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Deleuze and Simondon

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Simondon, Deleuze, and the Construction of Transcendental Empiricism

Anne Sauvagnargues[1]

Gilbert Simondon's philosophy of individuation plays a central role in the construction of the sign that Deleuze initiates in *Difference and Repetition* and pursues throughout his work. Simondon's contribution, which enables Deleuze to build his transcendental empiricism, may be systematised in terms of six logical and physical propositions. The first three propositions concern the concepts of modulation, transductive disparation, and the problematic, all three of which describe real operations but are systematised by Simondon as conceptual operators in his metaphysics of individuation. Deleuze integrates them as such into his own analysis and fully appropriates them, but not without modifying them somewhat – sometimes without even mentioning Simondon, whose presence in *Difference and Repetition* is stronger than Deleuze's few references to him would have us believe. The last three propositions, which concern the individuation of the crystal, the sign as intensive difference, and the constitutive membrane of the interiority of the living being, also describe real individuation and serve to formalise this intensive physics that Deleuze needs in order to clarify his philosophy of difference in the final chapters of *Difference and Repetition*. In this way, these two triads of concepts form the framework of an epistemology and a philosophy of individuation that support Deleuze's logic and physics of difference.

In the first pages of *Difference and Repetition*, the definition given to the sign is wholly Simondonian – the object that expresses the sign 'is necessarily on a different level, as though there were two orders of size or disparate realities between which the sign flashes' – and cannot be elucidated without a careful analysis of Simondon.[2]

[1] Translated by Christopher Cohoon.

[2] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 22, hereafter *DR*.

1. Modulation

First Proposition: The modulation of forces and materials replaces the abstract opposition between form and matter.

The first concept Deleuze takes from Simondon is that of modulation, which transforms the standard representations of form and matter. From Aristotle to Kant and Husserl, declares Simondon, Western metaphysics was prisoner to an abstract and static representation of being that rendered it incapable of explaining anything about the process of individuation. Indeed, we imagine the relation between form and matter as though form, transcendent and separate, played the role of a principle of individuation that imposes itself from outside amorphous matter in order to imprint an individual form upon it. This hylomorphic model is incapable of explaining the constitution of an individual: by abstractly separating the principle of individuation from the individual, we make it impossible to account for the process and genesis of real individuation.

Deleuze immediately recognises the speculative power of this position. Very early on – in 1966 – he wrote a review of Simondon's 1964 dissertation that allows us to take stock of his reading of Simondon. By comparing this review to *Difference and Repetition*, we may clarify the problematic knots Deleuze retains in his analysis and the manner in which he integrates them into his own system – but not without modifying them. At the very beginning of the review, he emphasises Simondon's contribution to contemporary philosophy: 'Gilbert Simondon makes no small display of intellectual power with a profoundly original theory of individuation implying a whole philosophy'.[3] We traditionally associate individuation with a completed individual and this makes us think of the individual as 'posterior' to its process of individuation and imagine the principle as 'anterior' – that is, as exterior and transcendent – to the constituted individual. This is how the model of the individual takes over an entire ontology: we think of all *being* as *a* being (as Leibniz said).

In reality, if the principle of individuation is supposed to explain the genesis of the individual in concrete terms rather than serve as a simple concept of reflection, then the individual will have to be contemporaneous with its individuation and the individuation will have to be contemporaneous with its principle. The hylomorphic schema that opposes form (principle of individuation) to matter (formed individual) must therefore be corrected. Simondon thus distinguishes two opposing models of physical individuation. To the traditional model in which form serves as a mould for matter, he opposes his own version: modulation. The mould fits the hylomorphic model because, ever since Aristotle, we have imagined that the abstract form of the mould in-forms a passive matter. As an alternative to the static opposition between form and matter implemented in the performance of moulding, Simondon proposes a new model, modulation, which accounts for individuation as a becoming on the plane of forces and materials, as a temporal and continuous moulding.

Simondon names this dynamic model *modulation*: modulation does not abstractly separate form and matter but rather takes effect in the thick of what the hylomorphic schema breaks up, on the plane of forces and materials, since form is always material and material is always formed. Therefore, we need to see things in terms of interaction and individuation itself. Modulation brings into play the interaction of three different energies each of which acts on the plane of forces: the strong energy of the amorphous substance in a metastable state (worked-up clay, prepared by the artisan); the weak energy borne by the mould, which functions as continuous modelling energy and acts as information that guides the transformation of the clay; and, finally, the decisive third energy, a 'coupling energy' that is continually underestimated in analyses of technology even though it is what sets the clay and the mould in opposition. This third energy is the most important: it is the one that brings about the taking-form [*prise de forme*] between the pre-individual substance and its modulating form, a taking-form here achieved extrinsically by the work of the artisan. If we failed to consider this coupling, it is because we applied a sociological model of the division of labour within a technological context, and because in theorising the hylomorphic relation we confused the position of influence of the master, who demands the accomplishment of a task, with the concrete operation of the artisan, who initiates the dynamic process of material individuation by bringing together the clay and the mould, the form and the matter.

[3] Gilles Deleuze, 'On Gilbert Simondon', in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974*, trans. M. Taormina, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), pp. 86-89 (p. 86), hereafter *OGS*.

As Deleuze gradually realised, what makes the Simondonian analysis of modulation so powerful is that it permits us to finally get rid of the ancient and contemporary vicissitudes of hylomorphism and to propose a material and intensive analysis of form in continuous variation. Matter and form no longer need to be abstractly opposed; form is a becoming of material forces, an immanent and fluctuating standard. Deleuze integrates this new idea once and for all into his philosophy of the sign and cites Simondon alongside Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire whenever he needs to explain his philosophy of forces and forms. The first proposition Deleuze borrows from Simondon is indeed bound up with this revolution of the hylomorphic schema that transforms the concepts of matter and form: taking-form requires forces and materials, and form is a fluctuating and intensive compound of assemblages of force relationships.

Moreover, the analysis of modulation, which necessarily leads to a re-evaluation of the technique and empirical sciences vital to the concept of minor science in *A Thousand Plateaus*, accounts for the operative mode of the concept as pragmatic arrangement, something that is as much practical as theoretical. Simondon observes that theoretical thought has shown itself incapable of theorising an act as apparently elementary as moulding, less because of any scientific impossibility – of course, the Ancients knew only stable equilibrium, and had no conception of metastability, the conquest of modern physics – as because of sociological prejudice, class blindness.

It is because philosophers have held on to a socialised representation of work and implicitly applied it to technological analysis that they have confused technical operation with an order, that is, with the master's abstract command imposing itself on the slave who carries it out. The hylomorphic schema is rooted first of all in the division of labour and it shapes the ancient representation of undervalued labour only because it perpetuates a sociology of the division of classes. Form, as it is conceptualised, has to do with the expressible, with a transmission of instructions that presupposes a social hierarchy. The weakness of the hylomorphic schema is thus bound up with the sociological division between thought and matter. It is because we have conceived technical operation from the viewpoint of the master, Simondon suggests, that we have identified the principle of individuation with form rather than

matter and confused form with an expressible order instead of regarding it as a material operation of modulation. Yet, Simondon, who remains indifferent to Marx, does not develop this trenchant analysis into a social critique. This helps to explain his obscurity within the French intellectual scene of the 1960s and it is one of the factors that led Deleuze to reproach him for his indifference.[4]

The origin of the hylomorphic scheme is therefore clearly social and not technological, for a real analysis of technological conditions completely transforms the notions of matter and form by revealing technical operation to be a question of a taking-form that puts forces and materials in opposition. The analysis of modulation thus becomes increasingly important in Deleuze's work: after having played a role in the construction of transcendental empiricism, it also bears on the problematic of intensive form and haecceity that Deleuze develops in his account of Spinoza and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire. The analysis of modulation therefore consists in replacing the abstract confrontation of form and matter with a new analysis of form as the intensive variation of forces and materials – as information – that presupposes the existence of a system in a state of metastable equilibrium with the potential for individuation. This is why modulation presupposes an analysis of disparation.

2. Transductive Disparation

Second Proposition: All individuation is metastable, in a state of disparation.

To explain the individuation of the brick, we need to show how the walls of the mould and the clay come into resonance ('modulate') and how the modulation of the clay and the mould produce the individuation of the brick.

In order to account for this individuation, we must explain how it develops in its pre-individual environment. The concept of disparation serves this purpose: 'What essentially defines a metastable system is the existence of a "disparation", the existence of at least two different dimen-

[4] 'One could say that in a civilization that divides men in two groups, those who give orders and those who receive them, the principle of individuation, which is based on the technological example, is necessarily attributed either to form or to matter but never to both together.' Gilbert Simondon, *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique, l'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information* (Paris: PUF, 1964), p. 56, hereafter *IGP*. [*L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* has yet to be published in English translation; this and all subsequent translations from this work are mine. – Tr.]

sions, two disparate levels of reality, between which there is not yet any interactive communication.'[5] This second proposition is very important for Deleuze because it reinforces his idea that all individuation requires as its condition a fundamental difference Deleuze calls 'transcendental Difference', often capitalising 'difference' during the period of *Difference and Repetition* in order to indicate that it is a constitutive difference, a condition of the new and not a comparative difference between two distinct states.

The term 'disparation', which Simondon borrows from the psychophysiology of perception, refers to the production of depth in binocular vision and describes the incompatibility of retinal images, the irreducible disparity between the images that produces three-dimensional vision as a creative solution. Each retina is overlaid with a two-dimensional image, but the two images do not coincide because of the parallactic difference (something one can observe by alternately closing and opening each eye).[6] Therefore, no two-dimensional image is available optically that could resolve what Simondon calls the axiomatic of two-dimensionality – the incompatibility between two images. In Simondon's vocabulary, the axiomatic designates the objective structuration of a problematic field – here, the visual field – that entails a 'problematic', that is, an objectively metastable situation that, as a problem, requires resolution. It is this problematic incompatibility that Simondon calls disparation.

In order to resolve this objective metastability between the two relations, the human brain integrates a new axiomatic as a condition of coherence: three-dimensionality. In this way, depth perception emerges as a resolution to the problem: it creates a new dimension – the third – that the two retinal images do not themselves contain. This is the process of disparation that Simondon extends from perception to the level of a general logic of becoming.

Disparation, which allows us to understand the construction of perceptual operation, serves as a model for all individuation and provides a model for the creation of the new. Deleuze appropriates it in this way but, as we shall see, he also puts it forward as an alternative logic that avoids the Hegelian conception of synthesis and the dialectic role of contradiction. Disparation produces the third dimension in order to resolve

[5] *OGS*, p. 87.
[6] *IGP*, p. 203, n. 15; *DR*, p. 51.

the disparity of the retinal images, although this new dimension does not erase the conflict between the two retinas but, rather, integrates it into a new system: depth. The retention of the retinal disparity explains the jump into this new dimension, which neither generates a synthesis nor subsumes a contradiction, but rather produces an integration by bringing the problem to a wholly other level where the disparity of the two retinas takes on a new sense. 'Perceptual discovery is not a reductive abstraction, but an integration, an amplifying operation',[7] explains Simondon: depth vision does not reduce the contradiction, does not eliminate the difference of parallax that is necessary for its production; it does not consist, moreover, in a dialectic synthesis of contraries that absorbs their disparity into a higher unity. It brings into play a wholly different operation, an inventive construction that adds a new dimension to the isolated retinal image. The solution does not stem from a resolution of the initial contradiction, but rather from the creation of a new dimension not contained in the initial problem. It is in this way that disparation is revealed to be as much creative as problematic.

Disparation becomes the determining category of individuation. It names the process of all real genesis, addresses the problem of the actualisation of the virtual, and accounts for what Simondon calls the metastable character of being.

Simondon presents his doctrine as a 'postulate of ontological nature' which relies upon a 'new method and notion': being is act and not a being, and therefore relation, the modality of being in becoming, replaces substance, the model of being already become. Simondon calls this method and this new notion 'transduction', the operation that structures differentiation on all planes of the real – physical, biological, mental, social. For Simondon, this term refers to the dephasing or structuring differentiation through which individuation takes place in such a way that each structured region serves as a constitutive principle for the next region. Simondon beautifully describes this idea, to which Deleuze wholly subscribes:

> The extreme terms reached by the transductive operation do not preexist this operation; its dynamism stems from the primitive tension of the system of the heterogeneous being that dephases itself and develops dimensions according to which it structures itself; the dynamism does not come from a tension between the terms that will be reached and deposited at the extreme limits of the transduction.[8]

In other words, the (individuated) terms that the constituting relation

[7] *IGP*, p. 206.
[8] Ibid. p. 31.

deposits at the extreme terms of its operation do not preexist the disparation; once created, they reset the whole system and spark a new transductive individuation.

For Simondon, transduction is therefore primary and must be understood as a way of being rather than as a link between two terms, and since substance here ceases to be the model of being, it becomes possible to understand relation as 'the non-identity of being to itself'.[9] Transduction therefore allows us to conceive relation as exterior and anterior to its terms – the very result Deleuze achieved in his empiricist account.

3. Problematic and Dialectic

Third Proposition: The problematic provides a new theory of opposition, one that replaces the abstract conception of dialectic and contradiction.

Thus, the individuation of a brick takes place between two orders of magnitude in a state of disparation: the individuation establishes communication between these orders of magnitude, these disparate realities (the walls of the mould, the clay), by actualising the system's potential energy, by integrating its singularities, or even by resolving the problematic posed by these disparates. Deleuze heartily welcomes the concept of the problematic in his review of Simondon and appropriates the concept by masculinising it (following Lautman): Simondon raises the problematic to the status of a category and endows it with an objective sense.

Deleuze definitively incorporates this analysis into his own system, as we see in the 'Ninth Series of the Problematic' in *The Logic of Sense* and in Chapter IV of *Difference and Repetition*. And yet, in these pages, Deleuze credits Kant for the notion of the problematic, for the author of *The Critique of Pure Reason* marks an important milestone in its conceptual development: 'Kant never ceased to remind us that Ideas are essentially "problematic". Conversely, problems are Ideas.'[10] Nevertheless, the concept is clearly a Simondonian achievement, as Deleuze's earlier text on Simondon unambiguously demonstrates:

> The category of the 'problematic' 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.[11]

[9] Ibid. pp. 30-31.
[10] *DR*, p. 168.

Moreover, only the Simondonian definition of the problematic as objective structure, whose resolution involves disparative creation, permits us to appreciate Kant's advance and to understand the dialectic Idea as a problem in the sense Deleuze intends: not as a false problem nor as a problem that could be eliminated by its solution, but rather as 'the indispensible condition' without which 'no solution would ever exist'.[12]

There is no question of resolving or eliminating the problem. With Simondon, who elevates the problematic to the level of an objective structure of knowledge that is irreducible to any limitation of our faculty of knowing, Deleuze moves from the Kantian impossibility of knowing, which reflects the constitutional finitude of our reason, to the powerlessness [*impouvoir*] of thought, which guarantees its empirical actualisation, its passivity, and therefore also its creativity, which is provoked by real encounter. Not only does this powerlessness imply finitude and encounter but, we now see, it also entails a structural generativity: as a positive factor, it grounds creation in its genetic dimension.

Thus, the concept of the problematic is proposed as a productive method for escaping what Deleuze deems inadmissible in Hegelian dialectic: the central role of the negative, the primacy of contradiction, and the resolution of difference by a dialectic that neutralises and absorbs it in identity within the concept. 'The idea of "disparation" is more profound than the idea of opposition', says Deleuze, while emphasising its strategic role. In Simondon, he continues, 'the problematic replaces the negative'.[13] For Simondon, physical and physiological disparation supersede the strictly logical model of conceptual opposition while the problematic *in re* replaces the negative. As we have seen, Simondon himself is careful to distinguish disparation from the dialectic procedure: it cannot be assimilated to a relation of contradiction and cannot lead to a higher-order resolution – for at least two reasons.

First, the role of synthesis is transformed: synthesis cannot get rid of the contradiction by superseding it. And yet, the dialectic movement, which purports to overcome the contradiction, logically encloses the foregoing terms by organising them hierarchically and ontologically;

[11] *OGS*, p. 88.
[12] *DR*, p. 168.
[13] *OGS*, p. 87.

produced as a resolution to the contradiction, synthesis is necessarily both homogeneous with and superior to its terms. Nothing of the sort occurs in disparation, which maintains a strict equivalence between resolution and conflict and which, in particular, does not supersede the conflict between the disparates it provisionally sets in relation. Strictly speaking, there is no synthesis in transduction: 'synthesis is not carried out, never completed' because the relation 'maintains the characteristic asymmetry of the terms'.[14] In other words, there is no production of a higher synthesis because the initial asymmetry is not absorbed. There is no question of resolving the contradiction. Where Hegel imagines internal contradiction and difference in the concept, Simondon proposes a real disparity, a heterogeneity between the terms that only the problematic relation puts in tension, and that cannot be put in tension without their heterogeneity being maintained.

Second, where Hegel assumes identity, Simondon insists upon difference. Where dialectic produces the identity of contraries in a unifying synthesis, transductive disparation makes heterogeneity the constitutive condition for the invention of a new solution. Disparation is made possible by this ineradicable difference. Asymmetry – problematic difference – produces individuation not as a synthesis but as a response to a metastable situation. The operation of synthesis is not carried out by reducing the contradiction; on the contrary, it is precisely because the asymmetry is maintained that it provokes, as a creative solution, the invention of a dimension that does not absorb it but rather gives it a new sense: this is how depth vision integrates the two-dimensional problematic into an entirely new configuration.

In the conclusion of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze draws together all the important points of the analysis: Simondon shows that individuation first supposes a metastable state, that is, the existence of a disparation, such as two heterogeneous sides whose potentials are divided between them. This pre-individual state is endowed with singularities, with distinctive points defined by the existence and distribution of potentials.

> An 'objective' problematic field thus appears, determined by the distance between two heterogeneous orders. Individuation emerges like the act of solving such a problem, or – what amounts to the same thing – like the actualisation of a potential and establishing of communication between disparities.[15]

[14] *IGP*, p. 109.
[15] *DR*, p. 246.

4. The Crystal and Internal Resonance

Fourth Proposition: Individuation emerges as the resolution of a potential difference between a pre-individual environment and a singularity.

In order to clarify how intensity is produced and complete the construction of transcendental empiricism, it is necessary to add a physical description to this logical analysis and examine individuation *in re*, the material individuation of the crystal, and the individuation of the vital membrane. This leads us to the fourth proposition: individuation as crystallisation, the taking-form of the individual in its pre-individual environment, accounts for the signal, the sign, and the initiation of individuation by a triggering singularity that puts the system in a state of resonance.

Crystallisation, the paradigmatic Simondonian example, is a central concept throughout Deleuze's work, from the definition of the event as a crystal to the time-crystal of *The Time-Image*. The crystal provides the simplest image of disparation: from a very small seed, it grows and expands in all directions in its pre-individual environment, with each already formed layer serving as the organising basis for the next molecular layer being constituted by increasing reticulation.[16] Disparation occurs between the mother liquid (*eau-mère*), the pre-individual environment in a metastable state, and the introduced seed, which causes the crystal to 'take' abruptly and initiates its individuation. This individuation in progress requires a pre-individual environment, the mother liquid, which is an oversaturated solution in metastable equilibrium that is rich in potential and which the second 'actor' in the crystallisation, the seed, causes to 'take' abruptly. Individuation begins with this first heterogeneous couple: the pre-individual environment and the triggering singularity, which are in a metastable, 'problematic' state. The seed crystal represents this eruption of singularity, which puts the metastable environment in a state of 'disparation' (the problematic tension is actualised). Thus, the individual-crystal emerges as a result, as an individuation that creatively resolves the tension between real disparates – the mother liquid and the seed. Individuation initiates the becoming of a process that is produced by disparation and displays transduction in action, in its singularity.

In order for the individuation of the crystal to become concrete, there

[16] *IGP*, p. 31.

needs to be an encounter between a metastable environment and the emerging singularity. This aleatory encounter, this toss of the dice, this chance that triggers its own singularity – which Simondon calls problematic disparation – is appropriated by Deleuze as a way to theorise this mixture of the aleatory and dependency in which he locates his own conception of necessity. If the encounter is to occur, it is necessary that the singularity emerge as information for the system by means of a chance that generates its own necessity. In order for this to happen, three conditions are required.

First of all, there is the eruption of singularity, which is the first aleatory condition but also a necessary one. Some sort of seed – an impurity or a seed crystal introduced intentionally in the case of artificial crystallisations – must be present in order to play the role of the triggering singularity, the bearer of information. Yet, in order for disparation to work, it is necessary – as the second condition – that the singularity emerge in a pre-individual environment whose metastability may resonate disparatively with the introduced singularity – here, the seed. Not all environments are appropriate. Deleuze often takes the example of stereoscopic vision in order to explain this: the problematic 'taking' occurs within a certain range beyond which it does not take effect. It is necessary that the triggering singularity act as information in the system. It is thus essential – as the third condition – that there be a compatibility between the environment and the seed and that this compatibility be based not on identity but difference. This is what is important: the problematic difference is what joins the pre-individual environment and the triggering singularity together as a couple, and neither the environment nor the emerging individual preexist this problematic state of tension. The individual-crystal thus emerges as the resolution of a difference of potential, but it emerges as difference and not as a mitigating system.

This discordant 'taking' necessarily leads to a problematic encounter between the pre-individual environment and the singularity. This is what Simondon defines as disparation. In order for it to occur, a supplementary condition is required, something Simondon calls the internal resonance between the environment and singularity, that is to say, the objective problematic that allows the singularity to emerge as information in the system. The solution – the pre-individual environment in a

metastable state – cannot 'take', cannot initiate crystallisation, without this condition: the introduction of the seed must 'resonate' with the solution in order to produce the disparation to which individuation responds as a resolution to the problem.

The individual must therefore be thought of as an operation, for it initiates the disparation of the pre-individual environment and the appearance of an individuation, which progressively resolves the system's disparation. The seed crystal resolves the disparative problematic of the metastable solution and carries out the crystallisation by iteration. Radiating out from its starting point, the crystal structure grows little by little. It is in this way that an individual crystal forms as a physico-chemical structure whose growth we may observe.

Transduction thus involves creation and differentiation; structuration by heterogeneous disparation leads to a complete reconfiguration of the field, which may then serve as the point of departure for a new differentiating restructuration. As for disparation, it refers to the type of transductive structuration that works by putting in tension two disparate realities, here, the mother liquid and the seed, the pre-individual environment and the singularity that provides the transformation. It therefore consists in a problematic tension that is resolved by the appearance of a new dimension, the formation of an individual-crystal. Individuation thus appears at the same time as 'the solution to a conflict, the discovery of an incompatibility, the invention of a form'.[17]

Form is thus not a structure but a genuine formation, which involves the constitution of an environment associated with the individuation in progress. The concept of the individual changes completely: neither unitary nor identical, it becomes relative, phased, and it always implies both a process of individuation and a related environment. The individual is thus never relative to a *single* order of reality but, always transductive, it involves disparation between different dimensions and occurs as a resolution to a problematic, to a tension between disparates. It appears as a response, and turns out to be as much genetic as dynamic. In reality, there is no unitary individual, but only multiple processes of individuation; furthermore, the individual involves no unity or identity, for it requires the heterogeneity of the heterogeneous phases

[17] Simondon, *L'individuation psychique et collective: à la lumière des notions de forme, information, potentiel et métastabilité* (Paris: Aubier, 1989), p. 77. [Translation mine – Tr.].

from which it appears by means of differentiation. It necessarily follows that there must be a perpetual interdependence between the individual and the environment in which it is constituted, and for Deleuze this interdependence is of the highest importance throughout his work.

5. The Sign that Flashes and the Asymmetrical Genesis of the Sensible

Fifth Proposition: The problematic coupling between disparate realities, which resonance puts in communication, produces a sign.

Thus, the encounter between a pre-individual environment and a triggering event is not the only cause of individuation, for individuation requires that the singularity be able to emerge as information for the system, that is, as the initiator of individuation. In order for the crystallisation to 'take', it is necessary to establish communication between these realities of different orders, the seed and the environment, so that the seed may appear as a triggering singularity.[18]

For Simondon, internal resonance thus refers to this linkage of disparates that is established when the disparates are actualised in a problematic mode. Not all differences resonate. Resonance is therefore always internal since it occurs when a disparation is actualised in a problematic system, when a singular point initiates its crystallisation and 'takes', for example. Deleuze's name for this disparative taking or problematic coupling between the different realities that resonance puts in communication is *dispars* – something of a dark precursor in *Difference and Repetition*. By relating this idea in a most inventive way to his structural reading of the resonation between the signifying and signified series, he establishes a brilliant connection between Simondonian energetics and the structural logic of thinkers such as Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, and Lacan.

Internal resonance is defined, then, as the state of tension in a system that enables individuation. It is 'information' in the special sense that Simondon gives to this term: not a defined magnitude, quantifiable and stable, but a relationship and even a moment of individuation. 'There is information only when a system is formed between what emits signals and what receives them. Information occurs *between* the two halves of

[18] *IGP*, p. 29.

a system in disparative relation'.[19] It is therefore never given, never prior, but, as Simondon explains very well, it is 'the signification that will emerge' – grammatically emphasising its creative character by using the future tense – 'when an operation of individuation will discover the dimension according to which two disparate realities can become a system'.[20] This is exemplified in binocular vision, where disparation occurs between the two retinal images so long as the tension between them is maintained, so long as there is the gap that is necessary for depth to emerge and intervene as the signification of the duality of the images.

In this sense, information is signal. It is by means of this term that Deleuze incorporates information into *Difference and Repetition*, as we will easily see as we turn to the definitions of the sign and the signal he offers in this work, definitions that employ Simondon's analyses in a striking manner. While suggesting that the logical relation of causality must be understood in terms of a physical process of signalling, Deleuze offers this clarification:

> By 'signal' we mean a system with orders of disparate size, endowed with elements of dissymmetry; by 'sign' we mean what happens within such a system, what flashes across the intervals when a communication takes place between disparates.[21]

For Deleuze, a signal is a system in disparation in which internal resonance has been established, such as the two retinas in a state of disparation, or the seed causing the mother liquid to resonate. Indeed, according to Simondon, there is information when a system is formed between what emits signals and what receives them. It is this coupling that Deleuze calls 'signal'. He reserves the term 'sign' for 'what happens within such a system, what flashes across the intervals'.

Flashing forth as the resolution to a problem, the sign does not imitatively represent a preexisting reality but rather disparatively resolves a conflict in a creative way. Here, and definitively for Deleuze, disparative becoming is substituted for mimetic resemblance. The vocabulary of the sign replaces the theory of information; whenever Deleuze employs the term 'communication', it is always in the Simondonian sense of internal resonance. Thus, Deleuze's intensive semiotic is built on an interpretation of the signal as disparation, a metastable equilibrium that triggers the individuation of the phenomenon as a sign that flashes.

[19] Ibid. p. 221, n. 30.
[20] Ibid. p. 31.
[21] *DR*, p. 20.

What, then, is the sign? We are now in a position to address the intensive theory of the sign and the asymmetric genesis of the sensible that Deleuze develops in *Difference and Repetition*, a text full of Simondonian resonances. The sign results from a difference of potential: its mode of emission is not that of signifying expression but that of electromagnetic intensity. Thus, in place of the phenomenological appearance, Deleuze proposes the disparative *flashing* of the sign, the intensive flash of lightning, which requires a verb-al logic better able to account for becoming than substantives and adjectives. In order to express this tension, what is required is a verb in the infinitive, not the stability of a noun.

> Once communication between heterogeneous series is established, all sorts of consequences follow within the system. Something 'passes' between borders, events explode, phenomena flash, like thunder and lightning.[22]

A sign flashes as a singularity. Asymmetry is its primary trait. This is true for all effect production in general: a phenomenon is a sign that flashes in the system as a resolution of a difference of potential. It is this asymmetry that Deleuze calls 'the Unequal in itself, *disparation* as it is determined and comprised in difference of intensity, in intensity as difference'.[23] The philosophy of Difference and intensity thus replaces phenomenology: 'intensity is the form of difference insofar as this is the reason of the sensible'.[24] This is the model of intensive differentiation.

Intensity incorporates the characteristics of Simondonian disparation: individuation includes as a creative benefit the emergence of a solution that enables a new configuration of the field. Intensive individuation is produced by disparation between two orders of size, at least, or two levels of heterogeneous realities between which a problematic field is formed according to the difference between them. Therefore, as we saw, Deleuze employs this perfectly Simondonian formulation: 'individuation emerges like the act of solving such a problem, or – what amounts to the same thing – like the actualisation of a potential and establishing of communication between disparates'. The establishing of communication between disparates defines the 'sides' between which the sign flashes.

With the coproduction of the individual and its environment of individuation, and with relation defined as exterior and anterior to its terms, Deleuze offers a wholly new theory of the relationship between the production of the new and its environing space. Individuation no longer points to the falling-back of an *élan vital* but is rather a matter of the act of individuation that coproduces the individual and its environment at the same time. In place of Bergson's entropic model, then, Deleuze offers a model that is both ecological – the individual is always connected to its environment – and disjunctive – the individual and its environment are always different.

[22] Ibid. p. 118; Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 172 and 162, hereafter *LS*. See also Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 347.

[23] *DR*, p. 223.

[24] Ibid.

6. The Membrane and Life in the Folds

Sixth Proposition: As topological and chronogenetic difference, vital individuation produces the difference between exteriority and interiority, between future and past.

If Simondon's analysis of the crystal, individuation, and disparation are extraordinary, then his analysis of life is even more remarkable, enthuses Deleuze. As he points out in 'On Gilbert Simondon', physical and vital individuation 'receive a profound exposition' in Simondon: the economy of resonance differs in each case, for the crystal receives individuation only once and grows only at its edges, while the living being receives several different contributions of information. But it is especially on the plane of interior space that the living being and the physical individual differ; on this point, Simondon writes an admirable chapter, 'Topology and Ontogenesis'.[25] Indeed, in this chapter Simondon defines the living being in terms of only two spatiotemporal conditions, a spatial or topological determination, the folding, and its chronogenetic consequence, the establishment of temporality. The membrane is defined in terms of two properties, a selective porosity, which lets certain (but not all) elements pass through, and a polar porosity. It selectively enacts its porosity in centripetal and centrifugal directions by letting certain substances pass in one direction or the other and by organising space in reference to itself, according to the characteristic asymmetry of the living being. In so doing, it promotes the emergence of a totally new property: by determining a direction of circulation, the membrane literally constitutes – creates – interiority.

The membrane defines the living being. According to Simondon's

[25] *OGS*, p. 88.

formulation, which Deleuze approvingly cites in *The Logic of Sense*, 'the living being lives at the limit of itself, on its limit': it is at the place of the limit, of the exteriority of the skin, that the characteristic polarity of life is produced as an aspect of the dynamic topology that supports its own metastability.[26] The vital potential energy of the skin is thus literally superficial. It is in this non-metaphorical mode that Valéry's celebrated remark – 'the skin is what is deepest' – has its validity, not because of any simple inversion of surface and depth, but because depth is literally produced, exuded by the skin.

There follows a second, equally powerful consequence. In separating interiority and exteriority, the polarised membrane differentiates the flow of temporality and creates the interiority of lived time. If the polarisation of the membrane characterises the living being, then it is not only topological but also chronogenetic: it produces time. By distinguishing interiority and exteriority, the polarised film produces the two folds of the temporality of the living being; that is, it produces the difference between past and future. The present emerges outside the membrane and, whether favourable or detrimental, it triggers action and arises in the mode of upcoming future. What happens outside can be assimilated or not, and may or may not be detrimental to the living individual: exteriority creates the channels of assimilation or rejection, and sparks the encounter with an upcoming future. The future depends upon action and is divided between the favourable and the unfavourable, the useful and the detrimental. What remains caught in interiority, on the other hand, is the organic memory of the living being, its vital identity, its pattern of repetition, the past. It is in this connection that Deleuze often cites Simondon's striking formulation: 'at the level of the polarised membrane, internal past and external future face one another'.[27]

Conclusion

'The new concepts established by Simondon seem to me extremely important; their wealth and originality are striking, when they're not outright inspiring.'[28] The Simondonian definition of individuation allows

[26] *IGP*, p. 225. Also see *LS*, p. 119.
[27] *IGP*, p. 226. Also see *LS*, p. 104.
[28] *OGS*, p. 89.

Deleuze to clarify his philosophy of Difference by defining the sign as disparation. Not only is Simondon crucial to the metaphysics of Difference and to intensive semiotics, the energetics of individuation Deleuze develops in *Difference and Repetition*, but he also shows Deleuze how the hypothesis of consciousness may be avoided by replacing the subjective transcendental with emissions of singularities that, structurally, are perfectly differential, and that allow him to produce an impersonal or pre-personal transcendental field. These singularities are produced as conditions, as the 'transcendental reason' of individuation and human subjectivation, and they account for the genesis of individuals and humans. They are distributed according to a potential we recognise as Simondonian metastable disparation, a potential that 'admits neither self nor I, but which produces them by actualising or realising itself'.[29] With this analysis, Deleuze thus maintains his transcendental constitution of psychic figures, for corporeal individuations, unconscious subjectivations and linguistic subjectivations do not resemble their pre-individual environment of individuation.

We can simultaneously examine what Deleuze's analysis takes from Simondon and the way in which Deleuze inventively revives it. The theory of individuation allows him to define singularities as events that correspond to heterogeneous series 'organised into a system which is neither stable nor unstable, but rather "metastable", endowed with a potential energy wherein the differences between series are distributed'.[30] In other words, by distinguishing the metastable environment of potential energy from individuating actualisation, Deleuze maintains his transcendental constitution, but he uses Simondonian disparation for an entirely new purpose that Simondon himself did not pursue: the constitution of a transcendental empiricism.

In order to ground this transcendental yet empirical genesis of individuals and subjects, Deleuze distinguishes the plane of the 'pure' event, the well-defined but virtual problematic transcendental field, from its individualising or subjective application. The transcendental does not take the form of a subject or an individual any more than the actual resembles the virtual. Deleuze reinterprets and reframes Simondon by employing a distinction lacking in the Simondonian analysis: poten-

[29] *LS*, p. 104.
[30] Ibid. p. 103.

tial energy corresponds to transcendental difference – to the virtual – whereas individuation actualises the virtual plane in a given empirical form. The benefit of this analysis is that it situates the anthropological plane of individual subjects, Man-form, among differentiations and individuations, and no longer needs to be presupposed as a transcendent form that preexists actualisation.

This analysis also shows what separates Deleuze from Simondon: Deleuze believes that one cannot generate difference by transforming identity or by making it more flexible, but that it is necessary to get rid of the concept of being, which Simondon preserves throughout his analysis. For Simondon, transduction must be understood as a way of being, even if he defines it as 'the non-identity of being to itself'. Instead of giving priority to heterogeneity, Simondon views transduction within the economy of unification. This primacy of relation over its terms and this conception of relation as 'non-identity' simultaneously represent an agreement and a point of divergence between the two thinkers, for Deleuze requires that Difference be thought affirmatively, whereas Simondon continues to speak of difference in terms of non-identity, which, according to Deleuze, is an unacceptable lapse into a logic of identity for which there is no justification so long as we view relation as prior to its terms.

Thus, according to Deleuze, substantive multiplicity is incompatible with phased being, which Simondon defines as 'more than being and more than unity' but which nevertheless retains an essential dimension of unity. Simondonian metastable being might well imply a transition away from phases of equilibrium, but it unifies them in its dephasings. In obtaining the multiple by complication, Simondon continues to operate under the economy of the one and implicitly allows himself to rely upon a median centre, as the expression 'more than being and more than unity' clearly shows. Herein lies the difference between the two thinkers.

Transduction nevertheless represents an important logical moment in the elaboration of Deleuzian difference. It also involves a new operation of thought, a philosophy of Difference, to which, according to Deleuze, the term ontology, which Simondon continues to employ, would no longer be applicable. When becoming asserts its divergence, there is no need to preserve a unified view of metaphysics in the form of an

ontology, of a discourse on the Being-One.[31] While Simondon proposes an ontogenesis, Deleuze, adopting Guattari's fine expression, speaks of heterogenesis.

[31] *IGP*, pp. 22-30. Also see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 118.

Deleuze and Simondon: Community and Transindividuality

(Concerning 'Bartleby; or, The Formula')

Arnaud Bouaniche[1]

The famous study that Deleuze devoted in 1989 to *Bartleby*, the novella by Herman Melville, is reprised in 1993 in the collection *Essays Critical and Clinical*, in which the articles are all dedicated by Deleuze to 'the problem of *writing*'.[2] 'Bartleby; or, The Formula' – the title of this study, which was originally a 'postface' – is no exception: the famous declaration by Proust in his *Contre Sainte-Beuve*, which opens *Essays Critical and Clinical*, according to which 'great books are written in a kind of foreign language',[3] was already in the epigraph of the postface to *Bartleby*. But that which appears in 'Bartleby; or, The Formula' as the problem of writing is inseparable from another problem: in Deleuze's terms, that of 'the search for a new human community'.[4] Now – and this will be our hypothesis here – even if Deleuze never cites Simondon in his study, it seems that this 'search' can be related, if not in the entirety of its stakes at least in some of its coordinates, to the profoundly original theory of relations between the individual and collectivity proposed by Simondon in *L'individuation psychique et collective*[5] – a work that we know does not precisely constitute a work, but the third and fourth parts of the monumental thesis by Simondon, sustained in 1957,

[1] Translated by Yong Dou (Michael) Kim.

[2] Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. lv, hereafter *CC*; a formulation one finds already in Deleuze's 'postface' in H. Melville, *Bartleby. Les îles enchantées*, trans. M. Causse (Paris: G.F. Flammarion, 1989). [All quotations and references have been modified to the English editions when translations are available. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from works previously translated into English will be from the published editions; all other translations are mine – trans.]

[3] Ibid. p. v [i.e., the epigraph to the book – trans.].

[4] *CC*, p. 193, n. 21.

[5] Gilbert Simondon, *L'individuation psychique et collective* (Paris: Aubier, 1989), hereafter *IPC*.

L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information.[6] This publication context is not, moreover, without interest for our purposes, since *L'individuation psychique et collective* appears in separate form in exactly the same year as 'Bartleby; or The Formula' in 1989.

Here, then, is the angle from which a fruitful confrontation can be sketched between the two thinkers from the two texts that we have just mentioned: a theme, almost in the musical sense of the term, that returns throughout Deleuze's study on *Bartleby* – that of a deep fraternity inseparable from an absolute solitude or, more precisely, that of discovering a deep fraternity in the experience of an absolute solitude. Such is the paradox that we would like to examine by showing that it has its key in the thought of Simondon and, more exactly, in a concept – the *transindividual* – as it is explained by Simondon in the decisive pages of *L'individuation psychique et collective*.[7] The question will be to understand how the correlation, initially paradoxical, of solitude and fraternity compels us to understand solitude and fraternity *differently* – of understanding solitude as something other than isolation and of understanding fraternity other than the means of an aspiration to identification and fusion. Here, the philosophies of Deleuze and Simondon will appear both in their convergence and their divergence, equally profound, as two anti-substantialist philosophies of relation: the one, that of Simondon, deployed on an ontological path that understands being as relation; the other, that of Deleuze, which, within the framework of a transcendental empiricism, dissolves being in relation. In this exact point, everything happens as if the stakes have increased to some extent, since throughout their philosophical relation, it is especially the philosophical problem of relation that would be posed. It could even be that this problem of a political search around new modes of relation defines, beyond Deleuze and Simondon, a true 'moment' at the end of 20th century French philosophy, in the sense Frédéric Worms gives to the term 'moment':[8] as an ensemble of contemporary philosophical positions in which singularity emerges from solutions proposed for a shared problem, since *L'individuation psychique et collective* and *Essays Critical and Clinical* join two major philosophical works traversed by the

[6][Trans.] This is the subtitle to G. Simondon, *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (Paris: PUF, 1964).

[7]*IPC*, pp. 155-7.

[8]See Frédéric Worms, *La philosophie en France au XXe siècle. Moments* (Paris: Folio: 2009).

problem of relation: *Oneself As Another* by Paul Ricoeur, published in 1990, and *The Politics of Friendship* by Jacques Derrida, published in 1994.

It is curious that it is from the collapse of all relation that the problem of relation is posed by Deleuze in his 1989 postface. Melville's novella recounts the history of a copyist, Bartleby, employed in a law firm with the constraint of being submitted to a slightly curious arrangement established by his employer, who demands that Bartleby works near his desk behind a green screen, such that Bartleby is able to hear what happens at the attorney's desk without being seen. Now, every time the attorney asks Bartleby to execute a task, Bartleby opposes him with a small phrase, formidable and famous: 'I would prefer not to',[9] a formula which strikes, in each of its utterances, both as the reaffirmation of a secret primitive pact and as the riposte to the attempt at its violation by the attorney. Now, what is the immediate effect of this formula? It is precisely to dissolve every form of relation by ruining the interior of the element that appears to found all relation, particularly the political relation, which is conceived to some extent by Aristotle in Book I of the *Politics* as the Relation of relations, at the point where he makes the shared 'characteristic' that makes possible the 'common' that of *language*.[10] That which Bartleby's formula shatters are in effect, according to Deleuze, the 'presuppositions of language', i.e., the totality of expectations that accompany our speech acts and that found what the one who commands expects to be obeyed, the one who promises, believed, etc, such that all language starts to turn to nothing. The characteristic of the formula 'I would prefer not to' is thus that of neutralising all statements that ensure the communicative function of language. In this way, faced by the formula, the attorney systematically finds himself within the impossibility of reacting and, in every sense of the term, of *moving on*,[11] that is, both in responding by proposing a new sequence of statements but also in exercising his power or his hold over Bartleby. This is essential: Bartleby's formula takes back in one and the same movement language and society to their absolute limits by imposing silence and solitude. At the same time, it disconnects words and things:

[9][Trans.] In English in the original.

[10]See Aristotle, *Politics*, I.ii.1253a and following.

[11][Trans.] The French here is *enchaîner*, which can mean to chain up or enslave or also to move on. The attorney is both constrained and finds it impossible to continue.

in shearing language from all reference, this expression interrupts by foiling relations between individuals. Deleuze is able, then, to celebrate in Bartleby a 'powerful, solitary Figure'[12] – a remarkable and ambiguous expression, exposed to all kinds of misunderstanding, such as the one by Toni Negri and Michael Hardt who, in the central chapter of *Empire*, oppose to the finally passive and apolitical figure of Bartleby that of the militant.[13]

But, at this stage of analysis, it becomes incomprehensible that Bartleby is inscribed in 'the search for a new human community' – a 'search' shared with Melville and generally in American literature, according to Deleuze, in which 'the biggest problem',[14] on his account, is to work for the advent of a '*society of celibates*, drawing its members into an unlimited becoming'.[15] Deleuze writes:

> How can this community be realized? How can the biggest problem be resolved? But is it not already resolved, by itself, precisely because it is historical, geographical, political? It is not an individual or particular affair, but collective, it is the affair of a people, or rather of all peoples. It is a political programme.[16]

We see plainly that the 'figure' of Bartleby – the 'powerful, solitary Figure' – is yet inseparable from a *political* reflection on the conditions for the emergence of a new form of society or community. Consequently, our initial problem returns: how can solitude present itself as the correlate of a relation? Is not solitude the other of relation, that which marks the limit and abolition of all community? Is not solitude, essentially, that which is not shared – and in this sense, constitutively *apolitical*? All these questions finally come down to this: how can there be a 'power' of solitude?

But Deleuze's striking expression – Bartleby, a 'powerful, solitary Figure' – will put us on the right path; and it is also that which will lead us to Simondon. A small difference changes everything: Deleuze capitalises 'figure'. By this, we must understand that he uses this term

[12] *CC*, p. 82.

[13] See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 203-204; see in particular p. 204, where the authors call Bartleby's 'refusal' akin to the one by Michael K., the character of the novel by J.M. Coetzee *The Life and Times of Michael K*: 'The refusal in itself is empty: Bartleby and K may be beautiful souls, but their being in its absolute purity hangs on the edge of an abyss. Their lines of flight from authority are completely solitary, and they continuously tread on the verge of suicide.'

[14] *CC*, p. 85.

[15] *CC*, p. 84 [translation modified].

[16] *CC*, p. 85. [Trans.] These quoted lines differ slightly from the text either of the French or English in *CC* by omitting a couple of phrases; I have modified the translation accordingly.

not in a vague and psychological sense but in a technical sense, that is, as a concept. Now what is a Figure for Deleuze? In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze calls a Figure an apparatus of capture and the revelation of invisible forces.[17] We can say that he does the same here with Bartleby. Bartleby is the one who makes sensible or perceptible a type of relation that, in the ordinary conditions of the social bond, remains imperceptible. In the silence to which he returns language, it is not *all* language that disappears but only the *given* language for the sake of 'another original language';[18] likewise, in the solitary figure of Bartleby, it is not all relation that disappears but only the set of empirically constituted and codified relations for the sake of another type of relation. Putting this in perspective with the study on Bacon would also allow us to clarify the positive function of solitude. Deleuze also speaks of the 'extreme solitude of [Bacon's] Figures'.[19] Everything happens as if solitude, obtained by Bacon in his paintings by an operation of 'isolation', enabled him to realise the greatest power of painting because, thus isolated, the Figures better reveal the forces that traverse them. But for Bacon it is above all an *aesthetic* of solitude; with Bartleby, it is a *political* power of solitude that is discovered. Now, it is here that the detour through Simondon permits us to elucidate this 'power' by means of the original concept of the *transindividual* because, in Simondon's terms, what Bartleby's 'formula' makes disappear are the 'inter-individual' relations and what it promises is the 'transindividual'. What does he mean by this?

As Simondon elaborates the concept and theory in *L'individuation psychique et collective*, we arrive at the 'transindividual' through solitude, from the discovery by the individual of a dimension that exceeds her. This point is explained by Simondon in the marvellous pages that he dedicates to Nietzsche's Zarathustra, and in particular to a key episode in the course of which Zarathustra witnesses the death of a tightrope-walker:[20]

> The transindividual relation is that of Nietzsche's Zarathustra with the tightrope-walker who falls to the ground before him and has been abandoned by crowd. ... Zarathustra *feels himself a brother to this man* and carries his

[17] See Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), chapter 8, 'Painting Forces', p. 48ff.

[18] *CC*, p. 72.

[19] Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon*, op. cit, p. 15.

[20] [Trans.] See §§6-8 of Zarathustra's Prologue.

> corpse away to give him a burial; it is in solitude, in Zarathustra's presence to a dead friend abandoned by the crowd, that initiates the experience of transindividuality.[21]

What is in question throughout this profoundly new relation that appears on the occasion of this event? The transindividual does not designate a relation between individuals but the relation between that which in the individual is individuated and that which is not individuated. The transindividual is that which in the individual exceeds the individual and accompanies her ceaselessly as a 'charge of being' in which the process of individuation finds the constantly available resource for its future configurations. Now, according to Simondon, the transindividual cannot be discovered in solitude. But what is to be understood by the sense of this solitude? It is a superior kind of solitude: an active and positive solitude. Simondon distinguishes the solitude characteristic of the discovery of the transindividual from the solitude of anxiety. Anxiety corresponds to the version of negative solitude consisting in the catastrophic confrontation of the subject with its pre-individual part where its structures are swallowed up. The experience of the transindividual supposes, on the contrary, a *traversal* of solitude in the direction of a 'more-than-individual' that the individual opens in herself. But – and this is essential for our purposes – while withdrawing itself from the common relation with others, it is that which makes the solitary experience of transindividuality discover a relation of a whole other nature than that which usually ties us to others, through its role, its qualities, its properties, and its function in social exchanges. It is just when he becomes indefinite, when he dies and ceases to exist in the eyes of the crowd, that the tightrope-walker gains the new consistency of *a* friend for Zarathustra in the name of his participation in a primordial nature. It is in this perspective that we must understand the critical analyses, with anti-Pascalian accents,[22] that Deleuze devotes to love as an attachment to qualities, which for him is opposed to fraternity as a form of

[21] *IPC*, p. 155, emphasis added.

[22] When Deleuze evokes this 'burning passion deeper than love' which 'has neither substance nor qualities' (*CC*, p. 84), one must think of the famous aphorism of the *Pensées* (Brunschvicg 323/Lafuma 688) in which Pascal criticizes the Cartesian 'ego' for denying an ordinary ontological consistency in the collapse of all 'properties'. But while Deleuze rescues Pascal's 'borrowed qualities' [see the *Pensées*, op.cit – trans.], he radicalises the Pascalian critique on the path of a depersonalisation in the movement of which is raised a new humanity without particularities: a 'society of brothers' or 'community of brothers' (ibid).

relation that can, on the contrary, be formed *outside* the conditions of identification and *against* it.

In light of this Simondonian detour, many aspects of the study on Bartleby can be clarified, which secretly have their source in Simondon. We can indicate two. The first concerns the insistence of a theme: that of Nature as 'primary Nature',[23] where Bartleby is several times declared inseparable. By 'Nature', Simondon means, according to an explicitly avowed presocratic filiation (particularly from Anaximander), a 'charge of indeterminacy', an *apeiron*, which returns less as a set of possibilities than as a 'true reality charged with actually existing potentials, like the energy of a metastable system'.[24] It is the bond with this pre-individual reality that founds a new universality capable of opening a new fraternity and of promoting a 'people to come'.

But, then, there is another expression by Deleuze that we find clarified by Simondon: i.e., that according to which America will be 'the potential of the man without particularities, the Original Man'.[25] 'Potential' must here be understood as 'energy': the resource for transformations. In extending this analysis, America should certainly not be understood in a relation of simple opposition to Europe, like a counter-model, but rather as the result of a 'disparation' between the two continents from the point of view of a 'geophilosophy'[26] and the creation of a supplementary dimension where America will designate the point of view of a 'universal minoritarian consciousness'. What would be necessary to summon here is without doubt another type of analysis, which no longer passes through Simondon but through Kafka and through the work that Deleuze and Guattari devoted to him in 1975, in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Because this theme of a solitude that operates as the re-opening of a transindividuality on the basis of a de-coupling [*dé-liaison*] of already constituted individuated relations directly echoes the Deleuzian theme of the 'people to come' and the correlative problem of its expression in a situation where its objective conditions are not given, it corresponds most precisely to the theme of Kafkaesque invention from a minoritarian position to the interior of a majoritarian

[23] This theme is a leitmotif in 'Bartleby'; it returns especially in *CC*, pp. 79, 80, 83.

[24] *IPC*, p. 210.

[25] *CC*, p. 85.

[26] On this conception of philosophy as 'geophilosophy', see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 85ff [i.e., chapter four – trans.].

system, according to the leitmotif of the 1975 book.

But here – and this will be our conclusion – it becomes possible to consider anew a remark that Deleuze presents in passing in the third chapter of *Difference and Repetition*. The question, in sum, is whether this remark of 1968 pertains to the theme of solitude underlying the 1989 postface. What is the question? At the heart of *Difference and Repetition*, to the philosophy which, a prisoner of the world of representation, doesn't cease 'presupposing' the exercise of thought, Deleuze opposes the demand of a 'transcendental empiricism' that alone is open to the 'real genesis' of thought: a task that, according to him, returns to a 'doctrine of the faculties' to accomplish. According to this doctrine, each faculty finds its exercise in the encounter with its 'passion' or its 'proper object' that is at the same time its 'limit'. Deleuze writes:

> Each faculty must be borne to the extreme point of its breakdown, where it falls prey to a triple violence: the violence of that which forces it to be exercised, of that which it is forced to grasp and which alone is able to grasp, yet also that of the ungraspable (from the point of view of its empirical exercise). This is the triple limit of the final power. Each faculty discovers at this point the passion appropriate to it, i.e., its radical difference and its eternal repetition ... its manner of originating, already repeating.[27]

The task opens, then, of determining for each faculty its proper object, which is at the same time its limit and the condition of its exercise:

> ... what forces sensibility to sense? what is it that can only be sensed? and yet is imperceptible at the same time ... for the imagination (is there an *imaginandum*, a *phantasteon*, which would also be the limit that is impossible to imagine?), for language (is there a *loquendum*, which would be silent at the same time?), and for the other faculties which would find their place in a complete doctrine – vitality, the transcendent object of which would also include monstrosity ...[28]

And Deleuze evokes a final faculty: '... and sociability, the transcendent object of which would include anarchy [...]'.[29]

In the language of the 'doctrine of the faculties' of *Difference and Repetition*, one will perhaps be able to say that solitude, understood as transindividuality, in the study on *Bartleby*, is the transcendent object of 'fraternity', understood as the form of a superior relation between individuals. Moreover, Deleuze specifies that this 'doctrine' is fundamentally *open* – open in particular to new faculties unthinkable in the form of common sense. That which Bartleby attempts to impose is indeed something unthinkable – and in any case *unlivable* (the tragic end

[27] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) p. 143. [Translation modified.]

[28] Ibid. [Translation modified.]

[29] Ibid.

of Melville's novel shows this): the experience of a superior sociability, whose conditions must be the object of a creation and whose incarnation (perhaps impossible) is called by Deleuze a 'people to come'.

Deleuze, an Anti-Phenomenology

Pierre Montebello[1]

I think that, for Deleuze, Bergson really opened up a new path in philosophy, one which led away from Husserl and Heidegger and away from the massive influence of phenomenology, particularly Merleau-Ponty, on French philosophy. What Deleuze always found unacceptable in phenomenology can be summed up quite easily: by placing the constitution of the 'world' on the side of the subject, it creates a world as a mirror of man. As profoundly as phenomenology claims to link subject and world, it is still a human world which it depicts, one which is consequently incapable of accommodating the world's profound diversity. Bergson made something else possible too: he showed us that the subject is an effect of the world, the effect of a world which is infinitely more diverse and larger than itself, one far removed from what a world constituted by a subject might be. The human subject is not the centre of nature, nor its foundation, nor its constitution; it is not an exception in nature, but a *case* of nature.

To counter phenomenology, an inversion of its method is needed. This new method finds in Bergson's texts the raw material from which it will later develop. To begin with, the notion of the transcendental – that pillar of phenomenology which runs from Kant through to Husserl and Heidegger – is turned upside-down. Against phenomenological transcendentalism, Deleuze opposes a new conception of the transcendental which he derives from a different lineage of thinkers: Bergson, Sartre, and Simondon. The readings which Deleuze proposes of Sartre's 'Transcendence of the Ego' and Simondon's *The Individual and Its Physical-Biological Genesis* in *The Logic of Sense*, and his reading of the first chapter of *Matter and Memory* in *Bergsonism* and *Cinema 1*, all share a common theme. They follow Sartre in his project of 'renewing' and 'purifying' the notion of the transcendental. We know that in 'The Transcendence of the Ego', Sartre discovers behind the self a non-thetic and non-positional consciousness of itself, an impersonal spontaneity of

[1] Translated by Paul Earlie.

which the self is itself only the reflective part. Deleuze radicalises this escape-route from the self by erasing the medium of consciousness: he has no need to resort to an impersonal spontaneity which would retain the character of consciousness. This is because the transcendental no longer designates the condition of possibility of *a priori* knowledge, which keeps us locked in the subjective, but now designates the *concrete genesis of concrete beings*; in other words, Deleuze gestures towards the pre-individual, pre-personal reality which engenders physical, biological, and psychological individualities. The world reclaims a genetic power outside the reach of the subject. The subject is no longer the source of geneses, but is itself indebted to genesis. We can only mention in passing here the notion of a 'transcendental field' which Goldschmidt applied in such a sharp way to the images of the first chapter of *Matter and Memory* in a class from 1960.

Yet from the book on *Bergsonism* to *Cinema 1* and *2*, the Deleuzian reading of Bergson continuously forges a path towards a renewal of the transcendental. The transcendental as the power of geneses takes several forms in Deleuze's writings: the impersonal field of images within oneself from the first chapter of *Matter and Memory* (the universe/light), the ontological virtual of memory-recollection, the cosmological One-All of memory-contraction where all levels of duration coexist, and finally the non-chronological and non-psychological time which is the foundation of all these analyses (to the point where Deleuze, referring to a certain type of cinema, speaks directly of a 'transcendental' conception of time 'in the Kantian sense').[2] It is a pathway outside of itself that the subject initiates with Bergson's pure perception, then with memory and time. When the subject becomes aware that he perceives against a background of vibrations of light of the universe, that he only remembers against a background of a past which everywhere overflows the actual, that he only actualises his recollections against a background of cuts of the past which coexist, and that his duration coincides with a multitude of other durations in the One-All: in each of these instances, a true decentering occurs. The subject is constituted through his relations with the material universe, with the coexistence of durations, with the past, and with the immemorial; it is not the subject

[2]Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 260.

who constitutes these relations.

What then does memory show us? We know that the greatest strength of Deleuze's reading of *Matter and Memory* lies in his separation of the ontological past from the psychological present. The recollection is a leap into the past, into that which does not come to pass [*dans ce qui ne passe pas*], and therefore into being, into an 'immemorial or ontological memory'. From his first great article on Bergson, 'The Conception of Difference in Bergson', Deleuze claims that the virtual is 'the mode of being of *that which is*'. It is through having a connection with my past that I have a connection to being, to a reality which is no longer only actual or psychological, but virtual and ontological. Deleuze clearly uses the virtual, then, to entirely de-psychologise duration. It is not the self which endures but being which is duration [*qui est durée*] and the virtual which differentiates itself. To say that being is duration is also to say that the self is only a form of duration:

> The virtual now defines an absolutely positive mode of existence. Duration is the virtual; the degree of duration is real, to the extent that this degree differentiates itself. For example, duration is not in itself psychological, but the psychological represents a particular degree of duration that is actualised between other degrees as well as among them.[3]

The same can be said for the third dimension of the transcendental: cosmology. If the great revolution of *Matter and Memory* is to be found anywhere, it will be in a conception of time which is itself difficult to seize: namely, in the contemporaneity of the past and the present, the coextension of time. Every present refers to itself as past, to that without which it could not come to pass, and every past also refers to the entirety of the past, since this is what conserves itself. The thesis of the coextension of time can be coupled with a thesis to which Deleuze devotes an entire chapter of his book on Bergsonism: 'Memory as Virtual Coexistence'. In short, it is the entirety of the past which is contemporaneous with the present, but it is also every possible contraction, every cut, and every level of the past which coexist together. *Matter and Memory* and later *Creative Evolution* apply this formidable proposition to the universe itself, as Deleuze demonstrates. The universe is itself the coexistence of all durations:

> *The idea of a virtual coexistence of all the levels of the past, of all the levels of tension, is thus extended to the whole of the universe*: This idea no longer simply signifies *my* relationship with being, but *the relationship of all things with being.* Everything happens as if *the universe were a tremendous Memory.*[4]

Evidently not every single point can be compared, but it seems that phenomenology, by contrast, will always sink further into a subjective

[3]Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974*, ed. David Lapoujade, trans. Michael Taormina (Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2004), p. 44.

[4]Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, 1988), p. 77. [Author's emphasis.]

transcendental, one which (in spite of what phenomenology itself tells us in this regard) is not correlated with the world. This is because the world of phenomenology is only the world rendered possible by ever-deeper subjective conditions of possibility, as if one always discovered beneath the caves of the egological transcendental a still greater number of caves: *a priori* conditions of knowledge which are *a apriori* for the transcendental subject, proof of the transcendental in what is categorical in Husserl's transcendental ego, in the ontological structure of *Dasein* where the conditions of possibility embrace existence in its entirety. Thus *Dasein*, at least in the period of *Sein und Zeit*, ends up recovering the entire dimension of existence within itself, even if that which attests itself from within *Dasein*, in its being-in-the-world, is indeed the absence of the world, the absence of the world as the source of geneses. In Deleuze, the transcendental designates something entirely different, that is, the real, independent field of consciousness in its fourfold dimension: immanent, ontological, cosmological, and temporal.

The transcendental consists in the pure perception of returning to a pre-human world, the virtual takes us back through memory to a pre-psychological ontological zone, a leap into a pure past. The universe itself is a One-All of coexistence which strips of all primacy '*my* relation to being'.

The enigma of time, the ultimate genesis

But what interests us here is the final dimension of the transcendental: the non-temporality [*intemporalité*] of time. The Bergsonian conception of time is the nodal point of all of Deleuze's analyses from the book on Bergsonism itself to *Cinema 1* and *2*. The enigma of Bergsonian time is the result of the existence of a pure, ontological past or non-chronological time, in other words, it is the result of a *form of non-temporality of time*. What does this non-temporality mean for a philosophy of becoming? For Deleuze, the great reversal of modernity consists in the following: we have passed from a cosmic-celestial movement which results in time (Aristotle) to a time which results in movement (and which conditions the successive parts of this movement). This reversal is Kantian, as Deleuze tells us in an article on 'Four Poetic Formulas That Might Summarize the Kantian Philosophy' and which seems to take up once more the central themes of the analysis of the volumes on cinema, though this time with an eye towards Kant.[5] In this reversal, however, time becomes far more mysterious:

[5]Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 27-35, hereafter *ECC*.

> Everything that moves and changes is in time, but time itself does not change or move, any more than it is eternal. It is the form of everything that changes and moves, but it is an immutable form that does not change – not an eternal form, but precisely the form of what is *not* eternal, the immutable form of change and movement. Such an autonomous form seems to point to a profound mystery: it requires a new definition of time (and space).[6]

In Kant, succession frequently refers to the *immutable* form of time, as a form of interiority and intimate sense. Deleuze often repeats the argument: time cannot be succession because it would then be necessary for this succession to take place in another time, and that there would then be a time behind time, and so forth to infinity. This is why Kant invokes time as an immutable form of interiority, the condition of all succession. But Bergson sheds a different light on the mystery: the immutable form of time is the pure past. In modern philosophy, the extases of time (the past, present, and future) are most often explained by the originary temporalisation of subjectivity (Saint Augustine, *Confessions*). Subjectivity could only exist by temporalising itself, through acts or by dehiscence from itself, by being that which it is not or by not being that which it is, as Sartre will later say. So originary temporalisation is not in the self [*en moi*]; it is fundamentally non-subjective; it is in itself [*en soi*].

Present time is engendered by a time which does not come to pass: eternal past, eternal time, or the *Aîon* of *The Logic of Sense* which is not the present time of bodies but the time which infinitely divides itself between past and future, 'always already passed and eternally yet to come'.[7] Like Bergson's cone, the present is not detached from the virtual immensity of the past which it contracts, from the eternity of the pure past which is actualised in itself in order to elicit the new. It is Deleuze who will have brought all of these Bergsonian themes to their highest form. As Deleuze succinctly puts it in *Cinema 2*: 'What the past is to time, sense is to language and idea to thought'.[8] Moved by an ideal, virtual, and non-temporal [*intemporelle*] power, the real or the actual ferments, matures, and grows from within itself. The world plunges its roots into an anterior/interior past, into an immutable time,

[6]Ibid. p. 29.

[7]Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (London: Athlone Press, 1990), p. 165.

[8]Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 96.

into a virtual horizon. The comparison speaks for itself: what would language be without the *meaning* which works on it and exceeds its propositions? What would thought be without the problems or *Ideas* which nurture it and exceed its statements? What would the world be without the virtual with its power for differentiation? We can easily see how the past, meaning, the Idea all demonstrate the reality of the transcendental itself as the power of geneses.

This is how the ultimate reversal of subjectivity operates; 'the only subjectivity' is time itself, such is the most decisive assertion of *Cinema 2*: 'the only subjectivity is time, non-chronological time grasped in its foundation, and it is we who are internal to time, not the other way round'.[9]

But what does Deleuze mean when he claims that time is the 'only subjectivity'? What does he mean by being 'in' time? He does not mean that we must fall back into some 'common place', as if this signified that we belong to the objective time of the world. On the contrary, it is the highest of paradoxes, and one which cannot be thought without the greatest of difficulty. Time is no longer our *objective* exteriority, no more than it is our *subjective* interiority. It is *non-psychological interiority*. This is a new paradox. Deleuze in effect invokes time as Kant's 'form of interiority', clarifying that this does not mean that time would be in the mind. Quite the opposite: the mind is in time, fissured by time, split at each moment by its manner of being affected by time (by the passive 'I' and by changing in time).[10] With duration, Bergson in turn discovers time as a form of interiority. Unlike Kant, however, Bergson's time is a cosmic interiority, the creativity of the Open, the Relation which interweaves all things. The statement 'It is we who are interior to time' signifies therefore that things do not belong to time unless time is the form of their interiority, contrary to space and to mathematised time which are only their form of exteriority. Time is the Open, the interior process which carries things off and causes a resurgence of the new, whereas in return things are only rhythms of durations which communicate, communicating durations.[11] In regard to time, this analysis leads Deleuze to associate the Kantian formula concerning interiority

[9] Ibid. p. 80.

[10] *ECC*, p. 31.

[11] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 9-12.

with the most decisive sentence of *Creative Evolution*: 'Time is not the interior in us, but just the opposite, the interiority in which we are, in which we move, live and change'.[12]

It is not the subjectivised which temporalises time, then, but time as the Open which temporalises subjectivity. This is the true meaning of the transcendental conception of time, this moment when with Kant time 'becomes unhinged and presents itself to the pure state'. We can no longer doubt that time is the fifth dimension of the universe, as immutable as it is successive, as spiritual as real, as virtual as actual, and as ontological as chronological. The great difference from Plato is that this immutable time does not also cease to become, since the past never ceases to grow; the great difference from Kant is that this time is the Open itself. It is not an immutable eternity but itself in becoming, and it is not the form of internal sense but the interiority of the world itself.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion: the battle against phenomenology was waged by removing subjectivity from its pedestal in four ways:

1. The transcendental, as the source of geneses, is for subjective perception the impersonal real, the immanent field of images, the universe/light.

2. The critique of psychology must not lead towards a transcendental psychology, as in phenomenology, but towards an ontology of the virtual. Psychological memory supposes an ontological plane.

3. The critique of naturalism must not lead towards transcendental ideality, as in phenomenology, but towards a thought of the One-All. My duration supposes other durations, a history of the universe, a history of life...

4. Finally, it is not subjectivity which temporalises but subjectivity which is temporalised by the non-temporality of time, the im-

[12] *Cinema 2*, p. 80. The exact formula which Bergson uses in *Creative Evolution*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson, Michael Kolkman, Michael Vaughan, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 128, is as follows: 'In the absolute, we live and move and have our being'. This is itself already a modification of the evangelical pronouncement of Saint Paul in *Acts of the Apostles*, 17:28: 'In Him [God] we live and move and have our being'.

> mutable form of time, the eternity *of* becoming and not eternity hanging over becoming, an immense virtual which continuously engenders the present in the direction of the future. A quadruple genesis of the subject, then, since in this way the four extra-subjective conditions of its perception, its memory, its rhythm of duration, and its temporality are established.

Philosophy must attempt to think, without any anthropomorphic prejudices, nature naturing in its power for multidimensional gestation, simultaneously ontological and cosmological, simultaneously a non-chronological and non-psychological time. The universe as a mirror of man is a universe devastated by man's own image, by his insane desire to see his own double reflected everywhere. The philosophy of Deleuze thinks the One-All in the absence of man; it poses the Open as being the only subjectivity, the only transcendental 'real', the only point of genesis of all things, and therefore, as a consequence, the only point of genesis of human subjectivity itself.

The Subjects of Nature

A Speculative Interpretation of the Subject

Didier Debaise[1]

> Subjectivity, corporeality, is no more a property of humans, of individuals, of intentional subjects, than being an outside reality is a property of nature.[2]
>
> Philosophy does not initiate interpretation. Its search for a rationalistic scheme is the search for more adequate criticism, and for more adequate justification which we perforce employ. Our habitual experience is a complex of failure and success in the enterprise of interpretation: if we desire a record of uninterrupted experience, we must ask a stone to record its autobiography.[3]

Introduction

With this article I would like to propose a speculative interpretation of the concept of the subject. From the very beginning such a project seems to encouter innumerable difficulties and paradoxes: Is it not evident that speculative philosophy can only try to subtract any exclusively anthropological, human inscription from the events of nature if it gives up all subjective approaches to nature?[4] And if indeed speculative philosophy is attempting to integrate the notion of the subject into its survey of nature, will it have to stop at one particular dimension, a phase or a step, in the much more profound process of the becoming of nature itself?[5] What should we expect from the association of two terms that have crystallised tendencies that are diametrically different

[1] Translated by Signe Christensen and Marjorie Gracieuse.

[2] Bruno Latour, 'On recalling ANT' in *Actor Network Theory and After* ed. by John Law (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 23.

[3] Alfred N. Whitehead, *Process and reality. An essay in cosmology* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), pp. 14-15.

[4] I am referring to a very general definition of the term 'event'. In his chapter devoted to Whitehead's philosophy in *The Fold*, Deleuze writes: 'an event does not just mean "a man has been run over". The Great Pyramid is an event, and its duration for a period of one hour, thirty minutes, five minutes ... , a passage of Nature, of God, or a view of God' (Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 76).

[5] The expression 'phases of individuation' was coined by G. Simondon. In *L'Individuation Physique et Collective*, G. Simondon writes: 'L'Unité et l'identité ne s'appliquent qu'à une des phases de l'être, postérieure à l'opération d'individuation' (Gilbert Simondon, *L'Individuation Physique et Collective* (Paris: Aubier, 1989), p.14), hereafter *IPC*. ['Unity and identity apply only to one phase of being, posterior to the process of individuation.' Trans. by Signe Christensen].

in contemporary philosophy: on the one hand a project in philosophical anthropology that will consider nature based on its impact on a subject that actually experiences it, and on the other hand a philosophy of nature that will infer nature's characteristics without referring directly to an anthropological subject.[6]

What if we were to look at this problem, as I would like to do here, under a different light and depart from the realm of the alternative between the subject and nature in order to establish a new relationship that would be both more direct and more constitutive? Instead of opposing these tendencies, why not make the subject into nature's primary reality, its ultimate place of existence, and no longer a phase or a step in a larger process? And instead of interpreting nature as an impersonal and undifferentiated process, a kind of 'apeiron', 'origin of all species anterior to individuation',[7] we consider it to be the result of innumerable subjective activities that would, on different scales, bind together and form actual sets or orders of nature, wouldn't we arrive at a new consideration of the relationship between the subject and nature? We would indeed arrive at an unusual perception of nature, but one that is not so different from that envisioned by William James when he wrote that it is a matter of thinking 'of personal lives (which may be of any grade of complication, and superhuman or infrahuman as well as human), variously cognitive of each other [...], genuinely evolving and changing by effort and trial, and by their interaction and cumulative achievements making up the world'.[8] This concept of nature provides a way out of having to choose between nature and the subject. If such an approach relates to speculative philosophy, it is because it simultaneously forces us to extricate the concept of the subject from an anthropological deliberation and the concept of nature from a philosophy of nature. My aim in this article is to give consistency to this notion of 'subjects of nature', using mainly the philosophies of Tarde and Whitehead.

[6]The term 'anthropology' is not used here to refer to the discipline but to the philosophical movement linked to forms of phenomenology and transcendental psychology. For more information on this topic see Meillassoux, *Après la Finitude* (Paris: Seuil, 2006).

[7]*IPC*, p. 196.

[8]William James, *Collected Essays and Reviews* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920), pp. 443-444.

A New Space of Subjectivity

The first question that we need to address is whether it is possible to identify some minimal components of the notion of the subject. How many would there be and how would they relate to one another? Tarde and Whitehead, who both see themselves as successors of this movement,[9] despite many hesitations of their own, recognise in Leibniz's project on monadology, the origin of a *survey on the minima of subjectivity*. They see in this an influence that stretches into all contemporary sciences, which would in turn take up the project: 'the monads, daughters of Leibniz came a long way since their father. By various independent paths, unnoticed by scientists, they edge into the heart of contemporary science'.[10] Therefore, if we were able to succeed in passing from one perspective to the other, to shift the point of interest from one science to the other, we would notice a proliferation of levels, and the dissolution of the orders of nature. But isn't this exactly what Leibniz tried to demonstrate when writing in a very well known passage of his *Monadology* that:

> Each portion of matter is not only infinitely divisible, as the ancients observed, but also actually subdivided without end, each part into further parts, of which each has some motion of its own [...] Whence it appears that in the smallest particle of matter there is a world of creatures, living beings, animals, entelechies, souls.[11]

It is without a doubt astonishing that Tarde and Whitehead need, of all things, to go back to *Monadology* in order to think the concept of the subject whose very existence is put into question by its dissolutive process. If from Leibniz to contemporary science we witness the dissolution of all forms of beings, physical, biological, and psychological, there is no ground on which to predict the return of subject. Tarde asked this question explicitly, in its most general form: 'From elimination to elimination, where will we end up [...]?'[12] And his answer, identical to that given by Whitehead in *Process and Reality*, expresses one of the fundamental principles of a neo-monadology: '[T]here are no means to stop on this slope to the infinitesimal, which becomes, surely very unexpectedly, the key to the entire universe'.[13] The infinitely small differs qualitatively from the finite, such objects of perception or ob-

[9]Because they both want to be complex re-actualisations of the monadological project, Tarde and Whitehead's philosophies may be characterised as 'neo-monadological', just as R. Ruyer will be later described (see R. Ruyer, *Néo-finalisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952)).

[10]Gabriel Tarde, *Monadologie et Sociologie* (Paris: Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 1999), p. 33, hereafter *MS*.

[11]G. W. Leibniz, *La monadologie* (Paris: Le livre de poche, 1991), § 66-67.

[12]*MS*, p. 37.

[13]*MS*, 37.

jects of everyday experience, on which ontology was built. The beings that compose it go to infinity in an increasingly imperceptible fashion, forming an all-encompassing sheaf wherein no parts, limits, distance or positions can be distinguished.

Consequently, there is indeed no reason for us to talk of 'being' anymore, or at least we should completely reform the notion, and it appears to be much more relevant to speak of *infinitesimal agencies* and *remarkable actions*, inside an infinite movement. And one could qualify these subjects-having-become-infinite as 'agents' that integrate, as I will show in what follows, the universe in its totality by starting from a point of perspective much in the same way as Leibniz's monads who experience the universe along a perspective. In this sense, Tarde writes: '[T]hose would then be the real agents; these small beings that we say are infinitesimal. Those would be the real actions, these small variations of which we say are infinitesimal'.[14] The concept of monad becomes purely functional instead of ontological, an 'action of variation' in Tarde, producing a variation or a difference inside a continuous movement. It is an agency of variation that goes 'differing', that is to say, that has step by step repercussions *on the whole universe*, although according to variable degrees of intensity. At this point, we will understand the principle that is at the centre of this speculative interpretation of the subject: 'To exist is to differ, difference, in one sense, is the substantial side of things, what they have most in common and what makes them most different'.[15]

Whitehead develops a similar idea based, not on the 'monad', but on a neologism: the concept of 'actual entities'. He places his concept at the basis of *Process and Reality*. As with Tarde's 'remarkable action', *actual entity* is a primary concept, an ultimate element, defining the speculative subject, from which the notion of the subject acquires its meaning and independently of which it would be empty and meaningless. Whitehead was rather elusive concerning the meaning of the concept of 'actual entity', which contrasts greatly with the importance he gives to this concept in his philosophy. A group of readers agreed that its meaning can be derived from analogies with other traditional or contemporary metaphysicians and that by way of these analogies it

[14] *MS*, p. 40.

[15] *MS*, pp. 72-73.

would be possible to attribute a specific status to this concept and to situate it within Tarde's philosophy. In my opinion, a much more useful approach for the reconstruction of the notion of the subject is to focus on the genealogy and the formation of the concept itself. [16] In this way, the concept of the 'speculative subject' becomes more precise and at the same time, more technical. Indeed, if one considers the two terms of the expression: 'entity' and 'actuality', it becomes obvious that they crystallise the main concepts of the metaphysical tradition. The first one, 'entity', comes from the Latin 'entitas'[17] and signifies a singular thing that might be designated by demonstrative pronouns such as 'This', 'That', 'Such', etc. Deleuze designates it with the expression: 'anonymous singularity'.[18] An 'entitas' is all that can be designated by a demonstrative and considered as 'one' reality (regardless of its mode of existence: virtual, possible, imaginative, etc.), even if it is composed of a multiplicity of other realities. As long as it can be designated as one set, it is an 'entitas'.

The second term in Whitehead's expression – 'actual' – qualifies the type of existence of the 'entitas'. It is not enough to designate it as a 'singularity' because as soon as it acquires this designation the following question must be addressed: what kind of existence does this 'singularity' have? And it is in order to bring precision to the kind of existence he is dealing with that Whitehead introduced the notion of 'actual'. This term is derived from the Latin *actus*, which means 'to do something', 'to act', or 'to accomplish an action'. In this sense, the singularity – entity – is a pure action or activity. But if we go a bit further and continue to follow the concept's genealogy we see that *actus* is also the Latin translation of the term *energeia*, the efficient reality, as opposed to the possible or virtual one. An 'actuality' in this sense, is an efficient reality and not a possible one; it means nothing for Whitehead to describe the subject as a 'possible' action, or as a 'possible being'. The subject is completely defined by its actual action.

[16] I have developed the concept of the 'actual entity' in a much more detailed way in my book: Debaise, *Un Empirisme Spéculatif* (Paris: Vrin, 2006).

[17] As I. Leclerc writes in his analysis of Whitehead's metaphysics: 'the term "actual entity", in its primary sense, signifies the general metaphysical category of *"that* which is"' (Leclerc, *Whitehead's Metaphysics: an Introductory Exposition* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958), p. 53). Concerning the use of the concept of 'entitas' during the middle Ages, see: Freiberg, *L'Etre et L'Essence. Le Vocabulaire Médiéval de L'Ontologie* (Paris: Seuil, 1996).

[18] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 77.

The change of register that Tarde defines as the passage from the finite to the infinitesimal and that Whitehead defines as the passage from the macroscopic to the microscopic has a major consequence: *the notion of the subject is no longer restricted to a particular domain of nature but acquires a maximum extension.* It is spread before any division between the organic and the inorganic, the physical and the biological etc. inside all forms of existence, forming the requisite of all of them. In this sense, Whitehead and Tarde install the question of the subject as a condition for a philosophy of univocity. It is here that univocity takes on its full-fledged meaning if we consider that what is at stake here is not the reduction of all reality to one main principle, but rather the maximal extension of the concept. Defining subjects, that is to say 'actual entities' in the terms given in *Process and Reality*, Whitehead writes:

> They differ among themselves: God is an actual entity, and so is the most trivial puff of existence in far-off empty space. But, though there are gradations of importance, and diversities of functions, yet in the principles which actuality exemplifies, all are one and the same.[19]

As a result, one can consider this passage as a manifesto for a form of univocity or as the will to re-actualise the exigency of the maximum extension. But, at the same time, when Tarde and Whitehead assert that there are no two identical subjects; that reality is composed of 'a swarming of innovating individualities, each one sui generis marked by its own distinctive seal, recognisable in thousands';[20] and that these are even *differing* – they are without a doubt heir to a kind of radical pluralism. This is much like Leibniz himself, when he claims that '[i]n nature there are never two beings which are perfectly alike and in which it is not possible to find an internal difference, or at least a difference founded upon an intrinsic quality'.[21] The difference is not a matter of the shape or form of the monad – these would allow for a comparison and thus a distinction from others – but rather of its characteristic movement (*'appetitio'*). I wish to characterise this particular relation between univocity and pluralism as follows: the establishment of minimal components of the concept of the subject (univocity) in turn makes it possible to give this concept a maximal extension (pluralism). It is the relationship between the minima and the maximal extension that is truly fundamental and yet so often misunderstood by critical

[19] A. N. Whitehead, *Process and reality. An essay in cosmology* (New York: Macmillan, 1929), p. 18.
[20] *MS*, p. 65.
[21] Leibniz, *La monadologie* §9.

approaches to the notion of univocity that mistake it for a monist exaggeration, neglecting to see that, on the contrary, it is the proof of an ability to think the plurality of modes of existence. Tarde expresses this very idea when he establishes, as the main principle of his project, the fact that the subject presupposes 'the discontinuity of the element and the homogeneity of their being'. [22]

The Power of Possession: Expansion and Consolidation

However, if we say that a subject is a 'remarkable action', and 'actual entity', which means a singularity defined by its official action, the central question is: what is this *constitutive activity*? In order to provide an answer to this question, we must recognise more links between different expressions in Tarde and Whitehead's philosophies. They both express the activity of the subject by a set of expressions that varies from one work to the other. Tarde sometimes uses the terms 'capture', or 'grip', and sometimes 'integration', or 'possession', and Whitehead re-actualises an ancient concept: 'prehension'.[23] I would like to align them all in one way of considering the constitutive quality of the subject. It is possible that this endeavor will lead to an alteration of the setting in which they come to characterise the activity of the subject. Indeed, what sort of relationship might there be between 'integration', 'capture', and 'prehension?' I would like to suggest that we refer to an expression, which, although it receives unequal attention, is still present in both works: the dynamics of possessions. From Tarde's earliest works to his last, and in Whitehead's speculative works, it is possible to recognise, albeit in different forms of explicitness, but always acting in a strong way, a research on the characteristics and the effects of dynamics of possession that deals with ontology, physics, biology, and social realities. This question is dealt with to such an extent that it is possible to establish as a principle of the speculative approach of the subject, the Tardean idea that: 'the possessive action from monad to monad, from element to element, is the only fertile relationship'.[24]

The subject is a beam of possessive activities, a way or a mode of integrating the real. If, according to Tarde, as I established earlier,

[22] *MS*, p. 33.
[23] Whitehead willingly connects this concept to the Cartesian *Meditations*: 'in Cartesian language, the essence of an actual entity consists solely in the fact that it is a prehending thing (i.e., a substance whose whole essence is to prehend)' (Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 41).
[24] *MS*, p. 91.

the 'monad' is an infinitesimal action, it is then possible to bring more precision to the definition of the subject: it is an act of annexation or integration of other monads. This process of integration goes in both directions simultaneously, even if these directions are opposed to one another: to integrate the other subjects and to be integrated by them. In this way, the answer provided by Whitehead and Tarde to the question of the characterisation of a particular subject, and the relation between two subjects, is similar and is situated in the *manner* in which the subject integrates the data of the universe that precedes it. This is how Whitehead epitomises it in his last great metaphysical work, *Modes of Thought*:

> The bases of no matter which pollution of actuality [subject] are the complete content of the anteceding universe in as far as it exists in exchange with this pulsation. They are this universe thought out in its multiplicity of details.[25]

In this passage we can see another legacy from the *Monadology*, which is the theory of expression to which the question of possession is strongly linked. In fact, when Leibniz writes in *The Discourse on Metaphysics* that 'When we carefully consider the connection of things we see also the possibility of saying that there was always in the soul of Alexander marks of all that had happened to him and evidence of all that would happen to him and traces even of everything which occurs in the universe, although God alone could recognise them all';[26] and that *haecceity* (thisness) or the singularity of 'Alexander' is the particular expression of the universe that he embodies; is this not what Tarde and Whitehead want to develop in saying that every part of the universe is in one way or the other inside the subject?

According to Tarde, a subject exists only in these conditions: its possessive agency melds with its being. We will not, therefore, ask what the reasons are for the subject's propensity to appropriate others, as this would presuppose ends beyond those determined as ultimate in Tarde's example: '[W]hat every being wants is not to be appropriated to others but to appropriate others'.[27] The subject expresses its tendency for expansion by using innumerable means to establish and to maintain temporary alliances, or to seduce in order to maximally encompass other subjects. The expansion limits of the subject are never internal: they come from resistances, limits and shifts imposed by other existing subjects, who are likewise busy working on extending their domination.

[25] A. N. Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1938), p. 28.
[26] G. W. Leibniz, *Discours de métaphysique et autres textes (1663-1689)* (Paris: Flammarion, 2001), §8.
[27] *MS*, p. 89.

A whole microscopic stage of wars, conquests, betrayals, and pacifications is thus played for each subject – a drama that gets multiplied *ad infinitum*. The subjects limit one another internally, just as they capture one another internally.

Even though Whitehead does not adopt a perception of the universe organised to this degree around the rather aggressive metaphor of possession, he offers a similar conception of the emergence of the subject by way of possession – one that is more metaphysical and neutral. The notion of 'prehension' is given, in Whitehead's metaphysics, the same status as that of 'capture' and 'possession' in Tarde's own work. Whitehead, however, adds to this meaning a technical and metaphysical dimension. According to Whitehead, prehension is the activity by which 'the many, which are the universe disjunctively, become the one actual occasion, which is the universe conjunctively. It lies in the nature of things that the many enter into complex unity'.[28] And Whitehead does not hesitate to articulate this system, placing himself in direct opposition with Kant's philosophy: 'For Kant, the world emerges from the subject; for the philosophy of organism [Whitehead's philosophy], the subject emerges from the world'.[29] In a word, the predicament here is not centered on the way in which a given subject can experience the world, nor how it can relate to reality, but rather *how the world can become a subject*, how it can transform itself, and become a subjective experience.[30] And it is the emergence of the subject from inside the world that should now be able to be grasped by the notion of the possessive activity of prehension. All this seems, according to Whitehead, to happen as if the universe never ceased to be multiplied by the simultaneous emergence of points of contractions, that appear alongside 'subjects of nature'. Whitehead's 'cosmology' is a vision of the universe as an endless process of contractions of all events that happened in new subjective experiences.

The question is how to render the prehensive activity of the subject in the Whiteheadian sense more concretely graspable. Deleuze devotes

[28] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 21.
[29] Ibid. p. 88.
[30] The term 'contractions' was mainly used by H. Bergson to express the act of the memory in experience. The complete past experience of a subject is contracted in one point, which is his actual experience. Cf. Henri Bergson, *Matière et Mémoire: Essai sur la Relation du Corps à l'Esprit* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990). Bergson's conception of memory was very influential for Whitehead's cosmology. What Bergson described as a contraction of memory, Whitehead used as a contraction of the universe.

a chapter in *The Fold* to Whitehead entitled 'What is an Event?', in which he gives a series of examples:

> Prehension is an individual unity. Everything prehends its antecedents and its concomitants and, by degrees, prehends the world. the eye is a prehension of light. Living beings prehend water, soil, carbon, and salts. At a given moment the pyramid prehends Napoleon's soldiers (forty centuries are contemplating us), and inversely. [31]

The interest Deleuze shows for the notion of prehension does not appear solely in *The Fold.* Already in *Difference and Repetition,* Deleuze used notions akin to that of 'prehension', such as 'contractions' or 'contemplations', and connected these to a form of neo-Platonism, mainly to that of Plotinus, using very similar examples:

> By its existence alone, the lily of the field sings the glory of the heavens, the goddesses and gods – in other words, the elements that it contemplates in contracting. What organism is not made of elements and cases of repetition, of contemplated and contracted water, nitrogen, carbon, chlorides and sulphates, thereby intertwining all the habits of which it is composed? Organisms awake to the sublime words of the third Ennead: all is contemplation![32]

It is based on these observations that I would like to introduce a radical distinction between, on one side, Tarde and Whitehead, and on the other, Leibniz. If it is possible, to some extent, to establish a shared interpretation between Leibniz, Tarde, and Whitehead, of the subject as composed of everything that exists, a radical contrast must be made between the logic of expression (Leibniz) and what I have proposed to call the dynamics of possession (Tarde and Whitehead). We must substitute the concept of expression for the notion of possession. As Deleuze has demonstrated, Leibnizian monads are centres of expression that presuppose the universe; or 'the world, as that which is expressed in common by all monads, pre-exists its expressions'.[33] Certainly, the universe 'does not exist outside of what expressed it, outside the monads themselves; but these expressions refer back to what is expressed as a requite for their constitution'.[34] As Tarde described it, refusing every influence from the monads, Leibniz made 'of each of them an obscure room where the whole universe of other monads depicts itself in reduction and under a special point of view'.[35] There is nothing

[31] Deleuze, *The Fold,* p. 78.
[32] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 75.
[33] Ibid. p. 47.
[34] Ibid.
[35] *MS,* p. 56.

surprising then in the fact that Leibniz came back to the question of communication between the monads and adopted the idea of a *vinculum substantiale* – a substantial chain that links the monads together.[36]

What founds the theory of expression is the presupposition of a common world which is multiplied, as Leibniz writes, by its perspectives but nevertheless unique. For Tarde and Whitehead on the other hand it is the universe itself which multiplies as it contracts itself, each subject producing its own universe through the operation of possessing the others. It is literally an 'unfurling of divergent series', the interruption of 'incompossibilities on the same stage, where Sextus will rape *and* not rape Lucretia, Where Caesar crosses *and* does not cross the Rubicon, where Fang kills, is killed, and neither kills or is killed'.[37] Each subject is the center of the emergence of a new universe which is nonetheless formed by the same materials; but this time, other than for Leibniz, this common material is not the expression of a preexisting universe but only consists of the other captured subjects that have become objects within this new relation. What is at stake is no longer to know how a common universe actualises itself within a multiplicity of subjects but, the other way around, to know how this multiplicity can produce one or several common universes. The individuation of beings does not flow from a universe to these expressions of this universe (subjects), but from the possessive agencies (a multiplicity of subjects) to gradual concentrations, thus giving birth to more and more complex forms of nature.

The Modes of Consolidation in Nature

How does this minimal definition of the subject expand to include all of reality, enabling them to capture the particular trajectories that compose different social orders as well as orders of nature, physics, and biology? This question shapes the third grand operation of speculative thought: the interpretation of modes of consolidation in nature. Subjects, being only sheaves of possessive agencies eager to possess others, are in turn objects of possession themselves. Just as they are active agents when it comes to integrating others, they become, at the very

[36] For more information on the introduction of the notion of *Vinculum* in Leibniz' philosophy, see Blondel, *Une Enigme Historique. Le 'Vinculum Substantiale' et l'Ebauche d'un Réalisme Supérieur* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1930); Boehm, *Le 'Vinculum Substantiale' chez Leibniz* (Paris: Vrin, 1938); or, more recently, Frémont, *l'Etre et la Relation. Avec Trente-sept Lettres de Leibniz au R.P. Des Bosses* (Paris: Vrin, 1981).
[37] Deleuze, *The Fold,* p. 93.

same time, passive objects of possession for other subjects. In this way, all subjects are directly connected to one another by a set of relations, forming, as I mentioned before, real dynamics of collective existence. They are active and passive at the same time – they retain the power to possess and to be possessed. There is nothing more to postulate than the immanent process of 'capturing', 'integrating', and 'prehending', and from these local relations in which each subject is part of the other, one can infer a more complex social existence. Tarde gives an ample number of examples of the immanent activities that are at the heart of all collective processes, from the most basic form of reality to the most elaborate. For example, in *Sociologie et Monadologie*, he does not hesitate to make a direct connection between social and biological organisations:

> [...] since the accomplishment of the simplest, the most banal, the most uniform social function though centuries; since, for instance, the regular overall movement of a procession or regiment demands, we know it, so many prior lessons, so many words and efforts, so much mental energy spent almost on pure loss – what mental, or quasi-mental, energy spread in streams is then not needed to produce these complicated maneuvers of simultaneously accomplished vital functions, not by thousands, but by billions of different actors, each of them, we have reasons to believe it, essentially selfish, each of them mutually as different as are citizens of a vast empire![38]

Tarde does not mean that we would have the exact same reality for a cell as for a regiment or a procession, nor does he mean that if we had the most basic reality (such as a 'cell' in this case), we would be able to explain the most complex one. But rather, on the contrary, Tarde completely reverses the perspective and demonstrates that in fact what one considers to be a manifestation of the most basic reality is in fact the culmination of an infinite number of actors as well as the elements that produce or maintain them. What Tarde means, and this connects him tightly to Whitehead, is that even if there is no possible comparison between all these modes of existence, they still require the same kind of activities, they still emerge from dynamics that can be compared. There are no similarities in their existence but there are identical requirements involved in explaining their emergence.

This is the reason why both Tarde and Whitehead do not hesitate to use a similar generic term that at first sight might appear quite removed from any speculative or cosmological concept, the notion of 'society': 'Any thing is a society, any phenomenon is a social fact'.[39] The use of the term 'society' is fundamental. The notion of the speculative subject that I have developed here is necessary only insofar as it engenders the clear expression and interpretation of the meaning of society. Ultimately, the success of speculative philosophy will have to be measured by its ability to give meaning, not to the subject itself, but to the emergence and the mode of existence of societies. It is important to acknowledge the fact that the term 'society' does not, of course, refer to Whitehead's and Tarde's philosophies in any particular area of nature, but acquires an unexpected extension: 'An ordinary physical object, which has temporal endurance, is a society', a rock, a cell, a man, even an idea are 'societies'.[40] Everything that has *duration* and *stabilisation*, even in an imperceptible way, can be qualified as a society.

What is a society? Tarde provides an extremely simple answer to this question, and it is exactly the same as that given by Whitehead in *Process and Reality*: 'the reciprocal possession, of extremely varied kinds, of all by each'.[41] In other words, a society is what I have been calling the 'dynamic of possession', a multiplicity of operations by which desirous and avid beings, by way of their encounters with one another, and by way of their convergences, oppositions or alliances – are held together by bonds, as long as they are able, in a common history. If we wish to investigate societies such as cells, bodies, and techniques, we will have to explore a multiplicity of levels of organisation, all engendered by the immanent activities of their members, constraining each other, and assuming the common history that they are following. Whitehead gave a famous example of such societies. When he asks 'what is a man?', he gives an answer that provides all the elements of the emergence and consolidation of societies: it 'is an historic route of actual occasions which [...] inherit from each other', and Whitehead does not hesitate to relay this question to more trivial ones in order to demonstrate that all societies require others in order to exist, for example, the 'set of occasions, dating from his first acquirement of the Greek language and including all those occasions up to his loss of any adequate knowledge of that language, constitutes a society in reference to knowledge of the Greek language. Such knowledge is a common characteristic inherited from occasion to occasion along the historic route'.[42]

[38] *MS*, p. 52.
[39] *MS*, p. 58.
[40] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 35.
[41] *MS*, p. 85.
[42] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, pp. 89-90.

Using the term 'historic route', Whitehead shows that the dynamics of possessions are not only spatial, but also, simultaneously, temporal. Each subject forming a society is interacting with his own past. Tarde uses an expression that corresponds to the same idea: 'There is, in fact, as properly social only the imitation of compatriots and forefathers, in the broadest sense of the word'.[43] Therefore, the dynamics apply as such to the past; which is at the same time the subject and object of possession. The past is what brings about the conflicts and enlivens the subject; it also continuously transforms itself according to the current dynamics. Thus, one finds again, in similar forms, in the relations of the subject to the past, the microscopic stage of wars, alliances, and mobilisations that were described earlier. Every possession of a present subject by another, echoes inside the whole past, with varying degrees of intensity. The echoing effect ranges from the simplest indifference to complete transformation – not directly of the past events themselves, but of the importance given to them, and the meaning they retain.

How do we go from individual possession to these massive sets of vast amounts of 'different actors' that can be cells, processions, or regiments? Tarde explains this by gradual concentrations that form true substantial beings:

> [A]ny harmonious, profound, and intimate relation between natural elements, creates a new and superior element, which in turn cooperates to the creation of another higher element; on each level of the ladder, from the phenomenal complexities of the atom to the self, passing by the more and more complex molecule, by the cell or the 'plastidule' [organic molecule] of Haeckel, by the organ and eventually by the organism, we count as many new beings as new unities...[44]

Contrary to Leibniz, mutual possession creates 'harmonies' that are not pre-established but emergent; and as such, every being finds himself involved in new relations. This level is neither reducible to some end – towards which the entities making part of would tend – nor to its components. Its existence is literally characterised by its shaping, through its new interactions with other societies, the milieu to which the subjects that gave birth to it will be connected, expressing the 'unceasing tendency of internal small harmonies to exteriorise and to progressively amplify'.[45]

[43] *MS*, p. 81.
[44] *MS*, pp. 67-68.
[45] *MS*, p. 107.

The Functions of a Speculative Empiricism

The speculative interpretation of the notion of the subject takes place in the more general context of the contemporary re-emergence of speculative philosophy. To the question of whether it is possible to develop speculative propositions – in the sense of propositions concerning the multiple modes of existence of nature as such – the answer to which I have tried to bring meaning, from Tarde and Whitehead, is that it would require three intertwined gestures defining together the speculative interpretation of nature: the first of these gestures is to undertake a critique of the anthropological paradigm. By anthropological paradigm I mean the tendency, more or less explicit, to polarise all forms of experience of nature to the exclusive one of the human subject, through the exploration of human faculties and their transfer to other realities in nature. In this sense speculative philosophy must undertake a new critique of the categories that were put at the root of the anthropological inquiry. Secondly, we must re-appropriate the notion of the subject, distinguishing it from the anthropological model and giving it a new extension. In order to do this, it is essential at this point to put forward, especially when it comes to assembling a series of abstractions, what might be the minimum required in order to be able to consider the subject. This is an operation that characterises speculative philosophy: for each concept there is a point that marks the limit, or as Whitehead puts it, an 'ultimate' point, upon which this concept may acquire its own meaning and its own substance, but beyond which it will simply become an element derived from another concept. We can establish minimal components that belong to it, such as the notions of prehension, of noteworthy actions, or even, as we have seen, of possessive activities. The 'subjects of nature' may thereby become the primary terms for an investigation into the modalities of the existence of nature, leading then to the oppositions between the subject and nature or to the various bifurcations that separate nature into fields such as physics, biology, and social sciences; thirdly, we must follow the specific modes of associations between subjects. This is the whole field of the dynamics of possessions, and Tarde describes its program in *Monadologie et Sociologie*: 'For thousands and thousands of years, we have been cataloging the different modes of beings as well as the different degrees of being, and no one has ever had the idea to classify the different species

by different degrees of possession'.[46] Following this notion of 'subjects of nature' we could establish both what there is in common between the modes of association and what kinds of differences there are in their pragmatic trajectories, especially when considering the milieu in which they exist. We would have a very particular form of speculative philosophy that would no longer necessarily be opposed to empiricism. If the determination of abstractions that enable us to define the minimal subject of nature does in fact belong to speculative philosophy, the question of the singular modes of association between subjects and of the trajectories and environments in which they exist, belong to empiricism, an empiricism that has been enlarged and that is now capable of moving about on the field of the multiplicity of modes of experience in nature.

[46] *MS*, p. 89.

Realism of the image and general praxeology in Simondon's course *Imagination et invention*

Anne Lefebvre[1]

Imagination et invention is a course Gilbert Simondon gave at the Sorbonne during the first semester of the academic year of 1965-1966 – at the Institut de la rue Serpente. It was given in the context of a general psychology course, which was, at the time, obligatory for obtaining a degree in philosophy. Simondon, whose oeuvre did not receive the expected recognition, at least in the milieu of philosophy, thus taught in a department of psychology.[2] It is hardly surprising then, given this context, that this course was initially published in the *Bulletin de psychologie*, in successive parts, from November 1965 to May 1966.[3]

In all likelihood, this course answered a request by the director of his thesis, Georges Canguilhem. The latter had been, in his role of 'inspecteur général', in charge of preparing the *agrégation* and the notion at the heart of the program of the general lesson that year was, precisely, 'the imagination'. This second circumstance may explain the title *Imagination et invention*, when the title hand-written in the margins of the manuscript would undoubtedly have been more appropriate: "Images mentales et inventions".[4] From the start one must avoid a mis-

[1] I am grateful to Cécile Malaspina for her attentive translation.

[2] In 1957 Simondon prepared and submitted a principal thesis, *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information* (Paris: Million, 2005), hereafter *ILFI*, and a complementary thesis, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* (Paris: Aubier, 1958, 1989), hereafter *MEOT*. While the complementary thesis was soon published and provoked great interest, not least by technologists, the reception of his principal thesis was muted by its more than arbitrary publication. The first two parts of this main thesis were published in 1964 as *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (Paris: PUF, 1964), but it was only in the year of Simondon's death in 1989 that the third and fourth parts of this thesis were published as *L'individuation psychique et collective* (Paris: Aubier, 1989; 2007).

[3] In this review the course was entitled 'L'imagination et l'invention'. It is only in October 2008 that this course was published in its entirety (Chatou: Editions de la Transparence, 2008), edition by Nathalie Simondon, presentation by Jean-Yves Château), hereafter *IMIN*.

[4] This is according to Jean-Yves Château in his presentation of the course in its 2008 edition, p. XII.

understanding regarding the content of this course. Merely reading the preface allows one to realize an important point and to avoid an ambiguity otherwise inherent in the title *Imagination et invention*. For Simondon what is at stake is not to present a theory of the imagination – at least in so far as this implies a particular faculty of the subject. Simondon instead proposes to construct a theory capable of apprehending the image in the reality of its genetic becoming,[5] a 'theory of the image'.[6] It will come as no surprise to those who have read his two theses that Simondon chooses a genetic approach to the image in this course.

This article will present the absolutely singular coordinates of a realism of the image, which Simondon is led to adopt. I will show that the theory of the cycle of the image does not content itself with escaping the frame of classical psychology, but enables the prolongation of the profound reform of psychology initiated by Simondon in his principal thesis.

Simondon clearly intends to adopt a realist position with respect to the image – indeed for him this does not lead back to the perspective of a psychology – at least in the classical sense of a theory of the subject and of its faculties. In this regard Simondon clearly expresses his distrust of the very term imagination, born from the theory of the faculties: it risks 'inducing an error, since it attaches images to the subject that produces them, and tends to exclude the hypothesis of a primitive exteriority of images with respect to the subject'[7]. Simondon intends undoing this interpretation 'in terms of subjectivity' that has prevailed, according to him, since the 17th century, an interpretation of which the thinker of the 'imagining consciousness' that his contemporary Sartre is, is still a representative. As a matter of fact Sartre is the author of the famous theory of the imagination which fully assumes the subjectivist presupposition from which Simondon wants to free himself; for him the image is the expression of the force of negation of a conscience *for-itself*. It is nevertheless essential to understand fully what Simondon aims at right from his introduction. If Sartre is wrong to see the image as the

[5] *IMIN*, p.3: 'This course presents a theory: the aspects of the mental image, which furnish the matter of discussions and of already published studies do not correspond to different species of reality, but to stages of a single activity subject to a developmental process'.
[6] *IMIN*, preamble, p. 3.
[7] *IMIN*, p.7.

product of consciousness alone, for Simondon it will not be about hoping to return the work of imagination to that which would still be a consciousness of the world, as phenomenology will do.

For Simondon the urgency is rather to free our thinking of the image from a presupposition, which has become attached to this position as its reverse, in favour of an 'imagining consciousness': the surreptitious reduction of the image to the reality of a conscious representation. In his complementary thesis, Simondon already denounces the fact that for the most part the thought of the image has persisted in attributing a privilege to form or representation. He wanted to show then that one cannot understand the invention of a form or of a representation, without positing the existence of a 'fund of images'[8] – if not non-conscious, then at least sub-conscious – a fund from which its very representation would precisely have to take its actuality and even its 'vitality'. He acknowledges the merit of Freud's affirmed of the existence of a fundamental mental reality escaping consciousness. But he proceeds to denounce the latter's conception which, whose analysis of the process of repression, is based on a site already inhabited by 'representations'. Simondon signals in his preface that the reduction of the image to consciousness is one of the major obstacles to the adoption of a genetic perspective on the image. For Simondon 'nothing proves that even in the best case consciousness exhausts all the reality of this local activity'. Simondon proposes to compare the image to the living parasite that is the mushroom: 'there are mushrooms that do not produce this visible part; they proliferate nevertheless, their action on the milieu is no less powerful'.[9]

Sartre will also play the role of a counter-figure hidden in the shadow of this course, possibly as the last representative of a tradition that, in the name of freedom, refuses point-blank that a mental reality might escape consciousness - a claim testified by his famous categorical refusal of the hypothesis of the sub-conscious. Just after having quoted Sartre, Simondon writes: 'But why exclude as illusory the characters by which an image (...) presents itself by itself, according to its own forces, inhabiting consciousness as an intruder who comes to disturb the order of a house where he had not been invited?'[10] The large reference Simon-

[8] MEOT, pp.58-60
[9] *IMIN*, p.4.
[10] *IMIN*, p. 7.

don makes to Lucretius, whom he counts among 'the most rationalist of ancient philosophers' perfectly counters the modern rationalism that is ready to sacrifice the effective reality of the image in order to save the morals of the will.[11] Simondon takes up in his own account the argument according to which the image disposes of a *force* that attests to its presence in a mental space – the image being mental, according to a purely topological sense of the term, only in so far as it is a reality *situated* in the individual subject – producing its effects on the activity or the praxis of the individual it 'inhabits'.

Simondon's project of a realism of the image is, however, not in the least reducible to that of Lucretius. For Simondon the mental image cannot be understood as an object or a physical reality – such as the famous theory of simulacra exposed in book IV of De Rerum Natura. Simondon declares, singularly, that the image is an 'intermediary reality between object and subject.[12] What does this mean? Firstly that the image must find its origin this side of the traditional opposition of the subject and the object: in life – by which we understand biological life in the organism properly speaking. For Simondon the image proceeds from a certain degree of organisation of the living organism. Highly centralised organisms, starting from the most mobile, are endowed with a highly integrative nervous system. Its development enables the individual to 'defer' the realisation of a gesture prepared by growth. Primitively, the image will have to be conceived of as a motor schema that the nervous system was able to 'put in reserve'. Conserved in the state of a potential, this schema can later be mobilised; the image is thus a behaviour that is virtually ready.[13] The image has, primitively, the status of anticipation first realised at the level of motricity.

If Simondon renounces a traditional psychological analysis, he leans, on the contrary, on recent discoveries in ethology. He adopts the statement made by Jennings about the primacy of motricity over sensoriality. The brownoïd movements of the most inferior organisms, which for the most part 'get nowhere' and which can thus not be interpreted according to the schema of 'stimulus-reaction'; they testify to a endogenous activity which constitutes, according to Simondon, 'the most primitive aspect of that which will become the genesis of anticipatory images in

[11] *IMIN*, p.8.
[12] *IMIN*, p.7.
[13] Cf. *IMIN*, p. 30-31.

organisms possessing a highly centralised and strongly telecephalised nervous system.[14] Simondon's strong point consists, in the end, in a radically genetic posture, in subtracting the image from the primacy of perceptive experience. Here the image precedes perception. Note that such a conception of the image forbids the return to a phenomenological perspective, be it that of Merleau-Ponty to whom Simondon owes a lot in discerning his problems. Far from being the result of the intentional exploration of a milieu, the image is the beginning of a local and endogenous anticipation. Far from owing its existence to a minimal subjectivity – that of a behaviour or of an 'I can' [15] – the image is instead that which serves the primitive organisation of this behaviour.

How does Simondon henceforth conceive of the genetic development of such images, understood as 'quasi-organisms'? We must take seriously their qualification as 'parasites' which Simondon gives to mental images.[16] The image in fact owes its subsistence to the organism, which serves as its support, but it develops in a relatively independent way from the latter. For Simondon the becoming *sub specie* of the formation of a system of images as constituting a 'sub-set' in the organism. Firstly this system goes through three developmental phases, which form the properly *mental* cycle of the image: anticipation, experience and systematisation. In anticipation, before experience, images subsist in a separate state and go through a spontaneous growth; the image constitutes an 'embryo of activity and perception' which develops by itself. In motor-perceptive experience the image 'becomes a world welcoming information from the milieu and a source of the response schemata to these stimulations' and thus effectively functional; the images organise themselves in 'interior groupings that are correlated according to dimensions of the rapport between organism and milieu'. Finally, after the interaction with the milieu, according to an affective-emotive echo, the images organise themselves 'according to a systematic mode of liaison, of evocations and of communications' which draw a 'veritable mental world' by which the subject 'possesses an analogue of the mental world,

[14] Cf. *IMIN*, p. 31: Simondon observes that in a milieu that has ceased being homogeneous, a kinetic conduct would be dangerous. He writes: 'spontaneous conducts of anticipation can only be adaptive if they remain virtual, as an attempt remaining inside the organism, a fictional try that does not leads to an act only once the reception of perceptual coordinates that enable the adjustment to the real milieu'.
[15] Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *La phénoménologie de la perception*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1945; 1976).
[16] *IMIN*, p.9.

itself having its constraints, its topology, its complex modes of access'.[17] It is essential to note that these phases do not in the least correspond to images of different nature; they correspond only to three 'aspects' (motor, cognitive and affective-emotive) which coexist in the image. This is to say that the image is conceived as a 'reserve' of an activity that deploys itself according to a triple dimension of perceptive-cognitive and affective-symbolic anticipation. This is precisely what motivates Simondon to talk of a succession of *phases* and not of moments. These *aspects* are, finally, distinct only from the point of view of activities or of functions that 'employ' the image – a same image may well serve the development of different activities or functions. Note, by the way, in this regard that Simondon's preface condemned the conception of different faculties (imagination, perception, memory) for being defined, as if through the effect of a 'reversed genesis',[18] according to 'the dominant tasks: anticipation, perception, recalling'. This conception was to constitute a 'conceptual barrage', the second major obstacle to the comprehension of the genetic theory of the image, since it led to the supposition of the existence of different kinds of images, where what is at stake is to grasp the unique process of development of this local and endogenous activity that is the image.[19]

Further on the perspective of phases of the image will allow operating a major reversal of the traditional rapport of the image to psychology: if the image cannot be comprised in the frame of traditional psychology, the becoming of the image must renew its account of the emergence of psychical functions in the living being. In truth this thought of the image comes to resolve a problem that had remained suspended at the end of his analysis of psychic individuation in his principal thesis. In order to avoid the double anthropological presupposition of a thought reserved to man and the return of a dualism of body and mind[20], Simondon made the hypothesis of a splitting of the vital functions into psychic and somatic functions in more developed living beings. The thought

[17] *IMIN*, p.19.

[18] I borrow this expression from Simondon, who uses it in the introduction to his principal thesis for a critique of the explanations of the process of individuation in traditional philosophy. *ILFI*, p. 23.

[19] *IMIN*, p.4.

[20] *ILFI*, p. 268: 'At the beginning the individuated being a soul and a body; it constructs itself as such by individualising itself, doubling itself stage after stage. There is not a psychic individuation as such, but an individualisation of the living being which gives rise to the somatic and the psychic'.

of the image specifies the effective potential of this splitting: mental images charged by these three *aspects* will be conceived 'as structural and functional sub-sets of this organised activity that is the psychic activity'[21]

In order to understand better what is implied by the role of this 'subset' in the organism, we must return to Simondon's conception of the process of individu*alisation* that defines the living being. Here Simondon takes up the individual-milieu couple that Canguilhem presented for understanding of the normativity of the living being.[22] But he does so in order to make a generic use of it. All individuation – individuation being always that of a system for Simondon – gives rise to the appearance of an individual *and* a milieu, including in the case of a physical individuation. In truth what is at stake is to conceive of the operation of individuation as of that of a being in so far as it is a becoming. This extension of the pertinence of this schema to an ontological perspective, while it crosses the epistemological limit of the knowledge of life given by Canguilhem, is precisely what will allow Simondon to undo all metaphysical claims towards life: to think a mere difference of *regime* between the physical individuation and vital individuation. Note that from the start living individuation does not presuppose the reality of a complex living organism, but only of a more complex *system* of individuation. In the living system of individuation the transduction of information is qualified by Simondon as 'indirect'. The living being goes through a process of internal integration and differentiation – two functions that Simondon explicitly compares to information and action, consciously using a psychological vocabulary, like Canguilhem, for heuristic ends. Resolving the difference of the functions happens according to a process of internal resonance that Simondon compares to affectivity.[23] This internal resolution accounts for the formation of an interiority, which constitutes in itself a relay in its relation to a milieu that becomes associated to it. The living being is the act of a double relation to itself and to its milieu that always remains problematical for itself. Thus after a first individuation that delivers its specific nature, it individu*alises* itself. Finally we must note that in order to explain the appearance of this new vital *regime* of individuation,

[21] *IMIN*, p.18.

[22] Cf. Canguilhem, *Le normal et le pathologique* (Paris: PUF, 1966; 2009).

[23] For this analysis, cf. *ILFI*, p.158-160.

which already supposes the individu-*alisation* of the individual, or that the living being constitutes a problematical interiority and becomes a polarised being whose haecceity is functional, Simondon relies on the hypothesis of a neoteny in the slowing down of the rhythm of psychic individuation.[24] It is, however, precisely this schema of developmental neoteny that Simondon will use to think the constitution of images. It is at least possible to read the fact that images are 'put in reserve' as non-actualised motor schemas, or as differed gesture, in the light of such a process. Simondon explicitly compares the development of the image at the heart of the living organism to the process of de-phasing which one can observe in certain ontogenetic processes of living beings or more clearly in the ontogenesis of behaviour – processes such as they make different speeds of growth or cycles differentiated cycles of development appear. It is important to understand the extent to which images will play the role of a supplementary *relay* of information at the heart of the organism, serving the *amplification* of the relational activity the living being ceaselessly entertains with its milieu in a life that is strictly speaking biological. An analogy will allow us to clarify Simondon's position: the system of images functions precisely as a 'relay of amplification'.

It is, ultimately, as an instrument of the living being's self-regulation that the image, as power and knowledge reserve, conditions the emergence of a 'psychic' activity that deploys itself in a threefold dimension of anticipation, perception/cognition and affection/emotion. Simondon wants to show that the image in fact never ceases to be the effective support of the organisation of the psychic activity of thought, and not to reduce this activity of thought to the mere production of images.[25] At this stage, we must nevertheless note that the becoming of this relay, the image, is not only due to the three constituent phases of the image's mental cycle. We must also take invention into consideration as the fourth and last phase of the becoming of the image – its critical phase so to speak. Invention 'marks the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new cycle, each cycle comprises three phases: anticipation, experience and systematisation'.[26] This critical phase emerges when the system of symbolic images is saturated or incapable of integrating

[24] Cf. *ILFI*, p. 152.

[25] Simondon shows how the image of the élan sustains Bergson's notion of intuition. *IMIN*, p 61.

[26] *IMIN*, p. 19.

incidental information. The system is led to reorganise itself under the effect of the incidental given whose integration it enables; in the problematical invention there is recurrence of the dimension of the solution on the position of the problem.

Invention cannot be conceived as a secondary problem, attached to the mere 'regional' problem of the historical progress of technology. In fact, far from supposing a theory of the imagination to be achieved and starting from the designation of a particular case of application of creative imagination, the concept of invention participates here in the revision of the classical problem of the imagination and of the understanding of the becoming of the image in its entirety. Invention will precisely have to account for the progress of a 'primary, secondary and formal level *"or in a reflexive sense"* of the activity of the image, i.e. the functional relation of the individual to a milieu, a territory and finally a world. Invention will have to account for the co-genesis of the image and the activity of the relation to the world, which it sustains. Simondon writes: 'The primary level can be called biological or vital: it is this one that implies the participation of the whole organism [...] the secondary level, which one can call psychological, even if this term is not satisfactory, implies in the local activity constituting the images a more specialised participation of the nervous system; instead of engaging directly with the organism in each situation in relation to the milieu, it develops an mental analogue of this primary relation [...] there may finally be a third level of the activity of images, which one would have to call formal or, in a certain sense, reflexive, because it operates systematisations that are effectuated from the point of view of a subject dominating his relation to his milieu'.[27] Note that the image sustains a relation at the primary level still carried by the body to the world, in order to become more and more formal. From this perspective the activity we generally call 'psychic' is far from proceeding from a dualism of body and mind.

The progress according to 'levels' of the cycle of images finally resituates the so-called 'psychological' functions at a level Simondon prefers to qualify as 'secondary'. Each of these traditional psychological functions, imagination, perception and memory, will have to be studied in themselves, in each part of his course, in the perspective of their de-

[27] *IMIN*, p. 20.

velopment according to the primary, secondary and formal level. The 'psychological' activity will have to be profoundly relativised in the light of the perspective of a general praxeology, without in the least implying their derealisation. 'General' because it does not presuppose any kind of anthropological division as such, the animal already being considered as a psycho-somatic being. Simondon refuses to return to the anthropological presupposition of thought as the privilege of man.

Finally, the theory of the cycle of the image must allow us to clarify the problem of the genesis of the symbolic relation to the world in life. Here the reflection on invention cannot constitute a secondary development for any thinker concerned with thinking 'the inherence of signification to being'.[28] We must stress the extent to which Simondon enables us to retake and displace the perspective of Merleau-Ponty, who sought to account for the genesis of the relation man has to the world on the basis of a perceptive relation. Strictly speaking, Simondon will locate the image in organic life, not beyond but 'this side' of the opposition of subject and object. If the image becomes the *effective* support, for Simondon, of an ontogenetic *progress* of the relation the individual maintains with the milieu, the territory and finally the world, it is on condition that it be seized in the plenitude of its genetic becoming. The image exceeds perceptive experience which is only one of its phases. Simondon notes that it is precisely in itself at the origin of the dialectical schema. The profound relativity of perception for Simondon must give the image a new function in the organisation of the effective symbolical relation to the world, valid for the existence and inscription of activity in the world.[29] The theory of the image allows Simondon to untie himself from Merleau-Ponty's conception of the image as inadequate for thinking the true *genesis* of the relation of the individual to the world. If Merleau-Ponty turns the image into a *relation* of the living being to the world, he reduces the image to the level of a perceptive relation, where it becomes the site of an expressive relation constituted as a quasi transcendental, originary mode of donation of a being, of which the imaginary is only a duplication [doublure]. The conception

[28] Cf. *ILFI*, p.35.

[29] Cf. *IMIN*, p. 20-21:. 'Synthesis of equal proportions of endogenous motor energy and of information coming from the milieu', at the end of the three phases the image has become 'a concrete symbol of the relation between the subject and the milieu [...] a point of insertion of the mental activity in the milieu'.

of the genesis of behaviour presented in *Structure du comportement*[30] will appear as not genetic enough, while Simondon's conception of the image alone enables the thought of an effective genesis of the individual's relation to the world and thus the undoing of the subject-object dualism. What remains is the need to discover how the original concept of invention Simondon deploys in the last part of his course – or the conception of a problematical act of invention, itself subject to degrees up to the concretisation of the image in a created object – will be able to undo the Bergsonian dualism between fabrication and creation and brings us, not to the *derealisation* of the created object, but to its *relativisation* – that is to say to understanding it not as the other of the subject, but as an intermediary reality between man and a milieu that is both natural and social.

[30] (Paris: PUF, 1942; 2006).

Concepts, Time, and Truth

Daniel W. Smith[1]

What is Deleuze's concept of a concept? In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari famously define philosophy as an activity that consists in 'forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts'.[2] Deleuze seems to have held to this conception of philosophy as the creation of concepts from the very start of his career.[3] 'The power of a philosophy', he wrote in one of his early books, 'is measured by the concepts it creates, or whose meaning it rejuvenates – concepts that impose a new set of divisions on things and actions.'[4] Even in high school, he recounts, when he was first introduced to philosophy, concepts struck him with the same force as literary characters, having their own temperament and vitality, and populating their own landscapes.[5] It was not until

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[2]Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994), p. 2, hereafter *WP*, citing Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufman and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Random House, 1967), §409, 220: Philosophers 'must no longer accept concepts as a gift, nor merely purify and polish them, but must first *make* and *create* them, present them and make them convincing'. Whitehead seems to have had a similar conception of philosophy: 'Progress in truth... is mainly a progress in the framing of concepts.' Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Fordham, 1996), p. 131.

[3]Guattari, who did not explicitly assume the mantle of a philosopher, seems to have seen the activity of thought in a different vein, preferring the production of flows or diagrams over the creation of concepts (Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness* (Semiotext(e), 2006), p. 238, hereafter *TRM*). For analyses of Guattari's 'diagrammaticism', see Gary Genosko, *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction* (London: Athlone, 2002), and Jannell Watson, *Guattari's Diagrammatic Thought* (London: Continuum, 2009). The publication of Guattari's *The Anti-Oedipus Papers* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2006) opened an interesting window into Guattari's working methods. For a review, cf. Daniel W. Smith, 'Inside Out: Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus Papers*', *Radical Philosophy* 140 (Nov-Dec 2006), pp. 35-39.

[4]Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* trans. by Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1992), p. 321, hereafter *EPS*. Although it was published in 1968, François Dosse notes that Deleuze had largely completed his secondary thesis on Spinoza (*Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*) in the late 1950s, before the publication of *Nietzsche and Philosophy* in 1962. See François Dosse. *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp. 118, 143.

[5]G. Deleuze, *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, (Paris: Montparnasse, 2004), E.

late in his life, however, in *What is Philosophy?* (1991), that Deleuze, working with Guattari, finally proposed his own 'analytic of concepts', to borrow Kant's phrase, reaching the point where he could ask, 'What have I been doing all my life?'[6] Deleuze compared the book, in passing, to Kant's *Critique of judgement*, and the comparison is an apt one: both are works of old age, written at a time when thinkers often have little new to say, their 'systems' already being well-established.[7] Yet Kant's third critique is a book bristling with new concepts, pushing at the limits of Kant's carefully constructed architectonic, and setting the stage for Romanticism and what we now call, precisely, post-Kantian philosophy. In a similar manner, *What is Philosophy?*, far from being the self-reflective culmination of Deleuze's career, is much more his bequeathal to future philosophy, a handing-off of the baton, a plethora proposing new concepts and problems functioning as so many vectors to be taken up by future thinkers. What follows is little more than an attempt to take some tentative steps down a number of those vectors.

The Becoming of Concepts

One of the most obvious features of Deleuze's analytic of concepts lies in the fact that, from a Deleuzian perspective, concepts do not have an *identity* but only a *becoming*. In his preface to the Italian translation of *Logic of Sense*, for example, Deleuze himself briefly charts the becoming of one of his own concepts: the concept of intensity.[8] In *Difference and Repetition* (1968), he notes, the concept of intensity is primarily related to the dimension of depth. In *Logic of Sense* (1969), the concept of intensity is retained, but it is now related primarily to the dimension of surface – same concept, but different components. In *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), the concept enters a third becoming that is related to neither depth nor surface: rising and falling intensities are now events that take

[6] *WP*, p. 1. For a different approach to Deleuze's analytic of concepts, oriented around the notion of the event, see Daniel W. Smith, '"Knowledge of Pure Events": A Note on Deleuze's Analytic of Concepts', in *Ereignis auf Französisch. Zum Erfahrungsbegriff der französischen Gegenwartsphilosophie: Temporalität, Freiheit, Sprache*, ed. by Marc Rölli (Munich: Wilhelm Fink-Verlag, 2003), pp. 363-74.

[7] *WP*, p. 2. Deleuze considered the *Critique of Judgement* to be 'one of the most important books in all of philosophy' (Gilles Deleuze, lecture of 31 Mar 1981, available from webdeleuze.com. Herafter lectures are referred to by date only).

[8] *TRM*, pp. 65-6.

place on a body without organs.[9] One might add a fourth becoming to Deleuze's list: in *What is Philosophy?*, the concept of intensity is used to describe the status of the components of concepts, which are determined as intensive rather than extensive (which is one way in which Deleuze distinguishes himself from Frege, for whom concepts are extensional). In other words, the concept of intensity does not stay the same even within Deleuze's own corpus; it undergoes internal mutations.[10]

To this, one must add the fact that many of the concepts Deleuze utilises have a long 'becoming' in the history of philosophy, which he relies on and appropriates, and into which Deleuze's own work on the concept is inserted. The distinction between extensive and intensive quantities, for instance, dates back to medieval philosophy and Plotinus. Deleuze's concept of multiplicity – to take another example – was first formulated mathematically by Bernard Riemann, in his non-Euclidean geometry, who in turn linked it to Kant's concept of the manifold. Both Husserl and Bergson adopted Riemann's concept for their own philosophical purposes, and Deleuze first wrote about the concept with regard to Bergson's distinction between two types of multiplicity (continuous and discrete), which Deleuze developed in his own manner, and considered one of the fundamental problems of contemporary thought.[11] On this score, one of the great texts in the history of

[9] See also Gilles Deleuze, *Desert islands and Other Texts, 1953-1974* (Semiotext(e), 2004) p. 261: 'I've undergone a change. The surface-depth opposition no longer concerns me. What interests me now is the relationships between a full body, a body without organs, and flows that migrate.'

[10] The same is true of Deleuze's other concepts as well. The concept of affect, for example, first arises in Deleuze's work on Spinoza, where it designates the passage from one intensity to another in a finite mode, which is experienced as a joy or a sadness. In *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What Is Philosophy?*, however, the affect is no longer 'the passage from one lived state to another', but has assumed an autonomous status – along with percepts – as a becoming that takes place between two multiplicities. See *WP*, p. 173: 'The affect is not the passage from one lived state to another but man's nonhuman becoming.'

[11] What is important to Deleuze is not only the concept of multiplicity, nor even the *types* of multiplicities he analyses, but the relations and transformations between these types (*WP*, p. 152), that is, the transformation from the continuous to the discrete, from the problematic to the axiomatic, the intensive to the extensive, the nonmetric to the metric, the nondenumerable to the denumerable, the rhizomatic to the arborescent, the smooth to the striated, the molecular to the molar, and so on. When asked about the concept of 'micro-physics' in the 1981 interview with Arnaud Villani, Deleuze responded: 'The distinction between macro and micro is very important, but it perhaps belongs more to Félix than to myself. For me, it is rather the distinction between two types of multiplicities. For me, that is the essential point: that one of these two types refers to micro-multiplicities is only a consequence. Even for the problem of thought, and even for the sciences, the notion of multiplicity, as introduced by Riemann, seems much more important than that of microphysics.' Arnaud Villani, *La guêpe et l'orchidée* (Paris: Belin, 1999), p. 130.

philosophy is Kant's opening to the Transcendental Dialectic, where he explains why he is going to appropriate Plato's concept of Idea rather than coining his own term, since Plato was dealing with a problematic similar to the one Kant wants to deal with, although Plato, according to Kant, had 'not sufficiently determined his concept.'[12] Deleuze in turn undertakes another transformation when, in *Difference and Repetition*, he takes up Kant's theory of the Idea and modifies it in his own manner, claiming that Kant had not pushed to the limit the 'immanent' ambitions of his own theory of Ideas.

Similarly, Deleuze seems to have initially intended *What is Philosophy?*, at least in part, to be a book on the concept of the 'category', and thus a reworking of Kant's analytic of concepts.[13] In the Transcendental Analytic of *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant had famously drawn up his own list of categories, derived from his typology of judgments, which he attempted to deduce as the conditions of possible experience. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze had explicitly distinguished his own fundamental concepts (problematic, virtuality, singularity, and so on) from Aristotelian or Kantian categories.[14] Yet both Whitehead and Peirce had drawn up very different tables of categories than Kant, and in the process they had *reinvented* or *recreated* the concept of a category. Deleuze seems to have come to see his own work in the same light: 'The conclusion to *A Thousand Plateaus* is, in my mind, a table of categories (but incomplete, insufficient). Not in the manner of Kant but in the manner of Whitehead. Category thus takes in a new meaning,

[12]Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), 'The Ideas in General', pp. 309-14, A312-20/B368-77.

[13]Deleuze first mentioned *What is Philosophy?* (1991) in the 1981 interview with Arnaud Villani, in response to a question about the books he was hoping to write after completing *A Thousand Plateaus*: 'I have just finished a book on Francis Bacon, and all I have left now are two projects: one on 'Thought and Cinema', and another which would be a large book on 'What is Philosophy' (with the problem of the categories).' See Villani, *La guêpe et l'orchidée*, p. 130.

[14]See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 284-5, hereafter *DR*: 'We have continually proposed descriptive notions... None of this, however, amounts to a list of categories. It is pointless to claim that a list of categories can be open in principle: it can be in fact, but not in principle. For categories belong to the world of representation, where they constitute forms of distribution according to which Being is repartitioned among beings following the rules of sedentary proportionality. That is why philosophy has often been tempted to oppose notions of a quite different kind to categories, notions which are really open and which betray an empirical and pluralist sense of Ideas: 'existential' as against essential, percepts as against concepts, or indeed the list of empirico-ideal notions that we find in Whitehead, which makes *Process and Reality* one of the greatest books of modern philosophy.'

a very special one. I would like to work on this point.'[15] For Deleuze, the *problem* that generated the concept of the category had changed: it was no longer a matter of determining the conditions of possible experience, but the conditions of *real* experience; and the conditions of the real were at the same time the conditions for the production of the *new*. Here again, the becoming of concepts within Deleuze's own work is a continuation of the becoming of concepts within the history of philosophy.

Even more tellingly, Deleuze says that even he and Guattari 'never did understand the "body without organs" in quite the same way', a revelation that is perhaps faint consolation to readers striving to comprehend *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.[16] Yet this is not a question of authorial intention. If one considers Deleuze and Guattari's jointly authored books as belonging fully to the trajectory of Deleuze writings, and equally fully to the trajectory of Guattari's writings, then one could take Deleuze's comment to imply that, even within a work like *Anti-Oedipus*, the concept of the 'body without organs' has a different sense, a different becoming, depending on whether one reads it in the context of Deleuze's trajectory or Guattari's trajectory. In other words, even *within* a single work or project, Deleuze and Guattari's concepts do not have an identity that would be reducible to a simple definition. Indeed, Deleuze insists on this point: 'Working together [with Guattari] was never a homogenization, but a proliferation, an accumulation of bifurcations.'[17] Moreover, if Deleuze entered into a 'becoming-Guattari' in his jointly authored works, one could say that he did the same thing in even his monographs, where he entered into a becoming-Spinoza, or a becoming-Leibniz (and Spinoza and Leibniz in turn were forced into a becoming-Deleuze), such that, even in his solo works, Deleuze's concepts never lose this status of becoming. As Deleuze said, 'I am nearly incapable of speaking in my own name [*en mon nom*]'.[18] In this sense, Deleuze's critique of the identity of the self or ego has as its exact parallel

[15]Deleuze made this remark in his interview with Arnaud Villani. See Villani, *La guêpe et l'orchidé*, p. 130. François Dosse, in *Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, cites a 1981 letter from Deleuze to Guattari which presented the problem of the categories as an integral part of their joint project: 'Pierce and Whitehead make modern tables of categories: how has this idea of categories evolved?' (14).

[16]*TRM*, p. 238

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid. p. 65

a critique of the identity of concepts. If 'experimentation on ourselves is our only identity', then the same is true of concepts: their only identity lies in experimentation, that is, in their intrinsic variability and mutations.[19] For this reason, finally, a 'becoming-Deleuze' similarly affects Deleuze's readers as well as those who attempt to write on his work. In Nelson Goodman's terminology, Deleuze's writings exemplify what they express: his texts are themselves problems, fields of vectors, multiplicities or rhizomes whose singularities can be connected in a variety of ways, so that writing on Deleuze's texts is itself a becoming, a production of the new (not merely an 'interpretation', as hermeneuticians might say).[20] One rarely finds 'positions' in Deleuze works ('Deleuze thinks that...'); rather, to read or write on Deleuze is to trace out trajectories whose directions are not given in advance of one's reading or writing. Even Deleuze's occasional appeals to various '-isms' ('vitalism', 'transcendental empiricism') are less pledges of allegiance than oxymoronic provocations. In short, there is a becoming of concepts not only within Deleuze's corpus, but also in each book and in each concept, which is extended to and draws from the history of philosophy, and is repeated in each act of reading.[21]

Philosophy as Creation

This, however, is what one would expect – both theoretically and practically – from a philosopher such as Deleuze. If Deleuze's philosophy is a philosophy of difference, then this differential status must be reflected in his own concepts, which cannot have an identity of their own without belying the entire nature of his project. But how then is one to understand this becoming of concepts? As an initial approach to this question, one could say that Deleuze's conception of philosophy as the creation of concepts has several interrelated consequences.

First, it defines philosophy in terms of an activity that has traditionally been aligned with art, namely, the activity of *creation*. For Deleuze, philosophers are as creative as artists, the difference being that what

[19] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II* (Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 11.

[20] For the distinction between expression and exemplification, see Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976).

[21] Summarizing all these becomings, Deleuze comments: 'There's nothing more unsettling than the continual movement of something that seems fixed' (Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations* (Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 157).

they create happens to be concepts rather than paintings, sculptures, films, or novels. In Deleuze's language, philosophers create *concepts* whereas artists create sensible aggregates of *percepts* or *affects*, and scientists create *functions*. Deleuze's approach to the question 'What is philosophy?' has the advantage of characterizing philosophy in terms of a well-defined occupation or a precise *activity*, rather than simply an *attitude* – for instance, knowing yourself, or wondering why there is something rather than nothing, or taking nothing to be self-evident. 'To create concepts', Deleuze writes, 'is, at the very least, to *do* something'.[22] Moreover, just as works of art bear the signature of the artist, so conceptual creations bear the signature of the philosopher who created them. In painting, we speak of Van Gogh's sunflowers or Jasper John's flags, just as in philosophy we speak of Descartes' *cogito*, or Leibniz's monads, or Nietzsche's will to power. In medicine, similarly, we speak of Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease; in mathematics, of the Pythagorean theorem or the Hamiltonian number; and in science, of the Doppler effect or the Kelvin effect.[23] In all these cases, the proper name refers less to the person than to the work of art or to the concept itself – the proper name is here used to indicate *a non-personal mode of individuation*. In this sense, it would be possible to do a history of philosophy along the lines of an art history, that is, in terms of its great products or masterworks. 'We dream sometimes of a history of philosophy that would list only the new concepts created by a great philosopher – his most essential and creative contribution.'[24] Indeed, Deleuze elsewhere muses that one could even quantify philosophy, attributing to each philosopher a kind of magic number corresponding to the number of concepts they created or transformed (a philosophical analogue, perhaps, to Erdos numbers in mathematics).[25] From this point of view, Descartes' *cogito* and Plato's Idea would have philosophical parallels to Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa or Michelangelo's Last judgement – the great philosophical masterpieces, signed by their creators.

Second, Deleuze's definition of philosophy as the creation of concepts not only implies that philosophers are as creative as artists; more

[22] *WP*, p. 7.

[23] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (London: Athlone Press, 1990), p. 70, herafter *LS*.

[24] Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (Columbia University Press, 1991), p. ix.

[25] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, H.

importantly, perhaps, it also implies that artists are as much thinkers as are philosophers – they simply think in terms of percepts and affects rather than concepts: painters think in terms of lines and colors, just as musicians think in sounds, writers think in words, filmmakers think in images, and so on. Jean-Luc Godard, for instance, once said that, in filmmaking, the decision to use a tracking shot rather than a panoramic shot was a profound activity of thought, since each type of shot produces a different type of space: panoramic shots are encompassing, giving us a global vision, as in projective geometry; whereas tracking shots construct a line, and link up local spaces and neighborhoods that in themselves can remain fragmentary and disconnected, more like Riemannian geometry.[26] The idea that thought is necessarily propositional, or representational, or linguistic, or even conceptual is completely foreign to Deleuze.[27] 'There are other ways thinking and creating, other modes of ideation that, like scientific thought, do not have to pass through concepts.'[28] When sculptors mold a piece of clay, or painters apply colors or lines to a canvas, or filmmakers set up a shot, there is a process of thought involved; but that process of thought does not take place in a conceptual medium, nor even through the application of concepts to a sensible medium (Kant). Rather, it is a type of thinking that takes place directly in and through the sensible medium itself.

A third consequence follows from this. Neither of these activities – art or philosophy – has any priority over the other. Creating a concept is neither more difficult nor more abstract than creating new percepts or affects in art; conversely, it is no easier to comprehend an image, painting or novel than it is to comprehend a concept. Philosophy, for Deleuze, can never be undertaken independently of art (or science, or politics, or medicine, and so on), and is constantly forming relations of mutual resonance and exchange with these other areas of thought. Philosophers can create concepts about art, just as artists and authors can create in conjunction with philosophical concepts – as, for instance, in so-called conceptual art. This is why Deleuze could constantly insist that, when he wrote on the arts, or on science, or on medicine, or on

[26] Deleuze, *Negotiations*, p. 58.

[27] See Deleuze's article, 'What is the Creative Act?' (*TRM*, pp. 312-24), which was originally presented as a lecture to the Fémis film school in Paris under the title, 'Having an Idea in Cinema.'

[28] *WP*, p. 8.

psychiatry, he did so *as a philosopher*, and that his writings in all these domains must be read as works of 'philosophy, nothing but philosophy, in the traditional sense of the word.'[29] In his studies of the arts, Deleuze's aim, as a philosopher, was to *create the concepts* that correspond to the sensible aggregates created by artists or authors. In his book *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze creates a series of philosophical concepts, each of which, he says, relates to a particular aspect of Bacon's paintings, but which also find a place in 'a general logic of sensation.'[30] In a similar manner, Deleuze insisted that his two-volume *Cinema* book can be read as 'a book of logic, a logic of the cinema' that sets out 'to isolate certain cinematographic concepts', concepts which are specific to the cinema, but which can only be formed philosophically.[31]

These three rubrics encapsulate, in summary form, Deleuze's characterization of the relationship between philosophy and art – or more generally, between philosophy and the act of creation: philosophers are as creative as artists (philosophers create concepts); artists and authors are as much thinkers as are philosophers (they simply think in a non-conceptual material or matter); and neither activity of creation has any priority whatsoever over the other. Some readers of *What is Philosophy?* have nonetheless expressed surprise at Deleuze's somewhat curt allocation of separate tasks to philosophy (creating concepts), art (creating affects and percepts), and science (creating functions). But Deleuze here is following the same semi-Bergsonian procedure he adopted in his earlier works. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson attempted to analyze what he called *pure perception* and *pure memory*, even though experience always presents us with mixtures of the two: the concepts allow us to isolate tendencies that remain mixed in experience. Likewise, when Deleuze distinguishes between active and reactive modes of existence in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, or different social formations ('primitive' societies, states, capitalism) in *Anti-Oedipus*, or different kinds of images in *Cinema*, he always presents them as isolatable *types* that can be

[29] *TRM* p. 176, translation modified. See Gilles Deleuze, '8 ans après: Entretien 1980' (interview with Catherine Clément), *L'arc* 49 (rev. ed., 1980), special issue on Deleuze, p. 99.

[30] For an analysis of the concepts Deleuze creates in his *Francis Bacon*, see Daniel W. Smith, 'Deleuze on Bacon: Three Conceptual Trajectories in *The Logic of Sensation*', translator's introduction to *The Logic of Sensation*, pp. vii-xxxiii.

[31] Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London: Verso, 1998), pp. ix, hereafter *ECC*; *Negotiations*, p. 47.

used to disentangle the mixtures presented in experience.[32] 'To extract the concepts which correspond to a multiplicity is to trace the lines of which it is made up, to determine the nature of these lines, to see how they become entangled, connect, bifurcate... What we call a 'map', or sometimes a 'diagram', is a set of interacting lines.'[33]

Deleuze utilizes the same approach in *What is Philosophy?* The significance of the distinctions Deleuze establishes between philosophy, art, and science is primarily that they provide a point of reference from which to assess and explore the resonances and exchanges – the becomings – that take place *between* these three domains (as well as medicine, politics, psychiatry, and so on). Concepts, for instance, are necessarily inseparable from affects and percepts: they make us perceive things differently (percept) and they inspire new modes of feeling in us (affect), thereby modifying, as Spinoza would say, our power of existing.[34] A concept that would be purely intelligible, and did not produce new affects and percepts, would be an empty concept. Conversely, Deleuze was acutely aware of 'the dangers of citing scientific propositions outside their own sphere', which are the dangers of 'applying' scientific concepts in other domains, or else utilizing them metaphorically and hence arbitrarily. 'But perhaps these dangers can be averted', Deleuze concluded, 'if we restrict ourselves to taking from scientific operators a particular conceptualizable character which itself refers to non-scientific areas, and converges with science without applying it or making it a metaphor.'[35]

[32] For an analysis of the relation between Deleuze's treatment of concepts in *What is Philosophy?* and the treatments of social assemblages in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, see Craig Lundy, *History and Becoming* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

[33] *Dialogues*, p. viii; *Negotiations*, p. 33.

[34] webdeleuze.com, Image Mouvement, Image Temps, 13 Dec 1983.

[35] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 125. In this essay, I have left to the side Deleuze and Guattari's treatment of science, which nonetheless seems to have gone through a certain evolution. In 1983, Deleuze noted in a seminar, simply, that 'concepts can be of different types, they can be scientific, they can be philosophical' (13 Dec 1983). By May 1984, however, Deleuze was clearly seeking to distinguish science from philosophy, defining the former as a 'system of operators' – although Deleuze immediately added that the notion of an *operateur* could function as a definition of science only if one was capable of answering the question, 'What are the differences between mathematical operators, physical operators, and chemical operators?' (29 May 1984). Deleuze would make use of the term *operateur* in the 1985 *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* as well (p. 125). In the same seminar, Deleuze defined art as the creative activity that consists in creating 'characters' [*personages*], as if he had not yet clearly disengaged the notion of 'conceptual personae', which, in *What is Philosophy?*, serves as a condition for the philosophical creation of concepts. The definition of science in terms of *functions*, in *What is Philosophy?* (1991), thus seems to have been a rather late formulation, itself the result of a series of experimentations and becomings.

In both these instances, Deleuze is exploring the nature of the interrelations between separable domains: as always, Deleuze's analyses are primarily focused on difference – on the in-between, the middle, the relational, the interstitial.

Concept Creation and Philosophy: 'Vital' Concepts as Singularities

Deleuze seems to have intended his theory of concepts to apply specifically to *philosophical* concepts – the concepts created by philosophers – rather than to everyday concepts of recognition, such as chairs or pearls. 'As Michaux says, what suffices for 'current ideas' does not suffice for 'vital ideas' – those that must be created'.[36] An example of a 'vital' concept – a concept that had to be created – is the concept of the 'Baroque', the components of which Deleuze analyzes in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*.[37] 'It is strange to deny the existence of the Baroque in the way one denies unicorns or pink elephants', Deleuze writes, 'for in these cases the concept is given, whereas in the case of the Baroque it is a question of knowing if one can invent a concept capable (or not) of giving it an existence. Irregular pearls exist, but the Baroque has no reason to exist without a concept that forms this very reason'.[38] In other words, vital concepts like the 'Baroque' *create* their corresponding object, since the object does not pre-exist the formation of the concept. In being created, a concept posits itself and posits its object at one and the same time; the concept, in other words, is *self-referential*.[39] This is not true of the concepts of ordinary language, which are used to *denote* already-constituted objects or classes of objects. This is why Deleuze considered concepts to be multiplicities or manifolds: metric spaces are determined by coordinates external to the space, such as Cartesian coordinates, whereas non-metric spaces have internal metrics, which mark out their internal transformations, mutations, and passages (in Whitehead's sense of a 'passage of Nature').[40]

[36] *WP*, p. 207.

[37] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (London: Continuum, 2006).

[38] Ibid. p. 37.

[39] *WP*, p. 22.

[40] See Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), p. 54: 'I am in full accord with Bergson, though he uses "time" for the fundamental fact which I call the "passage of nature".'

But this seems to imply that philosophy is not the only milieu of concept creation. The puzzle that Heinrich Wölfflin addressed in his *Principles of Art History*, for instance, is the fact that all the works of art produced during the Baroque period look like... Baroque works of art. But the Baroque, as a style, does not exist apart from its concept, and what Wölfflin attempted to do in his art history 'without names' (contra Vasari) was to isolate the components of the concepts of Classic art and Baroque art in the service of a broader history of modes of vision: the linear versus the painterly, plane versus recession, closed versus open form, clarity versus chiaroscuro, and multiplicity versus unity.[41] Though Deleuze breaks with aspects of Wölfflin's analyses – notably by insisting that the *fold* is a fundamental component of the concept of the Baroque – one can nonetheless see in Wölfflin's pioneering work a vast effort at concept creation.[42] A similar creation of concepts takes place in medicine. If conditions such as Parkinson's disease or Asperger's syndrome are named after doctors rather than patients, it is because the physicians were able to 'isolate' the disease by constructing an original clinical concept for it. The components of the concept are the *symptoms*, the signs of the illness, and the concept becomes the name of a *syndrome*, which marks the meeting place of these symptoms, their point of coincidence or convergence.[43] 'I would never have permitted myself to write on psychoanalysis and psychiatry', Deleuze once admitted, 'were I not dealing with a problem of symptomatology. Symptomatology is situated almost outside of medicine, at a neutral point, a zero point, where artists and philosophers and doctors and patients can encounter each other'.[44] In this context, Arnold Davidson, in his work on the emergence of the concept of sexuality, has shown that, strictly speaking, there were no perverts or homosexuals prior to the

[41] Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art* (1915), trans. M. D. Hottinger, from the 7th German edition (1929) (New York: Dover, 1932). Wilhelm Worringer would later undertake a similar conceptual analysis of the concept of the Gothic, which Deleuze appeals to frequently. See Wilhelm Worringer, *Form in Gothic* (1911), ed. Herbert Read (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), as well as *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (1908), trans. Michael Bullock (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1997).

[42] For a penetrating analysis of Wölfflin's work along these lines, see Arnold I. Davidson, 'Styles of Reasoning: From the History of Art to the Epistemology of Science', in *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 125-141.

[43] Gilles Deleuze, 'Coldness and Cruelty' in *Masochism* (Zone Books, 1989), pp. 15-16.

[44] Deleuze, *Desert Islands*, p. 134.

nineteenth century – as opposed to, say, pederasts or sodomites – precisely because their concept had not yet been formulated.[45] Similarly, Ian Hacking has shown how, particularly in the human sciences, the creation of concepts such as multiple personality can have the effect of 'making up people', creating phenomena, or making possible new modes of existence.[46] Concept creation, in short, does not seem to be the exclusive purview of philosophy. Although Deleuze occasionally speaks in this manner, he nonetheless writes, 'as long as there is a time and place for creating concepts, the operation that undertakes this will always be called philosophy, or will be indistinguishable from philosophy *even if it is called something else*'.[47]

What is important about concept creation, in other words, is less its specific relation to philosophy than the fact that created concepts – 'vital' concepts – in whatever domain they are created, must be understood as *singularities* (or rather, as sets of singularities, or multiplicities). 'There are two kinds of concepts', Deleuze notes, 'universals and singularities... The first principle of philosophy is that universals explain nothing, but must themselves be explained... Concepts are not universals, but sets of singularities that are extended into the neighborhood of other singularities.'[48] But what does it mean to consider a concept as a set of singularities? Deleuze frequently appeals to a distinction Lévi-Strauss made between two types of propositions: only similar things can differ from each other, and only differences can resemble each other.[49] In the first, resemblance between things is primary; in the

[45] Arnold I. Davidson, 'Closing Up the Corpses: Diseases of Sexuality and the Emergence of the Psychiatric Style of Reasoning' and 'Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality', in *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 1-65. See also David Halperin's now-classic analysis, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality: And Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

[46] See, in general, Ian Hacking, 'Making Up People', *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 99-114; and 'Biopower and the Avalanche of Printed Numbers', *Humanities in Society* 5 (1982), pp. 279-95. For Hacking's analysis of specific concepts and their corresponding modes of existence, see: (1) on *multiple personality*: 'The Invention of Split Personalities', in *Human Nature and Natural Knowledge*, ed. Alan Donagan, Anthony N. Perovich, Jr., and Michael V. Wedlin (Dordrecht: Springer, 1986), pp. 63-85; (2) on *child abuse*: 'The Making and Molding of Child Abuse', *Critical Inquiry* 17 (Winter 1991), pp. 253-88; and (3) on *autism*:'What is Tom Saying to Maureen', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 28, No. 9 (May 2006), pp. 3-7.

[47] *WP*, p. 9.

[48] *Negotiations*, pp. 156-7; *WP*, p. 7.

[49] See *Negotiations*, p. 156; *LS*, pp. 261-2; *DR*, p. 116. These texts are all referring to Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham (Boston: MA: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 77: 'It is not the resemblance, but the differences, which resemble each other.'

second, things themselves differ, and they differ first of all from themselves (internal difference). The first proposition posits resemblance as a condition of difference, and requires the postulation of an identical or universal concept (such as redness) for two things that differ from each other. According to the second proposition, resemblance or even identity are the effects of a primary difference or a system of differences. The concept of a *straight line* is a universal, because all straight lines resemble each other, and the concept can be defined axiomatically, as in Euclid. The concept of the *fold*, by contrast, is a singularity, because folds vary, and every fold is different: all folding proceeds by differentiation. No two things are folded in the same way – no two rocks, no two pieces of paper – nor is there a general rule saying that the same thing will always fold in the same way. In this sense, there are folds everywhere, but the fold is not a universal; rather, it is a 'differentiator', a 'differential'. As Deleuze writes, 'it is not at all a matter of bringing things together under one and the same concept [universals], but rather of relating each concept to the variables that determine its mutations [singularities]'.[50] Or again, writing about his own conceptual creations: 'What is interesting about concepts like *desire*, or *machine*, or *assemblage* is that they only have value in their variables and in the maximum of variables which they allow'.[51] What is important about a vital or created concept is not its universality but its internal singularities – the singular points that it connects, the intensive components that it condenses, the becomings and mutations it enters into. This is why the concept of the fold is linked to Lévi-Strauss's second proposition: all folds differ, and this difference is primary; but they are, secondarily, made to resemble each other in the concept. The concept of the fold is a singularity – or more precisely, it is a multiplicity that marks the convergence of a set of singularities, which form the components of the concept – and the concept can only gain terrain by varying within itself, by bifurcating, by metamorphosing. 'One only has to comprehend mountains – and above all, to see and touch mountains – from the viewpoint of their foldings for them to lose their solidity, and for their millennia to once again become what they are: not permanences, but *time in the pure state*.'[52] With this claim that concepts are sets of

[50] *Negotiations*, p. 31.
[51] *Dialogues*, p. 144.
[52] *Negotiations*, p. 157.

singularities (or multiplicities), we have reached the reason for the incessant 'becoming' of Deleuze's concepts: the aim of Deleuze's analytic of concepts is to introduce *the pure form of time* into concepts, in the form of what he calls 'continuous variation' or 'pure variability'. 'The aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (creativeness).'[53]

From Originary Time to Ordinary Time

But what does it mean to introduce time into concepts? To answer this, we must take a short detour through Deleuze's philosophy of time. More specifically, we need to understand what Deleuze means when he refers to the *pure and empty form of time* – a phrase that recurs frequently throughout his writings.[54] According to Deleuze, the modern mutation in our conception of time occurred with Kant: in Kant's work, time assumed an independence and autonomy of its own for the first time. Before that, from antiquity through the seventeenth-century, time had been subordinate to movement: time was the measure or 'number' of movement. Since the plurality of movements implied a plurality of times, the ancients were led to ask the question: Is there something immobile, outside of movement – or at least a most perfect movement – around which all other movements could be measured, a great celestial schema, or what Leibniz would call a kind of 'metaschematism'? Is there a movement of movements in relation to which all other movements can be coordinated? Since there were two major types of movement – the extensive movement of the cosmos, and the intensive movement of the soul – this question wound up being answered in two different ways. In the *Timaeus*, for instance, Plato sought to incorporate the movements of cosmos into a vision of a 'planetarium' comprised of eight globes, with the immobile earth at the center, surrounded by a sphere of 'the fixed' (the stars) turning on its axis, with seven globes in between (the planets) turning in a reverse direction. These revolving globes start from an initial position, and eventually return to the same position: a

[53] *Dialogues*, p. vii.
[54] For a comprehensive analysis of Deleuze's concept of time, which we are merely summarizing here, see James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011). Williams focuses primarily on *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense* rather than the analyses of time presented in the *Cinema* books (see pp. 159-64), although the later works seem to expand on Deleuze's earlier discussions of time in crucial ways.

great year or circuit of the 'eternal return' which, by some calculations, was thought to last ten thousand years. It was precisely this movement of movements that provided a reference point by which all other movements were to be measured: an invariant, a permanence. Time, in this manner, was subordinated to eternity, to the non-temporal, to the non-tensed: in Plato's apt formula, time was 'the moving image of eternity'.[55] Similarly, Plotinus incorporated the intensive movement of the soul into the movement of the One, with its emanative processes of procession and conversion.[56] In both cases, the result was a hierarchization of movements depending on their proximity to or distance from the eternal: an *originary time* marked by privileged positions in the cosmos or privileged moments in the soul. The discovery of this invariant was the discovery of the true: the form of the true was that which was universal and necessary, *in all times and in all places*. This conception of time as the measure of movement remains ensconced in our common chronological 'clock' time: days, months, and years measure terrestrial, lunar, and solar movements, while weeks and hours are primarily religious determinations of the soul (God rested on the seventh day); and our watches and clocks remain dependent on movement, whether that of a pendulum or a quartz crystal. Modernity no less than antiquity remains engaged in a vast effort to render both time and movement homogeneous and uniform (time tables, time zones, the global positioning system).

Nonetheless, the Kantian revolution was prepared for by the fact that both these domains – the cosmos and the soul – were haunted by fundamental *aberrations* of movement, where a *derived time* increasingly tended to free itself from the posited originary time. The closer one came to the earth (the 'sublunar'), the more the movements of the cosmos tended to become increasingly anomalous: the unpredictability of meterological movements, the movement of everything that comes-to-be and passes-away. (As Michel Serres notes, 'scientists can predict the time of an eclipse, but they cannot predict whether they will be able to see it.' It is not by chance that, in French and many Latin languages,

[55]Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d. Aristotle's definition is similarly indexed on movement: 'time is the number of motion in respect of before and after' (*Physics*, 219b2).

[56]Deleuze discusses the conceptions of time in Plato and Plotinus, see the series of seminars from 7 February 1984 to 27 March 1984. Descartes's modern solution to the same problem was to conserve something invariant 'in' movement, namely, the quantity of movement, mv, the product of mass times velocity.

the same word is used for time and weather – *le temps* – with its various cognates: *temperature, tempest, temperate, temperament, intemperate, temper*).[57] Does the sublunary world obey the metaschematism, with its proportional rules, or does it enjoy an independence from it, with its own anomalous movements and disharmonies? The Pythagorean discovery of irrational numbers had already pointed to a fundamental incommensurability between the speed and position of the various cosmic spheres. In short, the invariant provided by the 'movement of movements' was threatened by *crises* when movement became increasingly aberrant. Similarly, the intensive movement of the soul became marked by a *fear* that its restless movements in derived time would take on an independence of their own, and would cease to be submitted to the originary time of the One or God (the Fall). The search for 'universals' in philosophy is, in a sense, a remnant of this fear: the very term is derived from the Latin word *1*).

However, these aberrant or derived movements – marked by meterological, terrestrial, and spiritual contingencies – remained a downward tendency that still depended on the adventures of movement. They too posed a problem, a choice: either one could try to 'save' the primacy of movement (saving the appearances), or one could not only accept but *will* the liberation of time with regard to movement. There were two ways in which movement could be saved. The extensive harmony of the world could be saved by an appeal to the rhythms of *rural time*, with the seasons and harvests as privileged points of reference in the originary time of Nature. The intensive harmony of the soul could be saved by an appeal to *monastic time*, with its privileged moments of prayers and vespers; or more generally, by an appeal to an originary spiritual life of interiority (Luther). By contrast, the liberation of time would take place in the city, an 'enemy' that was nonetheless engendered by both the rural communities and monasteries themselves. The time of the city is neither a rural life nor a spiritual life, but the time of everyday life: there is no longer either an originary time or a derived time, but only an *ordinary time*. The sources of this liberation of time were multiple, having roots in the Reformation as well as the development of capitalism. Max Weber, for instance, showed that the Reformation became

[57]See Michel Serres, *The Birth of Physics*, trans. Jack Hawkes, ed. David Webb (Manchester: Clinamen, 2000), p. 67; and Michel Serres, *Atlas* (Paris: Julliard, 1994), p. 100.

conscious of this liberation of time by joining together the two ideas of a 'profession' – the profession of faith and one's professional activity – so that mundane professions like that of a cobbler were deemed to be as dignified as any sacred calling. Unlike the monk, whose duty was to be otherworldly, denying the self and the world, the fulfillment of one's duty in worldly affairs became the highest form that the moral activity of individuals could take. There was only one time – everyday time – and it is in this time that we would now find our salvation.[58] Likewise, Marx showed that this vision of *temporal activity* ('What do you do with your time?'), which is no longer grounded in a cosmic rhythm or a spiritual harmony, would eventually find its new model in the 'abstract' time of capitalism, which replaced the privileged moments of agricultural work with the any-instant-whatever [*l'instant quelconque*] of mechanized work. Time became money, the form under which money produces money (usery or credit); and money itself became 'the course of time': the abstract time of capitalism became the concrete time of the city.[59] It was Heidegger who would ultimately produce a prodigious philosophical concept of the everyday and its relation to time, though he still maintained the old distinction between an originary (authentic) and a derived (inauthentic) time.

For Deleuze, the result of the liberation of time will be a fundamental change in the relationship of philosophy to the thought of everyday life (opinion). Through the seventeenth-century, one could say that, philosophically, everyday life was suspended in order to accede to something that was not everyday, namely, a meditation on the eternal. The ordinary time of urban everydayness, by contrast, would no longer be related to the eternal, but to something very different, namely, *the production of the new.* Given the flow of average everydayness, I can either raise myself vertically toward the transcendent or the eternal, at least on Sundays (or Saturdays, or Fridays), through understanding or faith; or I can remain at the horizontal flow of everydayness, in which temporality tends toward the new rather than the eternal. The production of the new will be the correlate of ordinary time in exactly the same way that the discovery of the true was the correlate of originary time with the ancients. The aim of philosophy will no longer be to *discover* pre-

[58]See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1905]; *and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), as well as Deleuze, 27 Mar 1984.

[59]Deleuze, 7 Feb 1984.

existent truths outside of time, but to *create* non-preexisting concepts within time.[60]

The Pure and Empty Form of Time

If Kant was the first to give a philosophical expression to this new conception of time, it is because he freed time entirely from its subordination to movement, and rendered it independent and autonomous.[61] Kant drew the necessary consequences from the cosmological and psychological anomalies of movement: he freed time entirely from cosmology and psychology, as well as the eternal. In Kant, the Self, the World, and God are all shown to be transcendent illusions of reason that are derived from our new position in time. Time ceases to be the number of movement, and no longer depends on anything but itself; time no longer measures movement, but movement itself (whether originary or derived, anomalous or aberrant) now takes places within time. The reversal can be seen in the opening pages of the *Critique of Pure Reason.* Before Kant, time had largely been defined by succession, space by coexistence, and eternity by permanence.[62] In Kant, succession, simultaneity, and permanence are all shown to be *modes* or *relations* of time: succession is the rule of what is in different times; simultaneity is the rule of what is at the same time; and permanence in the rule of what is for all times. Put differently, succession (series) is the synthetic relation between the parts of time, simultaneity (set) is the synthetic relation between the contents of time, and what is permanent (duration) is something that endures in time by passing through successive states and possessing simultaneous states. In Kant, the self becomes a temporal entity that

[60]For Deleuze's elucidation of these themes, see 17 Apr 1984 and 4 May 1984. See also *TRM*, p. 238: 'Philosophy creates concepts, which are neither generalities nor even truths; they are rather of the order of the Singular, the Important, the New.'

[61]One of the themes of Deleuze's two-volume *Cinema* is that the cinema, in its much shorter history, nonetheless recapitulated this philosophical revolution in the movement-time relation. For a useful summary of this revolution in the concept of time, albeit from a slightly different perspective than Deleuze's, see John Dewey, 'Time and Individuality' (1940), in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 1., *Pragmatism, Education, democracy*, ed. Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 217-26.

[62]See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence*, ed. H. G. Alexander (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), p. 15: 'As for my own opinion, I have said more than once that I hold space to be something purely relative, as time is – that I hold it to be an order of coexistences, as time is an order of successions. For space denotes, in terms of possibility, an order of things that exist at the same time, considered as existing together, without entering into their particular manners of existing. And when many things are seen together, one consciously perceives this order of things among themselves.'

endures in time (permanence), that has intensive states (simultaneity), and that passes from one extensive state to another (succession). This is what Deleuze means, then, when he says that Kant reconceived time as a *pure and empty form*: time is an empty form that is no longer dependent on either extensive or intensive movement; instead, time has become the pure and immutable form of everything that moves and changes – not an eternal form, but precisely the form of what is *not* eternal.[63] Yet time itself is neither succession, nor simultaneity, nor permanence, since time cannot be reduced to any of its modes, or to what takes place within time (its content). We cannot even say that the immutable form of time is permanent, since what is permanent – no less than what is successive or simultaneous – appears and is perceived in time, whereas the immutable form of time itself cannot be perceived. As the pure form of change, time itself is defined by its infinite variability, and the definition of *chaos* that Deleuze gives in *What is Philosophy?* is itself a description of the pure form of time: 'Chaos is characterized less by the absence of determinations than by the infinite speed with which they take shape and vanish.'[64] In other words, within the manifold of time, chaos is defined by the lack of any synthesis or rhythm between these determinations, 'which spring up only to disappear immediately, without consistency or reference, without consequence'.[65]

If there is any salvation within this pure and empty form of time – time rendered ordinary – it takes place, in Kant, through the activity of *synthesis*, which is a process brought to bear, not on time itself, but on the modes of time, in order to render both being and knowledge possible.[66] Under the aspect of succession, what appears in time is a multiplicity of parts, which must be synthesized by the subject in an *apprehension* that fixes them in an ever-variable present. Under the aspect of simultaneity, moreover, I must not only apprehend parts in order for knowledge to be possible, but I must also *reproduce* the past parts, that is, I must remember the preceding parts in time and synthesize or 'contract' them with the present parts. Under the aspect of

[63] *ECC*, p. 29.

[64] *WP*, p. 42; *DR*, p. 28.

[65] *WP*, p. 118.

[66] Deleuze insists that it is important not to confuse the synthesis of time with time itself. Martin Heidegger, in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), reintroduced an originary time because he wrongly considered the synthesis of time to be an originary time. See Deleuze's critique in 17 April 1984.

permanence, finally, I can synthesize the apprehended present and the previous reproduced presents with the permanence of something that endures in time, which is related to a concept in an act of *recognition* ('so it's a table'). Readers of *Difference and Repetition* – notably in the third chapter on repetition – will recognize the ways in which Deleuze modifies the Kantian analysis of synthesis in the direction of a concept of *passive syntheses*.[67] The first synthesis (present) is reformulated into the passive organic and corporeal syntheses (habit) that make any receptivity, in Kant's sense, possible. The second synthesis (past), following Bergson, posits the need for a concept of the 'pure' past, without which the passing of time would be impossible. And the third synthesis (future), rather than appealing to *recognition*, instead is the condition for the production of the *new*. 'The more we study the nature of time', Bergson would later write, 'the more we shall comprehend that duration means invention, the creation of forms, the continual elaboration of the absolutely new.'[68] The production of the new – including the activities of creation found in philosophy, science, and art – is the direct consequence of this liberation of time. Though the term rarely appears in the text, *What is Philosophy?* is a book on time, or more precisely, a study of the determinations of thought that take place within the pure form of time. What Hume called the association of ideas (resemblance, contiguity, causality) links together our ideas in time with a minimum of constant rules, thereby forming a realm of *opinion* that protects us from chaos. But philosophy, science, and art do more than this, and Deleuze describes their respective activities using his own (created) vocabulary: from the infinite *variability* of time, philosophers extract *variations* that converge as the components of a consistent concept; scientists extract *variables* that enter into determinable relations in a function; and artists extract *varieties* that enter into the composition of a being of sensation.[69]

[67] For the *active syntheses* of the transcendental ego found in Kant, Deleuze substitutes a theory of *passive synthesis*, derived in part from Husserl. Joe Hughes provides an insightful analysis of the concept of passive synthesis in *Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation* (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), esp. pp. 8-19. See also Keith Faulkner, *Deleuze and the Three Synthesis of Time* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

[68] Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), p. 13.

[69] *WP*, p. 202.

A New Analytic of Concepts

The new analytic of concepts presented in *What is Philosophy?* is an attempt to insert the form of time into philosophical concepts, assigning them a synthetic structure that is differential and temporal. While concepts have no identity, they must have a *consistency*, but this consistency must have as its necessary complement the internal *variability* of the concept.[70] Deleuze analyzes these two temporal aspects of concepts under the rubrics of exo-consistency and endo-consistency. For Deleuze, no concept is ever simple: not only does it link up with other concepts (exo-consistency), but each concept also has its own internal components (endo-consistency), which in turn can themselves be considered as concepts. Descartes' concept of the *cogito*, for instance, can be said to have three components, namely, thinking, doubting, and being: 'I (who doubt) think, and therefore I am (a thinking being).' A concept is therefore always a multiplicity: it is composed of a finite number of distinct, heterogeneous, and nonetheless inseparable components or variations; the concept itself is the point of coincidence, condensation, or accumulation of these component elements, which it renders consistent *in itself*; and this internal consistency in turn is defined by the zones of neighborhood [*voisinage*] or indiscernability that it creates between these components. But like a hypertext, the concept of the *cogito* is an open-ended multiplicity that contains the potential for bridges that provide links or crossroads to other Cartesian concepts.[71] The idea of infinity is the bridge leading from the concept of *cogito* to the concept of God, a new concept that has three components forming the 'proofs' for the existence of God. In turn, the third proof (ontological) assures the closure of the concept but also throws out a new bridge or branches off to a concept of extended being, insofar as the concept of God guarantees the objective truth value of our other clear and distinct ideas.

This exo-consistency of concepts extends to the history of philosophy as well. When Kant later criticized the Cartesian *cogito*, he did so in the name of a new problematic field: Descartes could not say under what form the 'I think' is capable of determining the 'I am', and this determinable form, Kant argued, is precisely the form of time. In this way, Kant introduced a new component into the Cartesian *cogito*. Yet to say that Kant 'criticized' Descartes is simply to say that Kant constructed a problem that could not be occupied or completed by the Cartesian *cogito*. Descartes created the concept of the cogito, but he expelled time from it as a form of *anteriority*, making it a simple mode of succession sustained by a continuous divine creation. If Kant introduced time as a new component of the *cogito*, he did so on the condition of *creating a new concept* of time: time now becomes a form of *interiority* with its own internal components (succession, but also simultaneity and permanence). Similarly, to ask if there are precursors to the cogito – for instance, in Augustine – is to ask: 'Are there concepts signed by previous philosophers that have similar or almost identical components, but from which one component is lacking, or to which others have been added, so that a cogito does not crystallize, since the components do not yet coincide in a self?'[72] Concepts, in short, possess an *internal* history, a potential for transmutation into other concepts, which constitutes what Deleuze likes to call the 'plane of immanence' of philosophy.

> Creating concepts is constructing some area in the plane, adding a new area to existing ones, exploring a new area, filling in what's missing. Concepts are composites, amalgams of lines, curves. If new concepts have to be brought in all the time, it's just because the plane of immanence has to be constructed area by area, constructed locally, going from one point to the next.[73]

It is precisely through this kind of analysis that one can account for the various kinds of conceptual becomings that one finds in Deleuze's own work, and the transformations he himself introduced into concepts drawn from the history of philosophy. 'The history of philosophy', Deleuze writes, 'means that we evaluate not only the historical novelty of the concepts created by the philosopher, but also the power of their becoming when they pass into one another'.[74]

A complete study of Deleuze's analytic of concepts would have to examine the way the form of time permeates the other aspects of Deleuze's analyses. Concepts, for instance, are never created willy-nilly, but always as the function of a *problem*, and the analytic of concepts developed

[70] Bellour nicely summarizes the tension inherent in Deleuze's analytic when he asks: 'How can the concept be both what suspends, arrests, consists, and what flees, opens all lines of flight?' See Raymond Bellour, 'Thinking, Recounting: The Cinema of Gilles Deleuze', trans. Melissa McMahon, *Discourse*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 56-75 (p. 71).

[71] Paul Patton makes the comparison between Deleuzian concepts and hypertext documents in his review of *What is Philosophy?* in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 23 June 1995, pp. 10-12.

[72] *WP*, p. 26.

[73] *Negotiations*, p. 147.

[74] *WP*, p. 32.

in *What is Philosophy?* finds its necessary correlate in the dialectic of problems formulated in *Difference and Repetition*. Deleuze considered himself to be a 'pure metaphysician', but his fundamental metaphysical position is that Being is a problem: Being always presents itself under a problematic form, as a series of problematizations that are themselves temporal.[75] One might say that Plato invents the concept of the Idea in response to the problem of rivalry in the Greek cities (Socrates contra the Sophists), Descartes creates the *cogito* in response to the problem of absolute subjective certainty, and Leibniz formulates a whole series of hallucinatory concepts – expression, perspective, compossibility, harmony – in response to the problem of sufficient reason: everything has a reason, everything *has to* have a reason. Philosophy is the creation of concepts, but the creation of concepts has as its condition the construction of a problem or problems, which are themselves temporal. To 'problematize' a concept thus does not only mean that one places it in question; it means that one seeks to determine the nature of the problem to which it serves as a solution. While it is relatively easy to define the true and the false in relation to solutions whose problems are already stated, it is much more difficult to distinguish between well-posed and badly-posed problems, which is why philosophy has often taken the form of a critique of false problems.[76] Kant criticized the concepts of the Soul, the World, and God for being derived from 'problems without solution.'[77] Bergson similarly argued that questions such as 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' or 'Why is there disorder rather than order?' or 'Why is there this rather than that (when that was equally possible)?' are false problems derived from a confusion of the more with the less.[78] Wittgenstein even attempted to show that, through an

[75]See Villani, *La guêpe et l'orchidée*, p. 130: 'I feel myself to be Bergsonian, when Bergson says that modern science has not found its metaphysics, the metaphysics it needs. It is this metaphysics that interests me...It is in this manner, it seems to me, that philosophy can be considered as a science: determining the conditions of a problem.' Following Deleuze, Michel Foucault would later take up this concept of 'problematization' in interpreting the course of his own work. See Michel Foucault, 'Polemics, Politics, and Problematizations', in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 381-90.

[76]Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (Zone Books, 1988), pp. 16-17.

[77]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 319, A328/B384: 'The absolute whole of appearances [the World] is only an Idea, since it remains a *problem* to which there is no solution.'

[78]*Bergsonism*, pp. 17-18. See Bergson's classic article 'The Possible and the Real', in Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind,* trans. Mabelle L. Andison (Totowa, New Jersey: Littlefield, Adams &; Co., 1965), pp. 91-106.

analysis of language use, most philosophical problems could in fact be dissolved 'like a lump of sugar in water.'[79] Yet even more difficult than the critique of false or badly-formulated problems, as both Kierkegaard and Whitehead insisted, is the assessment of whether or not a problem is *important* or *interesting*.[80] Henri Poincaré said that, in mathematics, constructing a proof for unimportant problem was worse than discovering a flaw in one's proof for a remarkable problem: the former will remain eternally trivial, while the latter can be corrected and may have already gained important terrain.[81] The truth of a solution, in other words, is less important than the truth or interest of the problem being dealt with (a problem always has the solution it 'deserves'). The same is true in philosophy: one can read pages and pages that are not false, but are without interest or importance. It is true that the problem that animates a philosopher is not always clearly stated: to engage in the history of philosophy is to recover these problems, and thereby to discover what is innovative in the concepts being created. Mediocre histories of philosophy link up concepts as if they go without saying – as if they had not been created – without determining the problems to which they correspond. Similarly, mediocre philosophers are those who create no concepts and instead make use of ready-made notions; they remain in the realm of opinion, ignorant of the problems at issue. Problems in turn are expressed in the form of questions, and Deleuze's early writings are critical of the 'What is...?' form of questioning, as a means of attaining essences, in favor of questions such as Who? Which one? How many? How? Where? When? In which case? From what point of view? 'For a long time, concepts had been used to determine what something *is* (its essence). We, on the contrary, are interested in the circumstances of a thing: in which cases, where and when, how, and so on? For us, a concept should express an event, and no longer an essence.'[82] If one has neither a concept nor a problem, one is not doing

[79]Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951*, ed. James Klagge and Alfred Mordmann (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), p. 193. No doubt this was one reason Deleuze was not sympathetic to Wittgenstein: the dissolution of false problems has as its necessary correlate the construction of true problems.

[80]Kierkegaard argued that the *interesting* is one of the fundamental categories of philosophy. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 109: 'The category I would like to examine a little more closely is that of the *interesting*...'

[81]See *Negotiations*, p. 130: 'Poincaré used to say that many mathematical theories are completely irrelevant, pointless. He didn't say they were wrong – that wouldn't have been so bad.'

[82]*Negotiations*, p. 25. For the idea of a 'philosophy of circumstances', see Michel Serres, *The*

philosophy: one must become an apprentice not only to the creation of concepts but to the constitution of problems and questions.

Moreover, both problems and questions, in turn, presuppose pre-philosophical images of thought, that is, images of what it means to think that pre-exist any particular 'method' of resolving a problem or creating a concept. Borrowing a term coined by Bakhtin, Deleuze suggests that every explicit method in philosophy envelopes an implicit 'chronotope' of thought, that is, a noetic landscape of space-time with its own geography, inhabited by what Deleuze would come to call a *conceptual persona*, a 'somewhat mysterious' notion that appears in Deleuze's writings for the first time in *What is Philosophy?*.[83] The temporal aspect of thought (the before and after) is the order of reasons that a thinker creates between concepts; the spatial aspect is its distribution of aims, means, and obstacles. But the conceptual character of philosophers – as opposed to their psycho-social or historical character – is an internal condition for the production of their concepts: it concerns 'that which belongs by right to thought and only to thought', even if it remains inseparable from empirical, psychological, and social determinations.[84] To give a simple example: one could say that Plato, Descartes, and Kant all shared the same aim – the truth – but they inhabited the problem of truth through different conceptual characters. If Plato wanted to find the truth, for instance, if he wanted to find the intelligible essence behind appearances (the Idea), it is because he did not want to be deceived by the false claimants to truth that he found in the Athenian democracy (sophists, rhetoricians, orators, artists). This is the lived problem confronted by his thought: 'I do not want to be deceived.' But when Descartes sought the truth in the *Meditations*, he did so in relation to the different problem of subjective certitude: the senses deceive me, the scholastics deceive me, perhaps God is a malicious demon that deceives me, and in the end it is I who deceive myself and allow myself to be deceived. This is not the same way of posing the problem of truth: it is animated by a different conceptual character ('I do not want to deceive myself'), and it produces a different concept

Five Senses, trans. Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (London: Continuum, 2008), esp. pp. 282-88.

[83] *WP*, p. 61; Mikhail M. Bahktin, 'Forms of Time and of Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 84-258.

[84] *WP*, p. 69.

of truth. What is important to Descartes is that deception and error are themselves modes of thought, and thus the first certitude Descartes finds – the first truth – is the 'I think': even when I am being deceived or am in error, I am still thinking. When Kant in turns says, 'I want the truth', he again means something very different: 'I do not want to deceive.' This entails yet another manner of living the relation to truth. If Plato was marked by the Athenian democracy, Kant was a creature of the Reformation, and had discovered moral rigor. Kant thus subordinated knowledge (speculative reason) to morality (practical reason): morality no longer depends on one's knowledge, as in the virtue of the sage or wise man; rather, knowledge is itself subject to a higher finality, the finality of a moral reason. 'I do not want to deceive' indeed engenders Kant's search for the truth – the operation of knowledge – but it does so by strictly subordinating knowledge to a practical finality. If Kant does not want to deceive, it is because only beings that do not deceive are free, or can even claim to be free. In Kant, intelligible nature is no longer found in an essence, as in Plato, but in a community of moral beings, the kingdom of ends. In short, the concepts created by Plato, Descartes, and Kant fill a noetic space-time following a temporal order of reasons and a spatial order of aims, means and obstacles, but each of them refer to a prior image of thought inhabited by very different conceptual personae, which can be summarized in the cries, 'I do not want to be deceived', 'I do not want to deceive myself', and 'I do not want to deceive.' The differing methods of the three philosophers – dialectic, analytic, transcendental – are derived from these images, which preexist any explicit methodology.

The Power of the False

Deleuze's analytic of concepts, in other words, not only introduces time into concepts, but also into the construction of problems and questions, as well as the transformation of images of thought and the conceptual characters that inhabit them. Indeed, one of the most significant implications of Deleuze's analyses is that the form of time places the concept of truth in crisis. Philosophers tend to speak of the true with a reverence once reserved for the divine, as if its value were unquestioned.[85]

[85] Similarly, one could say that our culture has yet to develop a secularized relation to science; see Serres, *The Five Senses*, pp. 334-5.

Yet truth is itself a concept, with its own becoming. Nietzsche seems to have been correct when he said that he was the first see that the concept of truth poses a philosophical problem: 'Let us thus define our own task – the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question*... Suppose we want the truth: Why not rather untruth? Or uncertainty? Or ignorance?... Though it scarcely seems credible, it finally almost seems to us as if the problem had never even been put so far – as if we were the first to see it, fix our eyes on it, and *risk* it. For it does involve a risk, and perhaps there is none that is greater.[86] Deleuze's thesis is that the concept of truth enters into crisis when it confronts the form of time: the *form of the true* gives way to the *power of the false*. Speaking in general terms, the true is not the same thing as the real; it is rather the distinction between the real and the imaginary (or between essence and appearance). The false is not the imaginary; it is rather the confusion of the imaginary with the real (or of the apparent with the essential). What we call error is the act that consists of making this confusion: the false is effectuated in error, which confuses the imaginary and the real.[87] How then do we distinguish the false from the true? Only the true has a *form* (*eidos*); the false has no form, and error consists in giving the false the form of the true. Since Aristotle, the form of the true has had a precise sense: the universal and the necessary. The true is that which is universal and necessary, always and everywhere, in all times and in all places. This is not a universality of *fact* but a universality of *right*. In fact, it may be that people rarely think, and rarely think the true. But to say that only the true has a form is to insist that, in principle, if you think a triangle, you cannot deny that its three angles are necessarily equal to two right angles. Universality and necessity qualify the *judgments* that are made of the form of the true; since the false has no form, judgments made about it are by right deprived of all universality and necessity. Who then is the truthful person? In classical philosophy, what corresponds to the real in an idea is its power to *represent*, while what corresponds to the imaginary is the capacity of an idea (or image) to produce a *modification* of my body or soul. The former attains to essences, while the latter leaves one mired in appearances, and the anguish of the passions. The truthful person is

[86] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay III, §24, 153.
[87] *DR*, p. 148.

thus someone who would allow their body and soul to be modified only by the form of the true. The activity through which this takes place can be called the *in-formation* of the soul by the true, which takes as its model the Eternal (the universal and the necessary).[88]

If time puts the concept of truth in crisis, it does so not at the level of its content ('truth changes with time'), but rather at the level of its form: the form of time takes the place of the (universal) form of the true. The false is thereby given a *power* of its own: if the false does not have a form, it nonetheless has a power. When does the false take on a power? When it is freed from the model of truth, that is, when the false is no longer presented as being true. What can disengage the concept of the false from the model of truth? The answer is: time. Just as Deleuze attempts to formulate a concept of difference-in-itself, freed from its subordination to the concept of identity, so he attempts to formulate a concept of the false-in-itself, freed from its subordination to the concept of truth (and error). But this in no way implies the banal conclusion that 'everything is false', which would now be presented as a truth: as Nietzsche said, in one of his most profound phrases, in abolishing the true world we have also abolished the false world of appearances.[89] There is no longer either truth or appearance, and the false is no longer presented as being true; instead, the false assumes a power of its own. What then is the 'power' of the false? If the form of the true is derived from the power of *judgement*, the power of the false is a power of metamorphosis, that is, a power of *creation*. Creative of what? At this point, there is no reason not to re-employ the word 'truth'. The power of the false is creative of truth – but this is, precisely, *a new concept of truth*: truth is no longer a timeless universal to be discovered, but a singularity to be created (in time). 'Philosophy creates concepts, which are neither generalities nor even truths; they are rather of the order of the Singular, the Important, the New.[90]

When the form of time is put into the concept, the *falsifier* [*le faussaire*] – that is, the artist, the creator – takes the place of the truthful person. The falsifier is not a liar, since the liar is localizable (the liar

[88] On the concept of information, in this sense, see Gilbert Simondon, *L'individuation à la lumiere des notions de forme et d'information* (Grenoble: Editions Jerone Millon, 2005).
[89] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols*, 'How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable', in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Viking Press, 1954), p. 486.
[90] *TRM*, p. 238.

'owns' his lies), whereas the falsifier is non-localizable: the power of the false exists only under the form of a *series* of powers. To ask 'What is a falsifier?' is a badly-posed question, since the falsifier does not exist apart from an irreducible plurality or multiplicity: behind every falsifier there is only another falsifier (a mask behind every mask). The question becomes: where is one placed within the chain of falsifiers? As Nietzsche showed, the truthful person is himself nothing other than the first power of the false: Plato distinguished between the true world and the apparent world, but to do so he first had to *create* the concept of the Idea. If the power of the false is what Nietzsche called the will to power, one can distinguish two extremes or two powers within this will, namely, the will to *judge* and the will to *create*, and it is the latter that constitutes the higher power. On this score, Deleuze suggests that there have been three great presentations of the theme of the falsifier: in philosophy, the final book of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (the chain of the 'higher' men, each of which corresponds to a power of the false); in literature, Hermann Melville's final masterpiece, *The Confidence Man*; and in cinema, Orson Welles's last film, *F for Fake*.[91] The latter provides an instructive exploration of the difference between the painter Vermeer and Hans van Meegeren, the famous forger of Vermeer's works. How did van Meegeren pass off his forgeries as genuine Vermeers? Precisely because he made use of the criteria of experts, and the expert is someone who *judges*: the expert is able to recognize a true Vermeer by means of criteria he himself has established concerning Vermeer's style and periods. The forger then studies these criteria and uses them to produce the forgery, to the point where the expert will declare, 'This is clearly a genuine Vermeer because it corresponds to all the criteria.' The expert always has a forger within him, since they are both nourished off the same substance: the system of judgement.[92] What then is the difference between Vermeer and his forger? Both the artist and the forger belong to the chain of falsifiers, but Vermeer has a power of metamorphosis, whereas the forger and the expert scarcely know how to change: theirs is already an exhausted life that can do little more than judge the creations of others. The expert and the forger are united in their exaggerated taste for *form* (the form of the true),

[91] See *TI*, pp. 134, 145, as well as 8 Nov 1983 and 12 Jun 1984.
[92] *TI*, p. 146.

but the artist is able to take the power of the false to a higher degree that is realized, not in form, but in *transformation*. It is this same vision that animates Deleuze's conception of philosophy: philosophy is the enterprise of the creation of truth (the creation of concepts), that is, the will to power at its highest degree, which has as its necessary correlate the will 'to have done with judgement'.[93]

The Universal Thought-Flow

There is a final topic to consider, which *What is Philosophy?* hints at but does not discuss in detail. If philosophy is the creation of concepts, what is the process that lies at the *real* genesis of concepts or the *real* origin of thinking? The question of how to 'begin' has always been a delicate question in philosophy, and although Deleuze raises this question in *Difference and Repetition*,[94] we will approach the problem here by considering the following (somewhat obscure) passage from one of Deleuze's seminars on Leibniz:

> What is given, at the limit, could be called a flow [*flux*]. It is flows that are given, and creation consists in cutting, organizing, and connecting flows, in such a manner that a creation is sketched out or made around certain singularities extracted from the flows... Imagine the universal thought flow as a kind of internal monologue, the internal monologue of everyone who thinks... The concept is a system of singularities extracted [*prélevé*] from a thought flow... One can also conceive of a continuous acoustic flow that traverses the world and that even encompasses silence (perhaps that is only an Idea, but it matters little if this Idea is justified). A musician is someone who extracts something from this flow.[95]

Somewhat abruptly, and in a vaguely Spinozistic manner, Deleuze here posits the existence of what he calls the 'universal thought flow', even if its status is simply that of a justifiable Idea: just as we may have an Idea of a continuous flow of matter in the universe, of which we ourselves are modifications, so we can conceive of a continuous flow of thought in the universe, of which we are likewise modifications. 'I maintain', Spinoza similarly wrote, 'that there is in Nature an infinite power of thinking.'[96] The thoughts that come and go in our heads, of

[93] *ECC*, p. 126.
[94] *DR*, p. 129.
[95] Deleuze, 15 Apr 1980.
[96] Spinoza, Letter 32, to Oldenburg, 20 Nov 1665, in *Spinoza: The Complete* Works, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), p. 849.

which we are neither the origin nor the author, are the products of this thought flow. Or more precisely, they are themselves the very movement of this universal flow of thought – a flow that is anonymous, impersonal, and indeterminate, like a continuous internal monologue. Leibniz had already argued, against Descartes, that it is illegitimate to say 'I think, therefore I am', not because 'I am' does not follow from 'I think', but rather because, from the activity of thought, I can never derive an 'I'. At best, Descartes can claim that 'there is thinking' or that 'thought has taken place'.[97] Both Spinoza and Leibniz argued that there is an automatism to thought just as there is a mechanism of the body: we are all 'spiritual automatons' – it is not *we* who think, but rather thought that takes place within us.[98] Nietzsche likewise observed that 'a thought comes when 'it' wants, not when 'I' want',[99] and in one of his notebooks he added:

> A thought... comes up in me – where from? How? I simply don't know. It comes, independently of my will, usually surrounded and obscured by a mass of feelings, desires, aversions, and also other thoughts... One pulls it [the thought] out of this mass, cleans it off, sets it on its feet, and then sees how it stands and how it walks – all of this in an astonishing *presto* and yet without any sense of hurry. Just *who* does all this – I have no idea, and I am surely more a spectator than originator of this process.[100]

What then does it mean to say that a concept is a 'system of singularities extracted [*prélevé*] from a thought flow'? To answer this question, we need to consider what we might call the 'usual' status of the universal thought flow, and Deleuze has formulated a concept to describe it: *stupidity* [*bêtise*]. 'Stupidity is a structure of thought as such.'[101] More to the point, to a certain degree, stupidity is the *basic* structure of the universal thought flow. The thoughts that pass through our mind every day are not falsehoods, nor are they errors or even a tissue of errors; every thought may be true, but they are nonetheless stupidities, inanities. There is, no doubt, a certain provocation involved in Deleuze's use of this term (the French term *bêtise* is derived from *bête*, the word for a beast or an animal), since other philosophers have made a similar point by appealing to different concepts. Heidegger spoke of idle talk or idle chatter, and the fact that, most of the time, our thoughts are the thoughts of what 'They' think (*Das Man*).[102] Plato spoke of the reign of the *doxa* or the realm of opinion, and he saw the task of philosophy as the attempt to break with the *doxa*, to extract oneself from opinion. But the point remains the same: the thoughts that pass through our heads, carried along by the universal thought flow, are stupid thoughts – thoughts that are determined, often, by the inanity of the culture that surrounds us. Is this not the aim of marketing and advertising: to modify the thought-flow, to populate it with anonymous thoughts about making one's laundry brighter or one's teeth whiter? For Deleuze, the misadventure that constantly threatens thinking is not error or falsehood, but stupidity (clichés, ready-made ideas, conventions, opinions...). William James said that what prevents the creation of truth are the truths we think we already possess.[103] Moreover, at a deeper level, one might say that schizophrenia also reveals a possibility for thought, which is why Artaud plays such an important role in Deleuze's work. 'Artaud said that the problem (for him) was not to orient his thought, or to perfect the expression of what he thought, or to acquire application and method, or to perfect his poems, but simply *to manage to think something*. For him, this was the only conceivable "work".'[104] In different ways, both the flow of stupidity and psychosis reveal the *internal* problem that thought itself constantly confronts: as Heidegger put it, 'what is most thought-provoking in our thought-

[97] James made a similar point in his analysis of what he called 'the stream of thought'. See William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), Vol. 1 (New York: Dover, 1950), pp. 224-5: 'The first fact for us... is that thinking of some sort goes on... If we could say in English 'it thinks', as we say 'it rains' or 'it blows', we should be stating the fact most simply and with the minimum of assumption. As we cannot, we must simply say that *thought goes on*.'

[98] Spinoza, *The Emendation of the Intellect*, §85, in *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 37: 'So far as I know they [the ancients] never conceived the soul (as we do here) as acting according to certain laws, like a spiritual automaton.' Leibniz, for his own reasons, appealed to the same image. See 'Clarification of the Difficulties which Mr. Bayle has Found in the New System of the Union of Soul and Body', in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, 2d ed., ed. Leroy E. Loemker (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1969), p. 495: 'The soul is a most exact spiritual automaton.'

[99] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §17, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Modern Library, 1992), p. 214.

[100] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. Rüdiger Bittner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 34 (= Notebook 38[1] = KSA 11:38[1]). See also *DR* p. 118: 'It is not even clear that thought, in so far as it constitutes the dynamism peculiar to philosophical systems, may be related to a substantial, completed, and well-constituted subject, such as the Cartesian Cogito: thought is, rather, one of those terrible movements which can be sustained only under the conditions of a larval subject.'

[101] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson (Continuum, 2006), p. 98.

[102] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), §§25-27, p. 35.

[103] William James, *Pragmatism* (1907) (New York: Dover, 1995), p. 24.

[104] *DR*, p. 147.

provoking time is the fact that *we are not yet thinking.*'[105] On this score, Deleuze likes to cite a phrase of the French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard: *pas une image juste, juste une image* ('not a just image, just an image'). Since we are constantly besieged by images that are nothing but clichés, the task of the filmmaker is not to create just or moral or uplifting images, but simply to create an image *tout court* – that is, to manage to create an image that is not a cliché. That in and of itself is enough: to create even a single image that is not a cliché. The same is true for the creation of concepts in the realm of thought: 'to think is to create – there is no other creation – but to create is first of all *to engender "thinking" within thought.*'[106]

Given the reign of stupidity in the realm of thought, and the reign of clichés in the realm of art (and even the reign of psychic clichés in our affective and perceptive life), what then is the process that constitutes a real act of creation? How is thinking engendered within the habitual clichés of the universal thought flow? We have already seen Deleuze's response: thinking is always engendered through the fortuitousness of an *encounter* with a problem (under the form of an intensity), which alone guarantees the necessity of what it forces us to think. Philosophy has long been content to assume a 'dogmatic' image of thought which presupposes that thinking is a voluntary activity; that the thinker has a natural affinity for the truth; that we are led into error by what's foreign to thought (the body, the passions); and thus that what we need to think well is simply a method that will ward off error and bring us back to the truthful nature of thought.[107] But Deleuze is pointing to a generalized thought process that cannot be covered over with this reassuring dogmatic image. Thinking is never the result of a voluntary will, but rather the result of forces that act upon us from the outside: we search for 'truth' and begin to think only when we are compelled to do so, when we undergo a violence that impels us to such a search and wrests us from our natural stupor. A lazy schoolboy who suddenly becomes 'good at Latin' because he has fallen in love with a classmate is no less an instance of this than Leibniz's relentless pursuit of the problem of sufficient reason, and there is no method that can determine

[105] Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper, 1968), p. 64.
[106] *DR*, p. 147.
[107] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 103.

in advance what compels us to think.[108] The 'conceptual persona' one finds in Deleuze is not the Platonic *friend*, voluntarily exercising a natural desire for the truth in dialogue with others about a 'What is...?' question, but rather something akin to the *jealous lover*, involuntarily forced to confront a problem whose coordinates are derived precisely from the questions Plato rejected: What happened? When? Where? Why? With whom? Deleuze said that he himself frequently sought material in encounters outside of philosophy, although these occurred more often with films and paintings than with people.[109] But this is precisely why Deleuze, like Kant, distinguishes knowledge from thinking: *knowledge* is only a result or an outcome; it is the establishment of a territory, a competence or specialisation; but *thinking* is a process of learning or apprenticeship that is initiated by one encounter with a problem, and necessarily stems from the depth of one's own ignorance.[110] 'How else can one write but of those things which one doesn't know, or knows badly?' Deleuze asks in his preface to *Difference and Repetition*, 'It is precisely there that we imagine having something to say. We write only at the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border which separates our knowledge from our ignorance and transforms the one into the other. Only in this manner are we resolved to write. To satisfy ignorance is to put off writing until tomorrow – or rather, to make it impossible.'[111]

Yet the encounter with a problem would mean nothing if the universal thought flow were nothing but a flow of stupidity, that is, if it did not have its own singularities. Indeed, this is why the concept of 'singularity' plays such an important role in Deleuze's philosophy. In mathematics, the singular is opposed to the regular: the singular is what escapes the regularity of the rule – it is the production of the new (the point where a curve changes direction). More importantly, some singularities are remarkable, while others are ordinary, and in this sense, one could say that there are two poles of Deleuze's philosophy: 'Everything is remarkable!' and 'Everything is ordinary!'.[112] It is in terms of these two poles that we can understand the real genesis of

[108] Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* (Athlone, 2000), p. 22.
[109] *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, C.
[110] *Negotiations*, p. 7.
[111] *DR*, p. xxi. Deleuze and Guattari similarly suggest that *Anti-Oedipus* was written out of ignorance: 'We would like to speak in the name of an absolute incompetence' (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum, 2004), p. 415).
[112] *The Fold*, p. 91; cf. *TI*, p. 15.

concepts. In Deleuze's ontology, every moment, every event, every individual, every thought is singular: Being is difference, that is, it is the inexhaustible creation of difference, the constant production of the new, the incessant genesis of the heterogeneous. Yet the ontological condition of difference is that, in being produced, singularities become regularized, made ordinary, 'normalized' (in Foucault's sense). It is this reduction of the singular to the ordinary that Deleuze calls the apparatus of 'capture': the inevitable processes of stratification, regularization, normalization – or perhaps what we might call 'stupid-ization' in the realm of thought.[113] The characterization of the 'usual' status of the thought-flow as having a structure of stupidity was thus a derivative characterization, for the thought flow is indeed constituted by remarkable singularities – but they are singularities that have been rendered ordinary and banal. As Nietzsche wrote, in a slightly different context, 'fundamentally, all our actions are altogether incomparably personal, unique, and infinitely individual; there is no doubt of that. But as soon as we translate them into consciousness *they no longer seem to be.*' This is why Deleuze insists that the distinction between the regular (what belongs to the rule) and the singular (what escapes the rule) – and even more so, the remarkable and the ordinary – is much more important in philosophy than the distinction between the true and the false.

If a concept is a 'system of singularities extracted from a thought flow', this process of extraction has two necessarily correlative aspects – destruction (the destruction of the cliché) and creation (the creation of the new). Deleuze has examined this two-fold process of thought in his analysis of the act of painting in *Francis Bacon.*[114] Painters never simply work on the white surface of a canvas, Deleuze suggests, since the canvas is already filled, actually or virtually, with the images (clichés, perceptual schemata) that painters bring with them, so that the first task of the painter is not to cover the canvas, but *to empty it out*: to destroy the cliché. Bacon's technique was to make random marks, to throw the paint from various angles and at various speeds, or to scrub, sweep, or wipe the canvas – precisely in order to clear out locales or zones that would destroy the nascent cliché and make possible the creation of an image. It is as if a 'catastrophe' or 'chaos' overcame the

[113]Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. by Brian Massumi (Continuum, 2004), p. 487.
[114]*Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, pp. 71-90.

canvas, which at once loosened the clichés of visual organization and outlined 'possibilities of fact' for the emerging image being created – though with the perpetual possibility that one could botch the painting or fall back into the cliché.[115] And just as the painter must destroy the cliché in order to create an image, the philosopher can create only by destroying the givens of opinion in order to extract the singularities of thought. This then is the real process that lies at the genesis of every act of creation, and which unites the various aspects of Deleuze analytic of concepts: if the singular is produced under conditions that constantly reduce it to the regular or the ordinary, then the task of creation amounts to a constant and ever-renewed struggle against the reign of clichés in order to extract singularities from the thought-flow and make them function consistently as *variabilities* on a new plane of creation: the *variations* of a philosophic concept (the plane of immanence), the *variables* of a scientific function (the plane of reference), and the *varieties* of a work of art (the plane of composition).

[115]On the time (or temporal synthesis) proper to painting, see 31 Mar 1981.

The Disparate: Ontology and Politics in Simondon

Alberto Toscano

Introduction

Within the ambit of contemporary continental philosophy, a veritable differend has opened up between two ways of articulating the political and the ontological, both emerging out of the post-68 mutations of Marxist theory and communist politics: on the one hand, we have a vitalist-Spinozist lineage centred on a concept of a self-valorising, powerful multiplicity, itself considered as expressive and constructive of being, on the other a Cartesian, or Sartrean, conception of political subjectivity that depends on the evacuation of any expressive substance from being and an emphasis on the discontinuous character of politicisation and the continued significance of decision and organisation for emancipatory politics. The latter position, to cite Merleau-Ponty's anti-Sartrean epithet, could be regarded as a kind of 'ultra-Bolshevism', while the first returns us to some of the Bergsonist tendencies that fascinated the syndicalist left at the beginning of the twentieth century. Or, to use terms from Badiou's *Logiques des mondes*, we could view the contemporary scene as split between a materialist dialectic of the void and the exception, and a democratic materialism concerned with corporeal and linguistic politics.

Without delving further into this position, which broadly pits Badiou against Negri, in this paper I'd like to complicate this debate somewhat by introducing a third position, as it were, that of Gilbert Simondon, which is particularly relevant here, inasmuch as the theme of ontology and politics, as proposed by Andrew Benjamin, has been conceived in terms of the category of relation – one of Simondon's key concepts. What I hope very briefly to show is the manner in which Simondon tries to think together nature and excess, technology and revolution, in a manner that might at least dislocate some of the common-places

of contemporary debate on ontology and politics. I aim to do this by focussing on three elements of what, rather improperly, could be referred to as Simondon's political thought: 1. the manner in which the concept of Nature or pre-individual displaces the debates on the relationship between political action, human nature and biological capacity; 2. the importance of the excess of the subject over the individual as the matrix of a politics of the transindividual; 3. the possibility of envisaging the concept of disparation as a non-dialectical but nevertheless political conceptualisation of conflict and transformation.

However, a political reading of Simondon's might at first appear as illegitimate or sterile. Though it recasts concepts such as society, community or culture, Simondon does not seem to grant any specificity to political activity as such. We could even say that his writings betray a strong anti-political tendency, if we define 'political' in terms of the sovereign and representative administration of public affairs, or as a constitutive activity of distribution of places and capacities, or as interruption and dissensus. Perhaps, in a time when, to quote Negri, 'ontology has absorbed politics', it is only to politically eccentric metaphysicians that we may turn to forge the conceptual tools that will enable us to think the present.[1] Having said that, we cannot disregard how Simondon's philosophy of 'technical culture' sought to neutralize the bond between antagonism and productivism which he regarded as the fatal platform for the politics of the Cold War. This effort was based on the diagnosis of the repression of invention by labour, and of the technical object by the wonderfully named 'morality of output'.[2] This led to an interpretation of Marxism as a worldview embedded in the hylomorphic domination of nature (as matter) by labour (as form-giving work), whose concepts of antagonism (class struggle) and of capacity (human nature) cannot do justice to the complexes of materials and forces, the lines of invention and the transindividual processes behind the ontogenesis of the social. Simondon's investigations on the technical object must be read as an attempt to evade the discourse *of* capitalism and the critical discourse *on* capitalism, by means of a thinking which refuses the paradigm of labour in order to seek in the technical and scientific activity of invention the key to a new genesis of the collective

[1] Antonio Negri, *Kairòs, alma venus, multitude* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 2001), p. 162.
[2] Gilbert Simondon, *L'individuation psychique et collective* (Paris: Aubier, 1989), p. 288.

life. 'Work and capital', he writes, '*arrive late on the scene* with regard to the technical individual', which 'is not *from the same epoch* as the labour that activates it and the capital which frames it'.[3]

But can we absolve the relational and creative power of invention from any truck with the 'molar' struggles of capital and labour? Would this not be a kind of 'angelic' relation? In this respect, by isolating a new politics of machinic organisation and invention from the explanatory tools of the critique of political economy, Simondon appears to block access to an immanent comprehension of the capture of invention and the machine by the capital. To put it differently, and in terms dear to both Marx and Negri, by treating the subsumption of technology to capital as formal rather than real or ontological, Simondon loses the means of thinking the contemporary convergence of invention and work, an indiscernibility that still requires an understanding of the sociogenetic function of exploitation. In other words, the configuration of ontology and politics cannot evade the manner in which the 'real abstractions' of capitalism – money, value, abstract labour – mould the very being of machines, inventions and subjects.

1. The unequal

Leaving aside for the moment the questions of political economy, what are the effects of 'forcing' the passage from the level of ontological speculation to that of political experimentation? Rather than turning to Simondon for a set of concepts with which to format the political, the most interesting 'political' repercussions of his thought can be found in the way that it becomes a testing ground and point of divergence for different approaches to politics. In my eyes, at the core of any discussion of Simondon and politics lies the question of the status accorded to his concept of preindividual being.[4] Here there are (at least) three possible readings.

The first interprets the preindividual as an unresolved charge, car-

[3] Gilbert Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques* (Paris: Aubier, 1989 (1958)), p. 119. My emphasis.
[4] Or, to use a quasi-synonym, to the concept of nature. The three paths which are sketched here also give us three versions of 'naturalism' in politics, by defining nature as (1) human nature or biological capacity; (2) common-inhumanity-in-man (apeiron); (3) metastable transcendental field. In my view, to understand this paradoxical naturalism from the perspective of which the openness to the world and the contact with nature would be given by the machine, one must follow the third path, which is the lesson of the Unequal developed by Deleuze.

ried by the individual as a *potential*, linking this concept to those of human nature and living labour. The preindividual would thus name a non-reflexive, naturalisable capacity, namely the linguistic capacity to produce new statements. The circumstances of contemporary capitalism, and of the subjectivity that underlies it, would be such as to make this preindividual surface, and politics could thus be considered as the insurrection of this capacity against the measures of domination imposed by capital and its mechanisms of control. A position of this sort can be encountered in Paolo Virno's very stimulating use of Simondon.

A second reading sees the preindividual as caught up in a twofold transindividual (or social) relation which concerns, on the one hand, an individual and what in it is more than itself, and, on the other, an individual and another by the means of their emotional, and preindividual unresolved charge. Muriel Combes gives an apt name to this relation: the intimacy of the common. These two orientations in the political reading of Simondon, which one could respectively call *naturalist* and *relational*, share a certain view of the latency of the political (or of politics), which contrasts interestingly with the Deleuzean reading of Simondon.

Deleuze turns to Simondon in one of the key moments of *Difference and Repetition*, at the beginning of chapter five. This text of pure metaphysics is nevertheless rich with indications for a political ontology. It begins by distinguishing between difference and diversity. The diverse is what is given, the phenomenon, but every 'phenomenon refers back to an inequality which conditions it', 'to a difference which is its sufficient reason'. This 'irreducible inequality', this transcendental injustice, is linked by Deleuze to the concept of a signal-sign system, in which the phenomenon is defined as a sign which 'fulgurates' between disparate and incommensurable series, giving rise to an *event of communication* that both synthesises and veils the heterogeneity from whence it emerges. Deleuze concludes as follows: 'The reason of the sensible, the condition of what appears, is not space and time, but the Unequal in itself, *disparation* such as it is comprehended and determined by difference in intensity, in intensity as difference'.[5] A politics of difference that is not merely to be understood as the conjunction of different particularities, which is to say as a politics of the diverse, would need to

[5]Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: P.U.F., 1968), p. 287.

begin from here. By tracing the boundary-line between potential and virtual, Deleuze casts the preindividual as a transcendental field populated by disparate singularities and series, rather than as reserve of creativity that could *express itself* in a given political occasion.[6]

For Deleuze, the preindividual is identified neither with human nature (in its neotenic or innate versions), nor with a 'common'. In both cases, that would involve a pre-emptive 'equalization' of the Unequal, it would mean advocating a speculative optimism which would look at the preindividual as the *preindividual-of-humanity*, the latency of a collective life which is always already possible, and precisely not as something that leads us towards politics by its very 'inhuman', unconscious and properly unliveable aspect; what Deleuze refers to as that 'which overflows any liveable or lived matter... a passage of Life that traverses the liveable or the lived'.[7] It is here that the concept of metastability, introduced by Simondon, comes to the fore. This is what Deleuze says: 'what primarily defines a metastable system, is the existence of a "disparation", at least of two orders of magnitude, two disparate scales of reality, between which there is not yet any interactive communication'.[8] Could one ever qualify this disparate metastability as 'common'? Simondon and Deleuze offer a conception of politics as the invention of a communication between initially incompossible series; as invention of a common that is not given in advance and which emerges on an ontological background of inequality.

2. Energetics or dialectics? Or, How to think revolution

Simondon develops a very original reflection on the social which is guided by the concept of an ontogenesis of relation. Are we then forced to identify politics and the transindividual (or collective) dimension? Political action with social relation? The Negrian discourse on real subsumption and the primacy of ontology over the political could suggest such an identification, but it would be better to attend to the possible disjunctions in Simondon's thought between the social and the politi-

[6]When Deleuze, in *The Logic of Sense*, speaks of 'potential energy' in the metastable system of divergent series, he develops a critique of anthropomorphic and negative understandings of potentiality.

[7]Gilles Deleuze, 'La littérature et la vie', in *Critique et clinique* (Paris: Minuit, 1993), p. 11.

[8]Gilles Deleuze, 'Gilbert Simondon, L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique', in *L'île déserte et autres textes* (Paris: Minuit, 2002).

cal. Short of naming every constitutive process, every social genesis, as *ipso facto* political, one cannot jump from the thesis of a (biological or ontological) disposition to sociality straight to the assertion of a disposition to politics. Taking into consideration the rare 'political' remarks in the work of Simondon points us to the place where the preindividual demonstrates its excess with regard to any disposition, capacity, or notion of the common.

In his intervention at the conference of the Society for French Philosophy in 1961, Simondon proposes, in a striking analogical short-circuit, and against the use of probabilistic theories in the social sciences, to 'transduce' the energetic theory of metastability to the social domain and to think the pre-revolutionary situation as a privileged object (or medium) for the political application of a thinking of individuation. This is a paradoxical provocation, but one well suited to a theory which 'does not grant any privilege to stable configurations': revolution is for Simondon the only 'laboratory' available for social thought *qua science*. Simondon displaces the false alternative between a causal density that would remove any singularity from revolution, on the one hand, and a mystifying decisionism, on the other, by seeking to think through the unforeseeable coupling between a pre-revolutionary disparation and political invention. The pre-revolutionary state is the 'very type', according to Simondon, of the psychosocial state which a political science of metastability should concern itself with, 'a state of supersaturation ... where an event is very ready to occur, where a structure is very ready to emerge'. What makes this state otherwise potential and accounts for its asymmetry vis-à-vis its resolution is the need for a structuring germ, a revolutionary crystal. This need is determined by an excess (of magnitudes, of disparate series, of energies) and not by a lack.

We are not dealing with the *expression* of a potential but with the invention of a communication responding to the larval emergence of divergent energies in the social field.[9] The element of politics as analysis and intervention is not the genesis and the concretization of social relations, but metastability (or disparation) 'as such' and the event-invention which crystallizes it into a new configuration (carrying a further preindividual charge). Pre-revolutionary disparation is not held 'in common'. Though it must sooner or later elicit the affects of subjects, it is not there as a dark background structuring social relations – and this is for the simple reason that it is defined by its incompossibility, by its basic 'inequality'. For this reason one must take seriously the characterization of this social science (a science of the revolution perhaps?) as 'founded on a human energetics'.[10] This definition sets aside the idea of a political disposition, of an originary sharing out of politics, in favour of a study of the conditioned contingency of political invention.

[9]The chosen example is striking: 'In colonisation, for instance, during a certain period of time, there is a possible cohabitation between the colonists and the colonised. Then all of a sudden this is no longer possible because of the emergence of new potentials, and so a new structure must spring from this'. *L'individuation*, pp. 63-64.

But how can we think the theme of conflict within this framework? Prolonging the idea of a social science attentive to psychosocial instability, Simondon remarks that one should consider social groups according to their metastable aspects, i.e. according to those moments when 'they cannot preserve their structure' and 'become incompatible compared to themselves ... they dedifferentiate themselves and become supersaturated'.[11] To truly catalyse the unfolding of a pre-revolutionary state, groups must thus disadapt themselves, deindividuate themselves. One could say that one of the conditions necessary for the invention of a revolutionary solution likely to amplify and integrate the new potentials brought by a metastable state is precisely that of demolishing old bonds, of affirming the difference in the midst of the social. If there is a 'revolutionary' subjectivity, it is related to this discovery of metastability at the heart of the group. The choice of opposing a theory of *groups* inspired in particular by symbolic interactionist sociology to a thought of the class struggle is very important here. It manifests Simondon's wish to avoid a dialectical or structural conception of antagonism, with the massive individuations ('pure social sets') that it would involve. In other words, Simondon sees antagonism substantialised or identified into classes as a dissimulation of the new potentials elicited by disparations and internal resonances of a social system in becoming. By encasing social change in a preconceived antagonism, Marxist thought would miss the true stakes of a 'human science'. Metastability may indeed determine antagonisms but the invention of a new social configuration is never transitive to, or

[10]Ibid. p. 63.

[11]Ibid. This attention to differentiation does not entail overloooking the constructive character of the political event. Explaining the thesis according to which the robot or the machine is not capable of insurrection, Simondon argues: 'Revolt implies a profound transformation of finalised behaviours, and not a deregulation of conducts', p. 272.

latent in, the logic of a system. There is always a hazardous discontinuity between the Unequal and the Common. Disparation thus makes it possible to think a social conflictuality, but one that is always relative to the metastable field. In short, energetics versus dialectics.

3. Towards a politics of invention

Invention, this 'dark zone [...] between labour and capital',[12] would allow us to pierce the substantialist veil which hides the processuality of the social, and thereby contribute to the emergence of the transindividual. It would function as fulcrum of radiation in the formation of collectives that escape the normative rigidity of an *inter*individual communitarian life. But the presence of a collective dimension in the experience of invention does not eliminate the need for a rethinking of the humanity-technics relation. The micropolitics of invention on the level of the technical object must be accompanied by a true transformation at the level of the 'technical ensemble'. It is here that Simondon introduces the motif of a technical finality, an 'auto-valorization' born of invention and propagating itself through machines. One of Simondon's first readers, Herbert Marcuse, gave a singular inflection to this question. In *One-Dimensional Man*, he quotes *Du mode d'existence des objects techniques* to define the totalitarian rationality at work in the technical ensemble of industrial capitalism (the 'autocratic philosophy of techniques'). But Marcuse also discerns in Simondon's book the thinking of a 'new technology' that would also announce the advent of a new rationality, an exit out of every dialectic of *Aufklärung*. Simondon, the thinker of the 'catastrophe of liberation', would introduce the possibility of a true change of course in the relationship between technics, capacity and human becoming. On the basis of Simondon's idea that the incompletion of the technics requires us 'to make finality', Marcuse calls for a political inversion of technology, for a 'becoming political' of science that would issue into a political control of the transformation of values into needs. One could then do without an additional ethics to technical rationality, in order 'to translate the values into technical tasks - to materialize the values'. But Marcuse's error, a dependence on a kind of negative dialectics, prevents him from fully drawing the lessons of Simondon's thought. He seems unaware that 'nature' in Simondon

[12] *Du mode d'existence*, p. 254.

has a very different relation to technical reality than Hegelian nature, that it displaces the entire problem of the politics-technology-nature relation, by starting from what Muriel Combes has usefully referred to as an 'inobjective' idea of natural facts. Marcuse consequently misses the event-driven discontinuity which in Simondon marks invention and technical objects as ways of relating social and political collectivity to the becoming of nature. Simondonian finality is punctuated by these intercessors, mediators and converters, and differs thereby from a dialectic of control. The call is to free the machine inasmuch as it can function, paradoxically, as a contact with disparate nature, much more direct than any intuition, as an opening of disparate potentials for the formation of groups and the revolution of social relations, and no longer as 'a servant who never protests'.[13] This image of machinic liberation in turn leads to a novel definition of politics: 'a coupling between the inventive and organizing capacities of several subjects'.[14]

4. Is there a theory of the subject in Simondon?

Unless we deem subjectivity as such to be political, we must acknowledge that an explicit thinking of the political subject is absent in Simondon. The subject, as an individual for whom the preindividual poses a problem (as Simondon puts it in some remarkable pages on Nietzsche's Zarathustra), is haunted by the social, but it is not constituted in or for an experience that could be described as political. The 'phase' of being that Simondon calls collective is better defined as social than political, and its immanence to subjects, although it integrates, at a 'higher' level, the disparities from which they suffer, does not represent the situated emergence of a nucleus of action that could as such function as a source of innovation. We saw that the political metastability ('the pre-revolutionary state') is conceived as an engine of dedifferenciation, determined by a disparation of magnitudes and the presence of new potentials that demand the insertion of a structuring germ endowed with a 'capacity to cross, animate and to structure a varied domain, or rather ever more varied and heterogeneous domains'.[15] Invention here is more the invention *of* a subject (as a sudden upsurge, an asymmet-

[13] Ibid., p. 279.
[14] Ibid., p. 253.
[15] *L'individuation*, p. 53.

rical synthesis) than invention *by* a subject (its more or less intentional product). Conversely, one can regard the subject in Simondon as a necessary but not sufficient condition for any political activity. The subject, which would never be 'in itself' political, would thus provide us with the key to the political event or relation, itself prolonged by specific groups and transindividual dynamics. Simondon thus brings together three elements: a) the paradoxical opening of the subject onto 'its' preindividual charge, b) the process of 'collectivization' that makes the preindividual pass into the transindividual and governs the formation of groups, and c) the events and disparities which define political problems or situations. The experience of the subject opens onto politics to the extent that this subject carries and seeks to resolve its preindividual excess, but can only do so at a collective level, itself 'mediated' by technical objects. The disjunctive synthesis between individual and subject is thereby doubled by the asymmetrical synthesis of the subject and the transindividual collective. Let us take a paradigmatic 'subject' for Simondon, the technician or the inventor as 'pure individual'. The (pre-)political character of this subject is announced by its strong anti-communitarian impulse, by the transindividual sociality to which it gives rise by subtracting itself, with the assistance of the machine and technical networks, from the inert normalcy of the interindividual. The technician as 'pure individual' constructs, through invention, a break with the communitarian bond, a creative destabilization which doubles and counter-effectuates metastability, thus preparing the 'revolutionary' event. He injects his excess into the social by the mediation of the technical object, preparing the collective by amplifying his own preindividual charge. For this reason 'the community accepts the painter or the poet, but refuses the inventor'.[16] To conclude, paraphrasing a remark made by Alain Badiou about Canguilhem, we could say of the subject in Simondon that it is a somewhat 'unstable' living being.[17] It is in the risk of invention confronted with the hazards of disparation, and not in a sudden appearance of an anthropological, or even inhuman

[16]Ibid., p. 266.

[17]Alain Badiou, 'Y a-t-il une théorie du sujet chez Georges Canguilhem?', in *Georges Canguilhem. Philosophie, historien des sciences* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), p. 304. Badiou refers to the Canguilhemian subject as a 'rather displaced being', which articulates the methodical and anonymous errancy of the subject of science with the normative 'centreing' of the biological subject. The role accorded by Simondon to invention and technique produces an altogether different (and more 'political') tie between life and norms than that proposed by Canguilhem.

commonality, that one can draw 'political' lessons from the thought of Simondon. Above all, perhaps, the following: 'The human being is a rather dangerous automat, which is always likely to invent and to give itself new structures'.

Deleuze: Desiring Bodies *versus* Organic Judgement

Marjorie Gracieuse[1]

This article seeks to clarify the nature of immanence on the basis of the intensive individuality of the living body, which Deleuze has always presented as the genetic and differential source of all representational activity. It is this conception that the thinker of difference contrasts with the classical conceptions of corporeity. The latter tends to consider the body as a harmonious organism organised according to a hierarchy of organs, thereby opposing the pacifying superiority of logical rationality to the uncanny silence of corporeal life. However, this so-called 'superiority' of reason is for Deleuze an optical effect, for if rational consciousness abstractly distinguishes itself from the body's materiality, and strives towards autonomy, the body concretely remains attached to it and communicates its vital imperatives to an ever-perplexed thought. Thus, interrogating the origin of rationality means retrieving the unconscious and passive syntheses by which a logical plane of thought comes to emerge and maintain itself *out of* the body's chaotic depth. This view entails acknowledging corporeal immanence as the living source of all cognitive processes, and to denounce as illusions any form of autonomous transcendences, in thought and nature.

If the 'sleep of reason engenders monsters', reason is itself the product of a monstrous body which allows amorphous potentials to subsist at the very core of thought.[2] This structural powerlessness or 'stupidity' is a violent and instinctual ground with which thought constantly struggles and into which it always risks being absorbed. Moreover, far from disappearing with the uprising of reason, stupidity can take the rational mask of utilitarian and reactive consciousness, the judgemental logos

[1] Translated by Rachel Tillman.

[2] "To be a monster is first of all to be composite. And it's true that I have written on apparently diverse subjects. But "monster" has another meaning: something or someone whose extreme determinacy allows the indeterminate wholly to subsist (for example a monster à la Goya). In this sense, *thought itself is a monster*.' Quotation extracted from 'Response to a series of questions', Deleuze's interview with Arnaud Villani, published in *Unknown Deleuze: Collapse III*.

functioning as nothing other than an organised violence that slows down the movement of life and encloses it within the limits of organic norms. By taking logical distinctions as the highest form of thought, philosophy has thereby elevated the most reactive regime of thought to the status of a superior ideal and overlooked the pathological origin of its reactive schemes of cognition: 'Even when we recognise that reason is a human, solely human faculty, which is tailored to human ends, we continue to grant it theological transcendence. We draw up a dualism of processes, instead of a pluralism of processes; this dualism opposes discourse to violence, as if violence were not already concealed within discourse itself, providing it with its various impetuses and ins and outs'.[3]

There is, therefore, a striking continuity between Deleuze's early work on non-conceptual difference and his later work oriented towards pre-philosophical immanence. In both cases, it is a question of unearthing the powers of the *pathos* beneath all *logos*, in order to criticise the idealist and judgmental 'terrorism of the head', whose bloodless categories have contributed to the separation of philosophy from its material and moving horizon, and critical thinking from the body's vitality. For if pathology conditions ontology, it is because thought is first and foremost a passion, the involuntary performance of a fluid and elastic body, whose intensive dynamism continuously informs the amorphous matter of the brain and generates perceptive thresholds of unequal existential value.

This is the reason why Deleuze's early work is above all an attempt to elaborate the genesis of representational images out of the vital ground from which they upsurge, in order to retrieve the corporeal origin of the processes of valorisation and the creation of sense beneath the apparent fixity of established orders and truths. Throughout his later works with Guattari, Deleuze continues to tear the plastic and germinal forces of living materiality from the static and organic systems of representational thought, not only out of a desire to explore the possibilities of a becoming-active of human thought, but also as a way to show that, by dominating not only ontology but also a certain conception of politics, organic schemas of organisation contribute to the separation of thought from life, and philosophy from its practical and therapeutic force.

[3]Gilles Deleuze, 'Péricles and Verdi, the philosophy of François Chatelet' in *Dialogues II*, Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet (Colombia University Press, 2007)

I wish therefore, in the first place, to emphasise that the Deleuzian primacy of difference over identity, of immanence over transcendence or of becoming over what has been traditionally called 'Being', must above all be understood as a primacy of the pathological forces of bodily affectivity over the ontological categories of representational and judicative consciousness. Second, it will be a matter of clarifying to what extent the Deleuzian critique of the closed system of judgment leads to an hetero-genesis of thought, which involves a practical hierarchisation between two modes of desiring production and two heterogeneous planes of perception (transcendent/immanent). Finally, I will show to what extent this intensive, hierarchical difference between two regimes of desire has led Deleuze and Guattari to distinguish between a molecular and majoritarian use of norms and to re-interpret what Nietzsche called the 'problem of hierarchy' in light of the moving horizon of material immanence.

The eternal return of the body

If metaphysics has been discredited, it is not only because it has religiously multiplied references to transcendent instances situated out of this world, but also because in doing so, it has failed to grant bodies a philosophical force and ontological dignity. Although I will mainly focus on the immanent powers of the human body in this article, it is important to keep in mind that, for Deleuze, the term 'body' univocally designates the life of matter through its equivocal and multiple modalities: 'A body can be anything: it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a mind or an idea, it can be a linguistic corpus, a collectivity.'[4]

One of the main aims of *Difference and Repetition* consists in rethinking the body's materiality as individuating *system*, which envelops the potentials of what Deleuze calls 'imageless thought'. The latter designates a vital questioning process, that Deleuze, already in 1966, names *desire,* and that he identifies with a differential unconscious, as that which 'remains always unthought at the heart of thought'.[5] Hence the importance of breaking away from the 'simple' empiricism of sensory data in order to elaborate a 'transcendental' or 'superior empiricism', capable of retrieving the purely intensive yet insensible origin of phe-

[4]Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza, Practical Philosophy* p. 127.
[5]Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands*, p. 92.

nomenal perception and accounting genetically for the difference of levels that characterises perceptive and cognitive activities. This implies rethinking the body as 'depth' or pure '*implex*', at the core of which the sensibilisation of thought to 'Ideas' is brought about by a more profound individuation of corporeal intensities.

We see that if Deleuze's philosophy is a philosophy of *pure* immanence through and through, this is above all because it aims at reconsidering the spiritual life of the body[6] as the living and 'deeper instance' of ideality (the body as 'will to power'). In fact, if individual bodies are the local singularisations of a universal non-organic life, which continuously exceeding the limits of organic forms, they are necessarily 'problematic bodies', for they bear within themselves non-actualised potentialities, which force them to reconfigure their regimes of thinking and acting and deprive them of a solid ground of reference. It is because traditional metaphysics has overlooked the extreme proximity of thought's groundlessness with the differential movement of life that it has, according to Deleuze, failed to think beyond logical antinomies and metaphysical aporiae.

Thus, it is a question of elaborating a purely *esthesic*[7] conception of the body, which rejects the mind-body dualism and any form of eminence of the former over the latter. The body is now conceived as the embodiment of becoming (i.e 'the eternal return in person'). It is a multileveled *system*[8] of individuating forces or factors in tension, whose differential perceptive levels testify to the unity of the spiritual and material life and to the parity of the soul's and the body's actions and passions. For between the mind and the body, there is nothing but a fold, which seals the depth and the surface, and differentiates itself into

[6]'The body without organs is flesh and nerves; a wave flows through it and traces levels upon it; a sensation is produced when the wave encounters the forces acting on the body, an 'affective athleticism', a scream-breath. When sensation is linked to the body in this way, it ceases to be representative, and becomes real; and *cruelty* will be linked less and less to the representation of something horrible, and will become nothing other than the actions of forces upon the body, or sensation (the opposite of the sensational)...it elevates mechanical forces to sensible intuitions, it works through violent movements...it also attests for a high spirituality, since what leads it to seek the elementary forces beyond the organic is a spiritual will. But this spirituality is a spirituality of the body: *the spirit is the body itself, the body without organs.*', my emphasis. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sensation*, p. 47, hereafter *LS*.

[7]This notion exclusively relates to the inner perceptions of sensitive variations and is therefore the object of aesthetics, which Deleuze conceives as being primarily the empirical science of transcendental sensations or power variations, before being the study of works of art.

[8]From the Greek '*sỳstêma*', as unity that can only be said of multiple parts.

a multitude of molecular folds. It is these folds that form the corporeal, vital tissue of the lived body, which is traversed by a plasmatic network, whose flows communicate to the rhythm of life and exceed the body's organic contours.

What Deleuze calls 'difference in itself' is thus this vital differentiality of matter, a difference which, when it comes to be incorporated and fully explored thought, can spark new concepts and existential possibilities. Contrary to what one might think, it is not at all a question of putting the body in the place of consciousness, but of converting bodily forces into a critical power for thought. Indeed, the affirmation of life is inseparable from an active process of hierarchisation, by which an emancipating thought is the one that learns how to effectively subsist between ascending and descending modes of life. If life necessarily affirms itself in the human's flesh, it is also that which must be re-affirmed at the level of 'pure thought', as a way to intensify existence and to escape the lethargy of common sense, which contents itself with the simple fact of being alive or of letting life or Being be. We see that, for Deleuze, the differentiator of difference is not a transcendent Being whose 'gift' would come onto thinking: thought is not governed by a *philia* for truth, but is rather of the order of a violent desire or passion. It is an aggression by which the forces of the body take hold of consciousness and compels it to abandon its habitual regime of functioning (recognition): 'Thought is primarily trespass and violence, the enemy, and nothing presupposes philosophy: everything begins with misosophy.'[9]

Hence the fact that philosophy is not contemplation, and contemplation is not the essence of man.[10] There is in fact nothing to contemplate above or within thought: the latter is an empty form, which remains sterile and unproductive as long as it is not invaded by affective forces which force it to think and create new perceptions and concepts. The veritable agent of difference is the living body, considered in its creative power of incorporation and violent striving for metamorphosis (philos-

[9]Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 175-6, hereafter *DR*.

[10]On this point, there is no possible reconciliation between Deleuze's non-contemplative and Heidegger's contemplative conception of philosophy: 'What great danger would then be impending? Then the highest and most fertile acumen in calculative planning and invention might be accompanied by indifference toward contemplation, total thoughtlessness in the genuine sense. And then? Then man would have renounced and cast off what is most proper to him, namely that he is a contemplative being. Therefore what is at issue is the saving of the essence of man. That is why it matters to keep contemplation alive.' Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 56.

ophy as *paideia*, *ascesis* or training of desire). For 'the one whom', after Nietzsche, Deleuze calls '*Dionysus*' in his early works, is nothing other than the 'operator of intensities' or 'dark precursor' of thought, the unique 'being of becoming'. This is why the vital body is *a* life; a singular yet absolute immanence, within which the matter of being and thinking are reversible, folded into one another and governed by an intensive exchange that remains hermetic to the contradictions of representational thought, as much as to the thoughts of 'Being'.

Against any phenomenological account of the lived body, it is a matter of disclosing the imperceptible origin of phenomenal perception, namely the vital and living body as noumenal entity, as the 'unthinkable' implicated within thought. The body's intensive energy is presented as being both that which generates sensing in sensitivity and that which engenders thinking in thought under the form of Ideas-Problems. This means that against idealism in general and Plato in particular, one does not access Ideas or Values in themselves through an ascending dialectic that would detach itself from materiality. On the contrary, it is through an aesthetic reconsideration of the intensities that make the very life of matter that one has a chance to retrieve and conquer life's creative power of novelty. It comes as no surprise that when Deleuze deconstructs the schema of traditional ontology, it is above all a certain image of the body that he unearths as forming the basis of the hierarchical difference between a transcendent spiritual principle and an immanent material principle. Indeed, he identifies what he calls 'organic representation' with a reactive regime of thought, which attempts to judge life and nature according to a judgmental structure of organisation, by which phenomena are abstractly measured and adjusted to the human's basic needs. The expression 'organic representation' is borrowed by Deleuze from Worringer's aesthetic analyses of Greek art,[11] and the Deleuzian re-appropriation of this term aims to disclose the interdependence between epistemology and aesthetics, as a way to show that ontology has nothing to do with a so-called 'fundamental' or 'metaphysical' truth, but in fact corresponds to the *expressive* activity of the body, when it passes from the silence of the pathos to the production of

[11] Worringer wrote of Greek art that such an art 'did not consist in the wish to copy the things of the outer world or to render their appearance. Its aim was to project the lines and forms of the organically vital, the euphony of its rhythm and its whole inward being, outward in ideal independence, *The Logic of Sensation*, p. 190.

sense (Being is *voice* and vital *clamor*). The transcendent organisation of Being, therefore, is just the ideal projection of the organic scheme of the human body reduced to its contours and external appearance, that is, conceived as harmonious organism.

Thus, the vertical scheme of power distribution, which one can retrieve in the so-called ontological and hierarchical difference between Being and beings, is constructed by analogy to the vertical posture of the body. By rising up and distancing itself from the earth, the head apprehends itself as a sovereign authority that commands the organs and overarches beings. Deleuze criticises the essentially anthropomorphic character of this hierarchical organisation by insisting on its anthropocentric and projective nature, which does not content itself with uniting the sky and the earth, but despises the latter's material becoming in favor of the former's eternal forms.

This is why the Greek will to harmonise the cosmos, which led Plato to elaborate an ontology of transcendence superimposed onto the immanence of the earth, emanates from a moral *decision,* which relegates the body and its sensory life to an ontologically inferior level. Plato not only reduces the material world to a simple field of phenomena and ontological degradation, but the body itself is also devalued in its material being and presented as a tomb, a sign of death and a prison of the soul. It is precisely this contingent and moral choice to exorcise the becomings of the body and its images, in favor of disembodied and transcendent forms or Ideas, that Deleuze conceives as an illegitimate denaturation of immanence: 'It was necessary to go that far in the inversion of values: to make us believe that immanence is a prison (solipsism) from which the Transcendent saves us.' [12]

However, we must not see, in the Deleuzian identification of the living body with earthly immanence, an apologetic for subjectivism or a return to solipsism. On the contrary, it is a matter of recovering, beyond the solitude of consciousness, the impersonal power of life *in* the lived body, and therefore to consider the body as complex of forces open to the outside. These forces merge with the *expressive* power of bodies, whose perceptive potentials are so many 'possible worlds', insofar as each body envelops and individuates the intensities of life differently.

[12] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, p. 47, hereafter *WP*.

It is in the *Logic of Sense* that the inquiry on the bodily forces fully becomes an exploration of the possibility of the production of sense by thought. This book recuperates the traditional hierarchical metaphor between 'depth', 'surface' and 'height', as a way to account for the differential levels of organisation of psychic systems. The body is once again presented in its multileveled immanence or material depth, and it is through this differential view of the psychic system, organised as a scaffolding of planes of perception and sense-production, that Deleuze rethinks the genesis of thought from the body's vicissitudes. He interrogates the risks of speculative life in order to assess the conditions under which life's intensities can be converted into a spiritual and critical force of production of sense or, on the contrary, can generate a purely pathological breakdown, a victory of the chaotic 'mad ground', as in the case of Nietzsche and Artaud.

Deleuze's clinical and critical approach of perspectivism implies, therefore, a re-interpretation of the death drive in terms of a speculative force: contra its Freudian assimilation to a will to return to inanimate matter, the death drive is presented by Deleuze as a creative power of self-reinvention and transfiguration. It signals an immanent capacity of distancing, by which thought can detach itself from its organic and reactive regime and convert its energy into a speculative and critical power. Thus, if perspectives or points of view are both levels of perception and modes of existence, the problem of thought is that of gradually converting this power of self-dissolution that it carries within itself into a critical power of creation and evaluation of common representations.

The immanent critique of judgement

This implies, above all, to take into consideration the pathological origin of the logic of sense (i.e 'ontology') and thus to do away with the authoritative presuppositions and moral ideals of what Deleuze calls 'the system of judgment'. The latter designates the reactive and dogmatic system of consciousness, from the perspective of which 'concepts are referred to essences and not to circumstances', and which generates stratified representations and illusory transcendent ideals. To conceive of thought as a power that is not reducible to consciousness means, therefore, to retrieve the corporeal 'system of affects' beneath the bloodless forms of logical consciousness and thus to deny the Kantian autonomy

of judgment. Following Spinoza, Deleuze defines judgment as the consequence of an Idea that affirms itself within the mind and envelopes an intensive variation of bodily states.[13] Before being hypostasised into transcendent ideals and values and organised into moral or religious systems, judgments are vital evaluations, they are circumstantial acts that depend on an individual way of sensing and living: 'What judges you is not values that would be external to you, but the nature of your sadness and joy' so much that 'you always judge yourself,' and 'You always have the affects you deserve according to your mode of existence.'[14] Thus, if we understand judgment as issuing from a mode of existence, it can no longer be considered as a faculty that is naturally 'given' and autonomous, but as one that, on the contrary, depends on a gradual culture of sensation that presides over the generation of knowledge.

Thought's continual experimentation with its 'outside' constitutes an immanent 'learning' that is not a definitive knowledge but rather a '*savoir-faire*', which requires an art of combining disparate forces with one another. This is why Deleuze affirms that when we seek to account for the genesis of representation, 'It is from learning and not from knowledge, that the transcendental conditions of thought must be drawn.'[15] The genesis of cognitive processes teaches us that to know is not to recognise an essence or an eternal truth, but to encounter and to experiment with the differences of an ever-differing world. The act of knowledge is therefore itself a type of individuation; it is always a local resolution of a vital problem and as such an act of creation of new skills and an act of resistance to a present ignorance. There is no premade or universal 'faculty of judgment', but only a multiplicity of particular volitions, always evanescent, which stem from the capacity of each to be affected and to affect oneself in return.

It comes as no surprise that Deleuze, after Nietzsche, identifies all judgment with a moral interpretation of phenomena, and rejects the traditional distinction between cognitive judgments and judgments of value. Judgment is merely the dream of an egological consciousness; it constitutes the motor of idealism and unfurls the reign of the most

[13] 'The human mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing, except through the modifications of its own body.' Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part 2, Prop. XXVI.

[14] Deleuze's lecture on Spinoza, available in audio format (cd 2, track 13 entitled 'la Morale') in the double cd on 'Spinoza: Immortalite et Eternite', collection 'A voix haute' (Paris: Gallimard, 2001).

[15] *DR*, p. 166.

bloodless and enslaving formalism, which prevents the emergence of a truly immanent and clinical critique of established order: '*The doctrine of judgment reversed and replaced the system of affects.* And these characteristics are found even in the judgment of knowledge and of experience. The world of judgment establishes itself as in a dream. It is the dream which makes the lots turn (Ezekiel's wheel) and makes the forms pass in procession. In the dream judgments are hurled as into the void, without encountering the resistance of a milieu which would subject them to the exigencies of knowledge and of experience; this is why the question of judgment is first of all of knowing whether one is dreaming or not.'[16]

One can see therefore to what extent such an image of thought, which subjugates existence to logical principles, separates philosophy from its revolutionary power: it anesthetises and sterilises thought by prejudging everything; it prevents any experience of the new. It is in the name of the unforeseeable newness of life and of existence that Deleuze condemns judgment: 'Judgment prevents the emergence of any new mode of existence. For the latter creates itself through its own forces, that is, through the forces it is able to harness, and is valid in and of itself inasmuch as it brings the new combination into existence. Herein, perhaps, lies the secret: to bring into existence and not to judge. If it is so disgusting to judge, it is not because everything is of equal value but on the contrary because what has value can be made or distinguished only by defying judgment.'[17] Judgment is denounced by Deleuze as a purely logical operation that constitutes a 'transcendence', i.e. an abstract principle of organisation and distribution, that functions within the closed system of representative consciousness and that is only constituted through the negations of real variations of matter and of thought. This is why living bodies are the first victims of the system of judgment: they are reduced to their organicity in order to be recognised and judged, not only ontologically but also politically. Furthermore, judgments are also immaterial statements that are attributed to material bodies and normalise them from without. Judgments are therefore assimilable to norms, to '*mots d'ordre*' or maxims, which circulate in minds and in society, exercising a power over living beings by informing

[16] Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 'To have done with judgement', p. 129, hereafter *ECC*.

[17] *ECC*, p. 135.

moral and political practices.

We have seen that in order to give a new body to thought, Deleuze needs to construct a metaphysics of the body; an ontology of pathos, in order to extract the power of thinking from the negativity of consciousness and from the organic and passivity of the body. The problem of difference is thus inseparable from that of vitality and implies an analysis of the profound link that unites the critique of thought to its clinical approach. This practice of the 'great health', as evaluative self-experimentation, is also what Deleuze calls 'the ethics of intensive quantities', which entails the affirmation of thought's most intense and most valetudinarian states, in order to make of illness a way to sharpen or intensify existence. This vitalist conversion, far from being natural, stems in fact from a vital *decision* that is one with the ever-renewed conquest of freedom: 'A *decision* is not a judgment, nor is it the organic consequences of a judgment: it springs vitally from a whirlwind of forces that lead us into combat. It resolves the combat without suppressing or ending it. It is the lightning flash adequate to the night.'[18]

Ideas as vital imperatives: intensive hierarchy

We have seen that Deleuze does not cease to insist on the psycho-somatic and vital origin of thought: the living body is the material condition of a virtual realm of ideas on which thought feeds and extracts the spiritual energy to construct its representations. This entails that the virtual Ideas that invade the mind are not well-determined concepts but distinct yet obscure entities, which come from the material depth of the body and enact a perceptive variation that disrupts the relative equilibrium of consciousness. Hence the fact that an affect, for Deleuze, is an intensive continuum, a desiring process, which unites thought with sensibility by communicating its violent energy to the faculties. 'To have an Idea' means first and foremost to experience a difference of level in oneself, by which the life of the body violently interferes with the mind. The transcendental awareness by which the mind touches the body's becomings gives birth to responsiveness in the senses and activates thinking in thought. This immanent feeling of difference is

[18] *ECC*, p. 134.

what Deleuze calls, in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, a '*hierarchy*'. [19] It is, of course, a purely intensive hierarchy that takes place in the body, but which is at the same time reflected and experienced by the mind under the form of an affective variation of power which itself provokes the birth of a new Idea. In other words, Ideas bear a hierarchising or differential function when they rise to the surface of thought as vital imperatives. They are valences or dynamic charges, which introduce a radical inequality at the core of thought and posit a problem: 'Ideas are always unequal glimmers of love and wrath which have nothing in common with any natural light.'[20]

If 'Ideas' are spiritual emotions that spring from the body's becomings, this entails that thought bears an immanent potency of selection, by which it becomes able to overcome its purely organic regime of perception. If the latter corresponds to judgment as faculty of recognition, there is nonetheless a higher regime of thought, which no longer contents itself with recognising, but which actually creates a new combination, a new vision of reality. The condition of reality of sense is not a transcendent being, but thought itself when it manages to distance itself from the fluctuations of the body and reach the power to articulate a discourse that literally makes sense.

This is what Deleuze calls the 'victory of the brain' over the non-sense of corporeal depth, for ultimately, it is the extreme proximity of the body to life that turns thought into a *vital problem* of sense creation that seeks to conjure chaos: 'between this mouth and this brain everything occurs, hesitates and gets its orientation. Only the victory of the brain, if it takes place, frees the mouth to speak, frees it from excremental food and withdrawn voices, and nourishes it with all possible words'.[21] What one needs to realise is that thought bears a power of repetition or reprise of itself, as a kind of freedom to become purely affirmative and by which the human can liberate himself from the violence of its present affections, and produce the sense of one's existence, by taking the important from the insignificant. All that matters is this kind of transmutation of will or desire, by which '*the whole body exchanges*

[19] 'The empirical feeling of difference, in short *hierarchy*, is the essential motor of the concept, deeper and more effective than all thought about contradiction.' Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, p. 10, hereafter *NP*.

[20] *DR*, p. 190.

[21] *LS*, p. 223.

its organic will for a spiritual will' and becomes capable of affirming, beyond the fortuitousness of accidents, the necessity of events: 'the event is not what occurs (accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed. It signals and awaits us (...) it is what must be *understood*, *willed* and *represented*[22]'.

Against the objectivism of perception and intelligence, it is thus a question of interpreting sensations as signs, and of revealing their intensive origin, namely the affective becoming by which thought converts bodily signs and signals into significant concepts or images of unequal sense and value: '*To live is to evaluate.* There is no truth of the world as it is thought, no reality of the sensible world, all is evaluation, even and above all the sensible and the real.'[23] Signs are the symptoms of the body's becomings and it is from this pathos that the world of qualities and values emerges, the system of judgment being entirely dependent on the system of affective variations. Moreover, if affections are the physical stimuli that leave a trace or imprint onto bodies, it is only in becoming 'emotions' or 'affects', i.e. in being crystallised by the mind in a purely virtual mode, that they will be able to give rise to judgments, interpretations, and values. This is why Deleuze maintains that evaluations do not derive from pre-existing values but are 'Ways of being, modes of existence of those who judge and evaluate, serving precisely as principles for the values on the basis which they judge. This why we always have the beliefs, feelings and thoughts that we deserve given our way of being or our style of life.'[24] Ideas for Deleuze are indeed judgments, but they are the judgments of Dionysus. They testify to the spiritual and autonomous life of the body that deprives, from within, conscious judgments of their apparent autonomy. Between the concepts of the mind and the affections body, there are therefore the transcendental movements of the 'spirit' or the 'soul', that is of desire now considered as a purely intensive force which, by making faculties communicate, generates thinking in thought and sensing in sensibility. Ideas are therefore always Ideas of a body before becoming representations of things. As immanent field of desire, the vital and hypersensitive body is in and by itself much more revolutionary than a mind which craves stasis and repose. It is to this Dionysian ground of thought, this

[22] Ibid, p. 149.

[23] *NP*, p. 184.

[24] *NP*, p. 1.

'chaosmic' horizon, that Deleuze's philosophy compels us to become attuned: *'We must believe in the body, but as in the germ of life*, the seed which splits open the paving-stones, which has been preserved and lives on in the holy shroud or the mummy's bandages, and which bears witness to life.'[25]

The Deleuzian distinction between a 'plane of transcendence' and a 'plane of immanence', which opposes, to the overarching and judicative vision of consciousness, the transcendental vision of a desiring thought, seeks to account for two radically different ways of sensing, thinking, and living. This is why the body is comparable to a germinal chaos that consciousness, as a regulating plane of organisation, cannot think, but from which it draws its force to think. If 'non-thinking thought' or 'non-philosophy is at the very heart of philosophy',[26] it is insofar as all thought emanates from the impulse of an excessive and energetic body that only knows vital problems. It is important to note that Deleuze defines ideas as purely corporeal processes: they are the dynamic instances 'That go from sensibility to thought and from thought to sensibility.[27] They are entirely immanent imperatives, although they appear as transcendent from the perspective of consciousness that cannot recognise them. Such is the reason why Ideas are not concepts, but the affective Judgments of a Dionysian body which never recognised himself in the humanist portraits of the idealist and rationalist tradition: 'The body is an animal. What the body does it does alone. T.E Lawrence makes Spinoza's formula his own: 'We do not know what a body can do' (...) the mind begins by coldly and curiously regarding what the body does, it is first of all its witness; then it is affected, it becomes an impassionate witness, that is, it experiences for itself affects that are not simply effects of the body, but veritable critical entities that hover over the body and *judge* it. Spiritual entities or abstract Ideas are not what we think they are: they are emotions or affects.'[28]

Thus, if ontological immanence is an anti-hierarchical world stripped of transcendence, it is no less the case that this immanence necessarily

[25] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, p. 173.

[26] *WP*, p. 41.

[27] 'Perhaps... it will be necessary to reserve the name of Ideas not for pure *cogitanda* but rather for those instances which go from sensibility to thought and from thought to sensibility, capable of engendering in each case, according to their own order, the limit– or transcendent – object of each faculty'. *DR*, p. 146.

[28] *ECC*, p. 124.

involves postulating a practical hierarchy of individualities or of 'bodies without organs' that stems from the manner in which each being exercises its power, invents new connections with its milieu and new combinations with other existents. It is necessary therefore to think power, at the level of beings, as being the object of an immanent exercise of composition with forces. We must think bodily experimentation, rather than judgment, as the ontological act *par excellence* through which beings distribute themselves in Being and create new vital connections, as so many transformations of life by the living. This vital power, which is in each of us, is nonetheless continually impeded in and separated from what it can do by identitarian beliefs, moral conventions and hardened powers. It is necessary to liberate new possibilities of life, i.e. construct immanence at the individual and collective level. Through this constructivist activity of the creation of the human by the human, nature and culture become indiscernible, and philosophy immediately merges with an ethics and a politics of material existence. This is why Deleuze and Guattari extend their anorganic vision of the 'body without organs' to social organisation itself. It is on the basis of this resonance between the vital network of the living body and flows of diverse orders that Deleuze and Guattari develop, beginning in the '70s, a political critique of organisations according to a vitalist model. Through this new paradigm, they attempt to rethink social dynamism according to the model of the flows of desire; the lines of energy that circulate in material bodies. The processes of socialisation are therefore conceived as combining two coexisting aspects that proceed from two regimes of desire: on the one hand, a regime of organisation that stratifies through encoding and through the imposition of a unitary and fixed form (all actualisation is a 'territorialisation'), and on the other hand, a regime of disorganisation that corresponds to the perpetual reconfigurations of forces and that results in social production itself (virtualisation as de-differentiation or 'deterritorialisation'). This distinction between a molar level and a molecular level must not be understood as an ontological difference between transcendent organisation and immanent processes. On the contrary, Deleuze and Guattari seek to think the capitalist organisation of the world in which we live as a purely immanent organisation, integrating within itself the conditions of its own overturning. It is because transcendence is an illusion, a fiction, that

it is all the more effective, and must be fought against at every level of human existence, knowledges and practices.

The problem of the hierarchy of desiring regimes, of 'bodies without organs' and the classification of assemblages constitutes the principal problem of what Deleuze and Guattari call 'schizo-analysis'.[29] This pragmatic discipline, individual and collective, does not only consist in exploring the breaches of representative thought in favor of creative processes, but also in locating the breaches of power and the limits to its exercise, in order to transform it from within. Power is nothing other than stratified desire. Thus, the 'combat of free men' for Deleuze is always a combat against transcendence and judgment, and this is why it is also a combat which must be carried out on oneself, in order to conjure up, within oneself, the reactive tendencies or 'micro-fascisms' through which we take pleasure in judging other existents and in exercising our power over others. It is therefore up to us, in existence, not to submit to the pseudo-transcendence of *word-orders* in order to grasp the modes of existence they imply, and perhaps to extract from them opportunities for transforming the social and ethical order of things. The Deleuzian reconfiguration of ontology, which conceives of beings as the immanent differentiations of Being or life, would remain abstract and insufficient if it did not allow for the emergence of a new problem. This problem is that of accounting for the practical individuations of beings within being, and requires the assessment of the various ways in which beings re-problematise their relation to life and empower their freedom. It is in this sense that Deleuze's ontology of vital differences is an interrogation of the human's potentialities to create new modes of valuation and sense, capable of integrating the complexity of a fluent world and of weaving new connections between individual and collective spheres. Deleuze's philosophy is not the unconditional affirmation of all modes of existence in the name of life. Difference, life or immanence never plays the part of a super-sensible absolute to which one should

[29] 'If it is a question of showing that rhizomes also have their own, even more rigid, despotism and hierarchy, then fine and good: for there is no dualism, no ontological dualism between here and there, no axiological dualism between good and bad, no blend or American synthesis. There are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots. Moreover, there are despotic formations of immanence and channelisation specific to rhizomes, just as there are anarchic deformations in the transcendent system of trees, aerial roots, and subterranean stems' Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* p. 22. Also: 'The most important problem of all: given a certain machinic assemblage, what is its relation of effectuation with the abstract machine? How does it effectuate it, with what adequation? Classify assemblages.' Ibid. p. 79.

return. Life is, rather, that which does not cease to return as new, and that we must learn to re-invent, love and affirm. This explains why the exigency of creation, which Deleuze never ceased to emphasise, cannot be understood as the indifferent promotion of all images or simulacra, but as a selective enterprise of resistance against the dominant theoretical schema that offer impoverished visions of human potentialities, feed on ignorance and reinforce the domination of opinion. In this sense, Deleuze's philosophy is a philosophy of desire because it is a philosophy of freedom that does not acknowledge a difference between existing, thinking, creating and resisting to the clichés of the present. For in the last instance, it is not from the chaotic abyss of the body, but from opinion that emerges 'the misfortune of the people'.[30]

[30] *WP*, p. 206.

'The deepest is the skin': Deleuze and Simondon as Superficial Philosophers

Claudio Rozzoni[1]

1. The Incorporeal

'The deepest is the skin': that is the beautiful expression that Deleuze borrows from Valery – from *L'idée fixe*[2] to be precise – and which appears at the beginning of *The Logic of Sense* (recurring again in the fifteenth series, as we will soon see). This formula interests Deleuze greatly because it brings him back to what is for him the 'first great reversal of Platonism', the 'radical reversal',[3] that is to say, the reversal of Platonism brought about by the Stoics. From the beginning of this work Deleuze tells us that the Stoics were the 'initiators of a new image of the philosopher',[4] an aspect to which I will return later. First, we must pose two questions: who are Deleuze's Stoics? And what in their thought is so decisive for the philosopher of the reversal of Platonism?

The Logic of Sense, the text through which Stoic philosophy installs itself in Deleuze's theoretical horizon, is a work which owes a great deal to a book by Emile Bréhier – which Deleuze cites – entitled *La Théorie des incorporels dans l'ancien stoïcisme*. This is for two fundamental reasons. Firstly, this work underscores the revolutionary importance of Stoic thought with respect to Plato's philosophy as well as that of Aristotle. Secondly, Deleuze borrows from this text a notion which will be elevated to a central place for understanding his whole philosophy, that is to say, the notion of the *incorporeal*. Bréhier, in the work in

[1] Translated by Taylor Hammer.

[2] P. Valéry, *L'Idée fixe* (Paris: Gallimard, La Pléiade, 1931), p. 216.

[3] Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1969), p. 16. English translation, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 7, translation modified. Hereafter cited as *LS*. Citations of translations will list the French page number first followed by the translation page number.

[4] *LS*, p. 7; viii.

question, recalls in effect that, according to Sextus, the term incorporeal designated for the Stoics four entities: the expressible (*lekton* in ancient Greek), the void, place [*le lieu*], and time. It is the first that we will consider here since that is the one Deleuze makes use of in *The Logic of Sense*. We must say right away that the notion of the incorporeal does not let itself be easily *grasped* [*saisir*] (in the classically philosophical sense of the German verb *greifen*). It is not by chance then that Deleuze resorts to the image of vapor in order to characterize it. At the beginning of *The Logic of Sense* one can read about a 'faint incorporeal vapor which escapes from bodies, a film without volume which envelops them, a mirror which reflects them'.[5]

The notion of the incorporeal is a slippery one. It will be difficult to approach. Bréhier tells us, following Chrysippus, that incorporeals can be neither agent nor patient, these being actions reserved for bodies, and this for a very important reason: the incorporeal does not touch bodies since it is not separated from them. We see then that one must think the two planes, corporeal and incorporeal, as two planes which are distinguished but not separated. If for Plato the incorporeal was separated from the real world in its eternal truth, for the Stoics the incorporeal is placed at the surfaces of beings, in order to become the effect of them – a particular kind of effect, to be sure – a superficial effect.

'Surface effects' is the exact phrasing of the title of the second series of *The Logic of Sense,* the series through which this ungraspable notion seeps into Deleuze's thinking and in which Deleuze begins take it as his own from the project set out Bréhier's book:

> The Stoics also distinguish between two kinds of things. [On the one hand,] there are bodies with their tensions physical qualities, actions and passions, and the corresponding 'states of affairs.' [...] There are no causes *and* effects among bodies. Rather, all bodies are causes – causes [...] for each other.
>
> [And on the other hand,] all bodies are causes [...] for each other – but causes of what? They are causes of certain things of an entirely different nature. These *effects* are not bodies, but, properly speaking, 'incorporeal' entities. They are not physical qualities and properties [...]. They are not things or facts but events. We can not say that they exist, but rather that they subsist or inhere (having this minimum of being which is appropriate to that which is not a thing, a nonexisting entity). They are not substantives or adjectives but verbs. They are neither agents nor patients, but results of actions and passions. They are 'impassive' entities – impassive results'.[6]

[5] *LS*, p. 20; 10, translation modified. The mirror is also a very important image, which Deleuze uses in *Cinema 2* in order to define the virtual.

This is the reversal. If in Platonism one can think the incorporeal as that which characterizes the maximum of being, according to the Stoic reversal one can only attribute a minimum of being to it. He insists, however, that this superficial minimum does not lack depth.

There are incorporeal events which inhere at the surface of bodies like an immaterial vapor, events which, in language, are expressed by verbs. According to a famous example that Deleuze draws from Bréhier, the tree is not green, but rather 'the tree greens'.[7]

There is here a complete formula of becoming, the being of becoming. As he will say many years later, in 'On the superiority of Anglo-American Literature', these becomings expressed by verbs have no subject and bring everything back to the impersonality of the event. And in my opinion, still thinking of the same text, we can see very well once again in what sense the incorporeal event is an effect. As such, we say, it must be effectuated in bodies, it depends on them since it is in them that it finds 'its causes', but, having said this, we must necessarily and at the same time specify that the state of affairs cannot absolutely exhaust the effectuation of the event, which, in turn acts, using the terminology of *The Logic of Sense,* as a *quasi-cause* which inheres in and dominates the states of affairs which effect it.[8]

It seems that the event needs the bodies which are its cause, but cause and effect in this case are two names for two inseparable but different orders. When one asks, still referring to 'On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature', 'Where is the storming of the Bastille?' or 'Where is the battle?'[9] is there not an echo of *The Logic of Sense*, where Deleuze writes, and to which we will return, ' "Where" is the battle?'.[10] And, once again, when, in responding to this question, one says that 'every event is a fog of a million droplets',[11] it is again to the image of vapor that we have recourse. That is why already in *The Logic of Sense*,

[6] *LS*, pp. 13-14; 4-5.

[7] *LS*, p. 15; 6.

[8] On this point, cf. *LS*, fourteenth series, 'Of Double Causality'.

[9] Gilles Deleuze, 'De la supériorité de la littérature anglaise-américaine', in *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), p. 79. Translated as, 'On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature' in *Dialogues II* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London: Continuum, 2006), p. 48, hereafter *OSL*.

[10] *LS*, p. 122; 101.

[11] *OSL*, p. 79; 48.

above all with respect to Bourquet (whom Deleuze qualifies as Stoic[12]), the fundamental ethical consequence of this position is brought to light, a consequence that one could call, without contempt, ontologically *frail*. It is necessary to become worthy of the event that one effectuates: 'My wound existed before me, I was born to embody it.'[13] And in 'On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature', he reiterates this idea, 'The wound is something that I receive in my body, [...] but there is also an eternal truth of the wound as impassive, incorporeal event'.[14]

Is this not an invitation to live in accordance with Nietzsche's 'yes saying' and to not sacrifice the eternal return of the wound? If one lives the eternal return only looking at states of affairs, one would never understand how 'to say yes' in the face of his or her misfortune – and this in turn is precisely one of the first objections that one can raise while 'learning' this 'doctrine' (which, deep down, is not a doctrine in the strict sense of the term). Counter-effectuating the event is a manner of 'yes saying' because when I say yes, I do not say yes to the state of affairs, but to the events which 'inhere' on their surface. Would it not be too heavy to 'say yes' to my wound if this wound exhausted the state of affairs? One only finds lightness, on the contrary, in saying yes to the 'splendor of the impersonal one [*splendeur du on*]' which inheres on the surface of my being. In the lecture which ends the famous 1964 colloquium on Nietzsche – organized by Deleuze himself at *L'Abbaye de Royaumont* – Deleuze had moreover already written in very clear terms that, 'Zarathustra knows that to affirm means [...] to lighten, to discharge what lives, to dance, to create'. It is in counter-effectuating the event that one can 'say yes' to life. As Deleuze says, 'saying yes' is a change of the will. It is to 'arrive at this will which makes us the event',[15] an 'apotheosis of the will' as Bousquet says. And in their words the proposition of Zarathustra resonates with a new splendor, nourished by that of the impersonal *One* [du *On*]: 'But it is thus that I wanted what was to be. It is thus that I want it'. And what is this

[12]'We are sometimes hesitant to call Stoic a concrete or poetic way of life, as if the name of a doctrine were too bookish or abstract to designate the most personal relation with a wound. But where do doctrines come from, if not from wounds and vital aphorisms which, with their charge of exemplary provocation, are so many speculative anecdotes'. (*LS*, p. 174; 148).

[13]*LS*, p. 174; 148.The expression is notably from J. Bousquet, *Traduit du Silence*, (Paris: Gallimard, *Les Capitales*, 1941).

[14]*OSL*, p. 80; 49.

[15]'volitional intuition' in Gurvitch's sense, as we will see shortly.

splendor? 'The brilliance, the splendor of the event, is sense'. This is nothing else than to say that the eternal return is selective, counter-effectuating the event, selecting – in this sense the eternal return is selective – the pure event of what happens. In *The Logic of Sense* (twenty-first series, 'Of the Event') he speaks very clearly of a 'selective force' selecting in what happens the 'pure event':[16] The event is not what happens in the presence of the instant, but what inheres in this instant doubled into the 'past-future', which sketches the present of Chronos, of the states of things.[17] It is in this sense that one must read, already in 1965's 'Klossowski or Bodies-Language' that 'The true subject of the eternal return is intensity and singularity; the relation between the eternal return as actualized intentionality and the will to power as open intensity derives from this fact'.[18] (And one could say that if the passage from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche was the passage from 'will' to 'will to power', from Nietzsche to Deleuze it is from 'will to power' to 'intensity'[19]).

It is thus that one can counter-effectuate the event and breathe the incorporeal vapor on the surface of states of affairs. It is necessary, according to the 'beautiful' formulation of Blanchot, to liberate 'the part of the event that its accomplishment cannot realize';[20] it is necessary to become 'the quasi-cause of what is produced within us'.[21] The state of affairs which effects the event, as we have already seen, does not exhaust the event inhering on the surface that we call, following Deleuze, the incorporeal quasi-cause, with all of the 'neutral splendor which it possesses in itself in its impersonal and *pre-individual nature*, beyond the general and the particular, the collective and the private'.[22] This is the 'splendor of the impersonal One', to use this expression which Deleuze makes use of at the very beginning of *Difference and Repetition*, but on which he had already written, for example, in 'Klossowski or Bodies-

[16]*LS*, p. 177; 151.

[17]Cf. *LS*, p. 176-178; 150-153.

[18]Gilles Deleuze. 'Klossowski et les corps-langage' in *Logique du Sens* (Paris : Les Editions de Minuit, 1969), p. 348. Translated as 'Klossowski or Bodies-Language' in *The Logic of Sense* (New York : Columbia University Press 1990), p. 300, herafter *KC*.

[19]'Intensity, being already difference in itself...' (KC, p. 348; 299)

[20]M. Blanchot, *L'Espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), p. 160. Translated as *The Space of Literature*, trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 155

[21]*LS*, p. 174; 148.

[22]*LS*, p. 174; 148. My emphasis.

Language'[23] and which is moreover present in *The Logic of Sense* where one can read: 'How different this impersonal 'one' is from that which we encounter in everyday banality. [We are obviously quite distant from the impersonal *das man* of Heidegger.] It is the 'one' of impersonal and pre-individual singularities. [...] The splendor of the impersonal 'one' is the splendor of the event itself or of the fourth person.'[24]

2. The Superficial Philosopher

The eighteenth series of *The Logic of Sense* is entitled 'The Three Images of Philosophers'. Here, instead of tracing out a history of thought, Deleuze sketches a geography which, according to his own orientations, leads him to distinguish three images of philosophers: the Platonic philosopher, the Pre-Socratic-Nietzschean philosopher, and the Stoic philosopher. It seems, firstly, that the 'classical' image of the philosopher had 'been set by Platonism'.[25] The contemporary *doxa*, still today, wants to mock philosophy while passing through this image of the philosopher, and repeating (without realizing it) the gesture of the Thracian servant who, according to Plato's *Theaetetus*, laughs at Thales when he falls into the well while staring at the sky.[26] (And you see that it is already a problem of orientation. Neither the height of the sky nor the depth of the well, but the concrete of the surface seems to be lacking here in Millet's philosophy). Ascension is therefore the orientation of Thought which characterizes Platonic philosophy. The movement of Platonism tends toward heights, and its philosopher is the 'philosopher of heights'.

Nietzsche sees in this orientation a completely decadent movement, he sees there a 'human, all too human' flight that one takes in order to escape 'an unbearable terror'. With Nietzsche, the geography of thought is again put into question. Deleuze brings the Nietzschean method closer to the one that, in his opinion, belongs to Pre-Socratic philosopher. Here we encounter the image of the 'philosopher of the hammer' which distrusts heights and 'does not leave the cave'. But 'on the contrary, he thinks that we are not involved enough or sufficiently

[23] *KC*, p. 345; 297, translation modified.
[24] *LS*, p. 178; 152, translation modified
[25] *LS*, p. 152; 127.
[26] Plato, *Theaetetus*, 173d-174b.

engulfed therein'.[27] We have gone from philosophy to the blow of the hammer.

However, it is always Nietzsche who teaches us that behind the veil there is another veil: 'Behind every cave there is another, even deeper'.[28] And, in effect, Deleuze tells us, 'Nietzsche [like Alice according to *The Logic of Sense*] was able to rediscover depth only after conquering surfaces', even if, he adds, 'he did not remain at the surface'.[29]

Is there then a place for a new image of the philosopher? It will be necessary, to look for it, to rise up from the depths, not in order to regain the height, but in order to conquer the surface. This adventure of surfaces, in *The Logic of Sense*, appears to be the one undertaken by the Stoics. Deleuze remarks that it seems to be of them that Nietzsche speaks when he says, 'How profound these Greeks were as a consequence of their being superficial'[30] (and we will later need to recall the implications of this passage). What is there on the surface? The gaze of these Greeks no longer looks toward the high or toward the low but rather (to stick with the Deleuzian geographical image), laterally:

> Rereading Diogenes Laertius' most beautiful chapters, those on Diogenes the Cynic and of Chrysippus the Stoic, we witness the development of a curious system of provocations. [...] [The philosopher] keeps quiet when people ask him questions or gives them a blow with his staff. [Or again,] if you pose abstract and difficult questions, he will respond by designating some bit of food [...] which he will then break over you – always with a blow of his staff. [...] Yet he also holds a new discourse, a new logos animated with paradox and philosophical values and significations which are new. Indeed, we feel that these anecdotes are no longer Platonic or pre-Socratic. This is a reorientation of all thought and of what it means to think: *there is no longer depth or height.*[31]

But it is not a question, we can already say, of thinking the surface against depth and height – or, more precisely, *against* all depth and all height – but of reevaluating, of reintegrating in order to be able to think a new depth as well as a new height. It is a question of rediscovering the depth of the surface, as has been suggested by two phrases that we have already cited: 'How profound these Greeks were as a consequence of their being superficial' and 'The deepest is the skin'.

But what riches haunt the surface? What are the 'objects' that one finds there? It seems that it is a question of the same very special 'objects' that we have already taken on. In rising up from the depths

[27] *LS*, p. 153; 128.
[28] *LS*, pp. 153-154; 129.
[29] *LS*, p. 154; 129.
[30] *LS*, p. 154; 129.
[31] *LS*, p. 155; 130

and in falling from the heights one finds the 'incorporeal events', the new frontier 'between things and propositions'[32]: 'The double sense of the surface, the continuity of the reverse and right sides, replace height [Platonic, as we said] and depth [Pre-Socratic as we also saw]. [...] Sense appears and is played out at the surface. [...] The staff-blow philosophy [...] replaces the hammer-blow philosophy'.[33]

The third image of the philosopher is thus sketched out, the hero of the surface, the unknown dimension – in which events *inhere* – which remains to be 'explored'.

3. Simondon and the Transcendental Field

Henceforth we hear about Simondon in so many terms. Precisely when it is a question of posing the depth of the surface, when it is a question of probing this impalpable frontier, Gilbert Simondon's reflection comes in to enhance Deleuze's theoretical force. We will see that it is thanks to Simondon's notions that this immaterial surface – this edge between things and propositions, this vapor populated with 'singularities' – will find the force to install itself in Deleuze's philosophical horizon never to leave again.

It will therefore be necessary right away to enter back into *The Logic of Sense* this time passing through another doorway, that is, the fifteenth series – 'Of Singularities' – that one could also call the Simondon-series. Right away, this series interrogates anew the problem that we have already taken on concerning the place [*lieu*] of the event: ' "Where" is the battle?'[34] The soldier who wants to grasp the event must go, to paraphrase Nietzsche, beyond 'courage and cowardice'[35] in order to grasp it, certainly not by means of the understanding (once again in the sense of *greifen*), but by the 'volitional intuition' of Gurvitch that Deleuze uses to designate 'a willing of the event, in the two-fold sense of the genitive'.[36] The battle, in effect, is not exhausted by its empirical effectuation. If one wants to grasp – through 'pure grasping', which

[32] *LS*, p. 158; 132.
[33] *LS*, p. 158; 133.
[34] *LS*, p. 122; 101.
[35] *LS*, p. 122; 101.
[36] *LS*, p. 123n1; 344n1, Cf. note 14 above: it is 'arriving at the will which makes us the event'.

characterizes this 'volitional intuition'[37] – the event at the surface of things, it will be necessary, as we'll soon see, to discover new faculties, or new usages – new transcendental exercises in place of the 'old ones'.

To explore this frontier, this impassive *Aion*, Deleuze must raise up, with the help of Simondon, to a level just below Husserl, that is to say, just below the transcendental consciousness, in order to 'determine an impersonal and pre-individual transcendental *field* [and not a consciousness]'.[38] We cannot stop at the empirical dimension, at the 'empirical exercise'[39] of the faculties. This will be then the first step toward trying to make oneself sensitive to the signs of the transcendental. Because it will be a question of a new – unsettled, if you will – aesthetic (in the sense of *aisthesis*) pedagogy,[40] required to sense what, according to an expression in *Difference and Repetition*, 'can only be sensed'.[41] The Simondonian pre-individual is below any consciousness (even Sartrean consciousness) and is only 'inhabited' by 'emissions of singularities' – 'heterogeneous series' which self-organize into a 'metastable system' – which 'play out' at the 'surface' of things; it is a 'mobile, immanent principle of auto-unification through a nomadic distribution'.[42] Nomad here, following Deleuze, evokes 'the pastoral sense of *nemo* (to pasture)[43] [which] only belatedly implied an allocation of the land'.[44] Lacking transcendental consciousness, 'singularites are the true transcendental events'. Ferlinghetti calls them 'the fourth person singular,'[45] another term for what Deleuze referred to earlier as 'splendor of the impersonal One'.[46] This fulfills the intent of the Stoic sage – the hero of the surfaces – and Simondon whose interest in science seems to

[37] *LS*, p. 122; 101.
[38] *LS*, p. 124; 102, italics added.
[39] Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et Répétition* (Paris: P.U.F. 1968) p. 186 Translated as *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) p. 143, hereafter *DR*.
[40] cf. *DR*, p. 305; 236-237.
[41] *DR*, p. 182; 140.
[42] *LS*, pp. 124-125; 102.
[43] 'Nomadic distribution (distributing in an open space instead of distributing a closed space [enclosed livestock raising, good sense])' (*LS*, p. 93; 75). Good sense [*bon sens*]: affirmation of a sole direction, that is to say, the right direction [*sens bon*]. But be careful: 'The opposite of good sense is not the other direction [*sens*] [...]. But the paradox as passion reveals that one cannot separate two directions [...]. 'Which way?' asks Alice. The question has no answer, since it is the characteristic of sense not to have any direction or 'good sense.' Rather, sense always goes to both directions at once, in the infinitely subdivided and elongated past-future' (LS 94-95; 77).
[44] *DR*, p. 54n1; 309n6.
[45] *LS*, p. 125; 102-103.
[46] *DR*, p. 4; xii, translation modified, *and passim*.

be read by Deleuze through the characterization that he gives to Nietzsche in *Difference and Repetition*[47]: 'It is true that [he] was interested in the energetics of his time, but this was not the scientific nostalgia of a philosopher. We must discover what it was that he sought to find in the science of intensive quantities – namely, the means to realize what he called Pascal's prophesy: to make chaos an object of affirmation'.[48] The superficial frontier, populated by events discovered by the Stoics, is enriched thanks to 'the new concepts established by Simondon';[49] It becomes a place 'teeming with anonymous and nomadic, impersonal and pre-individual singularities';[50] it becomes a 'transcendental field' on which we ourselves 'tread'. Note 3 of the fifteenth series of *The Logic of Sense*, which is very important in this regard, dissipates all doubt regarding Deleuze's inspiration by announcing 'the five characteristics through which [he tries] to define the transcendental field' following *L'individu et sa genèse physico-biologique*:[51]

1. *The potential energy of the field*, the energy 'of the pure event' which makes it so that this field is 'a system which is neither stable nor unstable, but rather "metastable"'.[52]

2. *The internal resonance of series*, a resonance which does not find outside itself a principle which ties the heterogeneous series together. One recalls the Simondonian notion of *disparation* that Deleuze often uses, especially in *Difference and Repetition*. Simondon beautifully defines this notion in *L'individu et sa genèse physico biologique*, as follows: 'The word [disparation] is borrowed from the psycho-physiological theory of perception; there is disparation when two identical, non-superimposable wholes [*ensembles*], such as the left retinal image and the right retinal image, are grasped together as a system, being able to permit the formation of a unique whole of a superior degree, which integrates all of their elements thanks to a new dimension (for example, in the case of vision, the distinguishing [*étagement*] of different planes in depth)'.[53] The integration of disparate elements implies therefore the creation of a 'new dimension'.

[47] One could also say that it is the manner through which Deleuze wants to read Simondon and use his reflection. On this point, cf. Deleuze's 'book review' (1966) of Simondon's *L'Individu et sa genèse physico-biologique* (Paris : PUF, 1964), hereafter *IGPB*.

[48] *DR*, p. 313; 243

[49] Gilles Deleuze, '*Simondon, L'Individu et sa genèse physico-biologique*', in *L'île déserte et autres écrits*, Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2002) p. 124. Translated as 'On Gilbert Simondon', in *Desert Islands and Other Texts*, trans. Michael Taormina, (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004) p. 89, hereafter *OGS*.

[50] *LS*, p. 125; 103.

[51] *LS*, p. 126n3; 344n3

[52] *LS*, p. 125; 103.

It is necessary however to point out that, in the note in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze makes a small critique of Simondon concerning his development of the notion of disparation. Here, if on the one hand Deleuze recognizes in Simondon the true source of the notions of 'disparate series and their internal resonance in the constitution of systems',[54] on the other hand, he recalls that in *L'individu et sa genèse physico biologique*, Simondon 'maintains [in order for there to be resonance] the requirement of resemblance between series [even the Simondonian definition of disparation that we just cited refers to a partial superimposability between the series], or the smallness of the differences in play'.[55] In any case, Deleuze's concern is that resemblance, however small, must never be presupposed as a condition for there to be a resonance between disparate elements, but rather always envisioned as an effect of the resonating between two different terms.

No one knew better than Proust how to give an image of this 'new dimension' which surges from disparation, when, while speaking of the *ego*, he says that:

> He cannot be fed by what there is in the picture of an artist, or a book by a writer, nor by the second picture by the artist, the second book by the writer. But if in the second picture or second book he perceives something which is in neither the first nor the second, but in some way exists between them, in a sort of ideal picture which he sees projecting itself in spiritual substantiality out of the picture, he has been given his meat, and begins to live and be happy again.[56]

We cannot demonstrate it here, but this notion of disparation entails an entire theory of the metaphor which would no longer be founded on resemblance, but on the difference between disparate elements.

But it is the third point which concerns us more:

[53] *IGPB*, p. 223.

[54] *DR*, p. 158n1; 318n25.

[55] *DR*, p. 158n1; 318n25.

[56] M. Proust, *Contre Sainte-Beuve, précédé de Pastiches et mélanges et suivi de Essais et articles*, ed. P. Clarac and Y. Sandre (Paris: Gallimard, 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', 1971), p. 296. Translated as *Marcel Proust and Art and Literature*, trans. Sylvia Townsend Warner. (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1997) p. 266.

3. *The topological surface of membranes*

'Singularities or potentials haunt the surface'. The philosopher of the surface, the superficial philosopher knows that 'everything happens at the surface', even in biology where Simondon shows us the importance of membranes and the skin – 'the deepest' – which 'has at its disposal a vital and properly superficial potential energy'.[57] 'Has at its disposal', Deleuze says, because the superficial potential energy 'is not *localized* at the surface, but is rather bound to its formation and reformation' haunting the surface.[58] It is not a question of displacing interior and exterior, but rather of thinking the two beginning from this threshold which poses them as such. 'Thus, even biologically, it is necessary to understand [following Valéry] that "the deepest is the skin".[59]

According to Simondon, it is thanks to the membrane that, 'internal space is topologically in contact with the content of external space, at the limits of the living thing [*du vivant*]; there is, in fact, no distance in topology [...]. *To belong to interiority does not mean only to be inside, but to be on the interior side of the limit.* [...] At the level of the polarized membrane, internal past and external future face one another'.[60] And Simondon adds that, concerning 'multi-cellular organisms', for example, 'there are several stages of interiority and exteriority'.[61] Deleuze, for example, will remember this non-Euclidian[62] topological reading of interiority and exteriority borrowed from Simondon when he speaks of the brain in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*[63] as well as in the book on *Foucault*[64] when highlighting the Simondonian distinction between absolute and relative interiority and exteriority.

Finally, we have already spoken of the fourth characteristic of the

[57] *LS*, p. 126; 103.
[58] *LS*, p. 126; 104.
[59] *LS*, p. 126; 103.
[60] *LS*, p. 126; 104, Deleuze's italics, translation modified, citing *IGPB* p. 260-264.
[61] *IGPB*, p. 260.
[62] Deleuze borrows from Simondon the manner of defining 'non-Euclidian' in this reading of interiority as a dimension that one cannot 'only [define as] "being inside" in the Euclidian sense, but being on the interior side of the limit without delaying functional effectiveness, without isolation, without intertia' (IGPB, p. 264).
[63] Cf. Gilles Deleuze. *Cinéma II – L'image-temps*, (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985.) p. 233. Translated as *Cinema 2 : The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London : Continuum Press, 2005), p. 308.
[64] Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1986), pp. 126-128; Translated as *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 118-120.

transcendental field – *the organization of sense* – according to which the surface is the non-localized place [*lieu*] of sense, which 'surveys [*survole*]' (without separating from it, of course) – like potential energy, we could say – the actualisations (the states of affairs) which effectuate it without exhausting it.

Whence the fifth characteristic of the transcendental field, that is to say, its *problematic status*, the aspect that *Difference and Repetition* manages to envision and develop most amply.

4. Transcendental Philosophy

At this point, however, one might rightly point out that there is a difference between the depth of the transcendental field which we see in *Difference and Repetition* and the superficiality of the same field that we have discussed up to now, in *The Logic of Sense*. However, in order to understand this apparent divergence, it is enough to recall the two formulas which have guided our discussion thus far: 'The deepest is the skin' and 'How profound these Greeks were as a consequence of their being superficial'. The depth invoked in *Difference and Repetition* is in effect the depth of the *transcendental* field against the *empirical* surface of states of affairs. Depth, therefore, is in no way denied at the transcendental surface discussed in *The Logic of Sense*. Moreover, one can understand the note that Deleuze wrote in 1974 for the Italian edition of *The Logic of Sense*. Deleuze writes:

> For my part, my book *Difference and Repetition* aspired as much to a kind of classical height as to an archaic depth. The sketch that I made of a theory of intensity was marked by depth, either true or false; intensity was presented as coming from depth [but, I would add as a caution, an intensive depth]. In *The Logic of Sense* the novelty for me consisted in the fact that I learned something of surfaces.[65]

But, in any case, Deleuze tells us, 'the notions remain the same: "multiplicity," "singularity," "intensity," "events," [...] "problems," "paradoxes" – but reorganised according to this dimension'.[66] One could say then that the surface of *The Logic of Sense* is 'metaphysical surface',[67] or, as Deleuze will say again while returning to Stoic philosophy in 'On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature',[68] (meta)physical surface (note that we must write 'meta' between parentheses) or transcendental field. To determine the depth of the surface, of this (meta)physical surface,

[65] *Logica del senso* (Milano, Feltrinelli, Milano 2006), p. 294. Hereafter cited as *LS (Italian trans.)*.
[66] *LS (Italian trans.)*, p. 294.
[67] *LS*, p. 150; 125.
[68] *OSL*, p. 78; 47.

means then to not stop at the empirical dimension, which would require recourse to metaphysics (without parentheses in this case). This entails an entire revision of the doctrine of faculties, another pedagogy of the senses,[69] another image – or rather a non-image, or again an other-image – of thought. Can we think in a voluntarist way this pre-individual dimension which accompanies its effectuation without being confused with it? Can we 'grasp intensity independently of extensity or prior to the qualities in which it is developed?'[70] Only by means of 'a fundamental encounter and not a recognition' (which can only have purchase in the empirical). In effect, the object of the encounter is 'that which can only be sensed'.[71] Quite a bizarre definition. What is that which 'can only be sensed'? It is not just the sensible, which can also be 'recalled, imagined or conceived',[72] but also that which happens in habitual recognition as in 'Good Morning, Theaetetus!' It is not an *aistheton*, a sensible, but an *aistheteon*, a *sentiendum*, which 'can only be sensed'. It is no longer an 'empirical exercise'[73] of the faculty which permits the other faculties to grasp the same object that it grasps, but a 'transcendent exercise'[74] which forces the faculty to encounter 'the being of the sensible'.[75] Transcendent not in that it 'puts us in contact' with a separate dimension of the sensible, but rather with a dimension what while completely distinguishing itself, does not separate itself. 'Distinct' but indiscernible, such are the actual and the virtual', Deleuze will write later in *Cinema 2*, a work which resonates with several aspects of *Difference and Repetition* which we must quote to avoid any misunderstanding:

> The transcendental form of a faculty is indistinguishable from its disjointed, superior or transcendent exercise. Transcendent in no way means that the faculty addresses itself to objects outside the world but, on the contrary, that it grasps that in the world which concerns it exclusively and brings it into the world'[76]

The object of the encounter, therefore, 'cannot be sense (from the point of view of the empirical exercise) and can *only* be sensed (from the point of view of the transcendent exercise)'.[77] This being of the sensible is intensity, the incorporeal 'always covered by a quality',[78] which surpasses in its *profound surface* the extensivity [*l'etendu*] which can be grasped by all the faculties in the empirical exercise.

And this encounter is also the first link in the violent chain, which 'awakens the memory' and forces us to think. But we need to be careful. This violent communication does not awaken the memory in its empirical exercise. It is the transcendental memory which is set to work, called, in its turn, by its particular object, that is to say 'what can only be recalled'[79] or the 'impossible to recall (in the empirical exercise)'[80] and therefore that which cannot have been perceived, seen, imagined, thought. It is the immemorial, insofar as it can *only* be recalled. But the transcendental memory in turn obliges 'thought to grasp that which can only be thought, the *cogitandum* or *noēteon*, the Essence',[81] the 'unthinkable'.[82] I would, therefore, give, in conclusion, a literary example of the action of this violent chain which alone can make us think the unthinkable of the pre-individual, the depth of surfaces, and suggests to us that, if one qualifies Deleuze and Simondon as superficial philosophers, one could, in the same sense, think Proust as a superficial author.[83] In *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*, the narrator, while out on a walk, 'suddenly [is] filled with a feeling of profound bliss'[84] while perceiving three trees (the famous episode of the three trees of Hudimesnil). The encounter which strikes the narrator with an *intensity*, simultaneously deep and impalpable, giving him a 'feeling of profound bliss', makes him right away search for an empirical memory to explain its cause: '[The three trees formed] a pattern that I knew I had seen somewhere before. I could not manage to recognize the place they had, as it were, been separated from; but I sensed that it must have been somewhere familiar to me, long ago'.[85] But the attempt at empirical recognition is destined to fail:

> I gazed at the three trees, which I could see quite clearly; but my mind

[69] *DR*, p. 305; 237.
[70] *DR*, p. 305; 237.
[71] *DR*, p. 183; 140.
[72] *DR*, p. 182; 139.
[73] *DR*, p. 182; 140.
[74] *DR*, p. 182; 140.
[75] *DR*, p. 182; 140
[76] *DR*, p. 186; 143.

[77] *DR*, p. 304; 236, italics added.
[78] *DR*, p. 305; 236.
[79] *DR*, p. 183; 140.
[80] *DR*, p. 183; 140, translation modified.
[81] *DR*, p. 183; 141.
[82] *DR*, p. 184; 141.
[83] Moreover, Deleuze, in 'The Method of Dramatization', writes that 'A physical experiment, no less than the psychic experiments of the Proustian variety, imply the communication of disparate series, the intervention of a dark precursor, as well as resonances and forced movements that result'. Gilles Deleuze 'La Méthode de dramitisation' in *L'île déserte et autres écrits* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2002), p. 137. Translated as 'The Method of Dramatization' in *Desert Islands and Other Texts*, trans. Michael Taormina (London: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 98, translation modified.
[84] M. Proust, *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (Paris: Gallimard, 'Folio', 1988), p. 284. Translated as *In the Shadow of Young Girls in Flower*, trans. James Grieve (New York: Viking, 2002), p. 297, hereafter *O*.
[85] *O*, p. 285; 297.

> suspected they hid [Recall that we just understood Deleuze to say that the being of the sensible, intensity, the incorporeal, is 'always covered over by a quality'] something on which I could have no purchase [like the incorporeal, which is like a vapor. One cannot simply 'grasp' it.], as our fingertips at the full stretch of our arm may from time to time barely touch but not quite grasp objects that lie just out of reach'[86]

The empirical exercise of the faculties cannot grasp the incorporeal vapor. The memory which is employed in this case being the transcendental memory, all attempts at empirical recollection cannot find any purchase: 'Where had I set eyes on them before? [...] Did this mean they belonged to years of my past life [...]? Or did they belong to one of those places one glimpses in dreams [...]? Or perhaps I had never seen them anywhere; and though I thought they were a memory to be [empirically, we should add] recalled, were they in fact only an invitation [*solliciter*, the verb is used by Deleuze in Difference and Repetition to describe the non-voluntary dimension of the exercise of the faculties] to comprehend an idea, concealing behind themselves [...] a meaning that was every bit as obscure and ungraspable as a distant past?'[87]

It seems then that memory in his transcendent exercise 'grasps that which from the outset can only be recalled, even the first time: not a contingent past [empirical forgetting, I saw the trees, but I do not remember where], but the being of the past as such and the past of every time [essential forgetting]'.[88] The thing '*appears* in person' *as* 'forgotten'. Finally the narrator tells us that this reminiscence without empirical recognition invites him to deepen his thought. This verb, also used by Deleuze, speaks to us of an invitation to think, of the third link in the violent chain through which the thing strikes us. It is the intervention of the chain that the three trees cause the narrator to think. To think what object?

The narrator says that he wants to be alone to discover it. Merely discover?

> It was a pleasure that came to me seldom, and its object always lay beyond my mental scope, requiring me *to create it myself*; but on each occasion when it did come, I would have the feeling that all the things which had happened to me since the last time were more or less devoid of signification, and that, for my real life to begin at last, I must attend to nothing but this unique reality.[89]

[86] *O*, p. 285; 297.
[87] *O*, p. 286; 298.
[88] *DR*, p. 183; 140.
[89] *O*, p. 285; 297, italics added.

It was only a question, for the narrator, of counter-effectuating, of selecting the eternal return of what which comes [*revient*] for the first time... that which returns [*revient*] for the first time... in the creation in view of the fact that it is the 'the eternal return [which] creates the superior forms'.[90]

[90] G. Deleuze, 'Conclusions sur la volonté de puissance et l'éternel retour' in *L'île déserte et autres écrits*, (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2002.) p. 174. Translated as 'Conclusions on the Will to Power and the Eternal Return' in *Desert Islands and Other Texts*, trans. Michael Taormina (London: Semiotext(e), 2004), p. 125.

Dosse, F. *Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari – Biographie Croisée*

Chris Beighton

François Dosse's excellent biography of the authors of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* was published in 2007[1] and its subtitle, *Biographie Croisée*, manages to provide pithy, stylish evidence of a serious attempt to tackle the background to this enigmatic writing partnership. Those already familiar with the work of Deleuze and Guattari would doubtless admit to a degree of suspicion towards any attempt to render into narrative their lives and thought. But Dosse's subtitle is representative of his success in balancing the double movement which is needed to approach the complex relationships between these two contrasting but complementary figures, a fertile *crossing* of lives and ideas. On one hand, their two trajectories are a *cartographic* crossing, a chiasmus whose lines begin and end quite separately; on the other, we have the idea of a *biological* crossing, a cross-fertilisation producing the hybrids which the partnership is of course famous for. This double movement clearly configures both the content and form of their work and functions, in my view, extremely well.

The desire to present this sort of mobile hybrid of a text is of course quite natural: how else might we try to do justice to the Deleuze-Guattari assemblage? The choice is furthermore supported by one of the many impressive aspects of the book, namely its reference to sources, both personal and professional, which grant Dosse's insights a good deal of authority and underline the need to which the 'subjects' need, for Dosse, to be situated in their cultural milieu. A quick glance through the extensive list of people interviewed for the book is enough to suggest that the work is both a serious and sensitive one, but any reader of biographic details of the generally reticent Deleuze is bound to wonder how the private and public faces of the subjects will be treated. Dosse's

[1] F. Dosse, *Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari – Biographie Croisée* (Paris: La Découverte, 2007). Translated as *Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: Intersecting Lives* (European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought and Cultural Criticism) (Columbia University Press, 2010).

skill lies in meshing them by referring to both in ways which, while revealing and occasionally disturbing, maintain a welcome delicacy, a definite warmth towards these two thinkers and their work. In essence, readers of Deleuze and Guattari who have been waiting for an intelligent biography are not disappointed.

Structurally, the book offers the trajectories in largely separate mode: two lines begin apart but converge before separating again. Chapters present their development chronologically through the stages of their professional careers, the major events of which are no secret. Supporting the chronology, however, alongside relevant details of their personal lives, are presentations of their thought and activities in relation with their context, with a focus on the people who influenced and were influenced by them. Insights and details emerge from a range of scholars, friends and acquaintances past and present who bring a real sense of depth to the work. One example among many is found in one of the most touching sections of the book which deals with the untimely deaths of first Guattari and then Deleuze. These show a remarkable sensitivity which adds much to our understanding of the relationship between the two, indeed Dosse's strategy of presenting the two events from their respective viewpoints is both touching and revealing.

If, then, a Deleuzian way of interrogating such a text might be to ask 'to what question is this the answer?', clearly it could fall one of two ways; either such a biography could attempt to satisfy prurience and gossip, or it could try to activate the dynamics of this partnership and try to describe how – and even why – it operated in such a productive way. Dosse of course opts for the second and in doing so finds support from a range of scholarly and personal sources, the most revealing of which deal with ideas rather than purely biographical information. The crossover here of course is inevitable and indeed actually invited by Deleuze and Guattari's work, and especially the former's insistence on the blurring of the boundaries between the individuals in question as authors in well-known sections of, for instance, *A Thousand Plateaus* and *Dialogues*. Interestingly, Dosse seeks to challenge the portrayal of a sort of synthesis of the two by contrasting the public image of the Deleuze-Guattari machine with a much more nuanced picture. We are reminded, for instance, that they maintained a rather formal relationship, did much of their work by letter or in austere isolation, which lead,

unsurprisingly perhaps, to a degree of frustration at least on Guattari's part. Dosse, like many others, relates comments made by the latter[2] about the precise nature of the way in which he and Deleuze worked. Their meeting and subsequent relationship was something of a disappointment to Felix, who did not expect the long sessions behind closed doors, not to mention Deleuze's perfectionism and understandable desire to get work finished. As a result, he found it hard to recognise himself in *Anti Oedipus*, of which it seems, Deleuze was really in control. We are left with the picture of a highly workmanlike Deleuze who, while needing the input and interaction of close groups of friends to develop, nevertheless, if Guattari is to believed, tended to take a more mechanical or at least systematic attitude to the production of the text itself. This is perhaps just as one would expect from one trained in philosophy with a substantial back catalogue of influential monographs to his name. But a more revealing aspect of this relationship seems to lie in Dosse's account of the decline in Guattari's health into a state of depression in the late eighties and nineties, partly, it is implied, as a result of broken relationships of one sort or another. There also seems to be some evidence that the friendship with Deleuze had soured, in itself an unsurprising direction for the 'Laurel and Hardy' of philosophy to take, although this did not prevent Deleuze visiting Guattari at home. Significantly, on Dosse's analysis, Deleuze remained true to form by writing *What is Philosophy?* himself and insisting that it be jointly credited as a gesture of friendship and recognition of Guattari's contributions, however 'marginal' (p. 27) they might be. While such details are interesting, though, what remains of them is less the image of Felix slouched on the sofa in front of the football than the written record of the ideas and the cross fertilization between these disparate minds. Dosse's text is not the re-cognition of these concepts into lazy inferences about what one or the other might have done, to whom, and why, but a salutary reminder that the ideas and their dynamism can and should stay in the forefront.

The chronology of these ideas takes in of course Deleuze's milestone texts of the 1960s on Hume, Proust, Nietzsche, Bergson and so on, with a useful focus on many of their key ideas and influences. Drawing on this development, Dosse defines 'Deleuzism' as a three pronged approach to

[2]Notably in the 2006 *Anti-Oedipus Papers*.

philosophy which might be qualified 'perverse', reflecting the perversity of a world without the Other described in Tournier's, *Vendredi ou les limbes du pacifique*. There are three ways in which this 'Deleuzism' might be defined:

1. recuperating diverse bits of theory from various sources and using them to other ends, or
2. confronting a concept with its real conditions seen as the forces and dynamisms which underpin it, or
3. rather than frontal criticism of a notion, attacking it via another, twisted, conception.

This view of the central movement of a Deleuzian critique is clearly outlined and situated as an attempt to avoid dialectic reasoning by taking a concrete situation and looking to where it creates an excess or a leak. This is clearly quite different to a critical model which seeks to identify contradictions in terms of their lack, or of a desire for synthesis and transcendence, and this stressing of the paradoxical tensions within concepts renounces the critical approach which presupposes a looking down at the concept from above. While this 'height' approach might offer the advantage of allowing a choice or a moral decision to be made, it fails to truly espouse the nature of the concept itself by pre-supposing a superiority on the part of the reader/thinker *a priori*. It also excludes thereby a range of openings that the concept might have and ignores therefore what it, or any body, can do. This essential creativity of Deleuze is therefore a form of emancipation from ways of thinking which reduce the density and creative potential of concepts themselves to transcendent abstractions: a mathematisation of logic, a naturalisation of physics and a technocratisation of ethics.

Readers of the book may find it surprisingly combative towards Deleuze's critics. From Lacan to Badiou, via Foucault, we see an exposition of some of the most influential critiques of Deleuze and their subsequent demolition by both Dosse's compendious knowledge – not to mention sharp tongue – and comments by others close enough to the arguments be taken seriously. Lacan, for instance, garners little sympathy. The tone regarding this relationship *manqué* is one of genuine disappointment as the deferential Deleuze, keen to meet the Master for

the first time, is treated to the childish behaviour of an apparently self-centred and mercenary individual set on being as unpleasant as possible to the provincials around him. A portrait is drawn of a rather inflated character, unafraid either to charge consultancy fees for time spent in the car being given a lift home, or to offer condescending remarks on others' work.

Alain Badiou's attitude to Deleuze also comes out of this study as a rather juvenile, petulant affair. While Dosse of course gives the background of this relationship in the late sixties and early seventies,[3] he spends more time critically exploring Badiou's analyses of Deleuze in *The Clamour of Being*.[4] Readers of this text will know that it sprang from a potentially interesting but finally frustrating exchange of letters between the two, as Deleuze refuses to continue with Badiou's seemingly dogged refusal to understand or accept basic principles. Badiou, Dosse argues, is both rancorous and malicious in his misrepresentation of Deleuze and in his obtuse and pointless attempt to find a contradiction between the notions of multiplicity in expression and the univocity of the plane of immanence which of course lie at the heart of an understanding of Deleuze's spinozism. As is amply clear in the work on Spinoza, the issue is one of the infinite variety of expression which compose the One, whether this is God, in Spinoza's case, or a plane of immanence. There is no inherent contradiction here at all, for Dosse, and it is hard to see how readers of *Difference and Repetition* could come to Badiou's conclusion. No serious reader of Deleuze would therefore find any resemblance in Badiou's caricature which, for Arnaud Villani, is 'fundamentally dishonest' (p. 439). While this might seem little more than zero-degree criticality and mudslinging, this is just one example of the sharp contrast presented between the picture of Deleuze's intellectual generosity and that of would-be rivals who, in contrast, seem petulant, misinformed, jealous, or as in the case of the 'aggressive' psychiatrist questioning Deleuze and Guattari's experience of schizophrenics, simply 'insolent' (p. 263). Attempts to see Deleuze as a wrecker of modernity or a nihilistic antichrist were never further form the mark.

[3]Dosse describes Badiou as a political activist among the post-68 Maoist groups, whose activities included frequent attempts to disrupt lectures at the new 'experimental' campus in Vincennes where Deleuze lectured.

[4]A. Badiou *Deleuze: La Clameur de l'Etre* (Paris: Hachette, 1997) / *Deleuze: the Clamour of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

A further excellent example of Dosse's ability to clarify the often complex movements in Deleuze's thought is the way in which he is able to describe his relationship to Marx (p. 238). Clear differences include a contrast between Marx as a theory of needs and consumption in contrast to the Deleuzian theory of desire as production. Again, where Marx opposes infrastructure to superstructure, for Deleuze and Guattari there is no ideological sphere separated from the rest of society, only different organisations of power. Ideologies are no more or less than the statements of these organisations themselves. If Marx, finally, can be identified with a recapitulation based on a re-collection of collective memory and a unitary development of the forces of production, this is clearly counter to Deleuze's attack on such repetitions. Interestingly, though, if these stark contrasts exist in a context of forgetting Marx, during the process of forgetting 'little fragments float to the surface' (p. 239).

Another case of where Dosse casts interesting light is in the ambivalence of the Deleuze-Foucault relationship (p373). While there was clearly great professional and personal regard, it was marred by differences of both a personal and a philosophical nature which are of course raised in several of Deleuze's texts.[5] On the whole these references to Foucault are either laudatory or, on occasion, reticent, but the friendship was not without its intellectual rivalry, according to Paul Veyne.[6] Deleuze, however, cannot be said to have shared this jealousy and Foucault's occasional waspishness may have stemmed partly from jealousy at the success of Deleuze's *Nietzsche.*[7] There also seems to have been a definite resentment of Deleuze's work with Jacques Donzelot, which explains why the preface to the latter's published thesis (the Foucaldian *La Police des Familles)* became a postface. Foucault was also suspicious of Guattari and of the many groups and projects with which he was involved.

More interestingly, Dosse is very clear on their philosophical and political differences, notably, but not exclusively, over the Klaus Croissant

[5]See, for instance, G. Deleuze, *Pourparlers : 1972-1990*, (Paris: Minuit, 1990) / *Negotiations*, trans. M. Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

[6]Veyne, an influential classical historian and colleague of Foucault's, recently published an excellent study of Foucault's life and thought in *Foucault, sa pensée, sa personne*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008).

[7]G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires Françaises, 1962) / *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Althone Press, 1983).

case, in the 1970s.[8] It seems clear that while these political differences were important, deeper philosophical issues were also at play. Indeed there are three areas of thought in which they can clearly be said to differ. Philosophically, they evidently saw *desire* in very different ways, as indeed is clear from Foucault's later work. Consequently, Foucault was in reality less appreciative of *Anti-Oedipus* than some have thought, and he was unwilling to openly support a text he saw as mere verbiage (p.376). The point is interesting insofar as it contradicts laudatory references to Deleuze and Guattari in the American preface to *Anti-Oedipus* itself as well as in the roughly contemporary *Discipline and Punish,*[9] but confirms the shift apparent in the 1976 *College de France* lectures (*Society Must be Defended*[10]) away from what Foucault feels are fragmentary responses unable to deal with the recent changes in society. The Deleuzian notion of desire as productive is misguided, and is merely one of many other effects of the same drive towards giving voice to an obsession with sex rather than repressing it.[11]

Dosse also describes how the two disagreed by offering different answers to the same questions of power and the ethics of non-fascism. While agreeing that desire is always caught up in assemblages which prevent its spontaneity, Deleuze is constructivist, and speaks not of *possibility* but of *construction.* This is why they read Nietzsche differently, Deleuze preferring *The Will to Power*, Foucault *The Genealogy of Morals.*

A third area (p. 379) concerns their relationship to truth, considered by Deleuze to be something of an otiose question.[12] Foucault's presentation of truth as being dependent on powerful assemblages leaves intellectuals with no power at all, since they are what bolster this same

[8]Although Deleuze supported Croissant, a legal representative with cloudy relationships to extreme leftist and terrorist groups, Foucault refused to do so. Interestingly, Dosse notes that Croissant was subsequently exposed as a Stasi agent.

[9]M. Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir – Naissance de la Prison*, (Paris : Gallimard, 1975) / *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, (London: Penguin, 1991).

[10]M. Foucault, *Il faut défendre la Société: Cours au Collège de France 1975-76*:. (Paris: Gallimard, 1976/1997).

[11]These issues are of course taken up by Deleuze, for instance in '*Desire and Pleasure*', a 1977 letter published in *Deux Régimes de Fous: textes et entretiens 1975-1995*. Ed. David Lapoujade. (Paris: Minuit, 2003).pp.112-122.

[12]The importance and precise nature of Deleuze's constructivism and lack of interest in 'truth' is stressed in G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie? (Paris.* Minuit, 1991). / *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (Columbia University Press : New York, 1994).

system. A reversal seems impossible, with no space at all for ideas or ultimately the creation of concepts, which is of course the *sine qua non* of Deleuzian philosophy. As Dosse points out, if for Foucault the notion of truth is what defines philosophy, for Deleuze the validity of a concept is not its truth, but rather its importance, its interest, whether it's remarkable or new. It's clear on Dosse's account that for Deleuze, Foucault was at times a misguided, even literally a dangerous thinker, ultimately obsessed by death. But interestingly, in an area where they might have found more common ground (the questions of subjectivity which increasingly attract Foucault's attention in *History of Sexuality*) no *rapprochement* took place, perhaps because the relationship had already broken down irretrievably.

Dosse, then, gives us a well structured and accessible guide to some of the key ideas arising in the work of Deleuze and Guattari. But perhaps a more provocative aspect to Dosse's work is his consideration of biographical data in explaining some of their idiosyncrasies. Guattari, it is implied, develops his famous hyperactivity largely from a turbulent childhood, including with his father's unsuccessful attempts at business. Deleuze, largely silent on the question of his own upbringing, was profoundly affected by the death of his brother Georges, during the war. Parental hero-worship of the lost son must have been a difficult thing to navigate for the young Gilles, and we are left with the impression that this surely configured to a significant extent his reticence, attitude and even subsequent theories about the family. Other suggestive details include being referred to as 'the new Sartre' as a student, and the problems with drink which are alluded to from time to time in his work. Clearly, while the lives of philosophers are rarely interesting, it seems important that a biography worthy of the name should attempt to present as full an account as possible without infringing the laws of delicacy. Precisely how Deleuze himself might feel about these suggestions is certainly open to question. If his answers to attempts in the *Abécédaire* to pin him down on more personal issues are anything to go by, they would receive short shrift, at best a knowing smile and an evasive answer.[13] I would therefore encourage colleagues to read *Biographie Croisée* for themselves and make up their own mind both about this and the photographs provided in the central section of the book.

[13]G. Deleuze, *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze*, (Paris: Montparnasse, 2004).

These appear at times supportive of Dosse's claims, as do the sources cited, but again readers will make of them what they will.

In attempting to summarise the message of Dosse's biography beyond its scholarship and obvious warmth towards its subjects, it probably lies in suggesting that Deleuze in particular may not be quite where we expect to find him. The portrait of the man is of an affable, self-effacing and homely character, keen on light music (Edith Piaf, Paul Anka, Claude François), chatting with the neighbours, spending the evening at cards or at the cinema with his wife Fanny. Deleuze the teacher is conscientious, unshakable and sympathetic. In pursuing ideas, the turn towards others seems systematic, provided it is part of a friendship of curious minds. As a thinker, we hear less of revolutionary or conceptual creativity, than of the particular brand of classicism and even caution in thought which more careful readings of his work reveal. The attraction of the former, more radical Deleuze, is clear for many, and Dosse accepts that much of the World Wide Web for instance is perfectly happy with a world of multiplicities, desubjectification, disjunctive syntheses, machinic production and Bodies without Organs. But these interpretations miss a crucial point in the form of ascetism called for by Deleuze and Guattari, 'a touch of herb and pure water'[14] in response to the risks of the absolute variety they see and describe so evocatively. For Dosse it is this ascetism, not its sloganising, which makes such thought powerful: it's not enough to cry 'long live multiplicities' without doing something in connection with the outside. '*Deleuze must not be turned into some sort of philosophical UFO. He remains within a tradition while inventing his own.*' (p. 204).[15]

[14]G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, F. *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. B. Massumi (London: Continuum, 1987), p. 109.

[15]Dosse here quotes Pierre Montebello, whose own work (e.g. *Deleuze, philosophie et cinéma*, Paris: Vrin, 2008) is a further example of very interesting recent work.