

# DELEUZE'S POST-CRITICAL METAPHYSICS

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*Badiou claims Deleuze's thinking is pre-critical metaphysics that cannot be understood in relation to Kant. I argue that Deleuze is indeed a metaphysical thinker, but precisely because he is a kind of Kantian. Badiou is right that Deleuze rejects the overwhelmingly epistemic problems of critical thought in its canonical sense, but he is wrong to claim that Deleuze completely rejects Kant. Instead, Deleuze is interested in developing a metaphysics that prolongs Kant's conception of a productive synthesis irreducible to empirical causation. Where Badiou's criticism might hold, however, is in the risk that Deleuze's strategy runs of contaminating his new metaphysics with a new kind of transcendental idealism. This reading has recently been developed by Ray Brassier and I explore and evaluate it, concluding that in *Difference and Repetition* this accusation may be correct, but that by the time of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze (now with Guattari) has the intellectual resources to resist it.*

## I. Introduction

Badiou claims that Deleuze's thinking constitutes (like his own) a classical, that is an essentially pre-critical, metaphysics; for Badiou, this makes any return to Kant (or by implication any phenomenological development of Kantianism) impossible.<sup>1</sup> The fact that "Deleuze identifies philosophy purely and simply with ontology" is a "point that can never be sufficiently emphasized," and one that a "critical or phenomenological interpretation continuously conceals."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: La clameur de l'Être* (Paris: Hachette, 1997), tr. by L. Burchill as *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 45–6/69. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the French, then to the English text.

<sup>2</sup> Badiou, *Clamor*, 32/20. The antagonism that Badiou sets up between a metaphysical/ontological reading of Deleuze and a phenomenological one is stated rather more boldly than in most readings of Deleuze. But it seems to be rather accurate. An avowedly metaphysical commentary like Peter Hallward's *Out of this World: Deleuze and the Phi-*

I agree that Deleuze is a kind of metaphysician, but claim that Deleuze's metaphysics can only be understood by a return to Kant. This return, however, must be correctly interpreted: Badiou is right that Deleuze does not return to the epistemically anxious Kant of the critique of transcendent metaphysics, but to the productive Kant who redirects the term "synthetic" from its propositional philosophical origins to the metaphysical process of the real production of reality.

Perhaps the ambivalence of Deleuze's return to Kant can help to explain the purchase that phenomenological readings of Deleuze can get from his texts. But I think Badiou is right to claim that the main contours of Deleuze's thought will be occluded by a phenomenological interpretation, however heterodox. I will therefore avoid such an interpretation.

The return to Kant that I suggest, by contrast, identifies critique with production: a non-critical approach accepts things (e.g., objects) as given, whereas a critical approach gives an account of their production (e.g., the production of objects). Kant distinguishes strongly between the transcendental production of objects of experience and empirical production that occurs within constituted experience. Kant's main term for tran-

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*osophy of Creation* (London: Verso, 2006) has Deleuze doing ontology ("Deleuze equates being with unlimited creativity," 8) but does not have much time for Kant ("Deleuze himself is not primarily a critical thinker," 73) and regards Deleuze as simply affirming the existence of that ("intellectual intuition," 12) on which the denial of the Kantian critique constitutes itself. Similarly, Todd May's *Deleuze: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) acknowledges that Deleuze is (unlike Derrida) renewing ontology (80), and also sees his relation to Kant as essentially negative, relegating to a footnote Deleuze's interest in the *Critique of Judgment*, and May certainly does not see Kant as required for understanding the basic outlines of Deleuze's thought. (79–80 and 79 n. 6) Conversely, John Mullarkey's *Post-Continental Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2006) reads Deleuze as doing a kind of "radicalized phenomenology" (14) that has no time for a Deleuzian metaphysics or ontology: he describes Badiou's position as "seductively simple." (15) And Christian Kerslake's "Deleuze, Kant and the Question of Metacritique" in the *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 42, 481–508 provides a subtle reading of Deleuze through the lens of the post-Kantian idealist problem of making legitimate the critique that declares there is no "simple regression to a pre-critical kind of metaphysics" in Deleuze and that this is exactly what is wrong with "metaphysically materialist" readings of Deleuze. (484)

scendental production is “synthesis,” and Deleuze’s revival of Kant’s doctrine of synthesis should be understood within this context.

However, Badiou may be right that this revival runs the risk of a return to a kind of idealism at odds with the trajectory of Deleuze’s thought. In Kant, synthesis is always associated with the subject. Looked at one way, the doctrine of synthesis gives a critical account not of the production of objects, but of the production of *representations* of objects.<sup>3</sup> I argue that even in Kant, the doctrine of synthesis shows critique leading to a new productive metaphysics: synthetic processes are transcendently necessary but cannot be empirical, and they therefore constitute a kind of metaphysics of the subject. Deleuze takes up the doctrine of synthesis and tries both to disengage it from the subject as well as to radically re-think the nature of the subject, dispersing and splitting it. It is, however, an open question whether he succeeds, especially in his earlier works like *Difference and Repetition*<sup>4</sup>, in extricating the doctrine of synthesis fully from its Kantian context. To the extent that he does not, he then may also be embracing a new metaphysical account of the constitutive powers of a subject, which, although it may be quite different from Kant’s, would still make him a kind of transcendental idealist. In this paper I will defend Deleuze against this criticism, forcefully stated by Ray Brassier in his *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*,<sup>5</sup> and instead show that Deleuze’s later view of synthesis in, for instance, *Anti-Oedipus*, does effect a complete break with transcendental idealism by migrating synthesis to the real.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Of course, for Kant, such a gloss is deeply misleading, for it fails to register the crucial fact that such representations *comprise* the empirically real.

<sup>4</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), tr. by P. Patton as *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as DR. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the French, then to the English text. Translations are my own, but I have usually followed Patton.

<sup>5</sup> Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie: 1. L’Anti-Oedipe* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), (tr.) R. Hurley, M. Seem and H. Lane as *Anti-Oedipus* (London: Athlone, 1984). Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as AO. Page references, separated by a slash, will be first to the French, then to the English text. Translations are

## II. The Really Productive Kant

It may be worth initially recalling some of the basic outlines of Kant's attack on metaphysics. Most importantly, it should be recalled how limited this attack actually was. Kant thinks that we do have metaphysical knowledge, which he identifies with synthetic *a priori* knowledge in general. Indeed, the manifest motive for critique was an explanation of how such knowledge is possible. Kant's answer is his (perversely named) Copernican Revolution in which the correspondence between object and cognition is explained by treating reality (understood as experience) as itself a product of cognition. The metaphysical knowledge to which we are entitled comprises the set of conditions that make experience possible. Such knowledge is immanent to experience. In the same move, however, Kant also claims that we lack knowledge of what transcends the boundaries of a possible experience, and it is this purported knowledge that Kant criticises as the transcendent metaphysics of his precursors, both rationalist and empiricist. The epistemically anxious side of Kant has been prolonged and exacerbated in the multiform developments of phenomenology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond.

But there is another side of Kant too, the really productive side, that understands the Copernican Revolution in a different way. The characteristic problematic of pre-critical thought was that of assuring the correlation between representations and represented. The Copernican Revolution turns things around by insisting on the importantly constitutive role of human cognition in the experience of objects (CPR, Bxvi-xvii).<sup>7</sup>

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my own, but I have usually followed Hurley *et al.* My reading of Deleuze coincides analytically with Žižek's *Organs without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences* (London & New York: Routledge, 2004), where he distinguishes between the Deleuze of the late 1960s and of the early 1970s, except that I reverse his negative valorisation of a productive transcendental matter (21) versus the positively valorised transcendental as the immaterial field of "sense-Event." (22) Žižek, in other words, is happiest when Deleuze *can* be made out to be a transcendental idealist, as in his subtle reading of the different directions of transcendental and empirical "causality." (84)

<sup>7</sup> References to Kant's works will be to the edition of the German Academy of Science, *Kants gesammelte Schriften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1902ff.) and the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, which will be cited in the usual way as CPR, followed by the first/second edi-

But underlying that revolution is a more profound one that orients critical thought around giving an account of the production of objects, rather than taking them as given.

The term “synthesis” designates a privileged venue in which the productive and epistemic concerns of Kant’s thought are themselves unified. In its initial acceptance, “synthetic” describes a proposition whose predicate is not contained in its grammatical subject. But Kant also uses the term “synthesis” in an extended sense to describe the cognitive machinery by means of which objects of experience are produced. In its productive use, synthesis is still understood in relation to the subject, but instead of connecting the grammatical subject with its predicate, it now joins the cognitive subject with the outside: its affection by sense, and ultimately by the thing in itself.

The doctrine of productive synthesis is a contentious one. It is bound up with the “psychologistic” deduction of the objective validity of the categories in the first (A) edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* (A98ff.) and largely omitted from the second (B) edition. Why does Kant make this change? Part of the answer is no doubt due to his general response to the so-called Göttingen review written by Marcus Garve in 1782 in which he assimilated Kant’s transcendental idealism to Berkeley’s empirical or subjective idealism.<sup>8</sup> Many of the amendments found in the second edition of the *Critique* in 1787 are clearly aimed at distinguishing Kant’s own transcendental idealism from Berkeley’s doctrine. From Kant’s point of view, empirical idealism is not just the misplaced doctrine of a forerunner, but is actually incapable of adequate formulation. To understand why, it is important to realise that inner experience is just as much a species of experience as outer experience. Indeed, the “Refutation of Idealism” (CPR, B274–79) purports to show that the former can only be constituted on the basis of the latter, i.e., that inner experience is only possible on the basis of outer experience.

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tion page numbers given as A/B. Translations are my own, but I have usually followed Guyer and Wood’s *Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). My translations will be indicated by the abbreviation “tm.”

<sup>8</sup> See Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1987).

Now, one way of understanding the syntheses of the A deduction is as an empirical hypothesis about this very inner experience, i.e., mental functioning. Indeed, each of the three syntheses is presented first in an empirical form of just this kind. Thus understood, however, as, for instance, empirically causal claims, the hypothetical mechanisms must presuppose the constitution of the empirical and, therefore, cannot, in fact, be responsible for constituting it. Such syntheses would effectively presuppose their own prior application. This seems to be the nub of the objection that the A deduction is “psychologistic.” Thus in the B edition, Kant essentially eliminates talk of productive synthesis as question begging.

Kant’s own acquiescence in the critique of psychologism is historically significant, since this very aspect of his thought was the target of a very influential critique a century later. The dominant strands of both Continental and analytic philosophy take their cue from thinkers (Husserl and Frege respectively) who rejected any “psychologistic” understanding of Kant. For Frege and analytic philosophy, this meant recasting notionally synthetic *a priori* claims as empirical claims concerning the domain of semantics<sup>9</sup>; but for Husserl, and especially later developments of phenomenology, the rejection of psychologism meant an increasing tendency to collapse the epistemically anxious strictures surrounding the transcendent into the transcendental itself. The transcendental, as condition of the empirical, cannot be anything empirical; but the empirical is all that there is.

This collapse, however, was not the only option open to Kant. For, even in the A deduction, Kant distinguishes (fairly) clearly between the empirical syntheses and their transcendental counterparts. Kant there opens up, albeit briefly, the possibility of thinking a properly transcendental mode of synthetic production as distinct from empirical (causal) production (indeed a production that would in part be a production *of* empirical production), one which would meet the requirement of not presupposing its own application. This would, however, involve Kant in a transcendent endeavour of a frankly metaphysical kind, for the transcendental syntheses would, by definition, be refractory to possible represen-

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<sup>9</sup> See J. Alberto Coffa, *The Semantic Tradition from Kant to Carnap: To the Vienna Station* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

tational experience of objects. Nevertheless, such transcendently metaphysical claims would be limited to an account of the world-constituting powers of the spontaneity of the subject.

### III. Positioning Deleuze

Deleuze can be viewed as starting out from this Kantian insight into the possibility of a transcendental account of object production distinct from and presupposed by empirical (causal) production. But rather than taking this as an opportunity to redeploy the epistemic constraints that surround the transcendent onto the transcendental itself—a move characteristic of phenomenology—Deleuze takes it as an opportunity to offer a speculative metaphysical account of the production of objects of experience that rejects the categories of representation. It is, therefore, precisely the transcendental element in Deleuze that makes him into a metaphysician. As Badiou suggests, Deleuze does not propose a prior investigation of the conditions under which these processes of primary production can be *represented*. To give priority to this kind of question is already to have presupposed an answer in the register of the philosophy of representation, but, for Deleuze, representation is the target and not the motor of critique. The critical aspect of Deleuze's project is not oriented toward questions of access to the transcendental at all, but toward production.

As a result, Deleuze joins the ranks of those reading Kant in an anti-psychologistic manner, criticising Kant for setting out transcendental structures that fail to meet the requirement of not presupposing what they are intended to constitute, and that instead “trace” (*décalque*) the empirical. Indeed, in *Difference and Repetition*, he points exactly to the “psychologism” of the syntheses in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and accuses Kant of merely “hiding [them] better” in the second edition. (DR, 177/135) However, Deleuze's rejection of psychologism implies neither an abandonment of the transcendental nor its assimilation to a post-critical problematic of access, but the construction of a critical metaphysics.

Deleuze is, of course, highly critical of Kant and far from being in sympathy with his basic orientation. Most obviously, in *Difference and Repetition*, the critique of representation is, at least in part, an attack on the supremacy of the object-recognition model of cognition in Kant. But this critique of representation could, in principle, be carried through

in a way essentially consistent with phenomenology by maintaining that experience is a wider category than representation. Indeed, this is one of the uses of Deleuze's term "transcendental empiricism." In *Difference and Repetition*, for instance, Deleuze uses the term to describe how "the work of art leaves the domain of representation to become 'experience.'"<sup>10</sup> (DR, 79/56)

But Deleuze's critique of representation does not stop with an account of non-representational experiences. Rather, the metaphysical aspect of Deleuze's project would attempt a reversal of Kant's idealist view that objects must conform to our concepts of them. Instead, Deleuze effects a speculative reconstruction of reality that is not relative to specifically human interests (not "representational" in Deleuze's vocabulary), a reconstruction driven by the transcendental and critical thought that the real processes of production of empirical objects cannot themselves be objects.

It follows that such an account must provide the resources for understanding the synthesis of all features of the real, including subjects along with their cognitions. Synthesis, in other words, must be understood not *just* as pertaining to the subject in relation to its outside (as is suggested by the originally logical use of the term as binding grammatical subject and predicate) but also in the sense of, for instance, chemical synthesis, as a material operation taking place at the level of the real and not operated by a subject at all. It is this move that is, I think, only inadequately carried through in *Difference and Repetition*, an inadequacy that opens him up to the accusation of supporting a kind of transcendental idealism.

On this basis, I think it is possible—although Deleuze does not do it explicitly—to make a distinction between a transcendental empiricism and a transcendental materialism.<sup>11</sup> Transcendental empiricism

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<sup>10</sup> More frequently in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze uses the term "encounter" to describe these "experiences" that cannot be contained within representation. (DR, 182/139)

<sup>11</sup> In his review of Todd May's *Gilles Deleuze: An Introduction* (Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews: [<http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=2741>]), Keith Ansell-Pearson notes that by *Anti-Oedipus* transcendental empiricism has "transmuted into something that calls itself 'transcendental materialism.'" Deleuze does not, I think, explicitly use the phrase "transcendental materialism," but it is certainly not an inappropriate description for *Anti-Oedipus*. For instance, in the methodologically important passage in which Deleuze and



would retain some kind of essential link with experience. On the other hand, transcendental materialism is the production not only of experience (even construed widely) but also of the real: synthesis joins not only experience to the real, but the real to the real. I will argue that part of the reason for Deleuze's hesitation in *Difference and Repetition* is that he still conceives his critical method analytically and not synthetically, i.e., he starts from something like phenomena and works backwards to their transcendental conditions.<sup>12</sup>

The doctrine of synthesis has never been popular, and this aspect of Deleuze's appropriation of Kant is not always evident, either in Deleuze's texts or in the literature. For instance, in *Difference and Repetition*, it is Chapter 3 on the "Image of Thought" where Deleuze seems most conspicuously Kantian, enjoining philosophy to take up a "radical critique" (DR, 172/131) of this "dogmatic, orthodox or moral Image" (*Ibid.*, 173/132) in order to eradicate its "presuppositions."<sup>13</sup> (*Ibid.*, 170/129) Deleuze's prosecution of this critique is highly original, but the idea of criticising the presuppositions of prior philosophical work is not a specifically Kantian conception of critique.

Deleuze goes on to mobilise a doctrine of the faculties<sup>14</sup> that does seem more peculiarly Kantian, and often follows the account of the importance of the various different configurations of the "network" of faculties that he had given earlier in his 1963 book on Kant.<sup>15</sup> In particu-

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Guattari discuss their relation to Kant, they claim to want to "rediscover a transcendental unconscious" by undertaking a "revolution—this time materialist" inspired by Kant. (AO, 89/75)

<sup>12</sup> In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze is conscious that the order of transcendental conditions is distinct from the order of phenomena (DR, 130/97), but the insight is not fully applied until *Anti-Oedipus*.

<sup>13</sup> The informally critical nature of Deleuze's strategy here is nicely analysed by Levi Bryant, *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 15ff.

<sup>14</sup> He claims in an important passage that "despite the fact that it has become discredited today, the doctrine of the faculties is an entirely necessary component of the system of philosophy." (DR, 186/143)

<sup>15</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Kant's Critical Philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties*, (tr.) H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 10, and compare with *Difference and Repetition* (e.g., DR, 178–79/136–37).

lar, Deleuze emphasises the extent to which the Kantian sublime involves a “discordant harmony” of the faculties, prefiguring his own claim that the faculties must achieve autonomy to defeat an image of thought that itself requires their subordination to the goal of representation. (DR, 187 n. 1/320–21 n. 10; 190/146) However, by 1968 the autonomy that Deleuze thinks the faculties must achieve is construed quite differently from Kant’s construal. In the Kant book, Deleuze correctly infers that the “new powers” we discover in the “higher form” of, for example, the faculty of reason is that “it is we who are giving the orders” to nature, i.e., that empirical reality is our product.<sup>16</sup> Were Deleuze to subscribe to this claim about the higher or transcendent exercise of the faculties in *Difference and Repetition*, then he would obviously be committed to a form of transcendental idealism. He clearly does not explicitly subscribe to this claim.<sup>17</sup> But then the question remains: How should Deleuze’s renewal of the doctrine of the faculties be interpreted, if it is not to be construed as a simultaneous renewal of some form of transcendental idealism?

The most openly Kantian aspects of Deleuze’s early works (the Kant book and Chapter 3 of *Difference and Repetition*) do not answer this question because they have, I think, an essentially ground-clearing function: they establish that there are experiences (encounters) that transcend the banality of representational object recognition, and that to account for these the faculties cannot operate according to their regular representational model. But what *is* the target of such encounters? It is (in a privileged instance) the “being of the sensible” (DR, 183/140) or “difference in itself.” (*Ibid.*, 187/144) But what is this? And can “it” be understood both as the real production of the real *and* as the underlying ground for the production of experience and encounters? To answer this question, one has to return to the specific accounts of difference in itself (and,

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<sup>16</sup> Deleuze, *Kant*, 4, 14.

<sup>17</sup> In a vocabulary knot that Kerslake nicely unties (“Deleuze, Kant ...,” 499–500), Deleuze here associates the “transcendent” or higher use of the faculties with a proper delineation of the transcendental field that does not merely “trace” it from the empirical. (DR, 186/143)

it turns out, of repetition for itself) where Deleuze elaborates his doctrine of synthesis.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> There is almost nothing about synthesis in either the Kant book or Chapter 3 of *Difference and Repetition*. In the Kant book, the term is only mentioned four times: once in its propositional rather than productive sense (4–5) and once in relation to the *Critique of Practical Reason* (6) where he is really referring to what Kant describes as the determination of the will. On the other two occasions, Deleuze confines himself to a bald statement of the pre-representational nature of productive synthesis, arguing that it excludes or is prior to “recognition.” (8, 14–17) In *Difference and Repetition*, however, I will show that Deleuze uses the A edition of the transcendental deduction, where there is a synthesis of recognition, as a foil for his own account of synthesis (compare CPR, B160–61 with A103ff.)

There is a burgeoning secondary literature on Deleuze and Kant, much of it very interesting. However, those who are interested in exploring the relation of Deleuze to Kant do not fully address the implication of transcendental idealism, concomitantly downplaying the question of synthesis. Kerslake, for example, attempts to re-inscribe Deleuze in the classical German Idealist tradition by framing Deleuze's Kantianism in terms of metacritique, the question of the authority of reason in subjecting itself to critique. He regards Deleuze as opening up new possibilities for synthesis (“Deleuze, Kant ...,” 499) so that, for example, sensations need not (as with Kant) be “taken as” necessarily referring to an object, but may be taken in other ways (e.g., as “the sign of a problem”), but such new constructions as Deleuze provides should in no way be understood as “returning its [the sign's] status to that of a mere transaction in nature.” (498) Naturalism here seems identified with sensationalism, as in the empiricist tradition, and Kerslake does not undertake to address the possibility of a transcendental conception of nature.

One of the most promising new directions of research into the relation of Kant and Deleuze is (correctly) to emphasise the importance of Salomon Maïmon to his reading of Kant. As Dan Smith points out, two of Maïmon's crucial claims—that philosophy should seek “genetic” conditions of real and not just possible experience, and that a principle of difference derived in the first instance from the differential calculus provides such a condition of the real—“reappear like a leitmotif in almost every one of Deleuze's books up through 1969.” (“Deleuze, Hegel and the Post-Kantian Tradition,” in *Philosophy Today*, 44, 126) Similarly, Juliette Simont's *Essai sur la quantité, la qualité, la relation chez Kant, Hegel, Deleuze : Les « fleurs noirs » de la logique philosophique* (Paris : Éditions l'Hartmann, 1997) provides a reading of Deleuze that owes a great deal to Maïmon. But, again, this takes place against the background of the idealist developments of immediate post-Kantianism. (“Kant, Hegel, Deleuze”) Maïmon's own argument in the *Versuch über die Transzendentalphilosophie*, herausgegeben von Florian Ehrenspreger

#### IV. The Syntheses in Chapter 2 of *Difference and Repetition*

The notion of synthesis plays a significant role in *Difference and Repetition*: Chapter 2 (“Repetition for Itself”) is the most sustained encounter with synthesis, but Chapters 4 and 5 both invoke it in their titles. It is Chapters 4 and 5 in particular that elaborate the now-familiar mechanisms of the actualisation of the virtual *via* the intensive (as well as counter-actualisation) and, therefore, promise to give a properly asubjective metaphysical account of the synthesis in the real of actual entities.

But Deleuze does not understand synthesis primarily in a merely Kantian way as the process of transcendental world-constitution or construction of the world as representation; this is rather (at best) only a special case of real synthesis. Deleuze always distances himself from the conservative aspect of Kant’s transcendental method: where Kant regards transcendental conditions as making legitimate what they condition, Deleuze extends the sense of critique so as to understand the product of transcendental production processes as occluding those very processes.<sup>19</sup>

It is in Chapter 2 that the term synthesis is elaborated most extensively for itself, and this elaboration is logically prior to that of the account of the differentiation of Ideas and their differentiation (actualisation) that occupies Chapters 4 and 5. This is for two reasons. First, de-

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(Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2003), (tr.) N. Midgley, H. Somers-Hall, M. Reglitz and A. Welchman (London: Continuum, 2010) is too intricate for summary to be rewarding. Still, it is worth observing that Maïmon’s account of the qualitative perceptual content characteristic of finite intuition as comprised by pure differential quantities is intended to license the inference that we think of that content not as ultimately given, but as “arising” through an infinite understanding that posits its own content. (64–65) Fichte was particularly impressed by this idea. It seems, therefore, precisely to be on the question of the status of the differentials that Deleuze differs from Maïmon and this is the question that I am interested in pursuing. Merely adverting to these differentials and talk of genesis (or arising) does not decide the issue.

<sup>19</sup> “The in-itself of difference hides itself by giving rise to what covers it over.” (DR, 154/117) James Williams’ *Gilles Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition: A Critical Guide and Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 99ff., gives a good account of this important modulation of Kant’s method, saving it from what he regards as a “*reductio*.” (100)

spite their apparent coordination throughout the text, repetition (the target of Chapter 2) is itself transcendently prior to difference. Second, the temporal syntheses of Chapter 2 set up something like the transcendental “space” of the virtual, whose mechanisms of proliferation and actualisation and counter-actualisation, therefore, depend on this prior constitutive synthesis. It is in this context that an investigation of the structure of the syntheses of time in Chapter 2 is of such importance.<sup>20</sup>

The two best commentaries on Chapter 2 of *Difference and Repetition* are the relevant sections of Williams' *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition* and Ansell-Pearson's *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual*<sup>21</sup>, which both do an excellent job of reproducing and reconstructing Deleuze's sometimes very dense argumentation, especially in relation to the second synthesis. However, far from addressing the question of the status of synthesis head on, Williams appears to presuppose an essentially anti-realist view through his careful unpicking of the effects of temporal synthesis as concerning the “significance” of events, thus implying the presence of an underlying physical/causal/material substructure that remains unaffected by temporal synthesis. “Significance” is here a transcendently ideal construct rendered plausible by an underlying transcendental realism corresponding to the standard scientific world view.<sup>22</sup>

By contrast Ansell-Pearson (obviously highly indebted to Bergson) strenuously resists the assimilation of the syntheses of time to anything psychological, enjoining instead a “leap into the ontological”<sup>23</sup>, especially in relation to the being of the pure past that results from the second synthesis. However, it is unclear that these are exhaustive alternatives. Kant was already aware of the need to purge his conception of synthesis of anything psychological, but the result of that move (for Kant) was ontological only in the sense in which Kant uses the term, i.e., to refer to the being of objects of experience. (CPR, A845/B873) To the ex-

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<sup>20</sup> The reader should be warned that I am not primarily interested in Deleuze's account of time, but on the implications of this analysis for the problem addressed by this paper, namely, the metaphysical status of synthesis.

<sup>21</sup> Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual* (London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition*, 8, 104.

<sup>23</sup> Ansell-Pearson, *Adventure of the Virtual*, 203.

tent that the term “ontological” can be used to refer equally well to transcendently ideal constructs of the empirically real *and* to mind-independent reality, then its use is of little help in resolving the present problem.<sup>24</sup>

Conversely, some commentators have approached Chapter 2 of *Difference and Repetition* from a robustly non-idealist perspective. For instance, Manuel DeLanda as well as John Protevi and Mark Bonta have effectuated a remarkably clear and detailed mapping of Deleuze’s concepts onto those of dynamical systems theory.<sup>25</sup> Although in a sense such a reading risks the collapse of a metaphysical and philosophical account into a purely scientific one—and hence of transcendental production back into empirical production—it nevertheless clearly indicates that the primary thought of this synthesis is the real construction of the actual.

These commentators evince some distaste for the “subjective” vocabulary that Deleuze deploys in Chapter 2 of *Difference and Repetition*. DeLanda, for instance, finds these terms disquietingly “anthropomorphic.”<sup>26</sup> And Ray Brassier has argued more trenchantly that the mind-dependent constitution of temporal multiplicity that Deleuze has

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<sup>24</sup> This conception of Kantian ontology as applying only to the transcendently ideal makes evaluation of the actual status of claims marked as “ontological” a tricky business. See Karin De Boer, “The Dissolving Force of the Concept: Hegel’s Ontological Logic,” in the *Review of Metaphysics*, 57 (2004), 789 n. 7, for references on the importance of this move of Kant’s for the classical Idealist tradition.

When explaining the “ontological” nature of the pure past, Ansell-Pearson (*Adventure of the Virtual*, 184) refers to Bergson’s claim that time is subjective, but explains that through Deleuze’s claim that “subjectivity is never ours, it is time.” He explains this apparent circle, in turn, through Heidegger’s 1927 reading of Kant’s reading of the “subjectivisation” of time as implying that it is not something *vorhanden*. My suspicion is that such an interpretation is indeed of time as something transcendently ideal, but I do not pretend to be able to defend that view here. Hence, my strategy is to focus *not* on the separate and highly complex question of time, but much more narrowly on the operations of synthesis as Deleuze presents them.

<sup>25</sup> Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002). John Protevi and Mark Bonta, *Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Guide and Glossary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> DeLanda, *Intensive Science*, 162.

inherited from Bergson metastasises into a full-blown idealism.<sup>27</sup> DeLanda has little more to say about the issue, and one is left with the impression that Deleuze is probably guilty just of a poor choice of terms. Brassier's argument, however, is rather stronger. It decomposes into two parts. On the one hand, like DeLanda, he is disturbed by Deleuze's constant use of "subjective" terms (as Ansell-Pearson also shows). But this kind of objection is hard to settle, since it may still be (as Deleuze seems often to claim) that he is purging (apparently) subjective or psychological doctrines (like Bergson or psychoanalysis) of their subjective sense and redeploying them in a properly naturalistic context. The second aspect of Brassier's accusation is easier to evaluate: the actual or empirical is the product of a synthesis whose operator is not the real itself, but a privileged subset of the real, the subject in its broadest sense. In what follows I will lay out the syntheses in their Kantian context and assess these claims. Ultimately, I think Deleuze becomes progressively more aware of the problem, but only solves it in *Anti-Oedipus* where he disengages the problematic of synthesis from that of temporality.

Deleuze adopts what Kant would describe as an analytical procedure for his accounts of both difference and repetition: he starts with "empirical" versions of difference and repetition understood as subordinated to the logic of object-recognition, conceptual identity and the representational image of thought. The empirical form of difference is specific difference, i.e., the difference that marks the partition between concepts in a hierarchical and inclusive system of classification like Aristotle's (DR, 46–53/30–35). This conception of difference is parasitic on the prior constitution of the identities or concepts on which it depends. The transcendental form of difference must, therefore, be understood independently of conceptuality: in Deleuze's formulation, difference in itself is difference without a concept. But difference without a concept is itself visible only in repetition.

The elementary form of repetition is that of the repetition of the same, involving the emergence of a difference between two instances of the same concept that is, therefore, a non-conceptual difference. Deleuze describes this most primitive understanding of repetition as "material" (DR, 36/24), "bare" (DR, 37/24), "mechanical" (DR, 2/xix) and "extrin-

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<sup>27</sup> Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 201.

sic.” (DR, 367–68/287) Despite a certain obvious symmetry between the treatments of difference and repetition, the empirical formulation of repetition nevertheless implies (and is implied by) the first and merely negative attempt to think difference in itself, i.e., to think the transcendental condition of purely empirical difference. Repetition, thus, has a certain transcendental priority over difference.

The problem that underlies Deleuze’s elaboration of synthesis is this: How is material repetition itself possible? From the beginning it seems quite clear that the problematic of repetition and, therefore, synthesis, is to be understood as entertaining a privileged relation with subjectivity. “Repetition changes nothing in the object repeated, but does change something in the mind which contemplates it.” (DR, 98/70)

Deleuze starts Chapter 2 with these words, paraphrasing part of Hume’s analysis of causation in the *Treatise*.<sup>28</sup> Badiou points out that Deleuze often engages in a complex form of free indirect speech in his commentary that makes it a delicate procedure to attribute doctrines to him.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, in this case, he never retracts Hume’s claim and indeed reinforces it with his other intellectual sources, including Kant, Bergson and Nietzsche, all of whom deploy arguably psychic accounts of temporal production. The question is: Can Deleuze’s apparent commitment to processes of constitution lodged in something like the subject be integrated into a wider framework of transcendently material syntheses or is his account ultimately *based in* such subjective processes of constitution, comprising, therefore, a new kind of transcendental idealism?

Here it is important to clear up a potential misunderstanding. In *Difference and Repetition*, under the influence of a Bergsonian distribution of valorisations, materialism is usually denigrated and much of the text is occupied with a critical deepening of, e.g., a bare, extrinsic material conception of repetition. *Anti-Oedipus*, however, proclaims itself as undertaking a materialist revolution. (AO, 89/75) Has Deleuze changed his mind about this issue? Not necessarily; that is, the issue cannot be de-

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<sup>28</sup> On repetition, Hume writes that it “neither discovers nor causes any thing in the objects, but has an influence only on the mind.” See *A Treatise on Human Nature*, with an analytical index by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, with text revised and notes by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1739–40/1978), I.iii.14.

<sup>29</sup> Badiou, *Clamor*, 25/14.



cided merely on the basis of this vocabulary. In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze uses the term “material” to describe the empirical objectivity of the actual, whereas in *Anti-Oedipus* he and Guattari use the term “materialist” instead to denote the ultimate transcendental productive base or desiring-production. Thus, in the vocabulary of *Anti-Oedipus*, matter or desiring-production can under certain circumstances give rise to just that empirical world of stable objects that constrains repetition to what in *Difference and Repetition* is called its material form. In other words, the denigration of (empirical) matter in *Difference and Repetition* is not, on the face of it, incompatible with an enhanced, i.e., transcendental, materialism. To establish this requires argument, not just an allusion to Deleuze’s vocabulary.

To do this, I think it is essential to understand Deleuze’s argument in the primary philosophical context in which he presents it, that is, in terms of Kant’s critique of Hume on causation. Deleuze’s first schema of material repetition is the AB, AB, AB, ..., A of Hume’s constant conjunction of events comprising the objective substrate of causation. (DR, 98ff./72ff.) And it is clear that each of his three syntheses is in some way a reworking of the three syntheses detailed by Kant in the A Deduction, so that not only Hume’s account of causation but also Kant’s critique of it are prerequisites for Deleuze’s understanding of temporal synthesis.

Kant’s first synthesis of apprehension can be understood as a preliminary response to Hume’s account of causation. Kant outlines the necessity for a synthesis of apprehension based on a curious kind of counter-factual conditional. This conditional is curious because it does not try to establish what would have been (factually) the case had its antecedent been true; rather, it tries to establish that were its antecedent false, there would have been no facts, i.e., experience would not have been constituted at all. Kant claims that “*as contained in a single moment*, no representation can ever be anything but a complete unity.” (CPR, A99 tm) Conceived in the traditional way as a series of instantaneous moments (*Augenblicke*), each vanishing present of time is in a relation of complete exteriority to all other moments, i.e., it is an “absolute unity.” As a result, the instantaneous representation of a manifold would also be an absolute unity. But then the representation of the manifold of intuition would lack, precisely, manifoldness. The representation of the manifoldness of the manifold of intuition would be impossible if “the mind did not differentiate time (*die Zeit...unterschiede*) in the sequence

of impressions one after the other.” (CPR, A99 tm) There must necessarily be a “running through” (*Durchlaufen*) and a “taking together” (*Zusammennehmung*) of the manifold as manifold. (CPR, A99 tm) And this is what Kant calls “synthesis.”<sup>30</sup> What is produced by this synthesis is not yet a synthetic *unity*, but the very disparity of something that can be called *a manifold*.

Time is central to synthesis for Kant because it is the medium of all appearing. (CPR, A98–99) But, far from spatialising time, this first synthesis presents an acute—if sparse—critique of the instant. Deleuze’s first synthesis is a commentary on Kant’s that shows its proximity to Hume’s problem of necessary connection. Even material repetition of the same, i.e., the objective substrate of causation, would be impossible in a temporality composed only of dimensionless instants. Freely interleaving Hume’s analysis of the functioning of the faculty of the imagination with Husserl’s account of the envelopment of protentive and retentive presents in his phenomenology of internal time consciousness, Deleuze argues that it is only on the basis of a “contraction” (DR, 97/70) of dimensionless instants into a “living/lived” (DR, 98/70) present that it is possible to construct cases of the same at all. Time must be differentiated/distinguished in the sequence of pure instants by establishing minimal connections or relations between preceding and succeeding instants, running through them somehow and taking them up together, including them in a minimally distended living/lived present. It is only in this way, therefore, that the objective substrate of Hume’s causal series as a series of (manifold) cases of the same becomes possible: AB, AB, ..., A....<sup>31</sup>

Deleuze departs from Kant here in three important ways. First, Kant’s synthesis occurs *within* time, which is already, for Kant, a transcendental form, i.e., it is subjective. For Deleuze, the syntheses are syntheses *of* time. Second, Deleuze designates these unconscious syntheses as “passive.” (DR, 97ff./70ff.) Here again Deleuze is following Husserl’s

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<sup>30</sup> In fact, this is Kant’s account of the empirical synthesis of apprehension: an *a priori* transcendental synthesis is necessary for synthesising the manifold of the pure intuitions space and time. (CPR, A99–100) It seems to me, however, that Kant’s argument about the manifold is equally transcendental.

<sup>31</sup> Just as with Kant, this synthesis is pre-cognitive, and should not be confused with the fully-fledged *representation* of objects or events as composite or manifold (A, B), something that presupposes their prior (unconscious) apprehension as a case. (DR, 97/70)

critique of Kant's treatment of synthesis as spontaneous or active—a treatment that subordinates synthesis to the identity of the subject that “acts” synthesis.

Lastly, Deleuze disperses the passive subject of the synthesis of contraction far beyond the already non-cognitive faculty of the imagination in Hume and Kant. We “are” contractions before we “have” them (DR, 99/73, 101/73) to the extent that organic matter itself must be understood as composed of “larval selves” who/that “contemplate” and “contract” lived/living time out of its dimensionless instantaneity (DR, 107/78) and whose proto-protentions take the form of need and proto-retentions that of “cellular heredity.”<sup>32</sup> (DR, 100/73, see 101/74) Thus, Deleuze's response to Hume's dictum that repetition changes nothing in the object, only in the mind that contemplates it, is not to interrogate the relation to the subject, but to spread the subject out. As a result, it appears that living/lived time is still *constituted* by contemplative subjects/selves, even though the subject is radically dispersed across the organic stratum (or perhaps even further).

Kant's second synthesis of reproduction is also clearly aimed at Hume. The problem, he claims, is that it is a matter of brute fact that “representations that have often followed one another are finally associated with each other (*mit einander...vergesellschaften*)...[so that] one of these representations brings about a transition of the mind [*des Gemüts*] to the other in accordance with a constant rule.” (CPR, A100) In other words, in the context of the Humean repetition of a series of cases (itself synthesised in apprehension) AB, AB, ..., A, ..., the mind does in fact expect B when presented with A. Nevertheless, unless representations actually *do* follow regular patterns, “our empirical imagination would never have anything to do with this ability, which would remain as it were dead, unknown and hidden in the recesses of the mind.” (CPR, A100 tm) A transcendental synthesis is required to guarantee that elements of the manifold from the past have an appropriate “affinity” (CPR, A113–14) with each other.

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<sup>32</sup> Deleuze goes so far as to say: “Perhaps it is irony to say that everything is contemplation, even rocks and woods, animals and men.... But irony in turn is still a contemplation, nothing but a contemplation....” (DR, 102/75) But the self-reflexivity of this remark makes it difficult to interpret.

Affinity is an ambiguous doctrine that has been a subject of rich debate.<sup>33</sup> But there are basically two readings: a weak reading and a strong one. On the strong reading, Kant is claiming that experience might still prove to be impossible, even if every event is necessarily referred to a cause: each event (cause/effect) pair might be unique so that there would never be any opportunity to reapply a causal law. The doctrine of affinity is meant to provide a further transcendental condition of the possibility of experience that exerts a constraint on the matter of experience as well as on its form. The strong reading is usually understood in terms of the transition from Kantian transcendental idealism to the absolute idealism of the post-Kantian classical tradition, i.e., the subject is understood not just as determining the form of experience but also its content. By contrast, on the weak reading, affinity is understood as the retroactive phenomenal registration of the occurrence of synthesis. As a result, it is only once synthesis has occurred that the elements of synthesis necessarily manifest an affinity for each other, and they do this merely by virtue of the fact that they have actually been synthesised. However, there is no reason to conflate affinity with subject-constitution in the first place and, hence, no need for the phenomenologically complicated weak reading. Instead, the metaphysical constitution of nature might simply require its proto-elements to be able to make connections with each other, since otherwise empirical causal series would not be able to take place. The subject does not produce these connections, but their existence can be inferred transcendently from given empirical causal series. On this view, what is important about these connections is that they cannot themselves be understood in terms of the empirical causal production to which they give rise.

It is in the service of elaborating such a picture of a transcendental connectedness that is irreducible to—while constitutive of—empirical causation that Deleuze appeals to Bergson's conception of the past. The second synthesis is the most argumentatively dense of the three and defies easy summary here. As a result, I shall give only a structural outline of the argument. It has three main threads. First, this synthesis presents a transcendental deepening of the notion of repetition, from bare material

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<sup>33</sup> See my "Kant, Affinity, Judgement," in *The Matter of Critique*, (ed.) A. Rehberg and R. Jones (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2001).

repetition to a “clothed” (*vêtue*) form (this is correlate with a deepening of the notion of difference too). Second, Deleuze gives a transcendental theory of time in which he argues that it is a condition of the passing of the living/lived present into the past that there be an *a priori* past that was never itself a present. Lastly, through his reading of Chapter 3 of Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, Deleuze presents the structure of this *a priori* past in terms of a kind of ontological memory that constitutes the matrix or “space” of the virtual.

It is the reading of Bergson that is crucial because it is through Bergson that the notion of an *a priori* past (in itself already present, e.g., in Schelling) is mobilised in the construction of the virtual: it is Bergson's analysis that permits the inference from the a prioricity of the past to the contemporaneity of the contents of the past with the present in contracted form and, hence, to an understanding of the difference between past and present in terms of the relative contraction or dilation of the same ensemble of contents. It is this understanding of the virtual that makes it an elaboration of the metaphysical doctrine of affinity. The constitution of a series of cases of material repetition or causation is made possible by an underlying network of affiliations between cases across sections of Bergson's cone affiliations that connect cases together in ways that go beyond empirical or causal connection. And, of course, it is this that deepens the notion of repetition, which is now understood to operate between conic sections, each of which already contains distinct contractions of repetitions of cases.

It may be possible to object to Deleuze (as well as to Bergson) that he is in some danger of projecting an essentially psychic apparatus (of involuntary memory) into an ontological characteristic (the virtual). But the accusation of a *possible* projection of psychic characteristics into metaphysics is quite different from the avowed need for subjective constitution claimed by the first synthesis. This is demonstrated by Deleuze's proximity to the metaphysical interpretation of affinity in Kant, which itself need only imply that the repetition of cases is dependent on an underlying metaphysical connectivity irreducible to causal connection without necessarily implying anything about the subjective constitution of such connectivity.

Deleuze's third synthesis of time does not appear to bear the same direct relation to Kant's text as the first two. This is because most of Kant's argument in the third synthesis subordinates the problematic of

synthesis to that of object-recognition, the target of Deleuze's critique of representational thought in Chapter 3 of *Difference and Repetition*. Kant's account of transcendental or apperceptive self-consciousness as consciousness of one's own synthetic activity is at the same time what guarantees the representational form of his philosophy: it is consciousness of one's identity as subject of synthesis that provides the model for the abstract unity of the transcendental object = X to which the manifold of sub-cognitive representations must be referred in order to constitute experience. And it is this move that assures that experience must necessarily be *of* objects. Representation is literally recognition for Kant: one re-cognises one's own identity in the unity of the object.

Nevertheless, Deleuze does attribute to Kant the conceptual break that culminates in Nietzsche. It is Kant's filtration of all representation through "the pure form of time" (DR, 116/86) that splits the thinking subject from its own appearance, even at the most basic level. When I think, I *am* the very being that does the thinking, but that being is not given to me in thought. When I think about myself, the "I" that is doing the thinking is not the self that I think *of*. The latter is the appearance of the former *in time*. In thinking of itself, the subject of thought, the "I" (*Je*) does not coincide with itself taken as the object of the very same thought, the "self" (*Moi*). As a result, the "I" is split ("*fêlé*," DR, 117/86) and the self is rendered passive (one might, though Deleuze does not, say reified or objectified). For Deleuze, Kant's real account of self-consciousness is that of a necessary *failure* of recognition: what the subject "recognises" as its self is precisely not what it (is) as the subject of the recognising, but its own temporalisation. It is just this split subject that forces Kant to contemplate a non-empirical form of synthetic production, since synthesis can only be attributed to the transcendental subject of spontaneity while that same subject appears empirically as subordinated to empirical law.<sup>34</sup>

Of course, Deleuze argues that Kant botches the possibilities for novel synthesis opened up in the fissure of the self. This is why Deleuze's syntheses are passive: he is aiming to reverse the slide from a

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<sup>34</sup> Arguably, Deleuze's reading is insensitive to a Sartrean view of Kantian self-consciousness as essentially non-thetic and, hence, different in kind from reflective self-consciousness in which consciousness takes itself as its own object.

speculative conception of transcendental spontaneity to the subordination of productivity to a traditional theo-humanist conception of freedom of the will by introducing a form of synthesis divorced from either subjective or objective unity.

But why is another synthesis required? For Deleuze, all transcendental production processes are occluded by their products; and this raises a philosophical problem coordinate with the physical problem of entropy: What stops “deep repetition” from exhausting itself in the brute repetition it produces and which covers it over? (DR, 374/292) The difference in-itself that is coterminous with repetition for-itself in the second synthesis of time can seem like a reservoir of difference, a reservoir that might in principle run dry.<sup>35</sup> Difference in-itself could in a sense be *consumed* through the intensive processes by means of which it actualises itself in empirical, extensive systems. The third synthesis is what shows that this does not happen although it is the site of an objective transcendental illusion.

Following what has turned into orthodoxy in French Nietzsche interpretation, Deleuze does not think that it is the same that returns eternally, but the different. What is eternal in that return is that difference always returns as different, i.e., as different from itself. The repetition of eternal return is a repetition that “‘makes’ a difference.” (DR, 374/292) The eternal return (of the different) undoes the identity of both subject and object ontologically because the identical is precisely what does not and cannot return. It liberates action from both its organic conditions (habit) and its psychic conditions (memory) so as to make possible the novelty or creativity of the future. Return is the production of the unconditioned as such. “All that returns...is the unconditioned in the product.” (DR, 380/297) The conditions of empirical series (“clothed” repetition, difference-in-itself) can only be sustained by revoking precisely the notion of *any* kind of determining condition, either causal or transcendental, so that the product must ultimately be conceived as precisely unconditioned.

Now this third synthesis seems to be in a position analogous to the second. On its most uncharitable view, Deleuze's interpretation of Nietzsche's eternal return transmutes Nietzsche's analogue of Kant's

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<sup>35</sup> Badiou, *Clamor*, 63/46.

categorical imperative, that is, a doctrine applicable only within the domain of the human psyche, into an ontological principle: “The act through which consciousness is fractured by the form of time in such a way as to introduce novelty into being is a peculiar privilege of complex psychic systems.”<sup>36</sup> But while his success here may reasonably be doubted, the problem is quite different from that posed by the first synthesis, whose very success demands the constitutive power of a transcendental subject (however split and dispersed).

### **V. The Syntheses of Production in *Anti-Oedipus***

Only in *Anti-Oedipus* does Deleuze, now in cahoots with Guattari, make explicit claim to a transcendental materialism. In a famous passage (AO, 89/75), they claim to be redirecting Kantian critique in a new “materialist” revolution that identifies the transcendental unconscious with immanent use of syntheses. It is important to register the significance of this terminological change. Here, immanence and transcendence are not understood in relation to experience, but in relation to synthesis itself. Thus, representation as such (in its specifically psychoanalytical figure of Oedipus) is transcendent metaphysics because it involves a transcendent use of the syntheses of production. By contrast, the transcendental unconscious is constituted by immanent metaphysics: immanent because its productive syntheses do not presuppose their own application; metaphysical because it unabashedly transcends the limitations imposed by representational consciousness.<sup>37</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari do not hesitate to describe the illegitimate use of syntheses in fully Kantian terms as “paralogistic.” (AO, 80/68ff.) But this term too has to be understood in a modified way. For Kant, Descartes’ inference from the “I think” to a thinking substance is paralogistic because knowledge of substances is synthetic and, hence, requires intui-

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<sup>36</sup> Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 184–85.

<sup>37</sup> The polemical target of *Anti-Oedipus* is not representation but desire conceived as lack. But their brief account of the Platonic and Kantian origin of this conception (AO, 32–33/25–26) suggests an analogue with representational theories of perception, especially the idea that desire as lack generates an economy of psychic fantasy that “doubles” reality. (AO, 38/30)



tive content unavailable in the case of pure formal self-consciousness. The claim that I am a thinking *substance* transcends experience, thereby constituting an illegitimate propositional synthesis. When Deleuze and Guattari shift the notion of immanence away from experience to synthesis *as such*, they invoke not the propositional, but the productive conception of synthesis. As a result, the criteria for immanence change: they no longer have to do with the content of a proposition in relation to experiential content; rather, they concern the use or activity of a synthesis in relation to synthesis itself so that an immanent use of synthesis is one that does not presuppose the prior use of any (other) synthesis. However, as I argued earlier, Kant himself was aware of *just this problem*. His reaction to the accusation of empirical idealism/psychologism in the A deduction was in part an acknowledgement that empirical/psychological synthetic productive mechanisms could not have transcendental reach because their synthetic activity presupposes a prior transcendental synthetic activity constitutive precisely *of* the empirical. Deleuze and Guattari complete this thought by developing a system of properly transcendental productive syntheses whose use is no longer paralogistic because it does not presuppose their prior application.

The idea of synthesis dominates *Anti-Oedipus* much more considerably than it does *Difference and Repetition*. Not only is the whole of the text organised around the three syntheses, but Deleuze has now substituted a synthetic method (starting from the transcendental) for the analytic method (of starting with the empirical and searching regressively for its transcendental conditions).

There is also a clear relation between the syntheses in *Anti-Oedipus* and those in *Difference and Repetition* despite the difference in topic between the two texts. Nevertheless, two important changes are obvious: in the first place, the role and position of anything like the subject have changed; and, in the second place, the syntheses are no longer understood as constitutive of temporality. Underlying these changes is a modification of Deleuze's basic strategy from attempting to ground his thought on a transcendental constitution of time dependent on the organic stratum to a kind of temporalisation (schematisation) of logical operators into a transcendental conception of matter.

In the crucial account of the first (connective) synthesis in *Anti-Oedipus*, for example, synthesis is still understood as a kind of binding, but what is bound is no longer either the content of an instant (as in

Kant's attempt to secure *a* manifold), nor is it the form of the instantaneous moment as such (as in Deleuze's attempt to secure a living/lived present within which elements or cases may be constituted as contents). Deleuze understands connective synthesis instead as the temporal materialisation of the logical form of "connection" (usually known as conjunction in English). In its illegitimate, transcendent, Oedipal, paralogistic or representational use, connective synthesis is understood to connect "global" persons with "complete" objects. (AO, 83/70) But this use precisely presupposes other operations of synthesis that can fashion stable subjects and objects. In its legitimate (immanent, an-Oedipal, non-representational and non-paralogistic) usage, connection is what the real does to itself—breaks its own flow to constitute a part object. (AO, 12/6) By disengaging his account of (connective) synthesis from the problematic of the constitution of time, he is also able to liberate binding itself from subjectivity, from even the minimal passive contemplations he treats as coordinate with the organic stratum.

Equally, the second (disjunctive) synthesis is also disengaged from the question of the constitution of time. To see this requires a brief account of the role of Marx in *Anti-Oedipus*. Rather than compromising Deleuze's refusal to engage with the dialectic, Deleuze's use of Marx effectively Kantianises him. For instance, in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari recall "one of Marx's warnings: we cannot tell from the mere taste of wheat who grew it; the product gives no hint as to the system and the relations of production." (AO, 31/24 tm) Deleuze and Guattari elide Kantian and Marxist senses of critique by suggesting that the empirical (characterised by representation in the epistemic domain and by the commodity form in the economic domain) constitutively veils its own conditions of production. To engage in critique is to trace the production conditions of the commodity/thing without presupposing that those conditions must resemble what they condition. In so doing, one realises in what other ways both experience and economic life might be organised.

Likewise, the explanation of the operation of what in *Difference and Repetition* is called the "object = *x*" or "*objet petit a*," and in *The Logic of Sense* a "quasi-cause," becomes clear in *Anti-Oedipus* through an affinity with Marx. This problematic concept is a part of the sequence of processes that in *Difference and Repetition* actualise the virtual *via* the intensive. But its precise contours are not always easy to discern. In *Anti-Oedipus*, however, Deleuze and Guattari establish a conceptually precise

“parallel” between the body without organs, acting as something like the “space” of the virtual where matter is at zero intensity, and Marx’s analysis of capital. Capitalism achieves a real reorganisation of the productive forces of a society, but in so doing constitutes a kind of objective illusion that it itself is the magical or fetishistic source of all value. This is an illusion because it is only labour that adds value, but it is objective because it involves a real reorganisation of production. Here capital acts exactly as a “quasi-cause.” A parallel process occurs at the transcendental level of desiring rather than social production, except that it is the body without organs that arrogates production to itself as quasi-cause. (AO, 16ff./10ff.) Deleuze and Guattari also (implicitly this time) follow Marx in wanting to elaborate the historical and parallel metaphysical conditions under which such a situation could be produced. This is the role of the second or disjunctive synthesis.

Here, again, the problematic of the constitution of time is displaced by one of the temporal realisation of logical operators. In Kant’s account of reproductive synthesis, the problem is that of assuring a link between the moments of time (as for Deleuze, these moments are themselves already synthetic). For Kant, the thread of causality, which determines the sequence of moments in law-like and, hence, objective manner, provides this link. The Deleuze of *Difference and Repetition* rejects Kant’s traditional assumption of the homogeneity of time and follows Bergson in arguing that it is only on the basis of a past, transcendently distinct from the present, that the present moment can pass. Linkage between moments is then provided by the differences between contractive layers of the virtual cone of the past (each of which is itself constituted by differences). Since the moments were already subjectively constituted and the background is Kantian transcendental idealism, it is hard—though perhaps not impossible—to interpret Deleuze’s claims that the Bergsonian account of memory should be ontologised. But in *Anti-Oedipus* it is only the notion of transcendental difference that is retained: disjunctive synthesis is precisely the thought of the difference between the “space” of the virtual (as transcendental condition of production) and what it produces.

In an involuted move, but one consistent with Kant’s inaugural thought of the synthesis of the (transcendental) production of (empirical) production, Deleuze and Guattari argue that transcendental production in general (connective synthesis) can operate immanently, i.e., without pre-

supposing its own products, only if it produces its own condition, namely, the body without organs. This is why the body without organs is understood as matter (production) at zero intensity. Disjunctive synthesis is the name for the transcendental materialisation of logical disjunction, guiding, first of all, the relation between virtual (body without organs) and primary production. The synthesis is performed legitimately if it is inclusive so that the condition of production or the whole of production is produced alongside production, (AO, 52/43) and illegitimately or paralogistically if the condition is excluded from primary production. Empirically, disjunctive synthesis is applied to the relation between production in general and its products. In its illegitimate/paralogistic usage, product is understood in contradistinction to production process, and hence as a thing, an object. In its legitimate usage, product is not thought as distinct from process (the disjunction between them is inclusive) and hence the product is itself thought as “counter-actualising.” Here the question of a problematic ontologisation of the psychic instance of memory hardly arises.

It is only with the third synthesis, that of conjunction, that anything remotely approximating a subject emerges. Unsurprisingly, at the level of transcendental production, this subject is not stable with respect to its psychic and social determinations. It is “not at the center, which is occupied by the machine, but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, *defined* by the states through which it passes.” (AO, 27/20) But more importantly here, it is in no way required for the constitution of the processes of synthetic production; it is “produced as a residue next to the machine, an appendix or room adjoining the machine.” (AO, 27/20 tm, see 48/40)

One reason why the connective and disjunctive syntheses are used illegitimately when they are understood as applying to (representational) relations between constituted subjects and objects is precisely that *any* notion of subjectivity presupposes a conjunctive synthesis. But this again shows that no notion of subjectivity is involved in the legitimate uses of the prior syntheses. It is interesting to note that Deleuze here abandons the (Kantian) idea of a subject “split” by the form of its own appearing (in favour of a “nomadic” subject identified with the states through which it passes), but in a sense returns to a much more traditional Kantian understanding of the third synthesis in a form of recognition: “‘so that was it!,’ ‘so it’s me!’” (AO, 27/21) However, this

recognition is turned around into a de-cognition since it is not the synthetic unity of the apperception of the “I” that one cognises again in the unity of object in experience, but the dispersion of the subject in the proper name as designator of a tranche of intensities.<sup>38</sup>

It seems to me, therefore, that with Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze has performed a critique of the position in *Difference and Repetition*. It is clear that he always wanted to shift processes of transcendental synthesis away from the intrinsic connection they bear in Kant's work to the subject. Deleuze is obviously concerned—although perhaps not exclusively—with new scientific understandings of material systems that dovetail with his metaphysics, and said as much. This suggests that Deleuze's intention was to produce a new *Naturphilosophie* in Schelling's sense, a speculative metaphysical reconstruction of the synthetic processes by means of which nature constitutes itself, us (as natural beings) and the transcendental illusions of representation.<sup>39</sup> It may be that in *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze has not fully extricated himself from the confines of a certain kind of transcendental idealism, a residual reliance on the constitutive capacity of something like the subject. Certainly, many of the ways in which he attempts to deepen nature, to add an intensive *spatium* to its bare material surface, involve the redeployment of conceptual apparatus drawn from philosophical characterisations that privilege the subject: Hume's imagination, Kant's thought of time as the form of inner sense, Bergson's spiritualist psychology. But by *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze has achieved this autonomy of the thought of nature by excising the subject from any constitutive role and making it (even in its nomadic forms) a by-product of primary production.

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<sup>38</sup> See Juliette Simont, “Intensity, or the “Encounter,” in *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Gilles Deleuze*, (ed.) Jean Khlafa (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 26–49, for a compelling analysis of the difference between this and Kant's conception of recognition.

<sup>39</sup> See Iain Hamilton Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling* (London: Continuum, 2006).

## **VI. Conclusion**

Deleuze does maintain a form of transcendental materialism in which the world as representation is the synthetic product of a series of transcendently constitutive material processes that themselves exceed the conditions of the possibility of representation in anything like Kantian empirical reality. This materialism is metaphysical in that it attempts a speculative reconstruction of the real. Such a proceeding is nevertheless critical in that it does not just take the object as given, but attempts to give an account of its production. It is an immanent critique because the syntheses that Deleuze elaborates operate without presupposing their own products (by contrast, representation is transcendent because it does presuppose the operation of a prior production). As a result, representation (in its various guises) is understood as constituting a kind of objective illusion. Objects and subjects are produced by non-objective synthetic processes, but those processes are necessarily occluded precisely by what they produce.

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