Rhizome

Ton Haarmans · Wide Open Windows



In Rhizome, the introductory plateau of A Thousand Plateaus, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari invite us into a philosophy that breaks with traditional thought. No more trees. No more hierarchies. No more roots that define the One beneath the Many. Instead, we have rhizomes: networks, multiplicities, surfaces without depth. A mushroom patch. Crabgrass. Mycelium. These are the metaphors.

The point is not biology. The point is orientation. A tree is a picture of thought that starts from a trunk, organizes upward, and returns everything to an origin. A rhizome is a picture of thought that starts in the middle. It does not ask for a first principle. It does not demand a single explanation. It allows connection to do the work that foundations usually do.

A rhizome is a map, not a tracing. It has no center, no beginning or end, only a middle from which it grows and overspills. In the rhizome, any point can connect to any other. It is not governed by linear order. It multiplies by linking.

> “A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.”

Deleuze & Guattari

This is why the rhizome matters for the themes of this site. It is not a claim about what reality ultimately is. It is a proposal about how reality becomes thinkable and livable without being reduced to a single root. In the language of Configurations of Appearance, it is a different way a world can organize itself.

In This Is It I describe what appears. In Mindsets I describe how appearance can stabilize into formats of experience. In Origins I ask about conditions rather than causes. The rhizome belongs in that movement. It refuses the comfort of a privileged standpoint. It distrusts the idea that coherence requires a center.

That does not mean rhizomatic thinking is chaos. It can be highly structured. But its structure is lateral: clusters, loops, cross-links, intensities. It is the difference between a chain of command and a living ecology. Between a curriculum and a conversation. Between a doctrine and a set of practical ways to proceed.

This is also where rhizome quietly touches Hierarchism. The tree model supports authority by design: a top, a root, a trunk, a correct path. The rhizome does not abolish power, but it makes power visible as one force among others. It shows that what presents itself as necessity is often only a stabilized habit.

Deleuze and Guattari call the book a call to experimentation. Philosophy not as system, but as motion. Not as explanation, but as encounter. A rhizome does not explain; it connects. It short-circuits the dogmas of meaning. It spreads.

This resonates with what I call Darkness. Not darkness as negativity, but darkness as looseness of ground. The openness of what resists capture. Where non-duality is

not a state to be achieved, but the absence of final states altogether. No origin. No arrival. Just a weaving of appearances that cannot be totalized.

The rhizome undermines the idea that we are progressing toward a final truth or a pure experience. There is no trunk to return to. No root system to uncover. There are only connections that work for a while, and then stop working, and then re-form elsewhere.

> “The multiple must be made, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by the conjunction 'and... and... and...'”

Deleuze & Guattari

That “and” is not decoration. It is a method. It prevents closure. It keeps thought from collapsing into One. It allows the possibility that different descriptions can coexist without needing a referee.

The rhizome speaks to our time because many of our inherited trees are failing: political trees, religious trees, scientific trees, personal trees. As certainties dissolve, we are forced into a new kind of navigation. Not as cartographers of reality, but as improvisers. Feeling our way, making temporary connections, letting go of maps that no longer fit.

There is a practical invitation here too. To live like a rhizome. Not trying to become someone once and for all, not trying to arrive at a final explanation, but learning to move through shifting terrains of meaning. A life that is not a ladder, but a field.

This is not a lesson. It is a pointer. A line of flight. A question mark that grows like wild grass.