V. DIFFERENTIATION

Systems in which different relates to different through difference itself are systems of simulacra. Such systems are intensive; they rest ultimately upon the nature of intensive quantities, which precisely communicate through their differences.

Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*

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What Difference does Deleuze’s Difference Make?

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Philosophies of difference, where difference maintains its grounds from beginning to end without being eclipsed by identity, are exceedingly rare.¹ In fact, if we subtract from their ranks those which, in their struggle to maintain the primacy of difference, succumb to the ineffable and give up on the creation of concepts, the number of philosophical heterologies turns out to be minuscule. Of course, it is not by chance that the fortunes of philosophical heterologies are better served inside process philosophies. To be a process philosopher, however, is not a guarantee that one will also be a philosopher of pure difference, movement, and the reflection on movement that constitute the raison d’être of the philosophies of process which offer a rich soil for the nurture of *tou heterou philia*. In the distance traveled between the Heraclitian river with its flowing waters being eternally qualified as *alla kai alla* (different upon different) and the Bergsonian durée, the birthrights of difference are well protected. But a process philosophy, in order to support a purely heterological thought, has to be capable of doing without subjects steering the process or being steered by it, without substantive names designating “blocks” in motion, and without points of origin or destination invigilating over the permitted trajectory. In the final analysis, only a process philosophy where process and product are the same can hope to prevent the subordination of difference to identity. It seems to me that Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy meets all these requirements and represents, in the wake of Nietzsche, the most consistent difference philosophy of all.

**Differentiating**

The mistake in reading Heidegger’s “Being” as if it were a substantive noun is now well recognized. The mistake in reading Deleuze’s “difference” as a noun, on the other hand, is in the process of being slowly registered. It is not as if we now begin to notice for the first time that in his texts “difference” means differentiation and differenciation—this became clear to us early on.² It is rather that we are now in the process of exploring all the implications of this decision. We understand better, for example, the sense in which difference is not a concept: concepts are not processes, and “differentiating” names a process—actually it names the twin processes of the real: the virtual and the actual. Were we to heed Deleuze’s recommendation and opt for a philosophical language
revolving around infinitives, the temptation of mistaking “differentiation” for a noun will be prevented; we will then choose to think in terms of “differentiating.” A new ontology would then be possible, built on the intuition that “to be is to be differentiated and to be differentiating.”

Indeed, the reason for the grapheme, t/c, is that in Deleuze’s ontology processes are made of two intertwining flows—the one virtual, the other actual—with both flows being real. The virtual is a differentiated and differentiating process whose differentiating dynamism coincides with its differentiated actualization. The product is the process, but with a difference: the product-process is the realm of solutions and actualizations of problems. Problems are expressions of tendencies belonging to solutions only because they belong by right to the virtual process that subsists inside the product-process and nowhere else. The plausibility of this point depends on the successful coordination of a number of concepts that Deleuze needs in order to build his ontology: force, intensity, tendency, virtuality, and event. The co-ordination will also decide whether Deleuze’s ontology is that of a pure process capable of guaranteeing the irreducibility of difference. It is to the complex issues stemming from this coordination that I now turn my attention.

Deleuze’s ontology is an ontology of forces bent on correcting the mistake we make whenever we think exclusively in terms of things and their qualities: in privileging extension and extended magnitudes, we overlook the intensive genesis of the extended. Forces, however, are experienced only in the results they render, and the products of force-fields are extended and qualified. I said “force-fields” because in an ontology of forces like Deleuze’s, “force” comes to mean relation between forces. Such an ontology therefore amounts to a veritable diacritics of forces in motion: forces are differentiated—they are what they are only because of the differential relation that they have with other forces. The differential quantity of forces is called “intensity” and intensities—or better, intensifications—are the real subjects of processes. But they are not subjects in any ordinary sense since intensities are not entities. Being responsible for the genesis of entities, they are virtual yet real events, whose mode of existence is to actualize themselves in states of affairs. They exist nowhere else but in the extended that they constitute. Despite the fact that they are not identical with the extended, the distinction between virtual intensities and actual extended things cannot be accounted for in terms of an ontological chorismos.

The Deleuzian virtual has generated an endless number of discussions and controversies, however there is nothing mysterious about it. In Deleuze’s ontology, the virtual and the actual are two mutually exclusive, yet jointly sufficient, characterizations of the real. Actual/real are states of affairs, that is, bodies and their mixtures or individuals existing in the present. Virtual/real are incorporeal events and singularities in a plane of consistency, belonging to a past that Deleuze qualifies as “pure” because he sees it in a past that has never been present. Virtual is something that, without being or resembling an actual x, has nonetheless the capacity to bring about x, without (in being actualized) ever coming to coincide or identify itself with x, or to be depleted and exhausted in x. The kind of process that we find in Deleuze’s ontology is not properly captured in the scheme, actual/real → actual/real; its correct schematization is rather this: virtual/real ↔ actual/real ↔ virtual/real (DR, 208–21). Becoming, instead of being a linear process from one actual to another, should rather be conceived as the movement from an actual state of affairs, through a dynamic field of virtual/real tendencies, to the actualization of this field in a new state of affairs. This schema safeguards the relation of reversibility between the virtual and the actual.

It is best to think of the virtual in terms of tendencies, provided that we remember to add that tendencies exist in differentiated intensities and subsist in differented extended parts. They, rather than the movement of extended elements, guarantee the continuity of intensive transformations. Although they are initiated by the differential relations between material forces and are actualized in them, tendencies cannot be reduced to the material forces without ruining the continuity and indivisibility of the duration of the process. Absence of continuity and indivisibility will render the process vulnerable to the paradoxes of Zeno. It is important not to confuse the virtuality of tendencies with Plato’s idealational Being; the emphasis that Deleuze places on materiality would by itself be a convincing reminder. The virtual can be apprehended only at the end of a chain reaction starting with sensation, affecting all faculties, and orchestrating their resonance in a kind of discordant harmony. However, there are additional safeguards against the return of Platonism: tendencies are problems and problems have no final solutions, but the partial solution of a problem transforms the problem back again into a tendency. To the extent that tendencies stand for problems on the way to the solutions that the actual forces in tension with one another permit them to have, they provide the actual with sense and intelligibility, without resembling it.

This is the reason why the role played by the virtual in processual transformations cannot be overlooked. Indeed, Deleuze often calls the virtual, “quasi-cause.” He also describes it as the horizon of events, and he goes on to distinguish events from states of affairs that belong to the actual and are in fact actualizations of (incorporeal) events. Deleuze writes:
It is in the context of making the distinction between events and states of affairs that Deleuze claims the infinitive as the best verbal mode for the designation of events: to green, to cut, to grow, to die, are the best designations possible for pure incorporeal events. Infinitives guarantee specificity and determinacy, without imposing subjective or objective coordinates. In their infinitival modes, verbs guarantee reversibility between past and future by virtue of the fact that they themselves are untimely matrices. They stand for forces, intensities, and acts rather than substances or qualities. To reduce events to states of affairs and then to assign them to the rupture points of a continuum is “to grant an unwarranted normative status to that state and to posit the break with it in terms that are both blind and transcendent” (GL, 132).

Perhaps we can now see more clearly why and how Deleuze’s ontology is built around a notion of difference that is not contained in the “than” of the “x is different than y”—in which case, difference would be relative to identity—but rather built around the attempt to capture difference in itself. The centrality that Deleuze attributes to intensity is pivotal here. In order to safeguard the continuity of becoming and to prevent the reduction of temporal sequences to sets of discrete moments, ontology requires the distinction between intensive differences and extended parts. Unlike extended magnitudes whose partes extra partes allow to be divided without any corresponding change in their nature (a situation that guarantees the commensurability of their divided parts), intensities cannot be subdivided without corresponding change in their nature; they are therefore incommensurable, and their “distance” from one another makes each one of them a veritable difference in itself. Placed in the context of the two sides of the Deleuzian ontology—the virtual and the actual—intensities catalyze the actualization of the virtual, generating extension, linear, successive time, as well as extended bodies and their qualities. The relation of reversibility between virtual and actual guarantees that intensities will not suffer the fate of negentropic death.

The advantages of these moves, from an epistemological and ontological point of view, are significant. Becoming, in the name of which Deleuze’s entire work is mobilized, cannot be constituted through a juxtaposition of “immobile cuts.” Participation in immobile cuts has always been responsible for the hieratic and static world of Being. On the other hand, forces seized in actu are better candidates for a diagrammatic mapping out of becoming. Of course, the success of these moves depends on the availability of a plausible theory of time and space that will permit the deployment of subject-less processes of a continuum of differentials, with no origin and no end points. No adequate theory of transformation and change can be contemplated as long as it is predicated on a process conceived as a mere sequence of multiple states of affairs. Deleuze’s claim that transformation goes from (actual) states of affairs to (virtual) tendencies and back to (actual) states of affairs prevents the time of transformation from collapsing into discrete temporal blocks and from destroying the kind of continuity and mutual imbrications necessary for an adequate characterization of the duration of processes. Without it, processes of continua would be possible only as mathematical formulas, devoid of physical embodiments.

Deleuze articulates the structure of temporality required by his ontology of processes through an ingenious re-reading of Bergson’s durée that permits him to advance the following claims: actual presents are constituted simultaneously as both present and past; in all presents the entire past is conserved in itself; and there is a past that has never been present as well as a future that will never be present (DR, 70–128). The idea of a past that has never been present (the immemorial past), as well as a future that would never turn into a present, can also be found (although with different axes to be ground) in the writings of Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Lévinas. The reasons for its postulation vary from one thinker to another, but there is one thing that they share in common: any philosophy that puts a premium on the de-actualization of the present, in order to tap the resources of the past or the future, runs the risk of reifying the past (as in Plato’s recollection) and also the future (as in the case of apocalyptic eschatologies). To prevent this reification, the notions of the “immemorial past” and the “messianic future” (Deleuze prefers to talk of the pure past and of the eternal repetition of the different) are brought to safeguard the idea of a process that can be conceived without the dead weight of tendencies determining it a tergo or ab ende.

When Is Thinking Possible?

Deleuze’s uncompromising theory of difference has important implications for knowledge claims. It builds on a critique of the image of thought (recognition through representation) which the philosophical
tradition has solidified into a dogma; it ushers in a new understanding of what philosophy is (the creation of concepts); it requires a new methodology (that of "transcendental empiricism"); and it works with a non-traditional understanding of the "dialectics of truth and error" (undecidability between truth and falsehood and "the power of the false").

Platonism proposed re-cognition as the model of thinking, and grounded the model on postulates that gave it a de jure legitimacy which de facto it could not have. With these postulates it vested an image of thought that retained from our cognitive processes few trivial facts illustrating recognition through representation. Doxa was mistaken for episteme. Error was held to be an evil extrinsic to thought, whereas malignancies intrinsic to thought such as madness, stupidity, and meanness were ignored as of no consequence. This traditional paradigm of thought is not able to think difference without compromising it. In it difference turns into an object of recognition and representation, and is subsumed under similitude, opposition, analogy, and identity. An already constituted and familiar world is greeted by an already constituted and familiar subject. An alternative model is needed for thought to become possible, and Deleuze contends that it will have to be responsible for jump-starting through "fundamental encounters" with intensities our always already reticent and idle thought. It should be the cogitandum (noeteon) that motivates the construction of a thought model, not the cogitatum (noeton)—provided, of course, that (given the axiom of the primacy of materiality) thought becomes the thought of the cogitandum only after the sentiendum and the memorandum have prepared it for this task: from that which ought to be sensed, through that which ought to be recalled, to that which ought to be thought. This is what cognition becomes when it is liberated from the constraints of the representative straightjacket.

The gerundiva that inspire the cognitive "ought" are the result of a bold reading and transformation of the Kantian theory of Ideas undertaken in the pages of Difference and Repetition. An Idea, for Kant, has no instantiations in the empirical world, yet it must be thought. Deleuze retains this imperative when he thinks of the virtual, but he confounds Kantianism with his decision to multiply Ideas by making them the gerundiva of all faculties (the cogitandum, the memorandum, the loquendum, the sentiendum). Ideas do not obey the Platonist imperative, una nomen una nominatum. They are (differential) structures of singular and ordinary points and intensities, animated by spatio-temporal dynamisms, in the process of actualization. Ideas are virtual and their "being" is that of problem-setting matrices. This is Deleuze's way of preventing the virtual from being a mere fraudulent and unnecessary duplication of the actual raised to the power of the transcendental; the virtual must not resemble the actual, exactly the way that problems do not resemble or represent their solutions. The tool for this rehabilitation of the transcendental is transcendental empiricism.

Transcendental empiricism—Deleuze's chosen method—attempts to go beyond experience to the conditions that account for things, states of things, and their mixtures given to experience. Its object is not what is given immediately but rather the immediate given. But the immediate given is the tendency—in other words, the 'unrepresentable' virtual. The similarity between transcendental empiricism and the Kantian transcendentalism is misleading. For both Kant and Deleuze, the actual with its de facto existence is governed by conditions that exist de jure. But the Kantian de jure is not like the Deleuzian in virtu. What is de jure is not characterized by a dynamic thrust toward its own actualization. Moreover, Deleuze's empiricism, unlike the Kantian critique, is capable of providing a genetic (not merely a static) account of the constitution of the actual, because the conditions that it seeks are themselves given in the virtual as the conditions of actual (not all possible) experience. Whereas in Kantianism, the sought-after conditions are those of possible experience, in the case of Deleuze, the targeted conditions do not exceed the conditioned, and therefore the concept they form ends up being identical with its object.

Rather than looking in the direction of Kant, we must recognize in the Deleuzian transcendental empiricism the inspiration of Bergson's intuition. Things and states of things are mixtures, and as such are subject to qualifications according to the more and the less, that is, according to differences of degree. But these (actual) mixtures are the products of (virtual) tendencies which, unlike mixtures, differ in nature or in kind from each other. Bergsonian intuition is a method of dividing the mixture according to tendencies, that is, according to real differences. Viewed in this light, Bergson's intuition is identical with Deleuze's transcendental empiricism. In the case of the traditional image of thought, representation, through the mediation of concepts, requires the presence of an identical subject to an identical object. However, the virtuality of the Idea does not require the assistance of an identical subject or an identical object in order to become real. Representation belongs essentially to consciousness and follows the logic of solutions. The Idea, on the contrary, is in Deleuze's expression, "sub-representative" and is fashioned according to the logic of problems and questions. Transcendental empiricism explores the field of this logic.

To be a transcendental empiricist therefore is to search for the "referents" of the gerundiva: sentiendum \rightarrow cogitandum. Deleuze, for whom consciousness is the "opaque blade" in the heart of becoming and
therefore subject to intensive reduction, assigns to radical empiricism the responsibility of putting perception inside things, rather than of coaxing eloquently about its ineradicably ambiguous grounding in the "lived body." To put perception inside things, to see things as they are, would seem to contradict Deleuze's appropriation of the label "constructivism" on behalf of his method. But the contradiction disappears when we understand Deleuze's constructivism to be the history of a redemption. This is how Jacques Rancière expresses this Deleuzian point: "We must give things the perceptual power that they have already, because they have lost it. And they have lost it, because their phosphorescence and movement have been interrupted by another image—the image of the human brain ... that confiscated the interval between action and reaction ... and made itself the center of the world. To put perception inside things is a restitution." It is redemption, and what is redeemed is *aesthesis*. Of course, the inspiration for this comes from Bergson, for whom matter and mind are best reconfigured as a world of images, moving, colliding, being deflected or being arrested. It is the mind that does the arresting, the selecting, and the reacting (after the interpolation of an interval calibrated in a way that permits reactions to "fit" actions). Given the interpolation of the "opaque blade," it follows that the Bergsonian/Deleuzian *sentiendum* is nothing but the *chaosmos* prior to its being stretched on the plane of organization that consciousness constructs.

To radical empiricism Deleuze also assigns the responsibility of creating concepts that would be adequate to what ought to be thought and sensed. Being neither reflective (one is perfectly capable of reflecting without philosophy) nor communicative (communication arrives either too early or too late), philosophy is creative of concepts. The concepts that it creates are neither abstract ideas nor universals; they do not name the traditional essence of a thing. They are about the circumstances of the emergence of a thing (the how, the when, the where, the particular case). A concept condenses the conditions of the actualization of an entity. It is therefore an assemblage of singularities that must not be confused with individuals. Made up of singularities, the concept is itself a singularity to the extent that its internal consistency is brought about through a condensation that causes the concept to be as an intensity. Unlike extended magnitudes, concepts cannot be decomposed to their constituent singularities without becoming different concepts—and this is precisely why concepts are intensities. Although the singularities, that is, the component elements of concepts, are incarnated in actual (sensible, particular) bodies, they are not reducible to the states of affairs of interacting bodies. They are virtual conditions, with no spatio-temporal coordinates and therefore best thought of as expressing events—virtual and yet real events—in the process of actualization. The task of philosophy is to draw out concepts from states of affairs inasmuch as it extracts the event from them.

The concepts that philosophy creates have a history.

We say that every concept always has a *history*, even though this history zigzags, though it passes, if need be, through other problems or onto different planes. In any concept there are usually bits or components that come from other concepts, which correspond to other problems and presuppose other planes. This is inevitable because each concept carries out new cut-outs, takes on new contours, and must be reactivated or recut (WIPh, 18).

To this extent, to be a Platonist or a Kantian today means to reactivate Plato's or Kant's concepts in our problems. Deleuze quotes approvingly Robbe-Grillet's answer to the question of whether there is progress in philosophy: "There is of course movement in philosophy, but to try to do philosophy the way Plato did is senseless; not because we know better than Plato, but because Plato cannot be outdone or outsmarted; what he did, he did it for ever. The only choice is between the history of philosophy and Plato-grafts on problems which are no longer his own." If, as Deleuze proposes, the "history of philosophy" is best done in stratigraphic rather than chronological time, that is, in the time of the simultaneous and non-contradictory co-presence of philosophical problems and events, the contradictions of the philosophical propositions that belong to the actual history of philosophy must give way to the "inclusive disjunctions" of philosophy's own becoming.

Before closing this section I would add two points: the first concerns the ability of an ontology grounded on different/ciating processes to deal with questions of genetic constitution; and second, its contribution to the integration of *aesthesis*.

1. Kant's critical philosophy and Husserl's phenomenology, as I argued elsewhere, took seriously the need for genetic explanations and constitutions, albeit static conditioning always has had the last word in their work. For both, the answer to the question "how is x possible?"—whether x is an object of experience or a bit of sense—may be provided when one or more rules or conditions, supposedly given and known a priori, are shown to be involved in its constitution. If the object whose constitution we are attempting to account for is, for the purpose of our investigation, not changing, and if the a priori rules that we bring to bear upon its constitution are not, for the duration of our investigation, scrutinized as to their own constitution, our transcendental investigation is "static." But if our investigation changes in focus and is
brought to bear upon the conditions and rules that could account for x's coming to be as it is now, or on the coming to be of the conditions and rules themselves as they are now, our transcendental investigation will be "genetic." It is often thought that the only way to prevent the blasphemy of endowing ourselves with an intellectus archetypus, usurping thereby the creative prerogatives of God, is to introduce into transcendental constitutions—whether of the static or the genetic variety—a neat distinction between activity and passivity (conditioning and being conditioned). Rules, structures, and forms act upon (condition) an unformed (primary) matter that passively receives their action.

In an ontology of differentiated and differentiating intensities the slippage from dynamic genesis to static conditioning is prevented. When force overtakes form, intensity, rather than extension, takes center stage, and the question of the genesis of form can no longer be side-stepped. Genesis discriminates, de-sediments, de-stratifies, differentiates; it accounts for becomings and unclogs passages. Let us take an integration of what? A genesis to what? The answer requires that we discern not one but two operations: differentiation, as the registering (below the threshold of consciousness) of differentials—petites perceptions—being the reason for perception, and integration, as the summation of means of which the mind tends to connect differentials as a single perception. Borrowing an old Aristotelian distinction, "to perceive" is a verb marking not a process (kinesis) but an achievement (energeia). In the center of every perception there is something that cannot be sensed, albeit something without which there would be no sensation. This "unsensed" is not a mere formal condition of the possibility of sensation in general, but the concrete set of differential petites perceptions—the necessary elements for the genetic constitution of whatever is actually sensed. Genesis shows that intensity is not only the being of the sensible—the way that Kant had decided—but also the being of imagination, memory, and thought. No longer confined to the category of quality, intensity is the ratio essendi of all categories, Ideas, and concepts, as well as of space and time. Genetic constitution reveals that ideas regulate and totalize because they are problem-setters, and also because, far from being the sole prerogatives of reason, they belong to each and every faculty.

Finally, to the extent that genesis is a search for the sentiendum and the cogitandum, it frees transcendental inquiry from the tyranny of what is only possible (DR, 211–4); what is being sought in genetic constitutive investigations are not the conditions of all possible experience but rather the series of "sub-representative experiences" that account for the singularity under investigation. It follows that genesis prevents the transcendental from becoming a sterile repetition and duplication of empirical descriptions. As long as the possible usurps the space of the virtual, genetic constitution and straightforward formal conditioning cannot be distinguished from one another. Under such circumstances genesis would be the process of engendering the real from the possible, and formal conditioning would be the extraction of the possible from the real. No longer conceived in the image and the resemblance of the empirical, the transcendental transforms itself into the virtual (neither sensible nor intelligible, but rather the being of the sensible as well as the being of the intelligible).

2. The strength of genetic accounts is in their ability to show that the sentiendum, memorandum, and cogitandum—unlike sensa, memories and cogitationes—reposition the sublime within every faculty, that they inflect violence upon faculties, forcing them to seize that which cannot be experienced in their normal, empirical exercise. The intensive gerundiva underwrite a new pedagogy for our faculties by reconnecting the sensation of our cognitive experience with the affect of our aesthetic appreciation. After all, the Greeks did call them both by the same name: aesthesis. Revisiting, for a moment, the Kantian narrative permits us to see the promise of this pedagogy and the betrayal of the promise. The rational idea was presented all along as a concept with no intuition being adequate to it. But the final concordia discordata shows the aesthetic idea to be an intuition with no concept adequate to it. However, this aesthetic idea expresses what could not be expressed in the rational idea. It looks as if the cogitandum and the sentiendum have both been named. But the problem with the Kantian criticism is that sensibility is never really trained, having been resigned to receptivity and passivity. The sensible manifold of the first Critique continues to be cut off from the sentiendum of the third. Aesthetics, therefore, has to bring down the barriers that Kantianism established between the cognitive, the praxiological, and the ludic—which does not mean the reduction of all language games or forms of life to the aesthetic. It means the "discordant harmony" of their distinct problematic. It also means that aesthesis, in all the domains of its exercise, must be understood as the intensive process of capturing forces—not forms—that it is. It means that Deleuze's text on Francis Bacon and the violence of sensation must be made into a chapter of his Difference and Repetition or, if you will, Difference and Repetition must be made into a section of The Logic of Sensation. Bacon, the painter, trades off representation for the aesthetic exploration of a world never seen before yet familiar and near the
way that Deleuze, the ontologist, trades off the image of thought for a new thinking without image.

The Ethics of the Event

The role of pure difference is not confined to the domains of ontology and noology alone. It finds an important place in Deleuze’s ethics, which resolves “to be done with (the) judgment (of God)” and attempts to get rid of the transcendental ought along with its twin bulwarks of duty and obligation. In its place, a virtue ethic is re-built, with intensity as its only foundation. In the succinct formulation of François Zourabichvili, “ethical difference distinguishes itself absolutely from moral opposition to the extent that it is no longer possible to pass judgment upon existence in general, in the name of transcendental values.” But an ethic of virtue (where “virtue” is meant in its Greek and Nietzschean sense) could still be typological and essentialist. It could still permit Aristotle in the case of the ambitextrous to muse about the right hand being ἀριστερή the best. Intensity, on the other hand, disallows partiality to the right hand because intensity does not resonate with good and common sense nor is it derived from the habitual insight of the so called phronimos and the expert.

An ethics of intensity is defined by Deleuze as life rendering itself worthy of the event (LS, 149). Although the definition reminds one of old Stoic admonitions, a direct appropriation of this formula is bound to lead to misunderstandings, as long as the terrain is not yet prepared by one more intensive reduction. This time, what is reduced is my Self and the other Self, on the road to becoming-imperceptible. This is the kind of becoming that carries with it its own pre-personal and pre-subjective intensities—the “affects,” that is, intensities, modifications, and expressions of our power to be, the vis existendi of Spinoza’s conatus and Deleuze’s desire.

Intensification and intensity, in order to be capable of delivering us from the judgment of God, must first free themselves from subjectivity, transcendental fields, and personological coordinates. They must be re-situated, away from the typologies of the noetico-noematic complexes of reasons, motives, and deeds, and closer to the topological diagrammatic configurations of forces and counter-forces. It is in The Logic of Sense that Deleuze demonstrates that freedom from subjectival and personological transcendental fields requires the reduction of the structure-self and the structure-other—in other words, the decision to commit simultaneously altruistic and suicide.

I can only summarize this demonstration here. If Sartre, Deleuze claims, is correct in arguing for the contemporaneity of ego and other ego—if both structures are the result of a dialectic of non-egological consciousnesses—the (intensive) reduction of the one will precipitate the reduction of the other. If, as again Sartre argued, “being seen by the other is the truth of seeing the other,” it is appropriate to initiate the double murder/suicide through the reduction of the other first. Again, if the other is the structure of the possible (worlds), as phenomenology tends to maintain, the sine qua non of the “worlding of the world” and of “lived perception,” and if the possible by not being actual is the source of negativities, it would follow that the reduction of the other/possible will restore to the transcendental field its fullness and affirmation. Once this reduction is complete, the transcendental field will surface as “otherwise other” (autre qu’autrui), and the anthropogenic force—the vis existendi or, as Deleuze calls it, desire—will assert itself as the creative energia of life.

Rather than being a source of phantasms, desire, in Deleuze’s work, produces relations and connections that are real in their functions and revolutionary in their rhizomatic multiplicity because Deleuzian desire is not defined by the intentionality of “wanting to be or to have”; lacking nothing, it is defined by the expression of its capacity to make connections. It is not assessed according to the extrinsic telos of pleasure, since it is desire itself that distributes the intensities of pleasure and attempts to stave off the dissipation of intensities in extension. Desire atrophies inside the dialectic of subject and object: either a fully constituted subject will confront a fully constituted object, in which case desire can only be a relation external to both; or, if desire were to be thought as a relation internal to both subject and object, subject and object alike will have to suffer from a Sartrean haemorrhage of being on the road to being related. It is not strange, therefore, that under these circumstances desire is downgraded to the need of the “have nots.” The way out of this, Deleuze maintains, is to think of desire as energia, not kinesis. A process without telos, intensity without intention, desire (like Aristotle’s pleasure) has its “specific perfection” in itself, at each moment of its duration.

Conscious of his debt to Spinoza, Deleuze submits that desire is not a passive state of being but rather an act, enhanced by joy, facilitating the formation of adequate ideas and striving towards more and “better encounters”; in other words, desire is the power to annex Being. It is at this point that the “naturalism” of Deleuze’s ethics rings loud and clear. The distinction between good and bad annexations or encounters is made not according to the measuring rod of transcendental norms, but rather on the basis of the ability of the constructed, concrete encounter and relation to augment the power to be of its relata. Experimentation
rather than expertise is required. "There are never any criteria other than the tenor of existence, the intensification of life" (WIPh, 74).28

However, the "tenor of existence" and the "intensification of life" are capable of grounding an ethic of desire/joy only if they are calibrated according to their alliance with the virtual. We must therefore try to reach a better understanding of Deleuze's claim that ethics must be an ethics of the event, an "ethics of the virtual" that would at the same time be a "virtue ethics." As long as our surrender to the actual has not yet allowed the exploration of the problem-setting virtual, Deleuze's Stoic characterization of ethics as the search for the becoming worthy of the event can be mistaken for an invitation to resignation; *amor fati* can in this case be read as the flattest fatalist maxim possible. To prevent this misunderstanding, it is not enough to be reminded, as is frequently done, that the Deleuzian event is not a mere state of affairs. We need also to remember to insert between events and states of affairs the process of "counter-actualization"; it is this process that reveals the true meaning of "becoming worthy of the event," the spinal cord of Deleuze's ethics.

The moment ethics cuts itself loose from the mooring of the infinite obligation and turns itself into a search for ways and means to multiply the powers of existence or to intensify life, the question of the fit between forms of life and affects imposes itself. To put it in a different way, the moment that ethics can no longer be defined in terms of the right habit formation (which is not to say that habit has not its place), the question of counter-memory, which alone can problematize old and new presents responsible for habits, begins to press. To the extent that ethics should not be abandoned to the romance of authenticity and bad faith, actual valuations and their standpoints must be accounted for genealogically, and their plane of (virtual) consistency must be constructed.

It follows that a quietist interpretation of Deleuze's entreaty to become worthy of the event is impossible since Deleuze is not suggesting that we acquiesce to whatever happens. The ethics of the event is not the ethics of the state of affairs (LS, 149).29 The event intended in the formula of (Stoic) ethics is virtual and, to the extent that virtual events are still future and always past, the ethics of the event presupposes a will that seeks in states of affairs the eternal truth of the pure, virtual event which is actualized in them. True *amor fati* is not the acceptance of the actual state of affairs but rather the counter-actualization of the actual in order for the inherent virtual or pure event to be thought and willed. "[One] wills not exactly what occurs," Deleuze writes, "but something in that which occurs, something yet to come which would be consistent with what occurs, in accordance with the laws of ... the Event" (LS, 149). Or again, "counter-actualization is nothing but the affair of

buffoons, if it stands alone and pretends to take the value of what could have happened. But to be the mime of what actually happens, to double the actualization with a counter-actualization, the identification with a distance, like a true actor or a dancer does, is to give the truth of the event the only chance of not getting confused with its inevitable actualization" (LS, 161). The virtual event is actualized in states of affairs that necessarily do not represent it, since actualization is not imitation but differentiation. Consequently, the mime to whom Deleuze entrusts the ethical task is not the hero of the re-presentation of the same (say, the Kantian who "repeats" a maxim until the categorical imperative acquires the extension of a law of nature). The Deleuzian mime is given the twin obligation to unmask the pretension of the actual to be the only player in the field and to re-enact the virtual in its infinite process of differing from itself.30

Nietzsche's imperative that Deleuze often makes his own belongs here: whatever you will, will it in such a way that you also will its eternal return (NP, 68). If the eternal return were about actual bodies, qualities and their mixtures, repetition would be the recycling of the Same, and the only ethics possible would be the morality of resignation. But the eternal return that Deleuze talks about is "the theory of pure events and their linear condensation on the surface" (LS, 178). Only in their case repetition can be imposed as the task of freedom. Deleuze argues that repetition is like a festival that repeats that which cannot begin again, not in order to multiply the original by so many festivals, but rather in order to take the first time to the nth power, "once and for all" and "for all times" (DR, 300). The repetition intended here is reached through the process of counter-actualization.

In the imperative of the eternal return and in the accompanying invitation that we measure up to the event, we may find, I believe, the elements of an ethics and the means to a delicate negotiation of the relation between obligation and creation, between distance and friend­ship or sociability, between affect and *phronesis*. What often prevents us from exploring these inclusive disjunctions is that "ethics" and "theory of moral obligation" have often been taken as synonymous; we must, however, undo the link between the two. There is something amiss whenever philanthropic avocation is taken to be coextensive with ethics. No one suggests that ethics without morality knows no obligations. What Deleuze suggests is that obligation, in order to be admitted, must be measured in the first place by men and women whose souls have already been tried and proven noble in the fire of the eternal return. These men and women are not all that far from Aristotle's *megalopsychoi*. They are the ones worthy of the event, the actors and dancers, the mimics of the counter-actualization.
We are now in a position to draw together the elements of a Deleuzian ethics. The dehumanization and depersonalization of the transcendental field for the sake of singularities and events deconstructs the onto-metaphysical discourse on values, and lifts their subordination to valuers. It therefore clears the way for an ethics in which decentered subjects experiment and are experimented upon, encompassing and being encompassed by the chaosmos of anorganic life. Here the self is no longer the master or the servant of the Other; nor is it the Other's equal. But this does not prevent it from freely assuming responsibilities for the sake of a new earth. What Deleuze writes about Tournier's Robinson and his search for a new earth aptly characterizes his own: "the end, that is, Robinson's final goal, is 'dehumanization,' the coming together of the libido and of the free elements, the discovery of a cosmic energy or a great elemental Health ..." (LS, 303).

This is what the Deleuzian “becoming-imperceptible” means in the last analysis: that “someone” comes to be where the “I” used to reign supreme. Becoming-imperceptible would be impossible if the temporality of (my) becoming were strictly limited by the metric time and the nested presents of Chronos. It is the absolute symmetry of the never ceasing to pass and of the never arriving—the very definition of Aion—which is responsible for the fact that the I is another. This is the paradoxical structure that no studious distinction between ipse and idem can ever eliminate. That which exists partakes of the Aion because it always already has a virtual side; with respect to this side, we can say that all differences coexist in a dynamic “state” of inclusive disjunction. The reality of the virtual side with its inclusive disjunction is a necessary condition of the affect that, in the words of Zourabichvili, is “the very consistency of that which exists” (Z, 1994, 109).

It is the depersonalization and dehumanization of the transcendental field that makes the construction of the ethical field necessary through an endless experimentation for the sake of the compossibility of abiding differences, with elements that cannot be expected to resemble the finished product. But this experimentation is never a solitary game. An ethics enjoining us to become worthy of the event must be supplemented with powerful politico-philosophical imperatives and tactics. A life filled as much as possible with active joy, and a life of striving to become worthy of the event, may be facilitated or, alternatively, made impossible by the conditions prevailing inside the polis.

Deleuze and the Political

Recently, the questions whether Deleuze ever succeeded in articulating a philosophico-political theory (rather than an ethical attitude and pre-
one another. Civil society, on the other hand, is the result of the effort to organize encounters, in other words, the effort to organize the useful and to fend off the detrimental. The greater the numbers of those who come together in one body, the more rights they will have in common, Liberation, that is, freedom from the fortuitousness of external causes, and therefore the affirmation and increase of one’s own vis existendi, can be promoted by society under conditions open to experimentation and discovery. Following upon these premises, an explication of modes of existence (forms of life) replaces the appeal to the transcendental “ought.” It is my contention that in these readings of Spinoza’s and Hume’s ethics one can locate the source of the optimism that moderates Deleuze’s subversive tendencies and ultimately mitigates his perversions.

The presence of subversive tendencies is unmistakable in Deleuze’s works (especially those that he co-authored with Félix Guattari). They tend to cluster around the concepts minority/majority and nomad/sedentary developed in A Thousand Plateaus in Deleuze and Guattari’s attempt to summon those who are in a position to stand against the state’s capturing forces. This quest is broader than it initially appears, as it involves minor, transformative forces (of life, politics, thought, artistic creation) capable of escaping the sedentariness and stratification being dear to majorities. “Nomadic” are called the minority forces—better still, the minor tendencies—which belong to the events of virtual becoming (rather than to the states of affairs of actual history). Nomads, unlike migrants, have territories. Having portable roots, they reterritorialize upon the line and the trajectory of their deterritorialization. The object of their “knowledge” is the behavior of the materials they work with and the intensity of forces, rather than the matter and form of hierarchal and hylomorphic sedentary sciences. The singular, rather than the universal essence, is their objective. Deleuze and Guattari hypothesize that nomads (or better, nomadic tendencies) have the ability to ward off the encroaching forces of the sedentaries. In fact, they assign to them the invention of the “war machine.” But unlike the state that wages war in order to conserve its integrative power, nomads wage war when their lines of flight are blocked and their deterritorialization prevented.

In this nomadology one can still find the remnants of the Marxist reading of the state as the “capturing apparatus” in the hands of the ruling class being maintained for the sake of that class’s interests. The sedentaries (alias the majority or the majoritarians) are the state, the state-apparatus, or rather the state-form; the nomads are the multitudes, the masses, or the minorities whose desires do not coincide with the interests of the state. But in a post-Marxist context the nomads do not want to become the state or to take over the state apparatus but rather to destroy it or to escape it. Here, the Nomad is the one who tries to prevent the social sedimentation of desire from blocking the connective process of the production of desire. Nomadic lines of flight are lines of subversion and transformation of the well-organized and smoothly functioning institutions of the sedentaries.

But there is another side to Deleuze’s (and Guattari’s) posture vis-à-vis the political, a posture that Jérémy Valentin, following François Zourabichvili, qualifies as “perverse.”36 As Valentin writes, “politics [for Deleuze] is a posture, a matter of perception, the result of a conversion that allows the development of a mechanics of resistance to the present” (PED, 106). This posture is “the permanent quest for an inner balance (for a liberation of force) ... always an in-between (entre-deux)” (PED, 138). It is always an “in-between” posture: in between philosophy and non-philosophy; in between political philosophy and politics; in between the aristocracy of thought and the becoming-democratic; in between the chief and the tribe; in between the near and the far; in between a past that has never taken place and a future that will never come to be present; in between subversion and perversion. Zourabichvili locates the perversity of this posture in the identity of fleeing and causing something to flee, the twin imperatives of Deleuze’s political platform, and he finds this perversive attitude expressed in passages like the following:

It might seem that a disavowal is, generally speaking, much more superficial than a negation or even a partial destruction. But this is not so, for it represents an entirely different operation. Disavowal should perhaps be understood as the point of departure of an operation that consists neither in negating nor even destroying, but rather in radically contesting the validity of that which is: it suspends belief in and neutralizes the given in such a way that a new horizon opens up beyond the given in place of it.37

Deleuze’s perversity has the structure of disavowal, and this is what makes it always already untimely. Untimeliness better equips the political philosopher in her task to resist the present but also renders Deleuze’s political philosophy incommensurable with traditional political thought.

Faced with Deleuze’s subversive tendencies, we are bound to ask how best to flee, without finding ourselves deprived of weapons or of the artifices needed during the journey of deterritorialization. We already saw the nomad fleeing sedimentation. (Valentin prefers to say that the nomad flees the generality and stratification of the law.) It seems to me that the question of the best means available for fleeing leads us to the heart of Deleuze’s “perversion.” With this question in mind, Valentin takes his reader through Deleuze’s writings on Masoch and Masochism
where Deleuze repudiates the conventional wisdom that sees in masochism the mere inversion of sadism. The sadist, argues Deleuze, is still steeped in the language of the law; his feat is that, in opposing the deduction of the law from an alleged principle of the good, he chooses to subvert the old law ironically by maintaining its form, while at the same time he replaces its content with precepts deduced from a “principle of evil.” A contrario, for Deleuze, the masochist chooses to pervert the law by submitting to it humorously in order to savor the pleasures that the law prohibits by means of punishments (M, 86–90).

In his further efforts to elucidate the sense of the Deleuzian perversion, Valentin also visits Deleuze’s distinction between the tired and the exhausted (epuisé), and makes the point that the one who is tired is more likely to mount the barricades and to mobilize his troops for the sake of the ultimate overthrow of the established power.38 On the other hand, the one who is exhausted confronts the depletion of the possible with the quest for the autrement qu’autre of Speranza’s Robinson through counter-actualization and plumbing the field of the virtual. Along with Zourabichvili, Valentin attempts to draw the delicate distinction between ne faire rien (to do nothing) and faire le rien (make the nothing) and concludes that it is the latter that characterizes Deleuze’s political posture—a posture that problematizes the field of the possibles without ever articulating a plan in view of a telos.39 What Deleuze consequently advocates is ataraxia, which is not to be confused with apragha. “One still has to move ahead with the event,” Valentin writes, “to act along with it, to draw from it a certain number of principles, and to align here and now with this encounter” (PED, 37).

Those who speak of an aristocratic dimension in Deleuze’s thought are correct, provided that this aristocratic posture is not confused with a rejection of democracy. Deleuze’s interest in Pierre Clastre’s writings on primitive societies is fully intelligible in this context: displacing Clastre’s preoccupation with power, Deleuze retains nevertheless Clastre’s attribution to the tribal chief of an aristocratic distance from the tribe—the space, in other words, necessary for the chief to exercise his clairvoyance (voyance) and to ponder over the means available for assembling the “missing people” (TP, 357–61). Despite the reservations that Deleuze expresses against actual democracies, his option for a becoming democratic, conceived as the politics of a universal brotherhood à venir, is unmistakable. This universal brotherhood à venir is the answer to the political problem generated by the fact that, in the Deleuzian narrative, the people (to whom the political theorist appeals) is missing (le peuple manque); “a new people and a new earth à venir” gives Deleuze’s political posture “a purposefulness without purpose”—provided, that is, that the clarion for a new people and a new earth is not interpreted as a teleological anticipation with messianic aspirations. Being not a question of les lendemains qui chantent, the missing people is both à venir and already there.

I spoke of the clarion for a new people and a new earth; Deleuze speaks of fabulation.40 The becoming-democratic of the missing people requires the art of fabulation, and fabulation must be distinguished from mere fiction. “The fable transports us to a territory that was unknown until this moment: the territory of indiscernibility” (91). The “aristocratic touch” of Deleuze’s posture is once again visible here. Fabulation requires the ability to be receptive to one’s environment, and the luxury of a “site” not too near and not too far from the demos. It requires that one allows oneself to be filled with the affects generated by having seen the intolerable in the present, and a style to speak the possibles that arise the same time that one apprehends the intolerable. It is plausible to assume that the clarion for the creation of the new people and the new earth will be heard primarily by those who recognize themselves in the fabule enunciated by the seer. Yet once again, the aristocratic posture is planted firmly inside the becoming-democratic. Deleuze never characterized concretely the people to come or the new earth. He did say that the “race” that fabulation summons up exists only as an oppressed race, and only in the name of the oppression it suffers. He did claim that there is no race but inferior and minoritarian, and that “race” is not defined by its purity but by the impurity conferred upon it by a system of domination.41 Valentin aptly concludes that the posture assumed by Deleuze is not struck for the sake of discovering the “plage au dessus le pavé,” but rather for the sake of re-injecting a little disorder in our societies of control, and waiting for the propagation of this disorder to do its work.

If we now ask for criteria for “the right” fabulation—the fabulation capable of summoning up the new people and earth—we find Deleuze rather circumspect and guarded with his answers—which does not mean without resources. Fabulation is possible only when imagination is given the task of training sensibility, memory, and understanding, in other words from the vantage point of a new life praxis moving out of its basis in art. This “moving out” entails the lifting of the Kantian barriers between the cognitive, the practical, and the aesthetic interests, and the fair redistribution of the insights of discordant Reason among all faculties. Aesthetics must free itself from the kind of autonomy that the Kantian narrative imposed on it, and link up with the aisthesis of the first Critique (KCP, 46–67).

In Difference and Repetition, Deleuze claims that the Idea/problem (the cogitandum), in order to be grasped, requires a chain reaction between levels of intensity which must always begin with sensible encounters. Only the violence of the sentiendum stands a chance to bring
about the resonance and the compossibility of all Ideas/problems (DR, 141). In his Logic of Sensation, Deleuze decided to reckon with this violence, choosing this time as his laboratory the paintings of Francis Bacon. He showed that the violence of sensation tormenting Bacon’s canvases trades off representation for the exploration of a world never before seen, and yet strangely familiar and near. He pointed out that in his effort to escape the figurative and representative modes of narration and illustration, as well as the abstractness of pure form, Bacon aims at the liberation of the figure through iconic isolation and hysteresis. Iconic isolation, that is, the neutralization of the background and the enclosure of figures in well-defined spaces, prevents the figure from telling a story or from representing forms external to the canvas. As for hysteresis, it means subtraction, removal, and extirpation. Even before the painter begins to paint, her canvas and her head are filled with sensations, clichés, and probabilities. “The painter’s problem,” writes Deleuze, “is not how to enter the canvas, since he is already there..., but rather how to get out of it...” (FB, 62). Hysteresis situates the problem well since it takes the form of an intensive reduction. Painting as hysteresis is not the filling of an empty surface with the representation of an object. It is imagination aggressively reasserting its rights. Painting, in search of the figural, just like sensation in search of the sentiendum, is the operation on an encumbered canvas, a kind of interventionist painting on pre-existing images. It aims at the reversal of the old, time-consecrated relation between model and copy whereby the reversal sustains the equation: sentiendum = simulacrum. In this context, sensation is no longer the response to a form any more than Bacon’s painting is a form-giving enterprise. Sensation is intimately related to forces, just as Bacon’s painting aims at the capture of forces. The prize of the artist’s subtraction—the figure, beyond representation, narration, and illustration—is the body without organs that subsists underneath the organism—the bwa that Deleuze calls “hysterical body” (FB, 33–8).

Returning for one last time to the question of the “right” fabulation measuring up to the task of summoning up the missing people, we can now see that fabulation will itself be measured according to the imaging and the imagination of the hysterical body. Although exomnominated through-out history, just like the nomads and their opposition to state power have been exomnominated, the body without organs (the “crowned anarchy” of Deleuze and Guattari’s texts) has the reality of the cogitandum, memorandum, and sentiendum of every political theory and praxis. Being a virtual reality, it has to be actualized and counter-actualized constantly, in ever different/ciated contexts. Like Althusser’s cause, it determines in the last instance the arrangement of the elements of a structure. Like Spinoza’s substance, it cannot be conceived without its attributes and modes, as it expresses itself immanently in attributes and modes. Like Lacan’s phallus, it is the paradoxical object = x, lacking in its place, having an “identity” that must be grasped in its eternally returning differentiations.

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Notes

1. An earlier, shorter version of this essay was published in French in Gilles Deleuze, Héritage philosophique, Alain Beaulieu, ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2005).


3. I discuss in more detail Deleuze’s ontology of forces in my “An Ontology of Intensities,” Epoché 7: 1 (Fall 2002). See also on this subject the excellent work of Véronique Bergen, L’Ontologie de Gilles Deleuze (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001). Recently, François Zourabichvili claimed that Deleuze has no ontology and that it is a mistake to attribute one to him (“Introduction inédite (2004): l’ontologique et le transcendantal,” François Zourabichvili, Anne Sauvagnargues, Paola Marati, La Philosophie de Deleuze (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004). Zourabichvili speculates that those who attribute an ontology to Deleuze must assume either that Deleuze has something to say about an ultimate reality (vulgar metaphysical position) or that he postulates the primacy of being over knowledge (deeper metaphysical position). I do hold the vulgar metaphysical position and, therefore, Zourabichvili’s reminder reaches me also: Deleuze is “a philosopher who, throughout his work, questioned the conditions of experience, unsatisfied that he was with Kant and phenomenology.” I do not see the pertinence of this reminder. Zourabichvili must hold the view that intensities and affects are useful fictions rather than the sentiendi and the gerundiva that Deleuze had wanted them to be. He must hold the view that Bergson’s and Deleuze’s structure of temporality have no ontological significance—but I beg to differ. I think that Véronique Bergen’s essay in the present issue of Symposium constitutes an excellent intervention on the
side of Deleuze's ontology.


10. I have argued elsewhere that caution must be taken against the syncretist tendencies that tend to identify the structures of the Deleuzian and the Derridean temporality. See Constantin V. Boundas "Between Deleuze and Derrida: A Critical Notice," *Symposium* (Spring 2005). A useful meditation on (Pauline) temporality is Giorgio Agamben’s "The Time that is Left," *Epoché* 7: 1 (Fall 2002).


25. See also The Logic of Sense, 146, 148–51.


29. See my essay, “The Ethics of Counter-Actualization.”


39. Zourabichvili in “Deleuze et le possible (de l’involontarisme en politique)" prefers to play with the distinction between “ne faire rien” and “s’activer pour le rien.”
