereby indexes a more general ground which may be, depending on the case, an order of presence, of effects or singularities rather than of generalities, of multiplicities or of the multiple rather than of unity. It indexes an ontological ground with which it remains complicit even as it detaches itself from it. (Laruelle 2000: 176)

For all philosophies of the event, Laruelle argues that the event itself realises their post-ontological and post-metaphysical character. The constitutive, creative event is the motor which produces novelty – and allows for the philosophical unravelling of this process of production in a way which does not necessitate ontological access to a primary being. As the outburst of a creative multiplicity which is extra-philosophical, the event is the cardinal point within this process of onto-genesis. But as a consequence, Laruelle (ibid., 178-179) insists, the event is endowed with a transcendental, quasi-ontological quality. It re-introduces the idea of a grounding, but incomprehensible externality through the back door. While the process of onto-genesis is understood as conditioned, shaped by the inside of thought from which it is accessed, the event becomes the necessary exception to this correlation of thought and being which allows philosophy to reconcile a non-deterministic conditionedness with the idea of change. The event becomes the constitutive outside or "Other-as-One" (Laruelle 2000: 178) to an immanent relationality.

For Laruelle, Deleuze's theory produces exactly such a "standard, philosophically average description of the event" (2000: 176). Diametrically opposed to Alain Badiou's

famous critique of Deleuze's event as productive of nothing but a reiteration of the virtual One, not able to escape the inside which is the philosophy of the One,[58] Laruelle argues that Deleuze locates the emergence of novelty in the absolute outside of the event. Consequently, his philosophy remains in need of the constitutive force of the Other(-as-One).[59] Laruelle's charge needs to be refuted before Deleuze's event can be connected to Luhmann's framework of a continuous, systemic production of the event which was developed at the end of chapter 3. For this reason, it is necessary to return to Deleuze's theory of the event here. I argue that dominant readings of Deleuze's event indeed develop an ontologically situated and absolutely external event as described by Laruelle. For this reason, it will be necessary to attempt a different way of thinking Deleuze's event before a harmonisation with Luhmann can be successful.

No other concept in Deleuze's philosophy, maybe with the exception of the idea of virtual difference, has received more attention in the secondary literature than the event (Badiou 2007a; Massumi 2011; Zourabichvili 2012; Bowden 2011; Lundy 2013b). Whether embraced or criticised, Deleuze's event is taken as the culmination of his philosophical and political efforts, a "Copernican revolution of its own in philosophy", which makes rupture, change and "the problem of the new (difference) not simply a question to be addressed in a remote region of metaphysics, but rather the primary determination of Being itself" (Smith 2012: 255). Smith (ibid., 14-21) and especially Bowden (2011: 18-

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[58] Because events, in Deleuze, are a necessary part of the different/ciation of the virtual towards the actual, which he assumes to be one-directional, Badiou argues that no event can ever be truly rupturing and create the conditions for genuine novelty. The event is nothing but the partial and secondary realisation of a virtual One (Badiou 2007a: 381-387; 2007b: 38-40).

[59] Many theorists have challenged both the adequacy of Badiou's reading of Deleuze (Crockett 2013; Williams 2009a) and the capacity of his theory of the event to resolve the problems he identifies in Deleuze (Smith 2012; MacKenzie and Porter 2011). In the context of this dissertation, Badiou's reading of Deleuze's event can also be criticised for its simplification of both the synthesis of time and the synthesis of sense which it is immediately connected to. Badiou argues that Deleuze's event can only ever unfold a univocal becoming which is pre-conditioned by the virtual because its connection to the future is theorised after the model of Bergson's pure memory, which Badiou (1999: 84.3) equates with Deleuze's univocity of being. The future is hence a fold of the past, directly connected to and determined by the former through a present without duration or thickness, which the event then actualises without being affected by the concrete situation of the bodies involved. Badiou acknowledges the relational nature of time in Deleuze (Badiou 1999: 44-64), but not the reciprocal conditioning of past and present in the production of the future. Assuming that all evental creativity originates in a Bergsonian memory, Badiou turns Deleuze into "a thinker obsessed with the past" (Crockett 2013: 13). Because Bergson's time is the essence of Deleuze's theory of becoming and event, and Bergson's theory of time is inherently monistic, Badiou (1999: 26.6) argues, the virtual One is endowed with a primary status, while the actual world of bodies, things and situations are reduced to mere Platonic simulacra. Badiou misses out the inherent ontogenetic openness of an event solely conditioned by ungrounded relations of time whose circularity it must rupture and also fails to acknowledge how the proximity of event and sense complicates the image of linear actualisation. Badiou assumes that a donation of sense takes place from virtual to actual. Because Badiou does not consider the surface of sense as the locus of production for evental creativity, he excludes the openness which the dynamic, excessive quality of sense brings to this process of production.

20) trace this philosophical Copernican revolution back to *The Logic of Sense* where Deleuze draws on Stoic philosophy to invert Platonism and demonstrate the priority of events over substances. In *The Fold,* Deleuze later draws on Leibniz's static genesis to develop a "transcendental philosophy that bears on the event rather than the phenomenon and replaces the Kantian conditioning" (2006a: 163).

The onto-genetic event can overcome the determination of being through thought by opening actuality to intensive difference where it can "extract singularities from the thought flow and make them function consistently as variabilities on a new plane of creation" (Smith 2012: 145). While the creativity it sparks thus takes place on the plane of immanence or thought, Smith clearly situates the event on the level of ontology. For him, Deleuze's event is a singular point emergent from a "Being [which] is difference" (ibid., 143). While Bowden, as shown in chapter 2, complicates the picture of a primary event by revealing its intimate connectedness to sense, he ultimately believes in "Deleuze's affirmation of the ontological priority of events" (2011: 275).[60] For both accounts, Laruelle's assessment so far seems correct: Deleuze fails to develop a theory of genesis which does not rely on an ontologically primary creative externality. However, Bowden adds that the "fundamental question of the ontological priority of events over substances" can only be thought as "accompanied by a series of 'divided subjects' who actualize, in their own particular ways, the problematic structure this question envelops into determined individuals, persons and concepts" (ibid., 273-274).

While this addition on its own does not resolve Laruelle's charge, it opens a new perspective on Deleuze's event - the event as an event of subjective actualisation on the plane of immanence. I argue that – broadly understood - new materialist Deleuzian theorists of affective affirmation such as Brian Massumi, Claire Colebrook, and Rosi Braidotti think the event in exactly this sense. They attempt to think evental creativity not as located in a transcendental outside, but as actualised by the subject who experiences and affectively responds to an evental encounter.[61] Massumi on his part directly addresses the difficulty of how the event can produce novelty when it is at the same time conditioned

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[60] A more detailed account of why this dissertation rejects any simple ontologisation of the event can be found in chapter 2.

[61] While the theories of Braidotti, Colebrook and Massumi are grouped together because of the way they situate Deleuze's event between continuity and change here, they certainly vary considerably in other respects, for example with regard to their underlying ontologies. While the materialism of Colebrook and especially Massumi leans towards a cybernetic, relational onto-genesis, Braidotti embraces a more vitalist ontology in her evental ethics. "The event is inscribed in the flesh, which is the thermometer of becoming" (Braidotti 2006: 214).

by actual context and immanent trajectories of different/ciation. He employs Simondon's relational onto-genesis to argue that Deleuze's event forms against the background of a "contrasting field of emergence" (Massumi 2011: 22) whose immanent relations are spanned between virtual and actual. Massumi argues in *The Politics of Affect* (2015) that the event can transcend the relational conditions which bring it into existence because, but only if, it provokes an affective reaction in an actual body.[62]

For Massumi, the event is thus an aesthetic event. It is conditioned, but it can generate a spontaneous affective response which can rupture and change relations of thought, economic production or political power (Massumi 2011: 82-106). Colebrook, like Massumi, understands Deleuze's event as an affective break with history. It follows an immediate encounter with the world that forces us to think (Colebrook 2002: 53-68; Deleuze 1994: 139). Massumi and Colebrook show how evental intensities dismantle a subject-oriented philosophy. Events produce the subjects they affect on the plane of immanence – the subjective is "the self-occurring form *of* the event" (Massumi 2011: 8). The interaction between a number of relationally conditioned singularities - ideas, bodies, objects – can produce an affective event which escapes state overcoding or alters the flows of capitalist axiomatisation (Massumi 2011: 6-15; Colebrook 2002: 3; 120). However, Colebrook uses the example of the affects experienced by a group of churchgoers to show that every affective event is indeterminate in its effect. It can reproduce and reinvigorate existing power structures just like it can subvert and challenge them:

> Imagine a group of Catholic churchgoers on Good Friday gathered around a procession of the crucifix. The crown of thorns, the wood of the cross, the suffering body, the subdued lighting and the recording of Bach's cantata in the background unite the group through direct affect. We feel the pain, the suffering, the mourning, the melancholy and the elevation. This is a political event, but not because the procession is a way of imposing the meanings of Christianity on the crowd (although that may happen subsequently). The politics lie in the relation between image and perceivers, the desiring investment in affect. The event produces a group through an organisation and coding of intensities. (Colebrook 2002: 46)

The affective event in both Colebrook and Massumi emerges from the relational encounter between singularities, which subsequently alters them, including subjects. Braidotti on the contrary attempts a tentative reconciliation of Deleuze's theory of the

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[62] This affective response can then be intersubjectively coordinated and affirmed to generate a collective force towards manifest political change, which Massumi (2014) saw present in the (attempted) revolutions of the Arab Spring.

event with the idea of the subject as the actor of a rupturing (counter-)actualisation in the event. "The free subject, the ethical subject" is here "the one with the ability to grasp the freedom to depersonalise the event and transform its negative charge" (Braidotti 2006: 208). Emergent as conditioned by given socio-political relations, the event must be seized and counter-actualised by the subject who thereby proves herself worthy of the event (Braidotti 2008). For Braidotti, a Deleuzian evental politics must extract positive productivity from the happenings historically embedded in networks of ressentiment, it must be affirmative in the sense of Nietzsche's unconditional *amor fati*. As already in Massumi and Colebrook, the event must modulate affective responses in order to transform local, affective becoming into a collective flow which can actualise political change (Braidotti 2006: 148-154; 2008; 2013: 130-138).

I suggest that the affective event of Massumi, Colebrook and Braidotti makes two important contributions to thinking the event with Deleuze. Firstly, the emergence of the creative event is re-located from the virtual depth of Smith's and Bowden's readings to the conditioned, differentiated but not yet actualised relationality of the plane of immanence. As in Luhmann, conditionedness and evental openness become compossible. Secondly, the character of the event itself is altered as a consequence. Rupturing potentiality is no longer the true ontological essence of the event which must be discovered, preserved or recovered by (political) actors. Instead, the potentiality of the event is open, but – emergent under the conditions of a particular logic of sense - lends itself to the reproduction of the former. The event of novelty and change is not the true actualisation of a rupturing essence intrinsic to the event, but the counter-actualisation of a potentiality which can just as likely function recuperatively.

However, despite those important advancements, I argue that the new materialist Deleuzian event is insufficiently armed against Lauruelle's charge of the Other-as-One because of its exclusive focus on political affirmation. The Deleuzian theories of affect are able to turn inwards and accept the social conditionedness of evental emergence because they locate the rupturing potentiality which makes change possible not in the event itself, but in the way it is sensed by and affects the bodies of those perceiving it. Bracketing the close proximity of conditioned sense and evental rupture in Deleuze, they fail to explore forms of sense and the epistemic expressions they condition as another resource for creative rupture which does not need to be activated through the immediate

physicality of affect. Instead, they turn these into event-effects of unconditioned material-vital becoming.[63]

> Acts of speaking, writing and thinking are events within life, producing the sense of the world, allowing life to change and become. (Colebrook 2002: 51)

> The form or the discursive event rather emerges from the creative encounter of the doer and the deed, or from the active process of becoming. The Zen archers who shoot their arrows with their eyes shut become the emblem for what I would describe as an ethical ideal: the 'becoming-imperceptible'. This amounts to turning the self into the threshold of gratuitous (principle of non-profit), aimless (principle of mobility or flow) acts through which the vital energy that is bios/zoe gets expressed in all its ruthless splendour. (Braidotti 2006: 173)

I argue that here, embodied affect becomes a second, physically essentialised quasi-event – the event which actualises evental rupture. For this affective event, Laruelle's critique still appears valid. It is able to rupture the structures which situate the event because it has access to a more immediate, material-physical – for Massumi (2014), neurological – resource of actualisation which is prior to and therefore lies outside of the socio-politically axiomatised epistemological realm. In this sense, new materialist Deleuzian theories reintroduce the external absolute in the form of the immediate bodily affect which provides subjects with the necessary creative impulse to access the rupturing potential of the conditioned evental encounter.[64] I suggest continuing the trajectory of thinking a relationally immanent and yet creatively open event which was begun but not radically developed in new materialist Deleuzian thought through the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead.

For Deleuze's event, it is suggested that this turn to Whitehead will allow for freeing it from the charge of ontologisation as external absolute. This is the case because the materialism which Whitehead's philosophy offers is more nuanced and multi-layered; his event is always the product of a double causation by both material singularities and the

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[63] Underlying this link is, especially in Braidotti, a strong neo(materialist) ontology which privileges material force as the resource to create genuine novelty. This onto-genetic perspective precludes an investigation of how the singularities of thought contribute to creative processes, which this dissertation seeks to remedy with the concept of synthetic, onto-epistemologically productive sense it develops.

[64] In addition, I argue that the strong emphasis on the necessity to affirm the event, neutralise its conditioned force and turn it into a positive force is based on a potentially dangerous simplification of contemporary politics – and Deleuze's own politics. In *Dark Deleuze* (2016), Andrew Culp argues that Deleuze would be misunderstood as a thinker of unconditional affirmation. Culp rejects Deleuzian theories of affective affirmation and vitalist-technological "connectivity" (2016: 10) by pointing out how their argumentation feeds into the self-productive, extensive functioning of capitalism. "'Too much!' is a potential rallying cry - too many products, too many choices, too much of this world! Instead, become contrary!" (Culp 2016: 35). A similar concern with regard to uncritical affirmation is also put forward by Benjamin Noys (2016) in his critique of the recent turn to vitalism within Continental Theory.

nexus of previous perceptions, but its creative potentiality depends on the connection to the relations of the latter. For Luhmann's event, which is also conceptualised with reference to Whitehead, this excursus will shed light on how the immanent eventral emergence of novelty outlined at the end of the last chapter is possible in Luhmann's system; characteristically straying away from philosophical depth, the details of this conditioned (non-)emergence remain ambiguous in Luhmann.

4.2 Whitehead's two-fold event and the pragmatic primacy of perceptive abstraction

4.2.1 The speculative constructivism of Whitehead's perceptive nexus

In addition to his characterisation of the sense-event explored in the last chapter, one of the moments where Deleuze comes close to providing a definition of the event is in *The Fold*, his book on Leibniz – but it is a puzzling definition. Deleuze paraphrases Whitehead to state that "[t]he Great Pyramid is an event, and its duration for the period of one hour, thirty minutes, five minutes" (Deleuze 2006a: 44). The event which Deleuze describes here with Whitehead, the event of the Great Pyramid, looks nothing like the event Deleuzian scholars are accustomed to think – it is durational, not rupturing. If it produces anything then its product is the continuity of sense, not its alteration. So how can Deleuze embrace Whitehead's definition of the event which seems so contrary to the image of his philosophy focused on resistance, rupture and change?[65] To understand the role of the event in Whitehead, it is firstly necessary to show that what Keith Robinson refers to as the "immanent and realist process ontology" (2011: 54) of Whitehead is a move away from ideational or substantive creation and towards a groundless, relational self-production which is equivalent to the self-production of sense relations I developed in chapter 3.

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[65] Parallels and overlaps between the works of Deleuze and Whitehead have been explored in a number of recent publications (Faber and Goffey 2014; Faber and Stephenson 2011; Shaviro 2009; Williams 2010; Robinson 2009; 2010), most thoroughly in Isabelle Stengers' *Thinking with Whitehead* (2011). However, what exactly Deleuze draws from Whitehead and how relevant he is to his thinking, compared to those thinkers whom Deleuze dedicated a monograph to, is not quite clear. As Williams points out, "[t]here is no 'Deleuze's Whitehead' in the same way as there is 'Deleuze's Hume' or 'Deleuze's Nietzsche'" (2009b: 282). But in the same way that Stengers, in her book, invites readers to undertake a speculative journey of "thinking with Whitehead" which is justified first and foremost by its theoretical productivity, which renders extensive philosophical congruence secondary, I will explore Whitehead's evental making of continuity as the key to unlocking a dimension of Deleuze's thought which so far remains unexplored – the role of the conditioned event in creating both continuity and change.

The philosophy of Whitehead certainly has Platonic roots – the reality which Whitehead is concerned with is the realm of "abstractions", of forms and concepts. Whitehead explicitly situates his magnum opus *Process and Reality* against "[t]he evil produced by the Aristotelian 'primary substance'" (Whitehead 1978: 30), the philosophical belief that ideas can be unambiguously deduced from a material actuality which therefore must be the focal point of philosophical investigation. Whitehead rejects classical materialism, but not, as I will show, because he believes in the ontological primacy of forms. On the contrary, Whitehead's philosophy has recently received much interest from theorists who draw a non-essentialist vitalism from his thought which is focused on relational becoming rather than an essential force of life (Robinson 2010; Shaviro 2009; Sha 2005). For Whitehead (1978: 18), the world consists of actual occasions. Actual occasions are not stable objects, but rather the singular components which can be cut out of the permanent flux which is reality. "That the actual world is a process, and that the process is the becoming of actual entities. Thus, actual entities are creatures; they are also termed 'actual occasions.'" (ibid., 22). Whitehead uses the term actual occasion as synonymous with the event "with only one member" (ibid., 73), which I will term singularity-event in the following. The actual occasion can however not be grasped detached from the nexus which links it to other occasions – it attains significance, exists as such, only in and through this connectivity (ibid., 22). Relationally connected, every actual occasion is "a mode of the process of 'feeling' the world" (ibid., 80) or "a throb of experience including the actual world in its scope" (ibid., 190). But this means that actual occasions attain actuality only as part of a connective nexus which links them not only to other material occasions, but also to conceptual and sense-perception. Whitehead's becoming of occasions takes place not only between material entities, but also between objects and their prehensions.[66]

Whitehead's speculative ontology is threefold. It consists of actual entities, sense-prehensions which generate abstractions or ideas, and their processual nexus – the relation between actual entities as well as between being and thought (ibid.,18-19). Diverging from more materialist readings of Whitehead, I argue that Whitehead endows the nexus

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[66]Whitehead's prehensions are pointedly defined by Meyer as the "sensuous, untidy art of intellection that Whitehead also seeks to address with his investigations of the 'real internal constitution' of acts of experience" (2005: 10). Whitehead links ideational abstractions and prehensions in a way which reverses Kantianism: he wants to understand the selective making of abstractions through new prehensions, not the production of sense-prehensions through stable and fixed ideas. Nevertheless, sense-prehensions, because they form part of the processual nexus, are not independent from abstractions but take place against the background of previous abstractions. For this reason, prehensions and abstractions will be taken together as marking the side of the Event of previous sense-relations in the following.

of the connective process with a reality he privileges over the other two. The nexus does not pre-exist either actual occasions or prehensions and abstractions in any absolute sense. For Whitehead, it only does so in a temporal sense, because it is composed of nothing but past actualities and abstractions (Faber 2011). However, the nexus is what gives reality to the material object, makes it not just entity but occasion in a context of relations which include both other objects and thought. Through the relational nexus, specific actualities are "cut out" (Whitehead 1920: 47) of an imperceptible material complexity and become perceivable for sensation – "objectification is abstraction" (Whitehead 1978: 110). But because the processual nexus is nothing but the link between actualities and sense-prehensions, it is creative only insofar as it is also conditioned by previous processes of abstracting creation which involve matter and thought.

> Being is located neither in the object itself nor in the subject that perceives it. This leaves becoming as primary. But this is not an inert becoming: it is not the mere passage of matter in flux. The key to Whitehead's concept of becoming is that each becoming occurs in a specific environment and in a specific fashion. That which both enables becoming and differentiates this becoming from any other is the way in which the becoming unfolds. (Halewood 2008: 63)

In this non-subjective sense, because of the particularity of the nexus, perception is always and necessarily perspectivist in Whitehead (Stengers 2011: 63-65). This is the case because the nexus is the necessary condition for the emergence of actualities, which Whitehead calls actual occasions, but which are importantly not identical with the ontic constituents of the environment – they are what can be abstracted from the former to be perceived. Actual occasions have two sides: they are on the one hand drawn from an actual material-bodily context and on the other hand made in relation to the framework of perceptions, ideas and concepts that is subjective thought. The connective interrelation of both in the nexus is creative. It shapes the character of the actual occasion independent from any "original" quality. Whitehead (1978: 88) describes the actual occasion in this sense as *causa sui*, produced by the relations which give it existence.

To employ the imagery of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* which runs through Deleuze's *Logic of Sense,* the grin of the Cheshire cat is an actual occasion par excellence. Left behind after the cat's body has disappeared, the way it is perceived by Alice is completely disconnected from the organic actuality it was situated in. Instead, its perception is in part determined by Alice's own, abstracting position, situated in her wondrous experience (Dombrowski 2005: 56-57). As a consequence, Whitehead approaches perceptive abstractions with both a critical awareness of their limitedness and

constructedness, and a pragmatic belief in their necessity for constituting the nexus that cuts out materiality to generate prehensions. Actual occasions can only be accessed from the side of sense prehensions, within the nexus that connects them to the latter (Faber 2011: 15-16).

However, for Whitehead, science and philosophy need to beware the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness" (1978: 7) – the naïve belief that scientific and philosophical concepts readily correspond to the complex phenomena they are abstracted from. For Whitehead, "abstraction explains nothing" (Stengers 2011: 417) but the constructed perspective through which we see the world and is therefore never innocent. The impossibility of accessing nature without a particular viewpoint in the face of the philosophical desire to do so in order to understand the creation of the world as we perceive it lies at the heart of Whitehead's ontological principle. The perception of an actual occasion by the perceiver is a selective *decision* which could be otherwise – and the fact that it is not otherwise has to be explained.

> It is the principle that everything is positively somewhere in actuality, and in potency everywhere. […] The ontological principle asserts the relativity of *decision*; whereby every decision expresses the relation of the actual thing, for which a decision is made, to an actual thing by which that decision is made. (Whitehead 1978: 40-43; italicisation added)

> Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind (Kant). The philosophy of organism inverts this analysis, and explains the process as proceeding from objectivity to subjectivity, namely, from the objectivity, whereby the external world is a datum, to the subjectivity, whereby there is one individual experience. Thus, according to the philosophy of organism, in every act of experience there are objects for knowledge; but, apart from the inclusion of intellectual functioning in that act of experience, there is no knowledge. (Whitehead 1978: 155)

Whitehead's ontological principle might be misleadingly named, as its purpose is precisely to do away with any kind of first principle which could provide the basis for theoretical investigation. Whitehead develops a speculative empiricism or constructivism, as Stengers (2011: 19) prefers, which does not seek to deconstruct abstractions. Instead it proceeds in the opposite direction: Whitehead embarks on the "experimental adventure" (Whitehead 1920: 9) of exploring the relational production of objects in thought, recognising both the material and the abstract terms of the relation as absolutely necessary, but contingent on the very same abstracting nexus. This nexus, rather than the material singularities, affects or ideas which feed it, is the source of every creation. Because of this, it must be the focal point of a philosophy which seeks to

understand how and under what conditions novelty comes into being on the level of the nexus-relations - on the level of sense.

Whitehead's speculative empiricism has a clear Deleuzian colouring - it comes very close to Deleuze's transcendental empiricism which situates productivity in, and thus methodologically directs the philosophical gaze to, the creative transcendence of objects and ideas through their interrelation (Debaise 2016: 72-79; Robinson 2011: 59-61).[67] However, while Deleuze explicitly frames his philosophical interest as "empiricism", Whitehead, for all that he emphasises the constructedness of ideational abstractions and their inadequacy to represent the process of becoming in nature, keeps his philosophical gaze directed to abstractions. For Whitehead, philosophy must be "explanatory of abstraction, and not of concreteness" (Whitehead 1978: 20). Philosophy must critically unpack abstractions as problems in Deleuze's sense to recover the creative complexity of the nexus of sense, "recover the totality obscured by the selection" (Whitehead 1978: 15). As pointedly phrased by Alberto Toscano, Whitehead's philosophy recognises that it can only operate through abstractions but seeks to remain "vigilant as to their tyrannical ossification" (2008: 65). Whitehead's exploration of the creative nexus is "not the search for an ultimate explanation, but a resource for telling our stories in another way, in a way

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[67] In *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1991a), Deleuze conceptualises transcendental empiricism as a philosophical method in the context of his discussion of David Hume's philosophy. Setting up his investigation, Deleuze formulates an interest in the internal, self-referential organisation of mind, imagination and ultimately subjectivity out of a network of multiple impressions: "how does the collection become a system […] how does the mind become a subject?" (Deleuze 1991a: 22-23). From this starting point, Deleuze moves on to unpack creation as the aggregation or enfolding of a unity as a reciprocal process involving both habit and sensation, taking place on the ground of both social and sensual-emotional experience – each constituting the respective milieu for the individuation of the other (ibid., 52-66). "On the one hand, habit allows the understanding to reason about experience, as it transforms belief into a possible act of the understanding. […] On the other hand, habit presupposes experience: once their conjunction is discovered, objects are linked together in the imagination" (Deleuze 1991a: 68). Hume dismisses habits and beliefs which are not grounded in sensual experience as "illegitimate" (ibid., 70). However, in analogy to the enfolding of matter through the monadic soul in Leibniz, the movement from experience to habit, from perception to idea can only happen at the initiative of the inside of the mind. Against this background, Deleuze conceptualises transcendental empiricism as the philosophical study of "relations [which] are always external to their terms" (Deleuze 1991a: 36). This means that the creative processes of assemblage performed by the mind or subject on the plane of sense are independent from their terms, the material as well as epistemic-social singularities they enfold. What follows from the externality of relations is not that the belief in a creative materiality outside of social stratification is false. It is the Humean impossibility to differentiate between material and epistemological-social outside, but also to distinguish this affective outside from the productive relations which it constitutes. The process of genesis is dissolved from its primary location in either subject or object and re-located within the contingent, but productive association of both. "[B]elief in the existence of bodies essentially encompasses causality. But, on the other hand, the principles of association, insofar as they constitute the given as a system, generate the presentation of the given in the guise of a world. It follows that the choice is to be made not between one or the other of the two principles, but rather between all or nothing, between the contradiction or nothingness. […] And this is the state of madness" (Deleuze 1991: 83).

that situates us otherwise - not as defined by the past, but as able, perhaps, to inherit from it in another way" (Stengers 2011: 14).

4.2.2 The two-fold nature of the event in Whitehead: a creativity called forth by sense

So far it has been shown how Whitehead's processual relations of the nexus of prehension or sense are the creative force behind the actualities of the world as we perceive it. It is within the "eventful process" of the nexus that "subjects and objects of nature come to be (and are passed beyond)" (Halewood 2005: 60) – hence that novelty and identical duration are produced. What already becomes evident here is that the creative event in Whitehead requires two dimensions in order to take place – the singular event of material affect, change or duration which gives rise to the actual occasion, and the series of events in the nexus which condition the becoming-actual of the former. Whitehead's event requires both singular point and conditioned series in order to take place. In *The Concept of Nature* (1920), Whitehead (ibid., 14-15) defines events as those parts of actual entities which present themselves to the nexus of prehension (as argued above, they can only do so in the form of actual occasions). It is the event of a material entity which can be made sense of through abstraction, not the actual object. In this sense, events are "the ultimate substance of nature" (ibid., 19). Roland Faber argues that Deleuze plays exactly at this "eventfulness of *everything* as being the expression of Becoming" when he quotes Whitehead in his book on Leibniz; "there are no things with (private) attributes but only divergences and convergences of series of events" (2011: 11).

Whitehead's nature is fundamentally processual, it is a series of events. Taken together, these events constitute a becoming which Whitehead conceptualises in explicit reference to Bergson's *élan vital* as "the passage of nature" (1920: 54).[68] However, I argue that

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[68] Whitehead states to be "fully in accordance with Bergson" (ibid.) here but chooses not to use his concept of time because the latter already constitutes a scientific abstraction. "Time is known to me as an abstraction from the passage of events. The fundamental fact which renders this abstraction possible is the passing of nature, its development, its creative advance, and combined with this fact is another characteristic of nature, namely the extensive relation between events. These two facts, namely the passage of events and the extension of events over each other, are in my opinion the qualities from which time and space originate as abstractions" (Whitehead 1920: 34). The influence of Bergson is present in Whitehead's whole work: in the introduction to *Process and Reality* (1987), he references Bergson, whom the latter seeks to "free from the charge of anti-intellectualism" (Whitehead 1987: xii), together with William James and John Dewey, as an important influence on his work. But Whitehead's Bergson is radically different from the philosopher of a holistic, all-encompassing and linearly deterministic past which Badiou (2007a) makes him out to be. Here, the process of abstraction begins with actuality, the real object of experience, from which prehensions

neither Whitehead nor Deleuze are trying to make a primarily ontological argument about the constituents of the world (as it can be made sense of) here. On the contrary, I argue that both seek to explore the event as a relationally constituted force of creation whose open effects lie within a continuum between identical reproduction and radical change. "Our knowledge of nature is an experience of activity (or passage)" (ibid., 185). But this passage is not independent from the observing subject perceiving it. Since we have no means to perceive nature as it is, we are only aware of nature in so far as it is moving, productive, expressive – nature is a passage because this is the only way in which it can present itself as something which can be perceived, as actual occasion, in the relations of the nexus (Whitehead 1978: 73). The passage of nature is "a concrete slab of nature limited by simultaneity which is an essential factor disclosed in sense-awareness" (Whitehead 1920: 53).

The passage of nature is nature in its evental form, divided into singularities which can become actual occasions on the surface spanned by the relations of the nexus. In the moment of connection in the nexus, Whitehead's event takes place as a double causality to produce an actual occasion (Massumi 2011: 126-127). The two-fold event has one face turned towards the complex materiality from which the passage of nature is cut out and one face turned towards the nexus-relations generated from already serialised actual occasions and the abstractions drawn from them. The first face will in the following be referred to as singularity-event, which is connected to the relations of the nexus to emerge and be expressed on the level of sense. The second face is the "percipient event" (Whitehead 1920: 106) which consists in the series of past singularity-events in the sense relations of the nexus, which I will in the following refer to as Event. The Event is not identical with subjective sense but can rather be compared to Deleuze's plane of immanence as the condition for subjective perception and thought.

It is "not the mind, that is to say, not the percipient. It is that in nature from which the mind perceives" (ibid.).[69] The Event is thus a particular state of the relational nexus of sense itself – its composition changes, but not its relational duration.[70] It is important to

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are constantly drawn anew in order to produce duration in perception and thought (Stengers 2011: 50-56; Whitehead 1920: 52-58).

[69] The distinction between capital "E" event and small "e" event is not used by Whitehead himself, but I choose to introduce it here on the one hand to facilitate the distinction between the different dimensions of Whitehead's event, and on the other hand to prepare for the analogy with Deleuze's distinction between ideal "Event" and singularity-"event" which will be drawn out in the following.

[70] Whitehead (1920: 107) himself differentiates the Event further into temporal duration and spatial location which however does not find equivalents in Deleuze and Luhmann and will not be adopted for the context of this dissertation.

point out that the difference between the singular point of the event and the sense relations of the Event is nothing but temporal. It therefore fits nicely into the framework of self-grounding, but self-deparadoxifying time established as the theoretical context of the event in chapter 3. Once perceived, the singularity-event becomes part of the relational duration of the Event and awaits the occurrence of new occasions to continue the passage of nature as it can be made sense of. The Event is the locus of the event, the condition for its existence in perception, but it is itself constituted by nothing but previous and future evental expressions (Toscano 2008: 63-65). For this reason, I argue that Whitehead's two-fold event manages to ward off Laruelle's charge of the Other-as-One. Neither the singularity-event nor the percipient Event whose relational duration constitutes the passage of nature are ontologically primary, nor do they hold a privileged position in the making of evental creativity within the nexus of the latter.

The singularity-event in Whitehead is not the spontaneous, per se creative expression of an ontic essence. The actual occasion which it creates does not exist or stimulate a perceptive response outside the relational nexus which links it to subjective affect, thought and knowledge. With Whitehead, the perspective of evental philosophy shifts from singular, rupturing encounter to connectivity in the nexus-relations of the Event. The creative emergence of the event takes place on the level of sense, and is therefore thoroughly immanent, dependent on the relations of the nexus which bring it into existence. The event is thus the cardinal point of Whitehead's pragmatist constructivism. Whitehead does not argue that there is no material reality – the passage of nature is the condition for all creativity (Whitehead 1920: 165-171). However, productive of actual occasions is nature as emergent through the nexus spanned by the physical as well as the sensuous and conceptual conditions for perceptive abstraction in sense. When we perceive the colour red, Whitehead argues, it is not because we directly, but passively receive the evental expression emitted from matter. On the contrary, our perceptions are "accidental products of the relations between nature and mind" (ibid., 141) in the nexus of sense.

Whitehead locates the creative accident of perception in the sense relations of the nexus. There is no perception of "physical objects without perception of sense-objects" (ibid., 156). The singularity-event does not produce a material object; instead, "the object is located in the abstractive element" (ibid., 160). In Whitehead, there is not only no conflict between conditionedness by the abstracting relations of sense and the creation of novelty. Rather, conditionedness by relationally immanent forms of sense is the background

against which a creativity, which always happens as a synthetic interaction between mind and body in response to a singularity-event, becomes possible in the first place (Stengers 2011: 259). The conditioning series of the Event is the point of view, the only available perspective from which events can be perceived, against which novelty can be recognised, where events can become effective.

> Whitehead has thus succeeded in avoiding a twofold danger: he has taken away from the mind its responsibility for the 'here' and the 'now' of all experience without referring this explanation to biology, that is, without subjecting the concrete fact of passage to specialized knowledge. What seems to extend from nature to the mind has been referred to the register that no one can claim to appropriate: the event. (Stengers 2011: 66)

I argue that the same constitutive duality of singularity-event and relational nexus Event can be found in Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*.[71] As suggested in the last chapter, Deleuze develops the event in *The Logic of Sense* in line with the Stoic separation between bodies and incorporeal effects as their expressions. As in Whitehead, Deleuze's event therefore has two sides – the depth of bodies and materiality and the surface of sense expressive of the height of ideas. Deleuze, like Whitehead, refers to the event which happens on the side of bodies and materiality as singular point. The Event on the level of sense is a set of singularity-events. "[T]he event is subject to a double causality, referring on one hand to mixtures of bodies which are its cause and, on the other, to other events which are its quasi-cause" (Deleuze 1990: 94). Again, as in Whitehead, the difference between both is not absolute and essential, but only temporal: "it is imprecise to oppose structure and event: the structure includes a register of ideal events, that is, an entire history internal to it" (ibid., 50). The Event distributes the evental singularities into series, it orders them in time on the surface of sense. Singularity-events provide the content for sense-making.

While a creative event cannot happen without a change, movement or signal on the level of bodies, the event is here, as in Whitehead, not equivalent to this change. For Deleuze, events "are ideational singularities which communicate in one and the same Event" (1990a: 53). Deleuze's two-fold event is an effect on the level of sense. It only comes into being as event within the Event which receives its singular point. Like Whitehead, Deleuze is not interested in the true origin or quality of the event, but in why and how it

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[71] Contrary to his discussion of the event in *The Fold*, Deleuze does not make explicit reference to Whitehead here. For this reason, it is difficult to say with certainty to what extent Deleuze is (already) drawing on Whitehead's event here. Regardless of whether Deleuze is actually using Whitehead here, I argue that the extensive parallels between their two-fold conceptions of the event justify the link between Whitehead and Deleuze, if only to provide a clearer understanding of Deleuze's ambiguous concept of the event.

comes to matter – in its effects on the level of sense. He unpacks the creative force of the event from the side of the "splendid sterility of the expressed" (Deleuze 1990a: 32) in the sense relations of the Event. In Deleuze, as in Luhmann, there is thus no tension between the conditionedness of the Event, which situates every evental singularity in a continuous series, and the novelty introduced by this singular point. On the contrary, the singularity-event can only take place and can only have a creative effect as such in the context of the relations of the Event; how this creative effect plays out, whether it identically reproduces a past-future line if sense or leads to a change in direction within the relationality of the former perceived as evental rupture must be explored at the intersection of both events. Because both Whitehead and Deleuze resolve the contrast between conditionedness and evental openness through a relational continuity to which all creativity is immanent, this two-sided event is not an absolute, creative externality.

4.2.3   2+1 events: the creation of change as third event in Deleuze

Through Whitehead, any rupture or change which can be caused by the event must be understood as a specific form of continuity in the relations of sense. But how can change emerge as "self-caused" in Whitehead's sense within a conditioned relationality? To understand the relationship between duration and change in the continuous relations of the nexus, it is necessary to unpack Whitehead's concept of the eternal object. Whitehead defines eternal objects as pure potentialities or "potentials for the process of becoming" (1978: 29). While the function of the eternal object is equivalent to that of the form in Plato, its character is radically different in the context of Whitehead's theory because the eternal object is located in the nexus of sense. The eternal object is "that which provides definiteness to the experience of becoming" (Halewood 2009: 50). Only if an object exists in the nexus, and thus exists as eternal object that is perceivable, can the event of its appearance happen, and create an actual, perceivable occasion. The Cheshire Cat must pre-exist in the nexus of sense-organs, neuronal networks and conceptual abstractions in order to make every new appearance of the cat, as singularity-event, happen.

The continuity of the eternal object throughout the nexus is the necessary condition for receiving every new evental singularity as percipient Event on the level of abstraction. Eternal objects direct the production of abstractions in the nexus, but they also give figure to both the concrete form of the excess of sense-complexity which Whitehead seeks to recover from and against the tyrannical ossification of abstractions. "Eternal objects …

are adverbial, rather than substantive; they determine and express how actual entities relate to one another, take one another up, and 'enter into each others' constitutions.' Like Kantian and Deleuzian ideas, eternal objects work regulatively, or problematically" (Shaviro 2011: 87). The Great Pyramid is an eternal object actualised in a series of events or actual occasions on the level of sense (Whitehead 1987: 26-28; Halewood 2009: 45-54). But the eternal object of the Great Pyramid does not condition that its expression remains unchanged throughout the series of actual occasions which produce the Pyramid as it can be perceived; some stones could come loose and fall off, changing the form of the Pyramid, but not the eternal object which is pure duration.

While actual occasion and conceptual abstraction are both contingent on the eternal object which informs them, the eternal object is at the same time nothing but the product of previous relations of different/ciation in the creative nexus of perception, which are path-dependent, but remain in principle open. "[E]ternal objects […] involve their own nature's indecision. They are, like all entities, potentials for the process of becoming. […] But their own natures do not in themselves disclose in what actual entities this potentiality of ingression is realized" (Whitehead 1978: 29). The eternal object is the creative multiplicity or complexity which is opened in every moment of evental production through the link between singularity-event and percipient nexus Event. How the potentiality of this relational encounter plays out between identical continuation and openness is completely contingent. Whitehead's eternal objects consist of nothing but their own, continuous history in the relations of the nexus, and they condition nothing but their own future. In Whitehead, the event of identical continuation, the duration of the Great Pyramid, and the event of change, of continuation with a different trajectory, have the same status. But, a Deleuzian scholar would certainly object at this point, this is not the event that Deleuze is interested in – Deleuze seeks to theorise an event which causes change.

This difference between Whitehead's creative event whose effect is completely open, and Deleuze's creative event which must, to be recognised as such, be creative of something new, is noted by Stengers. For Stengers, creation in Whitehead is the non-linear effect of "a world that is […] saturated with cultural artefacts that orient us, giving rise to due attention without our even having to be aware of it". On the contrary, the idea of novelty in Deleuze "celebrate[s] the creator in the heroic mode of radical risk and extreme solitude" (2011: 272). While Stengers is right to notice this difference, I suggest that it is not so much a difference in theoretical argumentation than it is a difference in political

orientation. Deleuze does not disagree with the idea that the rupturing effect of the event is contingent – but it is exactly the rupturing, change-inducing event he is interested in. With Deleuze, the moment in which the course of a particular actualisation of the eternal object is determined can be conceptualised as a third or "pure event" (Deleuze 1990a: 22; 63).

This moment is what Whitehead refers to as the "decision" (1978: 43) over the abstraction in the nexus. This non-subjective decision, which is conditioned by the forms of and performed in the medium of sense, will in the following be encountered as central to Luhmann's discussion of the event, especially with regard to its role in political processes of sense-making. Turning back to Deleuze, this third event is pure, because it is pure creative potentiality without present existence. Upon entering the conditioned nexus of the Event, the corporeal singular point, which is always "in danger of being snapped up by its cause" (ibid.), is opened-up to a multiplicity of "ideational or 'fictive'" (ibid., 95) quasi-causes for connection. While the singularity-event, on its own, is one-directional, it is turned into a resource for relational creativity once connected to the Event on the surface of sense which is governed by "the autonomy of the effect" (ibid.). To illustrate how free corporeal and epistemic effects can function productively Deleuze uses the example of the battle which is "the Event in its essence […] it is actualized in diverse manners at once, and … each participant may grasp it at a different level of actualization within its variable present" (Deleuze 1990a: 101).

The rupturing event which takes place through counter-actualisation in a moment of openness, which the critical theorists Braidotti and Massumi are interested in as shown above, is therefore importantly not lost in reconciling Deleuze's event with the two-fold event of singularity and conditioned nexus in Whitehead. But through Whitehead, the possibility for change in the event is drawn inwards and located within the relationality of sense. The connectivity of available nexus relations in response to a new singular point enfolded, and not a resistant subject or creative material or affective force determines the effect of the event within the continuum of identical duration and change.[72]

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[72] I argue that the turn to Whitehead actually allows me to move beyond certain subjectivist remnants in the way Deleuze himself discusses the counter-actualisation of the pure event in *The Logic of Sense*. To achieve change in the connective duration of sense, Deleuze argues that the pure event must be counter-actualised by an actor who "selects" a particular connective actualisation between historical quasi-cause and future to be realised (Deleuze 1990a: 147). Counter-actualisation is "the replacement of physic ingression by speculative investment" (Deleuze 1990a: 238) which opens the creative potentiality of the pure event through "this leap … this passage from one surface [of sense] to another" (ibid.). The way Deleuze describes the counter-actualisation which produces novelty in the pure event here is strikingly similar to an introductory passage in Whitehead's *Process and Reality*. Here, he repeatedly speaks of the necessity for

To unpack the significance of the connective moment which links the singular point to the relations of the Event in a particular way, deciding over continuity or change, but not in such a way that this connective decision presumes or is limited to individual subjects, I argue that it is necessary to return to Luhmann. In the second half of this chapter, it will be explored how the selective decision in the pure event is performed by Luhmann's entities of sense thoroughly detached from all subjective agency – his sense systems. More importantly, his theory makes it possible to unpack what Deleuze, as cited in the introduction, alludes to in one passage of *The Logic of Sense*, but never fleshes out – that the connective moment in the sense-event is the space of politics, and that revolutions, understood as evental sense-connections which actualise change rather than identical duration, "are made possible" (Deleuze 1990a: 49) in the evental openness which conditions the connective synthesis of objects and thought, the synthetic making of sense in time.

4.3 Event, structure and decision in Luhmann

4.3.1   Singularities as self-produced information-events

In Luhmann, explicit references to Whitehead are even more sparing than they are in Deleuze. However, the references Luhmann makes suggest that the central dimensions of Whitehead's theory of the event are present in his theory as well (Hernes 2014: 263). The

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an "imaginative leap" (Whitehead 1978: 4) or "leap of the imagination" (ibid., 13) which would allow philosophy to understand phenomena beyond the limits of existing trajectories of meaning, beyond particular forms of sense expressed in language. Like Deleuze, Whitehead also formulates the enaction of this leap in the connective moment of the event in a negative sense – not as counter-actualisation, but as negation. A leap of imagination requires a subject that negates rather than accepts the connective opportunities most obvious, most readily available in the sphere of abstractions (ibid., 239-280). Situating the selective decision over identical reproduction or a change of direction in the nexus-relations of sense, Whitehead's and Deleuze's creation of novelty again escapes Laruelle's charge of relying on a constitutive externality. If creative change is to be achieved in the connective moment of the pure event, it must happen on the side of the Event and its relations of abstraction. It has been shown how both thinkers escape thinking creative materiality as constituent Other-as-One, but what becomes evident here is that this seems to take place, in both Deleuze and Whitehead, at the expense of incidental returns to or at least a certain retainment of the Kantian figure of the acting subject similarly to what has been observed with regard to Braidotti (2006; 2013) above. It is the responsibility of the philosopher to create the event of conceptual-abstractive change against the tyrannical ossification of concepts through counter-actualisation or negation in sense. However, it should also be made clear that In *What is Philosophy?* (1994)*,* Deleuze and Guattari (ibid., 66-73) do to a certain extent offer an alternative to the subjective actor - in the form of the *conceptual persona*. *Conceptual personae* emerge from the work of a philosopher under particular context conditions to enfold a conceptual power which can induce change in the relations of sense on the plane of immanence. However, Deleuze and Guattari focus on the force and effects of the concept here while not unpacking its constitution beyond a relational, almost accidental emergence. In this sense, they do not offer an alternative to Luhmann's theorisation of non-subjective connective decision.

first important aspect is here the two-fold character of the event which is split between a singular point and the relational nexus of the Event distinguished not qualitatively, but only temporally. Beginning with the singularity-event, Luhmann uses the term "event" interchangeably with the concept of "element" as well as, especially in his later writings, "operation" (Greshoff 1999).[73] Despite this apparent carelessness, the event is central to the idea of systemic autopoiesis in Luhmann: the event is the basic constituent of the system. It is the very definition of Luhmann's autopoiesis that a system does not only produce its own structures independent from any external stimulus, but also the elements which constitute these structures: events (Luhmann 2009e: 40-41; 1995: 8).

This definition should not be understood as standing in contrast to what has been established in chapter 1, that sense as medium and form is constitutive of social and psychic systems. Rather, Luhmann's concept of the event provides a clarification. If we zoom in on sense as the medium for the autopoietic reproduction of systemic (sense-)relations, then this reproduction takes place in time through the continuous emergence of and connection to new evental elements. It is clear that Luhmann's event corresponds to the singularity-event in Deleuze and Whitehead. Its central characteristic is a productive potentiality which follows from its temporal transience. Like the singular point in Whitehead's passage of nature, Luhmann's event is primarily defined by its fleeting quality; its novelty can only be momentous (Luhmann 1996). In the context of systemic relations, on the inside of sense, Luhmann's singularity-event presents itself as information (ibid.). Information "must lend itself to the crystallisation of sense. Americans would use the neologism 'sensemaking'" (ibid.). Information is the elemental unit of sense – it makes sense, ensures the autopoietic continuation of its relations.

Implicit to this definition of the event as transient singular point of information is that there is a second side to the event in Luhmann. As already briefly discussed at the end of the last chapter, informational novelty can only be perceived as such against the background of what is not new – what is established, known, memorised. There is thus also an Event that is a nexus of sense relations, in Luhmann. "[A]s soon as it has informed" (ibid.), information loses its informational character and becomes sense; it is integrated in the structures of sense remembered by the system. In Luhmann, Whitehead's distinction between singularity-event and percipient Event in the nexus takes the form of

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[73] For this reason, the concept of the event has received little attention in secondary literature on Luhmann. For instance, in the extensive *Luhmann-Handbuch* by Jahraus et al. (2012), the event – in notable contrast to the concept of structure – is not granted its own chapter.

the age-old sociological distinction between event and structure or, as Luhmann (1995: 48) prefers in *Social Systems,* event and processual relation. Like Whitehead and Deleuze, Luhmann radically relativises the distinction between both parts of the event. Relations are nothing but temporalised events, and every event will become relational structure in the autopoiesis of the system: there is no "'difference in character' or 'difference in quality' between operation and structure" (Luhmann 1993a: 49). Luhmann (1995: 58) references Whitehead as the "basic" source for this temporal distinction of event and structure/relation.

As in Whitehead and Deleuze, both sides of the event are necessary to constitute an event. But also as in Whitehead and Deleuze, the decisive moment is the emergence of the informational singular point within the relationality of sense. Information must be understood as such, and this is only possible through connectivity to the relations of sense. Luhmann is here even clearer than the former: while information presents itself to the relations of sense as disruptive novelty and can be attributed to a source outside the system, it is a functionally necessary product immanent to these sense relations, not a Laruelleian Other-as-One. The information-event introduces difference or openness to the system, but "difference as such begins to work if and insofar as it can be treated as information in self-referential systems" (Luhmann 1995: 40) – only if is already enfolded in the surface of sense.

But as shown in chapter 3, there is a second, more pressing necessity to the event – its emergence as informational novelty within the relations of sense is necessary for the connective autopoietic continuation of the system. Luhmann again makes reference to Whitehead, specifically his concept of the actual occasion, when he discusses this necessity to continue in the event in *Social Systems.*

> In the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, the concept of 'actual occasion' occupies this basal position, and because it was the only way of guaranteeing connectivity, it was also endowed with the possibility of self-reference (it 'has significance for itself'). Self-reference became the criterion of reality pure and simple, and this occurred on the level of elements that could not be dissolved any further because that was the only way to guarantee coherence. (Luhmann 1995: 290)

If the only mode of actual existence is having significance, and this significance must take the form of situating an actual occasion on the level of sense, then a constant supply of information to become actual must be guaranteed within the nexus of sense.

Deleuze and Whitehead seek to theorise the link between event, sense and continuity on a philosophical level (even though always complemented by political critique in Deleuze)

– from this perspective, every particular singularity-event which generates continuity is merely exemplary, and highly contingent. But Luhmann changes the perspective: his systems theory is interested in self-producing actualities. From the perspective of every relational actuality or sense system, the percipient enfolding of new singularities is functionally necessary because it gives new significance to its relations of sense (Hernes 2014: 263). Beyond Whitehead and Deleuze, Luhmann therefore seeks to explore the moment in which the informational singular point is connected to the serialised sense of the Event as the motor of systemic autopoiesis, but also the central problem which every system continuously has to resolve. While the pure event of contingent relational connectivity is indeed momentous in Deleuze, and immediately follows when the singular point enters the set of the Event, it is theoretically drawn out and unpacked further in Luhmann.

The pure event of creative openness in which a multiplicity of productive connections are possible happens when the information-event takes place on the level of sense. Information emerges on the surface of sense, as a form of sense which can therefore be recognised – as event. But it is not yet connected to a specific relation of sense, the moment of autopoietic connectivity has not yet taken place, cannot have taken place because the complexity of the event makes connectivity impossible. How can this complexity be resolved in such a way that the information-event can be linked to the relations of the Event, thereby reproducing them? "For a theory of autopoietic systems … the pre-eminent question is: How does one get from one elemental event to the next? (Luhmann 1995: 36). I suggest that in Luhmann, the answer to the problem of evental connectivity seems to lie within the realm of systemic structures: "[s]tructure transforms unstructured complexity into structured complexity" (ibid., 282).

I argue that the "structure" Luhmann refers to here is not the series of past sense-events providing order in time; it is not Luhmann's take on the idea of a social structure which he prefers to call relation. On the contrary, he seems to develop a second, different idea of structure: a functional tool developed by the sense system which is located within its relational structures. This second structure provides guidance, allows for selection and connectivity in the moment of the event by operating as a constraint to complexity (Greshoff 1999: 22-23; Luhmann 1995: 393). It excludes connective possibilities, selects options for relational connection and thereby makes it possible for the relations of the Event to continue in time through connectivity to new information-events. Luhmann's second structure is a structure of expectation (Luhmann 1995: 293). Structures of

expectation transform the complexity of the pure event to a moment of *decision* between alternatives.

It is important to note that this decision is not the intentional action of a subject, even though it can be retrospectively made sense of in this way, once relational connection is achieved. Luhmann's concept of the decision is more general: equivalent and complementary to the expectational structure, it is an operational development through which every sense system achieves relational connectivity in the moment of the event (Wirtz 1999: 190-192). "One can speak of a decision: *if and insofar as the slant of [sense a connective] action has is in reaction to an expectation directed to that action*" (Luhmann 1995: 294; original italicisation). It is worth recalling here that Whitehead, in his ontological principle, also uses the concept of decision. For Whitehead, a decision is that which achieves connectivity in a similar, relational and non-subjective way. He already points to "the relativity of decision; whereby every decision expresses the relation of the actual thing, for which a decision is made, to an actual thing by which that decision is made" (Whitehead 1978: 43).

While not explicitly drawing on Whitehead, Luhmann theorises the decision not just as contingent, but more importantly also as that which ultimately conceals contingency. The information-event ruptures relations of sense in time to avoid circular reproduction as discussed in chapter 3. But the decision on a particular path of differentiation in the event performs the actual displacing movement beyond the circle of time, producing a continuous flow of time which grounds relations of sense. The interaction between information-event and structure-Event thus takes place in the mode of decision. Information emerges on the surface of sense in the form of something to be decided on; it provokes a decision which selects the past events included in a particular plane of sense and the futures opened in line with these (Luhmann 1996b: 246-247). Luhmann's decision offers a perspective from which Deleuze's interest in counter-actualization can be continued in a way which is clearly distinct from intentional subjective action. Translated to Luhmann's decision in the event, what is at stake in the question of counter-actualisation against identical repetition is how different structures of expectation interact in and inform the decision in the event.

The connective decision which links the information-event to the Evental relations of the system is the necessary condition for autopoiesis. It thus must take place in all sense systems, which all have to produce and hold available structures of expectation which reduce complexity, select sense-connections and allow for connectivity to be established.

For the sense system of society, the connective decision selects a future to continue towards through the actualisation of a particular past-future lineage in a way that must be binding for all of its members to reproduce the social relationality as a whole. For this reason, I argue that the decision in the event here becomes a *political decision*, not just in its scope, but also because the decisional resolution of evental complexity which guides the course of societal evolution is the specific functional responsibility of the political system in Luhmann. In *Die Politik der Gesellschaft* (2002)*,* Luhmann states that, under the conditions of functional differentiation, where different social systems only exist and persist autopoietically by fulfilling their particular social function, it is the specific function of politics to "hold ready the capacity for collectively binding decision-making" (ibid., 84).

The decision in the event marks the point where the theory of sense as a perspective to understand the genesis of the world as it can be known in its creative forces and contingencies, which this dissertation has sought to develop so far, becomes a more explicitly political theory which provides understanding for the way contemporary politics functions. While I so far have sought to understand ungrounded, self-grounding production in sense, Luhmann's decision opens-up the possibility to use this theoretical framework to unpack contemporary politics as functioning in an ungrounded, but self-productive manner. This theoretical link becomes available, I argue, because the decision in the event has not just a general, but a double relevance for the political system: not only does it have to decisionally continue its own sense in the event, but this autopoiesis of its own sense relations is tied up with the functional responsibility of politics. This responsibility lies in the decisional production of orientation in sense for society in the face of problematic informational complexity.

Politics must continue sense through the exclusion of complexity to persist in its current status quo, as a relational entity capable of effectively steering the course of social evolution. This existential relevance of the decision for politics which can be detected in Luhmann situates his thought in a "philosophical tradition, [which] from Benjamin to … Agamben, takes the absence of a status […] as the moment of birth of a social category that, ever-denied and ever-present, plays a key role within legal and political history and embodies its founding self-contradiction or paradox" (Schütz 2000: 116). In this sense, Luhmann's decision in the event, induced by the enfolding of informational complexity on the surface of sense, can be understood as a particular version of the self-productive decision on the exception theorised by Carl Schmitt, Agamben and Walter Benjamin. In

the following I will unpack Luhmann's decision in the event further against the background of those theories of exceptional decisionism to highlight the particular contribution of Luhmann's approach if understood as a theory of ungrounded political self-production in this sense.

I will show how Luhmann provides a middle ground option between the determinism which is attached to the decisional resolution of the political sovereign's foundational paradox in Agamben and which leaves no room for immanent change, and the melancholic mourning of the loss of all political agency in Benjamin. In Luhmann, the political decision deparadoxifies the absence of both an ontological foundation for politics and the absence of effective, decision-making agency. However, as I will show, a politics which operates through the self-productive decision in sense must internally be highly unstable. It relies on the expectational structures of the Event for orientation in the evental emergency of unprocessable complexity which must eternally return to facilitate both the reproduction and the flexible adaption of political sense relations.

4.3.2 Decision and self-production of the political sovereign: Schmitt, Agamben, Benjamin

The conceptual history of the political decision as paradoxically constitutive of the deciding political entity finds its point of origin in the political theory of Carl Schmitt. In Schmitt, the political is both superior to all other social realms upon which it imposes its will, and autonomous insofar as it differentiates itself from those other realms. The political is what the political sovereign decides on (Thornhill 2007: 500-501). In this sense, Schmitt develops a decisionist theory of politics – political legitimacy is not derived from democratic support or "overwhelmingly convincing arguments" but from the authoritative decision itself which provides "judgement by means of the authoritative setting aside of doubt" (Schmitt 1996: 46). Politics operates self-referentially (Schmidt 1912: 86; Fischer-Lescano and Christensen 2012: 94). The decision from which the sovereign derives their legitimacy is a two-fold decision on the exception. The sovereign has the authority to declare a state of exception, and can then decide about the exceptional means which need to be used in order to overcome it (Weber 1992: 12). Deciding on the exception which lies outside the normal political-legal order, the sovereign reproduces this ordinary realm of governmental authority through the constitutive outside of the exception (Schütz 2000:118; Weber 1992: 9-12).

In Schmitt, the event of the exception is produced by the sovereign, but also unfolds a constitutive force for the authority of the former which is *sui generis*. "With regard to the content of the decisional norm, each constitutive and specific decisional moment entails something new and foreign. Normatively speaking, the Judgement is born out of nothingness". (Schmitt 1979: 41). Does this characterisation of the event as exception provide points of connection to Luhmann's theory? I suggest that the event can indeed be described as an instant of exceptional emergency for Luhmann's relational system – a "factor of anxiety", "uncertainty or risk" or source of "problems of planning and decision" (Luhmann 1995: 28). It is a self-conditioned exposure to the complexity immanent to the sense relations of the system which, as in Schmitt, necessitates a decision to be resolved in the selective continuation of one or another line of sense. Complexity is usually constitutively excluded from the system, but returns in the form of the event, where, as discussed in chapter 3, past actual and possible lineages of sense return.

As in Schmitt, Luhmann's event, literally, has the quality of an exception. Although its emergence is conditioned, it is detached from the rules of the systemic order which it ruptures. However, Schmitt's state of exception is an ideal-typical example of Laruelle's Other-as-One. Produced by the sovereign in order to reinvigorate political power, it is an absolute outside which unfolds an almost mystical power through which the inside of ordinary legality is reproduced. While Schmitt's exceptionalism remains intrinsically tied to a moment of transcendental emergence, Luhmann's event is radically immanent. It only appears as the "outside" of informational complexity on the surface of sense on the inside of the system where it is secondary to and contingently conditioned by its nexus relations. For this reason, exceptionality can never be a genuine ontological quality of the complexity which re-enters the system. On the contrary, the conceptualisation of complexity as risk, uncertainty or problem already orders it into a particular line of expectation which prepares decision. What becomes evident in Luhmann's decision in the complexity-event is that "systems cannot grasp their own complexity (even less that of their environment) and yet can problematize it. The system produces and reacts to an unclear picture of itself" (Luhmann 1995: 28).

Schmitt's decision on the exception has been theoretically developed further by Agamben in a way which undoes the agency of the sovereign and aligns with Luhmann's turn to relational immanence as the onto-epistemological location of the decision. In his *Homo Sacer* series, Agamben theorises the exception as the moment in which a sovereign power which lacks all ontological essence constitutes itself from the inside of power relations.

Sovereignty functionally requires the recurrence of the exception to continuously produce itself by becoming manifest in the decision on the exception (Agamben 2005: 28-34). "Agamben's philosophical thought starts, as it were, in the moment when the distinction of problem and solution – i.e. their unity – has become questionable" (Schütz 2000: 120). In *The State of Exception* (2005)*,* Agamben argues that the emergency which allows the sovereign to decide should therefore not be thought as an outside to the legal order it temporarily abolishes, but an *inside outside* produced through "inclusive exclusion" (ibid., 22) which takes place within the political relationality it will ground exactly in the way theorised by Luhmann.[74]

> In truth, the state of exception is neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other. The suspension of the norm does not mean its abolition, and the zone of anomie that it establishes is not (or at least claims not to be) unrelated to the juridical order. (Agamben 2005: 23)

Two things are important here to understand the relational necessity of the exception. Firstly, sovereign power needs the reproductive event of the exception because it lacks substance. In *The Kingdom and the Glory* (2011), Agamben draws out an analogy between religion and politics: both function and reproduce themselves through an economy of glory which conceals their absolute lack of ontological essence. The decision on the exception is here more than a tool strategically employed by the political sovereign – it is the necessary condition of his or her existence as such. Like in Luhmann, the event (of the exception) is endowed with a functional role in the self-reproductive relations of Agamben's political economy of glory. The decision which resolves the event, which, in Agamben, is mainly the decision to exercise some form of political force, unfolds a constitutive power which is relationally exercised on something - bodies, groups, institutions or legal frameworks.

The constitutive power of the decision is aimed at becoming manifest. Through actualisation, for example in the bare life of those included in the realm of sovereign power through exclusion, Agamben (2005: 170-173) argues that the decision also lends actuality to a constituent sovereign power which only exists in so far as it is exercised. The event of the exception allows for the productive split between constitutive power and constituent power to take place, and thus for the political sovereign to be produced *ex post*

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[74] Interestingly Agamben describes this exceptional mechanism of producing an inside outside with a reference to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*: "Sovereignty only reigns over what it is capable of internalizing" (1987: 360; as quoted in Agamben 1998: 18; see also Richter 2018).

facto through the exercise of the force whose source it supposedly is (Agamben 2011: 99-105; 127). Immanent decisional power is replaced by a perpetual seizure of power through the decision in the exception (Schütz 2000: 121). This changes the status of the exceptional event. Agamben points out that "[t]he meaning of 'exception' [was] acquired by the term oikonomia in the sixth or seventh century, especially in the field of the canon law of the Byzantine Church … the contiguity of the two meanings is evident" (2011: 49).

A second important element of Agamben's political decisionism is that the event of the exception is politically (and theologically) productive precisely because it is not truly exceptional. Rather than being a rare occurrence which demands an extraordinary response, both the exception and the decision it makes necessary are ordinary features of an economised apparatus which produces political glory. "The paradigm of government and of the state of exception coincide in the idea of an oikonomia, an administrative praxis that governs the course of things, adapting at each turn, in its salvific intent, to the nature of the concrete situation against which it has to measure itself" (Agamben 2011: 50). Agamben's exceptional political economy functions through a relational "ontologico-political machine" (Agamben 2016: 239) which reproduces sovereign power through the displacement of constitutive and constituent power. Every political act (re-)produces the political sovereign it supposedly originates from. For this reason, there is no outside to the relations of the evental political economy – Agamben (1999) theorises a self-grounding, self-productive politics of absolute immanence.[75]

The political problem opened by Schmitt is how politics makes strategic use of the constitutive power of an event made into an absolute outside to reproduce its own status. With Agamben, the problem shifts to a relational apparatus in which the event eternally re-emerges to supply the political sovereign with opportunities to reproduce its constituent power through constitutive decision. The relational production of the coupling event-decision is here automated and totalised (Agamben 2016: 151-134). Agamben's theory of the evental decision is noticeably closer to Luhmann's than Schmitt's. While the exceptional event is a tool passively used and produced by Schmitt's authoritative political sovereign, sovereign politics in Agamben needs the exception to continuously

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[75] While Agamben (1999) interestingly discusses Deleuze's late essay "Immanence: A Life" to stress that, under the conditions of a self-reproductive ontologico-political dispositif of biopolitics (Agamben 2016), the emergence of resistant creativity has to be theorised as immanent, readers of Agamben have also pointed out that he remains close to Heidegger's ontology of a one-directional, revelatory emergence of the new, and thus fails to dissociate his theory completely from transcendental remnants (Mills 2008).

produce itself in its status as authoritative entity. Here, the event becomes a productive moment to which both the decision and the continuation of (political) relations which follows are secondary. However, at the same time, the primacy of the event to be decided on is not absolute. As in Luhmann, the event rather emerges as functionally necessary within the relationality it reproduces. The exceptional event is constituted by a dramatising political economy which allows for the complete closure of the self-reproductive machine of politics (Fischer-Lescano and Christensen 2012: 98-100).

However, I argue that two ambiguities remain in Agamben's take on the self-reproductive decision on the exception. A first, political ambiguity surrounds the exception itself. Within critical political theory, Agamben's state of exception has found much resonance as a tool to understand contemporary politics. In particular, researchers have drawn on Agamben's state of exception to analyse state surveillance in response to supposed security threats (Hunter and MacDonald 2017; Dillon 2015; Aradau and van Munster 2007) as well as the governance of refugees, migrants and other *homines sacri* such as the Palestinian inhabitants of Gaza (Mavelli 2017; Joronen 2017; Ticktin 2005). While Agamben's exceptional decisionism resonates with how coercive, sovereign authority reproduces itself through politically dramatised emergencies, it has also been observed that Agamben's framework does not seem to be able to accommodate every aspect of how the exception is governed in practice.

Research on the US Prison in Guantanamo Bay (Aradau 2007; Johns 2005), the EU refugee crisis (Richter 2018) or Gaza as spaces and/or moments of exception (Tuastad 2017) indicates that on the one hand political exceptions can exist in the absence of a singular, clear sovereign decision. On the other hand, not all self-reproductive instances of sovereign decision-making seem to follow an exceptional logic. I argue that this points to the necessity to de-couple the idea of an ungrounded, self-productive politics which functions through the decision from an exceptional emergency which is actually perceived as such, and which also involves the perception of a grand, messianic, singular political decision which resolves the former.

A second, theoretical ambiguity in Agamben's take on the decision on the evental exception is the latent determinism of his sovereign machine of ontologico-political relations. As demanded by Laruelle, Agamben situates the creativity which makes politics function on the inside of its relations. As these relations reproduce themselves through every political decision as ontological actualisation or political expression, there is, in Agamben, not only no outside to the relationality of politics, but also no possibility for

conceptual or practical action which does not feed into the ontologico-political machine of sovereign politics. For Agamben, resistant creativity can only take place on the basis of a complete detachment from the socio-political conditions of biopolitics, it must be "set free from every figure of relation" (Agamben 2016: 268). Even if we do not assume that this renders Agamben, as Catherine Mills argues, a theorist of "anti-political quietism" (2008: 129), the absolute relational detachment he demands as a basis for genuine creativity calls into question to what extent his theory can be used to understand both identical and divergent relational production in a nuanced way where both are located in close proximity to each other rather than in separate onto-genetic realms.[76]

I suggest that yet another theory of the political decision on the exception can contribute towards the resolution of both ambiguities, which can be found in the thought of Benjamin. Agamben (2005) in fact substantially draws on Benjamin's theory in addition to Schmitt to develop his theory of exceptional decisionism. However, in the context of this discussion I believe that it makes sense to reverse this chronological and theoretical trajectory here because the perspective developed in Benjamin's *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* (1998) is the furthest removed from Schmitt's sovereign determinism. Invoked by Agamben, the fundamental condition marked by the *Trauerspiel* in Benjamin is a lack of sovereignty which is compensated for with the dramatic enactment of political power (Benjamin 1998: 60-68; Weber 1992: 8). Situated between Baroque exaggeration and romantic simplicity, the exception of the *Trauerspiel* reveals the original tragedy of sovereign power (Lindroos 1998: 76-77).

Like Agamben, Benjamin exposes the theological foundations underlying the dramatic production of a political power which lacks substance and the capacity for actual executive control. For example, Benjamin describes the drama of Fascist politics as the political "continuing of theology by other means" (Lindroos 1998: 172). Like Machiavelli's prince, Benjamin's political sovereign can only exist as such in and through the "chaos" (ibid., 159) of the exceptional event. For this reason, as he states in his eighth thesis in "On the Concept of History" (2003), the modern sovereign must govern through a state of exception which "is not the exception but the rule" (ibid., 392) – which

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[76] By Agamben's logic, this isolation is necessary to render inoperative the mechanism of biopolitical capture. But there is no mention of how the alternative political perspective which this withdrawal open can then be reconnected to, challenge or change the relations of the governed political community. Relational withdrawal neutralises the operativity of the law, but, importantly, "without for that reason abolishing the law" (Agamben 2016: 273). But if this is the case, any socio-political actualisation of the novel political practice which creative potentiality can bring into view must be rendered ineffective by the relations of the biopolitical apparatus that have remained intact, and which will exert their dialectical-reproductive pull as soon as it comes into contact with them.

Agamben (2005: 57) will later borrow for his conceptualisation of exceptionailsm. For Agamben, the normalisation of the exception is a necessary part of the politically productive economy of glory. Politics needs to reproduce itself in a continuously returning emergency-event as the agent of salvation through political decision.

At this juncture, Benjamin emphasises that the constitutive potentiality of the event does not endow the political sovereign with the power to resolve the threatening chaos of the emergency through decision. The emergency-event must rather be thought together with "the indecisiveness of the tyrant. The prince, who is responsible for making the decision to proclaim the state of emergency, reveals at the first opportunity, that he is almost incapable of making a decision" (Benjamin 1998: 71). In Benjamin, there is no one-off, forceful decision which produces and/or resolves the exception to reproduce the political status of the decision-making sovereign constituent. The decision is instead broken down, multiplied, repeated or drawn-out – the final decision never takes place. As Weber (1992: 12) highlights, Benjamin does not speak of a sovereign decision on the exception, on what is to be constitutively excluded from the realm of sovereign legality, but instead he states that the task which the sovereign is faced with is to exclude exception, to exclude that what is already excluded.

Agamben (2005: 52-60) picks up on the indecisiveness of the sovereign which Benjamin formulates against Schmitt but reads it in an ontological fashion. For him, it reveals that the distinction between the political-legal inside and the extra-legal anomie is fictitious and not secured, but rather constitutively subverted in the political figment of the exception. For Agamben, Benjamin's melancholy follows his realisation that "the sphere of creatures and the juridical order are caught up in a single catastrophe" (Agamben 2005: 57) which is the exception. The exception is catastrophic because it reveals that there is no essence of politics which is separate from exceptional violence. It is not, however, a tragedy for the political sovereign who, following Agamben, can still rely on the political economy of glory to consistently and convincingly produce immanent power against the background of ontological lack. But Benjamin on his part not only questions the foundation of political power, but also appears doubtful that this dramatisation, put on by a sovereign utterly dependent on it, could be so flawlessly convincing.

The continuous return of the decisional moment is here not just strategic, as in Schmitt, or economically automated, as in Agamben; it rather speaks of a genuine political inability to resolve the exception through a decision which can only be "temporary, problematic and limited" (Benjamin 1998: 116-117), a lack of power to decide which

continuously threatens the sovereign as it keeps him or her in place. Benjamin's sovereign is not absolutely powerful, not even as the fictional character created through dramatisation.

> The state of exception is excluded as theatre […] The theater of the German baroque diverges both from classical tragedy and from the Schmittian theory of sovereignty in that it leaves no place for anything resembling a definitive decision. Rather, it is precisely the absence of such a verdict and the possibility of unending appeal and revision that marks the *Trauerspiel*. (Weber 1992: 17)

The final decision which resolves the plot is the characteristic of the tragedy, but the characteristic of the *Trauerspiel* is the recurrence of fate as an evental force of accident which continues to threaten every resolution achieved through decision (Benjamin 1998: 137). The functionality of a politics which is self-reproductive in the event is more dependent on constant legitimisation, more reactive, the position of the sovereign it reproduces weaker in Benjamin not only compared to Schmitt, but also compared to Agamben, where the location of immanent, self-reproductive power is transferred from the sovereign himself to the relations of the ontologico-political economy, but its grasp is still absolute.

> From [Benjamin's] account it is clear that the dilemma of the sovereign in baroque drama is also and above all that of the subject as such: it is no longer determined by its 'head' - that is, by its consciousness, its intentions - but by forces that are independent of it, that buffet and drive it from one extreme to another. (Weber 1992: 16)

Two insights can be drawn from the theoretical trajectory Agamben-Benjamin. Firstly, the status of the event changes together with the status of politics. The grasp of the sovereign authority, or of the power relations which take its place, cannot be absolute in the face of the event. Benjamin reveals the ambiguity that characterises the functional relationship between event and political power. The exceptional event is both of reproductive necessity and genuinely threatening to the status of the political sovereign. In Benjamin, the chaos of the event entails an open potentiality which must be politically contained through the sovereign (non-)decision. The "temporally limited" emergence of the event interrupts the passage of time, and thus the political order of sense it conditions (Benjamin 1998: 117). The event is exceptional, but the exception has to be excluded by the sovereign in order to reproduce the status quo of ordinary politics (Benjamin 129-130; Weber 1992: 12-14).

What differentiates the *Trauerspiel* from the tragedy and makes the analogy to the state of politics so powerful for Benjamin is that it entails a double tragedy or a double loss.

Lost is not only the ontological foundation of political power, but also the possibility of a sovereign decision which could ever fully resolve the chaotic complexity of the event (Benjamin 1998: 163-169). Benjamin's melancholic assessment concludes that there is no hope for effective political action or political change under the conditions of a politics of the *Trauerspiel*. For Benjamin, it has to be resolved in a politics-to-come, a society-to-come which would re-discover its own meaningfulness and truthfulness in the thought for a new community which has yet to be imagined (ibid., 32-39). As a consequence of this double loss of actual and enacted decision-making power, Benjamin secondly reveals that the decision in the event can no longer take place *ex nihilo*, as it is the case in Schmitt. The always only temporarily powerful sovereign requires a structural auxiliary, requires historical timelines which provide orientation in the chaotic emergency of the event so that it can be politically excluded (Lindroos 1998: 76).

While Benjamin views history in general as fulfilling this ordering function, I argue that his perspective makes it possible to explore the exceptional emergency itself, as a form in sense, as one of those structures which allow politics to exclude the event. As indicated above, this path can be continued with Luhmann because Luhmann identifies the forms of sense available to grasp exceptional complexity, such as risk (1991a) or crisis (1984), as selectively structuring in a way which already prepares for its decisional-connective overcoming. For him, the decisional self-production of politics in the exception of the event is a theoretical description located on the analytical level of second-order observation (of the political system) which can, but does not have to involve that both this emergency and the sovereign decision which follows are made sense of as such within other systemic entities.

Moreover, following Benjamin, the constitutive outside of the emergency is no longer enough to reproduce the political sovereign – only if politics manages to exclude the threatening emergency that has become the condition of its existence, only if authoritative political steering can actually be achieved in the moment of the event can the sovereign persist in her status as politically powerful. However, does this opening of the threatening quality of the eventual chaos necessarily have to be understood as loss, as it is the case in Benjamin? I argue that this is not the case, because an event which is conceptualised as always both politically productive and threatening to the particular conditions it reproduces in fact theoretically nuances the relational determinism of Agamben's ontologico-political machine, but also counters Benjamin's political melancholy with the

possibility of creative emergence. While not analysing the German *Trauerspiel,* Deleuze discusses the political tragedy of the Baroque in *The Fold.*

Like Agamben and Benjamin, Deleuze identifies the loss of a secure ontological anchoring for power as the specific characteristic of the Baroque (while the former draws an analogy between theology and politics, Deleuze, like Foucault, focuses on pastoral power; political implications are present, but remain implicit). This loss leads to a turning inwards, a becoming-immanent of power which now has to operate through permanent, dramatically enacted relational continuation.

> At a point close to us human Reason had to collapse, like the Kantian refuge, the last refuge of principles. […] But still, before, a […] crisis and collapse of all theological Reason had to take place. That is where the Baroque assumes its position: Is there some way of saving the theological ideal at a moment when it is being contested on all sides, and when the world cannot stop accumulating its 'proofs' against it, ravages and miseries, at a time when the earth will soon shake and tremble…? The Baroque solution is the following: we shall multiply principles – we can always slip a new one out from under our cuffs – and in this way we will change their use. We will not have to ask what available object corresponds to a given luminous principle, but what hidden principle responds to whatever object is given. 'The play interiorizes not only the players who serve as pieces, but the board on which the game is played, and the material of that board'. (Deleuze 2006a: 76)

While theology and politics have no means to avert the tragedy of foundational loss in Benjamin, Deleuze argues that it is not so much a tragic loss as it is simply a shift in their functional logic away from the exercise of immanent power to power relations which operate through internalisation or enfolding. In a world where they have lost the monopoly of steering oversight with regard to the forms of sense and their series which ground society, power persists through connectively enfolding all of these forms within its synthetic, always both epistemic and material relationality – its relations of sense. The synthetic relations of power function as nexus-relations of Whitehead's event – they call forth singularities to produce durations in sense. The evental emergency cannot take place in the sense relations of the nexus without a material singularity – the bodies of the players and the material of the board are enfolded by the dramatic relationality of politics.

As Benjamin puts it, "the world of things … towers oppressively over the horizon of the *Trauerspiel*" (1998: 133-134). But nevertheless, the introversive functionality of political relations means that evental creativity is now fully immanent to them. Deleuze mediates the pessimistic tone of Benjamin's assessment: the functionality of post-foundational politics can be seen both as a loss and as an opportunity. Because it emerges from a multiplicity immanent to its relations, the threatening event can be thought of as a source

of change and innovation. Political relations are fixed only insofar as they are reproductive of a constituent power, of politics, but their content and reproductive end-points are indeterminate – "we can always slip a new one out from under our cuffs". The event is the operator of this reproductive variance, and I suggest that its political significance can be further explored through the juncture developed above from Agamben to Benjamin and Deleuze if we return to Luhmann.

A certain proximity to Schmitt's decisionism has already been noted above, as well as by several commentators on Luhmann's throught (Thornhill 2017; Fischer-Lescano and Christensen 2012; Schütz 2000; Wirtz 1999), especially in Luhmann's earlier work. Luhmann himself however rejected this association, and the static character of Schmitt's theory, in a manner that is unusually direct: "I am indeed not convinced by Carl Schmitt's theory. I think that a good politics is exactly the one that is able to combine a maximum of realisability with a minimal genesis of enemies. It has to try and convince enemies and conquered to not remain those forever" (Luhmann in Wirtz: 1999; own translation). It can be argued, as Wirtz (1999) does, that Luhmann's assessment of Schmitt is based on a negligent misunderstanding of Schmitt's theory due to a lack of in-depth engagement, and that the overlap between both theories of political self-production through decision is clear and significant. However, I believe that Luhmann's explicit demarcation is justified because his account of the political decision in the event goes beyond Schmitt's sovereign decision on the exception in several ways, which mirror the observations of Agamben and Benjamin, but also add to the theories of the latter.

As stated above, for Luhmann the functionality of the political system lies in "holding-ready the capacity for collectively binding decision-making" (Luhmann 2002: 84) for the social system. Luhmann's decision is firstly not made by a singular actor, but it is the product of a system of sense relations. He disempowers the figure of the sovereign which Agamben (and similarly Benjamin) somewhat paradoxically holds on to, even where he describes the functionality of 20th century politics and its contemporary implications. In Luhmann, however, decisional continuation reproduces a system of political relations or political sense as constituent power. It can take the form of a singular authoritative figure, but equally can be a democratic system of institutions, actors and practices, a system of loosely cooperating, local grassroots collectives or any other form of relational organisation yet to be thought and practiced – as long as it fulfils a (however defined) political functionality for society. For Luhmann, "decisions are simply enactments of the

code by which politics constructs itself as differentiated and autonomous" (Thornhill 2007: 504).

Secondly turning to the decisional task for the relational political system, the conditions of functional differentiation which characterise contemporary society for Luhmann institute a mutual dependency between society and its other systems. Society depends on politics for the provision of decisional orientation to guide relational continuity in sense; it depends on a political system which, on its part, must fulfil this socially steering function in order to persist in its functionally differentiated responsibility (Luhmann 2009c: 329-330). However, the same conditions of functional differentiation mean that individual social systems are closed off towards each other's relations of sense, which allows them to develop and sustain their high level of internal complexity (Luhmann 1998a: 744-746). Functionally differentiated systems cannot perceive the relationality of sense internal to another system other than as unprocessable complexity, and this holds true for the political system as well (Luhmann 2002: 52-55). This renders the situation of politics paradoxical, because the collectivity for which it has to hold ready orienting decisions is none other than society with its autopoietically closed systems. Politics thus must provide orienting decisions for the continuation of sense relations which it, within its own relationality of sense, cannot possibly understand (Thornhill 2007: 511).

Politics requires the functional coupling with other social systems as well as the psychic systems of citizens to the extent that information events to be decided on can be drawn from the former and decisions can be communicated as collectively binding to the latter. Paradoxically, "in order to maintain society's differentiation politics must sporadically de-differentiate its own relation to other systems of society, and it must deploy cognitive resources which are adequate to the internal communications of a plurality of different social systems" (ibid., 512), but without actually understanding what it is deciding on. Thornhill speaks here of an exceptional "dramatic politicisation" (ibid.) of other systems through which they appear, on the level of political sense, as in need for a regulatory decision. For politics, this dramatisation is exceptional because it constitutes a challenge: it performs an opening to the sense of other systems (to the forms which constitute their content, not their relational logics of sense, which remain inaccessible), which is a functionally necessary exception that allows for the decisional reproduction of sense relations (Luhmann 2009c: 332-332).

But at the same time, like Benjamin's exception, this opening to complexity is also a genuine threat to the relational integrity of the political system; the exceptional

information event must be enfolded, but must then also be decisionally excluded to allow the political system to continue in its functional role. For this reason, like in Benjamin, the decision of Luhmann's relational political system can never be complete, and always remains precarious. While Luhmann acknowledges a certain echo of Schmitt's decisionism (Thornhill 2007: 500), his take ultimately results in the deconstruction of the former (Fischer-Lescano and Christensen 2012: 97-102).

> The decision of the political system, rather, is always partial, differentiated, and revocable. A modern society can never confront itself totally in a decision, and it can never be brought into an exceptional or total account of itself, for both society and society's political system make many (very unexceptional) decisions, and these decisions cannot be generalized into absolutely exclusive options or choices for all spheres of society at the same time. If Luhmann was a decisionist, in consequence, he was a decisionist who sought to demystify decisions and who saw the dramatic totalization of decisions as a modern absurdity. (Thornhill 2007: 504)

But how can the political system persist through decision on something that it cannot actually decide on? I argue that, for Luhmann, the solution is twofold. While mostly overlooked (Fischer-Lescano and Christensen 2012; Thornhill 2007: Wirth 1999), I suggest that Luhmann's passive phrasing of the political system's functional responsibility is important here. Luhmann does not argue that the political system reproduces itself through effective decision-making, but rather by continuously *holding ready* the capacity to make such decisions. I argue that this radically changes the character of the self-reproductive decision in the event.

In Luhmann, the decision does not reproduce the decisional legitimacy or efficacy of a particular government or a particular form of governance, a particular constituent power. What it must reproduce is the idea that such decisional governance is possible, that decisional capacity is held ready by the political system as a functional entity as such, even if its contemporary execution is highly flawed, even if radical changes are necessary to institute or recover such decisional efficacy or legitimacy: "the monarch is already dead and after him there is nothing but decisions" (Luhmann 2002: 431). Politics must reproduce the idea that effective political decision-making is *per se* possible on the level of sense. Rather than a creation *ex nihilo,* as in Schmitt, Luhmann's decision is, as in Benjamin, the structurally guided bridging of complexity in the event. But more explicitly than Benjamin, Luhmann shows that the decision which achieves this continuity must be a decision in sense, not the dramatised exercise of political force.

Politics reproduces the political capacity for effective decision-making in sense by decisionally producing diagnostic self-descriptions for society as a whole which are centred on or at least intertwined with particular political problems (Luhmann 2012: 168-169). Under conditions of functional differentiation, the production of self-descriptions as forms of sense allows "the political system legitimately to actualize itself as *something* (and specifically as *something political*)" (Thornhill 2007: 504). By producing second-order self-descriptions of its own political relations, contemporary politics supplies itself with the rules for its legitimate continuation – democracy, popular sovereignty or individual rights – which at the same time become ordering codes for sense-making in the societies governed under these terms (Luhmann 2002: 319-341). But beyond those political self-observations, Luhmann notes that politics replaces religion or morality as the system which produces – no longer ontologically founded, but meta-stable – diagnostic observations of the state of society in its characteristics and issues which function as orienting for the systems this society is comprised of. While authority keeps Schmitt's decisionist politics in motion, Luhmann replaces it with collectively orienting understanding.

> Something seems to have taken the place of authority that could be termed the politics of understanding. Understandings are negotiated provisos that can be relied upon for a given time. They do not imply consensus, nor do they represent reasonable or even correct solutions to problems. They fix the reference points that are removed from the argument for further controversies, in which coalitions and oppositions can form anew. Understandings have one big advantage over the claims of authority: they cannot be discredited but must be constantly renegotiated. (Luhmann 1998b: 69)

It must be made clear at this point that this does not mean, and that Luhmann does not argue, that politics does not make decisions or that those decisions do not impact the lives of citizens. Luhmann's analysis rather seeks to grasp a change in the operational logic of politics which no longer reproductively legitimises its existence and powers through a decision-making that effectively steers social developments in line with a particular political target or value, but that instead produces self-descriptions which provide orientation for society and its systems. "That politics has effects cannot be denied, just like it cannot be denied that it is unable to determine systemic conditions (and be it its own ones) in a particular direction" (Luhmann 2002: 110). When I therefore suggest that politics operates through self-reproduction in sense, this should not be taken to mean that this is everything which politics does, affects and which is at stake in political actions and decisions.

This diagnosis rather targets the underlying functional logic which drives decisions, actions and their absence and precisely warrants a critical unpacking because these certainly continue to have manifest and substantial practical consequences. As a second dimension which is important to understand how the political system can produce continuity in the face of what it cannot decide on, it must be noted that the indeterminacy with regard to the form of the political relationality reproduced is, for Luhmann, a "structural gain [which] lies … in the instability as such and in the sensibility of the system that is created by it" (1990c: 234). Instability on the part of the constituent power becomes the condition for its autopoietic reproduction as "something political". The pluralisation of the political form is "[t]he modern solution to the political problem" (Rasch: 1997: 110). Not only does the political system need the recurrent evental exception in order to offer orientation in the form of collectively binding self-descriptions for society, it also requires the event as genuine moment of immanent openness to re-orient and adapt its relations of sense to changing conditions (Thornhill 2007: 507).

In Luhmann, every information event constitutes an emergency for the political system which is faced with the need to provide guidance on what it cannot comprehend. It requires expectational structures present in the nexus of the Event to reduce informational complexity, exclude, as it is the case in Benjamin, the chaos of the evental emergency and thereby reproduce itself as "something political". In the following, I will unpack the expectational structures which allow politics to exclude informational complexity in the event and achieve autopoiesis in sense through the interplay between evental openness and ordering structuration in sense. Against this background, it will be possible to use the theoretical framework of ungrounded, self-productive relations of sense to understand the functioning of a contemporary politics for which, as discussed above, this continuous production of sense has a specific relevance.

Analogous to Deleuze's reading of Benjamin, Luhmann has shown that the instability with regard to the reproduced political form which follows from this evental mode of reproduction is not necessarily a loss, but can be understood as a gain of adaptive flexibility for the political system. For this reason, I argue that the creative openness which follows from the re-entry of complexity or Deleuzian difference to the order of self-productive sense in time must be held available within a political sense-making which follows its logic. Beyond the determinism of Agamben's ontologico-political apparatus held in motion by the decision, I will further show how the event remains an

immanent source of openness within a Luhmannian decisional politics which retains multiple points of contact with Deleuzian thought.

Chapter 5

5. The Politics of Sense: Autopoietic Capitalism, Decisional Self-Description, Crisis

5.1 Decisional politics in Luhmann's functionally differentiated society

Up until the end of the last chapter, I sought to carve out a theory of onto-epistemological production as ungrounded, self-grounding, perspectivist but immanently open. The political quality of this theory was firmly located on the level of (post-)ontology. Through the problematisation and subsequent undoing of either an ontological or epistemological external location of the creative force which produces the world as it can be made sense of, the theory of sense I proposed situated the genesis of path-dependent, but fundamentally contingent onto-epistemological lines of sense within the relationality of sense itself. I argued that production, reproduction and change takes place in the form of a decision on the continuation of sense relations in the event of re-emergent, chaotic complexity. Understanding this decisional moment reveals the contingencies which can be employed to actualise an alternative sense of the world and allows for a critical unpacking of those structuring forms which impede such divergent actualisations.

Towards the end of the last chapter, a turn away from this theoretical ontopolitics to the focal point of contemporary political practice took place. I argued that a self-reproductive relationality of sense which functions through the decision in the event has specific relevance for contemporary politics because the former functions by reproducing itself through a political decision which does not exercise force but provides orientation in sense by generating self-descriptions for society to adopt. Against this background, the following chapter will put the theory of sense developed so far to analytical use. I will employ this theory of ungrounded, relationally autopoietic sense to understand the functioning of contemporary politics which, it is argued, is primarily self-reproductive. I will explore how politics must oscillate between the structured exclusion of evental openness which makes the decision in the event possible, and the possibility for the actualisation of this creative openness in the decision which allows politics to adapt to the emergence of new issues on the level of sense.

This turn from general theoretical conceptualisation to context-specific application mirrors the way Luhmann developed his theory of social systems. He published the

general outline of his supra-theory of society in *Soziale Systeme* in 1984 and subsequently used the former as an analytical framework to understand the functioning of particular social systems such as the economy, art, science, religion and politics (Reese-Schäfer 2016: 350-351). In this sense, this thesis combines Deleuze's commitment to onto-epistemological innovation, which is political in so far as it reveals the unfounded nature of dogmatisms as well as theoretical and social orthodoxies to problematise and ultimately dissolve them (Patton 2000: 21-26), with Luhmann's commitment to a social theory which is designed to understand social practice. But Luhmann on his part also seeks to understand this social pratice in terms of contingencies and path-dependent, but in principle open lines of production.

However, I argue that the analysis of contemporary politics which I will sketch out in the following goes beyond a simple application of the political theory of sense developed up to this point. This is the case because, as explored in the last chapter, the continuous decisional resolution of evental complexity has a specific relevance for a functionally differentiated politics. While every sense system must resolve re-entering complexity through the selection of a particular line of sense to continue, I have shown that this resolution is a double necessity for the political system. Not only does it need to continue sense through a selective decision in the event, but the overcoming of evental complexity towards the production of orienting self-descriptions for society is also the specific responsibility of the political system under conditions of functional differentiation. It is argued that politics does not functionally reproduce itself by making decisions which effectively steer the course of social organisation. On the contrary, it persists autopoietically by producing "the profoundly illusionary and at the same time very effective (because motivating) causal conceptualisation of political action" (Luhmann 2002: 24) on the level of sense.

I thus suggest that a politics of autopoietic sense-making can resolve the question of institutional persistence under conditions of externalised, totalised control unpacked as the character of contemporary societies in Deleuze's "Post-script on the Societies of Control" (1992b), which will form the starting point for the arguments presented in this chapter. While so far Deleuze has been slightly more prominent as the driving force of theoretical innovation in this dissertation compared to Luhmann, whom I have drawn on for vital, but comparatively shorter creative interjections, the roles of these thinkers will be reversed in this final chapter. I will start thinking an autopoietic politics of sense with Luhmann, while Deleuze's theory will supplement this Luhmannian framework to firstly

help situating Luhmann's political thought within a critical-analytical framework which draws out the relationship between a self-reproductive social relationality and the rise of capitalism and secondly to identify the operators and contingencies of this relational self-reproduction in order to understand how immanent change is possible.

The following chapter will begin by using the theory of sense developed in this dissertation to draw out the character of a political apparatus which reproduces itself through continuous sense-making in the face of complexity. The first part of this chapter will explore the structuring forms of sense which the political system has developed to provide orientation in complexity and thereby guide and facilitate decisional self-reproduction. I will unpack how Luhmann theorises structures of expectations as intricate webbings of programmes and codes which functionally complement the decision in the event of emergent complexity. It will be shown how these structuring forms of sense do not only reduce complexity, but also provide the political decision in the event with adaptive flexibility. They do so by conditioning a chronic overstraining of the decisional capacities of contemporary politics, for example through welfare state responsibilities, which then again increases the need for expectational selectivity to ensure that the decision in the event remains possible. While it will be argued that Luhmann's theory provides a powerful tool to understand contemporary politics, two ambiguities reduce its analytical purchase.

Firstly, I suggest that there is a certain mismatch between the somewhat dated sketch of rigid expectational structures and the self-extensive functioning of political sense which Luhmann diagnoses.[77] Secondly, while attempted through the concept of power, the functionality of self-reproductive politics as a whole remains underdeveloped in its over-arching quality, historical development and socio-economic situatedness beyond the theory of autopoietic social systems. While this ambiguity can be partially resolved by drawing on Luhmann's non-political writings, I suggest that a theoretically more solid and impactful analytical perspective on the functionality of an autopoietic politics of sense-making can be synthesised by linking Luhmann's political theory to the "post-mortem despotism" which sustains itself without actual steering power under the conditions of machinic capitalism in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* (1983).

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[77] It is important to note that the "datedness" I diagnose here can only partially be explained by the temporal situatedness of Luhmann's works. While *Macht* and the writings published in *Politische Soxziologie* were produced in the 1970s and so comparatively early in Luhmann's career, he was working on *Die Politik der Gesellschaft* up to his death in 1998.

The operational logic of despotic politics is retroactive coding. In the second part of this chapter I will draw on Deleuzian theory and its secondary readings to modify Luhmann's structuring codes in such a way that these fit with a flexible, adaptive politics of sense-making. This theoretical loosening will be achieved with the help of James Williams' Deleuzian conceptualisation of the code-as-sign. Underlying the link between Luhmann's structuring political codes and Deleuze's coding machines is the assumption that capitalism, as a particular social relationality, conditions the self-reproductive politics of sense which I diagnose. Against the background of this emergent link between Marx, Deleuze and Luhmann, I will unpack the "crisis" as an example for a code which appears prevalent in contemporary, self-reproductive political sense-making.

The final part of this chapter will then discuss the relationship between the continuous political self-reproduction in sense and the immanent openness of all sense relations. To show that the thought of both Deleuze and Luhmann allows for framing this discussion with a critique of the socio-political implications of capitalism, I will unravel how Marx's theory of capital as a socially evolved, self-productive and self-extensive relationality underlies Deleuze's control societies and Deleuze and Guattari's abstract machines, but more interestingly also reveals extensive parallels to Luhmann's theory of functional differentiation. In all three theories, the current state of societal autopoiesis in sense is the result of a path-dependent evolution which is distinct from, not necessarily coupled to the onto-epistemological productivity of sense unpacked in the first four chapters of this dissertation. This suggests that ungrounded self-production in sense is possible without and beyond axiomatic capitalism or functional differentiation, even though this "beyond" cannot be thought from the inside of a particular, politically reproduced order of sense because its expressions ideologically recuperate the conditions of their emergence.

5.1.1 The decisional reproduction of institutions in societies of control: expectation, programme, code

Before sketching out a contemporary politics which functions autopoietically through the decisional continuation of sense with Luhmann, I will briefly turn to what is maybe Deleuze's most explicitly political piece of writing: his short "Post-script on the Societies of Control" (1992b). Doing so, I will flesh out what exactly Luhmann's perspective can contribute to the understanding of contemporary politics, especially against the background of how politics is understood in post-structuralist thought. Deleuze's post-

script begins where Foucault's theory, which retraces a shift from the sovereign exercise of force on the bodies of citizens to the moulding of subjects in institutional realms of confinement, ends.[78] Foucault observes a gradual loss of controlling authority on the side of the political sovereign – the end of sovereign power grounded in the violent threat to take life, and the subsequent dispersion of power to a relational apparatus of disciplinary institutions held in motion by the hinge of the governed subject. But Deleuze now argues that the disciplinary institutions so "brilliantly analyzed" (1992b: 4) by Foucault have lost the monopoly to reproductively exercise control, leading to a "crisis" which all institutional "environments of enclosure" (ibid.) are subject to.

> [E]veryone knows that these institutions are finished, whatever the length of their expiration periods. It's only a matter of administering their last rites and of keeping people employed until the installation of the new forces knocking at the door. These are the societies of control, which are in the process of replacing the disciplinary societies. (Deleuze 1992b: 4-5)

Deleuze argues that institutions have lost their importance as centres of governmental control because contemporary societies are characterised by a mode of governance which is dislocated and unconfined. This control is technologically mediated and exercised in the form of an automated, algorithmic modulation rather than an institutionally situated subjectivation (Lazzarato 2006: 179-180). Societies of control operate through computers, they modulate "dividuals" as sets of data without the binding centre of a subjectivity through codes and passwords. "The numerical language of control is made of codes that mark access to information"; "Everywhere *surfing* has already replaced the older *sports*" (Deleuze 1992b: 5-6). Turning back to the institutions which "are finished" under those conditions, Deleuze uses the term "institution" in a slightly ambiguous way here. Beyond Anthony Giddens' classical conceptualisation of institutions as the "more enduring features of social life" (1984: 24), Deleuze's Foucauldian institutions are complex, dynamic social forms comprised of multiple intersecting relations which produce not only the actions, ideas and values of the subjects they mould, but also the integrity of their institutional grid as a whole (Rouvroy 2011: 120-124).

While Deleuze does not mention the political institutions of democratic politics as such, these certainly fall under such a concept of institution. The institutional "crisis" diagnosed by Deleuze must thus concern an institutional politics whose foundational claim – and the basis for its public legitimacy – is the capacity to effectively control the course of

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[78] In Deleuze's account, Foucault's theory ends prior to his turn to biopolitical governmentality (Foucault 2008) which could indeed be understood as an alternative perspective on the phenomena which Deleuze describes as totalised, not spatially confined control here.

social relations in response to topical events, long-term developments and the will of the electorate. Deleuze's diagnosis of an institutional-political crisis is effectively mirrored in other post-structuralist theories, especially Foucault's (2008) and Agamben's (2011; 2016), which retrace a shift away from centres of sovereign power to a contemporary governance which functions through ontologically and socially productive relations in all areas of social life. But how can the diagnosis of this crisis be reconciled with the remarkable stability of political institutions within Western democracies – despite certain indications for a post-democratic fatigue and depoliticisation as well as the recent rise of populism (Fawcett et al. 2017; Wood 2016; Swyngedouw 2010; Jones 2017)?

If contemporary political institutions retain little effective steering power regarding the societies they govern, if they are "finished" in a political sense, how and on which basis do they function and persist as centres of political power for the societies they no longer control? I argue that the ungrounded, decisional self-production of sense relations, understood as a mode of contemporary politics, provides a possible answer to this question. In the following, I will draw out the functional cornerstones of such a politics through Luhmann. In *Die Politik der Gesellschaft* (2002), the last book which Luhmann was working on up to his death in 1998 and which was published posthumously, he sets up his political theory by unpacking Aristotle's ontological distinction between *oikos* and *polis*. Just like Agamben, Luhmann identifies this distinction as constitutive of the "something" referred to as political (Luhmann 2002: 7-9; Reese-Schäfer 2002: 109-111).

Luhmann however situates this formation of a political system which produces itself through the distinction from what it is not in the historical evolution of society. Following Luhmann, hierarchically stratified, pre-modern societies were subject to a different kind of politics. Their structural organisation was focused on the sovereign as the political, financial, cultural and theological centre holding the power to effectively govern all areas of social life. When the complexity of social relations drastically increased in several realms of society from culture to science and economy at the brink of modernity, social systems subsequently closed off functionally from the rest of society to maintain and even increase their internal complexity (Luhmann 2002: 72-76; 1998a: 679-709). As a consequence, the institutions of the political sovereign are no longer able to govern the continuation of sense relations in society in a way that makes these seem deterministically closed and without alternative. "It is not by accident that politically constituted societies began to experience and problematise contingency" (Luhmann 2002: 88).

In addition, modern society is now in need for a mechanism to manage the persistently high complexity which had accompanied social evolution, but only at the cost of permanent connective insecurity: faced with a multiplicity of alternative trajectories, the autopoietically reproductive continuation of sense has become insecure – for society as a whole as well as for the social and psychic sense systems inhabiting it (ibid., 69-74). The high internal complexity of functionally differentiated social systems makes their effective political control impossible, but at the same time this connective insecurity provides politics with a new *raison d'être*. It shifts from an effectively controlling governance to the decisional management of connective insecurities in sense no longer concealed by the socially cohesive meta-ontologies of religion and morality, which have lost binding force within modern, post-Enlightenment Western societies (Luhmann 1998b: 51-55; Folkers 1987: 48-49; 62-63; Barben 1996: 104).

These cohesive meta-ontologies are replaced by a rule-focused rationalisation of governance immanent to the political itself, which re-moralises political goals and actions with a focus on the representation of the democratic will as the true *function* of politics. "What we call 'democracy' and link back to the institution of political actions is thus nothing else but the completion of politics' functional differentiation. The system grounds itself on decisions which it has instituted itself" (Luhmann 2002: 105). This functional closure of a decisional political system universalises the decision in the event – every continuation in sense has the potential to be expressed and perceived as socially guiding decision. This is necessary for a political system which reproduces itself by continuously demonstrating its capacity for decision-making. For Luhmann, the social contract theory of the Enlightenment, and particularly the figure of Hobbes' *Leviathan,* illustrates this functional turn in politics.

> The association of individuals now recognised as acting in their own interests is no longer the realisation of a politeia, but, mediated through an additional contract of governance, the founding of the police. What is expected to endure is not virtue, justice and equal distance to all particular values, but a particular political capacity to decide, which consolidates peace and furthers the common good. […] The mechanistic conception of the State must further be understood in this context. It is not, as one could assume from the perspective of a contemporary technophobia, aimed at preparing humanity for the experience of a totalised control of soulless, speechless despotism. On the contrary, the machine was a symbol for the delimitation of power by practical reason. The State was only supposed to produce the effects it was created for, and at the same time the allegory of the machine illustrates that it can't be effective without strictly functioning according to its own internal rules. (Luhmann 2002: 86)

The functional closure of politics which is sustained in this way is thus closely connected to the notion of democracy. While it is certainly thinkable that various types of political

regimes reproduce themselves by expressing their capacity for collectively binding decision-making on the level of sense, Luhmann's interest is focused on the intricate institutional structures, roles and procedures which democracies have developed to achieve functional reproduction (Thornhill 2006: 89). "The universalism of the presumption of decision [Entscheidungsunterstellung] is perfected in the democratic scheme; through the code government/opposition, it routinely and almost without reflection ensures that everything politics wants to see as a decision can be presented as such" (Luhmann 2002: 86). The political system only exists insofar as it is constantly made sense of as effective decision-making authority. This requires the continuous recurrence of something to decide on. But it is not enough that the opportunity for decision returns – it must be accompanied by complexity-reduction, which transforms the chaos of the event into distinct, alternative past-future lines of sense that can be decisionally continued (ibid., 62-70).

Luhmann argues that both the return and the reduction of evental complexity is achieved through structures of expectation. Structures of expectation are historically developed, serialised forms of sense particular to a system, which stratify production in the medium of sense in the face of unprocessable complexity (Seßler 2012: 79-80; Luhmann 1998a: 368-370). While autopoiesis is achieved through the decision, the decisional continuation of sense is only successful because of the availability of expectational structures as its functional complement. These expectations stratify evental complexity, preparing the ground for the reproductive decision to take place. Luhmann introduces a number of important concepts to further describe those expectational structures, especially the programme and the code, which I will unpack in their specific political quality and relevance in the following. Luhmann's programmes are primarily characterised by their conditionality: they are "if…then…" commands (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2006: 225). As a structuring form of sense, the programme is thus comparable to an algorithm – it is a systemically produced command to react to a particular *if* with a particular *then*.

A programme is able to "find and assign a complimentary other for every item in its area of relevance" (Luhmann 2012: 41).[79] While Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos (2006: 225)

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[79] In *Macht* Luhmann applies this definition not to the programme, but instead to the code. While the fact that he defines programme and code in identical ways at different points in his work contributes to the conceptual ambiguity surrounding the structure and functioning of the programmatic in the context of relational auopoiesis which I draw out in the following, I suggest that this can be treated as an example of conceptual evolution in Luhmann. He seems to move away from a singular, more ambiguous concept of code as it can be found in his book on power originally published in 1975 and towards a more developed system of programmes, scripts and codes in his last works *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* and *Die Politik*

provides the example that courts use programmes to make decisions, Luhmann (1998a: 362) also mentions the state of knowledge in a particular field of science as programme, suggesting that programmes can be grasped in a broader, less clearly defined fashion. The programmes which schematise alternatives for the selective continuation of sense constitute scripts. Scripts serialise programmatic commands to perform complexity-reduction over time – they are schemata of time which regulate systemic memory (Fuchs 2012: 101; Luhmann 2002: 156-157). Scripts discriminate "between memory and forgetting to erase the traces of past operations and free capacities for new operations under changed conditions. Scripts allow for learning" (Luhmann 2002: 158).[80]

Recalling what has been outlined in previous chapters, the event constitutes a re-entry of time, as the open potentiality of Deleuze's Bergsonian memory, into the ordered past-future relations which condition sense in the moment where the evental singularity is enfolded by the nexus relations of sense. Programmatic scripts guide political decisions in the face of this returning temporal complexity so that a particular past-future lineage can be (re-)produced through connection in sense. Programmes (and scripts as their overarching sets) are emergent products of a self-reproductive relationality of sense which ensure the availability of past-future lines to continue through selective remembering. But they do so in such a way that alternative past-future relations are forgotten only to return again, to remain available as creative resources for the next instant of sense-making in the face of the evental chaos. As Luhmann illustrates, elections are examples for such programmatic scripts. They provide short-term security through the temporally sequenced installation of a government, which can provide orientation in sense – but only for a limited period of time.

Elections thus also enable the structured return of evental insecurity, "thereby creating conditions which ensure that political operations cannot be calculated but have to be made in the form of decisions" (Luhmann 2002: 105).[81] The interrelation and interaction of

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der Gesellchaft. For this reason, I argue that it is justified to add Luhmann's definition of "code" from *Macht* to help illustrate his concept of "programme" here.

[80] Luhmann remains ambiguous with regard to whether schematised political remembering and forgetting actually happens within the political system or is performed by the individuals who observe it. This is related to the ambiguity surrounding the structural coupling of individual consciousness systems and various social systems.

[81] I suggest that the example of the election illustrates the ambiguity of Luhmann's concept of the script, particularly in its distinction from the programme: elections could very well also be seen as "if…then…" commands for the appointment of a new government. Luhmann's use of the concept of the script in relation to politics is incidental and often inconsistent. While discussed in some detail in *Die Politik der Gesellschaft*, it makes no significant appearance in *Macht*. But even in the former, Luhmann (2002: 152-159) seems to use the term synonymously with, or at least without significant difference from, the terms "schemata", "problem area" or even programme in a wider sense. Because of its ambiguity the concept of

multiple different programmes within the political system ensures that a politically reproductive decision between a limited number of sense relations is possible, but also, equally importantly, that there is always something to decide on. Programmes must order evental complexity in such a way that politics is continuously provided with new issues to tackle, new problems to solve, new crises to overcome. For this reason, I suggest that within the political system, programmatic structures must be understood to condition a political relationality which functions self-extensively and introversively on the level of sense.

In a functionally differentiated society of autopoietic systems, the socially orienting self-descriptions produced by politics on the level of sense are the form in which politics reproduces itself decisionally. Autopoietic politics is a politics of sense-making – it reproduces itself not by resolving political issues, but by producing them as part of a collectively binding framework of sense which defines society in its characteristics, developments, challenges and possible resolutions. Politics is the functionally differentiated realm through which society observes itself and its own future (Luhmann 2012: 168-169). While this "delegation of self-description" (Luhmann 1984: 67) to the political realm replaces the political necessity of reproducing its functionality through the exercise of power as force, it is not unproblematic for politics - it "may require, as in fact all delegation, some kind of control, and if not organized control at least semantic ones" (ibid.). This semantic control is provided by programmes, which stratify the complexity of sense and carve out particular lines which can then be expressed communicatively, not only but importantly in the form of linguistic meaning.

Programmes must facilitate the constant connection of new "ifs" to the "thens" relationally available in sense by opening up new themes, topics and issues as political (Clam 2006). But this observationally self-extensive functioning of programmatic political sense intensifies the dilemma of autopoietic politics – it persists only in so far as it decides on an ever-increasing range of issues which it cannot effectively decide on, because it cannot comprehend the logics of sense they are emergent from. Contemporary politics thus reproduces itself through a programmatic overburdening which endangers

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the script will be abandoned in the following in favour of a wider conceptualisation of the programme which Luhmann at times seems to adopt as well. In a more general sense, the components of ordering structures which Luhmann mentions both with regard to the political system and autopoietic systems more generally seem to be an example for the evolving, sometimes overlapping and imprecise use of concepts which is characteristic for him (Hornung 2006). For example, he also uses the concept of procedure similarly to the concept of the programme as a command for selective step-by-step ordering in the early *Politische Soziologie* (Luhmann 2015: 40-68).

exactly those connective decisions through which politics functionally persists. Luhmann views the democratic welfare state as an example for this self-extensive introversion performed by politics:

> the problems waiting to be solved are unsolvable problems, because they reflect the functional-structural differentiation of the social system [as a whole] into the political system, but at the same time are based on the fact that the political system is only a subsystem in this functional differentiation of society. The welfare state secures its autopoiesis through the re-definition of unsolvable problems. There is certainly always something to do. (Luhmann 2012: 216)

In this sense, institutionally developed democracy "is simply a self-reflexive condition of politics itself, in which the political system maximises its own ability to address its own constantly escalating complexity" (Thornhill 2006: 97). The self-extensive functionality of self-productive politics then in turn increases the system-internal demand for ordering structures of expectation which radically reduce complexity.

To understand how this complexity-reduction can be achieved Luhmann introduces another concept: the code. Like programmes, codes stratify the expressive medium of sense, sense in its operative form – for the political system as a social system, this operative form is (both linguistic and non-linguistic) communication. While programmes provide guidelines for the decisional connection of sense relations in the event, codes stratify the alternative relations of sense which the decision can connect to. Codes are always binary: payment/non-payment in the economic system or obedience/non-obedience to the exercise of power in the political system. Through their rigidly structured form, they allow systems to perform a decisional selection between clear alternatives which then performs their autopoiesis (Süssenguth 2012: 71-72). Programmes and codes work hand in hand for Luhmann: codes "make it possible to develop expectations regarding the acceptability or non-acceptability of communication. It is only through these structures that the improbability of communication is transformed into probability" (Luhmann 1998a: 230-231; see also: Luhmann 2009d: 195-196).

Where programmes provide the algorithmic rules which facilitate decisional selection, codes prepare alternatives to decide on in such a way that distinct pathways of sense become available through expectations, but importantly these are always pathways which involve alternatives. "A code creates and guides the decisional freedom of the system: production and reduction of contingencies all in one" (Luhmann 2002: 88). Binary codes thus hold available alternatives for structured negation. Every sense-relation which can be continued through decisional connection has one or – through inter-related,

thematically overlapping codes – multiple alternatives. But these alternatives do not endanger the autopoietic stability of the system because they can be actualised through structurally equivalent coded paths of sense (Luhmann 2012: 40-43; Süssenguth 2012: 72).[82] Luhmann's expectational structures, which consist of programmes facilitating the decisional connection to coded alternative lines of sense, make it possible to understand how the institutions of the political system can reproduce themselves through socially orienting sense-making in the absence of manifest steering power. Programmes and codes allow the politically reproductive decision to bridge evental complexity in sense, but in such a way that this complexity must always return, so that there is "always something to do" for the political system.

5.1.2 The anaemia of Luhmann's autopoietic politics

While Luhmann's political thought thus offers an answer to Deleuze's question of political-institutional persistence in complex societies of control, I argue that its analytical purchase is compromised by the rigidity of Luhmann's theoretical framework. Luhmann's characterisations of politics exudes a certain datedness. While he seems to imply that his political insights are general or at least generalisable, I argue that the political system he theorises is in fact the (Western) German republic of the second half of the 20th century. Luhmann's politics is a politics of clear lines: internally, the political system is divided into the forms of state, parties and public (Luhmann 2002: 117). Political parties are structured according to the binary conservative/progressive code and there is a binary polarisation between government and opposition (ibid., 95-96). This characterisation of contemporary politics however seems at odds with recent developments in the structure and functionality of politics as highlighted by political research.

In very general terms, political scientists observe a diversification and de-differentiation of party systems across established Western democratic systems where parties move

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[82] It has to be noted that Luhmann is liberal, often even ambiguous in his use of binary coding. For example, the political system is characterised by various binary codes which seem to be located on different levels – some, such as the government/opposition or progressive/conservative binaries are internal to the programmes of particular institutions or organisational systems, while others seem more general (Brunczel 2010: 146-147). The binary code legitimate/illegitimate for instance is foundational for democratic political systems and the distinction of obedience/resistance is intrinsic to the way we conceptualise power. However, despite their incongruence in scope and level of analysis Luhmann describes the various codes which guide political sense-making in much more detail than the programmes these interact with (ibid.).

within the ideological spectrum more flexibly as well as decreasing ideological differences between major parties (Dalton 2016; Costa Lobo and Curtice 2014; Smith 2009; Jacoby 2017). In addition, a flexibly shifting focus on current issues, events or political personalities is noted (Drometer 2012; Marsh and Miller 2012), which suggests that exactly those programmatic structures and binaries which Luhmann focuses on are less significant for the functioning and orientation of political parties and political decision-making. The multi-layered, multi-dimensional and frequently changing landscape of politics means that "the characteristics of the functional subsystem [in Luhmann] … describe the most important features of politics less plausibly than they do in the case of other subsystems" (Brunczel 2010: 241).

Is Luhmann's theory able to accommodate such recent changes? Luhmann himself acknowledges a certain softening of coded binaries towards the turn of the century. This softening results from the dilemma of self-extensive politics: the chronic overstraining of decisional capacities creates a "narrow scope of the at all possible (especially also: the financially possible)" resulting in an "approximation of government and opposition" which

> relocates politics to predominantly verbal conflicts which only accidentally lead to creative innovations. Many political concerns and interests thus remain unrepresented in the political spectrum of government and opposition and are looking for alternative expressions of voice, or fall into the apathy feared particularly by democrats, which can, if at all, only be reinvigorated with exaggerated rhetoric. (Luhmann 2002: 102)

This perceived loss of importance for rigid expectational structures and binary codes does not necessarily call the usefulness of Luhmann's theory of a self-productive politics of sense-making into question; as argued above, (political) contingency increases the need for selectivity on the level of (political) sense, which can only be achieved through structuring expectations. However, while noting this perceived shift in the functioning of political programmes, Luhmann does not account for it on the conceptual level of his political theory. The consequence, I suggest, is a mismatch between the highly structured political practice Luhmann describes, and the frequently changing, seemingly instable contemporary political landscape with, amongst others, the Brexit referendum, the election of Donald Trump, the rise of right-wing populism in many established democracies and a day-to-day politics which shifts between the focal points of various security issues. Against the background of this political practice, Luhmann's autopoietic politics remains peculiarly anaemic.

While he provides a detailed, comprehensive account of parliamentary democracy in its structural features and actors, it seems difficult to accommodate the systemic sense-structures Luhmann sketches out to actual political situations, happenings or issues which appear to demand exploration on the part of political theory (Brunczel 2010: 246-247). I however argue that the lifelessness of Luhmann's political thought is not a necessary consequence of the abstract character of his observations but results from an overemphasis on the pre-structured quality of expectational forms at the expense of their functionality in the context of his political theory. Within Luhmann's political analysis, the programme and its programmatic scripts for the most part remain too narrow and small-scale to grasp shifts within the mode of autopoietic political sense-making; a programme is something which is "assigned to the administration" (Luhmann 2002: 261) or guides the actions of a political party (ibid., 265).

Beyond the mere description of their existence, there is no account of how individual programmes relate to each other and function together to operate structuring. In his sketch of expectational structures Luhmann remains on the level of historical-sociological description without drawing out implications for the functionality of politics as an autopoietic system beyond these contingent examples. A theorisation of the general programmatic stratification of complexity in its functional necessities and contingencies, including the political changes mentioned above, seems to be missing from Luhmann's theory of political sense-making. What appears necessary is a reconceptualisation of Luhmann's political theory which firstly loosens the rigid theoretical structures of programme and code and which secondly performs an analytical zooming out from the level of socio-political description to capture the emergent structuring of a self-reproductive politics more generally. Can political figures, themes or events replace ideological party lines as dominant political programmes? Could the state of exception as theorised by Schmitt, Agamben and Benjamin be understood as a programmatically developed algorithmic *if...then* rule for the continuation of sense, or is contemporary politics shaped by other codes?

5.1.3 The political limitations of power as symbolically generalised medium

I suggest that a tentative answer for how programmatic structures of expectation intersect and interrelate to paint the picture of a particular political status quo can be found in Luhmann's concept of power. All programmatic binary codes mentioned by Luhmann

have something in common: they are linked to the exercise of power. Power will thus be explored in the following as the overarching mechanism which performs and actualises political programmatic structuration in Luhmann (Luhmann 2012: 11-15). For Luhmann, power is a medium of communication, or communicative sense-expression. It is socially generalised,[83] which means that sense expressed in the medium of power can be understood by all other sense systems, but its use is particular to the functional specialisation of the political system. Socially generalised media of communication such as power, money, truth or love are central to the way Luhmann's social systems perform autopoiesis in sense (Luhmann 1998a: 317-321).

Socially generalised media of communication contain the programmatic codes of "generalised symbols which operate the transfer of selective accomplishments" (Luhmann 2012: 14). They developed in such a way that the expectational structures which order complexity in the system they belong to are at the same time motivational structures for other sense systems, increasing the probability that sense-expression through these media is accepted (Luhmann 1998a: 320-321). In this sense, media do not only produce, but "transfer reduced complexity" to facilitate the continuous connectivity in sense which makes systemic autopoiesis possible (Luhmann 2012: 18). Power is the medium which guides communicative connections of sense in such a way that they reproduce the political. The function of the political system, as discussed in chapter 4 as well as above, lies in holding ready the capacity for collectively binding decision-making. While it was shown that effectively steering decision-making is impossible for the political system, it was argued above that politics is reproduced in its social functionality when it produces self-observations for society which function as collectively orienting in sense – this sense-making takes place in the political decision in the complexity-event. The political continuation of sense is externally, publicly perceived as political action and thus reproduces politics in its functional responsibility (Luhmann 2012: 27).

Against this background, the medium of power must operate in such a way that it catalyses sense-connectivity for the decision in the event. For Luhmann, "power is a chance to increase the probability that unlikely selective constellations actually come together and work" (ibid., 20). Power does therefore not exist as an ontological substance;

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[83] Luhmann links the development of socially generalised media of communication back to the decline of the binding force of religion and (Christian) morality as "meta-ontologies" which ensure that sense-expression takes place and is understood in the framework set by the expectations of Western societies. Now, the institutionalisation of socially generalised media of communication which are particular to the specific social realm in which they operate structures sense-relations in such a way that the chance of successful connectivity in sense is increased (Luhmann 1998a: 203).

its exercise is not the effect of a pre-existent potentiality.[84] Rather, I argue that the structurally generalised medium of power must be understood as a specific form of the productive medium of sense. In line with my unpacking of sense in its mixed quality in chapter 2, Luhmann explicitly highlights the synthetic character of power, which can never "merely consist in a sequence of generalised [linguistic] symbols" (ibid., 70), but always includes sense-expression in language as well as in physical force.[85] While Luhmann thus insists that power is actual and "not just an analytical summary" (ibid.), it is actual as a relation of sense-expression which is "only constructed in this process" (ibid., 66) and to which the attribution to an actor, institution or process is always secondary (ibid., 23).

Because power is "ambiguous and fluctuating 'by nature'" (ibid., 52), it requires coded expression in sense to give it form and stability. For Luhmann, the code most central to the orienting function of power in sense is legitimacy/illegitimacy (Thornhill 2006: 82). Luhmann's medium of power is the equivalent of constitutive power in Agamben – it produces and reproduces the political entity which can (legitimately) exercise power in exactly this expressive exercise. There is no ontological or epistemological "something political" which pre-exists sense-making in the medium of power. However, contrary to Agamben, Luhmann draws attention to the contingency of the sovereign form of this constituent power. Legitimacy/illegitimacy are structurally equal ways of "linking contingencies in the sphere of power" (Luhmann 2012: 59) – the rejection of a particular political regime, logic or even concept of the political itself is a functionally equal, alternative path for political autopoiesis. Luhmann's decision in the event unfolds a reproductive mechanism that can only function insofar as it reproduces no particular form of political sense – it only reproduces sense as a productive medium in its specifically political form of power.

In Schmitt, Benjamin and Agamben, the mechanism of decisional politics begins with the creation of a state of exception and then moves to its politically constitutive resolution. For all three thinkers, the emergence of the exception remains tied to a political sovereign

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[84] Due to its processual-relational quality, its lack of ontological substance and the openness of the political effect it produces (reproduction or resistance), Luhmann's concept of power has repeatedly been compared to Michel Foucault's power (Opitz 2013; Borch 2005; Pottage 1998; Kempel 1996). Because the medium of power can only function productively through the relational differentiation from what it excludes, the production of power is, as in Foucault, also always accompanied by the production of resistance or "anti-power" (Luhmann 2002: 77).

[85] In this juncture Luhmann (2012: 71-72) refers to "symbiotic" organic mechanisms which are coupled with the medium of power.

who pre-exists it and who wills the exception because it is necessary for its reproduction, even though its power is decreasing from Schmitt to Agamben and Benjamin. At this juncture, Luhmann provokes a shift in the analytical perspective. While the political system needs the recurrence of evental complexity to reproduce itself autopoietically, the emergency which is the evental encounter with sense-complexity does not return because a sovereign, who is nothing but a contingent programme of the political, wills it. Even the political system as a whole cannot wilfully create an event because it has no agency or intentionality. "Power does not instrumentalise [instrumentiert] a pre-existent will, it only produces this will and it can obligate it, bind it, can make it absorb insecurities and risks, can even tempt it and make it fail" (Luhmann 2012: 29).

Instead, the return of evental complexity is nothing but an evolutionary product of social sense relations. While of particular functional necessity to politics, the return of the complexity-event is common to all social systems. It precedes every structuring programme the political system can develop for its resolution in the connective continuation of sense relations, such as the political sovereign, or the state (Brunczel 2010: 149-150). While the political system deparadoxifies the recurrent threat to its relational integrity as part of its functional responsibility, the continuation of politics remains not only dependent on the evental recurrence, but also always subject to the possibility of a re-organisation of political sense through the complexity it opens up. For Luhmann, the exercise of violence, or at least the threat of the former, has historically been the most effective sense-expression to reproduce the political constituent in the face of alternative lines of sense (Luhmann 2012: 55). But the socially generalised medium of power is subject to evolution: in the course of functional differentiation, the immanent reproduction of political power in sense becomes increasingly depersonalised and symbolic (ibid., 45).

Power is outsourced to a "technical" (ibid., 80-81) mechanism of programmatic scripts which is comparable to Agamben's sovereign political economy of glory. This mechanism still includes, but is neither limited to nor centred on, the material-physical exercise of force. With a focus on the medium of power, Luhmann offers some more interesting explorations of the general functionality of expectational structuration. Firstly, Luhmann suggests that programmatic structures achieve a stretching of time in the event of complexity which is the counterpart of the compressive synthesis of the present as unpacked in chapter 3. The extension of the decisional moment provides the political system with additional time to order complexity (ibid., 36). But this slowing-down in the

event also ensures that the intense virtual of the past and its past-future lines can be accessed and actualised by a political system whose sense relations must at all times allow for flexible adaptability. Temporal extension in the event, for Luhmann, thus ensures decisional elasticity (ibid., 37).

Autopoietic politics functions temporally as a continuous sequence of programmatic extensions in the event and compressions in the decisional production of a new present in sense. At this juncture, Luhmann remarks that this temporality of political sense produces a certain liquidity of power. "The impression of 'flowing' is generated by events … which happen in sequences whose respective selectivity is interlinked through coding in such a way that selections condition and continue each other" (ibid.). This fluidity of power is important to note because we will encounter it again below, in the way Deleuze and Guattari describe the contemporary mode of governance under the conditions of axiomatic capitalism. Above it was shown how the functionally differentiated democratic political system needs the self-induced insecurity of the democratic will and the chronic, excessive demands of the welfare state to keep its decisional autopoiesis in motion in a way which can flexibly react to changing social conditions (Luhmann 2009d: 111-118).

The differentiation of the programmatic mechanism of power beyond the physical exercise of force on the bodies of its subjects reflects this double need for increased reproductive independence together with heightened system-internal contingency. The medium of power is forced to incorporate more and more themes in a self-extensive widening which mirrors the development of autopoietic politics in general (ibid., 128-130). On the one hand, this extension can be seen as an increase in scope for a power now strongly reminiscent of Foucault's governmentality operating as a politics of life:

> insofar as welfare provisions provide regular forms of assistance that incorporate people into a system of social advantages, then the possibilities of negative sanction in the form of the potential power of withdrawal of such advantages grow … such power operates in a diffuse and productive manner, and is not amenable to centralised control. (Ashenden 2006: 138)

On the other hand, the dilemma of a self-reproductive politics of sense which must function self-extensively resurfaces in a mode of power understood as its overarching logic. Politics is increasingly confronted by a problem of "contingency control" (Luhmann 2002: 68).

Because the socially generalised medium of power has evolved in such a way that both sides of the codes it is comprised of – power/powerlessness for political actors or

organisations, progressive/conservative for political parties, legitimate/illegitimate for decisions – are increasingly contingent and less sharply distinguished, the boundaries between evental-processual openness and structuration become blurred, and the effectiveness of the latter in guiding sense-making is called into question (Brunczel 2010: 168-170; Clam 2006: 145-147; Luhmann 2002: 67-68). How does this affect the constitution or functionality of the programmatic apparatus of power? While Luhmann's theory of power achieves a nuanced exploration of decisional politics beyond totalised political agency, simplified intentionality and political determinism, I argue that the insight it provides into the programmatic functioning of politics is insufficient. As shown for the evolution of programmes and codes above, Luhmann observes a structural shift within the confines of autopoietic politics but again does not explain it within his theoretical framework.

As a consequence, a theoretical exploration of how programmes make decisional politics function, which elements of the structural mechanism of expectations are functionally fixed and which can vary, what such a variation would look like and how it takes place, is still outstanding. Luhmann hints at the fact that his sociological-political observations are implicitly based on such a theoretical framework. His elaboration of the temporal functionality of programmatic scripts and the flow of events they create allow the reader to glimpse the former, but it is at no point developed in an explicit, coherent and extensive way. In the following, I will attempt to carve out such a theoretical underpinning to understand the position and quality of structuring programmes/codes within a meta-stable political that is particular to the self-productive functionality of politics I have sketched out through Luhmann. Luhmann's tentative suggestions will be supplemented with Deleuze and Guattari's theorisation of a post-mortem politics which operates through retroactive coding under the conditions of the capitalist machine informed by Marx's theory of self-extensive, self-reproductive capital.

5.2 Luhmann's politics in the capitalist machine: political coding and the self-productive flows of capital

5.2.1 Sense-machines, capitalism and post-mortem politics

In *Anti-Oedipus* (1983), Deleuze and Guattari sketch out their own version of a self-reproductive politics, to which the concept of the code is central. Here, self-reproduction

describes the operational status quo of the despotic machine of sovereign politics under the conditions of free, omnipresent capital flows. To understand Deleuze and Guattrari's diagnosis of the current state and functionality of politics, it is necessary to situate it in the trajectory of the socio-political evolution they draw out. Employing the concept of the machine to describe the *mode of functional relationality* dominant in a particular society, Deleuze and Guattari theorise a transition from societies of savage territorial machines, which are held together through horizontal relations of kinship and direct exchange, to the despotic machine where the State exercises a vertical, hierarchical control over its subjects through the coding of production and representations. The advent and totalisation of capitalist production then marks a transition from the regime of the despotic machine to a capitalist machine of freely oscillating flows of capital (Patton 2000: 90-92).

Deleuze and Guattari's machines are desiring-machines. They organise flows of desire, but a desire that is conceptualised as a productive, both psychic and social relationality (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 24; 113) analogous to the way sense is conceptualised in this dissertation. Like sense, Deleuze and Guattari's desire is the medium and form of "the production of the real" (ibid., 32). For this reason, I argue that the theoretical leap of linking Deleuze and Guattari's machines to the political theory of sense developed in this dissertation can be justified beyond an instance of experimental thinking *with* as specified in the introduction.[86] In *Foucault* (1988) Deleuze develops an explicitly socio-political conception of the abstract machine of power relations which appears as a reiteration of the theory of machines presented in *Anti-Oedipus.* As Deleuze specifies here, every abstract machine of the social field relationally connects "discursive" and "non-discursive" (1988: 37) formations to produce sense.

An abstract machine must thus be thought as a specific logic or map of sense-making – the "non-unifying immanent cause" (ibid.) for the continuous relational connectivity of sense. It is important to emphasize that despite the technological language used here, Deleuze's machines are, like Luhmann's coded systems,

> social before being technical. Or, rather, there is a human technology which exists before a material
> technology. No doubt the latter develops its effects within the whole social field; but in order for it

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[86] I further suggest that replacing desire with sense removes certain limitations in Deleuze and Guattari's work which are related to the psychoanalytical focus of their project, which for example becomes evident when they explore the anxiety-inducing effects of decoded capitalist flows (ibid., 33), and hampers an application to the political conditions and implications of the social evolution they observe.

to be even possible, the tools or material machines have to be chosen first of all by a diagram and taken up by assemblages. (Deleuze 1988: 40)[87]

Turning back to *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari here draw out the socio-historical genealogy of their desiring-machines which condition the mode of sense-making in a society in the above sense. The territorial machine represents the most primitive form of social organisation. Here, territorial representations code and contain the flows of desire or, in my theoretical re-thinking, sense, which are the productive element of all social relations. The primitive territorial machine operates through immediate, productive territorial connections – between states, families, producers and consumers, speaker and audience – each performed in a particular, clearly distinct relational mode (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 146-164).

Through gradual centralisation in which the different territorial entities become subsumed by the despotic machine of the state, the territorial organisation is transformed into a hierarchical order of production which now only serves the reproduction of the despotic machine itself. The despotic machine is the sovereign state which exercises control over a society through a totalising overcoding which subsumes the formerly distinct modes of relational production under the logic of politics (Patton 2000: 91-92). The relations in which the despotic machine is situated now follow a disjunctive logic. They are no longer direct but interrupted by the diversion to state institutions which mould bodies, behaviour and representations into expressions of one and the same political code.

> [T]he State itself has always been in a relation with an outside and is inconceivable independent of that relationship. The law of the State is not the law of All or Nothing (State societies or counter-State societies) but that of interior and exterior. The State is sovereignty. But sovereignty only reigns over what it is capable of internalizing, of appropriating locally. (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 360)

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[87] It is suggested that this emphasis is a vital, corrective addition to the recent focus on technology within Deleuzian scholarship, especially in readings of his post-script. The automated and totalised control which Deleuze theorises here is conventionally understood as the result of recent technological, especially computational innovations (Rouvroy 2011; Hui 2015; Galloway 2012; Mengue 2013; Savat 2009) which produce a fundamental change in "the process through which the physical world and its inhabitants are made visible and meaningful, through which states of affairs are seen and evaluated, through which evidences are produced and given" (Rouvroy 2011: 7). In the post-script, Deleuze states that societies of control operate through computational, modulating control as a new form of political-economic surveillance which is both spatially boundless and temporally limitless. It requires neither physical presence nor conscious participation from the side of the governed in order to be exercised, since it operates on the level of perception and awareness itself (Hui 2015; Rouvroy 2013; Rouvroy 2011). But what is often forgotten or at least underdeveloped by the theorists of the "technological turn" in Deleuzian scholarship (apart from the Marxist Lazzarato (2006)) is that those technological means and expressions are only products and symptoms of an underlying shift in the relational functionality of society. Computational technologies are effect, not cause – they merely "express those social forms capable of generating them and using them" (Deleuze 1992b: 6). Those social forms are the totalised relations of the capitalist machine or, as Deleuze calls it here, a self-productive "capitalism of the product" (ibid., 5).

The despotic machine exercises control through the inscription of its own authority in all social relations to reproduce the socius it governs as a hierarchically stratified political unity. But in the course of further social evolution, the totalised overcoding of all relations becomes impossible; the coded flows break open and give way to a state of free-flowing, decoded, complex sense under the conditions of the capitalist machine. While the despotic machine had functioned by reproducing overcoded order, the state of the capitalist machine is deterritorialised, disordered complexity which can no longer be contained by a territory or state, but instead oscillates freely, self-referentially and self-reproductively.

> [T]he capitalist machine begins when capital ceases to be a capital of alliance to become a filiative capital. Capital becomes filiative when money begets money, or value a surplus value […] It is solely under these conditions that capital becomes the full body, the new socius or the quasi cause that appropriates all the productive forces. We are no longer in the domain of the quantum or of the quantitas, but in that of the differential relation as a conjunction that defines the immanent social field particular to capitalism. (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 227)

While the material-economic roots of the capitalist machine are obvious, it is more than a particular mode of economic production defined in a narrow sense. The capitalist machine creates a social field which follows the relational logic of "filiative capital" which is self-reproductive, but takes the form of multiple conjunctive flows which oscillate together in the same mode without affecting each other (ibid., 225) similarly to Luhmann's sense-based, but functionally differentiated social systems.[88] In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari's evolutionary theory of social machines presents "a Marxist theory of capitalism, but one that has been transformed and adapted to new conditions" (Smith 2011: 38) so that its analytical pretence is centred on the mode in which social relations produce themselves as well as those subject to the control of their relational functioning. While Deleuze does not explicitly link his post-script to the capitalist machine of *Anti-Oedipus,* I believe that the "capitalism of the product" (1992b: 6) which he identifies as the mode of algorithmic, totalised modulation in the former is theoretically equivalent. Like capital, control is here "ultrarapid" and "free-floating" (ibd., 4). Control is no longer exercised, let alone monopolised by the despotic machine once the relationality of capitalism has transformed "the surplus value of code into a surplus value of flux" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 228).

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[88] Deleuze and Guattari describe the deterritorialised relations of the capitalist machine as axiomatic in this sense.

For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the productive primacy of decoded flows is catastrophic for the despotic machine: it can no longer reproduce itself through overcoding. Importantly, however, it is not lethal for the former:

> Decoded flows strike the despotic State with latency; they submerge the tyrant, but they also cause him to return in unexpected forms; they democratize him, oligarchize him, segmentalize him, monarchize him, and always internalize and spiritualize him, while on the horizon there is the latent Urstaat, for the loss of which there is no consolation. It is now up to the State to recode as best it can, by means of regular or exceptional operations, the product of the decoded flows. (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 222-223)

On the contrary, under the conditions of vampiric capitalism – a formulation which Deleuze and Guattari adopt from Marx (1976: 342; 367) - the functioning of the political sovereign becomes retroactive – a "*post-mortem* despotism" (1983: 228). Post-mortem despotism is effectively powerless because it cannot steer the flows it codes (Smith 2011: 48). But rather than becoming obsolete, there is a certain symbiotic relationship between the functionality of vampiric capital flows and post-mortem politics. Flows of capital reproduce themselves through deterritorialisation – but to constantly be able to do so, they constantly require territories to decode. Such momentous territorial stability is provided by the codes of the despotic machine, which function as reterritorialising.

Under the conditions of machinic capitalism, the functional responsibility of politics now "consists in reterritorializing, so as to prevent the decoded flow from breaking loose at all the edges of the social axiomatic. One sometimes has the impression that the flows of capital would willingly dispatch themselves to the moon if the capitalist State were not there to bring them back to earth" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 258). While unable to control and steer the flows of capital, the political coding of Deleuze and Guattari's post-mortem politics provides moments of orientation in meta-stable forms of sense which allow the self-productive mode of capital relations to continue. The despotic political machine must be understood to reproduce itself, in its social relevance, by producing territories of sense with a momentous stability through retroactive coding.

In chapter 3 I worked out the territorial quality of sense as a flat, ungrounded but self-grounding surface and suggested that Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy can be understood as a perspective on onto-epistemological genesis which is centred on the former. Against the background of what has been discussed in this chapter so far, specific territorial surfaces of sense can now be understood as the functional products of a self-reproductive politics, which such a geophilosophy of sense can further critically unpack

in their contingency and with regard to the operators of their identical reproduction. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987)*,* Deleuze and Guattari define the territory as a set of algorithmically coded guidelines for the focused, orienting production of a specific line of sense:

> What defines the territory is the emergence of matters of expression (qualities). Take the example of color in birds or fish: color is a membrane state associated with interior hormonal states, but it remains functional and transitory as long as it is tied to a type of action (sexuality, aggressiveness, flight). It becomes expressive, on the other hand, when it acquires a temporal constancy and a spatial range that make it a territorial, or rather territorializing, mark: a signature. The question is not whether color resumes its functions or fulfils new ones in the territory. It is clear that it does, but this reorganization of functions implies first of all that the component under consideration has become expressive and that its meaning, from this standpoint, is to mark a territory. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 315)

The territorial surface, following Deleuze and Guattari, performs and maintains "a semi-stable selection from chaos" (Kleinherenbrink 2015: 212). Through territorialisation politics consolidates and holds available particular path-ways for sense-making to provide momentous orientation in sense and reproduce its status in the absence of actual control. Writing on the racism faced by migrants, which transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries, Etienne Balibar has already noted that Deleuze and Guattari's "[g]eneralized concept of 'territory'" (2009: 192), which goes beyond a merely spatial understanding, constitutes a fruitful starting point to understand how political power operates and reproduces itself through contingent, ordering classification. Translated to Luhmann's political theory, territories are manifestations of the way politics operates as a particular domain of sense-making at a particular point in time.

Where Luhmann's concept of political power as a socially generalised medium of communication provides insights into its function, historical contingency and social expressions in a way that is similar to power in Foucault (Opitz 2013), I argue that Deleuze and Guattari's territory provides an analytical perspective on the operativity of contemporary politics as performing coded territorialisation. While providing insight to the functionality of political self-reproduction between identical repetition and contingency, this perspective also makes it possible to explore which territorial forms of sense are produced and reproduced in through political coding, and which alternative pathways in sense are excluded in the coded selection which constitutes the decision in sense. Which territories constitute the mechanism of self-productive political sense-making at a particular point in time or in a particular context? Is contemporary politics

subject to a resurgence of the national-cultural territory? Which are the codes that facilitate this territorialisation?

Against this background, I argue that Deleuze and Guattari's retroactive post-mortem politics can be productively integrated in the framework of an autopoietic politics of sense-making which has so far been established through Luhmann within this chapter. While in many ways less developed than Luhmann's political system, I argue that it opens up two important theoretical trajectories in the Luhmannian framework of autopoietic politics assembled above. Firstly, the looser use of political "code/coding" makes it possible to resolve the rigidity of Luhmann's expectational structures and links to Deleuze's wider work in such a way that determinacy and contingency in the self-reproductive political coding of sense relations can be explored. Secondly, Deleuze and Guattari's genealogy of social machines hints at the economic foundations of a self-referential social relationality, which I will also show to be present in Luhmann's social theory. Drawing out the links to Marx's theory of capital in Luhmann's thought, firstly through a critical analysis of the "crisis" as politically reproductive code and secondly by retracing the capitalist underpinnings of functional differentiation, it will be shown how Luhmann's theory can be used for a critical investigation of the operators and limits of identical political reproduction which is congruent with Deleuze's philosophical project.

5.2.2   Undoing the rigidity of Luhmann's programmatic code: the political code as internally multiple, synthetic and contingent nodal point for territorialisation

I argue that the central advantage of introducing Deleuze and Guattari's despotic machine to the framework of autopoietic politics is that it frees the concept of the code from the confinement of the programme. Both the code and the algorithmic programme find functional equivalents in the work of Deleuze or Deleuze and Guattari – but they fulfil separate analytical functions. In the following it will be shown how Deleuze's more open understanding of the code makes it possible to think a politics which flexibly shifts between focal points for complexity-reduction in the way that Luhmann envisions for contemporary politics. In Deleuze and Guattari, codes produce territorialised sense (Smith 2011: 49). Like in Luhmann, they guide molecular connections to reproduce the molar, relational "unity of a socius: an organism, social or living, is composed as a whole, as a global or complete object" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 342). This is the basis of the

symbiosis between capitalist machine and despotic machine: political coding is included in the relationality of capital flows as a socially evolved, protective mechanism against the "nightmare of every society" which is "the terror of a non-coded or decoded flow" (Smith 2011: 44).

Smith therefore defines the code as the functional correlative of the flow. It is "a form of inscription or recording" that is "'applied' to a flow" (ibid., 43-44) which can only be made sense of as coded. However, I argue that this conceptualisation of the code remains vague in Deleuze and Guattari and is at no point sharpened towards an analytically applicable conceptual tool. For this reason, I draw on Williams' Deleuzian concept of the sign to add theoretical nuance and clarity.[89] While Williams' *A Process Philosophy of Signs* (2016a) is not explicitly marked as a "Deleuzian" work and indeed goes beyond a secondary reading of Deleuze's philosophy in its theoretical scope and purchase, the theoretical proximity to Deleuze is, as in all of Williams' works, tangible, even if not always expressed. In the process philosophy he conceptualises, Williams defines a sign as a "selected set" (2016a: 3) which guides the relational continuation of a process.

> [A] sign is a selected set where selection is an ongoing process rather than the settled outcome of a choice. The process of selection emphasises a series of changing relations between all things brought about by a selection of some of them. It is therefore to pick out things by altering their relations, yet without detaching them from all others. (Williams 2016a: 75)

> It is therefore inaccurate to think of signs as fixed connections … because the sign is a process of selection before it appears to be a fixed relation. The sign is also a change in intensities before, during and after this merely illusory static connection between two terms. (Williams 2016a: 77)

While Williams specifies no "unit" for the operativity of the sign, I argue that it can be understood to operate in sense as it is conceptualised in this dissertation.[90] On this basis, William's sign can be used to further specify the code in Deleuze and Luhmann: the code,

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[89] To be clear I am not suggesting that the theories which situate code and sign respectively here are congruent or significantly overlap. Even the way Williams applies his sign as an analytical lens is different from Luhmann's code – he mentions family or sexuality (2016a: 103) as examples, implying that his sign would be too broad to fit Luhmann's conceptualisation of the code (sexuality, in Luhmann, is a socially generalised medium of communication while family appears as an interaction system). However, I suggest that precisely because I aim to broaden and de-structure Luhmann's concept of the code in the political context this connection is both plausible and fruitful.

[90] This is further supported by the fact that Williams (2016a: 114-117) employs Lacan's theory of the pre-linguistic sign to draw out his process philosophy, which is also used by Deleuze in *The Logic of Sense* to conceptualise sense. However, Williams broadens its analytical scope beyond "the psychoanalytical roots of the Lacanian sign" (ibid., 116) which I analogously suggest with regard to the concept of the abstract machine and the codes it produces. The differences between Deleuze's concept of sense and his concept of sign which Williams identifies as based on the heavy metaphysical baggage of Deleuze's ontology and his theory of time (ibid., 140-145) do not correspond to the reading of Deleuze developed in this thesis and are therefore, in this juncture, dismissed.

thought through Williams' sign, guides the expressive production of sense. It is a structuring rule which precedes a particular expression of sense, but not in an absolute fashion, because it can be changed through the latter (Williams 2016a: 20).[91] In this sense, the code is not ontologically external to the process it guides, it is a product of processual use developed over time (ibid., 25). The code as sign is further synthetic. It can include material as well as epistemic points which can on their part be both singular and relational sets in their own respect: "A cup of tea as a sign could be the set made up of tea, breakfast, Britishness and tradition, but it could also be tea, tea leaves and the hills of Sri Lanka, the history of plantation life, the exploitation of young women" (ibid., 2).

Codes make the continuous, processual production of reality possible by providing a creative force with ordered lines of actualisation (ibid., 69). More specifically, drawing on Deleuze, Williams (ibid., 133-136) argues that the code as sign deparadoxifies self-grounding in exactly the way that was illustrated for a decisionally self-productive politics which relies on the event and the expectational structures which give form to its reproductive resolution. In the context of the theory of a self-productive politics of sense which I develop here, I suggest that three aspects of the Deleuzian code theoretically concretised with Williams should be highlighted here. Firstly, codes are selections of sets; they are themselves selected, and themselves relational. Williams (2016b: 41-44) opens a perspective on the code as a processual structure of sense which appears fixed and singular but draws its ordering power from its internal multiplicity of diverse relational associations. The cup of tea, as a code, can guide selection by ordering the complexity of sense so effectively because its formal structure is not static, but flexible and conjunctive, allowing it to incorporate and stratify a multiplicity of diverse and heterogenous lines of sense.

Beyond Luhmann's neatly ordered, life-less binary labels, Williams' Deleuzian codes guide the selective production of complexity-reducing focal points in sense. They provide algorithmically ordered "if…then" trajectories for the past-future continuation of those relations of sense which they concentrate and enfold introversively, undoing the necessity for a strict differentiation between programme, script and code, which fails in Luhmann. In the following I will explore the "crisis" as a political code in this sense. It will be argued that the "crisis" is a complexity-reducing network of forms of sense which offers

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[91] While William himself uses the term "meaning", I believe that it is not only justified in the context of this thesis to replace it with "sense", but even plausible in the context of Williams' book as he, as discussed below, emphasises that algorithmic signs include language, but also images, objects and practices which go beyond the linguistic realm of "meaning".

a focal point for political territorialisation that is more flexible and internally diverse than the state of exception with its temporal and spatial confines. This allows for a theorisation of post-mortem politics of sense which makes use of codes to retroactively order complex, deterritorialised flows and reproduce itself in its social functionality. But while retroactive coding serialises phenomena, processes or events into a past-future line with a shared identity, codes remain internally complex.

Their conceptual design can account for the fact that the coding of a party as conservative, or of a government as legitimate, requires a multiplicity of links between actors, images, words and events to become effective on the level of sense (Brunczel 2012: 246-247). The code theorised by Williams is the nodal point of a relational multiplicity. The relational sets of codes can interrelate, overlap and conflict, their number within the political realm can vary. It can incorporate a political sense-making that is focused on issues, themes or events which do not necessarily lend themselves to binary splitting or neat diametrical opposition. The limits of the code are not necessary, but themselves contingent functional products of their ordering application by a coding politics faced with the task "to recode as best as it can" (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 223) under the conditions of deterritorialised flows which cannot be effectively steered. The differential line between particular codes is always constructed; it "does not matter where we draw the line […]. Each time we do so the limit will prove to be porous" (Williams 2016a: 25).

Secondly, the concept of code inferred from Williams underlines the synthetic character of the expectational structures it constitutes, which always contain both linguistic and material elements.

> Since any element can be selected into a set, …and since the selecting alters intensities of relations in and around all elements, the variations of intensity are in principle limitless in the relations they affect and in the elements they touch upon. Nothing can be excluded from the operation of the selection of a set and no element is left unchanged by the intense relations determining it as process. (Williams 2016b: 42)

This is implied in Luhmann, but never unpacked explicitly, for example when he defines the ordering function of political programmes (which require actors and manifestos as well as ideas) (Brunczel 2010: 148-149). I argue that it is vital to acknowledge the synthetic, internally multiple character of codes in order to arm a theory of political sense against simplistic assumptions that intentional political ordering can be performed through linguistic labelling, which are latent in post-structuralist analyses of emergency, threat or risk as the codes which reproduce the sovereign grasp within contemporary

politics (Neal 2012; Corry 2012; Booth 2005). Codes are the functional products of politics, not the intentional creations of certain political leaders, a particular government or even a particular type of regime. They are developed within the political system over time and produce nothing but the continuation of "something political".

But this gradual social evolution implies, I argue, that the coded social self-descriptions produced by politics prove viable on the level of general social observation, that they resonate with the observations produced by the members of the public which the political system is coupled with (Brunczel 2010: 165-167). To produce decisional orientation in sense, the political system can employ a variety of codes – it selectively draws attention to, includes and excludes, frames and establishes historical trajectories and causalities by selecting which lines of sense are continued in time and which are forgotten, erased from the memory of social self-observation. The political decision selects lines of sense from a multiplicity of sense relations which precedes the decisional situation and exceeds the political realm - it cannot bring them into existence. Political coding needs to synthesise sense relations, which themselves contain epistemic and material singularities, as they are available on the level of social observation in order to reduce complexity and perform the connective political decision in sense.

Thirdly, like Luhmann, Williams emphasises the double function of the code as sign – it operates selectively, but also retains a productive openness which allows for flexible continuation, adaption and change within a coded set whose relations are themselves meta-stable and subject to "a process of intensive unfolding" (Williams 2016a: 76). While the code establishes structural path-dependencies, their application remains open – "selections are free" (ibid., 80) and can change the set of the code itself. Each instant of coding "remains an unconditioned selection despite prevalent patterns" (ibid., 82). Drawing on Deleuze, Williams provides theoretical grounding to the relative distinction between the ordered relational processes of the coded set and the "other world" (ibid, 105) of its environment. In the following section, it will be shown how Williams' less rigid, Deleuzian code-as-sign makes it possible to use Luhmann's political theory to critically unpack how contemporary politics reproduces itself with the help of complexity-reducing, but internally flexible codes, such as the "crisis".

5.2.3 The political processing of eventual openness: "crisis" as a political code

The following observations constitute a pause in the theoretical arguments developed in this chapter to exemplify what such a complexity-reducing code could look like in practice, and how it can be unpacked through the framework provided. The analysis developed in the following is based on the observation of a recent proliferation of "crisis" as a political label for different social events, processes and situations (Paglia 2018; Gentili 2017; Calhoun 2011) such as the "EU debt crisis" of 2008, the UK's "Brexit crisis" or the "migrant crisis" which Europe is facing. In this sense, "crisis" will be explored as a complexity-reducing, expectationally structuring code particular to contemporary politics.[92]

While in many ways similar to and overlapping with the state of emergency, it is suggested that the spatio-temporally more open quality of the crisis, which neither requires a particular territory to govern exceptionally nor a clearly defined beginning and end, not only resolves some of the issues identified with the assumption of a generally exceptionalist governance in chapter 4, but also seems more productive for a political relationality which, following Luhmann, requires a high degree of flexibility and adaptability to reproduce itself. Dominant explanations of political crisis discourses either focus on the crisis label as a discursive tool constitutively used by political actors to legitimise actions and focus attention (Calhoun 2011; Koselleck 2006) or view political effects such as depoliticisation and the rise of populism as the effect of a manifest social crisis brought about by neoliberal governance from a materialist perspective (Gentili 2017; Lazzarato 2015).

I suggest that the identification of "crisis" as a code which structures expectations to facilitate the sense-making performed by politics can provide a more nuanced understanding which incorporates both argumentative trajectories while avoiding the

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[92] Underlying the possibility of its use as a political code is the etymology of the concept of crisis. The meaning of crisis can be traced back to its origin in ancient Greece where "krisis" referred to a decision between "life-deciding alternatives meant to answer questions about what is just or unjust, what contributes to salvation or damnation, what furthers health or brings death" (Koselleck, 2006: 361). In his conceptual history of the crisis, Koselleck (1988: 98-103) interestingly points out that this meaning remained remarkably stable over time. The crisis still denotes a decisional dilemma that needs to be politically resolved immediately in order to meet societal expectations (ibid., 130-137). While the identification of a crisis suggests the necessity of immediate action, neither the appropriate form of action nor its direction is implied (Koselleck 2006: 361-362). However, while the socially developed meaning of the crisis is important for its functionality as ordering code in sense, this meaning is not enough for something to be made sense of as crisis by the political system or its public observers – the network of the crisis code must include materiality, bodies and experiences in order to stratify expression in a medium of sense which is fundamentally mixed.

latent linguistic or materialist reductionisms of either. The idea of a functionally reproductive crisis already features in Marx's economic analysis. I suggest that two elements of Marx's concept of crisis are relevant here. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx identifies the continuously falling profit rates of capitalist production as the cause for a necessary economic crisis in the wake of which capitalism can be politically overthrown (Choat 2016: 177-178). Even though this economic crisis occurs within and is thus a product of the systemically totalised, self-productive relations of capital, Marx (1981: 367-369) nevertheless emphasises the material reality of this anticipated economic crisis. But Marx gives a different nuance to his concept of crisis in the third volume of *Capital*, where he explores how the functionality of capitalism is accelerated in relations of credit. Here, the crisis seems to be the functional product of capital relations. It facilitates their reproduction by providing "momentary, violent solutions for the existing contradictions, violent eruptions that re-establish the disturbed balance for the time being" (ibid., 357).

As an extension of the "real crises" which are always caused by "poverty and restricted consumption of the masses" (ibid., 615) according to Marx, he conceptualises a reproductive crisis which performs a regular, functionally necessary and thus "unavoidable" (ibid., 649) expulsion of energy from the credit system of accelerated fictitious capital. Within a capital system which is closed off from the content it represents, the relations of labour and production, crises function in a reductive manner. Whenever credit relations reach a limit of self-extension, they destabilise to allow the self-extension of capital to begin anew. In Deleuze and Guattari's terms, the crisis reterritorialises capital flows. While economically focused and situated in a materialist ontology in Marx, I argue that both dimensions, a crisis which is produced within the relations it reproduces because its reductive functioning facilitates this reproduction, but also a crisis which nevertheless has a degree of material actuality and is never completely fictitious, are important cornerstones of the political functionality of the crisis code within a politics of sense.

In *Social Systems* (1995), Luhmann describes crises as immunity mechanisms of social systems. Borrowing from neurobiological research on second-order immunity systems, Luhmann's systemic immunity-reactions are auto-affective: rather than responding to external stimuli, the threats targeted by the immunity mechanism are always its own constructions and follow its particular internal logic (Vas 2001). The particular threat which the immunity-mechanism of the crisis responds to in order to secure "not the continuity of life but the connective capacity of [communicative] actions" (Luhmann

1995: 373) is evental complexity. Even though it does always emerge as a product of the sense relations it endangers, the threat of complexity coded as crisis is of manifest reality to the system. As an immunitarian threat, the crisis is both immanent and real. But as a systemically developed code, the crisis also forms an expectational structure which orders complexity at the same time as it produces it on the level of sense. The immunitarian code of the crisis thus functions pharmacologically with regard to the complexity it makes sense of – it is both poison and remedy for the autopoietic relationality in which it operates (Luhmann 2004: 475-457).

Distorting the secure ground for decisions, evental complexity threatens the political continuation of sense. But at the same time, if coded as crisis, this complexity constitutes an opportunity for political decision-making and thus for its resolution. The crisis code reverses the threatening nature of what it codes. Because they are experienced as threatening, and thus creating the need for ordering resolution, by society as a whole, crises constitute alarm signals learned and historically incorporated by the political system. But when a crisis is expressed in its alarming sense, this expression also opens a political path of (re-)action solidified by past experiences: the selective making-sense of an event as crisis already resolves evental complexity on the level of sense by producing a particular self-observation of society. In addition, the crisis reduces complexity through temporal compression and the focus of political sense-making on the specific issue at hand, and the sense relations relevant to overcome it. It functions as a concentrating nodal point in sense in the way identified as particular to codes in the discussion of Williams' theory. The crisis "suggest[s] urgency and speed. We have not much time, approaching an either/or situation. But this is also a self-protective device. We have not enough time, then, for theory-building and reflection" (Luhmann 1984: 59).

On the level of sense and its relational continuity, the crisis code therefore turns the condensed insecurity of the event into "something almost secure: something has to happen" (Luhmann 1995: 371) to resolve it. All descriptions of society, even descriptions of a society that is subject to "crisis, uncontrollability" (ibid., 431) continue its self-observation on the level of sense, and thereby relationally continue those societies. I argue that this pharmacological functioning makes the crisis code particularly relevant to a political system which functionally has to cope with high levels of evental complexity, and additionally has to maintain a high level of internal contingency to flexibly adapt to changing conditions. Under such conditions, Luhmann argues that "alarm signals" such as the crisis become a dominant form of (politically provided) social self-observation.

Focusing attention while remaining ambiguous and thus flexible with regard to the issue made sense of, the crisis code relieves politics from the responsibility to provide observations of the social world in the form of positively guiding plans for action (Luhmann 1984: 59-62).

Recalling the synthetic character of codes which are themselves comprised of a set of relations emphasised in their definition through Williams, and again in their material quality through Marx above, the crisis code must be understood to unfold its productivity as a form of synthetic sense comprised of both epistemic and material series. This means that a crisis cannot be the mere product of intentional political labelling, its actuality must be rooted in the synthetic surface of sense, must fit into and form part of the trajectories of sense-making in society as a whole. All forms of sense which the ordering crisis code can be applied to are the functional products of sense relations, not the constructions of particular actors, structures or their organisational combinations – its material and epistemic constituents give actuality to the event coded as crisis on the level of sense in a way which is independent from its particular political coding (Luhmann 1984: 65-66). Against this background, the theory of sense which I developed as a "third way" between discursive and materialist approaches in this dissertation is particularly well-equipped for such a non-reductionist unpacking of how crises function politically reproductive in contemporary societies.

However, the crisis as political code does not just immunise the political system from evental complexity by recuperating its threatening character, it also allows politics to flexibly alter and re-constitute its internal relations. Something must and can be done to resolve the crisis – it is not a disaster or catastrophe – even if there is no solution in sight, a resolution of the crisis is generally possible (Luhmann 1984: 59). But what exactly such a resolution looks like remains indeterminate. In this sense, the crisis code does not just exclude the diagrammatic openness present in every particular decisional actualisation of a line of sense, but also constitutes the political system's functional response to an increased need for adaptivity and short-term responsiveness. In this sense, the crisis code is an example for how a political system or machine makes use of the immanent openness of sense relations to reproduce its relational functioning through divergent reterritorialisation.

> For an instant [coded contradictions such as crises] destroy the system's total pretension to being ordered, reduced complexity. For an instant, then, indeterminate complexity is restored, and everything is possible. But at the same time contradictions possess enough form to guarantee the

connectivity of communicative processing via sense. The system's reproduction is merely directed into different paths (Luhmann, 1995: 373).

The fact that sense-expressions of evental complexity are always part of its recuperation in sense does therefore not, for Luhmann, take away from the fact that events constitute genuine moments of instability for the political system which faces them. In the event, reproductive connectivity is precarious and reproduction in sense is genuinely open. On the one hand, its high flexibility means that the crisis code makes self-reproductive politics extremely adaptable while still preserving its functional integrity. For political territorialisation with the help of the crisis code, the issue coded and the sense relations opened can for example vary from a loss of public confidence faced and ultimately overcome by a government to a profound instability which can only be resolved by a complete re-organisation of the political system in its decisional scope and content. What is preserved is only, but importantly, the ungrounded, self-productive functionality of "something political" which provides momentous orientation in sense – even if this functionality can only be preserved if ascribed to a government, political order or conception of the political which differs radically from the status quo of contemporary institutional-democratic politics.

5.3 Deleuze, Marx, Luhmann: historical contingency, openness and recuperation in the social relationality of capital

So far, I have explored the functioning of a self-reproductive politics of sense exemplified by the "crisis" code with an emphasis on internal contingency and resulting adaptive flexibility, which was theoretically carved out through the concept of the event in chapter 4. However, what remains ambiguous is the scope and thus the possible political purchase of the creative openness which must return to the order of sense under the conditions of functional differentiation, or, put with Deleuze, the axiomatic capitalism of the societies of control. How, and to what extent, can the immanent openness of sense relations be employed to actualise a line of sense, and in the course produce a possible world, which is genuinely different? In the following I will draw out a theoretical trajectory which links Marx's theory of capital, which has been shown to underlie Deleuze and Guattari's machinic capitalism, to Luhmann. Doing so it will be explored how contemporary self-reproductive social relationalities can be understood as conditioned by the rise of capitalism and as subject to the problem of ideological recuperation in both Luhmann and

Deleuze, but how the productive relationality both thinkers conceptualise offers scope for immanent change beyond Marx's dialectic determinism.

Unpacking a certain congruence between Marx's theory of capital and Luhmann's functional differentiation allows me to continue the theoretical path treaded above with the critical analysis of political reproduction through "crises". This congruence highlights how Luhmann's theory of a self-reproductive politics of sense-making can be integrated and used in a critical theoretical framework which seeks to locate and understand potentialities for change which are immanent to the former. As discussed in chapter 1, Luhmann can, if at all, only be cautiously identified as a critical thinker. At all times he retained a mocking attitude towards "the muscly metaphysics of materialism" (Luhmann 1991c: 91), especially of the Frankfurt School kind. However, recently a few attempts have been made to work out similarities in the way Luhmann and Marx describe the functioning of contemporary society with an emphasis on relational circularity and auto-logical reproduction, as well as focusing on the role of history and the concept of difference in their respective theoretical methodologies (Pahl 2008; Thornhill 2013; Hessinger 2015; Prien 2013; Renner 2013). In *Observations on Modernity,* Luhmann himself speaks uncharacteristically favourably of the theoretical purchase of "a non-Marxist Marx" (1998b: 7):

> What remains remarkable about the Marxist critique of the political economies of its day is the shift of a knowledge previously justified through nature to a social context. The economic order of capitalism does not, according to Marx, follow a natural economic action with an innate trend toward individual and collective rationality. It is, rather, a social construct. The reference to nature is presented as 'reification'; that is, it is analyzed as a moment of social construction. Economic theory's claim to represent an extrasocial objectivity is contested. It only reflects the logic of a social construct. Even if we give up everything else, we should keep this and proceed with Marx […] that capitalistic economy is founded not on an extrasocial objectivity but rather on itself, and that all references to interests, needs, necessities, or advantages of rationality are internal references to external situations. They are therefore dependent and remain dependent on the logic of capital economies. (Luhmann 1998b: 8)

Luhmann emphasises two distinct analytic achievements of Marx's economic analysis: the self-referentiality of capital relations within a capitalist economy and the fact that this economic relationality is the conditioned product of a particular social context. Beginning with the first element, Luhmann recognises that the relationality of capitalism which Marx theorises is equivalent to the autopoiesis of sense in his social systems under the conditions of functional differentiation. For Luhmann, money is however just one form

which the reproductive medium of sense can take, and which is particular to the economic system. Politics, for example, reproduces itself in power, and science through the medium of truth. On the contrary, capital in Marx is of the same status and quality as sense in Luhmann: it is both the medium in which a capitalist society reproduces all its relations auto-logically and self-extensively and the form in which it produces the world that is shaped by these relations. Capital, for Marx, is thus not a commodity or product produced in or extracted from a specific process, but first and foremost a relational process. Everything produced under the conditions of capitalism must thus be understood as the outcome of the productive capital relation, "a specific relation of capital to itself" (Marx 1973: 259).

Money – as abstracted, generalised mode of exchange - is the form in which these relations of production take shape under the conditions of capitalism (Marx 1973: 247-254; Choat 2016: 54-57). In the *Grundrisse*, Marx identifies three different functions of money which precede the rise of the capitalist economy. Money is firstly a measurement for the value of a particular commodity. Secondly, it is a medium through which exchange can take place to generate value and thirdly money can be acquired for the sake of money itself, for the purpose of aggregating, but – at least originally - not increasing value (Marx 1973: 221-224). All three forms of money, which precede capitalism, initially have in common a certain quantitative limitation because they remain bound to the production process whose circulation they mediate. In all three cases, money must be coupled with a particular use-value which is either ideally or materially present, or both, to make it function as measurement, exchange medium or aggregate. This means that money, even though its material existence is subjected to the form of its social function, remains bound to and thus grounded in the process of production, as this fixed value reflects a certain amount of labour-time necessary to produce the commodity it is linked to (Paulani 2014: 282-286; Choat 2016: 67-73).

This only changes for Marx when the commodity is fully replaced by its price and, together with its use-value, disappears from the process of circulation. Money is now fully autonomised in so far as its exchange-value is no longer limited through the production-process, but, as it has been latent in its third function, its value is also independent from its actual presence within a circulation process. While it therefore makes sense to conclude that the gradual expulsion of the material basis of money as a social form "is precisely what makes it autonomous from circulation" (Paulani 2014: 287), it is on the other hand also the case that the circulation process changes through the

transition to autonomous money. Dissolved from its three social functions to maintain, transfer or aggregate value, money becomes capital, directed towards self-valorisation. The circulation process now not only begins and ends with capital, but switches towards an auto-logic of constitution where self-valorisation and subsequent consumption construct the reality of circulation and production. This does not mean that the three social functions of money disappear, but they only persist as organised through the relations of capital and oriented towards its self-production (Marx 2000: 556-557; Nelson 1999: 117-119).

As shown above, Deleuze and Guattari unpack capitalist circulation in its open, unconfined, conjunctive dimension through the concept of the flow. Under capitalism, there is nothing but capital flows. In their characterisation of the capitalist machine in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari argue that capital has become the universal, totalising unit of social production. "Flows, who doesn't desire flows, and relationships between flows, and breaks in flows?" (1983: 229). Marx describes the unbound, totalised and self-productive functionality of capital with the concept of fictitious capital, which renders everything consumable in the process of capitalisation. "Fictitious capital, then, is everything that isn't capital, wasn't capital and will not be capital but works as such" (Paulani 2014: 291). Fictitious, self-producing capital allows the totality of capital relations to persist despite the constant decrease of exchange-value (Choat 2016: 83-84).

Marx's theory of money suggests that the shift towards capitalism is not merely a change in the mode of economic production. Capitalist circulation rather fundamentally alters the relationality which conditions the production of social life. Capital relations, no longer bound to material conditions of production or exchange which fix the value of the circulated money, are characterised by nothing but their own capacity for self-production – they reproduce capital as a relationality which is able to constantly integrate new events in its internal logic (Nelson 1999: 104-109). Marx's capital relations and Luhmann's political sense relations do not only have in common that they reproduce themselves by independently generating the elements necessary for this reproduction, they thereby also produce their own, flexible limits. As Deleuze and Guattari argue, the capitalist machine is "always ready to widen its own limits so as to add a new axiom to a previously saturated system!" (1983: 238). I suggest that Marx's famous image of capital as a vampire, which only persists as it can constantly produce new victims and which Deleuze and Guattari adopt, can be understood in this sense. Capital persists through introversive extension, it

"only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks" (Marx 1976: 342).[93]

Marx's totalised relationality of capital operates dialectically – its reproduction necessitates a constitutive difference (Kurz 2012: 52-53). When capital has become totalised, the relational unity of capital must produce its own outside from which it can differentiate itself. In his fourth thesis on Feuerbach, Marx (2000: 172) criticises Feuerbach's assumption of a pre-given, dialectical split of the world into a material and a spiritual sphere which conditions religious alienation. For Marx, both the worldly-material sphere and the theological-normative "realm in the clouds" (ibid.) which ideologically grounds the former are rather co-produced through a constitutive disruption of the material-social world itself (Jal 2009: 223-224; Nelson 1999: 7-7). When money becomes capital, it ceases to be the representation of a fixed material value and produces value on its own. Self-productive capital relations must deparadoxify their totalised productivity through the co-production of a constitutive outside from which capital can differentiate itself – with the additional "advantage" that in Marx, this theological, political or normative outside grounds the capitalist machine of material relations ideologically. The self-reproduction of capitalism takes place "via a *Umweg*, a detour that is built on the schizophrenic characteristics of capitalism: the individual and the social, the subject and the object, use-values and value, the material and the ideal, the concrete and the abstract" (Jal 1994: 224).

The productive self-differentiation that takes place between different systems in Luhmann under the conditions of functional differentiation thus happens between material conditions and ideological superstructure in Marx. Both have the effect that any ideational self-observation expressed is both always the product of this general social mode of differentiation which it reproduces and radically perspectivist to the particular difference it expresses. As Hanno Pahl (2008: 47-50) points out, what Marx sketches out here is an early, economically grounded version of Luhmann's autopoietic relational self-differentiation. While Marx and Luhmann locate and theorise the self-produced differences which sustain the autopoietic relationalities they analyse differently, they ultimately converge on the fact that the reproduction of requires the self-observation of

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[93] It must be noted however that there is a pre-existent, material component to Marx's vampire analogy from which introversive self-production in Deleuze and Guattari and in Luhmann diverges: the body of the victim sucked dry by capital pre-exists this process of extraction, even though, as consumable within the context of capital relations, it only emerges within the relationality of capital (similarly to the emergence of the singularity-event in the Evental nexus in Whitehead which I explored in chapter 4).

the capitalist- or functionally differentiated society on the level of sense, as it is, as argued in this chapter, performed by politics.

Pahl (2008: 113-115) further points out that the desire to understand socio-economic relations in their emergence rather than just explaining their status quo is something that Marx shares with Luhmann. Both insist on the historical conditionedness of the relational self-referentiality which operates in sense in Luhmann, and in capital in Marx. I argue that the four stages of Marx's materialist history (not including the resolution of capitalism in a communist society) from primitive society to the antique and medieval classed societies and finally capitalism do not only clearly inspire the three abstract machines of social relationality in Deleuze and Guattari, but also show significant parallels to the way Luhmann theorises social evolution. In *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, Luhmann (1998a: 613) also distinguishes four distinct historical stages: segmented societies, societies characterised by a centre-periphery differentiation, hierarchically stratified societies and functionally differentiated societies.

To be clear, what characterises a particular historical stage and provokes evolution is not the state of material production or division for Luhmann (ibid., 608-610), but the communicative form through which particular systems differentiate themselves and are observed by themselves and others in the medium of sense. Primitive societies are horizontally segmented into a number of distinct realms such as families, clans, professional or other circles in a way which is very similar to the societies subject to the primitive territorial machine in Deleuze and Guattari. But Luhmann argues that increasing social complexity decreases the relevance of kinship boundaries and leads to a widening and re-organisation of social realms. What follows is increasing territorial segmentation along a centre-periphery division which can accommodate a higher degree of complexity and thus allows for cultural, economic and political advancements such as increasing sizes of political empires, extended trade relations, professionalised production and a developed moral-theological system of ideas. These socio-evolutionary achievements produce differences in status, influence and wealth which in time constitute a shift to hierarchically stratified societies (Barben 1996: 118-119; Luhmann 1998a: 638-678).

In his socio-historically rich description of the shift from segmented societies to hierarchically stratified societies, Luhmann (ibid., 662-679) notes a transition from direct, personal and reciprocal exchange to centralised, directed social relations which are mediated through communication and thus more complex. He identifies the subsequent stabilisation of social elites as well as territorial inequalities as the central conditions for

this leap in social complexity towards multiple simultaneous relations upheld by a political centre whose total, relational control is analogous to that of the despotic machine in Deleuze and Guattari: "stratification, on a social level, does not happen without a parallel political centralism" (Luhmann 1998a: 682) which institutionalises politics as a distinct social sphere and prepares its modern functional differentiation. Luhmann, who seeks to ground his insights in socio-historical research, points to the "ambiguous state of research" (ibid., 656) on the role of economic advancements such as extended trade relations and the accumulation of prestige goods by particular families for this stabilisation of hierarchical inequalities. However, he tentatively attributes significant importance to economic factors in rendering the reciprocal relations of segmented societies irreversible (ibid.).

A further leap in social complexity then leads to the differentiation of society into epistemologically segmented functional realms whose relationality of sense becomes unprocessable for a political, or any other central authority. While material-economic underpinnings are the driving force for this evolution in Marx, only their contours become visible in Luhmann's social history. However, as Otto Bode (2000) points out in his economically situated analysis of Luhmann's theory, the functional logic of the autopoietic system is that of the liberal *homo economicus*. Both are machines which use particular codes to ensure that their diagrammatic relations only operate towards whatever constitutes functional gain – for Luhmann's system, this gain is autopoietic persistence (ibid., 184). Luhmann himself never explicitly draws out that the logic of functional differentiation is economic, even though the idea of a functional "division of labour" (Luhmann 1984: 65) between specialised social subsystems for the purpose of increased efficiency is obviously rooted in the early liberal economic theories of Adam Smith and David Ricardo. However, he emphasises that the transition from hierarchical stratification to functional differentiation implies a shift from the primacy of the political to a primacy of the economic which then holds a specifically influential position with regard to how sense is made in contemporary societies (Barben 1996: 128; Schimank 2010).[94]

In Marx, the self-reproductive relationality of capital remains vulnerable to possible rupture and change, albeit that the former necessitates a revolutionary alteration of the

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[94] Barben suggests here that Luhmann subsequently abandons the idea of a "primacy of the economic" because it sits uneasily with his idea that the division of society into sub-systems is strictly horizontal. I suggest my reading of Luhmann's primacy of the economic as shaping the relationality of society as a whole as an alternative way of harmonising this claim with the assumption that functionally differentiated systems are equal in their status.

material conditions of ownership and production to escape the reproductive pull of the dialectic between workers and bourgeoisie and between the relationality of capital and its self-produced, suprastructural outside (Kurz 2012: 284-285). But in Luhmann, where there is no *sui generis* productive materiality to free from the chains of self-productive (capital) relations and where all creative power is immanent to those relations themselves, such rupture is impossible. The socio-political scope for creativity in sense appears here confined to a reiteration of the social status quo of functional differentiation. While Luhmann argues that the historical evolution of a social relationality where functionally specified systems differentiate themselves is "extremely unlikely" (1998a: 707), functional differentiation is the emergent, but necessary response of social order to a rapidly increasing complexity. For highly complex contemporary societies, functional differentiation is thus "irreversible" (ibid.) and without alternative (ibid., 761-762). For this reason, Luhmann himself locates contingencies and the pontentiality for change in the realm of structural couplings within the existing order of functionally differentiated social systems. Luhmann does not think beyond functional differentiation because his systems theory seems to exclude the possibility of a move beyond the former (ibid., 776-788; Rasch and Wolfe 2000).

On the contrary, it has been emphasised at various points in this dissertation, for example in the introductory framing of Deleuze's theory in chapter 1 or the unpacking of his interest in counter-actualisation in the event in chapter 4, that such a "thinking beyond" lies at the heart of Deleuze's philosophical project. However, despite the central role which resistance and a creative potentiality for change play in his work, Deleuze's late diagnosis of societies of totalised control ends on a seemingly pessimistic note close to Luhmann. While the post-script contains a call to action for the "young people" (Deleuze 1992b: 7) who must find "new weapons" (ibid., 4) to resist a modulating and omnipresent control, Deleuze himself seems unable to conceive of a way out of the "progressive and dispersed installation" (ibid., 7) in which the systems of domination he outlines blend seamlessly into one another so that their grasp becomes perpetual and self-reproductive. Deleuze's societies of control seem subject to a self-productive control as it was defined by Luhmann in his late essay "The Control of Intransparency" (1997b).

> 'Control' therefore is not to be thought of as a discovery of errors, which would only make sense with trivial machines, but is the retrospective self-observation of a system which follows upon steering attempts. Control is not merely success control either. It may exist too when the system tries to divert or to eliminate external steering attempts or steering attempts from above. […] Thus control is almost always connected with a redescription of the steering, which exposes the system to a

constant self-correction. Just as steering belongs to the context of oscillation, control belongs to the context of memory. (Luhmann 1997b: 368)

Understood with Luhmann, the control of Deleuze's post-script is not a particular mode of governance exercised upon citizen "dividuals", but rather a way to make sense of a particular change or condition concerning the functioning of social relations, which includes even the absence of actual control (ibid., 366-368). Luhmann locates control on the level of social self-observation – the level of sense – where it is totalised, self-reproductive and without outside. Turning back to Deleuze, while a constantly present, relationally immanent potentiality for change is central to his theory of relations, he does not employ the former to insist on or carve out political alternatives to modulating control, leading some thinkers, especially those with a Marxist bend, to criticise Deleuze for a defeatist withdrawal from political practice (Žižek 2004; Garo 2008).[95]

Such accusations can be warded off by showing how the immanent creative openness theorised as central to a self-reproductive relationality of sense, which Luhmann and Deleuze theorise beyond the self-reproductive dialectic of Marx's capital, remains present in every manifest form this relationality takes in socio-political practice. In the final section of this chapter I will show that the genuine creative openness immanent to all self-productive relations subverts assumptions of political determinism not only for Deleuze's societies of control, but also for Luhmann's functionally differentiated society. Beginning with the realm of Deleuzian theory, Deleuze and Guattari point out that the historically evolved determination of sense relations through the capitalist machine is total with regard to the sense relations produced under the conditions it defines, but never absolute. Deleuze and Guattari insist on the possibility of "lines of flight" (1987: 139) towards new territories in sense which take place as micro-diversions in the reproductive expression of sense and thus emerge on the inside of its autopoietic relationality (see also: Deleuze 1988: 89).

The necessity for this immanent openness of structurally moulded relations can be further unpacked with the help of Deleuze theorisation of socio-political relations. For Deleuze, there is an intrinsic connection between the macro-relationality of the social machine and

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[95] While not specifically mentioned here, these criticisms also include Deleuze's more explicitly "political" writings with Guattari, which for example Žižek connects in his book (Sotiris 2016). While the emphasis of Deleuze and Guattari's work lies more explicitly on finding "war machines" (1987: 118) which can be employed to rupture sel-reproductive relations and open up "lines of flight" (ibid., 139) towards something genuinely new, the assumption is that the abstract, ontopolitical quality of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis focused on conceptual innovation recuperates the superstructure of capitalism in the same way as conventional metaphysics does and fails to connect to practical-political change.

the micro-relations wich it (de-)territorialises and through which the former reproduces itself in sense, which makes it possible to explore the immanant openness of the latter in its possible effects on the former. As Deleuze unpacks in *Foucault* (1988), while every machine constitutes a highly abstract "map of destiny" (1988: 36) which structures the relations of a social field, it can only reproduce itself in a concrete, actual sense-expression. Social machines, with their distinct relationalities of sense such as Foucauldian panopticism or axiomatic capitalism, only exist insofar as they are actualised in micro-relations of sense. But because these micro-relations are, as Deleuze argues, always external to their terms and can be reproduced only through the recurrent opening to chaotic complexity, these are endowed with the potentiality to change the relational logic of the social machine as such.

Why are Deleuze's relations always external to their terms? In his early book on David Hume, *Empiricism and Subjectivity* (1991a), Deleuze investigates the process of subjectivation as an example for the synthetic quality of every productive process. As unpacked with regard to the genesis of sense as a form which is a limited, grounding body in chapter 2, it always involves both ideas and material-physical experience without the primacy of either realm. Inverting the Kantian relation between idea and self, Deleuze uses Hume to argue that the reasoning, acting, experiencing "subject is constituted in the collection of ideas" (1991a: 99). Rather than being primary to ideas and sense-impressions (the discursive and non-discursive formations whose relations the abstract machine of the social field guides), the subject is constantly shaped and re-shaped by the productive, experiential interrelation of both ideas and physical impressions – to which these relations are external.

> Whether as relations of ideas or as relations of objects, relations are always external to their terms. What Hume means is this: principles of human nature produce in the mind relations of ideas as they act 'on their own' on ideas. […] To the logic of mathematics […] must therefore be juxtaposed a logic of physics or of existence […]. To say that a principle of nature—in this case, habit—is formed gradually is to say, in the first place, that experience is itself a principle of nature. (Deleuze 1991a: 66-67)

For Deleuze, machinic relations of subjectivation thus originate in a concrete encounter. They draw their productivity from the manifold relations of experience which can receive and integrate the former, pre-existing, but being altered through every new subjective expression they produce.

The relationality of experience firstly undoes the notion of primacy, or rather the need to account for absolute primacy, in order to understand creativity. Something new is created in the form of a synthetic, expressive relation at the juncture of nature and culture, empirical encounter and ideational expression, which both constantly inform the creative potentiality of, but are constantly altered through experiential relations. "Being external to their terms, how would relations be able to determine the priority of one term over the other, or the subordination of one to the other?" (ibid., 123). But secondly and more importantly, ideas, while themselves conditioned by the machinic status quo of power relations, can develop an original productivity through their interconnection with experience – in the expression of a new sense-relation which creates a thought, speech act or action. The productivity of an abstract machine is thus derived from the creative potentiality of the temporally charged, returning evental chaos or complexity which is opened in every moment of synthetic relational connection. It contains both connections already actualised in the power relations of a particular machine and alternative relations which bear no resemblance to the former (Vellodi 2014: 86).[96] As a consequence, the deterritorialising relations of the capitalist machine must always, in principle, remain open to change because they draw from the force of chaos immanent to every micro-instant of relational actualisation in sense (Kleinherenbrink 2015).

But can the onto-epistemological openness of sense relations equally be found to be present in the way Luhmann conceptualises their socio-political actuality under the conditions of functional differentiation? Zooming in on the history of Luhmann's functional differentiation, I will show how the countours of a genuine openness immanent to manifest socio-political relations indeed becomes visible, which mediates the deterministic appearance of Luhmann's social thought and bridges the gap to Deleuze's immanent potentiality for change sketched out above. Luhmann's social history sheds light on the internal differentiation of the social system as a whole. While he shows that this differentiation has not always been functional, Luhmann (1998a: 634-648) assumes that even primitive societies are differentiated into sub-systems, even if those are family units or territorial entities which are not particularly complex. While not explicitly

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[96] Deleuze uses the term "diagram/diagrammatic" to refer to this immanent outside of the social machine and its particular diagram of power which unfolds in the synthetic, excessive externality of every connection in sense. It is not an absolute, ontological externality, but immanent to the relations of sense through which every machine of (de-)territorialisation operates (Vellodi 2014: 83-84). The diagrammatic is the form of the immanent openness which has been developed in the argumentative trajectory of the political theory of sense as it refers to axiomatic capitalism or functional differentiation as a mode of social organisation, not onto-epistemological genesis or the production of individual sense-relations.

discussed by Luhmann, it seems that – similarly to Marx's discussion of money in pre-capitalist societies – the differentiation of these family- and territorial systems differs from functional differentiation in certain respects.

Most importantly, the closure of these systems, which are still bound to an external, socially shared scheme of difference, which is here not materiality, but kinship or political authority (ibid., 745), is less complete; the term "autopoiesis" is notably absent from Luhmann's description of pre-functional social differentiation.[97] However, I argue that Luhmann does conceptualise the households, territorial entities and hierarchically stratified units of his pre-functional societies as "systems" in the sense of his general systems theory – as relational entities which reproduce themselves through continuous connection on the level of sense under conditions of recurrent, complexity-inducing re-entry (ibid., 640-645). Ungrounded, relational self-production in sense does therefore precede, and is not necessarily coupled with, the conditions of functional differentiation, not the least because all societies described by Luhmann are populated by psychic systems which reproduce themselves autopoietically in sense in a way which is characterised as ahistoric by Luhmann (Fuchs 2012).

I believe that this theoretical uncoupling of autopoiesis in sense and functional differentiation has important consequences for the way Luhmann's theory can be used. Firstly, it shows that the perspective on sense as ungrounded, but self-grounding onto-epistemological force productive of the world as we can make sense of it developed in this dissertation can be viewed, and used, in a way that is distinct from the assumption of a society structured into functionally differentiated, autopoietically closed systems. While linking both can produce fruitful insights, which I sought to demonstrate with regard to the functioning of contemporary politics in this chapter, this link is not necessary, because the onto-epistemological genesis in sense can be thought without functional differentiation. Secondly, I argue that the fundamental changes that societies have undergone within the Luhmannian framework of ungrounded self-production in sense bring into view, at least in principle, the possibility of an emergent reorganisation of society beyond functional differentiation, even if an anachronistic return to previous modes of systemic organisation is impossible. "A social system is not, like an organism,

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[97] I believe that this is an interesting observation even though it is not quite clear that this omission is intentional. While the two volumes of *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (1998) were finalised by Luhmann himself and not published as posthumous fragments, the text certainly contains older fragments; the first manuscript of the book published in 1998 was written as early as 1975 and has since been published as *Die Systemtheorie der Gesellschaft* (Soziopolis 2017).

fixed in its type. A donkey cannot become a snake, even if such a development was necessary for survival" (Luhmann 2009a: 18).

So why do neither Deleuze, in his post-script, nor Luhmann theorise the possibility of such a fundamental re-organisation of society? It was shown above how the theoretical trajectory Marx-Luhmann made it possible to re-describe Deleuze's (1992b) diagnosis of control societies as a perspectivist self-observation of society conditioned by and reproductive of the social conditions of self-repoduction in sense which it is designed to unpack. But if the history of modes of governance drawn out by Deleuze is, following Luhmann, an example for "how memory creates reality" (Luhmann 1997b: 365), producing the phenomenon it seeks to unpack through selective decision in sense, the same must hold true for Luhmann's systems theory. Luhmann's work unpacks the operativity of social systems under the conditions of functional differentiation. But he accepts the perspectivism of his theory, which is fundamentally interwoven with the production of the systems it describes. As stated in chapter 1, Luhmann prefaces his *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (1998a) with the Spinozist axiom that what cannot be explained otherwise has to be explained through itself - but this means that, as in Marx, the explanation is always situated in what is explained.

This situatedness is the blind spot of observation in Luhmann – it cannot be explored, because such an exploration would require observation from an Archimedian point outside the productive conditions – the relations of sense - which make a particular self-observation possible in the first place. As Eva Knodt argues in her foreword to *Social Systems,* "[w]hatever distinction is selected, others remain possible. Each cut highlights certain aspects of reality and obscures others. Reality as such, the unity of the observing system and its environment, … remains inaccessible; it is what 'one does not perceive when one perceives it,' the 'blind spot' that enables the system to observe but escapes observation (1995: xxiv). In this sense, the social history of path-dependent, irreversibly increasing differentiation which can only end in functional differentiation is the product of the particular relations of sense, in their coded territorialisations, which Luhmann's analysis is embedded in and forms part of. But importantly, it is not the only possible history. As Luhmann states in "The Control of Intransparency",

> [t]he temporal horizon 'past' indicates unchangeability, which is its obvious character and its relief function. Nevertheless memory constantly modifies the past to connect it with a possible future in the present. Modification notwithstanding unchangeability? Even that is possible because memory

discriminates between forgetting and remembering, and it is able to rearrange within this space of discrimination. (1997b: 365)

Against this background, functional differentiation and the axiomatic capitalism of the control societies are perspectivist, themselves path-dependent products of a particular order of sense which is reproduced in the specific past-future lines that attribute them irreversibility and an all-encompassing character. Seeing beyond those conditions is only possible once a new line of sense has been decisionally actualised. But, I argue, once such a new line of sense has been actualised, its transformative potential is the genuine, fundamental openness identified as the motor of ungrounded, self-reproductive sense-making and its machinic social actualisation in this dissertation. While the world of functionally differentiated systems and their autopoietic reproduction is the only world which Luhmann's systems theory can see, his thought at the same time reveals that "[t]his world is not the best of all possible worlds, up to the basic elements of its socio-cultural and natural constitution it is always problematic, possible in a different form" (Obermeier 1988: 155; own translation).

Conclusion

6. A Political Theory of Sense

6.1 Thinking ungrounded relational self-production with Deleuze and Luhmann

Having sketched out the contours of the political theory of sense which I propose to think with Deleuze and Luhmann, this concluding section is designed to firstly recapitulate what has been achieved with regard to the two distinct aims set out in the introduction and to secondly offer an exploratory afterthought on how the creative openness immanent to a self-reproductive relationality of politics could be made use of from the side of political theory. The contribution of my political theory of sense was first and foremost intended to be ontopolitical: beyond the assumption that epistemological iterations or material forces of creativity and resilience produce the world as it can be made sense of, I developed a "third way" perspective for post-structuralist political thought: a political theory of sense as the ungrounded, self-grounding relational medium which produces the forms of the world in sense. This political theory of sense was based on a concept of sense which is both medium and form. Sense is a force of genesis which produces the world *as it can be made sense of*, but in a way which is grounded in nothing but previously made forms of sense.

These forms of sense derive their grounding quality neither from an ontologically primary realm nor from an epistemic-discursive order with superior shaping power because they appear on the surface of sense as always already synthetic - every ontic or epistemic attribution is secondary to the productive relationality of sense. While a common ground between the theories of sense developed by Luhmann and Deleuze emerged from these conceptual considerations presented in the introduction, chapter 1 had to extend this ground to enfold the works of both thinkers as a whole so that a creative dialogue could take place between them. I began the chapter by drawing out a theoretical kinship between the *conceptual personae* Luhmann and Deleuze which belies the apparent diametrical opposition between the German technocrat and the flamboyant French post-structuralist. It was shown that both *personae* are characterised by a combination of humour and theoretical sobriety aimed at critically exposing the contingency of every order in sense, albeit that this critical edge is certainly more explicit in Deleuze.

Rethinking the conceptual world of Luhmann's thought with Deleuze it was further highlighted how both Deleuze's and Luhmann's theories are centred on processual difference as that which is constitutive of actuality. While differential constitution takes place against the background of a complex multiplicity, this multiplicity cannot be understood as the primary, active force in this process of constitution. Rather, for both Deleuze and Luhmann, it is co-constituted in a process of differentiation which produces both a limited actuality of sense and the constitutive outside of nonsense which this actuality is differentiated from and which remains available to inform future processes of sense-making. In Luhmann, this self-grounding differentiation was then identified as autopoiesis, a continuous self-production which encompasses not only the forms present on the inside of a sense system, but also the evental constituents which the system draws on for its reproduction in sense. Luhmann's sophisticated concept of autopoiesis has no direct equivalent in Deleuze. However, I showed that the theoretical figure of autopoiesis is present in Deleuze's thought in the form of a conceptual triad consistent of becoming, univocity and immanence. While becoming captures the process of autopoiesis, univocity describes the relationship between what is reproduced and what is co-produced as excluded to inform self-production as immanent "outside". Immanence is finally equivalent to autopoiesis as a mode of production particular to a certain totalised relational unity.

Having identified sense as both the medium of ungrounded production and the forms produced, the second chapter explored the relation between both which grounds self-production. Employing a theoretical kinship to Leibniz which Deleuze and Luhmann share, I conceptualised sense as a folded surface which is the meta-stable middle ground of a creative process thoroughly immanent to the monadic entity it delineates. The ground of sense is always the product of a creative unfolding at the limit between matter and signs, but it is always also productive of a sense-expression which for a moment gives bodily form and thus ground to the monadic relationality expressed. But while the immanent creativity of the monad remains limited by the teleological orientation inscribed by a divine will in Leibniz, Deleuze and Luhmann radicalise immanent relational creativity. They show that the enfolding of a chaotic, both material and epistemic, multiplicity which drives the production of limiting surface-sense means that every relational unity of sense contains multiple worlds within itself.

Without being bound to a best possible world as the direction of unfolding, new worlds remain available for actualisation through an immanent sense-making which is not just

the evolutionary individuation of a unit on the surface of sense. This sense-making is on the contrary the contingent self-production of an entity that co-produces itself and the environment this self is differentiated from, and thereby can always change the line of distinction between both. It was shown that the radical way in which Luhmann embraces the two-directional character of every productive instant on the surface of sense alignes him more closely with Deleuze as a thinker of horizontal, reciprocal connectivity than it is the case for Simondon, who holds on to an onto-genetic process which starts from pre-individual substance and proceeds in stages. Against this background, I reflected on the ontological stance of both Luhmann and Deleuze, identifying both as thinkers of an onto-epistemological creativity in sense which subverts assumption of primacy for either an ontological or an epistemological realm. It was argued that Deleuze and Luhmann are not interested in ontological speculation but rather engage with ontology from the perspective of second-order observation, which reveals its philosophical and social situatedness as a form which is produced in sense.

Chapter 2 revealed how sense grounds itself in the absence of an either ontological or epistemological foundation through the constant, excessive transition from form to medium which then generates new forms of sense. In chapter 3 I unpacked directed temporality as the ground which makes this transition possible. Beginning my thinking of sense in time with Deleuze's theory of time as developed in three syntheses in *Difference and Repetition* and the synthesis between the depth of *Chronos* and the flat line of *Aion* in *The Logic of Sense*, relations of time were unpacked as functioning, on their part, in an auto-logical and self-grounding manner. While Deleuze identifies a Husserlian living present as the synthetic instant which makes time pass because it produces itself as situated between a past and a future, this synthesis of the present is at the same time conditioned by not one, but two pasts: the past co-produced as active because prior to the present in the synthetic genesis of the former, and a passive Bergsonian past which is not itself productive, but provides the living present with multiple past-future lines to actualise.

Because past and present thus condition each other reciprocally, Deleuze's time requires the eternal return of an evental rupture to decentre the circle of time. It was shown that the event can function as rupturing because it is a sense-event, re-introducing the multiplicity of material and epistemic singularities available for sense-making to the order of temporalised sense. Analogous to Deleuze, it was revealed that Luhmann also theorises a relationality of sense which functions self-productively, and which also deparadoxifies

the groundless, self-grounding functionality of its relations in time with the help of an eternally returning complexity-event. But Luhmann shows that the Nietzschen return of rupture, which his theory shares with Deleuze's, is necessary for time to fulfil its functional role and provide orientation for the continuation of systemic sense relations. The passing of time is functionally necessary for the autopoiesis of all sense systems. For this reason, I argued that the eternal return of the rupturing event must be understood as both the conditioned product of an autopoietic relationality of sense and a genuine moment of openness in which a change in the temporalised sense relations connectively continued in the event can take place.

This two-fold, both conditioned and open, event was then further unpacked through the philosophy of Whitehead underlying both Deleuze's and Luhmann's conception of the event in chapter 4. By escaping the necessity to ground evental creativity in a force of materiality, subjectivity or being which lies absolutely outside of the conditioned realm it affects, the event in Deleuze and Luhmann was shown to offer a perspective to think creative openness without deflecting it to what Laruelle refers to as external Other-as-One. I explored how Whitehead firstly detaches the event from the necessary assumption of radical rupture and change – for him, all creative production, even that of identical duration, is evental. It was argued that the Whiteheadian creative production takes place in the encounter between two events: a singularity-event emitted by a material entity and the series of past events, the sense generated through them and the abstractions drawn from them, which form the nexus of the Event. Both are necessary for an event to take place, but the particular, contingent enfolding of the singular point in the relations of the nexus determines how the event plays out – as the identical continuity of the Great Pyramid or as change.

Through Whitehead, Luhmann's insight that the emergence of the event must be thought as conditioned was supported with a philosophical undercarriage which nevertheless leaves the genuine creative openness which returns or re-enters in every evental instant intact. But Whitehead's event opened another analytical trajectory: the possibility to explore the emergence of identical or divergent relational continuity in the event as political decision. In the last section of chapter 4 I showed that such a spin on the idea of political decisionism was indeed developed by Luhmann. Through the theoretical trajectory of Schmitt, Agamben and Benjamin I worked out two significant contributions of Luhmann's take on the political decision in the event. Firstly, Luhmann radicalises the idea that contemporary politics operates through the exceptional enactment of a power

which it does not possess. Following Luhmann, the reproductive decision itself should no longer be understood as the actualisation of sovereign power, but rather as the political decision over the continuation of sense which generates self-descriptions for society to reproduce nothing but a political relationality of sense. Secondly, Luhmann shows that the high internal flexibility resulting from this mode of evental political reproduction constitutes a functional advantage for the relational political system – decisional politics is not deterministic but rather requires the eternal return of Whitehead's event as a genuine source of creative openness.

This discussion laid the ground on which I used the theoretical framework of ungrounded, self-productive sense which I established in the first part of this dissertation to understand the functioning of a contemporary politics for which, as argued with Luhmann, this mode of sense-making is of particular relevance. The provision of this theoretical perspective which can be used to understand the functionality of contemporary politics is the second intended contribution which my political theory of sense makes. In chapter 5 I unpacked the ungrounded, self-reproductive functioning of a politics of sense through Luhmann's conceptualisation of politics as an autopoietic system. It was shown how political self-production through the decision on the past-future line to continue in the event requires a framework of expectational structures of sense which reduce complexity and carve out a limited number of distinct alternative trajectories for decisional selection. These expectational structures were revealed as of vital importance for a contemporary politics which relationally reproduces itself through self-extensive overburdening and internal structural flexibilisation.

While Luhmann offers a number of different conceptual tools, namely the programme and the code, to unpack those expectational structures, it was argued that a certain dated rigidity and a lack of abstracting reflection limit the analytical purchase of Luhmann's framework. For this reason, I loosened the structural constraints of Luhmann's thought by linking it to Williams' more flexible, Deleuzian notion of code rooted in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of political coding and its retroactive functioning under the conditions of machinic capitalism in *Anti-Oedipus.* Through Williams' reading of the code as sign, I suggested that a code which can effectively achieve complexity-reduction for a self-productive, self-extensive and highly flexible contemporary politics must form a nodal point which focuses sense relations while being internally multiple, synthetic and contingent. With the help of this analytical framework I unpacked the "crisis" as a

complexity-reducing code prevalent in the decisionist production of orientation in sense performed by contemporary politics.

However, the example of the crisis code also revealed that its high flexibility implies a constant re-connection to the immanent openness of relational sense which endagers the relational reproduction of a particular political status quo. The crisis code demands resolution, for which the diagnostic stratification of sense is already a first step. However, the political relationality produced in the course of this decisional resolution in sense is radically indeterminate in its content. The exemplary analysis of the crisis code thus posed the question of the scope and possible political purchase of the immanent openness of sense as it informed the mode of socio-political organisation under the conditions of functional differentiation or the axiomatic capitalism of Deleuze's control societies. I further unpacked totalised, recuperative relational self-reproduction as a political challenge with the help of Marx's theory of capital, which underpins Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the capitalist machine, but also reveals an extensive overlap with Luhmann's socio-historical theory. While Marx's dialectic relationality requires a radical rupture from the material outside of productive conditions to escape the reproductive pull of capital relations, I explored how Deleuze's socio-political relations, which are always external to their terms, provide an alternative perspective on the emergence of change as directly linked to the immanent openness of self-productive relations of sense.

Zooming in on Luhmann's functionally differentiated social systems in search for a similar Deleuzian crack through which the immanent openness of sense could become visible, it was shown that Luhmann's functionally differentiated society is the contingent result of a process of social evolution with strong economic connotations and is not necessarily coupled with an onto-epistemological genesis in self-productive relations of sense. While functional differentiation is deemed irreversible by Luhmann, ungrounded self-production in sense can thus in principle take other socio-political forms, which remain a possible outcome for the divergent actualisation of lines of sense. It was argued that the fact that socio-political self-production beyond functional differentiation is not conceptualised by Luhmann, or in fact in Deleuze's political writings, does not negate this possibility, because such a "beyond" remains the blind spot of a theory ideologically bound to reflect and thereby recuperate the relationally totalised and totalising conditions of its emergence.

6.2 Epilogue: How to access the diagrammatic: concept creation and the radical proposal of Luhmann's *Zettelkasten*

What is the scope and purpose of political thought under the conditions of a self-productive politics of sense as diagnosed above? In the final section of this dissertation I seek to explore a pathway for how the immanent openness of sense-relations could be accessed to change the direction of political sense-making on the part of political theory. In the above discussion, the immanent openness of Deleuze's socio-political relations was shown to be present in every micro-instant of connective sense-making. I suggest that the academic discipline of (political) philosophy engages precisely in such micro-instances of sense-making when it produces and re-thinks concepts and the theoretical trajectories which can be drawn from them. In the context of Deleuzian theory, a turn to this micro-level of sense relations appears plausible. In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 34-36) insistently demand a shift from the molar to the molecular where they locate a creative potentiality which can escape the danger of reproduction through the constitutive opposition of an Other-as-One (ibid., 199-222).

Craig Lundy insightfully describes the Deleuzian politics of the immanent, relational middle in terms of becoming "a little bit, but not too much. Leave the shore, certainly, but do so in order that you may find a new land – do not hope to become irrevocably lost at sea. In other words, extend the crack and connect the rhizome, but do not become the rupture" (2013b: 245). But does a political theory focused on incremental change have to passively wait for an accidental "spill over" from the returning chaotic complexity to actualise a different trajectory of sense or can a theoretical encounter with immanent openness be actively provoked? I suggest that exploratory concept creation can be viewed as a way in which such a creative "spill-over" in sense can be incited, which is grounded in Deleuze and Guattari's theorisation of the *conceptual persona*, and which was practiced by Luhmann himself through his *Zettelkasten.*

In *What is Philosophy?* (1994) Deleuze and Guattari identify concept creation as the purpose of philosophy. The understanding of "concept" which they base this insight on significantly goes beyond the concept as a mere label for an idea, argumentative tool or pathway for analysis. For Deleuze and Guattari, a concept is an operative form of sense. Its effects unfold on the plane of immanence which, as shown in chapter 1, can be understood as the plane of sense on which the expression of thought and the construction of the world in its ontological structures take place. "Concepts are like multiple waves, rising and falling, but the plane of immanence is the single wave that rolls them up and

unrolls them" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 36). Concepts are not created *ex nihilo* but emerge in sense relations and work in the former – they have a history and a past in sense. For this reason, Deleuze and Guattari prefer to speak of concept extraction from pre-existing relations of sense rather than of concept creation. Because of their intrinsic relational interconnectedness, concepts cannot be understood as isolated forms, but a concept includes the way it affects the network of sense relations it is situated in. Every philosophical concept spans a conceptual plane (ibid., 18-20) which is connective and productive, not just classificatory or propositional (ibid., 79).

> The concept of a bird is found not in its genus or species but in the composition of its postures, colors, and songs: something indiscernible that is not so much synesthetic as syneidetic. A concept is a heterogenesis - that is to say, an ordering of its components by zones of neighborhood. It is ordinal, an intension present in all the features that make it up. The concept is in a state of survey [sur-volt] in relation to its components, endlessly traversing them according to an order without distance. (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 20)

Deleuze and Guattari point out that due to the connective nature of the concept, the method of extractive concept creation is that of the debate. The dialogue between different philosophers and their conceptual planes is productive, whereas "those who criticize without creating … are the plague of philosophy" (ibid., 28). The aim of philosophical concept creation is opening the relations of sense to the returning evental multiplicity (Mengue 2013). "The task of philosophy when it creates concepts, entities, is always to extract an event from things and beings, to set up the new event from things and beings" (ibid., 33; see also Deleuze 1990b: 196-170). In this sense, concept creation is what can actualise both identical duration and the counter-actualisation of different sense which was described as Deleuze's third event in chapter 4: the event is "counter-effectuated whenever it is abstracted from states of affairs so as to isolate its concept" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 159). For this reason, Deleuze (1990b) refers to concept creation as fundamentally political.[98]

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[98] However, concept creation is, in Deleuze and Guattari (1994: 55-56), not a task for politics. It must be achieved with philosophical or aesthetic means. In the case of (philosophical) writing, they move on to specify that it is not the philosopher who creates conceptual "thought-events" (ibid., 70), but instead the *conceptual persona*. "Conceptual personae are thinkers, solely thinkers, and their personalized features are closely linked to the diagrammatic features of thought and the intensive features of concepts" (ibid., 69). Deleuze and Guattari move very close to Luhmann's resolution of individuality and individual agency in the sense-relations of the psychic system here because the *conceptual persona* of a thinker should not be confused with his or her person. The *conceptual persona* can live within the work of a thinker, can appear to him- or herself, but it can also take the social context of a particular plane of immanence or the conceptual plane created by another thinker to actualise a *conceptual persona*. The *conceptual persona* is that which can become conceptually productive for sense-making within the work of a philosopher; that which

Concept creation aims at the unqualified production of a "new" which is not absolute but relative to a particular plane of sense. It is the diametrical opposite of a dogmatic use of philosophy limited by a particular school and its leaders (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 80). Exploratory concept creation is always worth risking, even if its success is insecure. "No rule, and above all no discussion, will say in advance whether this is the good plane, the good persona, or the good concept" (ibid., 82). I argue that such a creative use of thought, which aims at the production of different observational lines of sense through which the world can be made sense of, also lies at the heart of Luhmann's mode of theorising. His use of the *Zettelkasten* exemplifies this commitment to, and constitutes Luhmann's personal attempt at, inciting free, open and exploratory concept creation.

The *Zettelkasten*, which Luhmann started to use in 1951 and which he continuously updated until 1996, is a collection of 90 000 numbered note cards which he clearly considered vital to his work (Schmidt 2012; 2014). In an interview Luhmann stated, albeit certainly with a dose of the humour unpacked in chapter 1, that "the Zettelkasten takes up more time than writing books" (Luhmann quoted in Erd and Maihofer 1985). His former academic intimate Dirk Baecker (2012: 2) remembers that Luhmann turned down offers for visiting positions at prestigious universities in Europe and North America because he did not want to risk losing his note box in case of a travel accident. The notes collected in the Zettelkasten contain bibliographical references, an index of keywords and most importantly Luhmann's reading notes. While Schmidt (ibid., 169) observes that the earlier notes collected in the box are closely linked to the original texts read by Luhmann and only make sense as comments on the former, Luhmann's notes gradually developed into theses and arguments in their own right, which were established through, but independent from the texts they were inspired by.

But more important than the content of the *Zettelkasten* is the way in which Luhmann organised it. Borrowing conceptual tools from the introduction of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus,* I suggest that this organisational structure can be described as rhizomatic; in Luhmann's own words, the note cards form a "spider-like system" (1987: 143). While Luhmann organised his note box around themes with multiple sub-categories, these sub-categories are not linked to the overall theme in a linear, arborescent manner which follows and reproduces an underlying ordering principle. On the contrary,

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"intervenes between chaos [of the diagrammatic outside] and the diagrammatic features of the plane of immanence" (ibid., 76).

the mutual interconnectedness of the sub-categories allows for the emergence of rhizomatic conceptual networks beyond hierarchical thematic lines.

> Within the thematic blocks, some of which were again thematically differentiated extensively with up to four sub-levels, the way they were organised meant that the initial decision on an ordering theme did not produce a monothematic sequence of notes. Whenever there is an interesting secondary object, it is explored (now or later) on note cards added to an already noted thought which were inserted immediately behind the note they relate to. There can be several points like this on an original note, which lead to several inserted, cross-referencing further notes. This procedure can then also be applied to the inserted notes themselves, generating a sequence of notes which – if read in a linear fashion – becomes further and further removed from the original topic. This organisational method means that the preliminary categorisation into themes is in part abolished within those thematic categories themselves. It produces a particular structural depth … which means that on the one hand a topic or concept can be accessed via different routes. On the other hand, the different contexts which situate a topic produce divergent information [on this topic] which is relative to the comparative grounds on which it is based. (Schmidt 2014: 172; own translation)

In addition to this rhizomatic organisation of the notes it contains, Luhmann's *Zettelkasten* also includes a number of reference notes. These refer either to the number of a note card he views as relevant to the topic at hand or to the number of a note containing additional thoughts on a topic, which would be inserted immediately after the reference note, further distorting the linearity of the collection (ibid., 174-175).

In Luhmann's own words, the complex structure of spontaneous associations and multiple thematic cross-references means that the *Zettelkasten* is significantly more than just a "second memory" (Luhmann quoted in Schmidt 2014: 168) – it is a "tool for thinking" (ibid.). The non-linear order of the collected notes makes it possible to not only preserve theoretical connections once drawn in thought, but more importantly to continuously discover new links and extend existing thematic networks. Luhmann (1981: 226; Luhmann et al. 2000) explains that whenever you look for something in the note box, whenever you try to establish a particular connective relation in sense, the theorist finds more than she is looking for; information becomes available which is different from and exceeds the lines of sense anticipated as available for connection. "The Zettelkasten finds combinatory opportunities which have never been planned, never been thought, never been conceptualised in given occasions" (Luhmann 1981: 226). It is a theoretical-methodological tool "whose effects are the genesis of chance" (ibid., 228).

Against this background I argue that the organisational design of Luhmann's note box enforces an encounter with the openness immanent to previously established relations of

sense stratified by the expectational structures of certain socio-political conditions. Luhmann uses it as a methodological tool to incite cross-connections between different theoretical lines of sense, different ideas, different schools of thought in order to create concepts which can make sense of the world in a different way. The *Zettelkasten* eclipses the creative figure of the thinker in favour of a creative production which takes place in sense relations themselves, and to which the theorist who receives and applies their expressions is only secondary. "I don't think all of this on my own, but this indeed happens in the Zettelkasten […] my productivity must mostly be attributed to the Zettelkasten" (Luhmann 1987: 142).

Which lesson can be drawn from Luhmann's use of the *Zettelkasten* for a political theory which seeks to be critical in a productive fashion under conditions where a post-mortem politics of sense-making feeds off the self-extensive, recuperating relationality of capitalism? Should all theorists facilitate the "spill-over" of immanent openness by practicing concept creation with associative note cards rather than applying theoretical concepts they know and find useful in writing? I certainly do not want to go this far. However, I argue that the example of Luhmann's *Zettelkasten* makes a case for exploratory work which transgresses disciplinary boundaries, philosophical orthodoxies or established thematic trajectories to provoke an encounter with the complexity of sense. Such encounters cannot be constructed because they are immanent to the relationality of sense. However, they can be provoked, their chances can be increased – and the Deleuzian-Luhmannian political theory of sense developed in this thesis is intended as such a productive provocation.

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