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Edited by Daniel W. Smith and Henry Somers-Hall

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HENRY SOMERS-HALL

Introduction

Gilles Deleuze belongs to that group of philosophers, often taken to typify the continental approach to philosophy, for whom the difficulty we encounter in reading them is not simply one of the content of their claims and arguments, but also one of penetrating their style of writing itself. This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that Deleuze not only seemingly employs language in order to destabilize and obfuscate his philosophical arguments, but also revises his basic philosophical terminology between his numerous writings, from the early work of intensive depth, virtuality, and pre-individual singularities, to the body without organs, machinic phylum, and plane of immanence of his collaborations with Guattari.¹ This leads us to the problem of how we read Deleuze. Do we see the obfuscation of language, the various appropriations of the sciences, and the experiments in philosophical writing as attempts to cover over a paucity of argumentation? Do we take up this rejection of traditional metaphysical language, seeing it as a rejection of the tradition of metaphysics itself, or do we strip the language away in the hope of finding underneath it a philosophical position that can be distinctly expressed in another, more palatable language? Similarly, we might ask what the reason is for the proliferation of philosophical systems developed by Deleuze, both in his historical monographs and his own philosophical writings. The continual reinvention of basic philosophical concepts might be taken to signal a failure of Deleuze's philosophical enterprise, an inability to formulate a definitive yet consistent philosophical outlook. Finally, Deleuze presents us with the problem of understanding the relation of these various projects. Deleuze's engagements with the history of philosophy, science, aesthetics, and ethics seem reminiscent of the

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kind of grand systematic project of the nineteenth century exemplified by the works of Hegel. In spite of this similarity, there is a repetition of themes, and a recommencement of philosophical projects that is more akin to what we find in Schelling or Nietzsche. While *Difference and Repetition* and the *Logic of Sense*, for instance, were written at much the same time, they provide very different approaches to the questions of ontology and metaphysics. Key structures from Deleuze's early work, such as the simulacrum, disappear once he begins collaborating with Guattari, yet in his last, sole-authored project (*Immanence: A Life*), the early logic of multiplicities, together with the concepts of the virtual and the transcendental field, once again emerges.²

It is perhaps because of these difficulties that there are as yet so few attempts to provide a consistent general reading of Deleuze's whole *opus*.³ Rather than deal with questions of Deleuze's specific engagements, which are masterfully explicated by the contributors to this volume, I want to focus in this Introduction simply on the question of how we approach reading, interpreting, and engaging with Deleuze's philosophy, and how we are to reconcile his approach with the seemingly antithetical aims we might attribute to our standard conception of the philosophical endeavor.

Deleuze's relationship to prior metaphysics is complex. While he wrote numerous monographs on figures from the history of philosophy, frequently analyses presented in these historical monographs reappear within Deleuze's own metaphysical systems. Thus, Deleuze's reading of Hume on habit in *Difference and Repetition* opens out onto a vitalist conception of nature that moves far beyond the psychological considerations of Hume himself. His reading of Spinoza's relations of speeds and slowness reappears in *What is Philosophy?* as the chaos that science, art, and philosophy are all preoccupied with. Deleuze is not so much interested in these cases in providing a historical analysis as in resurrecting the conceptual developments of his predecessors to bring them to bear on his own philosophical concerns. Deleuze makes this clear in perhaps his most famous, and most misunderstood, pronouncement on his relation to the tradition:

I imagined myself getting onto the back of an author, and giving him a child, which would be his and which would at the same time be a monster.

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It is very important that it should be his child, because the author actually had to say everything that I made him say. But it also had to be a monster because it was necessary to go through all kinds of decenterings, slips, break-ins, secret emissions. (N 6)

In fact, Deleuze's borrowings from his predecessors make clear that what interests him in the philosophical systems of the past is not so much the systems themselves, but the concepts that each philosopher brings together to formulate their system. From his early years, Deleuze saw philosophical concepts as literary characters, having their own autonomy and style, and this preoccupation is reaffirmed in his last work with Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, where they make the claim that "the philosopher is an expert in concepts and the lack of them. He knows which of them are not viable, which are arbitrary or inconsistent, which ones do not hold up for an instant" (WP 3). While the philosopher's expertise may extend to concepts more generally, the activity of philosophy itself is, however, something more specific. The activity of philosophy is, at root, the "creation of concepts" (WP 5). This characterization of the philosophical endeavor immediately raises three questions that I want to address in this Introduction. First, what does it mean to *create* rather than discover concepts? Second, how do we relate these concepts together? And finally, what does philosophy achieve through the creation of concepts? It is by answering these questions that we can provide at least a rough answer to some of the questions with which we began.

In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari make the following provocative claim: "Plato said that Ideas must be contemplated, but first of all he had to create the concept of Idea" (WP 6). The assertion that Plato's philosophy is fundamentally creative appears radically at odds with Socrates' frequent claims, most notably in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*, that knowledge is attained through the reminiscence of our perception of real things prior to the soul inhabiting the body. Similarly, Descartes, in his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, does not understand the philosophical project as one involving innovation, but rather "entirely in the ordering and arranging of the objects on which we must concentrate our mind's eye if we are to discover some truth."⁴ In both these cases, we do not appear to have a project of creation, but rather

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one of the reminiscence, recognition, or discovery of something that pre-exists our enquiry. Even a philosophical project such as Kant's, that gives a constitutive role to thought, still centers on the discovery of pre-existing rules of constitution. Understanding this claim is essential, both with respect to understanding Deleuze's engagement with the philosophical tradition, and with respect to his relationship to his own project.

Relating this claim to the philosophical tradition lets us know that for Deleuze, philosophical systems cannot simply be this relation to a pre-existing field of potential objects of knowledge: philosophy is not a science of discovery. We can understand this claim in the light of Deleuze's reading of Feuerbach, whose *Towards a Critique of the Philosophy of Hegel* was translated into French by Deleuze's friend Louis Althusser.⁵ In this essay, Feuerbach makes the claim that the history of philosophy, including the grand systems of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, has been subject to a form of paralogism similar to the one Kant discovered in the philosophy of Descartes, but far more wide ranging.⁶ As Feuerbach noted, the communication of philosophical concepts is not seen by philosophers to occur through some kind of affective relation (the philosopher "does not instil his thoughts into me like drops of medicine"),⁷ but rather it relies on the listener actively taking up these ideas with his own intellect. Philosophical communication therefore relies on an abstraction from my own experience to that which is shared by every intellect (what Deleuze calls the "everybody knows" [DR 130]). Philosophy on this reading does not therefore concern itself with the active process of thinking itself, but rather with an image or representation of thought which can be recognized by and communicated to others. Furthermore, the concepts that it operates with are not concepts meant to capture the world, but rather those ready-made concepts that the intellect expects to find mirrored in others. Rather than exploring the metaphysical structure of the world, therefore, philosophy has instead produced a paralogistic image of a shared common sense. It is for this reason that it appears to be the case that we are remembering, discovering, or recognizing some objective state of affairs, while in fact we are merely mapping the structure of reason itself. Deleuze's response to this situation is twofold.⁸ If we are to escape from this kind of paralogism, then first

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it is necessary to break with the image of thought. In order to do so, Deleuze introduces a certain obscurity into his language – a stuttering, or in his own words, a deterritorialization of language that prevents the kind of reliance on ready-made categories of thought that inhibits true philosophical engagement. It is this aspect of Deleuze's project that leads to the obscurity we find in much of his prose. This explains, further, his interest in writers of paradox such as Lewis Carroll. In this respect, Deleuze makes explicit affinities with the actor, dramatist, and poet, Antonin Artaud,⁹ who also produces "defective" writing in order to forestall the kind of reflective enquiry Feuerbach is critical of:

This diffusion in my poems, these defective forms, this constant falling off of my ideas, must not be set down to lack of practice or control of the instrument I was manipulating, of *intellectual development*. Rather to a focal collapse of my soul, a kind of essential and fugitive erosion in thought, to a transitory non-possession of physical gain to my development, to the abnormal separation of elements of thought (the impulse to think at every stratifying endpoint of thought, by way of every condition, through all the branching in thought and form).¹⁰

If philosophy is not simply to fall into either sophistry or skepticism, it cannot simply remain at the level of stuttering, but instead needs to make this stuttering the foundation of a new method. It needs to think that which is outside of the intellect and reflect on that which has not been given to it ready-made. The notion that concepts are created is therefore intimately connected with the notion that philosophy begins with an encounter with that which is outside of it, whether this is "Socrates, a temple or a demon" (*DR* 139). In this sense, we can say that while there is a definite discipline of philosophy (the discipline of creating concepts), this discipline can only operate by reaching beyond itself, in encounter with that which is not philosophy. Deleuze's own work is exemplary in this respect, with its engagements with cinema, the arts, the sciences, and those aspects of philosophy itself that remain to be encountered (or re-encountered) beneath the sedimented structure of the image of thought: "each distinct discipline is, in its own way, in relation with a negative: even science has a relation with a non-science that echoes its effects ... The plane of philosophy is prephilosophical insofar as we consider it in itself independently of the concepts that come to

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occupy it, but nonphilosophy is found where the plane confronts chaos" (*WP* 217–18).

This leads us on to the second question. What is the relationship between concepts, and what is it that makes the creation of concepts more than an arbitrary fancy? Throughout his career, Deleuze makes clear that he is not opposed to systematic philosophy, but only to a certain characterization of system: "In any case, the death of metaphysics or the overcoming of philosophy has never been a problem for us; it is just tiresome, idle chatter" (*WP* 9). The question is how to characterize the notion of system itself, therefore. Traditionally, systematic thought has relied upon building up a complete, or totalized, explanation of the world from a more basic set of principles, whether clear and distinct ideas or constitutive rules. Deleuze and Guattari's claim that philosophical concepts are "fragmentary wholes" opens up the possibility of an alternative conception of system. The concept's status as separable from its context is at best ambiguous on their reading. It is nonetheless the case that together they produce "a powerful Whole that, while remaining open, is not fragmented: an unlimited One-All, an 'Omnitudio' that includes all concepts on one and the same plane" (*WP* 35). A philosophical system is therefore a plane on which a collection of philosophical concepts can coherently coexist: a plane of consistency, or plane of immanence. This notion of a whole that is nonetheless open is central to Deleuze's conception of the philosophical project.¹¹ Deleuze presents this account in *What is Philosophy?* by noting that the plane of immanence is "a section of chaos" (*WP* 42); that which is outside of our conceptual schemata, and which escapes all rational consistency. We can make sense of this relationship between the plane of immanence (philosophical system) and the world by looking at an analogy Deleuze introduces in *Difference and Repetition*. Talking about Ideas, Deleuze claims that each Idea is like a conic section (*DR* 187). If we take a three-dimensional cone and cut it along a two-dimensional plane, then depending on the angle of the plane to the cone, we will obtain a different curve. If we take a section that is parallel to the cone, we will have a circle. Cutting the cone at a more skewed angle will give us an ellipse, then a parabola, and finally a hyperbola. Each of these planes is whole, in that it contains a whole curve, but yet it is not complete, as it is only a section

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of the cone. Likewise, the singular points of each curve (where the curve meets infinity, where the gradient of the curve = 0) differ, but nonetheless all derive from the structure of the cone itself. Different philosophical systems are in the same manner objective presentations of the world that nonetheless are incommensurate with one another, each presenting a perspective on chaos while leaving open the possibility of other perspectives. There is, for Deleuze, no possibility of a system that would reconcile all of these different planes in a grand Hegelian synthesis. Rather, each of the key concepts of Deleuze's predecessors, Nietzsche's will to power, Spinoza's substance, Scotus' intensive difference, selects and extracts a different plane or constellation of singular points from chaos. The relative merit of these philosophers is not governed by the number of true statements they make, but rather the adequacy of their selection of singularities. Even in the cases of Plato, Descartes, and Kant, there is a selection of singularities, albeit one which, unthematized, threatens to simply reiterate the structures of common sense.

If we return to Deleuze and Guattari's claim that Plato's Ideas must be created before they can be contemplated, we can now see why Deleuze appears to constantly recommence the philosophical endeavor from different perspectives. Given Deleuze's claim that project of *Difference and Repetition* is an inversion of Platonism,¹² Deleuze and Guattari's later claim can be read as a reflection on Deleuze's own philosophical development as much as on Plato's. The change in terminology between Deleuze's texts is not a superficial aspect of his writing, but signifies the attempt to develop new planes of immanence. None of these projects can be anything but provisional, as they open out onto that which cannot be consistently given all at once. This brings us to the last of our three questions about the nature of philosophy for Deleuze: what is the purpose of philosophy as the creation of concepts? Traditionally, the aim of metaphysics has been knowledge, and even Hegel, who emphasizes the need to understand the development of thinking, still prioritizes the endpoint of this development: absolute knowing. If the best we can do is develop a plurality of wholes that are nonetheless still open, a fixed and final system of knowledge is not an attainable objective. In this context, Deleuze opposes knowledge to learning. What is important is our success in formulating

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a plane of consistent concepts in the light of our own particular set of problems. These problems are themselves brought to light by the specific encounter that opens us up to thinking. In this respect, Deleuze comes close to Heidegger's insistence on the repetition of the question of the meaning of Being. For Deleuze, however, even the question itself changes, as this too arises from the particularity of the encounter. "Great authors of our time (Heidegger, Blanchot) have exploited this most profound relation between the question and repetition. Not that it is sufficient, however, to repeat a single question which would remain intact at the end, even if this question is 'What is being?' [*Qu'en est-il de l'être!*]" (DR 200). Ultimately, therefore, what is central to philosophy for Deleuze is a process of engagement with that which is outside of philosophy; a process that does not aim at a final result and end to the endeavor, but rather a continuous effort to safeguard our openness to the encounter capable of engendering thinking itself.

In explicating the key themes in *Difference and Repetition*, in his chapter James Williams notes the sheer number of references to other authors by Deleuze. While following Sauvagnargues in emphasizing the roots of Deleuze's transcendental empiricism in Kant's philosophy, he observes that even a "successful" interpretation of Deleuze's philosophy will occlude aspects of it while revealing others, depending on the reference points chosen. The essays in this collection provide a series of interpretations, each emphasizing a different theme of Deleuze's work, with the aim as a whole of providing a rich portrait of the range and sophistication of Deleuze's thinking.

Many explore Deleuze's complex relationships with his philosophical predecessors. Daniel W. Smith charts out the somewhat repressive role that the history of philosophy played in the formation Deleuze received in the French university system, and analyzes the way in which he developed a use of the history of philosophy that was neither historical nor eternal but "untimely," and which found its first expression in *Difference and Repetition* and its theoretical elaboration in *What is Philosophy?* Beth Lord and Dorothea Olkowski both provide accounts of Deleuze's ambivalent relationship to Kant. Lord shows that while indebted to Kant for a number of key insights (the rejection of rational theology, the paralogisms that "fracture" the "I," and the plane of immanence), Deleuze

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sees Kant as betraying these insights by ultimately reinstating God and the subject, and distorting the plane of immanence. She argues cogently for reading Deleuze as following Salomon Maimon in developing a genetic transcendental philosophy. Olkowski approaches Kant from the perspective of his aesthetics, noting the resonances between Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and Deleuze's own work on aesthetics, and showing how Deleuze's incorporation of insights from modern mathematics allows him to broaden the concept of aesthetics itself. Leonard Lawlor also takes up the theme of transcendental philosophy, but this time the transcendental philosophy of Husserl. Arguing that Husserl fails to provide a properly generative account of sense, Lawlor explores one of the most profound aspects of Deleuze's *Logic of Sense*: the reworking of the notion of a transcendental field to purge it of the form of consciousness. Miguel de Beistegui traces a different philosophical trajectory, showing how Deleuze's call to overturn Platonism leads not to a rejection of metaphysics, but rather to a series of creative readings of the non-Platonic aspects of the history of philosophy. His analyses of Lucretius and the Stoics render accessible an important but much neglected moment in Deleuze's reconstruction of the history of philosophy. Finally, Henry Somers-Hall explores Deleuze's relationship to his successor, Alain Badiou, arguing that both philosophers can be understood as attempting to continue the project of metaphysics after Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as onto-theology. For Deleuze and Badiou, what is needed is a new logic, but the question is whether this is to be a logic of the multiplicity or of the multiple.

Deleuze's references to other thinkers extend beyond philosophy itself, and several of the chapters explore Deleuze's engagements and appropriations in other fields. Manuel DeLanda and John Protevi both investigate Deleuze's complex appropriations of and interventions into science and mathematics. DeLanda explores Deleuze's attempts to replace an essentially Aristotelian model of species and genus (and its logical counterpart) with something more appropriate for capturing the dynamics of complex physical systems. In the process, he argues that Deleuze's account of the metaphysical commitments of such mathematical models resolves many of the current difficulties in Anglo-American attempts to understand different modalities (such as possibility). John Protevi's chapter looks

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at Deleuze's account of life, providing incisive readings of some of the more impenetrable discussions of organic life in *Difference and Repetition*, and giving lucid accounts of several of the key terms developed by Deleuze in his later collaborations with Guattari. Ronald Bogue explores Deleuze's emphatically philosophical engagements with literature throughout his career, tracing the development of Deleuze's thought through all of his major engagements with literature, from his early work on Proust to his later work with Guattari on Kafka, and showing why, despite the often indiscernible nature of the distinction between Deleuze's affective prose and literature, Deleuze still holds fast to such a distinction. Eugene W. Holland lays out Deleuze and Guattari's engagements with psychoanalysis, presenting their relationship to Freud and the often ignored influence of Jung, before presenting their own positive account of schizoanalysis. Paul Patton and Rosi Braidotti both explore the normative dimensions of Deleuze's thought. In Patton's account of Deleuze's politics, we find an advocacy of micropolitics as an attempt to transform the institutions of democracy by enlarging the character of the majority. Braidotti draws out a nomadic ethics from Deleuze's neo-Spinozist ontology that emphasizes complexity, affirmation, and a reconception of the self as an assemblage of intensive forces.

Finally, Deleuze's collaborations with Guattari are discussed throughout the volume, but two pieces thematize this topic in particular. François Dosse's essay addresses Deleuze's relationship to structuralism, from his early quasi-structuralist sole-authored writings to his rejection and critique of it under the influence of Guattari. Tracing this history foregrounds the importance of Guattari for Deleuze's own development. Finally, Gary Genosko's chapter deals explicitly with Deleuze's work with Guattari, drawing on and explicating their attempt to replace a logic of predication ("x is p") with a logic of conjunction ("and ... and ... and").

NOTES

- 1 See the appendix to Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2002) for an attempt to correlate the terminology employed between Deleuze's work and his collaborations with Guattari.