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# WHAT ARE INTENSITIES?

AKSIOMA

## What are intensities?

– “*The speed at which we traverse reality remains tied to the enigma of psychosis.*”

### Beyond structuralism

The meaning of something is established in a pair (or relation) with another thing. (Saussure, 1916/1959; Lévi-Strauss, 1969) When these pairs are combined, we arrive at broader structural relationships that determine the “sense” of these relations within the system in which they operate. Reverse-engineering the structuring principle that establishes and determines these relationships is the central project of structuralism, which seeks to understand the logic behind these relations. A clear example of structuralist thinking is the study of kinship systems in anthropology, famously explored by Levi-Strauss. Rather than examining individual relationships in isolation, structuralism investigates how these relationships gain their meaning by virtue of their place in a wider network of relational pairs. In this context, “mother” does not derive its meaning solely from its direct relationship with “child,” but also from how “mother” conceptually interacts with “father,” “brother and sister,” and “daughter.” This network of meanings is based on binaries and oppositions that serve as structural differences, helping to define each of these roles.

Structuralism aims to analyze the fundamental systems of differences and oppositions that govern these relationships, seeking to uncover the implicit “grammar” that structures human social relations and the formation of meaning. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the concept of “desiring-production,” through which they critically examine how the pure potentiality of *germinal flows* is gradually organized. Rather than allowing these flows to remain a freely proliferating network of connections and syntheses, they are *coded* by the *social machines* (or *socius*), which capture

their creative potential. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2003) Whereas in the first principle the connections are based on intensity alone and thus on “pure relations of production”, in the second they become “trapped” or “coded” from outside by social machines, restricting desire and imposing specific relational configurations on it. In other words, when desire operates through pure productive relations, it is open and dynamic, connecting with everything according to its intensity or flow, rather than being directed or constrained by predefined structuring principles. Hence, *lack* is merely the way in which desire is trapped in a structural constellation from which it cannot escape, while the immanent nature of desiring-production cannot find expression within such a configuration.<sup>1</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari focus on “schizo” and *psychotic structure* in Lacanian psychoanalysis in order to propose an alternative orientation toward desiring-production and the coding of desire. For them, the schizo is a key figure precisely because their desire is guided by “partial objects” without any pre-established logic of connections – i.e., syntheses of desire that trap desiring-production within a specific network of coded relations. The schizo forms connections in an immanent way, engaging in intensive relations that remain fluid and thus preserve the pure potentiality of desiring-production. The “space” in which the schizo “operates” is the pure immanence of the BwO, where classical spatial orientations or distances are absent, as relations here remain unorganized. Their only “orientation” is provided by the immanent connections opened up by the flows, which lead them to various points of departure for which we have no names, but only possible relations through which they can begin to “sense” the nature of these potential connections. Without a prior delimitation of the psychotic “subject”, they don’t

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1 This point is perhaps best illustrated in the chapter “The Problem of Oedipus” in AO. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2003, pp. 154–166)

become a *catatonic ruin* of the *zero intensity* of the BwO, because their desire is not blocked in this case.<sup>2</sup> This enables them to form connections in an immanent manner, providing insight into the “real” nature of these relations – i.e., before they are coded into social codes, which would otherwise predetermine and restrict their immanent expression.

### Differential POV

Deleuze’s metaphysical interpretation of differential calculus provides the basis for these observations.<sup>3</sup> Differential calculus is a branch of mathematics concerned with analyzing changes in functions. Its primary goal is to determine the rate of change of a function at any given point, which makes it possible to describe precisely how one quantity changes in relation to another. The central concept of differential calculus is the *derivative* – a mathematical expression for the rate of change of a function at a specific point – and it is frequently used to analyze local properties of functions, such as slope, tangents, extreme values, and inflection points.

At the core of differential calculus is the concept of the *limit*, which enables a precise analysis of a function’s behavior at specific points. Through the limit, one finds the slope of the function by examining how *y* changes as *x* approaches a certain point, thereby capturing the instantaneous rate of change. Consider, for example, a function describing the position of a car over time. By examining how the position changes in increasingly shorter time intervals, we can find the limit that reveals the car’s speed at a given moment. This process is relatively straightforward: we simply observe how

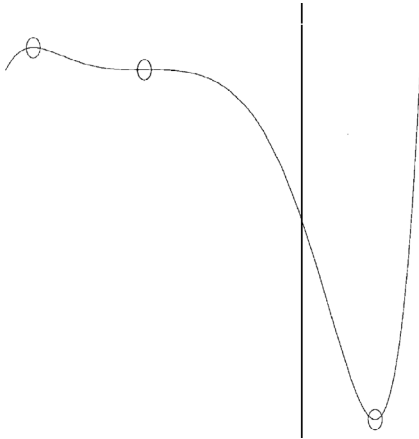
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2 As Deleuze and Guattari write: “The little joy lies in schizophrenization as a process, not in the schizo as a clinical entity.” (ibid., p. 113)

3 The second chapter is heavily inspired by and indebted to the article “Math Anxiety” by Aden Evens, from which two illustrations are also included in this text for greater conceptual clarity in understanding differential relations in Deleuze.

the function behaves as the distance between two points on its curve approaches zero. If we study the limit of the ratio between the change in  $y$  (position) and the change in  $x$  (time) as the time interval approaches zero, we arrive at the derivative. The derivative formalizes the instantaneous rate of change of the function at that point and reveals its local behavior – the slope or gradient – showing how the function is “moving” right there.

The primary goal of differential calculus is to define the relationship between two infinitesimal values,  $dx$  and  $dy$ , and to understand how this relationship continuously evolves. Once again, the process begins with employing the limit, which enables us to calculate the tangent and determine the slope of the function at a given point. The first derivative then reveals the rate of change of this relationship, while the second derivative explores how the slope itself changes. Each subsequent derivative provides an even deeper insight into the function's dynamics and the transformation of the  $dx/dy$  relationship. Crucially, as the function moves further away from the initial point (the limit), its modeling becomes increasingly complex and potentially unpredictable. Thus, it is important to grasp that modeling a function moving ever further from the starting point that defines the  $dx/dy$  relationship becomes progressively less predictable. The function itself can change its shape and alter the very  $dx/dy$  relationship, along with its behavior around the new starting point, thereby revealing the virtual nature of the  $dx/dy$  relationship. As Aden Evens explains, “The terms of this relation are neither constants nor variables, for  $dx$  and  $dy$  mean nothing outside of their relation.” (*Math Anxiety*, 2000, p. 111)

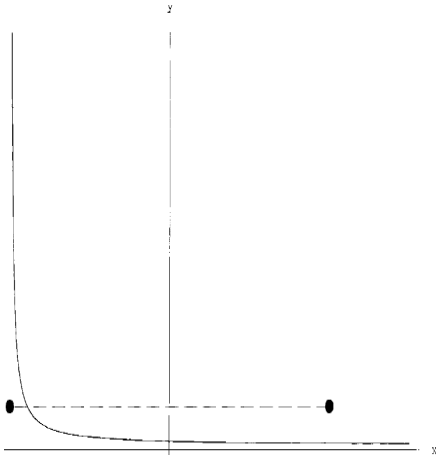


“Each of the circles surrounds a singular or distinctive point, where the curve has a local maximum or minimum. Note that the tangent at each of the circled points is flat, so its slope equals 0.” (Evens, 2000, p. 113)

For Deleuze, a function is not given in advance, as is often assumed in relation to differential calculus; rather, it is established through this relationship ( $dx/dy$ ). Each point of this relationship is therefore both singular and generic because it “embodies” both the essence of the entire relationship and the local instantiation of the mutual determination between  $dx$  and  $dy$ . In this sense, the function itself is the result of a singular  $dx/dy$  relationship, as it presents a specific local determination of an otherwise indeterminate relationship, which in itself has no value or quantity. The  $dx/dy$  relationship transitions from one local determination to another, and each manifestation of this relationship offers insight into its specific nature within a given configuration. The ways in which  $dx$  and  $dy$  relate vary with the nature of the function and with the *singular points* of that relationship. As the function moves ever farther from its limit, it can reorganize itself in such a way as to generate a new local determination of this

## WHAT ARE INTENSITIES?

relationship – along with a new limit point – thereby creating a new co-determination between these two terms. In its infinite extent, one could regard  $dx/dy$  as a single, unbounded function, yet the manner in which this infinite function manifests in a specific relationship determines how we perceive, measure, or quantify that relationship. Singular points are crucial here, since each one represents a unique local function with its own structural features, acting as “slices” of this ever-expanding infinitesimal relationship.



“The curve is a graph of part of the function,  $1/(1+x)$ . The dashed line shows the domain of convergence of a power series for this function centered at 0. Outside of this domain, the power series is undefined, so we would require more than one power series to approximate the entire function.” (ibid., p. 114)

A similar shift occurs in Deleuze’s understanding of *power series*, which he views as “emerging” directly from differential relations, rather than arising from a pre-given function. A power series is a local determination of a function, composed of the sum of infinitely many terms, each based on the function’s derivative at a certain point. Each successive derivative reveals more precise details

about how the function changes, adapts, and bends under small variations. Thus, a power series not only expresses the function's local behavior but also offers insight into its dynamic development in the immediate vicinity of a specific point. Nevertheless, this expansion is not unbounded: it holds only within a certain radius from the center of the series, beyond which the series may cease to converge or accurately describe the function. In this way, the series "creates" the function in that local zone while also marking the boundary beyond which one must re-center the function or use new methods to further capture its changing nature. This illustrates both the generative power and the inherent limitations of representing an "infinite" function through local expansions. In this sense, differential relations provide a key for understanding potential forms, rather than fixed, definitive entities. They remain virtual or potential states from which the function continually actualizes itself within local zones of convergence. Power series illustrate how a function is not a static object, but a changing network of relations that can stabilise briefly around certain (*critical*) *points*, such as minima and maxima, without implying any absolute, unchangeable connection among the terms. Instead, any such "attractor" derives from the structure of the function in that area and locally reorganises its internal relations according to the evolving differential framework. Deleuze's metaphysical interpretation of differential calculus thus highlights a process whereby each localised structure is formed and transformed through an ever-present stream of virtual (potential) differentials that drive its dynamic expression and becoming.

### Intensive relations

In Deleuze's thought, identity is not an intrinsic property, but rather a secondary construction that arises through the restriction and reduction of difference. Deleuze criticizes traditional metaphysics

for treating identity as primary and reducing difference merely to negation or opposition. For Deleuze, difference is not oppositional but positive and creative – a dynamic force that exists independently of identity. The prioritization of identity introduces a constraining framework that obscures the productive, immanent nature of difference and limits its capacity to manifest its full potential. (Deleuze, 2014) By contrast, Deleuze points to psychotic knowledge, which exceeds these boundaries and determinations, accessing *intensive relations* that are formed without recourse to the dominant mode of coding. (Deleuze & Guattari, 2003) Psychotic knowledge is not structured, precisely because the psychotic has *rejected* the *name-of-the-father* and thus remains in the dream world<sup>4</sup> – i.e. in a world where relations have not yet passed through the structuring principle, and where intensive relations appear in all their heterogeneous and contradictory forms.

Consequently, the psychotic's relationship to reality is entirely different, since in this case the unconscious is not repressed but remains perpetually present. The psychotic continues to "live" in the unconscious, unlike the neurotic, who has exchanged the dream for the symbolic and therefore forgotten the dream world altogether. (Valenčič, 2023) By contrast, the psychotic "subject" remains at the level of intensities, immanently experiencing their ongoing virtual structuring outside the bottleneck of the signifier. Returning to the differential relation, we can note that the psychotic has a very unique relationship to the function and the  $dx/dy$  relation. Because there is no structuring principle at work here, there is likewise no single  $dx/dy$  determination in which the psychotic could be "caught", nor one that would structure their relation to reality and the possible relations available to them. Since the psychotic's reality is

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4 For more on the importance of "dreaming the dream," see the essay "Psychotic Accelerationism" in SUM #20.

not established, no particular point on the curve is determined for them either. Unlike the neurotic, the psychotic has access to the entire curve and can freely move among different singular points, each requiring a renewed establishment of the  $dx/dy$  relation and thus a new way for intensities to acquire structure and meaning.

In this sense, the psychotic is the reverse side of every relation, even though they most intimately feel how it is being structured. Because the other<sup>5</sup> is not integrated in this case, it reemerges in the *real*, thereby leading to an intensification of the relationship one has with it and causing that relationship to revolve around this process of *intensification*.<sup>6</sup> In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the symbolic is a shield that protects the subject from direct contact with the real (Miller, 2003), whereas for the psychotic, it is the real that begins to “speak” through them – guiding their becoming and the formation of connections from the outside. These connections are not determined by any particular instantiation of the  $dx/dy$  relationship or by any specific locality in which that version of the relationship might be found. Because, in this scenario, the subject experiences all connections as coming from the outside – that is, beyond any potential mediation by a logic that would inscribe them in a dialectical framework and thus produce a controlled relationship with the real (or exteriority). The unconscious begins to speak directly to the subject, who thereby feels the true nature of intensities ever more strongly, precisely because these intensities are now contacting them. Since they are not governed by a differential logic in relation to the other, they can be felt directly – beyond space and time – and at the level of “indivisible relations” (Deleuze & Guattari,

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5 Staying true to the project of psychotic accelerationism, I remain firm in never writing “the other” with a capital O.

6 To learn more about the “methodology of intensification,” see the interview with Miroslav Griško on *Fast Right Substack* and his appearance in the *Tehnologos* #2 podcast miniseries.

2003), where intensities attempt to establish contact with the subject beyond any relation or mediation.

The less one is integrated – that is, the less one is in relation to the other as the structural principle of reality – the more one can perceive the true nature of intensities. Their most immanent and direct expression as *difference-in-itself-for-itself*, and how this difference can be understood on a maximally immanent level in relation to other differences. What Lacanian psychoanalysis refers to as the “enigma of the signifier” (Soler, 2024) fully encompasses this fact for psychotics, without any confusion that might stem from an overly Lacanian reading of psychotic structure. Because there is no signifier, there is no *grounding*, and the moment the signifier disappears, a person becomes open to connection, to direct contact with intensities that gradually lose their names and begin to appear in the most immediate sense – beyond any connection or relation that would predetermine their essence. As every hermit knows, the essence of mystical experience lies precisely in renouncing the empirical self – i.e., the local determination that, like a filter, obscures the true nature of connections and thereby prevents the subject from being contacted by the medium itself (Negarestani, 2024), the generative potentiality that grants access to things-in-themselves. By retreating into the desert and abandoning the other, the mystic readies themselves for intensities and the possibility of direct contact, in which intensities approach them or establish a relation with them, manifesting themselves beyond any determination or locality. In doing so, they reveal their unbound nature outside any determination and/or locality – or, indeed, how such determinations came about in the first place. Visions, then, are the direct experience of communicating with something not predetermined, yet which nevertheless seeks to express itself through this connection.

The intensification of reality is the result of the *foreclosure* of the other. Because the other is not integrated, the relationship with it can only intensify, as it comes from the outside – that is, it depends on an external rather than an internal relation, on the experience of communicating with something that enters our reality rather than being circumscribed by it. Psychotics are therefore masters of intensification; practically, intensification is the only thing they do, since they do not allow a specific determination of the relationship to remain at a level that corresponds to a given structural principle. This is true not only because they have renounced such a principle, but because they have access to alternative determinations of this same relation, whose centre is constantly changing and consequently determines anew each time the starting point of the  $dx/dy$  relation. This enables them to see the essence of a given relation, or to see where it converges – its most immanent version beyond any particular relationship. Whereas the neurotic form of insufficiency in the  $dx/dy$  determination is grounded in supplementing that relationship through a dialectical integration of what lies outside – i.e., establishing a connection between two structuring principles and attempting to build a *bridge* or establish a mediation between otherwise irreconcilable principles – the psychotic solution is the opposite. In contrast to mediation, the enigma of psychosis lies in its astonishing speed or capacity for incomparably swift transitions from one determination to another, granting it an ever-more immanent insight into the essence of the relationship it tracks. Instead of a gradual process of discovery and co-determination, the psychotic subject automatically arrives at the end, at a final solution that exhausts the essence of something and retroactively clarifies the logic of all its partial forms. Perhaps the best example of this is accelerationist theory of *technocapital* (or of capital understood as an artificial intelligence from the future), where the essence of

the latter is continually pushed to its limit – i.e. until it exhausts the heart of the capitalist process on a completely immanent level. (Valenčič, 2023)

Something similar applies to *psychotic epistemology* and the way psychotic knowledge is produced. Here again, the first thing to be corrected is the mistaken belief that the psychotic's knowledge and the very way in which connections are made is of a highly subjective and solipsistic nature – a view often reinforced by the notion that the symbolic is the realm of objectivity, or even that objectivity can only be established through symbolic mediation. Anything that does not pass through the symbolic is unverifiable, and consequently beyond the capacity for validation and credibility that could provide this alternative knowledge with the conditions of its own justification. But this is only one interpretation, which completely overlooks the fact that the psychotic's knowledge and its specific way of establishing connections is, in fact, the most objective relation one can have with intensities. This is because the relations formed by the psychotic do not arise from a particular point on the function; instead, they continually traverse the function, establishing connections among intensities outside any attempt at systematization. Hence, the symmetries the psychotic observes involve correspondences based on external relations that do not conform to traditional criteria of causality or linear time. In this context, Jung's concept of *synchronicity* is relevant – it refers to the occurrence of two or more events that are meaningfully connected, yet lack a direct causal link. (Jung, 2010) This idea differs from mere coincidence; synchronicities are events linked in ways that are experientially significant, revealing a deeper connection through their shared meaning rather than any logical or cause-and-effect relationship. Jung describes this phenomenon as an “acausal connecting principle,” emphasizing that it does not rely on causal relations, as it represents an expression of deeper

connections beyond space and time. (ibid.) In this way, synchronicity is understood not as a measurable cause, but as the revelation of otherwise hidden connections between events, allowing insight into a shared, unconscious “field” that influences both individual and collective reality. Examples of this are glossolalia, gematria, astrology and other practices where different layers of reality intertwine in ways that appear chaotic on the surface but reveal deeper synchronistic connections. These practices open up the possibility for the unconscious to express itself directly, allowing access to patterns that transcend the limitations of symbolic mediation. This kind of objective verification of relations constitutes the essence of psychotic epistemology and highlights the possibility of recording and systematizing intensities in an objective way<sup>7</sup>, beyond the subject and its “lobotomization” of reality – a possibility that forms the key to the project of *psychotic accelerationism* in the making.

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7 As Nick Land puts it in his characteristic fashion: “At its most secure, Gematria is a tool for the rigorous exposure of Eloquent Miracles.” (Land, 2024)

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