

ON SELF-ALTERATION

Stathis Gourgouris

To think is not to get out of the cave; it is not to replace the uncertainty of shadows by the clear-cut outlines of things themselves, the flame's flickering glow by the light of the true sun. To think is to enter the Labyrinth; more exactly, it is to make be and appear a Labyrinth when we might have stayed "lying among the flowers, facing the sky." It is to lose oneself amidst galleries which exist only because we never tire of digging them; to turn round and round at the end of a cul-de-sac whose entrance has been shut off behind us—until, inexplicably, this spinning round opens up in the surrounding walls cracks which offer passage.

Cornelius Castoriadis, *Crossroads in the Labyrinth* (1978)

I am militating politically for the impossible, which doesn't mean I am a utopian. Rather what I want does not yet exist, as the only possibility of a future.

Luce Irigaray, *J'aime à toi* (1992)

The terrain suggested by a *co-incident* reading of the two quotations above configures the path of this essay's primary orientation. Examining these two writers together is dictated by this path, not by some sort of preconfigured or presently contrived affinity.

Castoriadis' rumination disengages thinking from all Platonic derivatives that map the journey to Enlightenment, which would pertain to a whole range of transcendentalist aspirations, revelations, epiphanies, but also intensions of perfectibility, including any pretensions to arrive at a clearing (*Lichtung*). He sees thinking as a peculiar mode of architecture in which the instrumental is always secondary to the creative. That this architecture is labyrinthine means that it is ultimately without end, despite its many, its ubiquitous, dead-ends. It is without end because, on its own terms, it is interminable and boundless, because the limits that emerge on every turn are of the thinker's own making. Castoriadis' mode is to leave behind the elegy-inducing Rilke for the enigma-provoking Kafka, recognizing in the latter's vein that the labyrinthine galleries of one's burrow are one's thoughts in-the-making, with yet an important deviation: not as ideal projections of self-making (as for Kafka's paranoid architectural creature) but as wondrous openings of self-othering. In this respect, thought becomes quintessentially *poietic*, that is to say, creative/destructive: a (self-)altering force that sometimes produces cul-de-sacs and other times opens windows onto chaos. Indeed, Castoriadis' description of how a dead-end becomes a window onto chaos is one of the most dramatic encapsulations of his entire way of thinking. To think is thus to enact an alterity both toward yourself and toward the world. It is not to derive or emerge from an alterity, and surely not to desire alterity as *telos*—the labyrinth, a space resplendent with otherness, is always one's own.

ON SELF-ALTERATION

In turn, Irigaray's personal account clarifies that the utopian and the impossible are hardly identical. This is not because the utopian may also be in fact possible, but because desiring the impossible is an entirely real and actual way to commit oneself to what is possible in the future. Her emphasis on "what does not yet exist" does not entail investment in a predetermined or providential element that will come to be in the future—some sort of future nascent in the present. Rather, "what does not yet exist" is configured as a permanent condition of alterity within present existence, a kind of unknown variable in the equation of what may come to be possible in the future, an equation that obviously carries no mathematical consistency but remains permeable to the ever unpredictable contingencies of human action. This condition, therefore, knows no time—as X factor, it is *achronos*—but it lies, nonetheless, in place across the entire range of history's temporalities, perhaps as an already inscribed heterotopia. It is a condition open to the indefinite possibility of something whose "nonexistence" as "the only possibility of a future" is a presently existing condition, insofar as without this X the equation (present or future) cannot be constituted.

The coveted object in both quotations, therefore, is some measure of the impossible, of what indeed appears impossible because the horizon of possibility in the perception is rendered inadequate by the reigning preconception. The impetus here is to imagine that human beings are characterized precisely by their daring to make the impossible happen, which has nothing to do with making miracles but it does have to do with encountering and acting in the world with a sense of wonder. Enquiring what animates and encapsulates this daring for the impossible will lead us to the fact that *human-being*, as a living condition, is immanently differential, which to say that alterity is intrinsic to it.

The way of this inquiry is to contemplate an admittedly impossible concept: *self-alteration*. Strictly speaking, self-alteration signifies a process by which alterity is internally produced, dissolving the very thing that enables it, the very thing whose existence derives meaning from being altered, *from othering itself*. In terms of inherited thought, this is indeed an impossible concept—at least, within the conceptual framework that identifies alterity to be external, a framework, I might add, that is essential to any semantics (and, of course, politics) of identity. Such framework cannot but vehemently defend, by contradistinction, the bona fide existence of what can thus be called without hesitation "internality," even if, in a gesture of cognitive magnanimity, it may accept a fragmented, fissured, indeterminate, or even boundless internality. But internality thus conceived, however "open-ended" it claims to be, cannot enact self-alteration because alterity will always remain external to it, precisely so as to secure its meaning. Having said that, let us also concede that this framework of an internally/externally conceived distinction of identity and difference gives meaning to the language I am using at this very moment. It is, inevitably, the framework that enables us to build communicative avenues by positing totalities and identities that we consider recognizable even if we might significantly disagree over their content. I understand that, in this framework, self-alteration is an impossible concept, but I have a hunch that it is nonetheless possible, that it *takes place* in the only way anything can take place in the world—in history, *as* history. At the limit, the conceptual inquiry I am suggesting, labyrinthine though it is in its own turn, configures its groundwork in the world of human action, not in the universe of concepts and propositions.

1. CREATION/DESTRUCTION

Self-alteration is a central concept in Castoriadis' thought, and we could say that he understands it as essential to all living being—perhaps even go so far as to say that it is tantamount to *physis* itself. In this first order, the concept owes a lot to Aristotle's notion of movement as change—in Greek *alloiosis*. But though Aristotle may be Castoriadis' favorite philosopher, Castoriadis is by no means an Aristotelian; for him there is no *physis* without *nomos*. This comes into play particularly when we discuss the world of the human being—the most peculiar of all living beings. In this register, one other word for alteration in the Greek, which we find in Castoriadis' Greek texts, is more provoking: *heterōsis*. It is this meaning that I use as an anchor, in order to examine self-alteration, in the world of the human being, both as a psycho-ontological and as a social-historical dimension.

A basic kind of starting point would be to consider self-alteration in the context of Castoriadis' persistent view of the living being as self-creative and of the human being, specifically, as a social-historical being that exists via its interminable and indeed unlimited capacity for the creation/destruction of form in the world. Hence, self-alteration is articulated in direct connection with self-creation as an ontological standpoint that Castoriadis understands as *vis formandi*, a kind of morphopoietic force or life-power that reconfigures the world by creating radically new forms or indeed, more precisely, radically other forms. It is important to understand the *co-incident* of this notion of self-creative being with a destructive, catastrophic, element. Castoriadis is not consistent on this matter, but one often sees in his writings the formulation *creation/destruction*. Certainly, in his analysis of tragedy (*Antigone* especially) and in much of his discussion of pre-Socratic cosmology, where the emphasis is on an ever-present dyadic cosmological imaginary (*apeiron/peras, chaos/kosmos*), no notion of creation can be configured without a simultaneously enacted destruction.¹ The crucial element here is the simultaneity of two distinct forces. We're certainly not speaking of some monstrous concept, like the neo-liberal notion of "creative destruction" or some such thing. Nor are we speaking of any sort of simple dialectical relation, despite the inherent antagonism of such originary dyadic frameworks; in Castoriadis at least, the matter of dialectics as preferable epistemological mode is ambiguous at best.

This simultaneous or *co-incident* double figure elucidates one of the most controversial of Castoriadis' philosophical figures, the notion of creation *ex nihilo*. Given the texts, we don't really need to wonder why Castoriadis insists on this figure. His entire anthropo-ontological framework is based on the idea that what distinguishes the human animal specifically is the capacity to create form (*eidōs*) that is entirely unprecedented, previously inconceivable, and indeed nonexistent in any sense prior to the moment and fact of its creation. He insists time and again that creation does not entail the production of difference but the emergence of otherness. This capacity for the wholly new, wholly other, is what distinguishes the radical imagination. The *ex nihilo* is there to accentuate the fact that we are not talking about reformulation, or infinite variation, or creative assembly or rearrangement of already existing forms. His example that the invention of the wheel is a more radical and splendid creation in the universe than a new galaxy is well known, for every new galaxy emerging in space is ultimately but another instance of the galaxy form, whereas the wheel is entirely unprecedented.² The often used idiomatic injunction in English encapsulates what Castoriadis has in mind: "you're reinventing the wheel!" means you're not being creative, you're not using your imagination, you are wasting your effort in reproducing what exists (however we are to consider the merits or inevitabilities of this kind of effort).

But Castoriadis—especially in late years and in order to defend himself from likely misunderstandings—insisted on the clarification that *ex nihilo* did not mean *in nihilo* or *cum nihilo*. Unprecedented radical creation *out of nothing* does not mean with(in) nothing, *in a vacuum*. On the contrary, what makes it radical is precisely that it takes place in history, *as* history—that indeed it makes history anew. There is no way such creation can register as history anew without destroying, in some form or other, what exists in place, whether we conceive this as simply what resists the new or merely what resides there unwitting of whatever will emerge to displace it or efface it. New social-imaginary creations do contribute to the vanishing of social-imaginary institutions already there. That's why we don't have Pharaonic priests, Spartan warriors, or Knights of the Round Table running around in the streets of New York or the suburbs of Paris. That's why the North American Indians, who now exist in the impoverished universe of the reservation, cannot possibly imagine themselves as free roaming and proud warriors, and even if they could—beyond the patented clichés of Hollywood Westerns—they certainly can't be it.

In retrospect, it is possible to construct a description—to write a history—of how and what elements and processes characterize the creation of new social-historical being. A common example in Castoriadis, discussed at various junctures in his work and arguably culminating in the years that made up the seminars of *Ce qui fait la Grèce* (1982-83) is how the specifics of the Cleisthenes reforms that encapsulate the creation of Athenian democracy as new social-historical being are 'traceable'—if that's the proper word—in the complexities of the social-imaginary institution of the Greek *polis*, which Castoriadis duly points all the way back to the earliest Greek textual documentation—Homer, Hesiod, Anaximander, Sappho. In other words, Castoriadis' theory of

ON SELF-ALTERATION

creation *ex nihilo* is not entirely unrelated to various theories of discontinuity in history. I cannot pursue here this line of comparison, but it's a worthwhile path of reflection to consider the line, otherwise alien to Castoriadis, that extends (in the French tradition at least) from Bachelard to Foucault. If we don't adhere dogmatically to the notion of the "epistemological rupture" characteristic of this line—in the same way that we would not heed the accusations against Castoriadis that creation *ex nihilo* ushers some sort of theology in the back door—then we might arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the notion.³

But there is also another dimension to this issue that I don't think has been adequately attended to. In his classic essay "Fait et à faire" (1989), Castoriadis speaks of what grants validity to creation—its encounter with the world. I quote extensively:

Newton certainly did not 'discover', he invented and created the theory of gravitation; but it happens (and this is the why we are still talking about it) that this creation *encounters* [*rencontre*] in a fruitful way *what is*, in one of its strata.

We create knowledge. In certain cases (mathematics) we also create, thereby, the *outside time*. In other cases, (mathematical physics) we create under the constraint of encounter; it is this encounter that validates or invalidates our creations.

And later on:

To the extent that we can effectively comprehend something about a foreign society, or say something valid about it, we proceed to a re-creation of significations, which encounter the originary creation... A being without the re-creative capacity of the imagination will understand nothing about it.⁴

Let us focus for a moment on two elements: "the constraint of encounter" and "the re-creative capacity of the imagination". The first is precisely to emphasize that *ex nihilo* does not mean *in nihilo* or *cum nihilo*. Not only is radical creation out of nothing always enacted in the world, but it is enacted as and constrained by an encounter. The "nothing" out of which radical creation emerges exists, in the most precise sense, *in* the world; it is not, in other words, some sort of transcendental nowhere. And though we should not at all compromise the notion—we indeed mean out of nothing; we mean, in the ancient Greek sense, to note the passage "out of non-being into being"—we have to allow ourselves the paradoxical capacity to imagine both that this nothing, this non-being, is worldly and that, instantly upon coming to be something, this newly created being registers its worldliness by an unavoidable encounter with what exists, whether in the dimension of logic and calculation (what Castoriadis calls, by means of a neologism, *ensidic*—ensemblist-identitary) or beyond it, in the *poietic* dimension as such.

Second, it is not enough to stick to a kind of straight surging forth of the new, of the other. We need also to put our imagination to work on re-creating the entire domain of the surging forth, the full dimensions of emergence of the new. This too can be understood in different ways. One recognizable instance of imaginative re-creation is the hermeneutical act itself (as Suzi Adams has pointed out acutely). This is at play not only in philosophical work but surely in historical work. The best historians are the ones who can re-creatively imagine the horizon of emergence of the historical shift they are investigating. But in both cases (philosophical and historical), as I've argued in *Does Literature Think?*, one engages in the work of *poiein*—of imagining form in the case of radical creation; of shaping matter into form (which is to say: of signifying form) in the case of imaginative re-creation. The *poietic* dimension in society's imaginary institution pertains indeed to society's creative/destructive capacity, and is essential both to the radical interrogation of (self-)instituted laws/forms that enables in turn the radical creation of new forms—in other words, both to the question of autonomy and the question of self-alteration.

2. SUBLIMATION

This epistemological level of situating self-alteration—but also ontological, to the degree that it conceptualizes a *physis*—should serve as a certain groundwork, shifting though it is, which needs to be elucidated, however, by a psychic dimension, in order to lead us to the social-historical concerns that pertain to the *physis* of human-being as such. For Castoriadis, this is the crossroads between his psychoanalytic writing and his philosophical writing, where self-alteration becomes a key notion entwining the elaboration of a politics of sublimation, on the one hand, and the project of social autonomy, on the other.⁵

As an impossibly quick clarification, let me recount that, for Castoriadis, sublimation is not the transmutation of libidinal drive to the non-sexualized activity of the imagination, as is traditionally conceived in the wider sense of the so-called repression-hypothesis—in two ways: First, if nothing else, on account of an unquestionable human capacity for and proclivity toward non-functional sexuality that foregrounds sexuality first and foremost as a matter of the pleasure of fantasy (that is, the privilege of phantasmatic representation over simple organ pleasure). Because the pleasure of fantasy informs every aspect of human existence, it becomes difficult to contend in what sense sublimatory investment involves indeed desexualized pleasure. In other words, the primacy of phantasmatic (or representational) pleasure still occurs on the somatic or sensuous register. It's not meant to be understood as some sort of abstract spiritualization. Even ascetics experience pleasure in their asceticism, and the *jouissance* of mysticism over the ages is all too evident in a variety of expressions. What matters is the autonomization of desire, which goes hand in hand with the defunctionalization of desire—the *co-incidente* is precisely what makes the human imagination independent of instinct or drive and, in this respect, 'functional' in an altogether different sense of the term.

Second: because sublimation is the necessary mode of socialization—or precisely, as Castoriadis says, of humanization—that is, the mode by which the indomitable psyche cathects its primal desire for omnipotence onto the pleasure of social community, at the expense, of course, of this omnipotence but at the gain of the 'security' of ego-constitution through the provision of meaning (with all the traumatic elements this entails). Because, however, socialization/humanization is a social-historical process and sublimatory objects are always part of the imaginary institution of society (even when they are objects of radical interrogation of society, or indeed even when they are objects of society's destruction, suicidal or genocidal), sublimation is not some sort of natural process, with consistent and immanent elements, but always involves a politics. It is precisely the politics of sublimation that makes an inquiry of this properly psychoanalytic domain be at the same time an interrogation of the political ontology of subjugation and heteronomy against which the concept of self-alteration emerges as an emancipatory force.

The problem of heteronomy in sublimation is insurmountable within a certain Freudian register, insofar as it partakes of a basic contradiction in the psychoanalytic epistemological universe, which Freud never quite theorized, perhaps because he never resolved for himself the conceptual struggle inherent in the psychoanalytic project between the phylogenetic and the social-historical nature of the human. I'm obviously referring to Freud's inability to reconcile the fact that, on the one hand, civilization must be condemned for repressing human drives in the service of domination and exploitation, while on the other hand, this same repression of drives (according to the notion of the "renunciation of instinct") must be accepted as a prerequisite for humanity's actualization of its higher potential, a prerequisite of civilization's very existence. This, in Freud, necessarily links sublimation with repression and, given his admitted lack of theoretical elaboration on the work of sublimation, becomes responsible for the dismissive treatment of sublimation at the hands of many psychoanalytic and cultural theorists. Sublimation has thus been tainted with the mark of a pathological condition, which is all the more crucial if we consider its inevitability and necessity: the implication can only be that the human animal is irrevocably pathological by nature. We can say a lot of things about the human animal's biological incapacity, but it's terribly problematic to consider it pathological; the very assumption of 'incapacity' renders impossible the very concept of the normal and thereby its critical dismantling.

ON SELF-ALTERATION

There is indeed another implication, which I cannot address here, but deserves to be mentioned: the fact that a radical indecision arises at the core of psychoanalytic theory and practice, a split between the emancipatory project of liberating repressed libidinal potential and a kind of ingrained conservatism in recognizing repression as the necessary cost for the progress of civilization. Ego-psychology, as we know, bypasses the dilemma by making a conscious decision in favor of the second ‘solution’ and subscribing directly to what we could call the domestication of the unconscious, whereby ‘liberation’ of repressed desire is to be managed by an all-powerful ‘healthy’ ego that will, for all practical purposes, replace the injunctions of the superego with its own. To what extent this entails a double repression in turn, a repression not only of unconscious potential but also of superego activity—thereby occluding the workings of authority for the subject—should be evident. I hardly mean to disavow the standard thesis that recognizes the superego as the psychic locus of heteronomy. But at this point I am not concerned with sublimation as a proto-formative process but as a practico-poietic process, and here the ego (secondarily but for me essentially) becomes key. The ego is the locus of society’s *conscious* agency, and a heteronomous ego becomes the agent of heteronomous sublimation on grand social-cultural scale. This is precisely a matter of the *politics* of sublimation and cannot be exorcised by some sort of ‘pure’ psychoanalysis.

An evocative way to consider this problem is the radical significance of Castoriadis’ reversal of Freud’s classic motto to *Wo Ich bin, soll Es auftauchen* (Where I am, It shall spring forth). That is to say, the creative/destructive capacity of the unconscious will emerge in the ego’s location in such a way as to disrupt the ego’s reliance on gaining signification solely from the social-imaginary institution present in the superego. This disruption hardly means the end of sublimation. Such an end is essentially impossible; were it to occur, it would signify the evolutionary regression of the human animal. But it does mean, potentially, the alteration of the standard ways of sublimation, as we know them in history. In a concrete sense, it also means an altered relation to history as such, meaning, as ceaseless flow of human thought and praxis.

Let us return to Castoriadis’ insistence that sublimation is tantamount to humanization. The point is that sublimation is not merely the hand of civilization upon the human (the classic repression hypothesis), but the process by which one becomes human, insofar as the monadic core of the psyche cannot possibly survive on its own as an organism, driven by its insatiable desire for singular omnipotence at all costs. Sublimation, in other words, does not enact the agency of civilization and it surely involves something more than the creation of civilization: it is an element intrinsic to the process of human existence that makes human existence possible, an *autopoietic* element. Of course, from the standpoint of the monadic core of the psyche, sublimation will always appear as—and *is* in fact—heteronomous rule. From this standpoint, sublimation does entail violent disruption of the plenitude—the closure—of proto-psychic existence and its relentless refusal of reality. At this level, heteronomous sublimation is not a problem; it is a fact. But the level of the monadic core of the psyche is hardly a sustainable standpoint from which to understand (even to view) the complications of human existence. The problem arises precisely at the moment this elemental but *partial* fact is taken for the whole.

What do I mean? Castoriadis’ insistence on the defunctionalized nature of the human psyche, even at the level of the monadic core—a point, by the way, entirely commensurate with Freud—enables us to understand that, though it is indeed the work of the social imaginary institution, sublimation is not enacted as external imposition (nor should we be tricked to think that it is a brute internalization of superego-type injunctions). What enables it to happen is the psyche’s own ability to operate and respond at the level of representation, of imagistic flux (*Vorstellung*). The psyche’s imaginary capacity exists already at the level of drives; it is not a meta-attribute, some sort of *cultured* capacity. It is already present at the moment sublimation is enacted. We might say, it enables sublimation precisely because it provides a language that can translate society’s forms into psychic terms. In this respect, though the monadic core of the psyche experiences a violation and cannot but resist, it also experiences—against itself but from within itself—an elemental pleasure, which is what ultimately allows sublimation to work. Otherwise, given the insatiable autoscopic nature of the psyche, no sublimation would have been socially effective and one can only wonder what this would mean for human history.⁶

This tempers the sublimation-as-repression theory, if not render it inadequate, because simultaneously with the experience of radical violation of plenitude there is an equally powerful experience of elemental pleasure, an immanent pleasure one would say, in the object-investment that sublimation affords. One could choose to pathologize this double condition—which is actually to say, *naturalize* it—or one could choose to view it in social-historical terms, which would entail making a political decision as to the significance and distinction, indeed the value, among the multitude of sublimatory objects in the course of human history. In this respect, the heteronomy of sublimation, simply understood, does become a problem precisely because it is not a *naturally* inevitable outcome, but is rather conditioned by the historical dimensions of social imaginary institution.

3. SUBJECTION

Already, given the terms of this rumination, a trajectory is set up to pass through the conceptual straits of alterity with the enormous body of heterological discourses that shadow it. Be that as it may, the impetus is to attain, in a certain dialectical sense, an *altered relation to alterity*, with an aspiration ultimately to counteract the allure of transcendence that has become elemental in the contemporary lexicon of the Other, to such an extent as to reproduce consistently a cognitive figure of transcendence that is itself untranscendable. At the same time, I am aware that this trajectory thereby plunges us into the chimerical waters of the Self, whose own conceptual lexicon has long been the target of the most radical tendencies in psychoanalytic and feminist theory, as well as today's insurrectionary politics.⁷ This is all the more complicated by the often irresistible association of discourses concerning the subject with discourses concerning the self, which makes conspicuously evident indeed how problematic—that is to say, how political—becomes any theory of subjectification insofar as it must involve a theory (or, in essence, a politics) of sublimation, whether acknowledged or not. In the last instance, we must restate the utterly obvious because it is so crucial: subject-formation is a political matter, as it signifies the inaugural negotiation with power—indeed, with the power of the other, or with power *as* other, but also, inevitably, with power as altering (*othering*) force. It is this latter aspect that problematizes the entire equation, raising, by its very constitution, the question of the political pure and simple: Where does the power of othering, of alteration, of transformation, reside? Wherefrom does it emerge? What is its referential frame? Its location? Its standpoint of interlocution? And finally, what is its mode and terms of articulation?

In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Judith Butler has made a bold intervention in response to these questions, working from the Hegelian basis of the negotiation of power in the dialectics of self-recognition but clearly exceeding it—or more precisely, altering its terms—so that the always theoretically precarious terrain of the construction of the subject can re-emerge in its full complicity with the construction of subjection. Butler's overall understanding of the forces involved in this complicitous relation is profoundly dialectical. Indeed, in a basic sense, it forges an altered relation to dialectical thinking, very much in defiance of recent critiques, which demonstrates the capacity of dialectical thinking to frame questions and responses that outmaneuver the deadlock of identitarian logic. Let us traverse the terms of her argument for a moment, with an eye to their implications as groundwork for an inquiry into self-alteration.

Butler predicates her argument on the rather controversial assertion that subject-formation is always intertwined with subjection: that is, with subordination to the power of an other, or more precisely, to power as an other entity that retains the force of its otherness even when it is (as it must be) 'internalized' in the process of the subject's emergence into being. Internalization here does not mean the ideological assumption of the terms of external power, in the classic sense of all political and psychological figures of subjugation, precisely because, Butler argues, the moment of internalization is itself a formative moment—indeed, a *transformative* moment—whereby the subject's inaugural act of existence signifies both the 'absorption' of power as otherness and the enactment of the forming capacity of this power.

In other words, there is a foundational simultaneity at work in the inaugural moment of subjectification that points both inwardly toward the psychic nucleus and yet outwardly in excess of the determinant domain of the other.⁸ This paradoxical simultaneity, whereby the other both forms the subject and yet is formed by the

ON SELF-ALTERATION

subject, plunges the entire ontological equation into uncertainty and makes signification enigmatic. Butler calls it explicitly a “tropological quandary,” mining from language itself the full range of the Greek meaning of *tropē* (both turn and manner, shift and figure): “The form this power takes is relentlessly marked by a figure of turning, a turning back upon itself or even a turning *on* oneself. This figure operates as part of the explanation of how a subject is produced, and so there is no subject, strictly speaking, who makes this turn. On the contrary, the turn appears to function as a tropological inauguration of the subject, a founding moment whose ontological status remains permanently uncertain.”⁹ In this respect, the very language of subject-formation turns on a figure of uncertainty, whereby all structural and temporal order (of principles, elements, forces, loci, etc.) makes for an undeconstructible enigma.

Right away then, the discourse of subjection as discourse of subject-formation can hardly be mapped as a specifically directional vector force, the force of subjugation pure and simple. As order (*taxis*) is foundationally enigmatic, no paratactic or syntactic (or even tactical, in the context of strategic) arrangement of power can be assumed. Taking this rhetorical rubric to its full extent, I would argue here the same for subordination (the *hypotactic* element) in a grammatical but also philosophical sense, something that Butler does not address as such but, nonetheless, leads us to by implication. In any case, though power does exist ‘external’ to the subject—by definition, insofar as it is recognized as a formative force—its externality is impossible to determine, precisely because, in a dialectical sense, power is itself subjected to the transformative force of the subject’s inaugural act of making this power ‘internal.’ Conversely, the subject’s inaugural position, as itself ‘external’ to power (to whose formative force it is subjected), is also impossible to determine. There is no *a priori* subject. Rather, the subject enters the domain of determination at the very moment it ‘internalizes’ power as its own, thereby transforming—*altering*—power both in terms of its location and the elements of its force. It is crucial to keep in mind here that this alteration is a moment of rupture, an interruption. Otherwise, internalization would merely signify the worst aspect of heteronomous enslavement, and the significationality in the force of alteration would be entirely lost. This is why Butler repeatedly insists on the discontinuity between “the power that initiates the subject” and “the power that is the subject’s agency” (P, 12).

The logic in the figural encounter that Butler describes resonates uncannily with Castoriadis’ own psychoanalytic account of both subject-formation and social-imaginary institution. The similarity of both registers is quite remarkable, with some important differences in language—Castoriadis does not grant such authorizing force to “power” but prefers to keep in this position the term “society”—and in this respect it deserves a study on its own. For our purposes, however, let me note the following: Whenever Castoriadis speaks of imaginary institution, he always assumes a groundless, abyssal simultaneity at the origin, a simultaneity that thus forms a consubstantial, co-determinant, co-incident origin—what he explicitly calls “the primitive circle of creation”. In his basic terms, every society is the “subject” of its imaginary institution in the sense that every society emerges from the magma of its own significations: significations which society institutes as its own at the very time it is instituted by them, since, like the subject, no society can exist a priori to a social imaginary—there is no vacuum space in history. To say that society is the subject (and conversely, that the subject is an institution of society) is neither to imply a notion of collective consciousness (or for that matter, collective unconscious) nor to assume that subjects are, simply speaking, social-historical products. Society/subject is a dialectical form that has no a priori origin and no teleological meaning. Precisely because there is no historical vacuum, the subject is always instituted as a social form insofar as it assumes the imaginary significations particular to the social-historical moment that pertains to it. At the same time, however, social-imaginary significations at any historical moment are themselves meaningless (i.e., unsignifiable) without the subject that institutes them: confers upon them relevant meaning.¹⁰

Castoriadis conceptualizes this structure in the psychoanalytic terms that pertain to subjectification, as well in the domain he calls “the radical imagination,” which enables him to speak in terms of an ontology of society, of *physis* with *nomos*. At the level of the radical imaginary, the untamable core of the psyche encounters what appears to it to be the pure alterity of societal institution in a moment that signals simultaneously the psyche’s defeat and emancipation: the inaugural moment of subject-formation. I’m reiterating that, for Castoriadis, the

monadic core of the psyche remains insubordinate to the power of societal institution, while thus providing the nuclear energy, so to speak, that powers the institution: it is, at a foundational level, the *instituting* imagination—limitless, indeterminable, unsignifiable, untamable, abyssal flux of image/affect/representation: pure *Vorstellung*. This psychological insubordination, even if consequent source of radical imagination, preserves the constitutive internal schism on which it leans—the fact that the first real stranger that rends asunder the primal corporeal undifferentiation of the psyche is the ego itself, that is, the psyche’s very own renegade ambassador to the outside world. The later psychoanalytic work of Castoriadis elucidates especially this primary production of otherness within, which animates the psyche with an elemental self-hatred that always lies in ambush even in the most extreme manifestations of primary narcissism (self-love). For Castoriadis, the radical hatred of the other, observed indicatively in racist affect, leans precisely on this outmaneuverable psychological self-hatred. What averts racist desire is, in this respect, a specific politics of sublimation that enables an encounter with otherness as difference instead of as existential threat to the self—in psychological terms, radical treason of self. Conversely, a politics of sublimation that empowers racist hatred is always *potentially* genocidal in an intrinsic sense, even if it does not always reach this extent.¹¹

Obviously, the psychic monad as such (as pure *Vorstellung*) is a nonsensical entity in any sort of simple terms of human-being. It is entirely meaningless and its survival hinges on its being endowed with meaning, with signification. Going back directly to Freud, in this respect, Castoriadis speaks of the psyche’s translation of the images/affects/representations of societal institution at the very moment of this encounter, which may be conceived as a moment inaugurally, but is obviously conducted again and again in an individual’s lifetime, insofar as subject-formation is never exhausted in a single instance but is inevitably an open-ended (re) iteration, a historical enactment. In this translation, the psyche receives the instituted significations that signify it as a subject in a given social-historical domain, in which (significations) it then invests—as it must, in order to emerge out of its autistic monadic condition—but in such a way as never to be reducible to the overall instituted signification. Were it to be so, the psyche would be terminally defeated and an unconscious would be unimaginable. This translation is therefore a *poietic* performance, a transformative act that subjects instituted signification to alteration. By the same token, subject-formation is the limitless process (indeed limited only by the certainty of mortality) by which the radical imagination of the psyche retains its capacity to make and unmake (alter) the horizon of possibility of social-imaginary institution by accepting (and acceding to) social-imaginary signification, by accepting (and acceding to) the specific social-historical content it then comes to recognize as its worldly existence.

This relation renders any idea of absolute alterity unfeasible, unsignifiable, except as a condition of perspective. While from the radical standpoint of the psyche the institution of society does indeed appear as pure alterity—as does, conversely, the psychic core appear as absolute alterity to the logic of society (despite ceaseless efforts to explain it or conjure it away, whether by religion, philosophy, or psychoanalysis)—there is no way to signify a location external to these standpoints that would determine the other’s existence. To put it in a rather clumsy way: there is no self to the other, or in another sort of language, the other is not a subject. The other is a force of alteration that enacts and is enacted by the subject—this is the position that power holds in Butler’s conception: a force that brings the subject into existence, yet is nonexistent without the subject. Thus, the crucial element to determine is not the figure of the other but the force of alteration. Butler raises a succinct question in this regard: “how is subjection to become a site of alteration?” (P, 11). The political ramifications of this way of phrasing the question should be obvious: subjection must be (re)considered not as site of enforcement of instituted power but as site of transformative power—in Castoriadis’ terms, of *instituting* power. In Butler’s words, “the act of [the subject’s] appropriation may involve an alteration of power such that the power assumed or appropriated works against the power that made that assumption possible” (P, 13).

In this respect, Butler’s inquiry into the complicity between subject-formation and subjection demands that we reconsider the terrain of the other in a way that opens up the possibility of subjectification as self-alteration. This requires us to re-orient ourselves theoretically from attending to the internalization of the other toward recognizing the internal force of othering which, in the broadest sense, constitutes humanity’s creative/

ON SELF-ALTERATION

destructive (*poietic*) capacity to alter the forms of its historical existence, for better or worse. The obstacle in enabling this reorientation resides in the indicative gesture of concealment that seems to occur at the subject's inaugural moment: in order for the subject to emerge as power—or, in order for the subject's power to emerge—the subject seems to conceal the formative force of power, so that, as Butler says, “agency [appears to] exceed the power by which it is enabled” (P, 15). In other words, the subject appears to enact a gesture of self-referentiality at the origin that actually occludes the autonomy of self-reflexivity to be achieved: this is the ideological content of all autopoietic figures in our post-Enlightenment and post-Romantic imaginary, whether variants of the self-made entrepreneur or variants of the autonomous genius of the Artist.

This dissimulation—or to quote Butler, “the metaleptic reversal in which the subject produced by power becomes heralded as the subject who *founds* power” (P, 16)—occurs also at the level of societal institution, except in the other direction, a point that Butler does not address. Namely, as history has shown it to be prevalent, societies tend to conceal their own instituting force, potential and actual, conferring thereby authorization of their origin and survival upon social-imaginary significations that are constructed as instances of transcendent rule: God, the father, the king, the nation, the constitution, the market, etc. Indeed, even in cases of nominally secular societies, these instances of transcendent rule are explicitly rendered sacred, and this sacralization becomes in effect the most profound expression of subjection as subjugation. In this respect, the force of subjection does not merely concern the psychic domain of subject formation, but pertains to the social-imaginary as such. Most social-imaginaries in human history enact a heteronomous institution; that is, most societies submit the self-altering force emerging in the internalization of power to self-occultation, as Castoriadis says all too often. They prefer to (re)institute the perspective of an ‘external’ authority of subjection into pure alterity, into occult heteronomous order.

4. SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

A reconsideration of Irigaray's work may be useful here, if we consider that, of all philosophers in recent decades—only Levinas shares her persistence, but his impetus couldn't be further askew—she has placed “alterity” and “the other” at the core of her epistemological inquiries, thereby granting us, in especially incisive fashion, a novel armory with which to encounter the question of how can a politics of the other not disintegrate into heteronomous politics. My objection to decontextualized uses of “otherness” as an allegedly pure philosophical concept (in ethics, ontology, or even psychoanalysis) or simply as a formal rhetorical category (in aesthetics or politics) still holds.¹² The impetus on that occasion was to draw attention to how certain heterological discourses effaced any tangible indications of otherness by virtue of an avalanche-like process of ever increasing abstraction. At the height of identity politics during the so-called Culture Wars of the late '80s, the Other had already come to mean nothing, while at the same time signifying anything deemed marginal, minoritarian, oppositional, or disenfranchised. As a formal category, and essentially emptied of historical content even when ascribed to specific historical terms, otherness was suffering, I argued at the time, a *catachresis*. I meant the term rather literally, in the Greek sense, as *abuse*: a kind of ultimate counter-utility which, in plain language, entails an essential uselessness. It might be worthwhile, however, to resurrect the rhetorical content of the term in the English language and consider additionally the “catachresis of otherness” to signify an improper transfer of the sense and attributes of the other, an inappropriateness that returns to haunt whoever claims the domain of the other as an alibi for abstracting meaning away from the real historical battlefield. In either case, my concern remains essentially the same: an abstracted, disembodied other lends itself seamlessly to authorizing an empty and total Other—an absolutist, indeed, totalitarian Other. In this sense, even the most articulate heterology becomes an authorization of heteronomy, if it fails to configure otherness as a limit concept—that is, a concept permeated by an undeconstructible *différance* at the same time that it unleashes conditions of *différance* on all other concepts it encounters.

Levinas certainly enjoys heterology as heteronomy, but Irigaray doesn't. At least, there remains a certain *an-archic* element in her thinking, even in the later work of heterosexual affirmation, which refuses to grant to the other the markings of *archē* and *telos*.¹³ The reason is the singular importance that the notion of sexual difference

has held for her throughout the trajectory of her work, despite the obvious shifts in terminology and orientation this work has taken over the decades. Reading Irigaray without latching onto the issue of her various turns and periods—bracketing, that is, the otherwise important historical reading of an oeuvre that does indeed follow a circuitous and at times contradictory path—helps us recontextualize her insistence on sexual difference as a concept that acts like a hinge to the opening and closing of her various pathways: not simply a key concept, that is, whose content remains stable, uniquely comprehensible, and transferable across discourses, but an epistemological threshold whose crossing requires and also produces a continually altered (and altering) mode of raising and thinking about certain questions (even the same questions).

Irigaray alerts us to the fact that sexual difference can never be described in terms or signs of an equation, even a differential equation. Its mathematics, as it were, is incalculable. This is not simply because there is no equality between the different parts, between the sexes, but because the two contrasting elements of difference cannot possibly share a mutual means of measure. Even in the most complex differential equation one equals one. But the other, in this case, is not one—or more precisely, not merely one. She is at least double, or not merely double. She is multiple, though hardly multiplied as mere reproductions of the one. This enables her to be one, to register as singular presence, without ever occupying the position of the one. The other who is always more and less than one is always else than one. And this else cannot be signified even by the mathematical capacity to designate it as X, the unknown one, the variable one, the one that can have many (or any) values, the one who can have many faces or any face. This is because the many faces of X become possible—calculable—only within the terms of the equation, an equation which, in a peculiar self-authorizing way, X, through its unknown presence, makes possible and calculable. In terms of sexual difference, the other defies even setting the terms of the equation, perhaps because she knows (though who knows how she knows?) that any equation to which she grants her otherness will erase sexual difference.

In this respect, Irigaray's insistence on sexual difference transforms it from a concept to an epistemological condition that ultimately reaches beyond the strict referential framework of sexual relations. Incidentally, let us note that Irigaray increasingly opts to reconfigure the phrase as "sexed difference" (*la différence sexuée*), which may be a bit awkward in English, but is nonetheless more precise: sexual difference has meaning insofar as it denotes the fact that difference itself is sexed, not as a matter of sexuality but as a matter of disjunction between the sexes and repression of this disjunction in favor of one sex over the other. Sexual difference therefore pertains to matters beyond sexual relations, strictly speaking, because its specific epistemology is already grounded in a *différance*, a kind of irreducible separation from the presence of a simple difference—let us say, a 'natural' biological difference, or strictly speaking, the 'formal' philosophical difference between Self and Other. This irreducible separation enables the risk to conceptualize otherness as an 'internal' position, as an exteriority within. The tremendous complication of this positioning—always marked by *différance*, as *différance*—is an essential departure point for any meditation on self-alteration, conceptual, epistemological, or psychoanalytic.

In this context, I would therefore suggest that Irigaray's insistence on an epistemology of sexual difference has consistently aimed—despite the different terms, concerns, or textual targets—at disrupting the classic philosophical adherence to the "universal," without which, in any case, no conceptual possibility of the Other would have arisen. Irigaray has always acted as a philosopher—in the Greek sense as much as against the Greek sense. (To be provocative, but also more precise: in as much as she acts against the Greek sense, she has always acted as a philosopher in the Greek sense.) One might argue that her epistemology of sexual difference enables a self-interrogation of alterity—an interrogation of alterity within alterity and by virtue of alterity—that alters in turn any possibility that the politics of the other might lend itself to simple politics of identity. In this sort of argument, one could, very productively, place Irigaray at the core of the Hegelian problematic of subjectification as subjugation that we broached at the outset as a departure point in investigating the trajectory of autonomy as self-alteration. But Irigaray might also be said to reconfigure this Hegelian frame as a mode of interrogating the universalist morality of traditional philosophy—this is at least what I understand her to be doing in the series of texts collected under the title *Sexes and Genealogies*.

ON SELF-ALTERATION

She finds Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, for example, to be haunted by an unacknowledged content of a fissured doubleness, the repression of which cannot be exorcised by a progressive dialectics of the spirit in history. According to her reading of Hegel, this doubleness arises from two instances: 1) the chasm opened between a primary social imaginary (the “law of the ancestors”) and its contemporary manifestation (modernity’s ‘emancipatory’ ethical predicament after the French Revolution)—a symptom of not addressing genealogy in history as a problem, as Nietzsche would shortly thereafter; 2) the fissure the social imaginary opens in its configuration of nature as it passes into history, which silences the fact that both nature and this passage are undeconstructibly sexed. The two instances are obviously interwoven as a genealogical problem—the epistemic framework is not merely the juxtaposition of sexes and genealogies, but the fact that all genealogies in all societies are sexed. But the second instance, specifically, enables Irigaray to underscore Hegel’s implicit (unacknowledged) *double nature* of the spirit. As it becomes (part of) history, a sublated (and in a very real sense always sublimated) nature exceeds itself but is hardly abolished as nature: “History is the soil in which a second nature, a double nature grows: cultural, spiritual nature, which goes beyond its natural potential.”¹⁴ That this soil cultivates a condition—let us say, in Hegelian terms, a civil society—that deliberately (by necessity) occludes this double nature corresponds, metaphorically at least, to the self-occultation of the universal as unmediated exteriority, as objective singularity, which cannot but ultimately assume, even in strict historico-political matters, a theological (indeed theocratic) content.

Against it, Irigaray proposes what she calls “the ethics of the couple”, a differential entity that does not repress the doubleness of nature in history. This requires that “the ethics of the couple” be understood in light of the deconstructive mathematics of “the sex which is not one.” I understand the legitimacy of various objections to the explicitly heterosexual content Irigaray grants to the notion of the couple, though obviously this heterosexual double is not a matter of sexuality but strictly of gender. In any case, such critique will gain further if it diverts its attention from the content of this figure and (re)considers the form. By insisting on the “ethics of the couple” Irigaray challenges the formal identitary monism of the ethical demand that permeates traditional philosophy, not only in terms of Kantian autonomy but Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* as well:¹⁵ “The most powerful goal of interpretation is the analysis of discourse as sexualized [*sexué*] and not neuter. This can be demonstrated with linguistic and semiotic tools. To undertake this task is to complete that extra turn into self-consciousness that Hegel failed to make: reflexion upon discourse itself as a content that is the outcome of its forms, forms that are arbitrary” (SG, 138).

Going ahead to practice this sort of interpretation, Irigaray disputes the capacity of the Hegelian dialectic to account for sexual difference; in fact, she points to sexual difference as the limit point of Hegelian dialectics. She does so because she exempts the law of sex from contradiction, preferring instead to ascribe to it a sort of mimetic performativity: “Sex does not obey the law of contradiction. It bends and folds to accommodate that logic but it does not conform. Forced to follow that logic it is drawn into a mimetic game that moves faraway from life” (SG, 139). Irigaray enables herself to make this argument by taking Hegel literally, at his word, that social action is but an interminable (re)enactment of the spirit. In that respect, she is right to point out the alienation—literally, the despiritualization—that the lack of acknowledgment of sexual difference brings to human relations. Fair enough, but I cannot resist insisting that, whatever might be Hegel’s absolutist aspirations in regards to the various embodiments or even purity of the Spirit, the dialectical method itself is not even possible except as a performative process which is, moreover, not even simply characterized by mimesis but by bona fide impersonation: as a series of instances where one is, becomes, acts as an other—indeed, even as an other within oneself. Irigaray seems cautious here not to be understood in terms of a vulgar Hegelianism, whereby, as dialectics is contorted into confirmation of identity, ultimately “the one is reduced to the other” (139). This is not the occasion to delve into disputes over interpretations of Hegel, but this caution is unnecessary. Hegelian dialectics can be dissociated from the march of the Spirit, as an enormous and vastly varied precession of Hegelian dialectical practices that reject Hegelianism tout court (from Marx, to Adorno and Benjamin, to Žižek, Butler, or, I would argue, Irigaray herself), after all, testifies. Dialectics is a performative method whose content is therefore always provisional and occasional, (over)determined by whatever may be the historical or epistemic demands of the dialectical instance.

Be that as it may, what interests us here is not Irigaray's outright claim that "there is no dialectic between the sexes" but that Hegel fails (as does all traditional philosophy) because "he gives no thought to the living being as a sexed being" (SG, 139-140). To think the two assertions together, one might say, as Walter Benjamin did in his own way, that only a dialectics of the living really matters. Irigaray adds the obvious but deeply repressed qualification: life matters are irreducibly sexed. This is to say, in so many words, that the inability of philosophy to come to terms with sexual difference makes it unfit for matters of life. But Irigaray's grander point, and the one most crucial to our inquiry, is that the universality traditional philosophy produces is essentially anchored in monistic mathematics, capable (even if in relatively rare instances) of contemplating contradiction, yet even then reducing contradiction to singular units of time whereby the integrity of the opposed agents (subject-object, self-other, man-woman, history-nature, internal-external, etc.) ultimately remains total, separate, and closed. Against this, Irigaray argues that the universal is itself nothing more than a mediation: on the one hand, historically speaking, because humanity's yearning for its spiritual nature always comes up against the necessity for its worldliness, and on the other hand, because humanity's worldliness—whatever might be the flights of spirit or plunges into repression—is itself a constant reiteration of the problematic of sexual difference, a problematic that registers precisely in the enormous expenditure of signification energy to efface it.¹⁶

The gesture of depicting the universal as mediation also aims at destabilizing the equation by which the figure of Other lends itself to certain theological imaginaries—monotheistic ones, to be sure. Despite Irigaray's own peculiar investment in a certain recuperation of religious significations (whether her romanticized evocations of early Christianity or her uninterrogated exoticism of Hinduist or Buddhist categories), she nonetheless succeeds in making alterity concrete at the same time that she makes sexual difference historical—in other words, the primary condition in humanity's production of meaning in the real world. In the same way that the epistemology of sexual difference exposes the universal as mediation, it configures alterity as a worldly condition, limited by its interruption of history while at the same time unlimited as psychic energy of human transformation. As threshold to history, sexual difference dismantles the fetishism of absolute, monological alterity—it dethologizes alterity. It is, of course, banal—if not plainly idiotic—to note here that monotheism is the theological symptom of a patriarchal imaginary. The self-congratulatory delusion one sees in various New Age discourses that like to refer to God as She makes for a stunning confirmation of their subjugation to this imaginary, no matter what might be their feminist pretensions. God cannot be a She in the same sense that a world conducted in terms of a female imaginary cannot possibly invent monotheism. A sex which is not one cannot imagine a god who is merely (and only) One. Worshipping the Absolute Other, the One (and only) Other, paralyzes the conduits of an open relation to the other. Monotheism channels an obsession with the power of the One—an obsession with submitting to a monopoly of power—into the worship of the absolute, transcendental Other. This devotion to the One who is the Other makes engagement with otherness literally impossible. It is an instance when subjectification by means of the power of subjection is, very simply, incapacitation, pure heteronomy.

5. PRAXIS/POIËSIS

This raises the most salient political question of all: Can a process of subject-formation that takes place distinctly through a process of subjection conjured as pure subjugation produce an autonomous subject? To put it directly, can—or how can—an autonomous subject emerge out of a heteronomous order? Obviously, in risking the use of the term "autonomous subject," I do not mean to suggest a self-enclosed, self-supposing, narcissistic subject, suspended in the ahistorical void of its own essence. Pure autonomy is itself a theological concept, even in Kant's glorious rationalist mind. It pertains to a self-referential, tautological meaning that the monotheistic mind—in fact, any monomythical mind, as the German philosopher Odo Marquard has so incisively put it—attributes to the one and only power of signification. In a philosophical language, the name "I am that I am" is the name for the total attributes of Being, including, of course, all the possible languages of Being, the plurality of which is abolished by the monistic source that enables them. Thus, such pure ("autonomous") ontology cannot be named, cannot be represented. By extension, it cannot enter history because it cannot 'know' history—it cannot know anything other to what it knows absolutely, which is (and can only be) itself.

ON SELF-ALTERATION

Hence, it cannot change—not merely history, but anything at all, including itself. Not only does this Being not ‘know’ alterity; it has no altering—and most significantly, no *self-altering*—powers. At its most extreme, it may be said to exist as absolute alterity for someone else, someone who believes his/her being to be determined by it, derived from it. In other words, this absolute and tautological equation of Being-in-itself has meaning only in a heteronomous universe of meanings, in a universe whose signification is guaranteed by the presence of an unreachable, unutterable, and unapproachable Other who precludes any alternative authorization.

In the way Castoriadis understands it, very much against the grain of traditional philosophy, autonomy can exist only as project: an ever-presently restaged project whose primary condition or rule (*archē*) is explicitly drawn from the capacity for self-alteration. This means an *archē* that always begins anew, *othered*—therefore, an *archē* that re-authorizes itself as an other. That’s why autonomy as explicit self-alteration is not some fancy way of considering self-constitution, or *autopoiesis*. In fact, as an ever-restaged and ever-interrupted *archē*, self-alteration renders all received paradigms of self-constitution unfeasible, unconstitutible claims. From the standpoint of self-alteration, the autonomous subject engages in a kind of interminable self-determination, whereby both the “self” and the determinant elements are under perpetual interrogation. In literal terms, by autonomous subject I am considering here a subject who makes the law—a poet of the law—whose most prized achievement is the limitless interrogation of the law in its full range: first of all, law’s emergence, and then its referential framework and justification, its authorization and canonical execution, and most of all, its metatextual presumption of authority. To be the poet of the law is first and foremost to recognize the existence of the law not as transcendental dimension but as historical privilege. This is tantamount to thinking of the subject (whether of oneself or one’s society) as a historical entity, whose ground is otherwise abyssal, whose *archē* is indeterminate, and whose *telos* is nothing other than the very project of self-interrogated, worldly, mortal existence.

It is unclear what social-historical conditions are needed for subjectification to take this form. It is safe to say, however, that social autonomy is hardly a natural condition of human-being. It can only emerge as the *praxis/poiesis* within a certain social-imaginary, which surely does not mean that it is the mere expression or application of a certain social-imaginary. On the contrary, in such an instance, the radical interrogation of the terms of one’s existence would be itself the ground of *praxis/poiesis*, in full cognizance of its otherwise ontological groundlessness. Autonomy is impossible without limitless self-interrogation, in the sense that autonomy cannot be attained once and for all but must be, by definition, open to reinstitution (i.e., alteration), whose limits cannot be set outside the process of alteration. Contrary, then, to traditional notions of autonomous subjectivity which, one way or another, cannot avoid equating self-determination with the self-presupposition of both origin and end, Castoriadis’ notion insists on an open figure in which the limits of both “subject” and “autonomy” remain indeterminate as a matter of *physis*. The determination of limit that presumably distinguishes the domain of relation between subject and object, internal and external, individual and society, etc., is always a political determination, a matter of *nomos*.

To conclude, it would be essential to add, following this Castoriadian terminology, that autonomy signifies a particular sublimation: a politics of sublimation that confronts the definitional heteronomy ‘experienced’ by the psyche when it encounters the social-imaginary—the nature of subjection in Butler’s terms; the effacement of sexual difference in Irigaray’s—as the pleasure of/in the force of alteration itself. This sort of sublimation would enact a subject whose psychic reception of society’s *Vorstellung*—enacted, in turn, by the psyche’s translation of society’s imagistic/affective/representational flux into its own terms—would consist in a *poietic* experience: a performative experience of self-othering, which moreover signifies the non self-referential poetic pleasure of altering one’s world. In this respect, it seems apt to recall John Cage’s often quoted phrase “Art is self alteration”—provided, however, that we don’t take it to mean a sort of artistic redemption or self-actualization (in some New Age sense), but that self-alteration names the core process by which our worldly existence can be radically transformed, which is also, after all, the deepest significance of art: the radical transfiguration of form. To this end, self-alteration cannot be conceptualized or articulated if the self remains a notion within the signifying limits of identity. The process of self-alteration is deadly to the sovereignty of identity.

It presupposes—it enables and performs—an *identicide*: the self-dissolution of the self, or in another idiom, the production of non-identity as self-transformative force.¹⁷

Stathis Gourgouris is Professor of Comparative Literature at Columbia University, and the author of *Dream Nation* (Stanford UP, 1996) and *Does Literature Think?* (Stanford UP, 2003), and editor of a forthcoming volume *Freud and Fundamentalism* (Fordham UP). He is currently at work on two books: *The Perils of the One* and *Nothing Sacred*.

ON SELF-ALTERATION

NOTES

1. See “Aeschylus Anthropogony and Sophoclean Self-Creation of *Anthropos*” in *Figures of the Thinkable*, Helen Arnold trans. (Stanford University Press, 2007), 1-20 and *Ce qui fait la Grèce* (Paris: Seuil, 2004).
2. “The wheel revolving around an axis is an absolute ontological creation. It is a greater creation, it weighs, ontologically, more than a new galaxy that would arise tomorrow evening out of nothing between the Milky Way and the Andromeda. For *there are already* millions of galaxies—but the person who invented the wheel, or a written sign, was imitating and repeating *nothing* at all.” In Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Kathleen Blamey trans. (Cambridge: MIT, 1987), 197.
3. For a recent such example, see Laurent Van Eynde, “Castoriadis et Bachelard: un imaginaire en partage” *Cahiers critiques de philosophie* 6, Summer 2008, 179-178.
4. Cornelius Castoriadis, “Done and To Be Done” in *The Castoriadis Reader*, David Ames Curtis, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 396-397.
5. Castoriadis elaborates on his own theory of sublimation at great length in his signature work *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (MIT Press, 1987), but for a concise depiction of his psychoanalytic theory in general (in which sublimation and, of course, self-alteration play a central role), see also the psychoanalytic section in the collection of essays *World in Fragments* (Stanford University Press, 1997), 125-212 and *Figures of the Thinkable*, 153-222. For an elaboration on this intricate crossroads in Castoriadis’ work (and a predicate to this section here) see my essay “Philosophy and Sublimation” *Thesis Eleven* 49 (Spring 1997), 31-43.
6. A learned and thought-provoking discussion of how the psychic monad may enact/be enacted by the autonomous subject is conducted by Sophie Klimis in “Décirer l’irreprésentable, ou comment dire l’indicible originaire” *Cahiers Castoriadis* 3 (Bruxelles: Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis, 2007), 25-54.
7. Foremost in the feminist deconstruction of the problematic of the Self, of course, has been the work of Judith Butler in the last two decades. As for the most ingeniously damning invocation of the chimerical abyss of the Self—“whatever prosthesis it takes to hold on to an ‘I’”—in recent political texts I would select *The Coming Insurrection* pamphlet, the First Circle of which should ingested by us all as ineluctable *pharmakon*.
8. Reiterating what I mentioned at the outset, the inner/outer distinction is just a figure of rhetorical usefulness. This isn’t to say that the distinction is meaningless; rather, its meaning is a constructed condition of difference, as will become evident in the discussion that follows.
9. Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford University Press, 1997), 3-4. Henceforth cited in the text, as P, followed by page number.
10. Of the numerous texts Castoriadis has written on these matters, the most essential is “The State of the Subject Today” in *World in Fragments*, David Ames Curtis ed. (Stanford University Press, 1997), 137-171.
11. Castoriadis’ distinctive mark for the racist relation to the other is the commitment to the other’s inconvertibility, that is, the absolute barring of the other’s possibility of entering the domain of the self, an important notion to consider in the historical inquiry into the politics of religious conversion. This particular discussion is useful in corroborating the dimension of internal otherness, but it speaks to a much broader domain that cannot be, in this context, adequately dealt with. See Castoriadis’ “Reflections on Racism” in *World in Fragments*, 19-31 and “The Psychical and Social Roots of Hate” in *Figures of the Thinkable*, 153-159.
12. See “On the Catachresis of Otherness” in *Dream Nation* (Stanford University Press, 1996), 267-282. The mentoring in this discussion was conducted at the time—and still is—by Gayatri Spivak’s work.
13. This doesn’t altogether mean she avoids lapsing into a certain heterological transcendentalism on occasion. See, for example, the recent essays “Approaching the Other as Other” in *Between East and West* (Columbia University Press, 2002), 121-130 and “La transcendence de l’autre” in *Autour de l’idolâtrie*, Bernard Van Meenen ed. (Bruxelles: Publications des Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis, 2003), 43-54. But at least, Irigaray is careful to refrain from those positions that declare otherness epistemologically off limits, those who bristle at the suggestion that one can speak from the position of an other. While I understand suspicion against imperializing discourses that preside over monopolies of representation by proxy, the fight is to be conducted strictly on political grounds. It can never be an ontological argument. In presuming to put oneself in the position of an other, one does not strive to *be* the other—the very law of performativity does not allow it. In fact, it makes it impossible. One of the most articulate, radical, and moving examples of how one can indeed speak from the position of the other in full cognizance of the impossibility of *being the other* is, to my mind, Jean Genet’s last work, *Un captif amoureux* (1986).
14. Luce Irigaray, “The Universal as Mediation” (1986) in *Sexes and Genealogies*, Gillian C. Gill trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 133. Henceforth cited in the text as SG, followed by page number. I cannot resist pointing out that this is precisely what Benjamin and Adorno also perceived as a problem in Hegel and attempted to resolve first by “the idea of natural history” and later by “dialectics at a standstill” and “negative dialectics” respectively. The notion of history as second nature (nature’s second nature) is a concept that Adorno never abandoned. Neither of them, of course, addressed this differential relation as a matter of sexual difference, despite various insinuations.

15. Consider that one of the key figures in Hegel's theorization of *Sittlichkeit* is Antigone, whom Hegel never even entertains as being herself possibly an embodiment of *hubris* insofar as she too stages, from her own standpoint (legitimate though it is), a politics of *monos phronein*—the dogmatic singularity of excepting oneself from the polis. I have reviewed this issue at length in "Philosophy's Need for Antigone" in *Does Literature Think?* (Stanford University Press 2003), 116-157.

16. It's essential to note here that, while many have criticized Irigaray's later work as a kind of softening of position, the point is not to restrict ourselves to a mode of evaluation that presumes the polemical to be superior to the evocative. No doubt, Irigaray, in her later work, wrestles with the articulation of an emancipatory humanism, a humanism that proceeds through its own sublation and the sublation of the terms of so-called '60s-'70s French theory in which Irigaray was an unquestionable protagonist. One of the elemental meanings of sublation, let us not forget, is the preservation (*albeit in an altered relation*) of the sublated terms—in this case, the critique of traditional humanism. (Hegelian *Aufhebung*—as method, not as means to an end—is an exemplary figure of self-alteration.) I would argue that Irigaray's wrestling with the project of an emancipatory humanism lends a much greater and sharper gravity to her feminism, and specifically to her pursuit of sexual difference as an epistemological condition that explodes at the core of the history of thought. And I would add that the discomfort with her late humanism is analogous to what is expressed against the late writings of Edward Said—both cases marred by similar misapprehensions, though obviously their domains of discussion are different.

17. A key to understanding what is at stake here would be Anne Carson's sumptuous *Decreation* (2006). I mention it not only because it deserves to be mentioned, but also as a bona fide teaser—for it opens the way indeed to something else, of which at present I cannot but remain silent.

THE TRUTH ACCORDING TO HERMES: THEOREMS ON THE SECRET AND COMMUNICATION¹

François Laruelle

Translated by Alexander R. Galloway

Translator's Note. "Philosophy needs a nonphilosophy that comprehends it," wrote Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari late in life.² By non-philosophy they point not simply to a general inversion of philosophical thought, but to the work of one particular compatriot, the author and self-proclaimed "non-philosopher" François Laruelle. Born in 1937 and former professor at the University of Paris X at Nanterre, Laruelle has elaborated over many years a project of "non-philosophy," which recently has begun to receive more attention in the English-speaking world.

Non-philosophy hinges on a rejection of what Laruelle calls the philosophical decision. To engage in the philosophical decision is to endorse the position that anything and everything is a candidate for philosophical reflection. Thus to do philosophy means to reflect on the world, and likewise if one is being philosophical, one is necessarily being reflective or meta-philosophical. Non-philosophy means simply to refuse such a decision. In other words non-philosophy refuses to reflect on things. Instead non-philosophy withdraws from the decision, and in doing so enters into a space of what Laruelle calls science. As John Mullarkey describes it, Laruelle is "abstaining from philosophy as such while simultaneously taking it as its own raw material."³

Given the flexible utility of Laruelle's non-philosophical method, he has engaged broadly across the spectrum of philosophical thought, replacing a number of discourses with their non-philosophical counterparts. Hence strewn across Laruelle's paper trail one discovers a non-Marx, a non-Deleuze, a non-Derrida, and so on.

While the present essay does not address non-philosophy directly, and thus stands nicely on its own, nevertheless important traces are evident of Laruelle's general approach. In particular one might reference Laruelle's interest in radical immanence, evident here in his evocation of a "pure" Hermes, that is, a Hermes unsullied by the sallies and wanderings of hermeneutics. Laruelle's Hermes is a non-Hermes, one who touches the truth as such, without any threat of deceit in exchange, without any metaphysical depth, and without the fog of semantic transfer. Laruelle's goal is to cut through the correlationist thinking associated with hermeneutics that forever breaks truth in half as: truth and its communication, or the secret and its manifestation. We must instead, as Laruelle writes here, "let the philosophers in on the secret," so that they may pursue a rigorous science of truth.



Peter Paul Rubens, *Mercury and a Sleeping Herdsman* (c1632–33)⁴

1. The unitary or dominant way of thinking is that of a *generalized hermeneutics*, a hermeto-logy. The economy of hermetology and its most general structure are both those of a “difference.” Hermeto-logical Difference is the indissoluble correlation, the undecidable coupling of truth *and* its communication. It postulates that truth needs meaning, that meaning and presence—as differentiated and sought after as they may be—belong to the essence of truth, that the secret and the *logos*, the secret and its manifestation are reciprocally necessary and are mutually determined.

THE TRUTH ACCORDING TO HERMES

2. The hermeto-logical circle is deeper and more original than the “hermeneutic circle.” Hermeto-logical Difference is a fundamental invariant, a matrix for what is called “metaphysics” in general. It is more powerful than its modalities or avatars, among which the hermeneutic conflict of interpretations, as well as the textual and signifying critique within hermeneutics, and all possible theories of communication. The conflict between Being and *Dasein*, between truth and the meaning of Being is itself one of the modalities of a more general conflict, that between the secret—the supposed secret—and *logos*. Hermeto-logical Difference programs, predraws, and teleologically orders all its modalities. It is their internal and external boundary, continually redrawn.

3. The hermeneutic critique of texts and culture is terminal. The textual and signifying critique within hermeneutics is also terminal. “Terminal” does not mean that these conflicts cease in fact—they are, rather, interminable—but that we now know them to be interminable in their essence. Hermeto-logical Difference in general is inhibited or mired by its own endless conflicts. The hermeto-logical conflict deteriorates within its own unlimited effectivity. And this leads to a general disinvestment, a growing indifference toward these interminable struggles, an indifference that combines with a passion for conflict that is the specific characteristic of unitary Hermes, however differentiated, differential, or differentialiel. This bad indifference is not yet the unilateralization of hermetology.

4. Next to the unitary and authoritarian Hermes, there is another Hermes. He defines the essence of truth as a secret, but as a secret that in order to exist and to be made known needs none of the light of *logos*, none of the tricks of meaning, the strategies of interpretation, the horizons of the World, or the transcendent forms of appearance. Truth as secret exists autonomously *prior to* the horizontality of appearance. The secret enjoys an absolute precedence over interpretation; it is itself the Uninterpretable from which an interpretation emerges. It is the invisible that has never been visible because it is known from the outset to be invisible. The essence of the secret does not reside in a rupture or redrawing that de-limits presence via some kind of withdrawal or “retrocession.” That the secret has never appeared in the horizon of presence is simply an effect, the effect of its positive essence.

5. The transcendental definition of the secret—that is, its real, and not even its nominal or ideal definition—is the following: the secret is the strictly unreflected upon form of truth that, given to itself, gives nothing of itself and receives nothing of itself except the modality in which it is given. This is only possible if it is the One or the Indivision, the Without-division, which is given to itself in its specific (that is, indivisible) modality. The secret is the *veritas transcendentalis* itself as finite.

6. The secret is truth when it no longer needs to go out of itself and be for itself, when it is itself by staying in itself. It is inalienable within a presence or a transcendence, within an alterity or a nothingness. The secret is *index sui* prior to any indication, it has never emerged into the light of a *logos*. It is an immediate transcendental given, an immediate that is absolutely pre-dialectical and pre-differential, pre-Hegelian or pre-Heideggerian. The secret is non-positional (of) itself, unreflected upon; it never reaches a consciousness, or vanishes when it does.

7. The secret as essence has never been the predicate to knowledge; it is an essence that has never been in general a predicate. The transcendental essence of the secret prevents it from being a part of either ignorance or empirical knowledge that one might then banish to the transcendence of silence or of darkness. Rather, it *is* this silence or this darkness—when they are absolutely deprived of transcendence, but not of positivity. The secret contains in it no fragment of the World, of History, of Meaning, etc.: it is radically finite and for this reason inalienable.

8. Occultism and hermetism are to truth what mysticism is to this “ordinary” mystic kernel: a falsification—rational in the last instance—of the essence of truth. It is hermeto-logy that has abandoned the secret to the shameful “occult sciences.” Because there is a secret, there is no mystery: the secret is ordinary or human

mystique, not mysticism. The discipline devoted to truth and to its essence-of-secret is “hermetics.” We oppose the finite hermetics of truth to its unitary hermetology.

9. One never discloses the secret, its inalienable essence: one only discloses its disclosure, a disclosure which gives itself up. This is the principle of a radical, dualist critique, of all thought that might present itself as phenomenology. There is no point in restoring hermeneutics or phenomenology to their conditions of possibility, to *aletheia* for example. These are but the surface effects of the system of hermeto-logical Difference. The essence of the secret knows nothing of the play of veiling and unveiling, of the structure of difference in general. It is the One, understood in an absolutely immanent and finite way; it excludes the play of Being and play in general.

10. To meditate on the essence of Being, on the forgetting of Being, is a task that has lost its sense of urgency. It has gotten stuck and is deteriorating within its own effectivity. What needs to be done now, rather, is to meditate on the essence of the One and the fact that it has been forgotten by the greco-Western Hermes, unitary and conflictual. But with this second mediation there is no longer the same kind of urgency or the same kind of forgetting as with Being.

11. To avoid charges of inconsistency and non-reality, of *real* nihilism, hermeneutics and (in general) hermetology postulate, without knowing or while denying it, the hermetic essence of truth, an absolute or finite experience of truth. They postulate it as something other than a simple limit of indivision or indecision to the strategy of meaning and to the play of interpretations, a limit that would be indistinguishable from the conflict of interpretations.

12. While postulating a finite truth, hermetology in general denies truth in its essence, a truth that it leaves indeterminate or unthought. This is because it considers the secret from the perspective, or through the prism, of meaning. The unitary and dominant hermetology abandons the essence of truth, an essence that it confuses with its truth effects, which it impresses into the service of Being, and which it consumes in various reflective, signifying, textual, or cultural tasks. The condition of possibility for the hermetological appropriation of truth is the active forgetting, the refusal, by ontology and the deconstructions of ontology, of the One in its essence.

13. It is not a question of introducing the notion of the secret into philosophy, but rather to introduce philosophy to the secret and to the hermetic experience of truth, and in so doing to overturn the presuppositions, the ends, the style, and the operations of philosophy: to let the philosophers in on the secret, to substitute for the hermeneuts and the hermetologists in general a new group whom we shall call the “hermeticians,” that is, finite or ordinary individuals and as such subjects (of) the rigorous science of truth.

14. The first Hermes represents the old alliance between truth and meaning. The second Hermes is hardly a new alliance. It is the affirmation that no alliance is possible, that truth does not need meaning, even if meaning needs truth, that the relations between them are strictly unilateral or irreversible, that they are not reversible as Difference postulates. Between the two Hermes there is no conflict, no war, perhaps not even a “dialogue.”

15. The secret does not need communication in order to be what it is, to be known and to be an “object” of a rigorous science. But communication needs the secret in order to be what it is. Between the secret and communication there only exist determinative relationships that are unilateral, asymmetrical, or irreversible. The secret, being radically finite, has its own mode of communication: through another secret, on the one hand; and on the other hand, insofar as the secret, in its radical finitude, determines the communicational games in the last instance. This determination is the only way in which the secret can be communicated to the World and act on the networks of communication without passing through them or borrowing their channels.

16. The unitary philosopher (the philosopher of Being, then of Difference) was always a representative, emissary, and civil servant of the Postal and Telecommunication Ministry; a transmitter and decoder of hermetological

THE TRUTH ACCORDING TO HERMES

Difference; an agent of postal ingenuity. He exploits confusion, the ambiguity of the secret and of censure. Nearly all philosophers were the mailmen of truth, and they diverted the truth for reasons less to do with the secret than with authoritarian censure. Meaning, always more meaning! Information, always more information! Such is the mantra of hermeto-logical Difference, which mixes together truth and communication, the real and information. The most extreme version of this hermeto-logical ambiguity is the Hegelian and Nietzschean principle: the real is communicational, the communicational is real. It is in the omnipresent effectivity of communication that hermeto-logy itself deteriorates.

17. If there is any urgency, it is not to try to enhance dialogue and the transparency of communication. With excess communication come opacity and inhibition, which are a perverse effect of hermetology. Rather, the task of the hermetician is to turn the communication decision, the meaning and interpretation decision, in the immediate data of the One or of the Non-interpretable, into a pre-hermetological experience that in the last instance determines communication.

François Laruelle is the director of the *Organisation Non-Philosophique Internationale*, and the author of more than a dozen books, including two texts in English translation *Philosophies of Difference: An Introduction to Non-Philosophy* and *Future Christ: A Lesson in Heresy*, both with Continuum.

NOTES

1. TN: Originally published as François Laruelle, "La vérité selon Hermès: Théorèmes sur le secret et la communication," *Analecta Husserliana* 22 (1987): 397-401. Translation rights granted with kind permission from Springer Science and Business Media.
2. TN: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1991), 218.
3. TN: John Mullarkey, *Post-continental Philosophy: An Outline* (London: Continuum, 2006), 133.
4. Oil on panel. 63.5 x 53 cm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Reproduced under the fair use provision of US copyright law.

MULTIPLICITY, TOTALITY AND POLITICS

Maurizio Lazzarato

Translated by James Muldoon

I have always felt that I am an empiricist, that is, a pluralist.
Gilles Deleuze

The Seattle protests have opened up the possibility of a politics of multiplicity. The success of Negri and Hardt's book *Multitude*,¹ is surely linked to this direction that it indicated, a direction indicated, though not unambiguously : to discard the concept of 'the people' as a category that presupposes and aspires to the "one", while rejecting at the same time, a Marxist foundation of this passage. Should we understand Marxism as a philosophy of the multitude? Is the concept of class a category of multiplicity? For Paolo Virno, the concept of class is without a doubt synonymous with the multitude.² For Toni Negri, the concept of the multitude must reactualize the Marxist project of class struggle in such a way that it become possible to affirm: "the multitude is a class concept". However, the action of political forces and trade-unions who claim to represent Marxism remind us that the categories of class (but also of capital, work, etc.) are ontological categories, and not only socio-economic ones, which function and make sense only in relation to a "totality". These concepts imply modes of action that always privilege the "all" over multiplicity, and universality over singularity. The Western political tradition is constituted as a politics of totality and universality. Even when Marxism wanted to be a radical critique, it was unable to create the theoretical and practical conditions to escape this logic. On the contrary, it has often, although not to say always, increased this aspiration for the "all" and the universal.

We have here a fundamental theoretico-political problem: I am convinced that a reclamation of political initiative and the development of movements will only be able to come about on the basis of a politics of multiplicity. The referendum on the European Constitution demonstrated once again that for the political and trade-union forces of Marxist orientation, whether reformist or revolutionary, the call for a sovereign space to construct the "all", the supposed "absolute and total" (that whether we are talking here about the people, the nation-state, or class) seems irresistible. Because this will to push a singularity to overcome itself towards a totality and the universal has systematically been repeated throughout the history of Marxism, it has to have profound roots in the theory of Marxism itself. Contemporary Marxism largely contributes to the production of another fundamental impediment to the development of political movements: by limiting itself to the defence of "acquired rights" it leaves the management of "innovation" to corporate bosses and to the state. It seems to me that a theory of the "production of the new" is what is currently lacking in political Marxism. These two problems—the composition and disjunction of singularities and the production of the new—are inextricably linked and recall Marx's ontology of relations. This is what we will attempt to analyse starting from the philosophy of multiplicity, which is practically contemporary to it.

MULTIPLICITY, TOTALITY AND POLITICS

ARE RELATIONS INTERIOR OR EXTERIOR TO THEIR TERMS?

In their final book, *What is Philosophy?*,³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari remind us that at the turn of the last century, socialism and pragmatism, the proletariat and the emigrant, embodied two different ways of understanding and practicing the “new society of brothers and comrades”. We will accept Deleuze’s little provocation which puts pragmatism and socialism on the same level because it allows us to confront the Hegelian heritage of Marxism and the damage it has caused, and continues to cause, in political movements.

The question posed by pragmatism appears to have only philosophical implications: “namely, whether all the relations with other things, possible to a being, are pre-included in its intrinsic nature and enter into its essence”.⁴ In reality, the “great question as to whether ‘external’ relations can exist” has important political implications.⁵ The theory of the exteriority of relations implies that relations be largely independent of the terms that effectuate them, and that the terms be able to have multiple relations at the same time. It’s a question of the terms being able to exist within different systems at the same time and to be able to change certain relations without changing all of them. It is around the existence of relations external to terms, around the independence of terms and relations from a totality that plays out the possibility or impossibility of a politics of multiplicity (or of the multitude). This theory of “free-floating” and “diverse” external relations allows us to enter into a world of pluralism and of singularity where the conjunctions and disjunctions between things are each time contingent, specific and particular and do not refer back to an essence, substance or deep structure upon which they would be founded.

The philosophy of Marx, while being a theory of relations, denies the possibility of external relations. As in the idealist and rationalist tradition, relations are understood from the position of the difference between essence and phenomenon. For Marx, the individual is only an empirical fact, a phenomenon. What is real is not the empirical individual, the singular or particular (that is to say, the term), but the social individual and thus the relations in which it is caught up. To grasp the real, one must return to the essence constituted by the set of “social relations”. Immediate and empirical knowledge focuses on the “particulars”. It is a knowledge of phenomena that ignores their connections and relations. Revolutionary theory, on the other hand, takes into account the particulars but also traces their connections and places them in relation with the “totality”. That which is concrete is the “totality” of the relations, a totality in which the individual, the fact, the empirical exist.

The Italian philosopher, Giovanni Gentile, pointed out in his 1899 text on Marxist philosophy⁶—a text whose clarity and precision remain unequalled—that up until this stage of the argument, there has been only Hegel. The sole difference with Hegelian philosophy is that relations are not a fact of thought, but of real sensible human activity. Unity, and totality, and the relation between things are not the result of a “praxis” of the idea but of a “praxis” of the sensible. Unity and totality, and the relation between things, are the result of a “praxis” of the sensible rather than a “praxis” of the idea, where the former involves an alienated form of doing, and in which the “all”, the totality, or the “whole” are constituted not by the set of social relations but by relations of production (the capital-labour relation). If, in the philosophy of Hegel, it is the capacity of unification of the idea that “subsumes” the world, according to Marx it is the capacity of the capitalist relations of production that acts as a unifying force and subordinates the world to its logic. On the other hand, Etienne Balibar gives an interpretation of the ontology of relations in Marx that does not refer to the totality, but to the indetermination of the “transindividual”.⁷ Without entering into a philological debate, we can affirm that, whatever its theoretical influence may be, it is certainly not this ontology of the relation that was at the basis of the theoretical and political praxis of the communist tradition.

If we wish to locate the theoretical foundation of a thought that has profoundly influenced politics in the twentieth century, we must turn to Lukács’ *History and Class Consciousness*, which attempts to translate the political gains of the soviet revolution into theoretical challenges to be used against the “antinomies of bourgeois thought”. In this book, which is excellent due to its coherence and faithfulness to Marx’s philosophical thought, the concepts of “totality”, the “all”, and the “whole” reappear throughout. According to Lukács, Marxism must grasp with

“clarity and precision” the difference between the empirical existence of facts and their “internal structural core”, that is to say, their essence. In this way, Lukács follows the philosophy of Marx very precisely, for whom, if the essence of things and their existence as phenomena coincides, all “science” is useless. According to this methodology, relations are internal to the terms. No exteriority or autonomy is possible for either the terms nor the relations: “The elements and the particular moments of the totality contain the structure of the whole, the all”.⁸ That the totality could also be a divided totality does not change a thing. The real is relation, but relations always refer to an essence, a structure. Thus, the parts and the terms find their truth and their possibility of action only in relation to the all, which in the case of Marxism, means in their relation to Capital. Moreover, as with Hegel, reality is not that which is but that which becomes. Reality is movement, tendency, evolution. But an understanding of reality as a process only allows us to uncover the essence of the phenomenon in its realisation. In this way, “becomings” and processes do not open up onto the indeterminacy of the actualisation of their relations, but to their uninterrupted movement towards the totality (the relations of production) towards the realisation of their essence (the necessity of the development of capitalist relations and therefore of class conflict and therefore of revolution).

Marxism thus incorporates another condition of modern politics: to adequately understand the nature of the real in its entirety and to act at the level of the whole, there must be a universal subject.

THE DISTRIBUTIVE POINT OF VIEW AND THE COLLECTIVE POINT OF VIEW

Pragmatism is a long creative articulation of concepts against this mode of thinking and acting starting from totality, and with totality in mind, and against this mode of referring back to a founding substance. William James asks, does reality exist distributively or collectively?—“in the shape of *eaches, everys, anys, eithers?* or only in the shape of an *all or whole?*”⁹

Throughout his work, James insists systematically on the difference between the distributive and collective points of view. The first identifies itself with pluralism and multiplicity while the second is associated with a logic of totality and the universal. “We shall, I think, perceive more and more clearly as this book proceeds, that *piecemeal existence is independent of complete collectability*, and that some facts, at any rate, exist only distributively, or in form of a set of *eaches* which (even if in infinite number) need not in any intelligible sense either experience themselves, or get experienced by anything else, as members of an All.”¹⁰

The possibility of thinking the universe in the “each-form” (“*eaches, everys, anys*”)¹¹ and not in the form of a “collective unity”, the possibility of a mode of thinking which allows for multiplicity and pluralism, “means only that the sundry parts of reality *may be externally related*.”¹² Relations are thus free from all foundation, from all substance and from any essential attribution. Terms can be independent of relations. Things can be related to each other in multiple ways but there is no higher single relation which encompasses them all or which could contain them all. Each relation expresses only one particular aspect, characteristic or *function* of a thing. Deleuze will speak of an “operational essence” to distinguish this idea from the classic conception of essence. The operational essence is that which breaks off from a unity through a certain operation and thus gives rise to a new difference.¹³ In James’ words, “the same thing...can belong to many systems”,¹⁴ it can enter into a composition or unity without being completely determined by it.

Before being a form of political organisation, federalism is a way of organising the universe. In a pluralist universe, federalism signifies the impossibility of totalising the singularities in a complete and absolute unity as there will always be some element that remains “outside” of it. “The pluralistic world is thus more like a federal republic than like an empire or a kingdom. However much may be collected, however much may report itself as present at any effective centre of consciousness or action, something else is self-governed and absent and unreduced to unity.”¹⁵ The existence of diverse and free-floating external relations makes creation possible. In the “all-form”, parts are essentially bound together; their continuity and cohesion are assured by the totality. However, in the “each-form”, there are discontinuities and disjunctions and, as James would

MULTIPLICITY, TOTALITY AND POLITICS

say, “something always escapes”.¹⁶ It is precisely what escapes that creates movement and innovation. “In the each-form...a thing may be connected by intermediary things, with a thing with which it has no immediate or essential connexion. It is thus at all times in many possible connexions which are not necessarily actualized at the moment.”¹⁷ In the theory of external relations, there is no essence or substance. Behind phenomena “there is simply nothing”, as James will say. In this respect, relations refer only to the indeterminacy of the virtual, to a “possibility of the new”, and not to the realisation of an essence. Pragmatism holds that there is an abundance of different possibilities from our present experience.

There is no such possibility of absolute, untimely and unpredictable creations in Marxism, since they are given or implicated in structure and follow from essence in advance. Marxism could never be a theory of the “production of the new” as its ontology closes off any possibility of innovation (or the creation of new subjectivities) in a pre-ordained relation (capital and work hold a monopoly over innovation and processes of subjectification).

THE UNION AND DISUNION OF THINGS

A pluralist ontology implies a new method of understanding politics as it describes the ways in which singularities assemble and disassemble, how they unify and separate, according to two types of logic that, following Deleuze and Guattari, we can call majoritarian and minoritarian.

Pluralism does not deny processes of unification and composition, but in recognising that the ways in which the continuity between things is established are innumerable and always contingent, it poses the following question: “The world is One—yes, but *how* one. What is the practical value of the oneness for us.”¹⁸ For James, the problem of unity and diversity cannot be resolved by *a priori* arguments. The world will have as much unity and diversity as we observe in it. Empiricism conceives of the world in hypothetical propositions; rationalism (and Marxism) conceives of it in categorical propositions.

In the same way that there is a multiplicity of relations, there is also a multiplicity of different modes of unification, different degrees of unity, different ways of being “one”, and a multiplicity of ways of realising it. We could have “[u]nion of various grades, union of diverse types, union that stops at non-conductors, union that merely goes from next to next, and means in many cases outer nextness only, and not a more internal bond, [or] union of concatenation”.¹⁹ Human efforts are constantly unifying the world, but these processes are always contingent, empirical and partial. “We ourselves are constantly adding to the connections of things, organizing labor-unions, establishing postal, consular, mercantile, railroad, telegraph, colonial, and other systems that bind us together in ever wider reticulations.”²⁰ Unification is achieved through connections and systems constituting an “incalculable number of overlapping networks”. The “mode of unity” described by James is very different from the “perfect unity”, the “absolute unity” implied by the “all-form”.

In the universe of multiplicity, the variety of ways of being “one” imply a multiplicity of modes through which these unifications occur. How are things held together, how do networks forge connections, how is the world produced? “Things can be consistent or coherent in very diverse ways.”²¹ Among the “innumerable types of connections”, James distinguishes a “concatenated union” held together by connections through intermediaries which construes itself between bits and pieces and implies time, from an “absolute union” or union of “total conflux” (fusion or subsumption in the Hegelian-Marxist language).²² Because for James, knowledge is one of the most dynamic parts of reality, its cogency is found not in its ability to encompass the all or the universal (the pretention of marxisms to proclaim themselves to be sciences), but in its capacity to illuminate and direct us towards an “immense network of relations” to produce something new and singular. Knowledge also has a distributive, temporal and pluralist mode of constitution. “This ‘concatenated’ knowing, going from next to next, is altogether different from the ‘consolidated’ knowing supposed to be exercised by the absolutist mind.”²³

A pluralist universe is thus constructed through a “continuous concatenation” of things and through the

“intellectual connections” of concepts. Networks establish certain cohesions and “partial confluxes” through a connection between different parts of the universe. These parts are linked to each other by relations that are always specific and particular. “The result is innumerable little hangings-together of the world’s parts within the larger hangings-together. ... Each system exemplifies one type or grade of union, its parts being strung on that peculiar kind of relation, and the same part may figure in many different systems”.²⁴ It is thus not impossible to imagine different worlds contrasted by their diverse modes of connection and ways in which their heterogeneous elements “hang together”. “‘The world is One,’ therefore, just so far as we experience it to be concatenated, One by as many definite conjunctions as appear. But then also *not* One by just as many definite conjunctions as we find.”²⁵ Disjunction also has a multiplicity of modalities of being realised. There are a number of heterogeneous ways dividing which are each time contingent, specific and singular.

The study of the “special kinds of union which the universe enfolds” reveals “many of these to coexist with kinds of separation equally real.”²⁶ In place of a “block universe”, whose terms and relations would be implicated in one another and both in relation to a totality, we have a “mosaic universe”, a “patchwork universe”, an “archipelago universe”, that is to say an incompletely systematised universe, a “partially illogical or irrational” world where there are a possible and contingent multiplicity of junctions and disjunctions, unifications and separations. Jean Wahl has compiled a number of the terms with which James defines the pluralist universe: “arbitrary, chaotic, discontinuous, swarming, tangled, muddy, difficult, fragmentary, divided”.²⁷

What we have here is an unfinished and unfinishable universe, an incomplete universe where reality and knowledge gradually unfold, bit by bit, in a cumulative process through the assemblage of their various parts of bits and pieces. A universe where the composition must follow the cartography of singularities, of little worlds, of the different degrees of unity that animate them. A cumulative world where the total is never complete and “grows here and there”, thanks, not to the action of a universal subject, but to the piecemeal contribution of heterogeneous singularities. It is in this world of incompleteness, discontinuity and possibility—where innovation and knowledge produce themselves in a multiplicity of ways—that individuals and singularities can genuinely act (not only collective or universal subjects) and know, obtain knowledge [*connaître*].²⁸

We are now in a position to answer the pragmatic question: what practical consequences flow from the idea of unity in its absolutist and pluralist conceptions? The “absolutist and complete” modes of unification and the pluralist modes of unification refer respectively to the majoritarian and minoritarian logics by which Deleuze and Guattari defined politics in modern societies.

MARXISM AS A POLITICS OF TOTALITY

Pragmatism allows us to understand how Marx’s ontology of relation is still profoundly indebted to 19th century idealist philosophy and thus highlights the ontological limits of Marxist politics.

It is impossible for Marxism to imagine relations of pure exteriority that would be pure exteriorities, relations without a basis in the totality of relation of Capital. The methods of action and cognition of social movements that developed after World War II, however, express relations that are not inferred directly from terms, and terms that can be independent from relations. These movements, which practice and aspire to a politics of multiplicity, find only the most ambiguous of allies amongst current Marxists.

Let us take, for example, the feminist movement (although we could have chosen any other minoritarian practice—any bit or piece of the mosaic universe, as James would say). Marxism has always had a great difficulty with movements that do not refer, either directly or exclusively, to class relation. It cannot imagine them in their autonomy and independence, it cannot think them as “radical novelty” because Marxist method holds that their truth is not immanent to the movements themselves; it is not measured by the new possibilities of life that these struggles open up, but solely to the capital-labour relation. These movements only represent phenomena whose essence lies in the “relation of relations”. With Marxism as with rationalism, ultimately there is only the

MULTIPLICITY, TOTALITY AND POLITICS

“one” there is ultimately “only one thing”. The world is a priori “one”, or has to be so.

Marxism will think of the feminist movements in a number of different ways but all of which will ultimately refer back to an essence. The feminist movement is understood as a movement for the “payment of domestic work”, or the “sexual division of labour” in the factory or in society as a whole, or even as the “becoming-woman of work”. Marxism only sees in the distributive mode, in the dissemination, the fragmentation of “bits and pieces” through which the production and the knowledge of the universe come about, a dispersion, of simple disjunctions, a multiplicity without connections.

The impossibility of external relations, the impossibility of absolute newness, the impossibility of understanding the universe as a multiplicity, all this will bring the Marxist concept on the terrain of a “perfect absolute and complete” unification, operating in a way which seeks to purify and recuperate all that escapes it. Class, like all totalities, is never able to account for everything in a mosaic universe. However great the number of elements that are able to be brought within the unity may be, there is always something which remains outside, as independent and autonomous, and for which socialism was, and remains, a nightmare. In presupposing that the world of capital is ‘one’ (or, which amounts to the same thing, that it is divided into two), Marxism has vigorously contributed to its own ‘absolute and complete’ unity, thus making everything that subtracts itself from it or exceeds it pay a high price.

PRAGMATISM AND CAPITALISM

It is not necessary to demonstrate the pragmatic affiliation of Gilles Deleuze’s thought, which he has openly admitted himself. However, it is Michel Foucault, whom, while never acknowledging the influence of this tradition, drew from it to better use in the analysis of politics and in the reconstruction of genealogies of knowledges [*savoirs*].

In *What is Philosophy?*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari claim that the market is the one true universal of capitalism. Foucault adds a fundamental consideration to this observation, by demonstrating in some of his most recently published courses,²⁹ that this universal is, like any universal, a pragmatic construction. The capital-labour relation does not have the spontaneous dynamic that Marxism lends itself to. It is, on the contrary, the result of a strategy that utilises a multiplicity of apparatuses [*dispositifs*] of power. In the place of the totalising principle of Marxism, Foucault substitutes the proliferation of *dispositifs* that constitute a multiplicity of contingent compositions, systems of consistency, and degrees of unity. These *dispositifs* are not only multiple, they are also differentiated. *Dispositifs* of security differ from *dispositifs* of discipline (as do those of politics and the economy) in their manner of guaranteeing the cohesion of their parts, of assuring the continuity and discontinuity of their fragments, of their different methods of being “one”, and of incorporating the autonomy and independence of their elements. Additionally, for Foucault, a subject of rights (*homo juridicus*) is not the same thing as an economic subject (*homo oeconomicus*), both of which should be distinguished from “social” subjects.

According to Foucault, the centrality of the capital-labour relation is to be found in the fact that it proved to be the most effective way to control, master and appropriate external relations and their capacity to produce innovation. In terms of its strategy of the construction of universals one can justly apply the following remark from James to capitalism itself: “[h]e speaks of what he calls the rational *unity* of things, when all the while what he really means is their possible empirical *unification*.”³⁰ The deconstruction of universals and the critique of the relation of Capital as encompassing the relation of relations is argued and practiced from a point of view perfectly in line with the pragmatist method: the many ways of being “one”, necessitate for their “accurate ascertainment... as many different programs of scientific work.”³¹

It is this methodology that Deleuze recognises in the work of Foucault and it is in this sense that he defines his philosophy as “pragmatist and pluralist”. “The One, the All, the True, the object, the subject, are not universals, but singular processes—of unification, totalisation, verification, objectivation, subjectification—present in the

given apparatus. Also each apparatus is a multiplicity in which certain operate processes of this nature still in formation, distinct from those operating in another.”³² James’ pluralist theory of knowledge finds a striking continuation in the Foucaultian genealogies of local, minor, situated and discontinuous knowledges. Whereas the Marxist tradition challenges science on its own terrain, Foucault attempts to put these local knowledges into play against the “unitary moment”, against the “centralising effects of power”, which could be linked to an institution but also to a “political apparatus, as in the case of Marxism”.³³

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, in tracing possible connections between things other than as part of a totality this pragmatist ontology will perhaps find a use in describing ways of “being together” and “being against” (this division is also multiple, it is not ‘one’ division as in Marxist theory) that post-socialist movements are in the process of experimenting with.³⁴ A movement, like any element, can take part in several systems at once, have multiple relations, play different roles; be, for example, at the same time on the inside and outside of the relation of capital, be inside and outside of an institution, be both “for” and “against”, create, produce. This will lead to political strategies that are completely opaque to political and trade-unionist forces precisely because these forces consider the unity of things to be superior to their multiplicity.

Maurizio Lazzarato is an independent philosopher and sociologist, currently residing in Paris. His works include *Lavoro immateriale e soggettività* (Ombre corte) in addition to the more recent *Puissances de l'invention. La psychologie économique de Gabriel Tarde contre l'économie politique* and *Les révolutions du capitalisme* (both published by Aux Editions les Empêcheurs de penser en rond).

MULTIPLICITY, TOTALITY AND POLITICS

NOTES

1. Michael Hardt and Toni Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, (New York: Penguin Press, 2004).
2. Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, (New York, Semiotext(c), 2004).
3. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (London and New York: Verso, 1994).
4. William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), 79.
5. Ibid, 80.
6. Giovanni Gentile, *La Philosophie de Marx*, (Paris: Editions T.E.R., 1995).
7. This interpretation of the concept of ‘transindividual’, in both Balibar and Virno, is a surprising one. From the texts of Simondon, it seems impossible to interpret the concepts ‘pre-individual’ and ‘transindividual’ as language, relations of production or social relations. In both cases, it is ‘potentials’, ‘reserves of being’ and ‘metastable equilibria’ that allow for both biological and social individuation. To confuse the ‘non-structured’ potential (which is neither social nor vital) with the structuration of language, social relations and relations of production seems to me a most problematic interpretation.
8. Georg Lukacs, *History of Class Consciousness*, (London, The Merlin Press, 1971).
9. William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 114.
10. Ibid, 170.
11. TN: In English in the original.
12. William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), 321.
13. Gilles Deleuze, *Deux régimes de fous*, (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 2003), 320.
14. William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 130.
15. William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), 321-2.
16. Ibid, 321.
17. Ibid, 324.
18. William James, *Pragmatism*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), 132.
19. Ibid, 149.
20. William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 130.
21. William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909), 74.
22. Ibid, 358-9.
23. William James, *Some Problems of Philosophy* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 129-130.
24. William James, *Pragmatism*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), 136.
25. Ibid, 148.
26. Ibid, 165.
27. TN: The French terms used by Wahl are “arbitraire, cahoté, discontinu, grouillant, embrouillé, bourbeux, pénible, fragmentaire, morcelé”, Jean Wahl, *Les Philosophies pluralistes d’Angleterre et d’Amérique*, (Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2004).
28. This description of ontological constitution is in line with Gabriel Tarde’s constitution of the social.
29. For a useful analysis of Foucault’s two courses: ‘Security, Territory, Population’ and ‘Birth of the Biopolitics’, see Maurizio Lazzarato ‘Biopolitics and Bioeconomics: a politics of multiplicity’, at <http://multitudes.samizdat.net/Biopolitics-Bioeconomics-a>, accessed 4 January 2010.
30. William James, *Pragmatism*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), 280.
31. William James, *Pragmatism*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1912), 148.
32. Gilles Deleuze “What is a *dispositif*?”, in Timothy J. Armstrong (ed.) *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 162.
33. Michel Foucault, *Il faut défendre la société*, (Paris : Gallimard - Seuil, 1997), 15.
34. See chapter 5 of Maurizio Lazzarato, *Les Révolutions du capitalisme* (Paris: Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2004) where I sketch out a cartography of these new dynamics. But in this domain, everything is left to be done.

FOUCAULT'S HYPOTHESIS: FROM THE CRITIQUE OF THE JURIDICO-DISCURSIVE CONCEPT OF POWER TO AN ANALYTICS OF GOVERNMENT

Thomas Lemke

“Forget Foucault!”—this was the provocative title of a book by Jean Baudrillard published in 1977.¹ The famous French sociologist claimed that Foucault’s work and especially his analytics of power was obsolete, unable to account for power relations in contemporary societies. Baudrillard could hardly imagine that 30 years later the reception and appraisal of Foucault’s work would be even more intense than during his lifetime. Today, it is quite impossible to give an exhaustive overview of the monographs, edited books, articles and PhD theses that have used Foucault and his famous “tool kit”. The impact of his work has not been limited to philosophy and history. Foucault has inspired a variety of disciplines and fields of knowledge ranging from political science, sociology, media studies, gender studies, and criminology to postcolonial studies.²

One concept that has attracted an enormous amount of interest since Foucault’s death in 1984 is the notion of governmentality. The word is a neologism derived from the French word *gouvernemental*, meaning “concerning government”.³ This paper will focus on the role and dimensions of the notion in Foucault’s work. I will argue that Foucault corrected and elaborated his “analytics” or “genealogy” of power in the second half of the 1970s. At the centre of this theoretical reorientation was the notion of government that became a “guideline”⁴ for his research in the following years. It played a decisive role in his analytics of power, since it situated the question of power in a broader context. First, governmentality mediates between power and subjectivity and makes it possible to investigate how processes of domination are linked to “technologies of the self”,⁵ how forms of political government are articulated with practices of self-government. Secondly, the problematic of government accounts for the close relations between power and knowledge and helps to elucidate what Foucault in his earlier work called the “nexus of power-knowledge”.

Foucault introduced the notion of government as a “necessary critique of the common conceptions of ‘power’”.⁶ Its theoretical contours will become clearer when we compare it to the concept of power it tries to escape and overcome: the “juridico-discursive” representation of power.⁷ The article starts with a brief outline of this traditional idea of power and the Foucauldian critique. The second part will focus on the emergence

FOUCAULT'S HYPOTHESIS

of the notion of government put forward in the lectures of 1978 and 1979 at the Collège de France on a “genealogy of the modern state”. In the third part I will discuss some theoretical displacements that the concept of governmentality effected in Foucault’s work, leading to a more complex understanding of power, politics and ethics. The notion of governmentality has also inspired many studies in the social sciences and historical investigations. I will present the historical background and the theoretical merits of governmentality studies in the last part of my paper.

1. THE “JURIDICO-DISCURSIVE” CONCEPT OF POWER

The famous political scientist Steven Lukes once concluded that there exists a common idea that is shared by many diverse and conflicting conceptions and interpretations of power: “*The power of an individual or collective actor A with regard to an objective O is manifested if A achieves O by consent of one or more actors B.*”⁸ Lukes suggests that this definition has been interpreted in the Western political tradition in two different ways. The first line of interpretation proceeds symmetrically. It starts with the assumption that both parties share objective O. By contrast, the second line of reception proceeds asymmetrically, it regards B’s consent as coerced. According to Lukes the first theoretical model provides a concept of power as cooperation and consensus, and the second conceives of power as hierarchy and domination. Both lines of interpretation can be located within a very long tradition that goes back to Antiquity. The first includes authors as diverse as Plato, Hannah Arendt and Talcott Parsons, and on the other side we find e.g. Thomas Hobbes, Max Weber and Karl Marx.

The theoretical specificity of Foucault’s analytics of power consists in the fact that it escapes any neat classification. It is not part of the symmetrical tradition, nor does it belong to the asymmetrical line of interpretation. Foucault wants to move beyond this too common division, and calls into question the underlying premise of both conceptions: the coupling of the analysis of power to either questions of legitimacy and consensus or of constraint and violence. His points of departure are the ways in which power has been analyzed in political and social theory.

Foucault’s thesis is that in the Western political tradition, power was principally understood in terms of rights and from the perspective of repression: as law, interdiction, censure, constraint etc. This “juridico-discursive”⁹ representation of power is dominated by the idea of the freedom of a (sovereign) subject on the one hand and the instance of political sovereignty on the other. It focuses on the relationship between state sovereignty and individual autonomy. Foucault addresses three important features of this juridical conception of power, and proposes a theoretical perspective that promises to “reverse the mode of analysis”.¹⁰

First, he argues that power is not a substance but has to be analyzed in relational terms. Therefore Foucault usually speaks of power relations rather than power. In this respect power is not a territory to be conquered or transferred, nor is it a good that could be possessed or exchanged. Instead of juridical or economic terms, Foucault prefers a strategic and nominalistic concept of power. He argues that power is not an exclusive possession or a right of certain individuals, groups or classes (excluding others from power), and analyzes instead relations of power that result in a plurality of overlapping and conflicting tactics and systems of differentiation: “One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society.”¹¹

Secondly, Foucault calls into question the traditional identification of power with political power and the concentration of power analysis on state institutions. Foucault replaces a macro-political by a micro-political perspective, substituting an analysis in terms of representation by an interest in constitution. Thus, processes of power do not proceed from top to bottom, they do not originate in a centralized point to pervade the social space. On the contrary, it is power relations in society that account for the generation and the functioning of the state. They go beyond the state—which is to be conceived of as a condensed form of power. As a consequence, neither the control nor the destruction of state apparatuses makes forms of power disappear.¹²

Thirdly, Foucault challenges the idea that power relations are primarily characterized by means of repression and that they always serve interests of reproduction. According to Foucault, the problem with these accounts is that power is either reduced to certain modes of exercise like constraint, force or violence, or it is exclusively analyzed as stabilization, continuation or legitimation of social relations like exploitation or patriarchy—without paying attention to how these relations generate and change material forms of existence, social identities and bodily experiences. Power relations are, according to Foucault, not the expression of a “deeper“ reality that they reflect ideologically or secure repressively, nor can they be reduced to functional or negative criteria. Rather, they entail a productive dimension: they allow and enable individual and collective experiences and promote new forms of knowledge and practice.

Foucault’s central theoretical interest in the mid-1970s is to replace the juridical and negative concept with a strategic and positive account of power. The idea is that the investigation of power processes should be freed from the theoretical concentration on the institution of the state and the idea of the subject, but also from the normative fixation on specifying criteria of legitimacy and consensus. However, Foucault’s concrete investigations only partly succeeded in doing this. There were two particular theoretical problems that characterized the genealogy of power up to *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of the *History of sexuality*. First, Foucault only replaced the focus on legitimacy and consensus in political theory by accentuating war and struggle, analyzing social relations primarily from the perspective of confrontation and subjection. Using “Nietzsche’s hypothesis”,¹³ one could no longer analyze how belief in legitimacy, acceptance and consensus were actively generated and stabilized. Secondly, the “microphysics of power” that Foucault endorsed at that time was too much oriented to processes of disciplining and the examination of local practices and singular institutions like the prison or the hospital. As a result, the question of the state and its strategic role in the establishment of global structures of domination could not be adequately addressed; also, it was impossible to assess processes of subjectivation beyond the formation of disciplined bodies.¹⁴ In sum, while Foucault’s aim was to cut off the king’s head in political analysis, displacing the focus on law and legitimization, will and consensus, in practice he simply reversed the juridical model and adopted the “exact opposite”¹⁵ view. Instead of cutting off the king’s head, he just turned the conception that he criticized upside down by replacing law and contract by war and conquest. Put differently, the “cutting off” could only be the first step. After this, it is necessary to address the following question: “How is it possible that his headless body often behaves as if it indeed had a head?”¹⁶

The concept of governmentality that emerged for the first time in Foucault’s lectures at the Collège de France in 1978 and 1979 represents Foucault’s response to these two complexes of problems. It allows on the one hand for a more adequate analysis of the state and processes of subjectivation. On the other hand, it also makes possible the elaboration of an analysis of power beyond the juridical and the warlike concept of power

2. THE GENEALOGY OF THE MODERN STATE

The lectures of 1978 and 1979 bear the titles *Security, Territory, Population* and *The Birth of Biopolitics*. They focus on what Foucault once called a “genealogy of the modern state”.¹⁷ What Foucault is searching for in these lectures is not a historical reconstruction of the appearance and transformation of political structures. He endeavors to show how the modern sovereign state and the modern autonomous individual co-determine each other’s emergence. Like Norbert Elias, he is interested in the long-term processes of co-evolution of modern statehood and modern subjectivity. But whereas Elias relies on a general theory of civilization presupposing a single historical logic of development (“the process”), Foucault analyzes heterogeneous and plural “arts of government.”¹⁸ He refers to the older meaning of the term government.¹⁹ While the word has a purely political meaning today, Foucault is able to show that up until well into the 18th century the problem of government was placed in a more general context. Government was a term discussed not only in political tracts but also in philosophical, religious, medical and pedagogic texts. In addition to management by the state or administration, government also addressed problems of self-control, guidance for the family and for children, management of the household, directing the soul, and other questions.

FOUCAULT'S HYPOTHESIS

Taking up this old meaning, Foucault distinguishes the “the political form of government” from the “problematic of government in general”.²⁰ He proposes a very broad concept of government, one that does not conceive of subjectivation and state-formation as two independent and separate processes but analyzes them from a single analytical perspective. Thus the “history of ‘governmentality’”²¹ is also a “history of the subject”,²² since Foucault does not consider the modern state as a centralized structure but as “a tricky combination in the same political structures of individualization techniques and of totalization procedures”.²³

In the course of the lectures Foucault examines the “genesis of a political knowledge”²⁴ of governing humans. In the 1978 lectures he traces the genealogy of governmentality from Classical Greek and Roman days via the early Christian pastoral guidance through to the notion of state reason and the police science, while the 1979 lectures focus on the study of liberal and neo-liberal forms of government. At the beginning and end of the lecture series, Foucault gave an outline of the classic liberal art of government by discussing the works of Adam Smith, David Hume and Adam Ferguson. In the lectures in between he analyzed neo-liberal governmentality, concentrating in particular on two forms of neo-liberalism: German post-War liberalism and the liberalism of the Chicago School, which derives from the former, takes it a step further, and gives it a more radical form.

Foucault's lectures are based on the following thesis: the modern (Western) state is the result of a complex combination of “political” and “pastoral” power. While the former derives from the Greek *polis* and is organized around rights, universality, public space etc., the latter is a Christian religious concept that focuses on the comprehensive guidance of individuals. It is an individualizing form of power that is linked to the production of truth. Foucault analyzes the pastoral form of power in the texts of the fathers of the church, who took up ancient forms of guidance and articulated and modified them. Pastoral power conceives of the relationship between guider and guided in the context of the pastor, who cares for the “government of the souls”, the guidance and direction of individuals to ensure their salvation in the next world. The difference between this and Ancient Greek and Roman ideas of government is that the Christian pastorate developed methods of analysis, techniques of reflection and supervision that intended to secure the knowledge of the “inner truth” of the individuals. Alongside obedience to the moral and legal norms appears the authority of a pastor who permanently controls and cares for the individual in order to set him or her on the road to salvation.²⁵

According to Foucault, pastoral power spread and multiplied beyond the institution of the Christian church in the 16th and 17th centuries. In a secularized form it was of decisive historical importance for the formation of the modern state, which relies on the production of rational knowledge about the individual and the population as a whole. The distinctive feature of these specific modern forms of government consists in the reflection on the conditions, the objects and the aims of government. In several steps, Foucault analyzes the appearance of an autonomous “political reason”. It is autonomous insofar as it neither relies on theological-cosmological principles nor can it be deduced from the person of the Prince. Its starting point can be found in the tracts on the “arts of government” and state reason written in the 16th and 17th centuries, followed by books on the police science and the rise of liberalism in the 18th century, up to the renewal of liberal concepts of society and the state in the 20th century. Foucault argues in his lectures that political reflection partly detaches itself from the problem of sovereignty. Thus the principles of government are no longer to be found in the divine order of creation and subordinate to it, but are the object of rational knowledge: “the state is governed according to rational principles which are intrinsic to it and which cannot be derived solely from natural or divine laws or the principles of wisdom and prudence; the state, like nature, has its own proper form of rationality, albeit of a different sort.”²⁶

The new art of government found its “first form of crystallization”²⁷ in state reason, since here we find for the first time a discrete rationality of governing. However, state reason remained bound to the historical frame of sovereignty and the traditional model of the *oikos*. In this context, the main objective of politics was to increase the might and wealth of the sovereign.²⁸ Only with the emergence of liberalism can we speak of governmentality in a substantive sense. Foucault analyzes liberalism not as a political ideology or an economic doctrine. Rather, he regards liberalism as a specific art of governing that must be distinguished from the

political universe of discipline and from the world of sovereignty. Liberal government does not aim at salvation in an afterworld, nor does it strive to increase the welfare of the state. Liberalism rather binds the rationality of government to an exterior object—civil society—and the freedom of individuals is regarded as a critical yardstick for governmental action. A very important element in this respect is the idea of the economy as a conceptually and practically distinguished space, governed by autonomous laws and a proper rationality that allows for the development of a new form of knowledge: political economy.²⁹

Foucault presents liberalism as “a critique of state reason”, since the freedom of the individual and his or her rights against the global claim for regulation of the absolutist state are at the center of the liberal reflexion. He sees the particularity of liberal forms of government in the fact that they replace an external regulation by an internal production. Liberalism is not limited to providing a simple guarantee of liberties (freedom of the market, of private property, of speech etc.) that exist independently of governmental practice. Quite on the contrary: liberalism organizes the conditions under which individuals should exercise these liberties. In this sense, freedom is not a natural resource but an artificially arranged product and instrument of governmental practices. Liberal government does not expand the spaces of freedom, it is not limited to respect this or that freedom—it “consumes freedom”.³⁰

But in the very same process of the production of freedom, liberalism also endangers the freedom that it constitutes. It is precisely the “free play of forces” inside liberal forms of government that threatens these liberties and necessitates new interventions to “protect” or “stabilize” the social. At the heart of liberalism there is a problematic and paradoxical relationship between the incessant production of freedom and the permanent danger of its destruction. Liberal freedom presupposes the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of constraint etc. The problem of liberal government is to ensure that pursuit of individual or collective interests does not endanger the general interest. It follows that liberal freedom cannot be exercised in an unlimited way, but has to be regulated by a principle of calculation: “apparatuses of security”³¹ are the other side and the condition of existence of liberal government. The extension of control procedures and the deepening of mechanisms of constraint are the counterweight to the establishment of new freedoms.³²

The liberal art of government inaugurates a freedom that is always already endangered and thus the object of numerous interventions to secure individual and collective freedom. Liberal freedom is established and maintained by “mechanisms of security” that are the flip-side and the pre-condition of liberalism. According to Foucault, security has since the 18th century become an integral part of governmental rationality:

The fundamental objective of governmentality will be mechanisms of security, [...] it will be state intervention with the essential function of ensuring the security of the natural phenomena of economic processes or processes intrinsic to population. This explains [...] the insertion of freedom within governmentality, not only as the right of individuals legitimately opposed to the power, usurpation, and abuses of the sovereign or the government, but as an element that has become indispensable to governmentality itself.³³

3. THREE THEORETICAL DISPLACEMENTS

Beyond the historical-political reconstruction of a “history of governmentality” from the double perspective of state-formation and subjectivation, the introduction of the notion of government in Foucault’s work also has a very important strategic significance. Governmentality has correctly been regarded as a “key notion”³⁴ or a “deranging term”³⁵ of Foucault’s analytics of power. It plays a decisive role in several regards and leads to a threefold “theoretical shift”.³⁶ First, the notion of government offers a view of power beyond a perspective that focuses either on consensus or on violence; second, it helps to differentiate between power and domination; third, it clarifies the relations between politics and ethics. In the following I will take up each of these aspects in turn.

FOUCAULT'S HYPOTHESIS

3.1. *Government as conduct*

The problematic of government redirects Foucault's analytics of power. He now stresses that power is first and foremost about guidance and "*Führung*", i.e. structuring and shaping the field of possible action of subjects. The concept of power as guidance does not exclude consensual forms or the recourse to violence, but it signifies that coercion or consent are reformulated as means of government among others—they are "elements" or "instruments" rather than the "foundation" or "source" of power relations.³⁷ Foucault increasingly recognized in the last years of his life that neither the juridical nor the warlike conception of power that he had favored until the mid-1970s were able to account for the "specificity of power relations".³⁸ "Foucault's hypothesis"—as I propose to call it in order to contrast it with Nietzsche's hypothesis—is characterized by inquiring into the conditions of a consensus or the prerequisites of acceptance. As a consequence, the concept of governmentality represents a theoretical move beyond the problematic of consent and will on the one hand and conquest and war on the other: "The relationship proper to power would therefore be sought not on the side of violence or of struggle, nor on that of voluntary contracts (all of which can, at best, only be the instruments of power), but rather, in the area of that singular mode of action, *neither warlike nor juridical*, which is government."³⁹ According to Foucault power relations can be characterized as conduct, or rather as "conduct of conducts", and it is exactly this moment of relationality and reflexivity that distinguishes a power relation from consent and force: "Perhaps the equivocal nature of the term 'conduct' is one of the best aids for coming to terms with the specificity of power relations. To 'conduct' is at the same time to 'lead' [conduire] others (according to mechanisms of coercion that are to varying degrees, strict) and a way of behaving [se conduire] within a more or less open field of possibilities. The exercise of power is a 'conduct of conducts' and a management of possibilities. Basically, power is less a confrontation between two adversaries or their mutual engagement than a question of 'government'".⁴⁰

Obviously, this concept of power is located on a very abstract level. In the context of the analytics of government, Foucault speaks more concretely of "technologies" or "rationalities" of government. We have to emphasize two aspects here. First, government only refers to those power relations that rely on calculated and rational programs or forms of knowledge and are accompanied by techniques of directing and regulating behavior. Thus, governmentality implies systematic and regulated practices of government and also points to elements of calculation or to a rational knowledge of the subjects or objects of government. Secondly, government does not aim at directly shaping the actions of individual or collective actors, but rather at an indirect and reflexive determination of possible options of action. It is the way in which the actors govern their action ("conduct of conducts") which is the object of government.

It follows that this concept of government only grasps one section of the field of power relations. Foucault therefore distinguishes between several forms of power.

3.2. *Three levels of an analytics of power: strategic relations, states of domination and technologies of government*

The notion of government also contributes to another important theoretical improvement of the analytics of power. In his earlier work Foucault had used the notions of power and domination largely synonymously or at least he did not sufficiently distinguish between them. This was quite misleading, in the sense that Foucault always presented power relations as ubiquitous and "productive". According to him, they are an omni-present feature of modern society, giving rise to forms of knowledge, regulating institutional patterns and bodily experiences. As a result readers could get the impression that domination was a universal, ahistorical and inescapable fact while substantial forms of resistance seemed doomed to failure.⁴¹ Later in his theoretical life, Foucault became convinced that it was necessary to differentiate carefully between power and domination: "It seems to me that we must distinguish between power relations understood as strategic games between liberties [...] and the states of domination that people ordinarily call 'power'. And, between the two, between games of power and states of domination, you have technologies of government."⁴²

As a result, Foucault identifies “three levels”⁴³ of an analytics of power: strategic games between liberties, government and domination. Power as *strategic games* is a ubiquitous feature of human interaction, insofar as it signifies structuring the possible field of action of others. It follows that there exists no social domain outside or beyond power relations and no power-free form of interpersonal communication. From the perspective of this broad notion of power, power relations are not exterior to society but are the very condition of the existence of society: “To live in society is, in any event, to live in such a way that some can act on the actions of others. A society without power relations can only be an abstraction.”⁴⁴ Strategic games do not necessarily result in a removal of liberty or options available to individuals; they could lead to “empowerment” or “responsibilisation” of subjects, forcing them to “free” decision-making in fields of action.

Government refers to more or less systematized, regulated and reflected modes of power (a “technology”) that go beyond the spontaneous exercise of power over others, following a specific form of reasoning (a “rationality”) which defines the objective (“telos”) of action and the adequate means to achieve it. For example, in his lectures on governmentality, Foucault distinguishes between the Christian pastorate as a spiritual government of souls oriented to salvation in another world and state reason as a political government of men securing welfare in this world. In much the same way, disciplinary or sovereign power is reinterpreted not as opposite forms of power but as different technologies of government.

Domination is a particular type of power relationship that is stable and hierarchical, fixed and difficult to reverse. Foucault reserves the term “domination” for those asymmetrical relationships of power in which the subordinated persons have little room for manoeuvre because of their “extremely limited margin of freedom”.⁴⁵ Thus, in Foucault’s terminology states of domination are a specific form, an exceptional case in power relations in which alternative modes of action or spaces of liberty are extremely restricted. They are characterized by the fact that an individual or a group has succeeded in blocking the field of power relations and in establishing a permanent asymmetry.⁴⁶ But states of domination are not the primary source that makes it possible to hold power or exploit asymmetries: on the contrary, they are the effects of technologies of government. Technologies of government account for the systematization, stabilization and regulation of power relationships that may lead to states of domination. According to Foucault, governmental technologies assume a kind of “intermediating” position between strategic relations and states of domination.⁴⁷

3.3. *Politics and ethics*

The notion of governmentality also helps to explain Foucault’s concentration on ethical questions and the “genealogy of the subject”, which is the theme of the volumes two and three of the “History of sexuality”.⁴⁸ Many commentators saw in this theoretical move a radical rupture with his interest in processes of power, a move away from this genealogical project of the 1970s. It should have become clear by now that this is not at all the case. Foucault’s interest in processes of subjectivation does not mean that he abandons the problematic of power. What he does is to continue and correct his older work, rendering it more precise and concrete. It is right to speak of a “break”, but this rupture takes place inside the problematic of power rather than between the genealogy of power and a theory of the subject. The concept of power is not abandoned, but is made the object of a radical theoretical displacement. Foucault corrects the findings of the earlier studies in which he investigated subjectivity primarily with a view to “docile bodies” and exaggerated the impact of processes of discipline for the formation of subjects. In his later work, he uses the notion of government to analyze the connections between technologies of domination and what he calls “technologies of the self”. The latter term signifies techniques which permit individuals to effect a certain number of operations on their bodies, souls, thoughts etc., to transform themselves or modify themselves in order to attain a certain desired state.⁴⁹

It is exactly the interplay between these technologies, between the guidance of others and the forms of self-guidance that is at the heart of an analytics of government:

FOUCAULT'S HYPOTHESIS

I think that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, he has to take into account not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self. Let's say: he has to take into account the interaction between those two types of techniques—techniques of domination and techniques of the self. He has to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, he has to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion and domination. The contact point, where the individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves, is what we can call, I think government. Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word, governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself.⁵⁰

The theoretical distinction between several “levels” of power and the emphasis on the central political role of governmental technologies also helps to clarify some normative questions that Foucault's analytics of power has raised. These questions focused on the foundations of resistance and the motives of critique. Authors like Jürgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser, Axel Honneth and Charles Taylor put forward the objection that Foucault's work on power was characterized by a “monolithic relativism”.⁵¹ They diagnosed a “certain normative one-dimensionality”⁵² in the genealogy of power. In their reading, Foucault endorsed a global concept of power that made it impossible to specify why domination ought to be resisted and what is wrong with submission, why we should resist certain practices and accept others.⁵³

To respond to this kind of critique, Foucault makes clear that power relations are based on two indispensable elements. First, an analytics of government demands the recognition of the “other” as the subject of action: “Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are ‘free’”.⁵⁴ The second condition stresses the openness and the contingencies of power relations: “faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up”.⁵⁵ For Foucault the power of A does not consist in forcing B to do something or to prevent him or her to do whatever he or she would have done.⁵⁶ The notion of power is not linked to the capabilities of individual actors but to the complexities of social relationships and the constitution of fields of possibility. Foucault speaks of power when margins of action are extremely limited and restricted but also if options and potentials of action are invented or created. Power is exercised, according to Foucault, when the actions of one person affect the possibilities for action of another: if the actions of A modify the field of action for B, we can say that A exerted power over B.

To speak of power on this general level does not imply any normative judgment. The specification of some social relations as strategic games does not mean that they have to be condemned or ^{that} they are acceptable or approvable. Also, it does not imply that one party necessarily violates the interests of another. This may or may not be the case, since there are many ways in which agents can influence or determine the actions of others. They include moral advice or violent force, persuasion by rational arguments or ideological manipulation, pedagogic techniques, and economic exploitation. Only some of these relations will be found objectionable: those that are fixed in rigid asymmetries and institutionalized forms of inequality.⁵⁷

According to Foucault, power relations are not per se good or bad, but “dangerous” since they may always solidify into states of domination.⁵⁸ This is the reason why the analysis of governmental technologies assumes a critical significance. These technologies regulate in how open or fixed a way the strategic games are played, if they consolidate into states of domination or offer the opportunity of “practices of freedom”.⁵⁹

To respond to the critique I have summarized above, Foucault sets out to clarify his political-theoretical position toward Habermasian social theory: “The idea that there could exist a state of communication that would allow games of truth to circulate freely, without any constraints or coercive effects, seems utopian to me. This is precisely a failure to see that power relations are not something that is bad in itself, that we have to break

free of. I do not think that a society can exist without power relations, if by that one means the strategies by which individuals try to direct and control the conduct of others. The problem, then, is not to try to dissolve them in the utopia of completely transparent communication but to acquire the rules of law, the management techniques, and also the morality, the *ethos*, the practice of self, that will allow us to play these games of power with as little domination as possible.”⁶⁰

4. CONCLUSION: FROM FOUCAULT’S HYPOTHESIS TO GOVERNMENTALITY STUDIES

Until 2004, Foucault’s lectures of 1978 and 1979 at the Collège de France were—except for the lecture of the 1 February 1978—unpublished, available only on audio tape at the Centre Michel Foucault. As a result, almost all the work on the “genealogy of the modern state” presented in these lectures, and especially Foucault’s analysis of neoliberal governmentality, remained unknown. Furthermore, the analytics of government is more a fragmentary sketch than an elaborated theory. Foucault never wrote a book on governmentality, though he did introduce important differentiations and clarifications of the analytics of power in the course of interviews and in some articles. Also, his early death meant that he was never able to better connect his work on the history of sexuality and ethical guidance with his interest in power relations and political transformations.

Given this extremely unfavorable situation, it is quite astonishing that Foucault’s work on governmentality has inspired so many studies in the social sciences and historical investigations. The first to further elaborate and develop this “direction for research”⁶¹ were his fellow researchers. François Ewald, Daniel Defert, Giovanna Procacci, Pasquale Pasquino and Jacques Donzelot carried out genealogical investigations of insurance technology, social economy, police science, and the government of the family. Their work mainly focused on the 18th and 19th centuries, while historians like Christian Lazzeri, Dominique Reynie and Michel Senellart used the notion of government to analyze state reason and early modern arts of government.⁶² While this work has been undertaken in France, a new line of reception has developed in the last 15 years in the English-speaking world. While the interest of the former was either genealogical or historical, what has come to be called “governmentality studies” has mainly addressed contemporary forms of government. These works have focused on transformations from welfarism to neo-liberal rationalities and technologies.

The publication of the collection *The Foucault Effect. Studies in Governmentality* in 1991 was a significant event in this respect. This volume, co-edited by Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, presented translations into English of the already published lecture of 1978 and some other important Foucauldian texts. It also made available articles by researchers directly affiliated with Foucault like Defert, Ewald and Donzelot, and by scholars like Colin Gordon, Graham Burchell and Ian Hacking from an Anglo-Saxon background. *The Foucault Effect* marked the beginning of a huge new interest in Foucault’s work, particularly in Britain, Australia and Canada. In the following years a great number of studies were published that mostly focused on the rise of neoliberal or advanced liberal arts of government and of specific forms of self-government in diverse areas.⁶³ This boom in governmentality studies did not evolve on a purely theoretical level, but was linked to a changing political context. In the 1980s and 1990s Fordist and welfarist modes of government in many countries were increasingly replaced by neoliberal programs and market-driven solutions. It also became clear that these radical transformations called for new theoretical instruments to explain the social and political ruptures.

The notion of governmentality offers several theoretical advantages for an analysis and a critique of neoliberalism. While many forms of contemporary critique still rely on the dualism of freedom and constraint, consensus and violence, from the perspective of governmentality the polarity of subjectivity and power ceases to be plausible: government refers to a continuum, which extends from political government right through to forms of self-regulation. This theoretical stance allows for a more complex analysis of neo-liberal forms of government that not only feature direct intervention by means of empowered and specialized state apparatuses, but also develop indirect techniques for leading and controlling individuals. Governmentality studies have been very helpful in illuminating the “soft” or “empowering” mechanisms of power, in exposing the paradoxes

FOUCAULT'S HYPOTHESIS

of “controlled autonomy” or the ties that link the call for “self-determination” to societal and institutional expectations and constraints. They have shown how individuals and social groups are governed by “freedom” and “choice”.

Furthermore, the concept of governmentality also proved useful in correcting the diagnosis of neo-liberalism as an expansion of the economy into politics, one that takes for granted the separation of state and market. The argument goes that there is some “pure” or “anarchic” economy that will be “regulated” or “civilized” by a political reaction from society. The problem with this kind of critique is that it shares the (neo-)liberal assumption of a separation between politics and economy. The perspective of governmentality makes possible the development of a dynamic form of analysis that does not limit itself to taking note of the “retreat of politics” or the “domination of the market”, but deciphers the so-called “end of politics” itself as a political program.

I do not have the space to further explore the analytical strength and capacities of the concept in the light of contemporary societal and political challenges—or to assess the limitations of adopting the concept of governmentality as an analytical framework.⁶⁴ Let me, in conclusion, only point to a quite important misunderstanding. In the relevant literature, governmentality studies are often regarded as a distinctive “theory” or a specific “approach” or “school”. This description is problematic insofar as it suggests a level of coherence and elaboration that governmentality studies in fact lack. This “lack” is not a problem to be resolved in the future but a deliberate stance and a specific strength. There is no governmentality theory or approach, since “governmentality” is not a model or framework of explication but a distinctive critical perspective and a style of analysis. It offers conceptual instruments that point to the “costs” of contemporary forms of government while providing a basis for the invention of new practices and modes of thinking. In this sense, an analytics of government is close to what Foucault sometimes called an “ethos” or “a critical ontology of ourselves”: “The critical ontology of ourselves must be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it must be conceived of as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them [*de leur franchissement possible*].”⁶⁵

Thomas Lemke is Heisenberg-Professor of Sociology with focus on Biotechnologies, Nature and Society at the Social Sciences Department of the Goethe-University Frankfurt/Main in Germany. His research interests include social and political theory, biopolitics, social studies of genetic and reproductive technologies. His recent publications include *Biopolitik zur Einführung*, Hamburg: Junius Verlag 2007; *Der medizinische Blick in die Zukunft. Gesellschaftliche Implikationen prädiktiver Gentests* (co-authored with Regine Kolk), Frankfurt am Main/New York: Campus 2008; *Governmentality. Current Issues and Future Challenges* (co-edited with Ulrich Bröckling and Susanne Krasmann), New York/London: Routledge (forthcoming).

NOTES

1. Jean Baudrillard. *Oublier Foucault*. Paris: Galilée, 1977.
2. Here are just some book titles to indicate the thematic and disciplinary spectrum: *Foucault and the political*, *Foucault and the Writing of History*, *Foucault and education*, *Disciplines and knowledge*, *Foucault and Feminism*, *Foucault and Literature*, *Foucault and the Law*, *Foucault and the Critique of Institutions*, *Foucault and the Games of Truth*, *Foucault and Social Dialogue*, *Foucault Management and Organization Theory*, *Foucault and Religion: Spiritual Corporality and Political Spirituality*, *Foucault and Latin America*, *Michel Foucault and Theology: The Politics of Religious Experience*, *Foucault, Gender and the Iranian Revolution*.
3. See Michael Senellart, "Course Context." In Michel Foucault. *Security, Territory, Population*. New York: Palgrave, 2007, 369-401. The word "governmentality" was known even before it figured as a central term in Foucault's work. Roland Barthes had already used the "barbarous but unavoidable neologism" (*Mythologies*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1989, 130) in the 1950s, to denote an ideological mechanism that presents the government as the origin of social relations. For Barthes, governmentality refers to "the Government presented by the national press as the Essence of efficacy" (130). Foucault takes up this "ugly word" (*Security, Territory, Population*, 115), but detaches it from the semiological context. Governmentality no longer refers to a mythological symbolic practice that depoliticizes social relations, but represents the "rationalization of governmental practice in the exercise of political sovereignty" (Michel Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*, New York: Palgrave, 2008, 2).
4. *Security, Territory, Population*, 363.
5. Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self" (A seminar with Michel Foucault at the University of Vermont, October 1982" In Eds. Luther Martin, Huck Gutman and Patrick H. Hutton, *Technologies of the Self: A seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
6. Michel Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth" *Michel Foucault, Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: New Press, 88.
7. Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1. An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. London: Penguin, 1980, 82.
8. Steven Lukes, ed. *Power*. London: Macmillan, 1974, 107, emphasis in original: "Die Macht eines oder mehrerer Handelnder A in Hinblick auf ein Ziel Z manifestiert sich dann, wenn A das Ziel Z durch das Einwilligen eines oder mehrerer Handelnder B erreicht." (author's re-translation from the German edition)
9. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 82.
10. Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures." *Power/Knowledge*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980, 95.
11. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 93.
12. On Foucault's account of the state see Robert Jessop, "From micro-powers to governmentality: Foucault's work on statehood, state formation, statecraft and state power." *Political Geography* 26 (2007), 34-40; Thomas Lemke. *Eine Kritik der politischen Vernunft—Foucaults Analyse der modernen Gouvernementalität*. Berlin/Hamburg: Argument, 2007.
13. Michel Foucault. *Society must be defended*. New York: Picador, 2003, 14-19.
14. See Pasquale Pasquino. "Political theory of war and peace: Foucault and the history of modern political theory." *Economy & Society* 22:1 (1993), 77-88; Barry Hindess. *Discourses of Power: from Hobbes to Foucault*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996; Lemke, *Eine Kritik der politischen Vernunft*, 110-125.
15. Foucault, "Two Lectures," 87.
16. Mitchell Dean. *Critical and Effective Histories*. New York: Routledge, 1994, 156.
17. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 354.
18. Foucault, *Society must be defended*, 4.
19. See Volker Sellin. "Regierung, Regime, Obrigkeit." *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*. Ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984, 361-421; Michel Senellart. *Les arts de gouverner. Du régime médiéval au concept de gouvernement*. Paris: Seuil, 1995.
20. Michel Foucault. "Governmentality." *The Foucault Effect*. Ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, 88.
21. Foucault, "Governmentality," 102.
22. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 184.
23. Michel Foucault. "The Subject and Power" *Power. Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. 3*. New York: The New Press, 332.
24. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 363.
25. Foucault, "The subject and power," 333; see also Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*.
26. Foucault, "Governmentality," 97.
27. Foucault, "Governmentality," 96-7
28. See Foucault, "Governmentality," 98.
29. See Foucault, *The Birth of Biopower*, and Colin Gordon. "Governmental rationality: an introduction" *The Foucault Effect*, 1-51.

FOUCAULT'S HYPOTHESIS

30. Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 63; Maria Bonnafous-Boucher. *Un libéralisme sans liberté. Du terme "libéralisme" dans la pensée de Michel Foucault*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001.
31. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 108.
32. See Mitchell Dean. "Liberal Government and Authoritarianism." *Economy and Society* 31 (2002), 37-61; Michael Dillon. "Governing through contingency: The security of biopolitical governance." *Political Geography* 26 (2007), 41-47.
33. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 353; see Gordon, "Governmental Rationality," 20.
34. Barry Allen. "Government in Foucault." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21:4 (1991), 421-440.
35. Thomas Keenan. "Foucault on Government." *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 1 (1982), 35-40.
36. Michel Foucault. *The Use of Pleasure*. New York: Pantheon, 1985, 6.
37. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 340-342.
38. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 340.
39. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 341, emphasis added.
40. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 341.
41. This tendency is quite clearly displayed in Foucault's work of the early 1970s, e.g. in the text *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*: "Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at the universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination." (*Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, 378).
42. Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth," 299.
43. Michel Foucault. "The Ethics of the Concern for the Self as a Practice of Freedom" *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: The New Press, 299.
44. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 343.
45. Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for the Self," 292.
46. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 347f.
47. Hindess, *Discourses of Power*; Paul Patton. "Foucault's Subject of Power." *The Later Foucault. Politics and Philosophy*. Ed. Jeremy Moss. London: Sage, 1998, 64-77; Maurizio Lazzarato. "Du biopouvoir à la biopolitique." *Multitudes* 1(2000), 45-57.
48. Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*; Michel Foucault. *The Care of the Self*. London: Penguin, 1990.
49. Michel Foucault, "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self" *Political Theory* 21:2 (1993), 203; Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History."
50. Foucault, "About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self," 203-204.
51. Charles Taylor. "Foucault on freedom and truth." *Political Theory* 12:2 (1984), 179.
52. Nancy Fraser. "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions." *Praxis International* 1:3 (1981), 286.
53. Fraser, "Foucault on Modern Power," 283; see also Jürgen Habermas. "Modernity versus Postmodernity." *New German Critique* 22, 3-14; Jürgen Habermas. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Tr. Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987.
54. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 342.
55. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 340.
56. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 340-341.
57. Patton, "Foucault's Subject of Power"; see also Michael Kelly, ed. *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*. Boston: MIT Press, 1994; Samantha Ashenden and David Owen. *Foucault contra Habermas. Recasting the Dialogue between Genealogy and Critical Theory*. London: Sage, 1999.
58. See Michel Foucault. "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress." *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, 256.
59. Foucault, "The Ethics of a Concern for Self," 283.
60. Foucault, "The Ethics of a Concern for Self," 298.
61. Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 325.
62. For an overview of the (early) reception in France see Sylvain Meyet. "Les trajectoires d'un texte: "La gouvernementalité" de Michel Foucault." *Travailler avec Foucault. Retours sur le politique*. Ed. Sylvain Meyet, Marie-Cécile Naves and Thomas Ribemont. PUF: Paris, 2005, 13-36.
63. See for example Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne and Nikolas Rose, eds. *Foucault and Political Reason. Liberalism, neo-liberalism and rationalities of government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996; Mitchell Dean and Barry Hindess, eds. *Governing Australia. Studies in Contemporary Rationalities of Government*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998; Ulrich Bröckling, Susanne Krasmann and Thomas Lemke, eds. *Gouvernementalität der Gegenwart. Studien zur Ökonomisierung des Sozialen*. Frankfurt: 2000.
64. For a very useful discussion of the merits and the shortcomings of the governmentality literature see Jacques Donzelot and Jacques/Gordon Colin. "Comment gouverner les sociétés libérales? L'effet Foucault dans le monde anglo-saxon." *Esprit* 11 (2005), 82-95; see also Nikolas Rose, Pat O'Malley and Mariana Valverde. "Governmentality." *Annual Review of Law and*

- Social Science* 2 (2006), 83-104; Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose. *Governing the Present. Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1-25.
65. Michel Foucault. "What is Enlightenment?" *Power: Essential Works, vol.3*. New York: The New Press, 1997, 319.

CHRONOPHILIACS ANONYMOUS

Justin Clemens

Nathan Widder's new book is impressive in many ways, from its intriguing title on. Indeed, this title, *Reflections on Time and Politics*, turns out to problematize the very terms it deploys. The etymology of 'reflection' is ultimately Latinate: a bending or turning-back. The word at once signifies a throwing-back of light or heat from a surface; an image; the action of bending back; a reference or relation; a thought expressed; the faculty of mind by which mind deals with itself. Think, too, of the genre of 'Reflections': a series of famous and influential writings, from Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, up to the choice of the title for collections by Walter Benjamin and others. 'Reflections' then are constitutive re-foldings of energy that produce semblances of identity that they at once transform.

In its very structure, a series of eighteen 'reflections,' Widder's book essays, as I have said, to exemplify its own theme, playing on all these significations in a resolutely post-Deleuzian way, exploring what rebounds affectively from surfaces (and not from depths); the primordially of simulacra; the vicissitudes of the discontinuous; the differentiators of the heterogeneous; the traumatisms of time. Widder, moreover, engages in these reflections with a handful of proper names: above all, Aristotle, Bergson, Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, and, in minor supporting roles, Saussure, Bachelard, Freud and Lacan. I will focus critically on several of Widder's points, in order to bring out something I think he gestures towards without ever expressly affirming: the first is a general remark on the relation between time and space in Widder's project; the second bears on his interpretation of Jacques Lacan; the third on the topic of politics in its relation to ethics.

Widder opens by declaring: 'Time's dynamics, embedding the past and memory in the present in such a way as to propel time into an always open and indeterminate future, are being deployed against spatial models of representation to develop further non-representational concepts of difference, which had often been elaborated primarily in spatial terms' (1). You get the point as a general mission statement — it's just a program that's already been underway for two centuries or so. What else was German Idealist philosophy, à la Schelling and Hegel? Didn't Heidegger write a book called *Being and Time*? As Michel Foucault expresses the situation, in an explicitly politico-institutional frame:

At the moment when a considered politics of spaces was starting to develop, at the end of the eighteenth century, the new achievements in theoretical and experimental physics dislodged philosophy from its ancient right to speak of the world, the cosmos, finite or infinite space. This double investment of space by political technology and scientific practice reduced philosophy to the field of a problematic of time. Since Kant, what is to be thought by the philosopher is time. Hegel, Bergson, Heidegger. Along with this goes a correlative devaluation of space, which stands on the side of understanding, the analytical, the conceptual, the dead, the fixed, the inert.¹

One might therefore respond to Widder that, if his project remains in a generally Romantic philosophical lineage, it at once suggests and evades an antithetical shadow project, viz., one which would ask as to the *spacing* of time and difference, and attempt to construct a concept of time that doesn't succumb to residual sociological pressures, on the one hand, or to the priority of dynamics, on the other. Foucault's remark certainly doesn't compromise the validity of Widder's project to reflect upon the contemporary question of philosophy's relationship to politics and time, not at all. But it does suggest that the time of philosophy, its preposterous anachrony, is itself often a disavowed element of its own space-of-placement or *splace* (to invoke a term of Alain Badiou's).² Philosophy's anachrony is often due to its re-collection of a speculative genealogy for itself, one which scrambles elements of the past and present in ways that remain inaccessible to its own thinking of chronology qua disavowed self-spacing.

I present this as a too-general, unsatisfactorily specified remark in order to proceed to a much more specific *différend*: the non-relation between Deleuze and Lacan. Widder himself is among the best I have read at characterising this non-relation, which he does with real insight, sensitivity, and a surprising lack of partisan blindness. Against Widder, however, I will present my own account of the non-relation in detail, in order to conclude with a kind of evaluation of his insights. I maintain that: 1) Deleuze is more Lacanian than most Lacanians; 2) his supposed critique of Lacan doesn't cut where he, Deleuze, seems to think it does (e.g., in his repudiating of 'lack,' 'repression,' 'law,' or in his change of vocabulary to 'affirmation,' 'deterritorialization,' 'plane of consistency,' etc.); 3) nonetheless, precisely *because* of this mistaken self-reflection, Deleuze does push Lacan further at a particular point, by finally enabling the full and absolute separation of ethics from politics; 4) what Deleuze then constructs is a philosophy of a pure ethics without politics; 5) the 'cost' of this brilliant development is the possible reintroduction of a covert presupposition of totality (albeit completely transformed) into the thought of immanence itself.

Crucially, when you're dealing with Jacques Lacan, you're not dealing with just any philosopher. Actually, you're not dealing with a philosopher at all, and for a number of reasons. Above all, Lacan insists throughout his life that psychoanalysis is a clinical practice. It is certainly not philosophy. He even later formalises his difference from philosophy by insisting on his lineage with a post-dadaist 'antiphilosophy.'³ This immediately has several consequences. One has to take into account that psychoanalysis is a singular *practice*, and not a doctrine nor a set of propositions. Psychoanalysis certainly does not think in the same way, nor about the same things as philosophy. If psychoanalysis can sometimes seem to draw on philosophical concepts and arguments, this is, variously, as a kind of resource: a resource of auto-differentiation, a resource of stimulation, and, finally, as a simulated simulation. Psychoanalysis is an ethical practice of 'well-speaking' (not of 'well-being' or of whole-thinking). It is in fact localised as a practice by its attentiveness to the singular utterances of analysands, and in its deployment of two other 'disciplines,' modern science and literature. None of these are philosophical. Modern ('Galilean') science in fact constitutes a rupture with philosophical conceptuality, above all in its drive to formalise the universe in mathematical script and in the construction of experimental spaces. Literature, too, constitutes a rupture with philosophical conceptuality, and has been immemorially (as is testified by Plato's famous expulsion of the poets). Psychoanalysis is genuinely an antiphilosophy in that it injects literature into science (see Freud's own remarks in *Studies in Hysteria*) in its attempt to capture something otherwise irretrievable and incomprehensible about the utterances of its patients. There is therefore something *a priori* suspicious about any attempt to treat psychoanalysis and its writings as if they could be submitted to philosophical investigation.

CHRONOPHILIACS ANONYMOUS

Yet Lacan's own work, from the 1930s to the 1970s, clearly functioned as a kind of honey-trap for the very greatest philosophers of his time. From Alexandre Kojève (with whom he had planned to write an article in the mid-1930s on the differences between Hegelian and Freudian theories of desire), through Jean Wahl, Jean Hyppolite, Paul Ricoeur, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and of course Gilles Deleuze (etc. etc.), French thought of the twentieth century is irremediably marked by psychoanalysis, and Lacanian psychoanalysis at that. You'd perhaps be surprised by just how many of the above-named luminaries dropped by Lacan's Seminar at one point or another. To pick up on a phrase of Derrida's, however, this attraction has also been a kind of 'organizing allergy' — every one of the aforementioned philosophers (rightly) recognised that psychoanalysis offers the most extreme challenges to thought. It's even tempting to suggest that, just like Claude Lévi-Strauss and Merleau-Ponty — who'd spend Sunday afternoons at Lacan's talking about art — they just don't get it. On Lévi-Strauss' own admission, the reason they spoke about art was because Clod and Moz just didn't get what Lacan was on about whenever he veered off topic.

But bad-faith, miscomprehension and allergy have hardly stopped the plunder. A number of contemporary *bien pensant* philosophical issues are still directly indebted to Lacan. For our purposes here, let's take just four issues that Lacan introduces, on the basis of his own idiosyncratic encounters with post-Saussurean linguistics, and which he remorselessly re-interrogates throughout his work:

1. the signifier as constitutive lack
2. the inconsistency of any thought of the whole
3. the subject as empty, split, unreflective support
4. the rift between statement and utterance

1. If Lacan relies heavily on post-Saussurean linguistic science — and let's not dismiss the claims of 'science' here too rapidly — he immediately remarks something about structural linguistics that is at once very simple, yet has extraordinary consequences. For Lacan, the Saussurean conception of the sign has a peculiarity that Saussure himself falsifies with his weird little diagrams. It is this: one never encounters a signified anywhere. Ever. One only ever encounters signifiers. A simple, stupid point. If each language, as an ensemble of diacritically-defined signs, must cut up the world differently, then one cannot think of the signifieds of that language as having any direct lock onto the real. On the contrary, human language is distinguished from other sign-systems by precisely being, in Hegel's terms, 'the murder of the thing.' Not only is there no possible grounding referent outside of language, nor any transcendental signified, but language itself creates the things of the world for a language-user. Yet no signified can ever be met with directly, anywhere; one has to go through signifiers. Yet there is no such thing as a pure signifier in itself, without at least the presumption of a signified. That 'signified' can only be encountered as lacking from the signifier that nominally conveys it; moreover, every signifier leads only and always to others. At one stage, Lacan will even translate this double-differentiation in terms drawn from classical rhetoric: metaphor (the signified does not exist except in tropes) and metonymy (the signifier does not exist except by referring to others). Language is constituted by inflections, deflections, defections, misdirections — and reflections.

Language can only function because it is internally 'barred,' lacking from itself, yet always and everywhere presuming what it misses. The sense of a signified *insists*. This bar — to which we will give another sense in a moment — is a cut *within* the word. For Lacan, this gives a precise sense to the 'castration complex' of Freud: any language user is literally castrated by words that are themselves cut cuts. What, for psychoanalysis, can be the signifier of this irreparable lack? Nothing other than the 'phallus.' The phallus is the signifier of the constitutive lack that founds signifying, signification. The phallus is the signifier of lack that is itself lacking from its place — i.e., there is no sign in language that exemplifies it. It is thus a simulacrum, in the strict sense, undoing any relation between original and copy. It is also always only 'veiled,' because no signifier in language can be that phallus. If you want to say something to render your average Deleuzian antsy about this: the phallus is the differentiator.

This is a crucial point that Widder makes: ‘Deleuzian repetition here converges with Lacanian repetition’ (87). His exegesis proceeds:

The Oedipal story...refers not to a trauma occurring in time but to the traumatic organization of time itself. In this revised story, the Oedipal trauma may or may not be established by a real childhood event. Its effect, in defining sexual difference in heterosexual and genital terms and introducing the castration threat, is at once to separate and join together two orders, one infantile and pregenital and the other adult and genital, each having divergent body images and both real and imaginary objects of desire, memories of the past, and expectations of the future. The expression of this event is the phallus, the signifier of the mysterious paternal Law, which seems to give sense and cohesion to the psyche but is never entirely incomprehensible. Because it constitutes the separate series through a radical break, it cannot be localized within either series, appearing at the margins at each. But the phallus does not establish an identity between the series, because it has no identity itself (94).

This cannot be bettered as a description. One could add that: where Deleuze seems to dismiss or correct psychoanalysis, he often simply rephrases and/or renominates what Lacan has already said. There is thus unquestionably what Harold Bloom would call ‘an anxiety of influence’ at work, legible in the surface distortions of Deleuze’s claims on this and related points. Even the ideal of the affirmation of events in a non-*ressentimental* sense brings us very close to Lacan’s theory of the psychoanalytical ‘act,’ which effects a radical operation of depersonalisation (cf. Lacan’s interpretation of *Antigone* and the concomitant injunction ‘don’t give way on your desire’).

This dangerous proximity is presumably one reason why Deleuze is also shifty about his relation to structuralism. Widder is correct to note, against Deleuze, that Saussure doesn’t only define the sign negatively, but also as a positivity: ‘An unlikely source of elucidation here is Saussure’s linguistic theory — unlikely because Saussure is often thought to hold that language contains only negative differences. Deleuze too holds this reading. But Saussure’s thinking is more subtle’ (111). At the same time, what ‘is missing from Saussure’s analysis is the sort of nonhistorical becoming found in Hegel and Deleuze...’ (113). You can see the excellence of Widder’s procedures in these little extracts: a serious encounter with and attempt to elucidate concepts beyond the received images of partisanship, all the while sustaining the focus on the problematics of time throughout.

2. Yet Widder is probably incorrect to blame Lacan for undue Platonizing; or, rather, Widder doesn’t quite get the peculiar ways in which Lacan sets Plato against Plato himself. Widder writes ‘In its structural function, Lacan’s unconscious desire parallels Plato’s on almost every major point’ (56). This is broadly accurate: indeed, Freud himself in *Group Psychology* emphasizes that the love of analysis and love as conceived by ‘the divine Plato,’ are the same in their ‘origin, function, and relation.’ Yet it sort of isn’t too: for Widder to remark that ‘the rather obvious residues of transcendence in Bergson and Lacan lie in the former’s appeals to mysticism and the latter’s use of language of negative theology with respect to the phallus and the feminine’ (61) is a misreading of Lacan’s own peculiar form of immanence (in this, Lacan is followed by Badiou, who has dedicated a number of important essays to variants of this issue in Lacan, notably in *Conditions*).⁴ When Widder remarks that Lacan never really explains this recourse to transcendence, my objections are: i) Lacan doesn’t have to explain this because he is not a philosopher, and, to the extent that such an explanation is demanded, it misses part of the point of his program; ii) such a thought is nonetheless already there, but it has to be *reconstructed* because Lacan’s *not* doing philosophy.

What is the single biggest problem with the attempt to think ‘pure immanence’? It is the difficulty — the impossibility? — of thinking pure immanence without simultaneously reintroducing totality. This is why, despite his very strong identification with Spinoza, Lacan cannot ultimately affirm ‘Deus sive Natura.’ In the end, God and Nature are themselves struck by inconsistency; the whole is an imaginary phenomenon; what we confront when we try to think language is its constitutive ‘not-all.’ Language introduces an irreparable failure

CHRONOPHILIACS ANONYMOUS

into 'the totality of things,' no matter how one tries to conceptualise the latter. Language, to be 'language' at all, has to split from the world it allegedly signifies, as well as to split internally from itself in order to function. Language 'represses,' sure, but it 'represses' literally *nothing*. The signifier for this operation, which cannot itself, strictly speaking, be said to exist, is the phallus. Rather, with Lacan, the simulacrum rises to the surface, becomes depthless mirror, affirmative transformation...but also reterritorialization 'at the same time' (though this 'at the same time' is precisely what's put into question by Lacan, as it is by Deleuze and the army of contemporaneous French philosophers).

This non-existence drives as it divides. The phallus is the name Lacan gives to that which operates a disjunctive synthesis within and between the orders. It is necessarily extra-ontological, and only revealed in slips, faults, inconsistencies, etc. — i.e., in nonsense and paradox: 'What are the characteristics of this paradoxical entity? It circulates without end in both series and, for this reason, assures their communication. It is a two-sided entity, equally present in the signifying and the signified series. It is the mirror. Thus, it is at once word and thing, name and object, sense and denotatum, expression and designation, etc.'⁵ Ought this sound familiar to Deleuzians? Deleuze certainly alters the terms and mode and references of Lacan, but all this is done on a strictly Lacanian basis. Where Deleuze fails from a Lacanian point of view (and, more recently, from a Badiouan point of view, which explicitly picks up the Lacanian critique), is that, in his drive to think pure immanence, he covertly reintroduces a totality of being. Let's put this another way: 'equivocity' (Lacan) versus 'univocity' (Deleuze). Equivocity is the cost of trying to think immanence without totality; univocity is the cost of trying to think immanence without negativity.⁶ In any case, it is not transcendence that is the problem with Lacan; rather Lacan offers a new way of thinking about how a sense of transcendence is irreducible for humankind, as he points towards the real problems that therefore have to be confronted when attempting to construct a viable theory of immanence. It is my contention that Deleuze himself knew this, and that's exactly what he then undertook to provide — albeit with unavoidable distortions.

3. Let's pick up on Lacan's sustenance of the subject. The subject for Lacan can only be the subject of the signifier. What does this mean? Lacan's revised version of the Saussurean diagram is: S/s. What's the subject? Nothing but this /, an empty, cleft support that has to be there for any utterance to function as an utterance. The / cannot seize itself, cannot think itself, except by being there where it does not think, and not being there where it does. The 'subject,' in other words, has no need to be biologically human; it is merely whatever supports a signifying chain. For something to leap the bar, it must be *at once* the repetition of the phallic inexistence *and* the creation of a new signifier. Metaphor, poetic creation, must be the repetition of what does not exist (the phallus) and the invention of a difference (new signifiers).⁷ Whether Stoic or Cynic, Cyrenaic or Carollian, you don't leap into 'affirmation' just like that. Repetition as difference, difference as repetition, 'repression' and 'return,' 'law' and 'desire,' 'lack' and 'creation'....change the names if you prefer, perhaps to give yourself a nice warm feeling of being productive and affirmative (because you don't like the sense of the words 'negation' or 'lack?'), but, as Lacan might say, just because your friend's shoved his head in the sand doesn't mean you're invisible too. The desperate attempt to desexualize desire patent in these renominations — and which is only exacerbated by later Deleuzo-Guattarian developments — is itself an attempt to re-veil (and revile) one of the great antiphilosophical critiques. Under this description, metaphysics really is a ludicrous attempt at an apotropaic seduction of the Other.

4. More on the /. Despite Lacan's long-standing interest in Hegel's thought, he is not and cannot be a dialectician in the strictly Hegelian sense. There is no developmental immanence, nor contradiction, nor sublation possible in regards to language, and the logic of the signifier is *not* subject to the science of logic. What Lacan accordingly emphasizes in his own doctrine are various forms of non-dialectical differences: the differential definition of signs, the difference within each, the *gap* in any instance of language-use between what it says and that it is said, etc. Lacan is not really susceptible to Widder's critiques at this point, except at the cost of serious misrepresentation.⁸

If we take the evidence of this ‘non-relation’ between Deleuze and Lacan seriously, it is possible not only to see how thoroughly the youngish Deleuze (particularly the one of *Difference and Repetition* and *Logic of Sense*) remains Lacanian, but how he also uses Lacan to try to push philosophy past its capture by the linguistic turn. In a specifically psychoanalytic sense, it is even possible to assert that Deleuze is truly in love with Lacan. What does this mean? I am claiming that Deleuze draws from Lacan a series of topics, methods and propositions whose provenance he then assigns elsewhere (to the Stoics, the Scholastics, to Spinoza, etc.), dissimulating the traces of his own operations. Yet love *qua* transference is nothing other than the violent, recurrent misassignment of predicates, which at once knows and does not know what it is doing.⁹ Along similar lines, Deleuzians themselves are usually unbelievably unfaithful to their own professed master, insofar as they utterly refuse to examine the singularity of this non-relation. To track Deleuze’s own labyrinthine references — for example, ‘Deleuze and esotericism,’ ‘Deleuze and Maimon’ — is a necessary and desirable task. But it remains purblind unless one also tries to discern the adversarial, nameless force that gives Deleuze the most powerful kick up the arse, the one that forces Deleuze to re-think philosophy and, in doing so, to become ‘Deleuze.’ This nameless force bears, as I am arguing here, the hunter’s mask of a disavowed proper name: Lacan.

My point is not simply corrective, in the sense of rectifying misapprehensions about influence, and supplying a more adequate account of personal and conceptual issues. Rather, the fundamental reason that I have been harping on this non-relation is that it enables us to bring out Deleuze’s real and radical originality vis-à-vis the philosophical tradition. It’s time to say it bluntly: Deleuze not only has no theory of ‘the political’ or of ‘politics,’ but the entire animus of his work is directed against the possibility of any viable conception of politics in the name of an unprecedented, even absolute ethics. The massive dissension about the signifier ‘politics’ in the Deleuzian literature is a symptom of the commentaries’ giving way on the extremity of Deleuze’s desire.¹⁰ To my mind, Deleuze is perhaps one of the first thinkers of a truly *pure* and truly *contemporary* ethics.

If Widder’s book is one of the strongest commentaries I have read on these issues — and, indeed, on several other issues, notably the location of cracks in the thought of Aristotle and Bergson — he still doesn’t quite go far enough. Again, the symptom here is the retaining of the word ‘politics.’ Why call it politics at all? — it’s not true etymologically, pragmatically or conceptually. ‘The Polis’ — Deleuze not only has nothing like a city of men in his thinking, but his thought remains one of the greatest contemporary assaults on philosophical anthropology. Moreover, the term ‘micropolitics’ is essentially a misnomer if one accepts the full import of the Deleuzian intervention. There are becomings and PoC constructions, rather than human revolutions or utopian projections.

So when Widder writes of ‘politics and ethics’ in a single line, one has to say that only someone already entirely on the side of ‘ethics’ would be able to write this so easily, with so little sense of stress. (This is not a criticism of Widder’s position, but an acknowledgement of the strong decision he has clearly made; if a criticism at all, it is regarding Widder’s reluctance to assert his position as clearly as he might.)¹¹ Yet, in speaking of the necessity of the overcoming of identities, Widder is more accurate: ‘This overcoming is an ethical and political task. Or, perhaps better, it is an ethical task that flows into politics. It is a crucial task insofar as political and social life continues to privilege fixed markers and identities that are no more than surface projections’ (11). Again, Deleuze offers us a new ethics, one that has nothing to do with ‘ethics committees’ or any existing values, that is extra- and trans-political, and whose absolute incompatibility with ‘politics’ must be declared as such. Widder’s book is one of the few that can help us proceed along this great if treacherous line. It suggests, despite itself, that to keep saying ‘politics!’ is already to be so far downstream the Deleuzian source as to miss Deleuze’s import and implications almost entirely (of course, sometimes Deleuze himself misses his own import).

CHRONOPHILIACS ANONYMOUS

My concluding theses are these:

- 1) there is no possible Deleuzian politics;
- 2) there is a Deleuzian ethics;
- 3) any possible Deleuzian ethics must be an ethics of (self) problematizations;
- 4) such problematizations must be as much 'situational' as they are 'aionic.'

To date, we have barely approached the borderlands of such a milieu.

Justin Clemens is a Lecturer in English at the University of Melbourne, and has published extensively on psychoanalysis, contemporary European philosophy, and Australian art and literature. Recent books include *Villain* (Hunter Publishing 2009) and *Black River* (re.press 2007), illustrated by Helen Johnson. He is also a co-editor of *The Work of Giorgio Agamben* with Alex Murray and Nick Heron, and of the forthcoming *Alain Badiou: Key Concepts* (Acumen 2010) with A.J. Bartlett.

NOTES

1. M. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 149-150.
2. See A. Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, trans. B. Bosteels (London: Continuum, 2009).
3. On which point, see the various interventions of A. Badiou, *Conditions*, trans. S. Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2009); J.-C. Milner, *L'Oeuvre Claire* (Paris: Seuil, 1995); C. Soler, 'Lacan en antiphilosophie,' *Filosovski Vestnik*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2 (2006), pp. 121-144; J. Clemens, 'To Rupture the Matheme with a Poem: A Remark on Psychoanalysis as Anti-Philosophy,' in J. Freddi et al. (eds), *Trauma, History, Philosophy* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007), pp. 308-312 and 'Love as Ontology: Psychoanalysis against Philosophy' in C. Kerslake and R. Brassier (eds), *Origins and Ends of the Mind* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2007), pp. 185-201; and B. Bosteels, 'Radical Antiphilosophy' in *Filosovski Vestnik*, Vol. XXIX, No. 2 (2008), pp. 155-187.
4. See A. Badiou, *Conditions*, trans. S. Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2009), esp. pp. 199-247.
5. Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. M. Lester with C. Stivale, ed. C.V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 40.
6. In his response to an early draft of this piece, Jon Roffe wrote: 'One thought on an interesting turn of phrase: that equivocity and univocity are "costs." To my mind, the cost of thinking univocity is, for Deleuze, the regrettable theme of pure immanence, and this latter is the figure of totality, rather than univocity in itself. In Lacan, what I am struck by from my very peripheral position, is that it's a very peculiar equivocity, since the division in being locates "being" on one side (as the signifier-effect of language) and literally nothing on the other. This is admirable and striking. Deleuze is, dare I say it, the more conservative, because the covert totality reintroduced by the theme of pure immanence — from my point of view at least — does indeed draw close to a crude vitalism in the way that Badiou argues he does.' I believe Roffe is correct in this, but I have been unable myself to respond adequately to his remark in the present article.
7. See R. Grigg's remarks on this point in *Lacan, Language and Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY, 2008).
8. Moreover, it's necessary to underline that Lacan himself constantly shifted his own doctrines under both internal and external pressures, and the account that I am giving here is a still-too-general 'average version of Lacan' that avoids especially his later work.
9. For more on this point, see my 'Love as Ontology,' op cit.
10. See for example, the various incommensurable positions proposed by Claire Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002), Reidar Due, *Deleuze* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), Todd May, "The Politics of Life in the Thought of Gilles Deleuze," *SubStance*. 20: 3 (1991): 24/33, Philippe Mengue, *Deleuze et la question de la démocratie* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political: Thinking the Political* (London: Routledge, 2000), etc. To some extent, I just don't understand why, when, in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari speak of philosophy, science and art — and flagrantly ignore politics/the political as a possible plane of consistency — this extraordinary 'omission' doesn't seem to be taken seriously.
11. Perhaps partially a function of his occupation as a Lecturer in Political Theory in a Department of Politics and International Relations, perhaps partially a function of philosophical nostalgia?

THINKING TIME BEYOND PHILOSOPHY: ON WIDDER'S NONSENSE OF TIME

John Mullarkey

Richard Rorty once described Henri Bergson's process philosophy as little more than just 'whooshing about a bit'.¹ In one respect, he might have had a point, in as much as this 'whooshing' could be seen as an embodied, affective understanding of a process that thwarts representation. Indeed, process may well make more sense when it is enacted as an immanent movement rather than when it is seen as a representation of an object. Yet the problem of time for philosophy has, nonetheless, primarily been precisely in terms of a *representation of time* (rather than its embodiment). According to Parmenides, for example, only an immutable, immobile Being could explain the *illusion* (or false representation) of becoming. This need to find the condition for time, often understood as unsupported change (or 'substance'), can also be seen, however, as a problem more for philosophy than for time itself. It may be that the anathema of *unconditioned* becoming says more about philosophers' knowledge, about the conditions of epistemic respectability, than anything else. In Book XI of his *Confessions*, St Augustine famously wrote: 'What then is time? If no one asks me, I know, if I want to explain it to someone who asks, I do not know'.² From this one might ask whether the problem of time really is only a problem of knowledge, specifically, the philosopher's model of knowledge as *eternal sense*. In Nathan Widder's work, by contrast, I believe that one can see an instance of a non-sense of time that actually subverts such a need for philosophical rationality (though it may not be an instance that Widder himself would recognise in these terms).

Certainly, a whole line of modern philosophers have argued that the only way to understand time is through some timeless element. In particular, there are those philosophers of time called 'detensers' in virtue of the fact that they deny that the processual tenses of pastness, presentness and futurity are real aspects of time.³ Despite appearances to the contrary (for many take him to be a process philosopher in the mould of Bergson), parts of Gilles Deleuze's writings reveal him to be one such detenser. In his book *Difference and Repetition*, for example, Deleuze talks of the paradox of the present as the need for a time in which to constitute or synthesise time (as the succession of past, present, and future): '*there must be another time in which the first synthesis of time can occur*'.⁴ This time, moreover, cannot be time understood as succession, as change or tensed, for this would just bring us back to the question of how and where such a time was constituted, how did it flow. Rather, it is empty, the time of

eternity—what Deleuze calls the Virtual or *Aion*.

And here we come back to knowledge and the needs of philosophy again. For Deleuze, it is a *principle of sufficient reason* that demands that there be an ‘implicit’ or virtual domain to make the present pass: for there to be change, there must be a *principle of change*.⁵ But what if the whole question of ‘support’ was wrong? What if the ‘support’ for time was always *itself*, always its own *immanent enactment*? So, faced by the paradox of representing time as change (which we might call ‘Augustine’s problem’), philosophers can either posit some timeless ground that will facilitate its comprehension, its sense, or they can forward a new idea of what it means to comprehend time, a new logic of time. It is the latter that I can see at work (implicitly if not explicitly) in Nathan Widder’s recent book, *Reflections on Time and Politics*. Yet this counter-reading will involve a certain revision of what we mean by philosophical knowledge, one that approximates a logic of non-understanding, of not knowing, of not making *sense* of time. Moreover, in Widder’s case, it will be a *Deleuzian* logic that, ironically, counters even Deleuze’s own enterprise of founding time on *Aion*. Indeed, Widder uses Deleuze’s logic of non-sense in such a way that it goes against his need for a sufficient rationality of time. Widder proposes a Deleuzian ‘ontology of sense’ that involves nonsense. This idea of nonsense, he argues, should not be seen as dialectical contradiction, for that would be too abstract, and not *ontological* enough. Something beyond Hegelian contradiction is required: a ‘Sense’ of non-sense that is understood through a *differential* logic.⁶ Such ‘Sense’ goes beyond subject and predicate logic, being a sense that is ‘also nonsense’, for its identity is one of self-differentiation (the becoming that comes with paradoxes of self-reference, as in Russell’s famous Barber paradox). In this respect, a paradox brings *too much sense*, being a nonsense that keeps *making sense* only by creating new types of sense (just as Russell’s paradox was solved through a theory of types of meaning). As such, the Sense and nonsense of time are not opposites, but rather both ‘oppose the absence of sense’.

So far, so Deleuzian, one might say. Yet Widder’s Deleuzian non-sense can actually be seen to run counter to Deleuze’s principle of sufficient reason as regards time, for what is *Aion* or the Virtual if not an attempt to make time rational, intelligible (albeit not through substance or structure, but through philosophical reason itself)? A non-sense of time leads to time being self-sufficient *in its temporality* (rather than atemporality): we understand it not by thinking it, but by enacting it, by *actually* ‘whooshing about a bit’ (and everything else that this condescending phrase might indicate). The question that remains for Widder, however, is whether he remains too much of a Deleuzian (and so a philosopher) to see how his Deleuzian logic of nonsense thwarts the Deleuzian logic of a need for a (Virtual) support of time.

John Mullarkey is Lecturer at the University of Dundee, and the author of, most recently, *Post-Continental Philosophy*. He has published widely on Bergson, and is a collaborating editor of *Annales bergsoniennes*.

THINKING TIME BEYOND PHILOSOPHY

NOTES

1. Rorty, Richard, 'Comments on Dennett', in *Synthese*, Vol. LIII (1982), 182.
2. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick, Oxford Paperbacks, 2008, book XI.
3. Smith, Quentin 'The Infinite Regress of Temporal Attributions', in L. Nathan Oaklander and Quentin Smith, eds., *The New Theory of Time*, Yale University Press, 1994, p.180.
4. Deleuze, Gilles, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, Athlone Press, 1994, p.79.
5. See Deleuze, Gilles, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley, Athlone Press, 1993, 41-3.
6. See *Reflections on Time and Politics*, p.34, p.36. Later in the same work, we read: contra Hegel's abstractionism ('the real is the rational, and the rational the real'): 'sense must present itself in the movement from the empirical to the conceptual and back'. (p.37)

TIME OUT OF JOINT: BETWEEN PHENOMENOLOGY AND POST-STRUCTURALISM

Jack Reynolds

It seems to me that a philosophical concern with the inter-relation of time *and* politics immediately discloses that one is not an analytic philosopher. To put it less slavishly (that is, less in terms of an identity bestowed from outside), a positive concern with the conjunction of such themes is one of the core criteria for being a “continental” philosopher.¹ Such generalisations need not entail that the various different forms of continental philosophy are effaced or denied, however, since how to understand this conjunction is variously construed. As Elizabeth Grosz suggests:

Each of the three temporal modalities (past, present, and future in all of their conjugative complexities) entail presumptions regarding the others that are often ill- or unconsidered: how we understand the past, and our links to it through reminiscence, melancholy or nostalgia, prefigures and contains corresponding concepts about the present and the future; the substantiality or privilege we pragmatically grant to the present has implications for the retrievability of the past and the predictability of the future; and, depending on whether we grant to the future the supervening power to rewrite the present and past, so too we must problematise the notions of identity, origin, and development.²

And certainly there is no consensus in continental philosophy as to the appropriate answer to these and other issues, nor to the relationship between what David Hoy calls the times of our lives and the time of the universe (the ‘objective’ time of physicists)³. This enduring interest in the relationship between time and politics is one important marker among others that helps to provide a loose philosophical identity to that motley crew that is sometimes sloppily called ‘continental’, although it arguably also has some kind of diagnostic privilege over other family resemblance features. This is because the endorsement (and rejection) of various different philosophical methods is partly bound up with their success (and failure) in illuminating the relationship between time and politics. Consider the following ‘methods’: dialectics, transcendental reasoning post-Kant, genealogy, hermeneutical and psychoanalytic techniques, Heidegger’s destructive retrieve (and Derridean deconstruction),

TIME OUT OF JOINT

the Frankfurt School style critique of modernity, as well as the general wariness of aligning philosophical method with either common-sense or a deferential relationship to the findings of the sciences, indexed to the present, etc. (at least one of the last two characterises a central aspect of the meta-philosophy of most analytic philosophers). From Husserl's genetic phenomenology, to Bergson's *durée*, to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, time and method have been central to continental philosophy at least since the start of the twentieth century and, to a lesser extent, since the nineteenth century (think of Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx).

In this essay, however, I would like to respond to Nathan Widder's impressive book, *Reflections on Time and Politics*, by highlighting what I take to be one of the major internal differences within continental philosophy that Widder's book helps to make manifest: that between phenomenology and post-structuralism (which includes the renewed interest in, and use of, Nietzsche and Bergson's work by poststructuralist philosophers). While many deplore the use of umbrella terms like these, I hope to be able to proffer some useful generalisations about each in regard to their philosophies of time. Although it is implicitly present in Husserl's work, an association between time and normativity is explicitly emphasised in Bergson's and Heidegger's work. Heidegger's *Being and Time*, for example, draws a strong association between so-called "vulgar" time and inauthenticity. Moreover, for authentic Dasein time passes in a coherent and connected manner—that is, at least once *Angst* has jolted Dasein from its immersion in worldly time, clock time, and vulgar time. Without considering Heidegger much at all, Widder's book takes what I characterise as a poststructuralist position concerning the intersection between time and normativity. For him (and the various philosophers that he draws on, particularly Deleuze and Bergson) phenomenological accounts of time are thought to be problematic for still seeing time as, if not the measure of change, then at least as irremediably bound up with movement. And certainly most of the criticisms that Deleuze, Derrida and other poststructuralist philosophers pose regarding phenomenology revolve around issues to do with time and transcendental philosophy. One of their main objections is that phenomenological descriptions of the experience of time focus, predominantly if not exclusively, on the manner in which time gathers, or conjoins rather than disjoins (we have already seen that this appears to be true of authentic Dasein). More generally, the worry is that "lived time" is described by phenomenologists as a neat and unified continuum, but for the post-structuralists this kind of experience is an illusion of sorts. On their view, the unity of experience revealed in the 'living present' covers over something more fundamental about time—if I can put it somewhat dramatically as the theorists involved typically do, that is time as wounding (see Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*), time as out of joint in the manner of Hamlet's memorable refrain (see Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* and Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*), time as "nick" as Grosz puts it in *The Nick of Time*, or time as ungrounding as Widder phrases a related point, as casting asunder the identity of subjects and bodies. To put the point another way, it seems to me that the poststructuralist philosophers want to quite radically *disassociate* time from movement, and to allege that phenomenological conceptions of time too readily *associate* time and movement. What is at stake in this charge, and why would it matter if it is true? The poststructuralists (including Widder) allege that any association of time and movement threatens to be unable to explain the advent of genuine difference and novelty, and is, at best, only an indirect way of understanding time.

Of course, one wouldn't want to overstate the differences between phenomenologists and poststructuralists. We might note that in certain of his writings Derrida is not clearly on what I am characterising as the poststructuralist side of the equation at all. After all, whether there can be any more direct understanding of time than the vulgar common sense one is the subject of Derrida's great early essay on Heidegger, "Ousia and Gramme: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*" (in *Margins of Philosophy*). In addition, poststructuralist understandings of time crucially depend upon the work of phenomenologists like Heidegger and Levinas as much as they depend on Nietzsche and Bergson, and they all share in common the concern to avoiding reducing philosophy of time to clarifications regarding the physicist's understanding of it (Einstein and four-dimensionalism⁴) and are equally reluctant to concede that the physicists give us the truth about time *tout court*. As Hoy suggests in his recent book *The Time of our Lives*, Heidegger maintains that starting from objective time (the time of the universe) the philosopher will not be able to adequately explain the time of our lives, but starting from the temporality of our lives we can explain objective time⁵. To put Heidegger's point simply, then, we cannot understand objective time without existential time, and such a move is not dissimilar to that made by Bergson and various more

recent thinkers, whatever the concrete differences in their actual accounts of temporality. In different ways, both phenomenologists and poststructuralists also seek to avoid a conception of time that we might associate with common sense and the natural attitude. This view understands time as the chronological succession of an infinite series of ‘nows’, or instants, stretching from the future to the past. Why the future first, and the past second? Well, if a priority is given to this present instant, then we know that there are various things that have not yet happened (a *not-yet-now*), which we will come closer to (note the spatial metaphor), which will then happen, and which will then be in the past (a *no-longer-now*). This conception of time involves a series of moments, and a linear trajectory, which clock-time regulates and subjects to measurement. The arguments against such views tend to rely on various forms of transcendental reasoning, which attempt to show either that linear-clock time—or theoretical ideas of time that are dependent on a clock-like series of moments—is an abstraction from lived time, or that clock-time presupposes the existence of a past that cannot be recalled and a future that cannot be anticipated, and thus give us a one-sided account of the structures of time.

But to return to the *differend* that separates much work in contemporary continental philosophy (as practiced both on the continent and in Anglo-American countries), while I think that Widder, Deleuze, et al are roughly correct in their diagnosis of phenomenology’s association of time (or, better, temporality) with the subject, including with the movement of subject, I am not convinced that they are correct in considering this to be a theoretical weakness, nor that the proffered alternatives are to be preferred. I myself am pulled both ways, and in a critical vein here want to point to some problems with the “time out of joint” trajectory of Widder and others, or at the very least to establish some risks that are associated with such a perspective. My basic worry is that too often the transcendental critique of vulgar time and any emphasis on the “living-present” and other such “chronopathologies” trades on claims of necessity that are either speculative (the transcendental claim is not established as a necessary one, but is at best a weak inference to a better explanation) or that depend upon their association with an accompanying moral and political tenor (what I have elsewhere called “empirico-romanticism”⁶) that threatens to be dogmatic. While I agree with Widder and others that time and politics are intimately connected I also think that theoretical accounts of this fragile connection need to be careful to avoid lapsing into dogmatism, and this is so even if the relevant conception of time is not tethered to any teleological account of the trajectory of history. To worry about this risk is not to simply be the victim of a false problem as Widder suggests (p4), or a transcendental “illusion” as James Williams phrased a related objection⁷. But this is all very abstract. Using a simple sporting example, I will try to clarify some of the key aspects of a phenomenological account of temporal experience as well as what Deleuze and Widder are worried about in phenomenology’s focus on lived time, and thus, by default, the living-present.

CRICKET AND THE ‘LIVING-PRESENT’

It is received wisdom in cricket and other sports that players both are not, and should not, be directly phenomenologically aware of any kind of conscious decision-making processes while absorbed in what various theorists since Hubert Dreyfus have called skilful coping. In cricket, one reason for this kind of injunction is obvious enough: batting is, as John Sutton observes, regulated improvisation under severe time constraints⁸. Faced with a fast bowler (for those from the USA, think of an express baseball pitcher), say Brett Lee in his prime, there is no time for thinking or any kind of hesitation; batsmen need to spontaneously respond, and to be totally absorbed in the moment. There is not even time, according to Sutton’s research, to actually watch the ball all the way and then respond. Despite the fact that almost all coaches will advocate unwavering watching of the ball, elite players don’t, however, watch the ball for its entire trajectory. The best players watch it out of the hand, anticipate where it will land and direct their vision there, then attend to where it lands on the pitch and anticipate where it will go. Without this kind of anticipation, one could never respond adequately to the visual stimulus in a timely fashion when faced with a 150km an hour delivery.

Let’s consider the temporal experience involved here. It seems clear that in any “living present”, the sports player retains the past in the form of a retention or sedimentation in the body of what has happened before—this is what is called procedural memory in psychology and cognitive science. At the same time, they must

TIME OUT OF JOINT

also anticipate probable future scenarios regarding what will be likely to happen in the future. Such coping techniques simultaneously carry the weight of past sedimentation and yet are also productive of a world of anticipated possibilities that are increasingly differentiated from each other; for the expert, the situation calls for, or solicits, increasingly refined responses. Moreover it is the ability to perform such anticipations more quickly, and with greater accuracy, that separates experts from those who are merely competent. Such responses cannot be mechanistic, or rigidly rule-governed. Every stroke will need to be played in slightly different circumstances, on a different pitch, with differing wind conditions, differing condition of the ball, and an altered trajectory of the delivery, to mention just a few of the variables. As such, any given cricket stroke will never be totally new, but neither will it be brute or instinctual repetition either, having to be attentive to the difference presented by each ball, but still implicitly drawing on one's repertoire of past experiences that contribute to each shot (hence each batsman has a recognisable style). Through training and skill, one is solicited by the situation to respond to it in more and more nuanced and specific ways. Being-in-the-present, on this view, involves an experience of time that synthesises or integrates elements of the past and the future within its purview.

In his reflections on the phenomenology of internal time-consciousness in the book of that name, Husserl makes a related point. He famously suggests that our integrated experience of a melody—even on first listening—implies that any so-called 'now' must have a retentive element that retains the past notes, and a protentive moment that anticipates future elaborations, as well as what he calls the primal impression. Otherwise, our experience of the sounds would be random and disparate in a way that it is not, without any kind of ability to hear a melody. This kind of temporal experience then, is a synthesis, in which any living present, for it to be meaningful, involves a retentive and protentive element rather than being a self-contained instant, or a series of such instants.

While there is an important phenomenological distinction between these kind of acts that involve procedural memory and a passive synthesis of time, and explicit biographical memory or reflection on our past, we should also note that the 'don't over think' injunction that plays a large role in sporting activity usually prescribes more than just being in the present when engaged in the activity in question. The cricketer who dwells on the past between deliveries, say, or who reflects on their lucky escape a ball before when someone dropped them on 99, or the minefield that is the pitch, is not likely to perform well. Likewise the player who is preoccupied with getting to the lunch break in ten minutes time without being dismissed, rather than playing each ball on its merits, is also likely to make a mistake. This doesn't seem merely to be folklore, but is borne out by various studies (again, see Sutton). An elite sportsman or woman thus has to train themselves to put past biographical experiences out of their mind; certainly out of their immediate focus. Being a good cricketer depends not merely on talent and not merely on training in the various skill domains either, but on training one's mind; in particular, in controlling one's temporal experience throughout an afternoon or so of projectiles being aimed at one's torso. Without putting too fine a point on it, it seems that one performs better when one is not haunted by ghosts from the past or future.

Likewise, Dreyfus produces some quite compelling empirical research on decision-making processes that suggest that it is a spontaneous embodied responsive to the environment (which is not a matter of rational calculation) that leads to mastery and expertise in any number of given fields, whether they be basketball, chess, business, or even morality⁹. Constant calculators, people who reflect all of the time on the best course of action to take, tend not to make the best decisions and do not often reach the highest levels of expertise in a given field. This suggests that expert activity involves a disciplining of the manner in which one experiences time. There is, we might say, a kind of expert-induced amnesia, which is actually not necessarily a weakness. As such, we have an account of the synthesis of the living-present, as well as a normative account of how to 'successfully' live time, at least in relation to some specific skill domains. These domains may differ importantly from the domain of philosophy, art, and other creative endeavours, but I will leave this an open question, other than to say that I think there is a continuum here rather than a difference in kind.

Of course, one needs to be able to adjust when the cricket bat is unready-to-hand, as Heidegger might say. When Adam Gilchrist or Ricky Ponting, say, keep getting dismissed by spin bowlers on the subcontinent, it is probably true that some kind of integration of reflection and practice is required, some kind of integration between acting and thinking, doing and knowing. Even if you wouldn't want to be thinking too much during a test-match, prior thought and preparation will inform your procedural memory. As such, we can and should complicate the Dreyfusian account a little. But the point is that phenomenology seems perfectly able to describe such experiences, as well as to explain the skill acquisition that is fundamental to such expertise. Phenomenological descriptions, for example, help us to see the manner in which our experience of time is aligned with the movements of a body-subject. They also help us to see the need for the adding of retentive and protentive elements to any idea of a 'now' moment, rather than deploying a model of time that involves a series of instants. In addition, a phenomenology of bodily intentionality and anticipation helps to render explicable the ability of batsmen to respond in a timely fashion, since bodily know-how functions at a far quicker and more immediate way than would be suggested by the old representationalist model in which one passively perceives the sense data, then makes an active judgment regarding what to do, and then reacts, all while still attending to the trajectory of the ball¹⁰.

Of course, this isn't all, or even a large part, of what phenomenological philosophers say about time, not considering the detailed descriptions of Heidegger on boredom, care, etc., or Levinas' work in *Time and the Other*, to give two key examples. Husserl also insists that past, present and future are different from retention, primal impression and protention. As Hoy puts it, "we experience ourselves as in time and as having a past, present, and future because our temporality involves the structure of protention, retention and primal impression"¹¹. It is perhaps fair to say, however, that the synthesis of time involved in what phenomenologists called the 'living-present' involves emphasising this integrative aspect, this gathering together, and in the work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty it is also privileged. In the latter's work, our bodily intentionality helps us to secure an equilibrium with the world and a normalising trajectory that allows us to succeed in various areas of expertise. The question is, however, whether this is but a phenomenological/psychological illusion as John Searle or Daniel Dennett might maintain, or a transcendental illusion as Widder and Deleuze might suggest, or whether there is something problematic about both of these kinds of dismissals of the phenomenological rendering of the times of our lives. While analytic philosophers often look to physics and the neurosciences for an answer to this question (the empirical conditions of objective time, or the empirical conditions of our experience of time), Widder and Deleuze look to what we might call a transcendental psychoanalysis. Transcendental philosophy and Freud are thought to get us beyond the time of consciousness and the time of embodied subjectivity, such that 'I' become a "multiplicity of subjects living different temporalities within the same not so unified being"¹². Both challenge the philosophical significance of any phenomenological conception of the living-present and want to look beyond such experience to its conditions, and in both cases it involves a preoccupation with metaphysical issues in relation to time. For analytic philosophy, the key question is typically whether the experience of time's passage and/or the 'now' are real or a subjective illusion, with the truth about time typically being thought to be that which is revealed by the physicist. For Widder/Deleuze, there is no need to make this objectivist move: transcendental philosophy can reveal the partiality and, ultimately, illusory nature of this experience of the 'now' and the living-present from 'within', rather than presupposing a view from nowhere. As Widder puts the claim, "an inversion of the relation of time and movement is here required. Insofar as time is read off of movement, Deleuze argues, we are given only an indirect image of what it is"¹³.

Now it is perhaps true that much of the above account of the lived-time of the cricket player is indirect. It is also not entirely unfair to associate this with phenomenology more generally. But the question is what kind of direct image of time might be proffered instead, noting the long acknowledged aporias and difficulties with directly philosophizing about time, illustrated by Aristotle, Heidegger, Derrida, to mention a few, and famously lamented by Augustine: "What then is time? I know well enough what it is, provided that nobody asks me: but if I am asked what it is and try to explain it, I am baffled"¹⁴. Assuming that one is not content to simply trace time from the empirical (that is, from post-Einsteinian physics and four-dimensionalism, where time's difference from space is ultimately effaced), is the solution to radically distinguish time from movement, bodies, etc. (as

TIME OUT OF JOINT

with Bergson) and to insist on time as a formal transcendental condition in a quasi-Kantian manner? (as with Deleuze). Maybe. Such answers will certainly differ from the phenomenological accounts of time of (the later) Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, where time and space (incl. movement) are intimately connected. Merleau-Ponty insists that one need not take the Bergsonian pill of radically separating time and space and privileging the former, and post *Being and Time* Heidegger also emphasizes time-space, and on certain interpretations, place. For both, the metaphysical question of which came first, time or the subject/Dasein, is misplaced. As Merleau-Ponty says in *Phenomenology of Perception*, “We are not saying that time is for someone... we are saying that time is someone... We must understand time as the subject and the subject as time” (PP: 422). Given that we know that the subject for Merleau-Ponty in this period is a body-subject, then motility and time are clearly bound up with one another on his view. Bodily motility and bodily intentionality seem from the beginning of life to be temporally tensed: proprioception is evident at the earliest stages of in vitro life, and in neo-natal life the perception of an object gives us hitherto undisclosed sides, sides that our attention might be directed towards and which we necessarily anticipate. If these kind of conditions of bodily subjectivity are also conditions of a “world” in Heidegger’s sense, does this mean idealism? It depends on whether Merleau-Ponty means “time is the subject” metaphysically. If he did, this would seem to entail that so-called objective time is derivative of the time of our lives, and it might hence be protested what while our experience of objective time (objective time ‘for us’ as Quentin Meillassoux might say) may be derivative of this lived time, that doesn’t mean there is any metaphysical relationship of derivation. On this latter view, we might more plausibly read Merleau-Ponty’s comment as simply referring to the manner in which our learning about the world is through and through temporally tensed, as well as the manner in which our situated experience of time is also what enables self-reflection and the constitution of subjectivity.

This is a long story that we cannot detail here, but suffice to say that for Deleuze time still needs to be unhinged from this too subjective a perspective. The key problem with this account of time is that it does not seem to offer an account of the ‘new’, and why it is that time (including our experience of it, is always cut, nicked, or broken up, and exposed to an unknown future). Deleuze’s various books hence argue that genuine creativity requires a rather different experience of time, a form of time that the apparent ‘excesses’ of sadism and masochism are more open to, and which he and Derrida both borrow from Hamlet, the Northern Prince, and call “time out of joint” (while some maintain that this condition cannot be experienced, there is much in *Difference and Repetition* that implies otherwise). On the other hand, it seems from my account of the cricket player that it is precisely the integrative aspects of temporal experience that open up a horizon in all of its difference and variability. This, of course, is one of Husserl’s reasons for privileging the living-present: memorial time and narrative time in we which project particular futures all depend on this primary temporal immersion that is the living-present and are inconceivable without it. While Deleuze, Derrida, and others have given us sufficient reason to worry about this trajectory of grounding all aspects of temporality in the “living-present”, any stronger claim than that, however, such as that the former are an illusion and tacitly a debased conservatism, seem to me to be rather more tenuous, and whether their own transcendental philosophy of time is any better placed than Husserl’s is not so clear, being generally illuminative rather than strictly necessitarian. Likewise, while a normative emphasis on the nick of time—the *contretemps*—that sunders identity has value, we have also seen that there are normative virtues associated with the temporal amnesia that I have described. As Nietzsche says, “without forgetfulness, there can be no happiness, no hope, no present”¹⁵. Let us briefly consider Deleuze, Derrida, and Widder on “time out of joint” before returning to this question.

DELEUZE AND DERRIDA: TIME OUT OF JOINT

While Deleuze’s (and Widder’s) account of time out of joint is argued to be a formal condition for experience to have the structure that it does, it is important to note that it is not merely a neutral transcendental claim, also being explicitly associated with actual traumatic experiences like that of Hamlet (and learning to swim, etc.) and having a clear normative register. When Shakespeare has Hamlet declare that time is out of joint or unhinged¹⁶, this is predominantly a recognition that various actual events have monstrously violated Hamlet’s sense of his world, including most notably the murder of his father, and his mother’s remarriage to his uncle. They paralyse

him before he becomes equal to the act. This kind of aporetic impasse, this undecidability, is essential to the notion of ‘time out of joint’ for Derrida in *Spectres of Marx*. Indeed, Derrida’s point—which hovers between being a form of conceptual analysis and being more metaphysically committed—is that the only time in which something can ever happen, is when time is out of joint, when there is a constitutive not knowing what to do and how to be. “Time out of joint” hence has something to do with what Derrida calls *contretemps* (SM: 77), which indicates an unforeseen occurrence or event, but is more literally translated as the untimely, or counter-time. Derrida is clear that the untimely is not, however, atemporal, but is rather counter to linear time, and teleological history, with its seasons, regularity and order. *Contretemps* is the condition for vulgar time, the time of the present, but it is also that which breaks that living-present apart. It is the time of the event.

For Derrida and Deleuze, there is a sense in which this disjointed experience of time is more pervasive than that being a response to actual worldly trauma, but is also a condition for our experience of the living-present, albeit one that is covered over and concealed by experience itself. In this respect, time out of joint might refer to the manner in which waiting is essential to all experience, as well as the manner in which every experience contains an aspect of lateness¹⁷. Later in his career, Derrida will call this kind of relation to time “anachronism”. Anachronism is an error of sorts, a relating to an event or custom or ritual as if from the wrong time. It suggests someone, or something, is out of harmony with time, the living present. While there are clearly forms of anachronism that may be problematic—interpreting the past from the perspective of our own current predilections and interests—there is also something positive to anachronism for Derrida. In times of crisis when the new (and potentially violent) threatens to erupt in revolutionary crisis, Derrida suggests the more that one needs to borrow from past, and to attend to spectres and hauntings (SM: 109). This might not be in the form of nostalgia for the past, but some kind of spectral or uncanny visitation is required. Of course, precisely what we saw the sportsperson does not seem to want, or need, is such visitations.

In arguably the central part of *Difference and Repetition*, the account of the eternal return of difference and the disjunctive synthesis of time, Deleuze also invokes the Northern Prince. For Deleuze, prior to his father’s murder, Hamlet’s experience of time was oriented around “those properly cardinal points through which pass the periodic movements which it measures”—time was measured in relation to orderly movements of the world, sun and moon, dinner, duties, etc. Deleuze says “a time out of joint means demented time or time outside the curve... freed from the event which made up its content, its relation to movement overturned” (DR: 88). The movements by which time had been measured are disrupted, leaving only an empty form of time that eschews the unity of the subject. Widder pays a lot of attention to this fractured self, explaining its psychoanalytic provenance and seeking to problematise the normalising trajectory of bodies seeking an equilibrium (the return of the same rather than difference, we must assume). While neither he nor Deleuze want to dispute that this happens (at a superficial level), they want to revalue another kind of temporal condition for the living-present, which is also both an ‘experience’ of sorts, hence the analogy with Hamlet, as well as a kind of regulative idea for how to live. This unhinging, to return to Shakespeare, fractures the self and opens it to a becoming-other of some kind. On Widder’s view, time is a structure or disjunctive synthesis that ungrounds movement, including the idea of the flow, or passage, of time (p3). As Widder puts it: “‘time’ names the structure, not the measure, of change. It is a kind of being out of synch with oneself that is the condition of anything to change or move” (p6). This reversal also carries risks of idealism, as Widder acknowledges (p6). He also accepts that “an ontology of time is a human (although not a humanist) ontology” (Widder p4). It seems, then, if we conjoin these sentences, that the condition for anything to change or move is that the human being is out of sync with itself. *Prima facie* this looks like idealism. Of course, this risk of idealism would be ameliorated if we took the phenomenological step (with its alleged metaphysical agnosticism) of saying that Deleuze is just talking about temporality insofar as it manifests itself in human existence, but Deleuze’s metaphysics and transcendental philosophy (and Bergson’s) trades on stronger claims than this, extending to all things (wheat, for example). There is hence an equivocation about the level of analysis, or at least there is a difference between Widder’s account of time and Deleuze’s.

Not only is time out of joint a transcendental condition for all experience, but Deleuze also indicates that we can also better affirm and embrace this time, if only we could become good throwers of the dice, embracing both

TIME OUT OF JOINT

chance and necessity. This is why in *Difference and Repetition* he repeatedly refers to an essential “apprenticeship of learning” (DR: 164). This latter phrase is intended to evoke experiences where one is radically disrupted, forced to instigate new ways of existing. Consider Deleuze’s preferred example of learning, which is about learning to swim. He suggests that learning to swim, or learning a foreign language, means “composing the singular points of one’s own body or one’s own language with those of another shape or element, which tears us apart but also propels us into a hitherto unknown and unheard-of world of problems” (DR: 192). The kind of learning experience with which Deleuze is primarily concerned is not only that of the beginner and novice, but also the end, paradoxically enough, and that which constitutes true expertise and stands as an exemplar for a life of encounters and exposure to difference. The genuinely important aspect of learning is the way in which it always involves a violent training, a traumatic experiment in apprenticeship. At one stage Deleuze compares the experience of learning to the acephalic, the albino, the aphasic (DR: 165), and this understanding of learning rejects the more normative claim that a suitably refined adjustment towards one’s environment is the telos of learning and skill acquisition, and the account of time and the living-present which is bound up with it. Instead, Deleuze valorises those learning experiences that force us out of any such equilibrium with our environment; the kind of structural coupling between subject and world that is pivotal to the constitution of a living-present. Within certain bounds, we must aspire to be the perpetual apprentice, to encounter new situations that are inassimilable to our average coping techniques, and to become a nomad who is never at home¹⁸. Such analyses do have a certain phenomenological resonance, even if they are also argued to be more than that. We might, for example, invoke a related image of the sportsplayer who “counter-actualises” situations, and for whom it is a matter of not simply responding to the actual (even in the attenuated sense of actuality with its projective and retentive aspects as described above), but is fundamentally about negotiating the intensities provoked by past experiences and hopes for an unknown future (the famous Deleuzian war-time example is Joë Bousquet in *The Logic of Sense*).

Indeed, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari claim that nomads change their habits so as not to change their habitat (ice and desert), but migrants move and change their habitat so as not to change their habits. In relation to this opposition, Deleuze and Guattari side with the nomads (as a regulative ideal at least—they call them the noumena of history), but perhaps a philosopher like Merleau-Ponty and cognitive scientists indebted to him, are tacitly on the side of the migrants. Although circumstance changes, and we must consistently adjust, there is a normative impetus to attaining maximum grip on an environment (this is an evolutionary pressure too), to what cognitive scientists call structural coupling between organism and environment. Deleuze and Guattari argue that any genuine creativity or learning must be provoked by something traumatic, or at least the possibility of trauma must be omnipresent to sustain creative performance in any domain, but perhaps particularly philosophy and art. It is easy to get an intuitive grasp of what they are on about in this regard. We have all seen great performers in the early stages of their careers, who, some short time later, flush with success, are totally confident in coping with the pressures of live performance, but have lost something vital about their performance. And Deleuze, Widder, and others, are clearly right to suggest that life is not exhausted by bodily coping (and the time of the living-present, *l’habitude*), that even the activity of the cricket player is not done justice to without some reference to what we might summarise as ‘time out of joint’, in both its formal and also more experiential guises. Perhaps there are also some strategic reasons for privileging ‘lost time’ in modernity, given the sense in which clock time is increasingly dominant. But worlds and lives change, whether the self is fractured, whether Joe is thrown into the volcano or not. If there is a law, it is that of change, but it is never clear to me that the transcendental arguments about time out of joint (or structural equivalents) that are bound up with a recognition of this fact are compelling. They typically depend upon an opposition between the event and inexorable sameness, predictable predicates, etc. But is every philosophy of mediation, of continuums, necessarily condemned to be unable to explain the event/change? It is not clear that this is so. Transcendental reasoning of this sort depends upon a contrast that excludes other possibilities and cannot establish that its alleged conditions are the uniquely valid ones. Although I can only gesture towards this here, it seems to me that what we are witness to in these temporal disputes between phenomenologists and poststructuralists is an account of the time(s) of our lives which is irremediably split in both of these directions, and which problematises any attempt to adequately ground the one in the other. In regard to the association between time

and politics, it seems to me that this quasi-transcendental necessity also precludes any too easy decision in the realm of the ethico-political (e.g. change and rupture vs. sameness and coping).

Jack Reynolds is a Senior Lecturer at LaTrobe University, the author of *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida, Understanding Existentialism*, and co-author of the forthcoming *Analytic versus Continental: Arguments on the Methods and Value of Philosophy*. He has published widely on twentieth century French thought.

TIME OUT OF JOINT

NOTES

- 1 See James Chase and Jack Reynolds, *Analytic Versus Continental: Arguments on the Methods and Value of Philosophy* (Acumen 2010), and Jack Reynolds, *Chronopathologies: Time, Politics, and Transcendental Philosophy* (forthcoming Maryland: Lexington Books 2010).
2. E. Grosz, "Thinking the New", *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory and Futures*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999, p18.
3. David Hoy, *The Time of our Lives: A Critical History of Temporality*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008.
4. Einstein contends, for example, that when it comes to time there is just the objective time revealed by physics, and psychological or subjective time on the other hand, and nothing else to be said about time (H. Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity* p159). Suffice to say almost no continental philosopher will accept that.
5. Hoy, p22.
6. Jack Reynolds, "Deleuze and Dreyfus on *l'habitude*, coping and trauma in skill acquisition", *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 4 2006, p563-83.
7. James Williams, "Why Deleuze does not blow the actual on virtual priority. A rejoinder to Jack Reynolds", *Deleuze Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2008, p97-100.
8. John Sutton, "Batting, Habit, and Memory: the embodied mind and the nature of skill", *The Philosophy of Cricket*, ed. J. McKenna, London: Routledge 2008.
9. See H. Dreyfus, *What Computers Still Can't Do: A Critique of Artificial Reason*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997 edition, particularly part 3, "The Role of the Body in Intelligent Behaviour".
10. As such, phenomenology of this kind is not greatly trouble by Benjamin Libet's experiments on time-consciousness which seem to show that our conscious experience of making decisions is actually misleading. When we are conscious of having made a decision, in actual fact the decision was made (judging by neural activity) about 300 milliseconds earlier. What do such findings mean for phenomenology? Such data would be taken by most phenomenologists to support (rather than falsify) their view, in that embodied intentionality is shown to operate at a different level from conscious reflective decision-making (roughly the know-how/know-that distinction), and the manner in which the former kind of pre-reflective motor intentionality is always-already at work..
11. Hoy, p51.
12. N. Widder, "Time is Out of Joint - and so are We: Deleuzian Immanence and the Fractured Self", *Philosophy Today*, 50 (4) 2006, p411.
13. Widder, as above.
14. Augustine, as cited in Antonio Negri, *Time For Revolution*, London: Continuum, 2005, p29.
15. F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. W. Kaufman, New York: Vintage Books, 1969, p57-8.
16. See Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* for an interesting account of the differing French and German translations of this famous quote.
17. See Len Lawlor, "Derrida", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
18. Such claims are explored in detail in Reynolds (2006, see above) as well as my paper "Deleuze on the Ethics (and the time) of the Event", *Deleuze Studies* 2007.

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A POLITICS GROUNDED IN ONTOGENESIS

Jon Roffe

My title indicates the main problem that Nathan Widder's admirable *Reflections on Time and Politics* seems to me to raise, a problem which, though dramatised with reference to the theme of the untimeliness of time itself, is nothing if not timely. A revival of explicit and directly posed ontological questions is well and truly underway in contemporary thought, and a substantial body of work produced over the past decades oriented by a renewed attention to the question of time already exists. Widder brings these two concerns into relation with a third, that of politics. This connection, of course, has been invoked before, but rarely does it produce the wealth of insights that this book achieves.

In broad terms, Widder's book functions in three ways. First of all, it presents us with a set of reminders. Unlike Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (a book I was perhaps perversely reminded of as I read *Reflections on Time and Politics*), though, these reminders are not in aid of what Wittgenstein elsewhere calls "thoughts that are at peace [...] what someone who philosophises yearns for."¹ Widder's set of reminders are oriented in the opposite direction, and perturb accepted platitudes about (in particular) Deleuze, Lacan, and Foucault. I will mention some points about Deleuze below, but it is refreshing to see Foucault treated at the level that his complex work requires, and to see the proximity between Lacan and Deleuze exhibited in some very fine pages. I mean then that what we are reminded to do is to return to the texture of these works that has been smoothed out through habit.

Secondly, we are presented with a set of what I would call parallel demonstrations, a series of expositions which double the at times gnomic textual references made by Deleuze throughout the course of his work. The impressive and compact discussion of the relations between quantity, quality and the will-to-power in Nietzsche (125-9), for example, goes a long way to supporting the presentation of the same points undertaken by Deleuze in the key chapter of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. As is often the case with Deleuze's treatments of other thinkers, it is only once a detailed and thoughtful analysis of the original texts is engaged in that the surprising accuracy of the commentary becomes apparent – what look like unjustified argumentative steps turn out to be original and faithful glosses of the material they are concerned with, contrary to the initial impression that Deleuze may just be riffing on his own obsessions. Similar helpful passages are to be found on the role of Kleinian psychoanalysis

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A POLITICS GROUNDED IN ONTOGENESIS

in *Logic of Sense* (134-9), on the use of the Stoic theory of the incorporeality of sense in the same work (100-7), on the status of the Platonic theory of Forms that underpins a number of key moves in Deleuze (51-6),² not to mention the brief but striking passage in which Widder clarifies the specific nature of Deleuze's *differend* with Hegel. (63-8) In many respects, these directed investigations do more to vindicate Deleuze from charges of sophistry than the attempt to systematise his endeavour, an attempt that has become increasingly dominant in Deleuze scholarship over recent years.

Third, throughout the diverse thinkers and themes the book discusses, a single philosophical claim is expounded and refined, the theme which dominates Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*: that identity must be thought second to difference, that it arises from difference while remaining perpetually engaged with it. Moreover, Widder's project here is to account for the various ways in which important identities (subjective identity, the stable structures of language and social reality) come about on the basis of these differences. In other words, Widder pursues an ontogenetic account of the advent of identity. Like the intense interest in temporal and directly ontological questions, this interest in individuation is also a central feature of contemporary debates in European thought. It is to Widder's credit, however, that he manages to so fully flesh out what we might call the Deleuzian account of this issue, exceeding on a number of fronts a widespread facile pop-Deleuzism.



What conclusion does this triple project lead to, specifically with respect to the connections between time, politics and individuation? I could mention a number of things here, but I would like to confine my attention to three of them: the consequences for any reading of a theory of time in Deleuze, the nature of the connection between individuation and politics (a connection that constitutes the problematic I alluded to earlier), and the status of the individual itself.

Broadly speaking, Deleuze's philosophical treatments of time can be considered as either dyadic or triadic in nature. On the one hand, we find an account in *Logic of Sense* concerned with a pair of temporal concepts, *Aion* and *Chronos*. Likewise, the Bergsonian thread in Deleuze's philosophy, beginning with the essays on Bergson in the 1950's, tend towards the dynamic relation of the pure past and the passing present. On the other hand, a triadic schemata is to be found in *Proust and Signs*, *The Time Image*, and, above all, *Difference and Repetition*.

While it was the case for a significant period that the role of Bergson, and indeed of systematic metaphysics as such, in Deleuze's thought was poorly understood by readers of Deleuze in the English speaking world (due to some extent to the order in which translations of his work appeared), the turn to Bergson led to a somewhat grotesque subordination of Deleuze's philosophy to Bergson's, and in turn to an inflation of the role that the dyadic schema played in readings of Deleuze's philosophy.³ This can be amply seen both in Alain Badiou's infamous *Deleuze*, where he claims that "Deleuze is a marvellous reader of Bergson, who, in my opinion, is his real master,"⁴ but equally in Keith Ansell-Pearson's much more informed and convincing *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual*, even in the passages in which he defends Deleuze against some of Badiou's critical points.

There are a number of reasons why the triadic schemata deserves to be considered superior to a Bergsonian dyadic structure. For one, it plays an integral role in *Difference and Repetition*, which is certainly the most significant of Deleuze's foundational texts. For another, whenever it appears in Deleuze's work, it is equally integral. The same, I think, cannot be said for the appearance of the *Aion-Chronos* distinction in *Logic of Sense*, nor the opposition between history and becoming that populates some of Deleuze and Guattari's works, particularly *What is Philosophy?*

The significance of Widder's intervention into this set of issues is the way in which he demonstrates Deleuze's own overcoming of Bergson's philosophy of time, and thus his fidelity to a third order of time that surpasses the modality of the virtual past. While the chapter dedicated to one part of this argument is entitled "A Discontinuous Bergsonism", the point is to demonstrate a discontinuity *with* Bergsonism in Deleuze's philosophy. This, I think,

is decisive and already goes a long way to correcting a false image of Deleuze's philosophy of time and his philosophy more generally.

Widder makes a number of points on this front, some that show the critical distance that Deleuze's thought establishes (however implicitly) from Bergson's, and others that demonstrate the power of the third modality of time, not found in Bergson but associated with Nietzsche's eternal return (which is the real subject of this book in many respects). On the one hand, for example, Widder argues that the figure of the irrational cut, which plays an important role in *The Time Image* but is part and parcel with the ungrounding capacity of the eternal return, has no precedent in Bergson's thought. He traces this absence to what he presents as the conflation in Bergson between time and movement: his philosophy "remains parasitically attached to movement" and thus "does not go fully beyond the image of time it criticizes." (48) On the other hand, after mounting a powerful critique of the Heideggerian thesis of being-towards-death, he shows how literal death is nothing other than a specific case of the eternal return, and the sufficient reason for change in all forms: "the eternal return is inseparable from this 'impersonal death' or 'going under' which opens the self to multiplicity." (174)

Adding this recognition of the differential role of the eternal return to earlier points, we can see that it is this modality of time itself that is the operative element in the production of identity on the basis of difference. And here, Widder is nothing if not attentive to the central emphases of Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, in which this third disruptive time is called the 'for-itself' of difference.

My second observation arises on the basis of the absolute nature of this connection, in Deleuze and in Widder's broader reconstruction, of the time-individuation relation. As the title indicates, the project of *Reflections on Time and Politics* is to draw consequences of a political nature from this analysis of the role of time in individuation. It is not clear to me, however, despite the richness of Widder's analysis, that this is possible.

The broad thrust of the analysis of this individuation is clearly marked in the Introduction: "the same processes that generate stabilities and identities also serve as the mechanisms by which they are overcome and dissolved." (11) Immediately after stating this, however, Widder writes: "This overcoming is an ethical and political task. Or, perhaps better, it is an ethical task that flows into politics. It is a crucial task insofar as politics and social life continues to privilege fixed markers and identities that are no more than surface projections."

Why is this problematic? If these processes of individuation are both the sufficient reason for the advent of identity and its dissolution in the name of new identities, then it is hard to see why endorsing this dissolution could be conceived politically. If, that is, such a dissolution is inevitable – and this is what the analysis of the eternal return so forcefully shows – in what way can we put it into play in political thought?

In other words, it seems to me that the conclusions that follow from the ontogenetic account of the difference-identity relation can support an immanent ethics (contrary to a widespread if ill-informed belief to the contrary), but it cannot provide a motivation for political action, either in the form of a general orientation or as a guideline for the choice of specific actions. I am reminded of an infamous passage from the close of Lyotard's *Libidinal Economy*, where (after presenting a line of argument that is broadly confluent with Widder's own) Lyotard draws the following conclusion:

We need not leave the place where we are, we need not be ashamed to speak in a "state-funded" university, write, get published, go commercial, love a woman, a man, and live together with them; there is no good place, the "private" universities are like the others, savage publications like civilized ones, and no love can prevail over jealousy [...] What would be interesting would be to stay put, but quietly seize every chance to function as good intensity-conducting bodies.⁵

While Lyotard's claim would initially rankle with anyone of progressive sentiment, it seems like the direct conclusion in the order of subjective action from the ontological position that underpins it. In sum, if the

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A POLITICS GROUNDED IN ONTOGENESIS

secondary effect of identity (and its inevitable if local demise) is unavoidable, it seems difficult to suppose that fighting against this in some fully-fledged manner is even possible, let alone politically desirable.

Of course, it might be responded that this series of reminders about figures in the intellectual trajectory that interests Widder are also to be taken as reminders for us in our deliberations about politics that the stakes are contingent and underwritten by the real ontogenesis of political agents themselves. This is a salient point, and a worthwhile thing to be reminded of. Such a reminder, though, is not a politics or a philosophy of politics in any strong sense, and certainly cannot by itself answer to the “crucial task” (11) of developing new ways of living together.

It is worth noting that these concerns aren’t relevant to Widder’s philosophy alone. The attempt to parlay an immanent ethics into a politics of difference is characteristic of a great deal of post-Deleuzian European thought. Widder’s *Reflections on Time and Politics* easily stands head and shoulders above the bulk of such attempts, thanks to his *tour de force* reconstructions of the elementary theoretical machinery required to develop an adequate account of true individuation with respect to the decisive consequences of a meaningful philosophy of time. However, the gap between ontogenesis and politics remains, it seems to me, as wide as before. A final discontinuity thus remains to be thought, on the basis of these new and immensely satisfying philosophical investigations: the possible discontinuity between ontogenesis and politics itself.

My final point concerns the status of the individual and identity in Widder’s account. I think that the central thread of Widder’s analyses – the primacy of individuation as a process subordinated to temporal diremption – is both a good reading of Deleuze and a convincing ontogenetic account. However, the danger in such a reading is that identity is cast as entirely insubstantial.

Despite the fact that he indicates at the start of the work that “to hold that identities are semblances of stability is not to suggest that they are unimportant or dispensable,” (p. x)⁶ Widder sometimes⁷ seems to flirt with just such a position at a number of points.

For example, of the project of an ontology of sense, Widder writes (at 107):

In this ontology, the generation of surface sense is accompanied by illusions of identity, which metaphysical philosophy has always considered the sense of being but which has always remained abstract and inadequate to the task. Exceeding the sense given by metaphysics and identity, however, is another sense structured by concrete difference, in which identity is no more than a superficial effect.

In reducing identity to *no more* than a superficial effect, Widder runs the risk of evacuating reality from the product in trying to place it on the side of the productive mechanism, thereby rendering the regime of identity not just secondary but inconsequential. Ironically, this brings Widder close at points to endorsing the reading of Deleuze proposed by Alain Badiou, which would make of the actual, the individual, the regime of identity nothing but epiphenomenal flares on the surface of virtual One, an irony that is particularly striking given Widder’s powerful rebuttal of Badiou’s *The Clamor of Being*.⁸ It is only by (correctly, I would maintain) asserting the significance of both ‘halves’ of Deleuze’s ontology that we can avoid both Badiou’s Scylla (the posit of the irreality of the actual and the individual) and Peter Hallward’s Charbydis (the posit of the elusive status of the virtual).

◇

But one of Widder’s achievements in this book is to present with such force the disjunctive connector that interrelates these two, namely time itself, grasped not as a continual flow but as a formal structure that subjects both movement and stasis to implacable change. To my mind, it is by keeping the temporal element of such an ontogenetic philosophy of identity front and centre⁹ that the kind of ungrounded dualist consequences that

follow from such an ontology can be avoided. It is also by maintaining this emphasis that the ontological turn in contemporary thought can avoid becoming a new scholasticism.

Jon Roffe is a member of the editorial board of *Parrhesia*.

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A POLITICS GROUNDED IN ONTOGENESIS

NOTES

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. GH von Wright and Heiklin Nyman, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 43c.
2. Widder's articulation of Lacanian thought in relation to the structure of Platonism in this regard is particularly impressive, even if I am not sure that the homology between the Law of the Father and regime of the Forms entirely goes through.
3. Correlatively, given that the revival of interest in Bergson's philosophy was – as Widder notes on the first page of his book – significantly inspired by Deleuze, there was a tendency to read Bergson as a kind of proto-Deleuze, without noting the entirely peculiar qualities of the reading we find in *Bergsonism* and the other essays from the 1950's.
4. (DCB 39/62)
5. Jean-François Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London: Athlone, 1993), 262.
6. In introducing the concept of micropolitics, Widder writes that “Despite their fictitiousness, identity and opposition do structure a certain level of political and social life,” (177) though this sentiment seems to me somewhat undermined by the following claim later on the same page: “despite the efficacy of identity in these domains [normality and deviancy with respect to social life], this level is the most superficial one. Its standards are *false* standards, whose stability and seemingly clear boundaries are *merely* simulated ...” (177, emphases added) It is this gap between acknowledging the produced nature of identity and the standard pertaining to it, and their lack of purchase on reality that concerns me.
7. By no means is this a foundational commitment for Widder. For example, writing of Foucault, he says “Microscopic and macroscopic are neither simply external to one another nor internal and identical. They are immanent to each other and reciprocally determining.” (161) Here, however, we might be confronting a disjunct between the broader Deleuzian framework of *Reflections on Time and Politics* and this Foucauldian trope, since Deleuze's use of the theme of reciprocal determination remains internal to his account of the virtual, and is never used by him to describe the relations between the virtual and the actual, differential structure and identity.
8. See Nathan Widder, “The Rights of the Simulacrum: Deleuze and the Univocity of Being,” in *Continental Philosophy Review* 34 (4), 437-53.
9. There is a question, of course, whether this element is indeed consistently front and centre for Deleuze himself. As always, questions about the unity of Deleuze's philosophy remain problematic.

REPLY

Nathan Widder

It is a singular honour for one's work to be read, let alone for someone to take the time to write in response to it, and I certainly do not feel like such an important person not to be deeply humbled by having a review forum devoted to my book. I am grateful to all the reviewers and particularly to Jon Roffe for proposing and organizing this initiative. I appreciate all the compliments they have given me in their reviews, but I will focus my reply on the critical points they have raised. These are many and varied, and they have provoked a great deal of thought in me, as good reviews should. They have given me much to respond to, and I feel they have helped push my ideas further than they had been when I wrote the book, even if my replies will, for the most part, be made through it. I would like to begin with some background of how this project came to me and what I have tried to do in it, before addressing what seem to me the main concerns the reviews have raised: Deleuze's (non)relation to Lacan, the thesis of identity as a simulation and surface effect, the question of time being disjunctive rather than integrative, and the implications of this ontology of time in the realm of politics and ethics.

Reflections on Time and Politics is my second book. The first, *Genealogies of Difference*,¹ drew on ancient, early Christian, medieval, and contemporary philosophy in order to address a number of ontological issues, particularly around infinity, totality, and continuity; negation and internal difference; and equivocal and univocal conceptions of being. There was discussion of time and temporality, focussed primarily on the concept of the event, but my thinking was not particularly developed on those fronts. When I finally turned my attention properly towards these issues, there was already a well-established recent trend towards bringing time and temporality to bear on salient aspects of ethical and political philosophy. Inspired particularly, but not exclusively, by Bergson and Deleuze, many authors were holding time to be creation itself (following Bergson's statement that time is creation or it is nothing at all) or to be the guarantor of positive creativity and change, rather than simply negation and destruction (time being what levels mountains, rusts iron, destroys kingdoms, and so forth). I do not think I suffered from following along behind this trend, as it better helped me to recognize some of the issues I had with it. I rarely found the arguments that linked time to creation very convincing, as they seemed very often to rely on an assumption that simply because time was part and parcel of complex processes of change, the complexity of these processes guaranteed the production of novelty (i.e., the emergence of an event) rather than simple difference (i.e., the banal reality that no two grains of sand or drops of rain can *really* be the

REPLY

same). It seemed to me that going beyond a linear notion of time's passage in order to focus on its multiple dynamics – the reflux of the past into the present, the future's hovering over the present and re-inscribing the past, the multiple rhythms of duration – could at best account for the emergence of the new only by default. And this is precisely what I saw Deleuze rejecting throughout his work. Of course, the task of accounting for the emergence of the new in repetition is not particularly easy, especially since an event, as Deleuze outlines it, is notoriously subtle and ambiguous. It marks a becoming that does not necessarily “move anywhere,” one for which the terms of representation are never sufficient, and it is characterized by eternal return, not some radical break and creation *ex nihilo*. I found a potential way forward in Deleuze's view that time must be treated as the unchanging form or structure of what changes, a claim that is partially developed through a critique, familiar in both analytic and continental philosophy, that defining time by its movement leads to the problem of infinite regress, as it begs the question of what is the time in which time moves. I wanted to take seriously the conception of time as a structure rather than a measure of change, and to see where it led. That is what I tried to do in this work.

I did not see this task presenting a problem of unduly privileging time over space or ignoring the spatilization of time, since the notion of structure implies spatialization, as do Deleuze's specific formulations of the irrational cut, the interstice, and the series, and the later Heidegger's formulation of “nearhood” (*Nahheit*), which relates past, present, and future in a four-dimensional temporal structure. A more significant challenge was focussing on time as a structure without losing sight of the various experiences of its passage, including – but not limited to – the ordinary experience of time as a continuum that can be counted off in order to measure movement and change. These invoke distinct “time-images,” as Deleuze says, different portrayals of the same phenomenon. As such, even if time's structure is in a way foundational – at least, it presents a direct as opposed to an indirect time-image – it could not be treated as an empty form pre-existing time's passage, but needed instead to be seen as a schema of correspondence or a diagram that emerged with time's movement and the interaction of dispersed temporal series; conversely, even if time's movement is not grounded in some prior structure, it could not be considered a merely chaotic flux, since time itself is inseparable from a notion of synthesis.² Deleuze's concept of sense as an expressive dimension that is immanent to what is expressed but remains within it as something different, allowed me to link these two aspects of time together. Through the concept, I held time's structure, the various syntheses that make time what it is, to express the sense of becoming as such, of both things that move in time and time's own movement. As several of the reviewers have noted, this structure of sense is also one of non-sense, which perhaps is the reason the only formulation I could find to express it was one that violated the basic rule that one cannot define a concept with reference to its own terms: the structure of time is one of “out-of-sync-ness”; what moves or changes “in time” is necessarily out of sync with itself.

This idea led me to engagements with a range of thinkers, including Plato and Aristotle, Russell and Wittgenstein, Freud and Melanie Klein, Lacan and Irigaray, Hegel, Nietzsche, Adorno, Heidegger, and Foucault. But Deleuze is certainly the figure who appears most regularly, and who is the most obvious source for the thesis at the project's centre: that time, treated as the structure of change, is a discontinuous or disjunctive synthesis of differences, one in which differences are brought together by a second order difference or “differenciator” in such a way that, while they are not simply exterior to one another – it is an “inclusive disjunction” – they nonetheless remain incommensurable, never simply corresponding to or opposing one another. Developing the idea of disjunction, and its corollary conception of internal difference, is also central to the related philosophical project of establishing an ontology of immanence, one that, as I tried to demonstrate in several sections of the book, puts Deleuze's thought on a common terrain with Hegel's, and with many other thinkers, including Lacan, who are similarly critical of but also indebted to Hegelian dialectics. The structure of this disjunctive synthesis is one that ungrounds movement, including the movement of time itself, and thus calls into question the central categories of the subject (the base of change) and spatio-temporal continuity (the medium of change), along with associated notions of sameness, difference, stability, and endurance. I tried to show that while these categories of identity and representation are not simply erroneous, the substantiality of what they delineate is only apparent. I thus adopted Deleuze's thesis in *Difference and Repetition* that identities are the surface effects of difference, that they are simulations or optical effects engendered in a virtual process of “differentiation.”

From this idea followed a structure of time that, though concretely multiple and discontinuous, contours a becoming that, even while engendering the new, nevertheless gives the appearance of simplicity, centredness, and continuity. Even a discontinuous becoming structured by a time out of joint thus presents itself a continuous change, not unlike the way a multitude of muscle contractions and relaxations, working with and against one another, create an apparently simple motion when a person raises his arm or walks in a straight line. It is not that the simple, continuous movement or change is false, but it is only an overall effect, and its simplicity is given only when this microscopic complexity is abstracted away. Nor is it the case that this movement or change lacks unity, but it is the unity of a disjunctive synthesis, a synthesis of disparate, which hides within the appearance of a centred unity held together through a subject. And while these simulations of identity and substantiality are certainly indispensable for the organization of important layers of our political and social life – a social world without such markers would probably be incoherent, although this in no way demonstrates their truth³ – there is a political and ethical point to moving beyond them, and to exploring concrete forms of becoming that they often occlude.

Working out the relationships between Deleuze and several thinkers often held to be his antagonists, and pressing the idea that identities and continuities are simulations and surface effects, are probably the two most controversial aspects of this project, and certainly the two on which I expected to be challenged the most. Regarding the first, as ungenerous as many readers from across the philosophical spectrum have been to Deleuze's work, English-language Deleuze scholarship has often been marked by a stubborn refusal to explore the productive intersections that can be found between, for example, Deleuze and Hegel or between Deleuze and Lacan. There has also been a tendency not to read these and other thinkers independently but instead to take Deleuze's often polemical statements – for example, his harsh attacks on Hegel in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* – as the final word on these matters. Things are, I think, slowly beginning to change, although there is much work to do, and this work requires a willingness to read the likes of Lacan and Hegel on their own terms even if one ultimately sides with Deleuze on the points where he parts with them.⁴ Of course, it is only fair that critics of Deleuze, indebted principally to Lacan, Hegel, or others, are held to the same requirements. Regarding the second, the language of simulacra and simulation, particularly when applied to identity and subjectivity, easily invites critical reactions. On the one hand, the idea of identity as a temporary construct formed through constitutive exclusions that both delineate this identity from what it is not and subvert its unity and purity, remains a central feature of a great deal of post-foundationalist thought, particularly where the political and ethical concern is to reconstitute a notion of the individual or collective subject as an agent of change. Often the theorists who promote the idea of the subject present it through the stark alternative between affirming a coherent form of selfhood or leaving the self a jumbled chaos.⁵ In these circles, the idea that subjectivity is not even a temporary construct but a simulation and surface effect is certainly not welcome. On the other hand, the language of simulation and simulacra suggests the kind of Baudrillardian melting away of reality that was probably behind Deleuze's own decision to leave the terminology behind. It remains the case that critics of Deleuze – most notably Badiou – treat the simulacrum as a difference lacking reality, despite Deleuze's thesis being that it provides a positive principle of difference when Plato's denigration of it as a copy of a copy, as "merely a simulacrum," is removed. Perhaps it would have been better to avoid this language altogether, but I do remain convinced that it has value, even if it frequently invites preconceptions that are difficult to address and overcome fully.

I examined the relation – or non-relation – between Deleuze and Lacan in terms of their taking different routes away from Hegelian dialectics. Deleuze's critique maintains that speculative contradiction and dialectical synthesis necessarily abstract away incompatible forms of difference and dispersion and as a result Hegel can only complete immanence in abstraction. This leads Deleuze towards "difference in itself" as a second-order differentiator of differences, and to disjunction as a concrete form of synthesis. Lacan follows a similar path in many respects, also articulating a second-order difference irreducible to dialectical contradiction. Nevertheless, as I tried to demonstrate, at key points Lacan's portrayal of this difference remains abstract, such that, even if he cannot rightly be accused of reinstating transcendence proper, he nevertheless fails to execute a complete move to immanence, and this allows him to retain a form of the subject grounded by reminiscence, to hold a sense of

REPLY

transcendence to remain an ineliminable aspect of language, thought, and desire, and to maintain that morality must take the form of law. On this point, Justin Clemens seems to have misunderstood my intention – or perhaps I simply put things badly – when I wrote that, “the rather obvious residues of transcendence in Bergson and Lacan lie in the former’s appeals to mysticism and the latter’s use of the language of negative theology and the latter’s use of the language of negative theology with respect to the phallus and the feminine” (61). I meant by this that for the critics who normally attack Lacan and Bergson for transcendence, they find their most obvious ammunition here, but that the real issue lies elsewhere. I believe I made this clear two sentences later, writing that Lacan and Bergson each “disguises a more subtle Platonism within an incomplete move to immanence” (61-62). The problem, in other words, lies precisely in relation to, in Clemens’s own words, “his [Lacan’s] own peculiar form of immanence.” With both Lacan and Bergson, I argued that theirs are forms of immanence that preserve and repeat aspects of Platonism and foundationalism that seem sustainable in the absence of traditional forms of transcendence.

I do not see this difference in Lacan’s and Deleuze’s forms of immanence as a matter of equivocity versus univocity, where univocity amounts to some reworked form of totality, and so I would challenge Clemens’s formula that “equivocity is the cost of trying to think immanence without totality; univocity is the cost of trying to think immanence without negativity.” Deleuze’s form of immanence is one structured through disjunctive synthesis, and what is univocal in it is precisely this disjunction.⁶ It is simply that disjunction does not take the form of a fissure of the type that, in many theories indebted to Lacan, is constitutive of both the subject and the space of politics. Perhaps, from such a perspective – and even though “pure difference” is quite obviously an oxymoron – this univocity of difference must appear to be a reassertion of purity and totality. But whether the claim of Badiou and others that univocity reinvoles totality is an innocent misunderstanding or a red herring (I sometimes suspect the latter), I think it very much occludes a genuine discussion about what is at stake in the shared aspiration towards immanence. First, if disjunction does designate a differentiation – or, perhaps better, a folding – that cannot be put in terms of lack, void, or fissure, it shows that Deleuze’s terminology of affirmation and excess and his opposition to the language of lack and negation are neither feeble efforts “to give yourself a nice warm feeling of being productive and affirmative (because you don’t like the words ‘negation’ or ‘lack?’)” nor attempts to rephrase Lacan’s thought while deflecting some “anxiety of influence” that Lacan supposedly exercised over Deleuze. Rather, they designate precisely a fundamental break Deleuze executes in relation to Lacan – a break that, ironically in light of Clemens’s early remarks, operates on a reconceptualization of space in which disjunction does not take the form of foundational repression or exclusion.⁷ From Deleuze’s perspective, lack and fissure remain abstract portrayals of this disjunction, portrayals that capture only limited aspects of its operations (i.e., those that place the subject on the terrain of the desire of the Other, not those that deterritorialize this formation). Second, if the concept of fissure – and the associated idea of constitutive exclusion – is indeed indispensable for the concept of the subject, then the central question is not whether immanence is achieved at the cost of reintroducing totality or retaining a continuing sense of transcendence, but whether the subject itself is not the cost of immanence, whether immanence might not ultimately be incompatible with a retention of the subject. This is in part an ontological question, but it is above all a moral and political one, and there is certainly a case to be made on both sides of the debate. But it does little good to portray one side of this discussion as being simply apolitical or incapable of proposing a viable conception of politics. Although I am not certain where Clemens stands on the possibility of a Lacanian politics, his conclusion that there is no possible Deleuzian politics, and his counsel that this should be openly acknowledged, seems to overlap substantially with the criticisms of Deleuze commonly made by those who deem the subject to be a political *sine qua non* – and perhaps *this* is what should be openly acknowledged. I would not accept Clemens’s view that I do not go far enough in the direction set out by Deleuze because I seek to retain the word “politics.” I would instead turn the question around and ask whether others might not go far enough because, still linking politics to a subject striving (and presumably inexorably failing) to realize “human revolutions or utopian projections,” they fail to consider what political philosophy could be in the absence of the subject or where the subject is treated merely as a simulation. But I will return to the issue of politics later, after addressing the issue of the simulated status of identity and the consequences of a time out of joint that views the subject as a simulation for the unity of the self.

Jon Roffe is certainly not the first to suggest to me that treating identity as a simulation risks evacuating reality from the actual by leaving actual identities with “no purchase on reality.” But I am not sure this concern is warranted. Firstly, I do not think that holding these aspects of experience to be optical effects or illusions denies their purchase on reality. From the perspective of standing on the earth’s surface, the sun and the moon appear to be approximately the same size. This does not mean they are *really* the same size, but it also does not mean that they do not *really* appear this way. In regarding identities, be they individual or collective, in an analogous way, I tried to show that despite their significance, their reality does not extend beyond the way they appear from a certain perspective. To me, the status of identity as a simulation or an optical effect of difference is a necessary consequence of the Nietzschean perspectivism that characterizes Deleuze’s entire corpus. It certainly does not mean these simulations do not have profound effects or that they do not exercise substantial power in the way they exert claims to truth, but they are no less superficial and fragile for that reason. I do not think that acknowledging their superficiality alongside their staying power is a contradiction: presumably in whatever ways the sun and the moon have organized and will continue to organize our individual and social lives, they have appeared and will continue to appear to be roughly the same size, and this reality will remain a perspective illusion. Secondly, I do not believe Deleuze’s conceptualization of the actual is reducible to a realm of identity or (temporary) fixity, a view held by the likes of Žižek, who takes the virtual to be “the pure flow of experience, attributable to no subject, neither subjective nor objective” and the actual to be a world of “fixed entities, just secondary ‘coagulations’ of this flow.”⁸ Certainly Deleuze speaks of the actualization of the virtual as a process of “differentiation” into “species and distinguished parts,” but importantly he holds that this process remains one of dispersion and positive resonance, so that “the negative appears neither in the process of differentiation nor in the process of differentiation,” but instead appears in actual terms and relations “only in so far as these are cut off from the virtuality which they actualise, and from the movement of their actualisation.”⁹ Simulation, therefore, pertains not to the actual as such, but only to the appearance of coagulation, of a subject enduring through change, of the negative separation of things and parts, and so forth, within the domain of actual entities or events. To refer to an example I give in the preface of the book, someone may have a seemingly stable personality characterized by generosity, a sarcastic sense of humour, and a short temper; however, since no one remains the same over time, it cannot be for the same reasons because he or she is not actually the same person. The stability, in other words, exists in the effect, as a surface effect of processes of becoming, but through an illusion of perspective it appears to be the enduring base – the character – of the person and something persisting through all changes.

Jack Reynolds raises the concern that the disjunctive structure of time rests on unredeemed and possibly just dogmatic assertions that dismiss time’s equally fundamental integrative aspects and its connection to movement in the lived present. He presents this in terms of temporal disputes between post-structuralist and phenomenological accounts of time. But I would not agree that accounts of time out of joint “typically depend upon an opposition between the event and inexorable sameness” or that their criticisms of a phenomenological account lie quite where he seems to think they do. They certainly pertain to the unity of the self, but, I would say, it is a matter of whether this unity must take the form of a subject, and, indeed, whether this subjective unity is really required for the sort of accounts in which phenomenology excels, such as skills acquisitions and experiences that require absorption in the living present. In the twelfth reflection of the book, I drew on Nietzsche’s analysis of the drives and their relation to the ego in order to develop this idea of the self as a dispersed but synthesized being whose agency generates the simulation of an ego acting as a governing centre. This self is not simply lacking in unity, even if it is not centred. But perhaps a better account, and one that speaks more directly to Reynolds’s example of the cricket batsman, is found in Sartre’s early essay, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, which is certainly an important influence on Deleuze and which features prominently in *The Logic of Sense*.¹⁰ Following phenomenology’s basic premise that consciousness is consciousness of an object, Sartre holds that the ego is extraneous to consciousness’s synthesis with its object, and that it only appears in acts of reflection, when consciousness divides itself into reflecting and reflected consciousnesses in order to perceive its activity as if from outside. Thus, much like the cricket player, an unreflecting self might be absorbed in the act of reading, conscious of the book and its activity without any “I” impeding on the immanent unity of the experience; but as soon as this consciousness divides itself and reflects on this activity, it finds itself declaring “I

REPLY

am reading.”¹¹ Of course, such reflection is often crucial for many forms of concerted and sustained action, and so, in activities such as writing, deciding what to buy in the grocery store, or practicing so as to absorb into one’s muscle memory all the disparate but interconnected aspects of foot position, posture, grip and swing needed to successfully hit a cricket ball (or baseball) approaching at high speed, the “I” persistently makes an appearance. But while it arises in the coordination presupposed in these activities, it does not function as a governing centre: the “I” does not really organize the individual’s sustained activity, but emerges off of the self-to-self relationship the activity involves insofar as this activity requires consciousness to grasp its moments in a single intuition.¹² Sartre holds the ego to be dubitable but not a hypothetical object,¹³ and in this sense the ego that transcends consciousness’s agency necessarily exists; but he also speaks of it as a semblance and as a false representation that consciousness gives to itself.¹⁴ Greatly in contrast to his later affirmation of Cartesianism, Sartre’s fundamental point in *The Transcendence of the Ego* is that the role of phenomenological reduction is to remove the ego from consciousness, revealing consciousness alone to be concrete agency, but an agency that no longer takes the form of a subject.¹⁵ Far from being opposed to the kind of integration of the living present of Reynolds’s cricket player, the idea of the subject as a simulation affirms it on many points.

In the introduction I wrote that “this consideration of structural ungrounding and the concomitant status of identity as a simulation have profound implications for the entire way in which power, meaning, and resistance – as well as time and change – are theorized for a pluralist politics and ethics” (4). The last third of the book tried to cash out this claim through a series of engagements that explored, on the one hand, how even in a nihilistic condition where fixed markers and truths have lost their legitimacy, these superficial categories of identity continue to organize the distribution of disciplinary power relations; and, on the other hand, how the structure of time as eternal return conditions forms of transmutation that underpin Foucault’s thesis of the care of the self and Deleuze and Guattari’s understanding of micropolitics. These transmutations can certainly be collective – there seems to me to be no necessity that they are restricted to the realm of (individual) self-problematizations. They are often subtle and hidden beneath markers of identity that continue to appear stable and substantial, as Foucault demonstrates when he traces the collective ethical transformations that occur in ancient Greece and Rome even while moral codes about sexuality remain fairly constant. What is important is that even while the same processes that produce the appearance of stable truths and identities also constitute the mechanisms of resistance, flight, and transmutation that exceed their terms, these simulated markers do not simply disappear. Whether this is enough to answer Jon Roffe’s concern that an ontology that forcefully shows how identities necessarily dissolve cannot show a point to acting against them or against their reterritorializing effects, I am not sure. But I do not think that a space of politics is denied by the fact that abstract identities and lines of flight are engendered together; on the contrary, I think it ensures such a space. What makes this not only ethical but also a political space is that it involves engagement and negotiation with constitutive and agonistic relations of power and difference that cannot be incorporated into some higher order or simply excluded, making politics something ineliminable. As Lyotard writes in *Heidegger and “the jews”*: “The differend, transcribed as ‘tendency,’ as ‘faction,’ gives rise to negotiations, lies, maneuvers, concessions, denunciations.... If this is horrifying, then one ‘cannot engage in politics.’ One has others do it.”¹⁶ Admittedly, this does not in itself provide “a motivation for political action, either in the form of a general orientation or as a guideline for the choice of specific actions.” Yet I wonder whether providing such a normative standard should really be the criterion for the implications of an ontology moving beyond the ethical and into the political realm. If ethics is conceived in a Nietzschean or Foucauldian sense, as a sensibility that is part and parcel of relations to self and to others, rather than as a set of codes or imperatives, then a political ethics probably cannot entail a particular political position. But I do not think that is sufficient to make it any less a *political* ethics.

There are important political questions that we face in our time, such as how we motivate ourselves and others into political action; how we build effective political movements; how we decide what specific political action should be taken; how we determine when and where it might not be a bad idea to stage a revolution of some sort or another, or at the very least to smash up something fundamental; how we resolve what we ought to keep and what we ought to throw away in a new political future (a question of how we institute rupture and cope with continuity at the same time). I would not claim to have answers to these questions (though I know more than a

few people who would volunteer to provide them). I am sure, however, that they can only be decided collectively (that is to say, politically), that they will differ across the multiple layers that constitute political and social life, and that they are quite specific to time and place. But I think there is a more basic question that also needs to be asked, an ethical question that lies at the intersection of ethics and politics: what is it to be a “political animal,” particularly one that doesn’t suffer (too much) from *ressentiment*? Without providing firm and final answers to the other questions, I think the answer to this one suggests something about what those other answers can and must be. And I do not think the answer to this more basic question can be that to be a political animal is to be as a political subject, whether this is the unconscious subject of desire as lack or the subject whose conscious sense of itself and its identity is constituted through the friend/enemy binaries that characterize practices of hegemonization.¹⁷ I have long felt that the pluralisms built on such conceptions of the subject are actually quite narrow, and that the politics they offer is ultimately not very useful in a myriad of areas where collective solutions always remain temporary, never exhaust the problems to which they respond, and always generate new and quite different problems to negotiate. And so I have tried, through ontological explorations of time and synthesis, to open up a domain where what matters is the capacity to revalue and move beyond a series of crude but still very influential identities and binary oppositions, and to offer alternative formulations of selfhood agency, power, resistance, and sense that speak to this requirement. But there is much more to be done. As I said at the beginning of this reply, I do not feel like such an important person not to be deeply humbled by this forum being organized on my book. I certainly also do not consider myself such a master of these issues not to feel like I have only scratched their surface so far.

Nathan Widder is Reader in Political Theory in the Department of Politics and International Relations at Royal Holloway (University of London).

REPLY

NOTES

1. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002.
2. An implied consequence of this view that time's structure arises only alongside its movement is the idea John Mullarkey presents in his review of "time being self-sufficient *in its temporality* (rather than atemporality): we understand it not by thinking it, but by enacting it, by actually 'whooshing about a bit' (and everything else that this condescending phrase might indicate)." I am not sure, however, what one is doing when thinking – certainly in the Deleuzian sense of encountering the outside, but probably also in the austere philosophical sense of schematizing and finding sufficient reasons and even the everyday forms of thought – if not "whooshing about" in time.
3. Nietzsche sums up this point: "We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we can live – by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith nobody now could endure life. But this does not prove them. Life is no argument. The conditions of life might include error" (Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books), §121).
4. Several important steps forward here have been made by Edward Kazarian's recently completed PhD thesis, "The Science of Events: Deleuze and Psychoanalysis" (Villanova University Philosophy Department, 2009).
5. Consider, for example, the alternative Slavoj Žižek lays out between affirming the subject as a "unique scene of the Self" or denying this thesis and reducing the self to a "pandemonium of competing forces" (Žižek Slavoj, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, revised edition (London: Verso, 2008), p. xxiii).
6. Clemens quotes approvingly of a description I give on page 94 of the phallus as a differentiator, but he leaves off the statement two sentences later that "it [the phallus] is therefore univocal across the series, but its univocity is that of an enigma."
7. Admittedly, this point is not overtly thematized in *Reflections on Time and Politics*, but I have addressed it directly in relation to Lacanian-inspired political theories in Widder, Nathan, "What's Lacking in the Lack: A Comment on the Virtual," *Angelaki* 5.3 (2000), pp. 117-138.
8. Žižek, Slavoj, *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 22.
9. Deleuze, Gilles, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Athlone Press), p. 207.
10. Before going too deeply into this example involving a human self, I would like to respond to a statement Reynolds seems to make in passing, viz. that in referring to my ontology of time as a human but not a humanist ontology, I suggest an idealist position that the condition for anything to change is the human being being out of sync with itself, and that this differs from Deleuze's metaphysics and transcendental philosophy, which makes stronger claims about the temporality of things. On the one hand, I do not see my position as one that centres temporality and change on human experience in this way (and I'm also not sure exactly how the conjunction of four separate sentences from four pages of my introduction demonstrates this). I certainly accept, for example, that soft clay has a memory, that is, a natural tendency to resume its previous shape if it is bent or dented, and more generally that things have a temporal nature independent of us. On the other hand, I cannot see how any ontology, Deleuze's included, could be anything but a human ontology, despite (and I'm not sure if this is motivating Reynolds here) Deleuze's frequent borrowings from the sciences, including from biology, embryology, physics, and geology. Science remains a human construct, even if what science examines is not, and to me, at least, the interesting philosophical questions concern how and where science and the world it studies connect and do not connect, and also how science and philosophy overlap but remain disjointed (so that there really are philosophical questions about time that are simply different from scientific ones, and vice versa). But perhaps I am just one of the few people who take seriously Deleuze's and Guattari's claims that they were never engaged in doing science in the first place. A useful discussion of this somewhat controversial position can be found in Isabelle Stengers's "Gilles Deleuze's Last Message," located at <http://www.recalcitrance.com/dleuzelast.htm>.
11. Sartre, Jean-Paul, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, trans. Forrest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: The Noonday Press, 1957), pp. 46-47.
12. "Concerted action is first of all...a transcendent. That is obvious for actions like 'playing the piano,' 'driving a car,' 'writing,' because these actions are 'taken' in the world of things. But purely psychical actions like doubting, reasoning, meditating, making a hypothesis, these too must be conceived as transcendences. What deceives us here is that action is not only the noematic unity of a stream of consciousnesses: it is also a concrete realization. But we must not forget that action requires time to be accomplished. It has articulations; it has moments. To these moments correspond concrete, active consciousnesses, and the reflection which is directed on the consciousnesses apprehends the total action in an intuition which exhibits it as the transcendent unity of active consciousnesses" (Sartre 1957, pp. 68-69).
13. "I do not say to myself, 'Perhaps I have an ego,' as I may say to myself, 'Perhaps I hate Peter'" (ibid.: 76).
14. See *ibid.*, pp. 79, 101.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
16. Lyotard, Jean-François, *Heidegger and "the jews"*, trans. Andreas Michel and Mark S. Roberts (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 57.

17. That these conscious and unconscious forms of the subject are intertwined can be seen in the roles they play in the work of theorists such as Žižek, Judith Butler, and Ernesto Laclau.

THE TRAGEDY OF NATURE: THE SUNSET AND THE DESTRUCTION OF METAPHOR IN THE WRITINGS OF MALLARMÉ AND DERRIDA

Barnaby Norman

In his 1971 essay ‘La Mythologie blanche’¹, translated by Alan Bass as ‘White Mythology’², Derrida focuses on the metaphors of illumination in the philosophical tradition, articulating the “solar system” of metaphysical conceptuality³. The essay is concerned with the concept of metaphor as it has been determined by this tradition for which the light of the sun has provided the natural element of thought. Derrida argues that the sun has constituted a natural centre or ground of proper meaning which has assured the stability of the opposition of the proper and the metaphoric, he then seeks to undermine this opposition by showing that this most “natural referent” is itself already “metaphorical”. In the course of this analysis Derrida destabilises the metaphysical concept of metaphor through a deconstructive procedure which “explode[s] the reassuring opposition of the metaphoric and the proper”⁴, releasing the concept from the constraints of the system in which it is inscribed and re-inscribing it in a general economy of metaphors.⁵

The above is a sketch of one of the two possible “self-destructions” of metaphor considered by Derrida at the end of his essay. This “self-destruction” implies the opening of the text of dissemination as metaphor is cut loose from a proper ground. There is, however, another self-destruction which constitutes the *metaphysical* end of metaphor. This self-destruction “...follows the line of a resistance to the dissemination of the metaphorical...”, it is “...the metaphysical *relève* of metaphor in the proper meaning of Being”⁶. This destruction would be the achievement of the metaphysical project in *parousia*. Here the detour of metaphor would culminate with metaphor “rediscovering the origin of its truth”⁷. It is this trajectory of metaphor which, Derrida argues, has “marked... the man of metaphysics”⁸. In this doubled ending we can read the Nietzschean/Heideggerian inflection of the Derridean text. On the one hand, there is metaphor as it is conceived and considered within the horizon of metaphysics and, on the other, there is metaphor as it breaks with this same horizon.

In Derrida’s essay the two ends of metaphor are coordinated with two readings of the sunset. The end characterised as philosophical corresponds to the Hegelian moment. This is articulated in Derrida’s text. In a footnote at the end of ‘White Mythology’ Derrida quotes Hegel’s *Lectures on the history of Philosophy*:

... by the close of day man has erected a building constructed from his own inner Sun, and when in the evening he contemplates this, he esteems it more highly than the original external Sun. For now he stands in a *conscious relation* to his Spirit, and therefore *free* relation. If we hold this image fast in mind, we shall find it symbolising the course of History, the great Day's work of Spirit.

The History of the World travels from East to West, for Europe is absolutely at the end of History, Asia the beginning.. Here rises the outward physical Sun, and in the West it sinks down: here consentaneously rises the Sun of self-consciousness, which diffuses a nobler brilliance⁹.

This famous quotation is echoed in Hegel's equally famous statement in the preface to the *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* where he says that "...the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk".¹⁰ Hegel interpreted world history as the teleological unfolding of reason. Situated at the apotheosis of this development he considered his own speculative system to be the final accomplishment of philosophy. The passage to this achievement takes place in the twilight of world history and the setting sun is the *interiorisation* of this sun in Absolute Knowledge. The history of philosophy would culminate in the speculative assumption of the transcendence of the Platonic *eidōs* in the Absolute of the Hegelian *Idea*.

The philosophical end of metaphor is therefore "...not interpreted as a death or dislocation, but as an interiorising anamnesis (*Erinnerung*), a recollection of meaning, a *réleve* of living metaphoricality into a living state of properness"¹¹.

The *other* sunset, or the passage to the *other* night¹² is in profound complicity with this first, philosophical, dusk. Derrida says that it "...resembles the philosophical one to the point of being taken for it"¹³. This *other* self-destruction takes off from the first, it is in "traversing and doubling the first self-destruction" that the *other* "passes through a supplement of syntactic resistance"¹⁴. It is this "supplement of syntactic resistance" which displaces the closure of metaphysics, which endlessly "opens its circle". Earlier in the essay, Derrida analysed the classical conception of metaphor as it was written into the text of philosophy in Aristotle. In this analysis he highlighted that the concept of metaphor tended to exclude from its field what he refers to as *articulations*. Metaphor operates as the transfer of semantic plenitudes and so reduces or excludes syntactic features of language. Modern linguistics has, however, made Derrida deeply suspicious of the notion of a semantic plenitude; the meaning of a lexeme is not a property of the lexeme itself but is constituted through the differential play of the entire field. The syntactic is no longer reduced to a role of articulating discrete units of constituted meaning but is brought forward as a *constitutive* factor in the *generation* of meaning. This syntactic excess is a "...properly *unnameable* articulation that is irreducible to the semantic *réleve* or to dialectical interiorisation"¹⁵, as such it refuses or displaces the closure of metaphysics as it destroys or displaces the metaphysical concept of metaphor.

What interests me here is that this *other* self-destruction of metaphor comes to be thought as a *doubling* of the first. The two sunsets are not separate occurrences; they belong to the same movement. At the very end of 'White Mythology', Derrida mentions Bataille as a "metonymic abbreviation" for the *other* end. This reference draws Derrida's earlier essay, 'From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve' into the immediate context of his discussion of metaphor. In this essay Bataille's "sovereign operation" is understood to transgress the Hegelian closure of metaphysics only because he 'simulates' the closure of Absolute Knowledge:

Sovereignty transgresses the entirety of the history of meaning and the entirety of the meaning of history, and the project of knowledge which has always obscurely welded these two together. Unknowledge is, then, superhistorical, but only because it takes its responsibilities from the completion of history and from the closure of absolute knowledge, having first taken them seriously and having then betrayed them by exceeding them or by simulating them in play.¹⁶

This earlier essay is very useful for understanding what Derrida is up to in 'White Mythology'. He is following the trace of a destabilising movement which overtakes metaphysics at its own limit. It is for this reason that the sunset plays a remarkably complex role in 'White Mythology'. It operates on two levels of economy at once,

THE TRAGEDY OF NATURE

or operates the passage between two economies, *closing* the restricted economy of metaphysics and *opening* the general economy of dissemination. The argument that I would like to put forward in this essay is that this reading of the sunset is rooted in a body of work which is barely mentioned in ‘White Mythology’ but which discretely organises the work.

‘White Mythology’ was first published in *Poétique* 5 in 1971. The previous year Derrida had published two essays in *Tel Quel* which constitute his most sustained engagement with the writings of Stéphane Mallarmé. In the second of these two essays, which together make up ‘The Double Session’¹⁷, in a famous line of argument which challenges the ‘thematic’ criticism of J. P. Richard’s *L’Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé*, Derrida uses language which is strikingly similar to that used in ‘White Mythology’:

The syntax of its folds [the hymen] makes it impossible for us to arrest its play or its indecision, to fix it on any one of its terms, to stop, for example, as Richard has done, on the mental or the imaginary. Such a stopping of the works subsume “*mimique*” within a philosophical or critical (Platonic-Hegelian) interpretation of *mimesis*. It would be incapable of accounting for that excess of syntax over meaning (doubled by the excess of the “*entre*” over the opposition syntactic/semantic); that is for the remarking of textuality.¹⁸

I would like to propose, therefore, that despite the scant reference to Mallarmé in ‘White Mythology’¹⁹, his writings are in fact *the* most important resource for Derrida’s deconstruction of the metaphysical concept of metaphor. In order to argue this point it will first be necessary to demonstrate *why* Mallarmé’s poetic work brings us to the limit at which metaphor oversteps its metaphysical conception. This will be done through a brief look at Mallarmé’s aesthetics as they develop across the crisis inaugurated in the writing of the *Scène de Hérodiade*. A second line of argument will acknowledge the increased critical attention paid to the motif of the sunset in his work, the most important study in this area being Bertrand Marchal’s 1988 book *La Religion de Mallarmé*, and then go on to look at how Derrida reads Mallarmé’s text as the scene of a crisis for criticism and for rhetoric. At the end of the essay I will return to Derrida’s specific reading of the sunset in the crucial passage of ‘White Mythology’ where the Aristotelian inscription of metaphor as a philosophical concept is radically challenged. It is perhaps fitting given the enigmatic nature of the sun which “can always not be present in act or in person” that this essay is dealing with a reference which does not show itself as such but which is elliptically evoked; the glimmer of a distant star which is invisible to a direct gaze or the barely visible scintillation of a diamond buried in the face of a rock.

PART I: MALLARMÉ’S AESTHETICS

In the introduction it was noted that the sunset plays a complicated role in Derrida’s argument, being at the same time the *closure* of the restricted economy of metaphysics and the *opening* of the general economy of dissemination. It was then suggested that in order to account for this double role it would be necessary to take a closer look at Mallarmé’s aesthetics. Why is this the case?

In his reading of Bataille in ‘From a Restricted to a General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve’ Derrida is at pains to emphasise that in order for Bataille to disrupt the Hegelian system it was necessary for him to take Hegel seriously, to take Absolute Knowledge seriously. It was necessary for Bataille to accompany Hegel to the end of the system in order that he affirm that excess which cannot be incorporated into the system and which therefore disrupts its closure. Derrida’s strategy when reading Mallarmé is different; he indicates *textual evidence* in Mallarmé’s writings, highlighting the re-mark of a syntax which is irreducible to any “semantic *relève* or dialectical interiorisation”. My interest in this section is in what is already assumed by Derrida’s reading. How is it that Mallarmé’s work comes to be marked by this syntactic excess? This essay is concerned with the *passage* to a general economy of metaphors; Mallarmé’s writings have been identified as playing a crucial role. My argument is that if Mallarmé’s text is able to play this role, if Derrida’s reading is possible, then this is because Mallarmé’s text, like Bataille’s, is situated at the extreme limit of metaphysical thought. Since it is

Hegel who inscribed reason in history and then his own work at the end of that developmental process, I suggest that Mallarmé's Hegelianism²⁰ is not simply one aspect of his work, but is something that should be taken very seriously. What follows is therefore a redeployment of Derrida's argumentation in his essay on Bataille in the specific sphere of Mallarméan aesthetics.

It will not be possible in the space of this essay to do more than indicate the broad strokes of Mallarmé's Hegelianism which, in order to be fully demonstrated, would require a lengthier articulation of his writings with Hegel's *Aesthetics*. In this section of the essay it will be sufficient to point out that Mallarmé's *Oeuvre* as he began to conceive it across his work on *Hérodiade* is not, as an initial consideration might suggest, excluded by Hegel's text, but strangely mandated. This amounts to a reconsideration of Mallarmé's *Livre* which will allow us to account for its 'irreducible' position of *passage* between the restricted and the general economy.

Mallarmé's use of Hegelian vocabulary in *Igitur*²¹ has always seemed a little enigmatic. Surely, in thinking that a work of art could achieve the Absolute he has mistaken himself for a philosopher. Of course the artwork belongs to one of the three spheres of the Absolute but he must know that it is no longer up to the spiritual task of the age, that it has been superseded by the work of philosophy and is "a thing of the past"²². The artwork has no *right* and no business here; it is the owl of Minerva that takes flight at dusk and the artist should retire from his spiritual task. There seems to be a conflict here between Hegel and Mallarmé. This conflict has tended to make Mallarmé's Hegelianism something of a mystery; it has made Mallarmé appear as someone who has taken on board a certain vocabulary but is wilfully misapplying it, the question arises 'to what ends?' and this only serves to make his *Oeuvre* even more enigmatic. The enigma, however, begins to evaporate if we pay attention to a curious subtlety of Hegel's text which has always gone unremarked in Mallarmé commentary.

Hegel's *Aesthetics* runs through the history of art arguing that the spiritual development of the artwork increases in step with world history. From the Symbolic stage, the threshold of art, we pass to the Classical stage, the stage best suited to the sensuous manifestation of Spirit in the anthropomorphic sculpture of ancient Greece. The Classical Ideal is interrupted by the Christian revelation and we pass to the Romantic stage in which the sensuous medium becomes increasingly unsuitable for the increasing spiritual development of the Christian subject. The artwork is no longer adequate to the content it manifests and the Romantic stage is "...the self-transcendence of art but within its own sphere and in the form of art itself"²³. No longer up to its spiritual task the artwork breaks down, it is at this stage that the higher spheres of Religion and Philosophy can accommodate the spiritual content which is too much for the sensuous medium of the artwork. The artwork withdraws and is considered to be a "thing of the past".

If we remain at this level of Hegel's interpretation, that is to say his introductory comments, then certainly there is no access from here to Mallarmé's Absolute. His evocation of an Absolute achieved in *Igitur* would be incomprehensible in Hegelian terms. If we go further into Hegel's lectures, however, the conflict is dissolved and Mallarmé's Absolute is no longer an aberration but is mandated, even called for by the Hegelian text.

The Romantic stage begins with the transition from sculpture to painting. Painting can capture something of the inner life of its subject and it is entirely appropriate that it should come to the fore as a suitable medium in a Christianised West. Painting is however a transitional stage and is not situated at the end of the development. The highest spiritual content is manifest in poetry. Given that the whole Romantic stage is the self-transcendence of the artwork, the poetic comes to be situated by Hegel at the apotheosis of this process²⁴. Hegel writes:

Only as a result of considering the series of arts in this way does poetry appear as that particular art in which art itself begins at the same time to dissolve and acquire in the eyes of philosophy its point of transition to religious pictorial thinking as such, as well as to the prose of scientific thought. The realm of the beautiful... is bordered on one side by the prose of finitude and commonplace thinking, out of which art struggles on its way to truth, and on the other side by the higher spheres of religion and philosophy where there is a transition to that apprehension of the Absolute which is still further

THE TRAGEDY OF NATURE

removed from the sensuous sphere.²⁵

Poetry is therefore, at this highest stage of the development, in a thoroughly ambiguous position. Art itself begins to dissolve as it dispenses with its sensuous medium, accessing directly the inner life of the subject. In this way, says Hegel: “poetry destroys the fusion of spiritual inwardness with external existence to an extent that begins to be incompatible with the original conception of art, with the result that poetry runs the risk of losing itself in a transition from the region of sense to that of spirit.”²⁶

There is no clear dividing line here. Poetry can push through to its own dissolution. It *must*, in a sense, experience its own death. What other movement is Mallarmé describing in *Igitur*? How else are we to understand Igitur’s final act where he rolls the dice and lies down on the ashes of his ancestors? *Igitur* describes this final transition and the whole tale constitutes an open syllogism; the act accomplished, and *therefore*... Mallarmé pushes to the extreme the logic of Hegel’s *Aesthetics* and does so *in the form of art itself*. This accounts for the crippling and contradictory demands of the *Livre* as Mallarmé conceives it, and also for its questionable ontological status, its quasi-non-existence.²⁷

This reading finds confirmation in Mallarmé’s correspondence (I have quoted below in French the passage that I will be commenting on here).²⁸ In a letter to his friend, Eugène Lefébure, written in May 1867, Mallarmé gave an account of how he understood his work to fit into the historical development of art. The schema he supplies would have undoubtedly been familiar to Lefébure, a devoted Hegelian. There have been, he claims, two great “scintillations” of Beauty on this earth. The first of these is the *Venus de Milo*. In this manifestation Beauty is described as “complete and unconscious” and further on he speaks of the “happiness and eternal tranquillity” of the *Venus*. We have already seen that for Hegel sculpture is the most appropriate form for the manifestation of Classical Beauty. In the introduction to his *Aesthetics*, speaking of the Classical form of sculpture he says: “For through sculpture the spirit should stand before us in blissful tranquillity in its bodily form...”²⁹ and further “...we must claim for sculpture that in it the inward and the spiritual come into appearance for the first time in their eternal peace and essential self-sufficiency”³⁰. Later on, in the main body of the work, Hegel writes: “When the classical ideal figure is at its zenith, it is complete in itself, independent, reserved, unreceptive, a finished individual which rejects everything else”.³¹ The characterisation of Classical Beauty is therefore strikingly similar between Mallarmé and Hegel. But there is more. The second “scintillation” of Beauty is *La Joconde*, the *Mona Lisa*. Since Christianity, Mallarmé says, Beauty has been “bitten in its heart”; Christianity constitutes an interruption of the Classical ideal of Beauty. She is painfully *reborn*, however, but this time with a mysterious smile, in Da Vinci’s painting. The correlation with Hegel’s history is again striking. Mallarmé echoes the sequence of art-forms moving from sculpture to painting, and he also offers the same explanation for the disruption of the classical ideal - Christianity. The Romantic art form begins, for Hegel, through an external intervention in the Classical ideal: “...this new material [the content of Romantic art] is not brought to our minds by the conceptions of art but is given to art from outside as an actual happening, as the history of God made flesh.”³²

Having given his interpretation of these two earlier manifestations of Beauty, Mallarmé now suggests his own *Oeuvre* as a synthesis, an *Aufhebung*, into a higher more complete manifestation. Beauty can smile again with the tranquillity of the *Venus* and the mystery of the *Mona Lisa*. Having passed through the period that separates Mallarmé’s *oeuvre* from the time when the Classical ideal was “bitten in its heart”, Beauty has now gained the self-consciousness denied to the *Venus*. In another letter from the period Mallarmé refers to a “supreme synthesis”; writing to Henri Cazalis this time he says that he is slowly recovering strength “après une synthèse supreme”³³. Interestingly in this same letter he refers to a “terrible struggle with an old and malicious plumage” which he clarifies as a struggle with God. God, he says, has been “terrassé”. We should not rush to interpret this struggle, as we might from a contemporary perspective, as the passage to a secular world, or as a simple loss of faith; God has been brought down to earth, not killed off. In *Hérodiade*³⁴, the poem begun in 1864 and which instigates the crisis under discussion here, Mallarmé has Hérodiade cry to her nursemaid to close the shutters and block out the sky because she hates the “bel azur”³⁵. Mallarmé’s terrible struggle is with transcendence.

His supreme synthesis, the achievement of a poetic Absolute, corresponds very precisely to what was referred to above as the Hegelian moment; the unconscious ideal of Beauty is alienated from itself with the advent of Christianity, to return through a process of historical development to a triumphant self-consciousness. It has been argued in this section that this synthesis is not excluded by Hegel's text but is rather mandated by his comments on the poetic form as the self-transcendence or the dissolution of the art-work at its highest level of spiritual development.

PART II: MALLARMÉ'S SUNSET

All Mallarméan sunsets are moments of crisis – J. Derrida, 'Mallarmé'

The second half of the twentieth century has seen an increase in the critical attention paid to the motif of the sunset in Mallarmé's poetic production. Chapter IV of Richard's *L'Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé* is entitled 'L'Expérience nocturne' and made some interesting points on this subject, in 1959 Gardner Davies published *Mallarmé et le drame solaire*, in which he set out the case that Mallarmé's poetry returns with an extraordinary frequency to this motif and, in 1988, Bertrand Marchal argued in *La Religion de Mallarmé* that the sunset should be viewed as *the* key to a comprehension of Mallarmé's project. To begin with the sunset seems to confirm a Hegelian comprehension of his aesthetic. This is the reading Richard puts forward in 'L'Expérience nocturne'. With the sunset, Richard says, "we attend a death... In the spectacle of the Mallarméan evening, the catastrophe is the equivalent of an apotheosis."³⁶ The sunset is the 'death of God' in the Hegelian sense of a death of transcendence as it was examined in the previous section. The poetic 'dream' of the azure is extinguished here. The azure, Richard argues has always "...laid claim to the passage beyond the window... setting up... the existence of an *elsewhere*", and the "vesperal ruination brings an end to all these dreams". In the concluding paragraph of the last section it was noted that Mallarmé's "synthesis" implied a self-consciousness which was impossible for the Classical ideal of the *Venus*; the coming of the night adds, Richard argues, a *tain* to the window and whereas the day permits an undisrupted view onto the azure, the coming of the night reflects the subject back on himself; the vanishing light implies a reflexive turn onto the subject and a consciousness of self.

Mallarmé's experience is, however, troubling. The triumphant achievement of a new self-conscious Beauty is moderated by a "crushing/overwhelming thought"³⁷. The work on *Hérodiade* may be exhilarating for the artist but the same work confronts him with two abysses. The first of these abysses is properly speaking *disastrous*³⁸ and it even makes him abandon his work for a time. The disappearance of the azure is the disappearance of a transcendent measure of value³⁹. Mallarmé is confronted with "le Néant", nothingness; a supplementary 'nothing' which is neither inside nor outside the saturated field of the Absolute⁴⁰. With this realisation we encounter the modernist break which was so insistently interrogated in the writings of Blanchot. Mallarmé realises⁴¹ that Beauty cannot be referred to a value exterior to the text he writes and it is precisely here that Blanchot follows the movement of a turn inwards. "Why..." he asks in *The Space of Literature*:

...at the moment when through the force of the times art disappears, does it appear for the first time as a search in which something essential is at stake, where what counts is no longer the artist or active labour or any of the values upon which the world is built or even any of the other values upon which formerly the beyond opened? And why is this search nonetheless precise, rigorous, bent upon culminating in a work, in a work which *is*, and nothing more?⁴²

"Literature, here, undergoes an exquisite, fundamental, crisis."⁴³ Mallarmé's 'crisis', initiated in the writing of the *Scène* of *Hérodiade*, is absolutely a 'crise de vers'. In his short text *Mallarmé*⁴⁴, written for the *Tableau de la littérature française*⁴⁵, Derrida's essay is organised around this Mallarméan crisis. It is, he says, a crisis of criticism: "...which will always use judgement *to decide (krinein)* on value and meaning, to distinguish between what is and what is not, what has value and what has not, the true and the false, the beautiful and the ugly, all signification and its opposite."⁴⁶

THE TRAGEDY OF NATURE

The displacement of *value* is a crisis moment for criticism. Criticism, Derrida argues, has always presumed that it is in a position to recover the *meaning* of a text, that is to say that in the last instance it has been determined philosophically according to a value of determinable meaning. The assumption of a transcendent measure of value into the imminence of the text produces an extremely disorientating effect. Mallarmé's text operates a kind of decapitation.⁴⁷ The *Néant* which Mallarmé discovers in this movement is an 'extra-nothing' which unsettles his project: "This extra nothing, this nothing the more, or more the less, exposes the order of meaning (of that which *is*), even polysemous meaning, to the disconcerting law of dissemination. It gives *place*, out of the protocol of "literary" practice, to a new problematic of meaning and being."⁴⁸

This "extra nothing" is therefore what opens the text of dissemination. But this only *happens* at the extreme limit, at the closure of the philosophical/metaphysical (Hegelian) book. This is why Derrida says in 'Outwork' that 'Mallarmé's Book issues from *The Book*.'⁴⁹ Criticism is thrown into crisis because it can no longer continue, according to the regulation of philosophy, to presume a plenitude of meaning which it would be possible to recover. From here on the Mallarméan text will be constrained to interrogate and re-mark the space of its own generation of meaning (for example the *fold* or the *blank*). If criticism attempts to reduce these *re-marks* to *themes* which can be comprehended within a horizon of sense, then it has profoundly missed the radical gesture of Mallarmé's text, and this is precisely the accusation which, in the passage already quoted, Derrida levels at Richard: "Such a stopping of the works subsume "*Mimique*" within a philosophical or critical (Platonic-Hegelian) interpretation of *mimesis*. It would be incapable of accounting for that excess of syntax over meaning (doubled by the excess of the "*entre*" over the opposition syntactic/semantic); that is for the remarking of textuality."⁵⁰

In *Mallarmé*, Derrida hastens to add that this crisis of criticism is also, equally, a crisis of rhetoric "which arms criticism with an entire hidden philosophy. A philosophy of *meaning*, of the *word*, of the *name*."⁵¹ In the discussion of the metaphysical concept of metaphor in the introduction we saw that Derrida notes that for Aristotle metaphor operates as a transfer of semantic plenitudes and that it excludes what Derrida refers to as *articulations* or the syntactic elements of a text. Now, Mallarmé's text is obsessed by its own articulation; if "the word... is no longer the primary element of language" here, then, Derrida argues, the consequences are "far reaching". The *difference* between two terms is irreducible to the notion of a semantic plenitude; modern linguistics has even shown that it is *constitutive* of the meanings of those terms. It is therefore meaningless to speak of the meaning of a differential articulation. Taking the example of the sign *blanc* in Mallarmé's text, Derrida writes:

'... the sign *blanc* ("white," "blank," "space"), with all that is associated with it from one thing to the next, is a huge reservoir of meaning (snow, cold, death, marble, etc.; swan, wing, fan, etc.; virginity, purity, hymen.; page, canvas, veil, gauze, milk, semen, Milky Way, star, etc.). It permeates Mallarmé's entire text, as if by symbolic magnetism. And yet, the whites also mark, through the intermediary of the white page, the place of the writing of these "whites"; and first of all the spacing between the different significations (that of white among others), the *spacing of reading*. "The 'whites' indeed, assume primary importance" (*Un coup de dés*, OC p.455). The white of the spacing has no determinate meaning, it does not simply belong to the plurivalence of all the other whites. More than or less than the polysemic series, a loss or an excess of meaning, it folds up the text towards itself, and at each moment points out the place (where "nothing will have taken place except the place" [*Un coup de dés*, OC 474-75]), the condition, the labor, the rhythm."⁵²

In the earlier text of *Dissemination*, Derrida commented specifically on the consequences of the re-mark of the *blanc* for the concept of metaphor:

The dissemination of the whites (*not* the dissemination of whiteness) produces a tropological structure that circulates infinitely around itself through the incessant supplement of an extra turn: there is *more/no more* metaphor, *more/no more* metonymy [*plus de métaphore plus de métonymie* – translation modified]. Since everything becomes metaphorical, there is no longer any literal meaning and, hence,

no longer any metaphor either.”⁵³

Mallarmé’s ‘synthesis’, we saw, displaces a transcendent measure of value into the immanence of the text, and this movement draws the text into an interrogation of its own genesis. We might credit the writings of Blanchot with being the first place that criticism began to take notice of this strange obsession of the modern ‘literary’ text. It is in Derrida’s work, however, that the consequences of this movement for the philosophical tradition of the West begin to be articulated. The crisis of criticism is also a crisis of rhetoric. For Derrida, the Occident⁵⁴ is in the process of negotiating its end and Mallarmé’s text is an ‘irreducible’ reference here. The crisis of rhetoric takes place at sunset but the sunset in Mallarmé’s text is no longer strictly speaking a metaphor. It can’t be, and this is the radical implication of Derrida’s discourse on metaphor. How can you speak *through metaphor* of the closure of a historical epoch in which metaphor itself is inscribed as a concept, without, in the same gesture, making that concept shake. So, where Bertrand Marchal speaks in his book *La Religion de Mallarmé* of a “tragedy of nature” or a “solar catastrophe” which is the “historical accomplishment of that which the Renaissance inaugurated”⁵⁵, Derrida, on the same limit, speaks of a *catastrophe*⁵⁶ affecting the concept of metaphor itself. Derrida’s text is not contradicted by Marchal’s thesis but it gets caught up on an issue which Marchal tends to elide; while the issue of metaphor does receive some attention in *La Religion de Mallarmé*⁵⁸ it is certainly not treated in the same searching way as it is in *Dissemination* and ‘White Mythology’.

In the same way the value of ‘nature’ is always upheld by Marchal, even when ‘nature’ is rediscovered beyond the closure of a historical epoch as “...that which presents, in its symbolic dimension, the most fundamental psychic reality of man, the elementary syntax of the human soul”⁵⁹. What is nature here when Mallarmé rediscovers in the sunset the mythic structures of the human imagination, buried in “... the most obscure layers of the spirit, at a depth where history has no hold”, structures which are “masked” in society so as to “...privilege the only historic dimension of man identified with reason”⁶⁰? In short, the same goes for the concept of ‘nature’ as for metaphor. If nature is being referred to a depth at which a history of reason ‘has no hold’ then it is being re-considered beyond its inscription as a metaphysical concept in a history of reason⁶¹. I mention this at the end of this section because in Derrida’s reading of the sunset in ‘White Mythology’, the subject of the last section of this essay, the gesture with which he generalises the concept of metaphor also infinitely problematises the value of the ‘natural’.

PART III: THE SUNSET IN ‘WHITE MYTHOLOGY’

The Western tradition of philosophy was, for Derrida, inaugurated in the writings of Plato. In ‘Plato’s Pharmacy’, for example, he refers to “Platonism” which “sets up Western metaphysics in its conceptuality”⁶². In Plato’s *Republic* we find, in the Simile of the Sun, a powerful articulation of the analogy between the sensible sun which allows us to see objects, and the Good which allows us to achieve an intelligible understanding of the objects of thought. The Good permits us to perceive the objects of thought in the same way as the sun permits us to perceive sensible objects, but as well as this, it engenders those same objects: “The good therefore may be said to be the source not only of the intelligibility of the objects of knowledge, but also of their being and reality; yet it is not itself that reality, but beyond it and superior to it in dignity and power.”⁶³

Glaucon responds to Socrates here, to the general amusement of those gathered round, that “It must be miraculously transcendent”. So, the Good is a transcendent measure of value which will orientate ‘[a]nyone who is going to act rationally either in public or private life’. The path of the philosopher will lead him towards the Good and in the end he will be able to “look directly at the sun itself, and gaze at it without using reflections in water or any other medium, but as it is in itself.”⁶⁴ Socrates announces here the desire of philosophy to contemplate the Good directly, without recourse to reflection. This would constitute the disappearance of metaphor in the direct contemplation of the ground of truth. It would be the disappearance of the metaphor of the sun; a philosophical sunset.⁶⁵

For Derrida the analogy of the sun is not simply an analogy, the light of the sun constitutes the very “ether” of

THE TRAGEDY OF NATURE

philosophical thought. The passage of the sun towards its setting in the West and the *consentaneous* rising of a Sun of self-consciousness which Hegel speaks of in the quotation from the *Lectures on the history of Philosophy* given above is not simply a metaphor that the author Hegel *chose* to use. To contemplate the source of the light is a philosophical dream which has traversed the history of philosophy from Plato to Hegel. "Doubtless", Derrida says, "Hegel's Idea... is not Plato's Idea; doubtless the effects of the system are irreducible and must be read as such. But the word *Idea* is not an arbitrary *X*, and it bears a traditional burden that continues Plato's system into Hegel's system"⁶⁶ It is not sufficient, however, to point to the etymology of the word *Idea* (from the Greek *eido*, to see) to reveal a metaphorical origin. Again, metaphor belongs to that system as one of its philosophemes and cannot be mobilised unproblematically to explain the origin of the system, it is "derivative of the discourse it would allegedly dominate"⁶⁷ The recourse to etymology is therefore reliant on a concept which is produced within the system.

Derrida's strategy is different. He seeks to demonstrate that the philosophical concept of metaphor is sustained by the opposition of the proper and the metaphorical, that metaphor is understood by philosophy as a detour on the way towards the re-appropriation of a proper ground of truth. In this philosophical sunset metaphor destroys itself. On the same limit, however, Derrida argues that another destruction takes place. This time the turn of the sun does not close down the metaphysical project on a proper ground but dislocates that ground by showing it to be *already* metaphorical. This gesture radically problematises the concept of metaphor because it re-inscribes it beyond the opposition which has sustained it in the tradition. This generalisation takes place through a reading of the sunset.

Derrida refers here to the Aristotelian inscription of metaphor in the text of philosophy. This is a privileged moment because although Aristotle "invented neither the word nor the concept of metaphor... he seems to have proposed the first situating of it, which... has been retained as such with the most powerful historical effects". In the first of the two chapters of 'White Mythology' dealing with Aristotle Derrida analyses how the concept of metaphor, as Aristotle inscribes it, excludes what we have been referring to as *articulations*, the syntactic elements of a text, and considers only the *nominisable*, or elements which constitute a semantic plenitude. Only these latter are suitable for metaphoric transfer. For Derrida, this is indicative of the philosophical assumption that a word can have a unique meaning or at least a finite number of meanings. The word is the primary element of language and, as the transfer these semantic plenitudes, metaphor operates in the service of meaning. It does not trouble the potential recovery of full meaning; it works for it. Ultimately this would lead to the philosophical destruction of metaphor as it effaces itself in the movement of idealisation. Derrida notices, however, a problem in Aristotle's discourse. In the second of the chapters dealing with Aristotle, he quotes from the *Topics I*:

Every object of sensation, when it passes outside the range of sensation, becomes obscure; for it is not clear whether it still exists, because it is comprehended only by sensation. This will be true of such attributes as do not necessarily and always attend upon the subject. For example, he who has stated that it is a property of the sun to be 'the brightest star that moves above the earth' has employed in the property something of a kind which is comprehensible only by sensation, namely 'moving above the earth'; and so the property of the sun would not have been correctly assigned, for it will not be manifest, when the sun sets, whether it is still moving above the earth, because sensation fails us.⁶⁸

Derrida draws two consequences from this. Firstly, Heliotropic metaphors are always imperfect metaphors. Because the sensory sun cannot be known in what is proper to it, because it disappears from view, it cannot provide enough knowledge for a full re-appropriation of meaning. "Every metaphor which implies the sun (as tenor or vehicle) does not bring clear and certain knowledge"⁶⁹ The sun produces bad metaphors because it is improperly known. This would not be problematic in itself (there can be bad metaphors) if it were not for the fact that the sun is not just one metaphor among others. "The sun", says Derrida:

Does not just provide an example, even if the most remarkable one, of sensory Being such that it can always disappear, keep out of sight, not be present. The very opposition of appearing and

disappearing, the entire lexicon of the *phainesthai*, of *aletheia*, etc., of day and night, of the visible and the invisible of the present and the absent – all this is possible only under the sun.

The sun “structures the metaphorical space of philosophy” and in this respect it “represents what is natural in philosophical language”. If philosophy implies a movement towards the intelligible perception of truth then this sunset is a *catastrophic*⁷⁰ event. It introduces an irreducible loss, an “extra nothing”, into an economy which has always been predicated on a return in full; it opens the passage to a general economy. This catastrophic inversion leads to the second consequence:

Something has been inverted in our discourse. Above we said that the sun is the unique, irreplaceable, natural referent, around which everything must turn, toward which everything must turn. Now, following the same route, however, we must reverse the proposition: the literally, properly named sun, the sensory sun, does not furnish poor knowledge solely because it furnishes poor metaphors, it is itself solely metaphorical. Since as Aristotle tells us, we can no longer be certain of its sensory characteristics as of its “properties”, the sun is never properly present in discourse. Each time that there is a metaphor, there is doubtless a sun somewhere; but each time that there is a sun, metaphor has begun.

The consequence of this, for Derrida, is that the natural light of philosophy is not natural. There is no sensory sun which has not already been affected by metaphor. The sun cannot furnish for philosophy a ground of truth because the same movement that sets up the metaphorical space of philosophy (“The very opposition of appearing and disappearing, the entire lexicon of the *phainesthai*, of *aletheia*, etc., of day and night, of the visible and the invisible of the present and the absent”), the *sunset*, also assures its (the sun’s) non propriety, its metaphoricity (now no longer understood within the philosophical horizon). So Derrida continues: “If the sun is metaphorical always, already, it is no longer completely natural. It is always, already a luster, a chandelier, one might say an *artificial* construction if one could still give credence to this signification when nature has disappeared. For if the sun is no longer completely natural, what in nature does remain natural?”

In the French text of the essay the second sentence of the above quotation reads: “Il est déjà toujours un lustre, on dirait une construction *artificielle* si l’on pouvait encore accrédi-ter cette signification quand la nature a disparu.” The presence of the word ‘lustre’ here is striking. It is a word which has appeared before in Derrida’s work, in readings of Mallarmé, notably at the beginning of the first essay of ‘The Double Session’. In a preliminary note Derrida asks when describing the scene of the first delivery of the text at a session of the *Group d’Etudes théoriques*: “Is it pointless to add ... that the room was lighted by a sumptuous, old fashioned lustre?”⁷¹ A *lustre* hangs therefore over his discussion of Mallarmé. This is no accident, and a couple of pages later we read: “The title will thus remain suspended, in suspension, up in the air, but glittering like a theatre lustre of which the multiplicity of facets... can never be counted or reduced”. The *lustre* stands in for the title, *represents* the suspended title. In the same passage the ‘title’ is associated with “the head, or the capital...” and in ‘Plato’s Pharmacy’ the ‘capital’ is associated with the father of the logos precisely in a discussion of the Good in Plato’s text: “The figure of the father, of course is also that of the good (*agathon*). Logos *represents* what it is indebted to: the father who is also chief, capital, and good(s). Or rather *the* chief, *the* capital, *the* good(s). *Pater* in Greek means all three at once.”⁷²

Following this chain around Derrida’s text we can begin to glimpse that the *lustre* is no throw away reference here. It is not even simply an oblique reference to Mallarmé’s work. It provides the (non-natural) light of dissemination. Through a series of textual referrals it brings us back to the stakes of ‘White Mythology’. The sunset is *also* the decapitation of the text: “What ruins the “*pious capital letter*” of the title and works towards the decapitation or ungluing of the text is the regular intervention of the blanks, the ordered return of the white spaces, the measure and order of dissemination, the law of spacing...”⁷³

THE TRAGEDY OF NATURE

CONCLUSION

This essay has attempted to do two things. Firstly, to show that, despite scant reference to Mallarmé in ‘White Mythology’, his writings in fact play a crucial role in Derrida’s discussion of metaphor. Secondly, I have attempted to show *why* it is that Mallarmé’s text has been able to play this role. It was argued that Mallarmé’s “supreme synthesis” displaces a transcendent measure of value, the “bel azur”, into the immanence of text. This gesture initiates a crisis, a ‘crise de vers’, which is both a crisis of criticism and a crisis of rhetoric. Mallarmé discovers an “extra nothing” which cannot be incorporated in the saturated field of the Absolute and which, for Derrida, opens the text of dissemination. The sunset was shown to play a complicated role here as it is both the *closure* of the restricted economy *and* the *opening* of the general economy of metaphors.

At the end of the final section I followed a chain of referral from the evocation of the *lustre* in ‘White Mythology’ through other texts of Derrida’s, published in *Dissemination*, to suggest that the issue of the sunset is indissociable from the issue of the decapitation of the text. It is a sovereign operation, an operation on the sovereign, which, cutting off the King’s head, doing away with God’s representative, does away with transcendence. Mallarmé’s text is revolutionary in the banal sense in which this word is often used, but it also belongs to the Revolution. For Hegel, the Revolution was the passage to the modern state, the *ideal* of Plato’s Republic is actualised in the concrete circumstances of World History. This movement is catastrophic in the two senses of the word given in a footnote above. On the one hand, it is “the change or revolution which produces the conclusion or final event”, and on the other it is “an event producing a subversion of the order or system of things”. There are, then, two sunsets and two catastrophes. This, Nancy says, is where we are:

...we can now clarify what we said earlier: ... the world-becoming (detheologization) displaces value – makes it immanent... And this displacement is not a transposition, a “secularisation” of the onto-theological or metaphysical-Christian scheme: it is rather, its deconstruction and emptying out, and it opens onto another space – of place and of risk – which we have just begun to enter.⁷⁴

NOTES

1. First published in *Poétique* 5 (1971) and then included in *Marges de la philosophie* (Editions de Minuit, 1972)
2. *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, 1984).
3. “There is no such thing as a metaphysical concept” Derrida wrote in ‘Outwork’, *Dissemination*, (The Athlone Press, 1981) p. 6. He went on to say that “The ‘metaphysical’ is a certain determination or direction taken by a sequence of ‘chain’”. The metaphysical concept does not exist, as such, independent from its inscription in a text. The “textual labour” of deconstruction intervenes to exhibit and open up the “restricted economy” of this metaphysical determination. A metaphysical concept can be destabilised *because* it has no ontological primacy but is produced by dominant forces within a field of thought. For this reason I will often in this essay refer to the ‘inscription’ of a metaphysical concept.
4. *Marges* p. 270
5. For further discussion of Derrida’s discourse on metaphor, see ‘Metaphorics and Metaphysics: Derrida’s Analysis of Aristotle’ by Irene. E. Harvey Chap. 7 in *Jacques Derrida, Critical Thought* . (Ashgate, 2004) and the last section of the chapter entitled ‘Literature or Philosophy?’ in Rodolphe Gasché’s *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*. (Harvard University Press, 1986)
6. *Marges* p. 268
7. *Marges* p. 268
8. *Marges* p. 268
9. Introduction in *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, G. W. F. Hegel, trans. J Sibree (The Colonial Press, 1900) pp. 109-10.
10. Preface in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. G. W. F. Hegel, trans H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge University Press, 1991) p. 23
11. *Marges* p. 269
12. ‘The *other* night’ is intended here as a reference to the work of Maurice Blanchot who’s readings of Mallarmé in the 1950s were of considerable importance to Derrida. For more on the ‘*other* night’ see esp. ‘Orpheus’s Gaze’ in ‘The Space of Literature’ Blanchot, trans. Ann Smock (University of Nebraska, 1982). For a selection of references articulating Blanchot’s criticism of the metaphoric of illumination with that of Derrida, see ‘Derrida et Blanchot, Quelques citations’ by François Brémond, in *Les Fins de l’homme, Colloque de Cersy*. pp 214-218.
13. *Marges* p. 270
14. *Marges* p. 270
15. *Marges* p. 270
16. ‘From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve’ in *Writing and Difference*, J. Derrida. Trans. A. Bass. (Routledge, 2001) p. 341
17. Published together as ‘La double séance’ in *La dissémination* (Editions du Seuil, 1972). Trans. Barbara Johnson as ‘The Double Session’ in *Dissemination*. (The Athlone Press, 1981)
18. *Diss* p. 231
19. His name is mentioned only once, in the *Exergue*, where Derrida writes: “In the same constellation, but in its own irreducible place, once again we must reread the entirety of Mallarmé’s texts on linguistics, aesthetics, and political economy, all that he wrote on the sign *or* [gold], which calculates textual effects that check the oppositions of the literal [*proper*] and the figurative, the metaphoric and the metonymic, figure and ground, the syntactic and the semantic, speech and writing in their classical senses, the more and the less. And does so notably on the page which disseminates its title *or* in the course of “fantasmagoric settings of the sun””. *M* p. 219
20. For more on the question of Mallarmé’s Hegelianism see: ‘Mallarmé et le rêve du « Livre »’ in *Essais sur Mallarmé*, Lloyd James Austin (Manchester University Press, 1995); *L’Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé*. J-P Richard. (Editions du Seuil, 1961) esp. p. 231 where Richard supplies a generous list of further biographical references on this subject.
21. *Oeuvres complètes* p. 433
22. “...art, considered in its highest vocation is, and remains for us a thing of the past” *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art Vol. I*. G.W.F. Hegel. trans. T.M. Knox. (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1975) p. 11
23. *Aesthetics Vol. I* p. 80
24. For a discussion of the specific position of poetry in Hegel’s *Aesthetics*, see J-L Nancy’s *Les Muses* (Galilée, 1994) esp. ch. II ‘La jeune fille qui succède aux Muses’.
25. *Aesthetics Vol II* p. 968
26. *Aesthetics Vol II* p. 968
27. On this subject see *Le livre à venir* (Gallimard, 1959) ‘Le Livre à venir’ ‘Où va la littérature’ M. Blanchot. For further discussion of Mallarmé and Hegel see also ‘L’Absence de livre’, the last chapter of *L’entretien infini* (Gallimard, 1969) M. Blanchot.
28. “Et si je parle ainsi de *moi*, c’est qu’hier j’ai fini la première ébauche de l’œuvre, parfaitement délimitée et impérissable si je ne péris pas. Je l’ai contemplée sans extase comme sans épouvante, et, fermant les yeux, *j’ai trouvé que cela était*. La *Vénus de Milo* – que je me plais à attribuer à Phidias, tant le nom de ce grand artiste est devenu générique pour moi, La *Joconde* du Vinci,

THE TRAGEDY OF NATURE

me semblent, et *sont*, les deux grandes scintillations de la Beauté sur cette terre – et cet Œuvre, tel qu’il est rêvé, la troisième. La Beauté complète et inconsciente, unique et immuable, ou la *Vénus* de Phidias, la Beauté ayant été mordue au cœur depuis le christianisme par la Chimère, et douloureusement renaissant avec un sourire rempli de mystère, mais de mystère forcé et qu’elle *sent* être la condition de son être. La Beauté, enfin, ayant par la science de l’homme, retrouvé dans l’Univers entier ses *phases corrélatives*, ayant eu le suprême mot d’elle, s’étant rappelé l’horreur secrète qui la forçait à sourire – du temps de Vinci, et à sourire mystérieusement – souriant mystérieusement maintenant, mais de bonheur et avec la quiétude éternelle de la *Vénus de Milo* retrouvée ayant su l’idée du mystère dont *La Joconde* ne savait que la sensation fatale.” letter written to Eugène Lefébure on the 27th May 1867. *Mallarmé Correspondance* (Folio Classique. Gallimard, 1995) p. 349

29. *Aesthetics Vol. I* p. 85

30. *Aesthetics Vol. I* p. 85

31. *Aesthetics Vol. I* p. 532

32. *Aesthetics Vol. I* p. 506

33. *Correspondance* p. 342

34. For more discussion of *Hérodiade*, particularly regarding the poems relationship to *Igitur*, see; *Mallarmé et le rêve d’Hérodiade*. Gardner Davies. (Librairie José Corti, 1978) ; *Le « Mythe de Hérodiade » chez Mallarmé. Genèse et évolution*. Sylviane Hout (AG Nizet, 1977).

35. *OC* p. 48

36. *L’Univers imaginaire de Mallarmé* p. 156 (translations from this work are my own)

37. *Correspondance* p. 297 Letter to Henri Cazalis 28th April 1866

38. In the title of his Blanchot’s book *L’écriture du désastre* ‘désastre’ is a semi-quotation from Mallarmé who speaks of a ‘désastre obscur’ in his poem *Le tombeau d’Edgar Poe*. Etymologically the word is interesting ‘dés-astre’, lack of star. The sunset is a disaster in the sense that it is the disappearance of the measure of value that has guided the West.

39. For a discussion of how this re-evaluation of value has repercussions in the domain of political economy see J-L Nancy’s *The Creation of the World or Globalisation* trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (State University of New York Press, 2007). Esp. Ch. I ‘Urbi et Orbi’, for example: “...we can now clarify what we said earlier: if the world-becoming (detheologization) displaces value – makes it immanent – before world-forming displaces the production of value – making it universal – the two together displace “creation” into the “without-reason” of the world. And this displacement is not a transposition, a “secularisation” of the onto-theological or metaphysical-Christian scheme: it is rather, its deconstruction and emptying out, and it opens onto another space – of place and of risk – which we have just begun to enter.” p. 51

40. “But there is, here I intervene with assurance, something, very little, a mere nothing, let’s expressly say, *which exists*, for example *equal to the text*” *OC* p. 638. Quoted by Derrida in ‘Outwork’ *Dissemination*, p. 57

41. Saying that it is Mallarmé who ‘realises’ this may suggest ignorance of a whole discourse on the ‘signature’ which is of such importance in Derrida’s work. It may also suggest ignorance of Mallarmé’s own pronouncements on the depersonalisation of the author of the work. Following protocol I will say that when the use of a proper name seems to indicate reference to an unproblematised notion of subjectivity it should be taken as a ‘metonymic abbreviation’ for a movement which can be ‘read’ in the texts bearing that signature.

42. *The Space of Literature* Maurice Blanchot, trans. Ann Smock. (University of Nebraska Press, 1982) p. 220

43. ‘Crise de vers’ *OC*, S Mallarmé p. 360. (my translation).

44. Published in English (trans. Christine Roulston) in *Acts of Literature* (Routledge, 1992)

45. *Tableau de la littérature française : De Madame de Stél à Rimbaud* (Gallimard, 1974)

46. *Acts of Literature*, p. 113

47. The scene described in the ‘Cantique de Saint Jean’, the poem (unpublished in Mallarmé’s lifetime) printed as the final part to *Hérodiade* by the editors of Mallarmé’s *Oeuvres complètes*, unites the motif of the sunset with that of the decapitation of the prophet, recounted from the first person perspective (that is to say that Saint John narrates his own death). This poem re-enacts the overcoming of transcendence as in the final verse Saint John’s head refuses the ‘above’ and gestures towards the earth.

48. ‘Outwork’ in *Dissemination*, p. 56

49. *Diss* p. 54

50. *Diss* p. 231

51. *Acts of Literature*, p. 113

52. *Acts of Literature*, p. 116

53. *Dissemination*, p. 257

54. Occident – from present participle *occidere*, *to set* (used of the sun)

55. *La Religion de Mallarmé*, p. 255 (my translation)

56. Derrida speaks of a ‘catastrophe’ affecting metaphor in his later essay ‘The *Retrait* of Metaphor’, trans. Peggy Kamuf in *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (Stanford University Press, 2007)

57. See, for example, the sub-section ‘Mythologie et poésie’ in the chapter entitled ‘Une Théologie des lettres’, pp. 450-456

58. *La Religion de Mallarmé*, p. 363
59. *La Religion de Mallarmé*, p. 363
60. See on this subject 'On the Essence and Concept of *Physis* in Aristotle's *Physics B*, F. M. Heidegger in *Pathmarks* (Cambridge University Press)
61. *Diss*, p. 76
62. *The Republic*, Plato trans. Desmond Lee. (Penguin Books, 1987) p. 248
63. *The Republic*, p. 258
64. Hegel defines the artwork as the sensible manifestation of the idea. In his essay 'The Vestige of Art' published in *The Muses*, Nancy says the following: "If we pay attention and weigh words and their history carefully, we will agree that there is a definition of art that encompasses all the others (for the West at least, but art is a Western concept). It is, not at all by chance, Hegel's definition: art is the sensible presentation of the Idea. No other definition escapes this one sufficiently to oppose it in any fundamental way" p. 88. The dissolution of the artwork would correspond to the presentation of the Idea in pure thought as it overcomes its sensible presentation. This accounts for the paradoxical position of poetry in the *Aesthetics* as was noted above. If art "touches an extremity" in the work of Mallarmé, then it finds itself in the strange position of dispatching with its sensible manifestation. This can only be 'figured' as a sunset as the sphere of the sensible annihilates itself and art 'withdraws'. The essay by Nancy just quoted is extremely pertinent for the issues under discussion in this essay.
65. *Marges*, p. 254
66. *Marges*, p. 228
67. *Topics I*, 5, 102a20-22. Aristotle. Quoted by Derrida, *Marges*, 250
68. *Marges*, p. 250
69. *Marges*, p. 251
70. Catastrophe – overturning, sudden turn... 1. 'The change or revolution which produces the conclusion or final event of a dramatic piece'... 3. An event producing a subversion of the order or system of things. (Oxford English Dictionary)
71. *Diss*, p. 173
72. *Diss*, p. 81
73. *Diss*, p. 178
74. *The Creation of the World or Globalisation*, p.51

INNER EXPERIENCE IS NOT PSYCHOSIS: BATAILLE'S ETHICS AND LACANIAN SUBJECTIVITY

Andrew Ryder

LACAN AND BATAILLE

Despite his personal proximity to Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan makes very few direct references to his work. Indeed, the only mention of Bataille's name in the 878 pages of the *Écrits* is in a footnote to "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis."¹ This article declares that Daniel Schreber, the prototypical psychotic, was exposed to inner experience by his insight that "God is a whore."² Lacan affirms that his mention of inner experience is an allusion to Bataille, and refers the reader to *Inner Experience*, which he calls Bataille's central work; and to *Madame Edwarda*, in which "he describes the odd extremity of this experience."³ Lacan here identifies the experience of *Madame Edwarda* with Bataille's "inner experience," and stipulates that both are identical to Schreber's psychotic break.

"On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" was written in 1958 and generated by a seminar Lacan gave in 1955-1956.⁴ He had known Bataille for twenty years, having been a participant in Bataille's *Acéphale* group.⁵ Lacan was also the companion of Sylvia Bataille (née Maklès), Bataille's first wife, following their separation in 1934; Lacan married her in 1953.⁶ Sylvia remained close to Bataille for the rest of her life following their separation and divorce. Moreover, Lacan raised Laurence, Bataille's daughter, because her birth parents separated when she was four years old.⁷ The 1950s was a period of close contact between the two men; Lacan contributed some of the research for *Erotism*, published in 1957.⁸

Aside from this close biographical link and Lacan's explicit invocation of Bataille in his consideration of psychosis, Slavoj Žižek has argued for another point of proximity between their thought, a link that he finds dangerous and aims to overcome. In Žižek's view, it is in *Seminar VII* that Lacan is closest to Bataille in his formulation of transgressive *jouissance*.⁹ This is an influence that Žižek believes that Lacan subsequently escapes. I will argue that despite Lacan's personal friendship with Bataille, his statement in "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" betrays a misunderstanding of *Madame Edwarda*. That is, while Lacan had commitments to the reconstitution of subjectivity that render Bataille's work illustrative of psychotic experience, close reading of Bataille's text reveals a distinct position on self and other.¹⁰ In consideration of

these two points of contact between Lacan and Bataille (on psychotic experience and transgression), we must note that the neurotic who is led to undertake an act corresponding to the essence of his or her desire is not said to be a psychotic.¹¹ To reconcile this apparent contradiction, it is necessary to realize that for Lacan, all subjects are potentially psychotic, and avoid this only by the fragile construction of an ego ideal.¹² Psychosis, then, is the result of a foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father and a denial of the Other of the Other, leading to direct contact with the real.¹³ From this perspective, Bataille's refusal of the Name-of-the-Father and of subjectivity (writing under a pseudonym) and emphasizing an immediate contact with otherness that identifies a specific alterity (the title character) with its ultimate guarantor can only be read as a psychotic experience.¹⁴ I will inquire into Lacan's theories of subjectivity and examine the impetus they receive from Bataille's ideas on ipseity, as well as their departure from his thought, as well as investigating the Lacanian approach to a Kantian ethical problem, as read by Adrian Johnston, with the end of comparing this to Bataille's own imbrication of eroticism and ethics. A close reading of Bataille will show an alternative position on alterity that escapes subjectivity, while remaining distinct from the psychosis diagnosed by Lacan and the irresponsible nihilism suspected by Žižek.

Lacan and Bataille attended Alexandre Kojève's lectures together; as a result, both of their reconsiderations of selfhood bear the mark of his revisitation of G.W.F. Hegel.¹⁵ Kojève emphasized the free human subject as mortal and conscious of his finitude, and characterized by a linguistic capacity in some sense reliant on this ability to die.¹⁶ Regardless of the substantial imprint on Lacan's thought of Bataille's reception of and intervention into these Kojévian ideas, Bataille does not himself seem to have borrowed any particular insight from Lacan's work, nor did he ever endorse the direction Lacan had taken with ideas that are in some cases derived from his own writings.¹⁷ Lacan's reformulation of subjectivity is not only an exploration of Freud's discovery of the unconscious, but also a reception of Bataille's experience of selfhood as disrupted by alterity. I read Bataille's disruption as essentially an ethical one, which Lacan partially undoes by his re-inscription of the philosophical precedence of a subject (however finite and decentered) over Bataille's sensitivity to the singular and the irreducibly other. Lacan's increasing systematization at the hands of Žižek and others (notably, Bruce Fink, Joan Copjec, Alenka Zupancic, Lorenzo Chiesa, and Adrian Johnston) has had the effect of formulating an ingenious and robust return to the ethics of a committed subject.¹⁸ This development has, however, been at the price of other aspects of Lacan's thought more intimately linked to Bataille's experiences, elements that are, in my view, more adequate to an ethics that allows for the possibility of an encounter with alterity.

Lacan alludes to Bataille on the question of psychosis. Unlike many psychoanalysts, Lacan was particularly fascinated by psychotic experience.¹⁹ For this reason, his interpretation of Sigmund Freud's inquiry into the Schreber case is crucial to an understanding of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Dr. Daniel Paul Schreber was a judge who intermittently became overcome by wild delusions. He recorded his thoughts and feelings in *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, to which Freud devoted an analysis.²⁰ Schreber's came to believe that he had died, that he could communicate with God and with devils, and that he lived in another world.²¹ He also became paranoid and convinced that his former physician was trying to kill him.²² At the core of Schreber's delusions was a messianic belief that he had been chosen as a redeemer for the world, and that this redemption involved his transformation into a woman as a result of a miracle.²³ At times, he was convinced that God had impregnated him while he remained a virgin.²⁴

Freud discerns homosexuality in Schreber's disorder; his paranoid delusions cover up amorous feelings towards his doctor.²⁵ Many of Schreber's beliefs revolve around solar rays and the sun; he declared, "The sun is a whore."²⁶ Freud writes that the sun is a sublimation of the father; he extrapolates that Nietzsche's song "Before Sunrise," from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, speaks to a longing for an absent father. Among Freud's very few direct references to Nietzsche is his claim that the *Übermensch* is the primal father.²⁷ Bataille strongly identified with Nietzsche; this suggests that from a Freudian perspective, he might share an eroticized fascination with the father, comparable to Schreber's.²⁸ Bataille's work does at one point seem to converge with this homosexual fascination with the father, and with identity between the sun and the paternal figure. In a very early fragment, written sometime between 1927 and 1930, which he later titled "Dream," Bataille writes, "I'm something like three years old my legs naked on my father's knees and my penis bloody like the sun."²⁹ Psychoanalysis

INNER EXPERIENCE IS NOT PSYCHOSIS

would see this as an ambivalent fantasy of being castrated by the father as punishment for masturbation. This is as close as Bataille gets to Schreber's symptoms. However, a close reading of Bataille's subsequent texts shows a decidedly less central concern with fatherhood than Freud and Lacan emphasize, and a corresponding fascination with feminine alterity that differs from the psychoanalysts here discussed.³⁰

BATAILLE'S LITERATURE

Bataille's early surrealist writings also include "The Solar Anus," which features imagery that seems consonant with Schreber's delusion, but also introduces a concern with female alterity that is absent from Schreber's recollections. At the end of the piece, Bataille writes that "Love, then, screams in my own throat; I am the *Jesuve*, the filthy parody of the torrid and blinding sun."³¹ This seems to reinforce the identity between the father and the sun; the narrator affirms himself as a dirty simulacrum of the sun.³² A son can see himself as the distorted copy of his father, but this is subordinate to the affirmation of love screaming in his throat; this love does not scream at the father/sun. Bataille continues: "I want to have my throat slashed while violating the girl to whom I will have been able to say: you are the night."³³ So his desire is for a death that occurs simultaneously with transgressive contact with a feminine other, who he identifies not with the sun but with its absence, the night. "The Sun exclusively loves the Night and directs its luminous violence, its ignoble shaft, toward the earth, but it finds itself incapable of reaching the gaze or the night [...]"³⁴ In this passage, Bataille writes that the masculine authority, the sun, of which he is a copy, is not self-satisfied but aimed at the night, a night with which it cannot be in contact without losing it. The piece concludes: "The *solar annulus* is the intact anus of her body at eighteen years to which nothing sufficiently blinding can be compared except the sun, even though the *anus* is the *night*."³⁵ This final statement indicates that female alterity towards which his sodomistic desires are directed may appear as the sun for purposes of representation, but is in fact nocturnal and dark. The punchline of the narrative shows that the title is misleading; the disclosure of eroticism reveals that it is a crepuscular anus, not a solar anus, that is the focus of Bataille's obsession.³⁶

The other discrepancies with Schreber follow from this. Bataille's erotic concern is always with the otherness of night, while psychosis of Schreber's type eliminates the possibility of singular otherness in favor of identification with the universe. Lacan writes that for Schreber, "there is almost nothing in his surroundings that in some sense isn't him."³⁷ While otherness does exist for Schreber, it is an empty and superficial understanding of otherness as an abstract container with no singular content.³⁸ This identification leads Schreber to a partial denial of death.³⁹ While Schreber fantasizes himself as a redeemer, as Christ or Christ's mother, Bataille's invocations of Christ always emphasize a death of God from which there is no resurrection.⁴⁰ Schreber also forcefully denies sexual difference by his desire to become an impregnated virgin.⁴¹ Bataille, however, breaks with both the cult of virginity and the Sadian dismissal of sexual difference through the means of sodomy.⁴² Bataille's invocation of anal sex in "The Solar Anus" will be superseded by the encounter with God through sexual difference that takes place in *Madame Edwarda*.⁴³ This book, which Maurice Blanchot called "the most beautiful narrative of our time," is both a fictional narrative and a continuation of Bataille's conceptual inquiries.⁴⁴ It is comprised of two parts; a long preface and a subsequent *récit*. I will argue that the fictive narrative conveys certain insights that exceed the reach of Bataille's own explication. Bataille's language in the "Preface" creates the misleading impression that eroticism discloses a relationship to one's own death, which partly obscures the question revealed by the narrative: that is, the nature of the relationship to another.⁴⁵

Madame Edwarda is virtually plotless and has no characters of psychological substance. In summary: A restless narrator wanders into a brothel, where he encounters the titular prostitute. He performs cunnilingus on her in view of the other patrons. They leave the brothel and wander off together; while walking, Edwarda chastens the narrator, shouting profanities at him. They encounter a taxi-driver, with whom Edwarda has intercourse and orgasms. The narrative abruptly ends. We should note that the narrator is made sharply irreducible to the biographical Bataille. The story is published under the name "Pierre Angelique;" the author of the preface refers to the "author of *Madame Edwarda*," thereby dissociating the two.⁴⁶ For this reason, the first-person narrator of the story must be taken as empty and anonymous. *Madame Edwarda* is also minimally characterized and

is mainly described affectively; we are told almost nothing of what she looks like, and our attention is mainly brought to her raspy voice as her most distinctive trait. The cabdriver, the third character, is given essentially no substance at all. In this story that has hardly any plot and depthless characters, the main driving force is affect: Bataille's language constantly refers to boredom, confusion, terror, and madness.

Madame Edwarda first appears naked and accompanied by a "swarm" of women; she is named as the Madame and so given a title of hierarchical respect.⁴⁷ So she is "clothed" in her honorific, which under the circumstances appears inappropriate, and is otherwise exposed. The narrator relates his encounter with the Madame in a chain of linked clauses: "at a certain moment, her hand slid, I burst, suddenly, like a pane of glass shattering [...] I felt her break in two at the same instant: and in her starting, roving eyes, terror, and in her throat, a long-drawn whistled rasp."⁴⁸ The narrator appears to be describing a spontaneous and premature orgasm, which he experiences as a moment of rupture that is provoked by Edwarda and that is out of his control. She is torn along with the narrator; this laceration appears to describe a physical orgasm, though not necessarily. Our attention is drawn to Edwarda's eyes, which lack focus and are filled with fear (the object of her terror is not specified), and her voice, which the narrator specifies as "in her throat," that is, an expression of her body. The narrative characterizes this voice as the product of an "étrangement," a strangled outcry; she does not express comprehensible words.

Following this instant, the narrator invokes theological experience: "I became unhappy and felt painfully forsaken, as one is when in the presence of GOD."⁴⁹ Paradoxically, the narrator locates the feeling of being forsaken by the presence of God, rather than by His absence. "I was filled with unbearable sadness to think that this very grandeur descending upon me was withering away the pleasure I hoped to have with Edwarda."⁵⁰ Here the experience is explicitly characterized as unpleasant; he describes an initial awareness of the divine that separates him from the enjoyment he previously associated with Edwarda the prostitute. Then the appearance of God, initially diffuse, becomes localized into a single point, and rather than being separate from Edwarda and her pleasures, is revealed as interior to her being:

I was pulled out of my dazed confusion by an only too human voice. Madame Edwarda's thin voice, like her slender body, was obscene: 'I guess what you want is to see the old rag and ruin,' [*Tu veux voir mes guenilles?*] she said.

Hanging on to the tabletop with both hands, I twisted around toward her. She was seated, she held one leg stuck up in the air, to open her crack yet wider she used fingers to draw the folds of skin apart. And so Madame Edwarda's 'old rag and ruin' [*les « guenilles » d'Edwarda*] loomed at me, hairy and pink, just as full of life as some loathsome squid [*une pieuvre répugnante*].⁵¹

This passage begins with the separation between the human and the divine. The narrator is distracted from his initial apprehension of God by the human voice of Edwarda, which is linked to her body and which is characterized as "obscene." This establishes, first, that Bataille considers this voice to be an extension of the carnal body. Second, the narrative dictates that both the body and the voice should be considered as both offensive and exciting prurient interest. Edwarda's statement is her weary acknowledgment that the object of the narrator's scopophilia must be the "guenilles" (rags), which is a way of referring to her genitals that indicates dirt, multiplicity, and tearing. The narrator indicates that he has been hanging on to the tabletop, which suggests that he is in need of external support in order to prevent being pulled to the floor. He is required to contort his body in order to observe Edwarda.

She exposes her "crack," separating her labia. This name indicates a break or induced gap. At this point, the narrator describes Edwarda's crack as looking back at him, as hairy and pink, as filled with excessive life, and he likens it to "*une pieuvre*," an octopus, specified as repulsive and horrible. While the association of women with animals is standard, in contrast to the usual invocation of a Mallarmean faun or a Baudelairean cat, the narrative refers to the octopus as the figure for femininity—that is, a cephalopod with myriad legs, invertebrate, with three hearts, without hair, and whose skin is slimy and inky. Lacan will later describe the octopus as "the most beautiful animal there is," perhaps in tribute to Bataille's story.⁵² Bataille's anatomical diction is worthy of comment. Bataille almost never writes "vagin," in part because its medicalizing connotations interfere with the

INNER EXPERIENCE IS NOT PSYCHOSIS

erotic effect he aims to produce. It is also significant that the etymological root of the word “vagina” is the Latin for “scabbard,” which makes it secondary to and complementary with the phallus.⁵³ Bataille’s avoidance of this term prevents the tendency to consider feminine sexuality as filled by the masculine organ. In *Histoire de l’œil*, the narrator applies the term “*cul*” (**ass**).⁵⁴ In this work, Bataille chooses a word that avoids mention of sexual difference.⁵⁵ In contrast, *Madame Edwarda* dictates the names “fente” (crack) and “guenilles,” words that intensify the female genitalia as alien to masculine identity. From this perspective, *Histoire de l’œil* remains within a more comforting sexual economy in which female sexual difference is of little significance.⁵⁶ From a certain, perhaps too charitable, perspective, Bataille’s failure to make note of the clitoris is actually a testament to his willingness to consider the feminine as utterly different, as a locus of alterity, rather than an object to be inscribed into an essentially masculine sexual economy.⁵⁷

Bataille is often said to impart a morbid account of the erotic. For example, Susan Sontag has it that Bataille discloses the topic of pornography as death rather than sex.⁵⁸ This conclusion is so prevalent that it is necessary to pay close attention to this sentence: “And so Edwarda’s rags looked at me, hairy and pink, just as full of life as some repugnant octopus” (translation modified).⁵⁹ Unlike James Joyce, who writes of death as “the grey sunken cunt of the world,” Bataille writes of intense, frightening life.⁶⁰ Readers who see Bataille’s women as signs for nothingness, lack, or death, then, can only be confounded by this passage.⁶¹ Madame Edwarda, the eroticized feminine, does not reveal the terrifying emptiness of the grave; rather, her crack reveals an abundance of ongoing and alien vitality. After the description of Edwarda’s genitals, the narrator asks for an explanation of what has just transpired: “‘Why,’ I stammered in a subdued tone, ‘why are you doing that?’ ‘You can see for yourself,’ she said, ‘I’m GOD.’”⁶² The narrator loses control over his ability to communicate through ordinary language; he experiences an awe or respect. Edwarda answers that she is demonstrating herself as God. At this point, the separation earlier indicated between the pleasure of the narrator’s orgasm at Edwarda’s hand, and the subsequent guilt, dread, and awareness of God, vanishes. Edwarda is herself revealed as the cause, not of pleasure, but of the apprehension of the divine. It is necessary to pay close attention to this scene, because it is often said of narratives of transgression that they rely on their interdiction; the law is revealed by its violation.

Of this experience, Bataille does not write at all of an ephemeral fleshly enjoyment that is followed by spiritual torment. Rather, the (masculine) spiritual, “GOD,” not a goddess, is forcefully described as emanating from the (feminine) flesh, Edwarda. The essence of pleasure is revealed to be not at all pleasurable. More importantly, the carnal *is not indicated as the site of death*. This is, then, not the penitent Christian narrative in which sexual pleasure only discloses mortality and finitude. Instead, the apparent object of desire reveals itself as excessively alive, and itself the origin of the interdiction against its enjoyment. From the perspective of Edwarda as God, that is, the guarantor of the law and the origin of ethical demands, it becomes possible that virile life, which disregards the demands of everyday law, is itself brought into existence by a relationship to alterity, and not through autonomy. “‘I’m going crazy → ‘Oh, no you don’t, you’ve got to see, look ...’ Her harsh, scraping voice mellowed, she became almost childlike in order to say, with a lassitude, with the infinite smile of abandon: ‘Oh, listen, fellow! The fun I’ve had ...’”⁶³

In this passage, both the narrator and Edwarda speak, and their words are directly juxtaposed to one another. The narrator states that he is losing his sanity, and Edwarda, who has declared herself divine, demands that he continue in his observation. At this point, her voice is described as childlike. This suggests two things. First, because Edwarda has just named herself as an incarnation of God, this childlike quality recalls images of the Christ-child. Second, it recalls the psychological claim that the true aim of female desire is to produce a child.⁶⁴ At this point, Edwarda speaks as herself a child, as already the aim of her own desire. This is to say that, unlike in the Freudian schema according to which woman is essentially lacking and constantly wishing for the phallus, or for a child who stands in for this phallus, Edwarda speaks as herself a child; she is herself in a state of desire for herself. Edwarda, untroubled, asks the narrator to observe and listen to her communication of her enjoyment, which is “infinite,” absent from the world, and indicates “abandon.”

So the difference between Schreber and Bataille is quite great. Schreber’s statement that “the sun is a whore” is at the antipodes of Madame Edwarda’s declaration that she is God, because it is the feminine alterity of night that is the God-whore, not the masculine solarly of Schreber’s imagination. It is the aim of Schreber’s entire

megalomaniacal fantasy to eliminate alterity by the means of union with totality, where Bataille aims for precisely the reverse. Schreber's psychosis began with an initial experience of the world's twilight, which he subsequently filled in with his delusions.⁶⁵ Bataille's thought, in contrast, emerges from a continual approach towards this twilight, this disruption of selfhood by an obscure other, rather than its denial by means of hallucination.

FROM IPSEITY TO POETRY

Lacan insists that Schreber's relationship to the world and to language is not that of a poet. He defines poetry as "the creation of a subject adopting a new order of symbolic relations to the world."⁶⁶ Bataille's notion of poetry does not coincide with this, but what Lacan and Bataille have in common is that they inherit a Kojévian view of language in which a certain use of language has the capacity to negate.⁶⁷ The psychotic, as incapable of a true negation (being himself identical in a sense to everything), cannot construct a subjective use of language. It is in Lacan's view essential to poetry to be able to construct metaphors, while psychotics, children, and animals rely on metonymy.⁶⁸ This indicates that Bataille's inner experience has little in common with psychosis, because Lacan indicates that it is surrealist poetry that best exemplifies the preeminence of metaphor over metonymy in artistic creation. It is metaphor that relies on awareness of death, for Lacan, as naming does for Kojève.⁶⁹ However, Lacan is a much more orthodox Kojévian than Bataille, in that he ascribes the privilege of this type of creative language to a subject and decisively separates this subject from the world of animals. He says explicitly that animals do not understand metaphors and hence can never be poetic, while Bataille writes that true poetry approaches the immediacy of "the impenetrable howling of a dog."⁷⁰ These citations suggest that Bataille's consideration of poetry and indeed existence is something that departs from Lacan's consideration of subjectivity, to such a degree that Lacan at one point believed that Bataille's thought occupied a space contiguous to the pre-subjective world of the psychoses.

It is necessary to recall Bataille's difficult meditation on the notion of ipseity in *Inner Experience*, particularly because Lacan gambled on uniting its insights with *Madame Edwarda* and with Schreber's memoirs. At the close of part III, Bataille begins to discuss ipseity, which etymologically indicates selfhood and identity (from Latin, *ipse*, self). Bataille begins by noting that human ipseity is irreducibly complex and constantly dynamic; he compares it to a knife of which one first replaces the handle, then the blade.⁷¹ In other words, self-sameness is continually interrupted by successive difference.⁷² He explicitly links this condition to man's existence in the world through language.⁷³ It is then the unusual status of language as a system of differences that leads to human status as essentially non-self-identical. Bataille proceeds from this to question the status of the erotic relationship: "Knowledge which the male neighbor has of his female neighbor is no less removed from an encounter of strangers than is life from death."⁷⁴ This passage indicates that the erotic encounter is both the same as and different from the meeting of strangers, just as life is essentially different from but relies on death. This is to say that the erotic encounter is on one hand intimate and hence a meeting of neighbors and not of strangers, but insofar as it is erotic, necessarily includes a glimmer of the strange and the alienated even at the moment of the utmost familiarity. This insight is magnified in the section "Communication," in which Bataille writes, "We can discover only *in others* [*en autrui*] how it is that the light exuberance of things has us at its disposal."⁷⁵ Following from this reading, it is my suggestion, first, contra Lacan, that Bataille has little in common with Schreber, because Schreber's consideration of otherness is a hollow one that relies on an identification of himself with a sun that sheds light on everything and cannot contemplate darkness; his language is an eternal linking of self with other.

Conversely, Bataille's understanding of language insists on the reliance of life on death, knowledge on non-knowledge, identity on difference, and not through a monistic uniting of these opposites but rather an awareness of the gap between them and an openness to the outside. Second, Bataille's poetry and experience are also distinct from Lacan's subject who adopts symbolic relations to the world around him, because the Lacanian subject effectively understands metaphor in order to comprehend his finitude, a model which is all too Kojévian in its belief that the subject can master language and thereby establish autonomy from determination from without. Bataille has continually insisted on the irreducibility of alterity, one that is inherent in language and

INNER EXPERIENCE IS NOT PSYCHOSIS

that underlies the differences and communications between humans and animals, and men and women. It is Lacan and Schreber both who have found ways to ward off the possibility of a twilight of the world that would admit difference, Schreber through his delusions and Lacan through his subject; Bataille is distinct from each of them in his refusal to close his eyes to night.⁷⁶

LACAN'S SUBJECT

To examine Lacan's account of the overcoming of psychosis, we should strive to understand the emergence of subjectivity. Lacan induces communication between psychopathology and philosophy, indicating a comparison between the psychotic point of view, on the one hand, and the development of subjectivity, which he associates with Kant, on the other. I have already discussed Lacan's association between Bataille and psychosis; it is now necessary to read the links between Lacan's reading of Kant and his debt to Bataille. Lacan's ethics grapple with the possibility of transgressing the law at the price of death, and he believes he can find the best instance of this type of transgression in Kant's work.

Lacan asserts that ethics is no less than the origin of psychoanalysis.⁷⁷ To demonstrate this, Lacan embarks on a two-pronged criticism of the notion of happiness. The first type Lacan regards with dismissive contempt, this being "the American way," which he associates with ego psychology.⁷⁸ Lacan perceives utilitarianism behind American psychoanalysis, to which he refers as the "service of goods," with "goods" holding the double meaning of both consequentialist desirable outcomes and commodities. The second mode of "the pursuit of happiness" he considers a more worthy adversary, and that is the transgressive pursuit of desires repressed by society. Lacan calls this the "naturalist liberation of desire," and associates it with the eighteenth century libertine project.⁷⁹ This is an attempt to discover an unproblematic enjoyment, in this case, an elimination of superego interdictions and the neuroses they produce in favor of an untrammelled right to desire. Lacan considers this goal to be equally chimerous and unreachable. Against both a liberal, linear notion of progress and a revolutionary one, Lacan insists that man is not more liberated than before, and that he could not become so regardless of any future political developments or insurrections.⁸⁰ For Lacan, however, psychoanalysis offers its own deontological ethics of desire that takes a certain inspiration from this libertine project while also taking its distance from it. One instructive comparison is with Bataille.

Bataille argues that the notion of excess, sin, or transgression has a necessary and integral relationship to the law and the order of things. If we were to schematize and to treat Bataille as occupying a discernible philosophical position distinct from the express language of his texts, we might find in his work two related insights. The first concerns a necessary excess or waste product produced by any system, "the accursed share" that must be spent or expended. A non-productive expenditure is required to eliminate this sacred waste, which accounts for what Bataille considers to be an identical attitude toward the taboo objects of shit, God, and cadavers.⁸¹ This excremental, excessive point, produced by any inorganic or organic system, which Bataille considered the blind spot of the dialectic, bears comparison to Lacan's *petit objet a*, the obscure object of desire which is un-symbolizable, irrecoverable, troubling, and unreachable.⁸

However, there is a shift in Bataille's work, attested to by his provocative equation of "God" with shit, in which Bataille begins to consider this waste product to be primary. This symptom or waste becomes the basis of the system, if not its origin. The paradigmatic example for Bataille is the crucifixion of Christ, the *felix culpa*: The ultimate sin of the torturing to death of God himself is the greatest violation and the bedrock on which the entire religion of love and forgiveness rests.⁸³ Lacan compares this crime to the murder of the monstrous Father, on which Freud speculates in *Totem and Taboo*.⁸⁴ Bataille himself aims to adhere to the consequences of the death of the father, rather than attempting to reincarnate him. In Žižek's view, Bataille's work falls into enrapturement with the moment of excess and crime, what Alain Badiou called a "passion for the Real": the obsession with chance, subjective annihilation, death, violation, and the unspeakable.⁸⁵

Bataille's insight, that the norm relies on its exception, is close to Žižek's characteristic move: that is, the claim that apparent prohibitions and societal interdictions conceal an obscene underbelly, disavowed transgressions, and cynical distance which appears illegal but is in fact coded into the very law itself. However, Žižek risks a third move subsequent to Bataille's. Bataille suggests, first, that the law generates its transgression, that work produces festivals, the most liberal societies build prisons, and biological organisms excrete waste matter. Second, that this transgression is primary to the law or essential to it; that religions of love and kindness generate their authority from sacrifice, that capitalist economies depend on leisure and military industries, and that socialist economies depend on black markets. Žižek takes this one step further by declaring that the violation of the law is not primary or originary to the law, but is *identical* to the law in some radical sense.

Žižek characterizes Bataille's transgression as relying on its system or its limit as pre-modern, a failure to fully think the consequences of Kant, which tell us that "*absolute excess is that of the Law itself.*"⁸⁶ The Law is for Žižek illegal; it "intervenes in the 'homogeneous' stability of our pleasure-oriented life as the shattering force of the absolute destabilizing 'heterogeneity.'"⁸⁷ This claim has two possible valences: First, a literal adherence to the law would be its own fulfillment and transgression. Second, Žižek also speaks of the interruption of a higher Law or desire that would shatter and violate the ordinary laws and goals of everyday life. Žižek locates this move in Lacan, declaring that Lacan wavers between Bataille's regression and Žižek's subsequent innovation, progressing in chapter IV of *Seminar VII* from the former to the latter.⁸⁸ Žižek emphasizes that Lacan only fully accepts his own fusion with Kant in the very late and unpublished *Seminar XXIII*, when he concedes that there is "no substantial Thing—*jouissance* beyond the Symbolic," but that *jouissance* is "of/in the lack of itself, a *jouissance* that arises when its movement repeatedly misses its goal, a pleasure that is generated by the repeated failure itself."⁸⁹ We must note that this reading of Lacan is forceful, relying on an emphasis on very late Lacanian formulations and a simultaneous critique of many of his earlier claims.⁹⁰ Žižek emphasizes that *jouissance* is not found in transgression as such but is rather a name for the attempt to obey the law while at the same time trying (and failing) to achieve some enjoyment beyond it. *Jouissance* in this Žižekian reading is neither the product of fanatical adherence to the laws undergirding the symbolic order nor the transgressive refusal of it, but the space created by the vacillation between both these (ultimately futile) efforts. While noting this conclusion on Žižek's part, we should return to the claims made by Lacan about Kant in *Seminar VII*, the point of his apparent sympathy with Bataille, so that we might strive to articulate alternative ethical consequences.

SADE AND DESIRE

Lacan argues that the desire for happiness has always been an element of human existence, depreciating the originality of Saint-Just's claim that happiness had become a political factor for the first time with the destruction of the monarchy. Contrariwise, Lacan says that happiness "has always been a political factor and will bring back the scepter and the censor that make do with it very well."⁹¹ In other words, the desire for happiness had already existed and been consequent in the time of the monarchy, and had been able to thrive on its limitation by church and crown. Lacan argues that it is the novelty of the revolution to aim for "the freedom to desire," and that it is Sade who understands this.⁹²

Lacan paraphrases Sade's maxim as "the right to enjoy any other person whatsoever as the instrument of our pleasure."⁹³ The question for Lacan is whether this maxim passes Kant's test of universality. If our repugnance towards such a possible maxim is only an expression of fear or disgust on the level of affect, this should be of no consequence to Kant's true deontological ethics—consequences and emotional and sensual considerations are simply irrelevant. The only question is whether the Sadeian desire for the common property of bodies can be rationally willed to be universal. It is one of Sade's contributions to the understanding of desire that his libertinage is so unpleasant. Lacan asks, "in order to reach *das Ding* [the object of desire] absolutely, to open the flood gates of desire, what does Sade show us on the horizon?"⁹⁴ The answer is pain, "The other's pain as well as the pain of the subject himself, for on occasion they are simply one and the same thing."⁹⁵ Kant's ethical subject undergoes only one pathological emotion, the pain of humiliation, when he chooses, as he must, to obey the law. The law is then sadistic, a counterpart to "de Sade's notion of pain (torturing and humiliating the other,

INNER EXPERIENCE IS NOT PSYCHOSIS

being tortured and humiliated by him) as the privileged way of access to sexual *jouissance*,” the form of sensation which can far exceed mere pleasure in its duration.⁹⁶

The relentless pursuit of desire by the Sadian libertine mirrors the intractable ethical subject, who cannot be dissuaded by physical sensation or emotional disinclination. Sade’s technical goal is, among other things, a radically desublimated sexual enjoyment.⁹⁷ As Žižek clarifies it, we find in Sade a rigorous instrumentalizing of the sexual, not a raw burst of animal lust.⁹⁸ To this end, Sade offers an endorsement of the relationship with partial objects; as Lacan paraphrases it, “Lend me the part of your body that will give me a moment of satisfaction and, if you care to, use for your own pleasure that part of my body which appeals to you.”⁹⁹ This can be read as isomorphous with Kant’s definition of marriage as “the binding together of two persons of different sexes for the life-long reciprocal possession of their sexual attributes;” Sade merely eliminates the requirements of sexual difference and permanence.¹⁰⁰

As Žižek argues, Lacan recognizes that Sade lays bare the sadism of the superego. Rather than a neutral enforcer of societal norms, the superego is in fact a displacement of id-level aggression, tormenting the ego in the name of legitimacy and right.¹⁰¹ This is, however, not the true innovation of Lacan’s reading of Sade or of Kant. According to Žižek, Lacan is actually concerned with “the ultimate consequences and disavowed premisses of the Kantian ethical revolution.”¹⁰² For (Žižek’s) Lacan, what is so fascinating is not that the apparently universal and disinterested ethical law is actually polluted by personal pathological desires at every level. What is more interesting is that this tainting with personal wants is necessary as a barrier against the self-destroying and negating force of duty, which is far more “sadistic” than any Sadeian perversion—duty and desire become equivalent for Žižek’s Lacan.¹⁰³

BATAILLE AND LACAN, KANT AND HEGEL

Bataille and Lacan are often considered as readers of Hegel; Derrida’s “From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve” marks the beginning of a deconstructive engagement with Hegel, while Žižek has strived to articulate Lacan as the re-activator of an authentic Hegel as against subsequent misreadings.¹⁰⁴ In Derrida’s reading, Bataille radicalizes Hegel’s negative to a degree that it can no longer be defined as the moment of a system, even as meaning organizes itself around it.¹⁰⁵ Bataille’s sovereignty, unlike Hegelian mastery, is an absolute difference that never establishes hierarchy, cannot be found in its essence because its essence is a pure lack, a movement towards the universal that destroys the particular without achieving a corresponding idea. In contrast, Lacan’s mirror stage traces the possibility of the foundation of subjectivity as mediated by negativity in his famous écrit “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” in a manner that owes a great deal to the Hegelian account of subjectivity.¹⁰⁶ Bataillean “sovereignty,” however, is not merely self-destructive; he writes of “a link with this obscure *other*” as paramount.¹⁰⁷ I would like to suggest that the alternative consideration of otherness suggested by Bataille, which escapes from the precedence of subjectivity re-established by Lacan, can best be exemplified not through the traditional Hegelian master-slave model, which depends on masculine combat, but through a scenario present in the work of Immanuel Kant, dealing with the relation to femininity.

Kant’s example is that a sensualist is given the option of making love to the woman he desires, but at the price of immediate execution.¹⁰⁸ Kant argues that no one would make such a bargain, no desire could possibly be worth life; everyone can control his or her passions in extreme situations. Contrary to this, it is possible to imagine an ethical subject who might undergo execution rather than violate the moral adherence to truth and the commandment not to bear false witness against a neighbor. Therefore, while the moral law is immortal, the passions are fleeting and weak. The desire for self-preservation even at the loss of the sexual object is not ethical, because it remains tied to future empirical consequences, but it demonstrates the ability of a human subject to transcend his sensuous nature.¹⁰⁹

However, Lacan takes the risk of arguing for the possibility of at least one libertine so perverse he would in fact trade his life for such a desire.¹¹⁰ Desire possesses a capacity of sublimation, the practice of raising an object “to the dignity of the Thing.”¹¹¹ The Thing, *das Ding*, is for Lacan an object related to the traumatic Real; we desire it without regard for ordinary consequences. Should the desired woman attain the quality of the Thing, she would be worth death. Lacan takes a position directly opposing Kant’s; the sensualist’s fear of death is what is tied to the pleasure principle, his wish to live longer rather than to fornicate. A Don Juan who would willingly be dragged to hell would be the true example of an ethical subject. This hypothetical, suicidally lustful figure produces certain consequences: As Žižek puts it, if his passion suspends his egoistic interests, then it “is *strictu sensu* ethical.”¹¹² Desire and the law are formally equivalent, outside the horizon of the pleasure principle, non-sensual, overriding the fear of death.

Lacan argues for a strict delineation between *jouissance* and pleasure. Pleasure is a “diluted discharge of libidinal tension” mitigated by the reality principle.¹¹³ Any pleasure or enjoyment in the ordinary sense depends on the intervention of the ego’s domesticating abilities, reducing intensity, accommodating experience to external reality, holding back the self-obliterating force of *jouissance*—which is excessive, suicidal, and apparently irrational and impossible. It is in this sense that Lacan commented that “every drive is virtually a death drive.”¹¹⁴ Desire is made up of the elements of the demand that exceed needs; it has no final object and is insatiable. The drive, which includes the death drive as its constant latent tendency, demands total intensity and immediate connection to the Real, while simultaneously taking on the qualities Freud named the “nirvana principle”—the desire for rest, stasis, silence, and peace. The drive essentially demands everything as a tactic to get to nothing.¹¹⁵

In Adrian Johnston’s reading, raw *jouissance* simply could not be reached under any circumstances. To illustrate this thesis, Johnston also appeals to Kant’s example of the woman and the gallows, and suggests that first, following Lacan, that someone might choose to purchase the woman of his dreams at the price of his life, and this would be an elevation of an ordinary woman to the sublime and morbid heights of the Thing, but that the actual sex might be greatly disappointing—rather than a self-destroying burst of orgasmic fulfillment, the unfortunate libertine might find himself “crushed by a mixture of revulsion and horror,” confronted with “a mere pound of flesh not worth dying for in the end.”¹¹⁶ Johnston’s subject would effectively not be able to maintain the obsessive valuation of *das Ding*; upon looking too close, the woman would become an ordinary mammal and not the romantic desideratum of his libido. If the man is given the choice of either the gallows or the comely young woman, he has basically no real choice at all, because if he chooses the woman, he will lose the possibility of *jouissance* and his life as well.¹¹⁷ Social reality and repression turn out to be the necessary precondition for the apparent (but non-existent) possibility of *jouissance*, like hard, dry sand reflecting a mirage.¹¹⁸

In discussing Johnston’s argument, it is important to emphasize that *jouissance* is strictly asensual—so Johnston is not arguing merely that the sex promised to Kant’s ethical/lustful subject might turn out to be too brief or too ordinary or otherwise not to his taste. Johnston’s argument for the impossibility of *jouissance* is then not reliant on a claim for the inadequacy of lived sensation in comparison to fantasy. Instead, Johnston argues that the promised *jouissance* at the end of the drive is formally impossible. When Žižek associates Lacan with Bataille, he is thinking of Lacan’s claim that the desire to enjoy the woman even at the price of death is essentially ethical; this drive towards transgression seems to Žižek to be particularly Bataillean. Johnston’s account of *jouissance* as illusory and the death drive as inherently self-defeating serves the purpose of criticizing that which appears Bataillean in Lacan, and in this sense Johnston’s thesis is in line with Žižek’s desire to put Lacan on a more orthodox Kantian-Hegelian path. It is to Johnston’s credit that he draws out the consequences of Kant’s and scenario and Lacan’s acceptance of the wager, to the end that the promised enjoyment of the female would doubtless be found wanting and the courageous libertine would, from a certain perspective, find himself cheated. Therefore, a kind of transgressive heroism to which Lacan appears to subscribe is thwarted.¹¹⁹

However, a reading of the type I have suggested of *Madame Edwarda* indicates that if Lacan had meant to prescribe an ethics of sexual adventurism, this was never, whatever Žižek’s reading, something in line with Bataille. After all, it is essential to Bataille’s writing that eroticism is not a path to libertine enjoyment. While

INNER EXPERIENCE IS NOT PSYCHOSIS

Lacan goes part of the way in dissociating desire from sexual pleasure, his account of sexual desire in *Seminar VII* still seems to indicate a drive towards possession and consumption of the female other. For example, Lacan suggests that the libertine might act “for the pleasure of cutting up the lady concerned in small pieces.”¹²⁰ His point is that desire is essentially destructive and not sensual, but this is exactly the problem. While Lacanian erotic transgression destroys the other in order to sublimate her, Bataille’s account of transgression, on the other hand, only brings an Other to light who cannot be destroyed. Edwarda as incarnation of God is the most salient example of this. From this perspective, the horrified realization on the part of Johnston’s libertine, who has been cheated and finds himself with an abject creature of bones, flesh, and blood, is a consequence Bataille has already understood and accepted. It is at this point that ethics are actually reached, because this is the only moment in the sequence Kant-Lacan-Johnston in which alterity appears.

Andrew Ryder is a visiting assistant professor at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. He received his doctorate in comparative literature at Emory, where he was a fellow at the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry. He has published work on the theater and politics of Jean-Paul Sartre and written a dissertation on ethics, materialism, and experience in Georges Bataille.

NOTES

1. *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink et. al., New York: W.W. Norton, 2006, 488.
2. Lacan, *Écrits*, 485.
3. *Écrits 2*, nouvelle édition, Paris: Seuil, 1999, 61. Fink deletes the phrase about *Inner Experience's* centrality in his translation: Lacan, *Écrits*, 488.
4. Published as *Le Séminaire, livre III: Les psychoses*, texte établi par Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris: Seuil, 1981; trans. Russell Grigg as *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book III: The Psychoses 1955-1956*, New York: Norton, 1993.
5. *Acéphale* was a secret society that practiced rituals intended to restore an experience of the sacred to the modern world. See Surya, Michel, *Georges Bataille: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson, London: Verso, 2002, 252. See also Roudinesco, Elisabeth, *Jacques Lacan*, chapter 12, "Georges Bataille and Co.," trans. Barbara Bray, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, 121-139.
6. Surya, *Georges Bataille*, 534.
7. Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, 125, 187.
8. See *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986, 9.
9. Žižek, Slavoj, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006, 94-95. Lacan brought the transcript of this seminar to his stepdaughter Laurence, Bataille's biological daughter, when she was held in the Prison de la Roquette for her activities on behalf of the Algerian Front de libération nationale. See Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, 187.
10. On this point I am in broad agreement with Jean Dragon's thesis in "The Work of Alterity: Bataille and Lacan," *Diacritics*, volume 26, number 2, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, 31-48.
11. See for example *Seminar VII*, 99, 303, 243, 313.
12. See Chiesa, Lorenzo, *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007, 7.
13. Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness*, chapter 4, 108.
14. This can of course also be linked to Bataille's discomfort with playing the role of husband and father, and his willingness to allow Lacan to occupy this position on his behalf.
15. See Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, chapter 7.
16. See Kojève, Alexandre, "The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel," collected in *Hegel and Contemporary Continental Philosophy*, edited by Dennis King Keenan, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, 37-39.
17. Roudinesco writes of "The constant though implicit presence of Bataille in Lacan's evolving work and the total absence of Lacan's writings in the work of Bataille, together with the long, subterranean friendship between the two men themselves." *Jacques Lacan*, 136.
18. See Fink, Bruce, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995; Copjec, Joan, *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002; Zupancic, Alenka, *Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan*, London: Verso, 2000; Chiesa, Lorenzo, *Subjectivity and Otherness*; Johnston, Adrian, *Žižek's Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity*, Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2008.
19. Dylan Evans points out that "Lacan's interest in psychosis predates his interest in psychoanalysis;" his doctoral research on "Aimée," a psychotic woman, was the impetus for his initial readings of Freud. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, New York: Routledge, 1996, 154.
20. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII (1911-1913): The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique, and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey, London: Hogarth Press, 1971, "Psycho-analytic Notes Upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides) (1911)," 10. Cited subsequently as *SE*.
21. *SE XII*, 14.
22. *SE XII*, 14.
23. *SE XII*, 16.
24. *SE XII*, 32.
25. *SE XII*, 43.
26. *SE XII*, 53.
27. *SE XVIII*, 123.
28. See *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy: Volume II: The History of Eroticism and Volume III: Sovereignty*, New York: Zone, 1993, 367.
29. *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.
30. For an account of the development of psychoanalytic approaches to sexual difference, see Verhaeghe, Paul, *Does the Woman Exist?: From Freud's Hysteric to Lacan's Feminine*, trans. Marc du Ry, New York: Other Press, 1999. In this study, I am bracketing Lacan's famous speculations on female *jouissance* in *Seminar XX: Encore 1972-1973: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink, New York: W.W. Norton, 1998, though much of Lacan's reading here might be more relevant to *Madame Edwanda* than his explicit reference with regard to the psychoses.

INNER EXPERIENCE IS NOT PSYCHOSIS

31. Bataille, *Visions*, 9.
32. Bataille's father went blind before his death. See Surya, *Georges Bataille*, 8-9.
33. Bataille, *Visions*, 9.
34. Bataille, *Visions*, 9.
35. Bataille, *Visions*, 9.
36. Derrida writes of a classical ambivalence with regard to the metaphor of the sun, according to which it functions as both a master signifier and its lack simultaneously, in "White Mythology," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, 243, 251.
37. Lacan, *Seminar III*, 78.
38. "The psychotic can only apprehend the Other in the relation with the signifier, he lingers over a mere shell, an envelope, a shadow, the form of speech." Lacan, *Seminar III* 254.
39. Lacan, *Seminar III*, 26, 293.
40. See especially the discussion of the crucifixion in the second part of *On Nietzsche*, trans. Bruce Boone, St. Paul: Paragon House, 1994, 17-19.
41. "He is tainted by an imaginary degradation of otherness, and as a result he is, like Schreber, stricken with a sort of feminization." Lacan, *Seminar III*, 101.
42. Schreber's fantasy is in some ways the inverse of Sade's in that he dreams of a pregnant man, while Sade aims to interrupt the possibility of procreation. Nonetheless, they are united in their desire to refuse sexual difference, and in their positing of an essential and eternal virginity, according to Pierre Klossowski's reading in "Outline of Sade's System," *Sade My Neighbor*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1991, 72.
43. It is important to distinguish this concern with sexual difference from a normalized heterosexism, such as that which Philippe Sollers seems to endorse in "The Roof: Essay in Systematic Reading," *Bataille: A Critical Reader*, ed. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, Oxford: Blackwell, 88-89. Derrida's reading of Jean Genet in *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr., and Richard Rand, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986, critiques the association of "narcissistic" desire with homosexuality.
44. Blanchot, Maurice, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, 202.
45. Allan Stoekl reads the narrative as essentially turning on a ritual substitution of the elements of the Catholic mass, with the goal of establishing an altered form of Hegelian recognition, in "Recognition in *Madame Edwarda*," *Bataille: Writing the Sacred*, ed. Carolyn Bailey Gill, London: Routledge, 1995, 78.
46. *Œuvres complètes*, tome III, Paris: Gallimard, 1974, 9; cited subsequently as OC III. Translation modified. *My Mother, Madame Edwarda, The Dead Man*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse, London: Marion Boyars, 1995, 137.
47. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 149.
48. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 149.
49. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 149.
50. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 149.
51. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 150. French text taken from OC III, 20-21.
52. Lacan, *Seminar III*, 152.
53. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language: Unabridged*, ed. Philip Babcock Gove, Springfield: G & C Merriam, 1969, 2528.
54. Bataille, *Story of the Eye*, 9.
55. The English translation, *The Story of the Eye*, conceals this by applying the word "cunt," which would intensify sexual difference where the actual narrative diminishes it.
56. It shares this quality with Sade's fiction, which similarly focuses on the anus and presents female characters with enlarged clitorises.
57. The clitoris is of course often seen as phallus substitute, however inaccurate this characterization might be. See Freud, Sigmund, "Female Sexuality (1931)," *SE XXI*, 228.
58. "The Pornographic Imagination," included in Bataille, *Story of the Eye*, 106.
59. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda* 50; French taken from OC III, 20-21.
60. *Ulysses*, London: Penguin, 1992, 73. The contrast with Joyce is significant, because of Lacan's reading of this author in *Le séminaire livre XXIII. Le sinthome, 1975-1976*, Paris: Seuil, 2005, 164-168, hypothesized by Chiesa and Žizek as the true Lacanian ethics. See *Subjectivity and Otherness*, 183-192.
61. See Cathy MacGregor, "The Eye of the Storm—Female Representation in Bataille's *Madame Edwarda* and *Histoire de l'œil*," *The Beast at Heaven's Gate: Georges Bataille and the Art of Transgression*, ed. Andrew Hussey, New York: Rodopi, 2006, 107. Luce Irigaray indicates for men, a woman's "sexual organ represents the horror of nothing to see." *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985, 26.
62. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 150.
63. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 150.

-
64. See Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, 91; Freud, "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," *SE* 178-179.
 65. Lacan, *Seminar III*, 61.
 66. Lacan, *Seminar III*, 78.
 67. Kojève, "Idea of Death," 39-40, and *Inner Experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988, 135.
 68. Lacan, *Seminar III* 218-219, 228.
 69. Lacan, *Seminar III* 275, Kojève, "Idea of Death," 38-39.
 70. Lacan, *Seminar III* 218-219; Bataille, Georges, "From Existentialism to the Primacy of Economy," trans. Jill Robbins, in Robbins, Jill, *Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, 167.
 71. *Œuvres complètes*, tome V, Paris: Gallimard, 1973, 98, cited subsequently as OC V; translated in Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 83.
 72. "It is to this irreducible difference—which you are—that you must relate the sense of each object." Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 94.
 73. Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 83.
 74. Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 84.
 75. Bataille, *Inner Experience* 97, French taken from OC V, 114.
 76. Freud acknowledges proximity between psychosis and psychoanalysis at the conclusion of his Schreber study; *SE* XII, 79.
 77. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter, New York: W.W. Norton, 1992, 38.
 78. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 219.
 79. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 3.
 80. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 4, 209.
 81. Bataille, *Visions*, 94.
 82. Jacques-Alain Miller admits that "something Georges Bataille contributed in 'Heterology' is at work" in *petit objet a* in "Microscopia: An Introduction to the Reading of 'Television,'" in Lacan, Jacques, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, ed. Joan Copjec, New York: W. W. Norton, 1990, xxxi.
 83. Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 17.
 84. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 6.
 85. Žizek, *Parallax View*, 94. See *The Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, 56. Badiou mentions Bataille's cruelty specifically, 115.
 86. Žizek, *Parallax View*, 95.
 87. Žizek, *Parallax View*, 95.
 88. For this reason, Žizek argues that Bataille misunderstands the nature of sacrifice in modernity (the modern subject sacrifices itself, rendering transgression irrelevant), in *The Indivisible Remainder*, London: Verso, 1996, 125. See Matthew Sharpe's reading in *Slavoj Žizek: A Little Piece of the Real*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, 139. Žizek's self-sacrificial subject occludes the dimension of alterity maintained and examined by Bataille.
 89. Žizek, *Parallax View*, 96.
 90. Žizek is drawing on a criticism of a tragic and transcendent Lacan made by Bruno Bosteels and Lorenzo Chiesa, and articulating a criticism of his own early work, which constructed Lacan this way. For this reason, Žizek's attempt to extricate Bataille from Lacan is a necessary aspect of his own self-criticism; Bataille is made out to be a nihilist so that he can be identified with a straw-man Lacan, as against the apparently more ethical Lacan delineated by Žizek and Chiesa. See Chiesa, Lorenzo, "Tragic Transgression and Symbolic Re-inscription: Lacan with Lars von Trier," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, New York: Routledge, volume II, number 2, August 2006, 49-61.
 91. *Écrits*, 663.
 92. *Écrits*, 663.
 93. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 79.
 94. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 80.
 95. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 80.
 96. Žizek, Slavoj, "Kant with (or against) Sade," *The Žizek Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, 291.
 97. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 199.
 98. Žizek, "Kant with (or against) Sade," 287.
 99. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 202.
 100. *Metaphysical Elements of Justice: Part I of The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. John Ladd, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1999, 88.
 101. Žizek, "Kant with (or against) Sade," 288.

INNER EXPERIENCE IS NOT PSYCHOSIS

102. Žižek, “Kant with (or against) Sade,” 288.
103. Žižek, “Kant with (or against) Sade,” 288.
104. Derrida, Jacques, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 251-277; Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Political Ontology*, New York: Verso, 1999, chapter 2, 70-124.
105. “From Restricted to General Economy,” 259.
106. *Écrits*, 75-81.
107. *Inner Experience*, 61.
108. *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002, 44, read by Lacan in *Seminar VII*, 108, 189.
109. Johnston, Adrian, *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive*, Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2005, 234-235.
110. The association between erotic desire and the disclosure of death was already made by Freud; see “The Theme of the Three Caskets,” *SE XII*, 300.
111. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 112.
112. Žižek, “Kant with (or against) Sade,” 289.
113. Johnston, *Time Driven*, 236.
114. *Écrits*, 719.
115. See Johnston, *Time Driven*, 237.
116. Johnston, *Time Driven*, 239.
117. Johnston, *Time Driven*, 241.
118. Johnston, *Time Driven*, 243.
119. In Chiesa’s reading, Lacan learns to avoid this ethics of transgression by *Seminar XVII (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychosis)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg, New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), instead “asking us to *compromise* our desire precisely in order to keep on desiring.” Chiesa, Lorenzo, “Lacan with Artaud: *j’ouïs-sens, jouïs-sens, jouïs-sans*,” *Lacan: The Silent Partners*, ed. Slavoj Žižek, London: Verso, 2006, 346.
120. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 109.

REVIEW ARTICLE

Santiago Zabala, *The Remains of Being: Hermeneutic Ontology After Metaphysics*

Columbia University Press, 2009

Richard Polt

In this concise but rich book, Santiago Zabala takes stock of the current situation of philosophy, which he takes to be inescapably affected by Heidegger's thought. Heidegger brought the ancient topic of Being to life precisely by pointing to Being's decay: Being, at least as traditionally (mis)understood, is diseased, moribund, or mummified. But this alarming state does not, for Heidegger, give us cause to abandon Being; to the contrary, we are challenged to dwell on the decay, wrestle with the tradition, and seek a new beginning. We cannot simply overcome (überwinden) the tradition; we can only "get over" (*verwinden*) it (5), in the sense of "incorporating (learning to live with it)" (45).

In order to express this condition, Zabala develops an effective language of "remains": what we have left are only the remnants of the potent presence that once provided the founding sense of Being for the West. But in these remnants, Being remains: Being happens, Being is given to us today, precisely as leftover fragments that call for thought. This thought must take the form of hermeneutics (5, 14). For hermeneutics, interpretation is not a means to an end—a path to a promised land of final truth and complete correctness—but a process that is to be extended indefinitely. As long as interpreting continues, we continue to respond to the challenge and gift of Being in the most appropriate way possible for finite beings. But what exactly are we to interpret? As historical beings who understand through language, we cannot have an "original experience of Being" apart from the history of its articulations (53). The philosopher's first duty, then, is to interpret philosophical texts, and Zabala proceeds accordingly. He reviews the main achievements of Heidegger's writings in Chapter 1 and turns in Chapter 2 to post-Heideggerian texts, before presenting a brief program for hermeneutic ontology in Chapter 3.

"How is it going with Being?"—that is the question Heidegger demands that we ask. Or at least, that is Zabala's rendering of Heidegger's question in *Introduction to Metaphysics: Wie steht es mit dem Sein?* (50). Zabala's translation

is appropriate: it suggests the open-endedness of Heidegger's question and its reference to an event that, in Heidegger's view, runs throughout Western history yet is particularly urgent for us today. Because of its provocative questioning, *Introduction to Metaphysics* is, for Zabala, "the most significant of Heidegger's texts after *Being and Time*" (49). There is at least one rival, though: the *Contributions to Philosophy*, written in the later '30s, where Heidegger's question becomes *Wie west das Seyn?*—"How does Be-ing essentially happen?" or "How is Be-ing essencing?"—and the word *Ereignis*, "event," comes to the center of his thought as a response to this question.

Chapter 2 focuses on six post-Heideggerian thinkers who have struggled with Heidegger's questions. Reiner Schürmann interprets Being "as the mere epochal sequence of representations" (60), a "flux" without principles (66). Derrida seeks an alternative to presence in the "trace," a remnant that is not subordinate to some primal, self-sufficient original (71). Jean-Luc Nancy thinks of Being as always already "born" into the shared human world (74); presence is always a plural "copresence" (77). Gadamer, emphasizing the finitude and situatedness of human understanding, calls for "conversation" as a process that should take precedence over whatever answers might emerge from it (81). Gianni Vattimo, Zabala's teacher, has developed a "weak thought" that stresses the contingency of Being, its "eventual" and historical character (94).

While there is a recognizable "family resemblance" among these five postmetaphysical thinkers (111), Ernst Tugendhat is the black sheep in Zabala's survey of recent continental thought. This student of Heidegger directly contravened his teacher's central views by taking language primarily as assertoric sentences (92), and investigating Being by way of a formal analysis of sentence structure (86). The Heideggerian question of Nothing then becomes a question about the use of the word "not" (89). (This is not an original idea, as Zabala suggests, but goes back to Carnap's classic criticism of Heidegger's 1929 lecture "What is Metaphysics?") For Tugendhat, Heidegger's thought suffers from the lack of a "criterion of verifiability" (89). Zabala has presented a thoroughgoing interpretation in *The Hermeneutic Nature of Analytic Philosophy: A Study of Ernst Tugendhat* (Columbia, 2008), showing that Tugendhat straddles the analytic-continental divide. However, within the limits of Zabala's treatment of Tugendhat in the present book, it is hard to see why he is grouped with the other, distinctly non-analytic thinkers Zabala favors.

In his third and final chapter, Zabala sketches a logic of hermeneutics that is suited to the ontology of remnants. Hermeneutics, in Zabala's terms, "generates Being" (99). This is not to be understood as a celebration of will or of the sovereign subject, but as a call to respond gratefully to the gift of Being (101); to "generate" here means "to take up [metaphysics] consciously as our own, to shape what we see it to have been" (xiv). Since the gift of Being is a remnant, "*not what is but what remains is essential for philosophy*" (103). This approach calls for a "logic of discursive continuities" (106)—an understanding of the "experience of speech" that carries on the conversational interpretation of Being (107).

We might ask, though, once again: what exactly are we to interpret, if we have weaned ourselves from the myth of a Being in itself, if "the space in which philosophy finds itself inscribed is nothing other than its own discursive continuity" (115)? Why should we feel a particular obligation to participate in this discourse, or to prefer one interpretation of Being over another, if the conversation is not to be judged in terms of its correspondence to a Being that can be distinguished from the discourse? One does not have to insist, with Tugendhat, on a criterion of verifiability in order to sense the risk here of vacuousness and arbitrariness. Zabala, recognizing the risk, concludes with a rejection of the charge of relativism: he argues that "preferring one description to another is justified as a response to the description's own historical constellations" (119). This strikes me as a very vague reply that does not sufficiently address the relativistic threat. Surely the "historical constellations" do not determine our interpretations in a quasi-astrological manner, even if they limit our horizon. We can still ask, then, what ought to guide our preference for one interpretation over another within that horizon. This question is unanswerable, it seems to me, unless we see ontology as more than just a play of interpretations and allow it also to have applications in experience and practice—an idea that Zabala rejects rather abruptly (111).

While Zabala's style is relatively clear, some unnecessary ambiguities creep in when he does not maintain his usual convention of using "being" for an entity (something that is) and "Being" for what it means to be. (See p. 48 for some confusion.) Is the most fundamental question, "Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?" (29-30, 48) or is it, "Why *is* Being, and why *is* there not rather nothing?" (7). Strictly speaking, Being "is" not, since it is not an entity. Nevertheless, as Heidegger shows us in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, the question about beings can provoke us to ask the question about Being. Even if Being is not, it is given; and we can be provoked by the sheer wonder of beings to appreciate the gift of Being.

On the whole, *The Remains of Being* is an effective reminder of some of the most important developments in twentieth-century continental philosophy, and a thought-provoking call to continue our pursuit of the question of Being in the twenty-first.

Richard Polt is professor of philosophy at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. He is the author of *The Emergency of Being: On Heidegger's "Contributions to Philosophy"* and other works on Heidegger.

REVIEW ARTICLE

MICHAEL MARDER, *The Event of the Thing: Derrida's Post-Deconstructive Realism*

University of Toronto Press, 2009

Christopher Stokes (University of Exeter)

Michael Marder's thorough and provocative study repositions Derrida's work, away from the sign and towards the concrete: the latest in a long line of attempts to clarify deconstruction's legacy and to redeem Derrida's corpus from clumsy reductionism. Hence, where we have in recent decades confronted Derrida's phenomenological, political, ethical and theological, Marder presents us with Jacques the realist. Whilst such a proposition may seem counter-intuitive, given the oft-misinterpreted aphorism from *Of Grammatology* that there is nothing outside the text, this book presents a compelling and persuasive case for the persistence of the thing as a fundamental term of analysis in deconstruction. As this book traverses every major trope in Derrida's philosophy – from auto-affection to the gift, from the chora to the signature – one finds out that innocuous thing, the thing, *la chose*, has been there all along, in nearly every corner of deconstruction.

The recurrent motif, for Marder, is a simultaneous offering and concealment of the thing, apparent in and fundamental to the very structure of experience. Such logic, familiar from Heidegger although modified and deepened here, evokes an ontology inadequate to itself: the ideal(ist) structures of conceptualisation and representation which bring phenomena to articulation are always stratified by remainders, excesses and secrets. Derrida has always insisted that presence is always intertwined with non-presence, and Marder turns this thesis towards a certain kind of materialism whereby the thing withdraws as – and precisely because – it is presented. Binding the thing to the spectrality of *différance*, Marder suggests that the givenness of experience is set within an abyssal counter-movement: 'this fugal moment, the flight of the thing itself, is its flight *from itself*...the thing becomes other and renders itself accessible, when it strips itself of its self-identity *and*, more interesting still, when it is most 'itself' in the internal unfolding of its otherness' (24). First worked out via Derrida's readings of Heidegger, this notion of the withdrawn-offered thing is further substantiated with a turn to a deconstruction of Husserl, where a thingly substrate of *hyle* always eludes the subject's intentional grasp.

Of course, the aspersion that might be cast in the direction of this analysis comes with that other great philosophical resonance of the thing: the Kantian *Ding-an-sich*. When Marder speaks of, for instance, ‘the ideal object, which fails to be integrated within the idealist framework’ (65), one might envisage the book skimming perilously close to reconstituting a noumenal Other which lies on the far side of representation. The danger is that of, quite literally, reifying *différance*. Yet throughout its chapters, and certainly in its tightly argued conclusion, this reading of Derrida maintains a disciplined commitment to immanence. Marder contends that suspicions of a *nouveau* Kantian noumenalism are misplaced: ‘the thing is not a wholly transcendental principle but the spacing fissure or the concrete opening of the world *in* the world’ (136). This is apparent in the emphasis on the evental nature of the thing, but also in the study’s continuous interest in remains and remainders, debris and the inassimilable. If things withdraw, fugally, from themselves, then this is legible not in some kind of transcendently constituted object, but in things with the strange ontology and temporality of the cinder, the seal, the tomb, the fragment: that is, to say, presences shot through with absence. Marder terms this a ‘realism of the remains...of resistance to idealization on the ‘inner front’ of idealism’ (137). If representation is, broadly speaking, inadequate to the thing (which is to say, ultimately, that the thing is inadequate to itself), then it is on the *immanent* effects and after-effects of such inadequacy that Marder stakes his cardinal claims.

As mentioned above, this realism of the remains is first articulated through out-and-out phenomenology, and the whole study has a phenomenological tone. After setting out the self-effacing structure of thinghood via Heidegger in the first chapter, the second follows its reading of Husserl and intentionality with more specific analyses of three senses: hearing, touch and sight. All these readings follow the same basic pattern, whereby the object of the sense comes to disrupt intentionality, as when the auto-affective circuit of hearing oneself speak is broken by hetero-affectivity, or when Derrida argues touch never completes the work of touch, since there is always the narrowest interval separating the touching and touched surfaces. Here, as throughout the book, Marder always stays faithfully close to a relevant Derrida text. Although framed, naturally enough, through the thing, these are analyses that are familiar to any moderately experienced reader interested in deconstruction: something on which I will comment further below.

Marder then widens his scope, with a chapter on fetishism that draws together – perhaps somewhat awkwardly – Derrida’s writings on psychoanalysis and the commodity. With the core thesis of the study by now well-established, and its motifs (*Ereignis* in abyss, the fugal, etc.) familiar to the reader, we once again see the thing leaving remains and remainders across the surface of representation, as symptoms of its withdrawal. Thus, for instance, deconstruction and psychoanalysis are jointly articulated against idealism, for they both come up against the resistance of the thing and must ‘love’ what this resistance leaves behind. The second section, drawing heavily on *Spectres of Marx*, posits the work-thing as occluded behind the ghostly traces of the commodity fetish: in a spectralised world economy, all money is in a certain sense counterfeit. The final chapter turns to Derrida’s writings on aesthetics, spending time, in particular, with the readings made in *The Truth in Painting* (e.g. Van Gogh’s peasant shoes, the interpretation of the *parergon*). Central here throughout is the notion of the subjectile, that is a certain sub-representational and non-identical thinghood underlying the art object, and set free by the aesthetic. Once again, work is a key term, with Marder contending that the artist is never in full control of the material being worked: ‘a model for the schematism I am referring to is the archi-trace built into the thingly substratum itself, for instance, a vein that runs through the stone, and imposes a certain material necessity on the potential form of a future sculpture, a necessity with which the sculptor cannot not contend’ (105). Be it stone, paint, or words, this is the heart of his suggestion that aesthetics is deconstructed by the very thingliness on which the aesthetic work works.

As long as one is convinced that Marder has sufficiently grounded his realism of the remains as an analysis of a haunted immanence, and not reified *différance* as some thing ‘out there’ (i.e. the reversed Platonism against which Derrida has always guarded), this is a rewarding study. It covers an impressive range of relevant texts and although certain aspects of Derrida’s work are inevitably prioritised over others, its analyses of phenomenology, psychoanalysis, commodity and aesthetics are always suggestive. However, there is a certain uncanniness running through the book. Despite offering, on the one hand, what appears to be a very new Derrida, this can

also read like a complex attempt at synthesis or paraphrase: a series of capsule summaries given a measure of contiguity by *la chose*. At times, it articulates readings of essays and books that offer conclusions that are simply predictable. I think that the clue to this effect comes with Marder's identification of 'the non-coincidence with itself' of the thing wherein *différance* dwells' (22). In some senses, the 'thing' here is nothing more radical than a certain synonym for *différance*, and it is worth questioning what is at stake whenever a work on Derrida elevates one particular term (such as *la chose*) to the dominant status accorded the thing here.

My only other criticism would concern the almost total envelopment of the study by 'Derrida'. This can be seen most noticeably in the style: it does seem as if this book is deliberately mimicking Derrida's own prose, which is not necessarily always a positive thing when the language is not in the hands of Derrida himself. This is going to be a frustrating read for anyone not already immersed in the jargon and playful syntax of High Deconstruction. More importantly, though, Marder does not engage with any dialogues outside of those already initiated by the Derrida texts he is examining. It seems to me that a 'realist' or 'thingly' Derrida could be brought into a series of interesting and important philosophical relationships: with Jean-Luc Nancy's work on *exscription*, with Jean-Luc Marion's theories of the saturated phenomena, with Deleuzian and Kristevan analyses of materiality, with the so-called speculative realists (e.g. Quentin Meillassoux), and even with the continuing tradition of realism as it is found in analytic philosophy. Whilst this is, of course, a book that is presented and entitled as a study of Jacques Derrida, I would nevertheless hold that Derrida's legacy is most valuably understood, articulated and served if it is brought into a wider philosophical context. A book *on* Derrida need not to be a book so completely enclosed *by* Derrida.

Christopher Stokes is a Teaching Fellow at the University of Exeter. His publications include *Coleridge, Language and the Sublime* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and articles in 'Studies in Romanticism', 'Textual Practice' and 'Women's Writing' (among others). His research interests include Romanticism, the intersection between literature and religion, and literary theory (especially Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, phenomenology and the so-called 'theological turn')

REVIEW ARTICLE

Levi R. Bryant, *Difference and Givenness: Deleuze's Transcendental Empiricism and the Ontology of Immanence*.

Northwestern University Press, 2008

James Williams

Three deep philosophical questions have to-date remained without comprehensive answer in Deleuze scholarship, perhaps because work has gone into the related fields of the critical exposition of his work and its practical application to a vast set of disparate disciplines:

1. In exactly what way, if at all, is Deleuze's philosophy transcendental?
2. If we accept Deleuze's description of his philosophy as empirical, how can we accommodate that label with the obvious divergences between his work and traditional empiricism, notably in light of the question of the transcendental nature of his philosophy?
3. What is Deleuze's *philosophical* method, as opposed to the many practical and theoretical methodological approaches that can be traced through his work with Félix Guattari (schizo-analysis, for instance)?

Levi Bryant's recent book offers comprehensive and well-argued answers to these questions. As such, it is an important reference point for academics seeking to determine Deleuze's philosophical import in its own right, as opposed to through his reading of other thinkers, or in its descriptive powers, or as a move within a more tightly defined philosophical area, such as political theory or aesthetics.

The most straightforward account of Bryant's answer to the opening questions is deceptively simple and grounded in very well-known statements by Deleuze. His philosophical method is "transcendental empiricism". Yet, as Bryant is careful to argue, this "oxymoronic" answer raises many more problems than it solves,¹ as if Kant had awoken from his dogmatic slumbers only to remain haunted by impossible hybrid beasts. How can empiricism be transcendental without falling back into a form of dogmatism in the universal and therefore non-historical conditions of any possible experience? How can transcendental philosophy be empirical without

thereby thwarting its search for formal and stable conditions for any possible experience? In themselves, these questions already have great merit, since they force us to reflect again on Deleuze's relation to Kant, a relation that Bryant has analysed better and more deeply than any prior commentator. This allows him to explain and critically evaluate a set of underestimated Deleuzian moves, as set out in *Difference and Repetition*, for instance, in terms of faculties, such as recognition; ontological distinctions, such as subject and object; and constitutive processes, such as syntheses of time. These moves cannot be understood without explaining Deleuze's transformation of transcendental philosophy through an engagement with Kant's critique. This is an explanation over which Bryant has great command.

Bryant draws this philosophical shift by observing how 'intuition' in Kant is replaced by 'encounter' in Deleuze thereby introducing a problematic genetic structure where there was once a stable form. This is the most significant of his analyses of Deleuze's debt to Kant, one that no other researcher has yet remarked upon. Deleuze's notion of problem comes out of Kant's work but radicalizes it in a surprising manner. First, Kant's characterisation of problems is stuck in a taxonomic model that cannot free itself of a prior commitment to the faculty of recognition. Second, Kant treats concepts and problems as exterior to one another, thereby maintaining a formal independence between them, which in turn allows for the whole set of distinctions between faculties and realms in the Kantian account of thinking: "This exteriority is one of the marks of the Kantian system overall and inevitable leads to an account of mere conditioning rather than a true genetic perspective."²

A further advantage of this discussion of Deleuze and Kant is that it allows for a distance to be introduced between Deleuze and Bergson around the concept of intuition; one that is essential for the argument for the importance of Kant's role to survive an objection built on Bergson's critique of Kant. In addition, the reflection on Deleuze's radicalising of Kant's transcendental method allows for a series of useful and interesting connections between Deleuze and Heidegger that rejoin Miguel de Beistegui's work on those authors, also through the concept of genesis.³ In turn, this allows fruitful comparisons with Derrida's philosophy and its Heideggerian roots. Bryant sets out these connections in terms of the play of difference in events and encounters: "In Derridean terms, we could say that the subject is always caught in a play of *différance* producing a simulacrum of identity through difference as an effect."⁴ This is, however, quite a restricted view of Derrida's relation to Deleuze, a relation that has been investigated much more deeply than the concept of *différance* in Paul Patton and John Protevi's *Between Deleuze and Derrida*; for instance, in chapters by Gregg Lambert and Leonard Lawlor.⁵ Further important connections bolster Bryant's argument and the import of his book, most notably in his exposition of the role of Maimon⁶ and his situation of Hegel between Kant and Deleuze,⁷ in particular, in terms of subject and object.

So does this mean that a new philosophical orthodoxy can be set around Bryant's description of, and arguments for, Deleuze's transcendental empiricism? There is a series of views, most already present in some way in the existing literature, offering different takes on transcendental empiricism. Some depend on emphasising other aspects of the figures studied by Bryant. For instance, there is no reference to the Kantian sublime or to Kant's political works in the book. This is significant since the sublime (and Kant's treatment of political enthusiasm) offer the possibility of reading Kant as already moving beyond the role of recognition described by Deleuze in *Difference and Repetition*. This has been noted by Derrida and Lyotard, among others, and it implies that if Kant's philosophy is a restriction on thought, it is so only according to a restricted interpretation of Kant. I do not think that it is too significant that Bryant does not make space for this *in Kant*, but I do think it points to the possibility of more aesthetic or political readings of Deleuze's own concepts and arguments in their relation to Kant. I would turn to Steven Shaviro's recent book for an example of this first route, applied to the beautiful in Kant. Shaviro detects moments of Whitehead's adventure and Deleuze's encounters in Kant's aesthetics: "For Kant aesthetics has no foundation, and it offers us no guarantees. Rather it throws all norms and values into question or into crisis."⁸ This means that the concept of an encounter in Deleuze - which Bryant tends to describe in the form of the negative as it applies to the understanding, and where the encounter is the infinitely other of cognition and recognition ("The sign that can only be sensed is not *opposed* to recognition but is *other*

than recognition⁹) – could be given a description which better bridges to the signs emitted in an encounter, to their relation to ‘dark precursors’, to the roles of creative experimentation and the apprenticeship to signs in an environment conditioned by immanent aesthetic events.

A similar exercise is possible in terms of Deleuze’s empiricism in its debt to Hume, a figure (along with Nietzsche) with a tellingly low profile in Bryant’s argument. He sets mere empiricism in opposition to transcendental empiricism by insisting that the former “... continues to maintain the primacy of the subject or mind to which givens are given in sensibility.”¹⁰ Yet this is a very narrow account of Hume indeed, one that takes little account of Hume’s theory of mind or his work on the passions, both of which have been seen as forerunners of a different definition of transcendental empiricism, one that does not depend so much on the immanent transformation of faculties through encounters, but rather on accounts of thought that are evolutionary and pre-subjective. We find this argument in Jeffrey Bell’s recent book on Deleuze and Hume, and on Deleuze’s “Humean transcendental empiricism”, which stresses the role of creative principles drawn from Hume, rather than a more dichotomous account of established oppositions (between faculties and their other, between faculties, and between subject and object) transcended in encounters. So transcendental empiricism is already there germinating in Hume and takes on a much more experimental form in relation to the creation and experimentation with principles: “It is precisely this creativity of multiplicities that interested Deleuze in Hume; and just as Hume sought, within the given, to account for the constitution of that which is irreducible to the given, so too Deleuze, by affirming multiplicities ... facilitates a creation that is irreducible to anything actual.”¹¹

Even if it is the one underlying Bryant’s approach, I sense that the question ‘Who is right?’ is misleading here, since in their own way each of these *interpreters* gives convincing arguments for their positions and bequeaths elegant readings and suggestive ideas. Instead, the questions are more: ‘Whose line to follow and transform?’ and ‘Who to select as the object of a potential encounter?’ There is also no right or wrong answer to these questions in the sense of a general prescription, nor indeed in having to choose a single figure. In Bryant’s work a series of values emerge with great philosophical force: organise a field according to clear positional limits with respect to definitions and implications, and with respect to who or what is inside and outside given categories; respect the letter of a text by quoting at great length, rather than by dissecting passages in order to find the many different directions in which they can be taken; set out clear boundaries as to the scope of philosophical endeavour (for instance, in terms of ontology, aesthetics, politics and sociology) and with respect to the legitimacy of interpretative moves; eschew style in favour of precision and fidelity. There is something judgemental and taxonomic in this mode of thought and indeed image of philosophy, something that stands at odds with Bryant’s critique of Kantian taxonomy with respect to genetic problems. Oppositional taxonomy becomes an interpretative and evaluative presupposition in this book, an ethos rather than a conceptual frame.

This problematic tension is again not something resolvable, but it leads me to insist on the variety of openings offered by Deleuze’s philosophy, not so much in how it is to be analysed, but rather in how it can be put to work. Thus, for example, the recent collection *Deleuze’s Philosophical Lineage*, edited by Graham Jones and Jon Roffe, contains a series of alternate reference points for thinking about the relation of Deleuze’s thought to other thinkers. One could take Dan Smith’s account from that book, of the importance of Leibniz’s principles for Deleuze, and set it against the more oppositional claims for the transcendental made by Bryant. One could take Simon Duffy’s work on Lautman in order to see a more mathematical and dialectical model for Ideas and problems in Deleuze. Or one could see a much more Platonic Deleuze, with Gregory Flaxman, or one influenced by strange and often partly concealed influences, such as Scotus, Tarde, Ruyer and Wronski (studied respectively by Nathan Widder, Éric Alliez, Ronald Bogue and Christian Kerslake). What matters though is that the field should be allowed to remain open enough to allow this plurality of interpretations to co-exist in productive conversation.

Is this to claim all interpretations are equally valid? No, it is rather to shift the way validity is determined from statements about the methodology of a philosophy and its place on an historical grid to practical developments of a wider set of aspects. So the central question is not about what a philosophy is, but rather about what it can

do, or help us to do. In turn, this means a philosophy will not be judged negatively on perceived flaws or on the implications of a central set of methodological claims, but rather on more open and affirmative attempts to take the philosophy further, *alongside* attempts to make it as consistent and robust as possible. The aim therefore is not to avoid judging and situating philosophies according to method, or to stop criticising methodological flaws, but rather to shift the position of such judgement from a prior and determinant one, to a subsequent one flowing from practical considerations. This is then not a defence of an overly relativistic hermeneutics, but rather a turn to practical assessments alongside methodological ones, because methodology cannot be taken to be independent of context and practice. What we judge a philosophy to be depends on the practical problems we set it to work on. Whether we judge a philosophy to be successful is not strictly dependent on its methodological consistency and on its place within a set of alternative historical positions. Instead, it is dependent on how well it allows us to think through new problems outside the secure ambit of history and known methodological constraints, yet also partly within their scope and measure, as revised given the new developments. Deleuze's philosophy is aimed at such multiple practices and at such flexibility in its methodological core. It is this quality I fear might be missed by the restricted categorisation at work in Bryant's study, despite its great force and philosophical insight, or perhaps even because of them.

In his analysis in *Deleuze's Philosophical Lineage*, Smith insists on the "use" Deleuze is able to make of a set of Leibniz's principles,¹² thereby returning us to an interpretation that picks on the practical and assemblage-driven aspects of Deleuze's thought. Bryant, on the other hand, emphasises breaks with traditional figures, insisting on Deleuzian specificity rather than historical lines, contrasts and connections ("... he is not Leibnizian."¹³) Metaphysical specificity and textual fidelity are certainly timely values. They have proven their worth in eliciting a relation to Kant in Deleuze that is illuminating for a reading of *Difference and Repetition*. They can be dangerous values too, though, for instance in their puritanical tenor. In Bryant's book, the epithet 'brilliant,' when describing a rival interpretation, also carries connotations of regrettable error: "This tendency, for instance, can be clearly discerned in Keith Ansell Pearson's brilliant text [...] which moves fluidly between Deleuze's works co-authored with Guattari, his historical works, and the works in which Deleuze explicated his own philosophy without even raising the question of whether these projects are all continuous with one another."¹⁴ Yet Ansell Pearson's work is much more than a brilliant misconception and can only be seen as lacking in reflection about the continuity of its references if it is assumed that those references have fixed and incompatible futures. They don't. Specificity and its attendant 'value' of oppositional judgements with respect to a field of study apply uncomfortably to Deleuze's metaphysics, but also to his texts with their inner folds, disjunctive series, multiple expressions and fluid boundaries.

The radical openness of Deleuze's metaphysics, also in relation to that very label, lies in the multiplicity of its concepts. Bryant gives us deep accounts of some of them, such as encounter and genesis. Yet, other terms are downplayed in his reading and this *choice* removes the idea of a fold of Deleuze's concepts back on to their source texts, writing styles and structures. Examples of this widest of folds could be taken from the application of counter-actualisation to method itself, to *its* dark precursors, for instance, in the relation of selection to the concept of folding, in its guise as complication, as described in *Proust and Signs*. As paired disturbance to the process of unfolding determined by ideas of encasement, envelopment and implication, Deleuze offers the process of complication. Complication is a matter of asymmetries, breakdowns in communication and separation. As such it necessarily requires "elections" and "choices" which cannot be reduced to a prior systematic logic or ethics, but instead rest on a diversity of forces and tenebrous swirls. Even common names such as "transcendental empiricist" or "speculative realist" only "acquire their value in introducing non-communicating pieces of untruth and truth elected by the interpreter."¹⁵ Brilliant mistakes indeed.

James Williams is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Dundee, and the author of a number of books on Deleuze, Lyotard and post-structuralism, most recently *Gilles Deleuze's Logic of Sense: A Critical Introduction and Guide*.

NOTES

1. *Difference and Givenness*, p 3
2. *Difference and Givenness*, p 173
3. Miguel de Beistegui, *Truth and Genesis: Philosophy as Differential Ontology*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2004
4. *Difference and Givenness*, p 191
5. Paul Patton and John Protevi (eds.) *Between Deleuze and Derrida* London: Continuum 2003
6. *Difference and Givenness*, p 202-4
7. *Difference and Givenness*, p 24-5
8. Steven Shaviro *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze and Aesthetics*, Cambridge MA: MIT, 2008, p 1
9. *Difference and Givenness*, p 133
10. *Difference and Givenness*, p 11
11. Jeffrey A. Bell, *Deleuze's Hume: Philosophy, Culture and the Scottish Enlightenment*. Edinburgh University Press, 2009, p 153
12. Daniel W. Smith 'Leibniz' in *Deleuze's Philosophical Lineage*. Edited by Graham Jones and Jon Roffé Edinburgh University Press, 2009, pp 44-66, esp. p 64
13. *Difference and Givenness*, p 228
14. *Difference and Givenness*, p 267
15. Gilles Deleuze, *Proust et les signes*. Paris : PUF, 1993, p 143