

INVENTING NEW LINES

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Gerald Raunig, *Dividuum: Machinic Capitalism and Molecular Revolution*
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Gerald Raunig's *Dividuum* confronts any reviewer with numerous challenges, not least of which is how to begin. Raunig (and his co-authors, for 'the authorship of any book is divided' (p11)) offers us at least four different beginnings through which to slip into our navigation of this complex and ambitious text. Further, the book's inclusion of nine *ritornellos* scattered throughout - bursts of poetic philosophy which function simultaneously as experimental explorations of *dividuum* which obey their own narrative distinct from the other chapters in the text (and which are a homage to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *la ritournelle* in *A Thousand Plateaus*) - divides the book even further. As such, *Dividuum* never really 'begins', but rather, its beginnings are split, distributed, or *divided*.

Despite this, any reviewer must still select certain components to create an impression of the text. We will discuss two here: Raunig's genealogy of the concept of *dividuum*; and his associated attempts to spur the 'invention and multiplication of revolutionary practices and narratives' (p184).

Any conceptual genealogy must pass through a genealogy of use, extracting how certain concepts become embedded in economic, political, and social practices. Here, Raunig extracts the usage of the Latin *dividuum* from Roman Comedy, used in reference to the division of property: division as that which governs exchange. Raunig positions *dividuum* as bound up with socio-political division and economic distribution, specifically, with money, goods (p26), slavery, and patriarchy (p33). *Dividuum*, in other words, is associated with the partition, division, and exchange of money, goods, slaves, and women. However, Raunig also emphasises the struggle for freedom of those subject to such partition (p35): their strategies of 'incompliant subversion' (p36), invention of new lines of flight, and the carving out of new existential territories beyond extant hegemonic modes of division and exchange.

Raunig situates the emergence of *dividuum* in philosophy (with Cicero's translation of Plato's *Timaeus* (p45)) in opposition to *individuum* in the context of a discussion of divisible and indivisible matter (p47). The relationship between *dividuum* and *individuum* will become crucial; and although Raunig situates *individuum*, etymologically, as a negation of *dividuum* (p39), the former has nonetheless tended to assume priority in philosophy (in debates on the indivisibility of the 'atom', 'soul', or 'being'; the Christian God's primary *in-*

divisibility in conjunction with, or in spite of, its divisibility in the Trinity (as in Boethius (pp52-54)); or on the nature of the individual person). Raunig traces a treatment of *dividuum* in the history of philosophy (undoubtedly indebted to Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*) which subordinates it as a derivative or corruption of *individuum*. A 'subordination of the divisible under the indivisible' (p48), whereby *in-dividuum* is placed 'equiprimordially alongside *dividuum* as a quasi absolute word, resulting in the suppression of its positive' (p39).

The most substantive conceptual development of *dividuum* Raunig tracks is in his Talmudic reading of the work of Gilbert de la Porrée (1070/1080 - 1154), bishop of Poitiers (p55). Not only does Raunig find in Gilbert a thinker of dividuality, but also a thinker of immanence who does not subordinate *dividuum* to *individuum*, and is concerned instead with the 'singularity, concretion and immanence of all that "subsists"' (p55) in the secular realm, itself totally independent from the divine realm. Gilbert's work opens up a rich conceptual space - Raunig's reading of Gilbert constitutes one of the key successes of *Dividuum* - through which his notion of immanent ontological dividuality flows into discussions of singularity, connectedness, non-universalism, non-essentialism, connection, and conjunction: 'Whereas the concept of individuality tends towards constructing closure, dividual singularity emphasizes similarity in diverse single things, and thus also the potentiality of connecting, appending, concatenating' (p67). In this exploration of ontological dividuality, Raunig passes inevitably through the question of the individual subject, drawing on Nietzsche's critique of Western-Christian moral subjection and pastoral power as a process of 'self-division' through which subjects become divided internally within themselves (p87; pp92-94). It is through this question of the subject, and the splitedness or dividuality of both the subject (p100) and collectives (pp82-84), that Raunig brings us to the second component we will discuss: our dividuality today.

As Raunig pivots his attention to contemporary capitalism, it is not surprising that attention is paid to Deleuze's late essay 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', which famously argued that control societies are marked by the governance of *dividuals* (pp109-110).¹ Relatedly, in his discussion of our relationship to *machines* today, Raunig develops a concept of *machinic subservience* - a concept close to Maurizio Lazzarato's recent work on *machinic enslavement*² - proper to control societies. This brings Raunig through a wide-ranging discussion of social media (pp115-120), Big Data (pp123-127), algorithmic control and contemporary management structures (pp131-134); those 'machinic industries of recommendation' (p126) which both *pre-empt* and *produce* desire and consumption through techniques of dividual governance which govern us as 'objects of partition' (p33). Drawing additionally on the work of Stefano Harney and Fred Morton, Raunig notes:

Where people once divested themselves of effort, now they are divesting

1. Gilles Deleuze, 'Postscript on the Societies of Control', *October*, 59, 1992, p5

2. Maurizio Lazzarato, *Signs and Machines: Capitalism and the Production of Subjectivity*, Joshua David Jordan (trans), Los Angeles, Semiotext(e) 2014

themselves of control [...] That dys- and pan-topic fantasy of logistics aims to limit human beings as ‘controlling agents’ as far as possible, to liberate the flow of commodities and weapons from human time and human error [...] The drone brings death or it brings mail from Amazon, based on algorithmically produced risk or potentiality profiles. (p114)

Raunig consistently emphasises the divided actualisations of our dividual governance. Or, to put this another way, that the modalities and intensities of contemporary control are differentially distributed. Raunig’s reading - which leans on Brigitte Young³ - of the subprime crisis is instructive in this regard insofar as it tracks the integration of gendered and racialised humans into the financial system as a process through which that very integration paved the way for further subjection, division, and exploitation in the context of the financial crisis (debt traps, foreclosure, etc.) (pp140-141).

To his credit, Raunig consistently attempts to carve new lines of flight as vectors of molecular revolution. In an attempt to rethink debt, Raunig begins to develop a notion of *queer debt* as a means to co-compose ‘new forms of sociality’ (p149). In an attempt to rethink Eurocentric law (centred on the individual person and property), Raunig envisages dividual law and processes of immanent law-making (pp174-175). In an attempt to rethink the putative individuality and sovereignty of the state, Raunig offers us a nuanced, if under-developed, notion of *radical inclusion* (p189). These are some examples of the revolutionary paths Raunig seeks to open, and it is of note that his conceptualisation of revolution is decidedly dividual and multiple: revolution ‘becomes an unending chain of instituent practices [...] the institutionalization of the revolution becomes the invention of ever new monster institutions’ (pp184-185). Such practices (the invention of multiple lines of flight) are positioned by Raunig as decidedly non-teleological: the process of *inventing the line* is more about the creation of new singularising curves and conjunctions - what he will at the end of the book call ‘con/division’ (p92) - not about arrival or completion (pp79-80).

There are, at least, three points which would be particularly worthy of exploration in future volumes of this projected series. For one, Raunig leans heavily (especially when he develops the notion of con/division) upon a notion of similarity which is subject to a number of separate, if brief, reflections (pp67-68; p150; p191). This type of similarity enables conjunction and connection, but cannot be reduced to sameness. Its repetition throughout the text highlights its importance in Raunig’s conceptual scheme, and would have thus benefited greatly from a more thorough and extended discussion. Secondly, a future volume might pass through the question of the division of labour - the mechanisms through which global production and distribution are differentially distributed and divided - especially insofar as the vastly asymmetrical global labour conditions present a pertinent challenge to how any processes of con/division and molecular revolution might be ignited. While

3. Brigitte Young, ‘Die Subprime-Krise und die geschlechtsspezifische Schuldenfalle’, in *Antworten aus der feministischen Ökonomie auf die globale Wirtschafts- und Finanzkrise*, Berlin, Ebert Stiftung 2009, pp15-26

this is briefly gestured towards (pp185-186), it nonetheless would benefit from further exploration. The third issue relates to the notion of radical inclusion. In a global context where a new politics of *exclusion* is growing simultaneously with increased levels of displacement and refugee numbers, how might we invent new weapons, or co-invent lines of flight, in order to combat such exclusion? This pressing question is opened by Raunig but is not, unfortunately, deeply explored.

Dividuum is a challenging and, at times, exhilarating text, which manages to demand both slow reading *and* active practice in the world. True to his approach, Raunig does not ask readers to absorb compliantly and reproduce his method (he terms works that do as displaying 'method-fetishisms' (p191)), and as such, one of the key functions of *Dividuum* as a text-machine is as an invitation towards the invention of multiple new lines, the enunciations of new singularities, and new modes of existence: an invitation to make the multiple.

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