

13 The doctrine of univocity

Deleuze's ontology of immanence

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'If God does not exist, everything is permissible.' Deleuze likes to invert this Dostoyevskian formula from *The Brothers Karamazov*, because, he says, the opposite is in fact the case: it is *with* God that everything is permissible. This is obviously true morally, since the worst atrocities have always managed to find a divine justification, and belief in God has never been a guarantor of morality. But it is also true aesthetically and philosophically. Medieval art, for example, is filled with images of God, and it would be tempting to see this merely as an inevitable constraint of the era, imposed from without by the Church. Deleuze suggests a different hypothesis. In the hands of great painters like El Greco, Tintoretto and Giotto, this constraint became the condition of a radical emancipation: in painting the divine, one could take literally the idea that God must not be represented, an idea that resulted in an extraordinary liberation of line, colour, form, and movement. With God, painting found a freedom it would not have had otherwise – a properly pictorial atheism.¹

The same was true in philosophy. Until the revolution of the eighteenth century, philosophers were constantly speaking of God, to the point where philosophy seemed completely compromised by theology and the demands of the Church. But, in the hands of great philosophers such as Spinoza and Leibniz, this constraint became the condition of an equally extraordinary liberation. With God, philosophical concepts were freed from the traditional task that had been imposed on them – the representation of things – and allowed to assume fantastic dimensions. With the concept of God, everything was permissible. Or almost everything, for thinkers (like Spinoza) who went too far with the concept, or went too fast, often did so at their own peril. Deleuze thus harbours neither the antagonism of the 'secular' who find the concept of God outmoded, nor the angst or mourning of those for whom the loss of God was crisis-provoking, nor the faith of those who would like to retrieve the concept in a new form. He remained fascinated with theological concepts, and regarded medieval theologians in particular as a magnificent breed of thinkers who were able to invent, in the name of God, remarkable systems of logic and physics. Indeed, at several points in his writings, he picked up on certain

'heretical' paths of theological thought closed off by orthodoxy and seemingly abandoned, and set them to work philosophically in a different context.

Deleuze's appropriation of the medieval concept of univocity is the most obvious and important example of this unorthodox use of the Christian theological tradition. The doctrine of the 'univocity of Being' was an ontological theory developed in the thirteenth century by Duns Scotus, following Henry of Ghent, in his magnum opus entitled *Opus Oxoniense*, which Deleuze calls 'the greatest book of pure ontology'.² In the Middle Ages, univocity was a heterodox position, constantly at the borders of heresy, and had limited currency outside the Scotistic school (the English word 'dunce' is derived from the term of approbation used to describe the followers of Duns Scotus).³ The concept has a rather curious history in Deleuze's own work. The term was not even mentioned before 1968, when univocity suddenly became an important theme in almost all of Deleuze's writings. It first appears in *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, where it forms the 'keystone' of Deleuze's interpretation of Spinoza (even more than the title concept of 'expression').⁴ It then assumes an even more prominent role in *Difference and Repetition* and in *The Logic of Sense*, where Deleuze not only identifies an entire tradition of univocity in the history of philosophy, running from Duns Scotus (against Thomism) through Spinoza (against Cartesianism) to Nietzsche (against Hegelianism), but also presents his own ontology as a univocal ontology, thereby, as it were, identifying himself as the most recent inheritor of that tradition. And then, equally abruptly, and without explanation, the concept disappears, almost without a trace; it is scarcely mentioned in any of Deleuze's subsequent works.

What role does the doctrine of univocity play in Deleuze's thought? And why does the concept have such a short-lived but intense trajectory in Deleuze's writings, like a flashing meteor? Despite Deleuze's provocative claim, there is no 'tradition' of univocity in the history of philosophy, apart from the one he himself creates; there is hardly a secondary literature on the concept outside of Scotistic studies. Deleuze was more accurate when he remarked, in a seminar, that univocity is 'the strangest thought, the most difficult to think, *if it has ever been thought*'.⁵ In what follows, I attempt to follow the life of this 'strange' concept as it appears, matures, and then passes away within the flow of Deleuze's thought, creating unexpected 'traversals' between otherwise disconnected thinkers and problems. Were one to 'dramatise' the movement of the concept, it could perhaps be staged in four separate acts.

Act One would take us back to the medieval articulations of the concept. For Duns Scotus, as for many Scholastic philosophers, the object of theology was God, while the object of philosophy, or rather of the metaphysics crowning it, was *Being* as Being. In developing his theory of univocity, Duns Scotus was injecting himself into a lively thirteenth-century debate concerning the nature of Being: Being is said of beings, but in what sense? The Scholastics used three precise terms to designate the various ways of resolving the problem: equivocity, univocity and analogy. To say

that Being is equivocal means that the term 'Being' is said of beings in several senses, and that these senses have no common measure: 'God is' does not have the same sense as 'man is', for instance, because God does not have the same type of being as man. By contrast, to say that Being is univocal, as Duns Scotus affirmed, means that Being has only one sense, and is said *in one and the same sense* of everything of which it is said, whether it be God or man, animal or plant. Since these positions seemed to lead to scandalous conclusions – (equivocity denied order in the cosmos, univocity implied pantheism) – a third alternative was developed between these two extremes: Being is neither equivocal nor univocal but analogical. This became the position of Christian orthodoxy, as formulated by Thomas Aquinas: there is indeed a common measure to the forms of Being, but this measure is analogical, and not univocal.

Why did Deleuze revisit this seemingly obscure Scholastic debate? The answer seems clear: the three books Deleuze published in 1968–9 (*Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense*) mark, among other things, the culmination of Deleuze's confrontation with Heidegger. This confrontation had been present in Deleuze's work from the start, even if Heidegger's name receives only passing mention in the texts.⁶ As always, Deleuze brings a *contemporary* problematic to bear on his work in the *history* of philosophy. Heidegger (who wrote his own thesis on Duns Scotus) famously inaugurated the modern renaissance of ontology by posing the question of the 'ontological difference': what is the difference between Being and beings? Or, more precisely: how is Being distributed among beings? During the Middle Ages, this ontological problem had been intertwined with a similar, though not identical, set of theological questions: what is the difference between God and his creatures? Or put logically, in terms of the 'divine names' tradition: in what sense can we predicate of God the same terms (e.g. goodness) that we use of his creatures? The concept of univocity was situated at the nexus of this complex set of philosophical and theological questions.

According to Deleuze, however, although Heidegger revived the question of ontology and gave 'renewed splendor to the univocity of Being', he did not effect the necessary conversion according to which 'univocal Being belongs only to *difference*' (*DR*, p. 66).⁷ Heidegger, in other words, was unable, or perhaps unwilling, to push the problematic of ontological difference to its necessary conclusion. This is the project that Deleuze takes up as his own in *Difference and Repetition*. In this sense, univocity must be seen as one of the concepts Deleuze uses in order to state and resolve Heidegger's ontological problematic in his own manner. For Deleuze, the only pure and fully realised ontology *must* be a univocal ontology, and only a univocal ontology is capable of thinking difference-in-itself, or of providing difference with its own concept. As Foucault put it, in his well known essay on Deleuze, the univocity of Being is 'the principal condition which permits difference to escape the domination of identity'.⁸ But this link between univocity

and difference might seem obscure: if Being is univocal, what constitutes the *difference* between beings? Why does a philosophy of difference require a univocal ontology?

In the second act, Deleuze begins to respond to these questions by turning, not to Duns Scotus, who plays the role of a precursor, but rather to Spinoza, who, according to Deleuze, gave the concept of univocity its fullest expression. ‘Univocity’, Deleuze claims, ‘is the keystone of Spinoza’s entire philosophy’ – even though the word does not appear even once in Spinoza’s texts.⁹ Deleuze, however, often employs this ‘topological’ method in his historical monographs: when he interprets Bergson in terms of the concept of ‘difference’ (as formulated by Heidegger), or Leibniz in terms of a theory of ‘singularities’ (borrowed from Albert Lautmann), or Spinoza in terms of ‘univocity’ (imported from Duns Scotus), he is using a ‘foreign’ concept, not explicitly formulated by the thinkers at hand, to bring out aspects of their thought that might otherwise remain obscure.

Deleuze’s affinity with Spinoza here is not incidental. Heidegger himself wrote notoriously little on Spinoza – a surprising omission, it would seem, since the *Ethics* is a work of pure ontology that poses the problem of ontological difference in terms of the difference between infinite substance (Being) and finite modes (beings). Deleuze’s work on Spinoza, from this viewpoint, can be read as his means of working through the problematic of ontological difference in a new manner, just as *Difference and Repetition* could be read as a response to *Being and Time* (for Deleuze, Being is difference, and time is repetition). Where Heidegger returns to the Greeks (the origin), Deleuze turns to Spinoza (the middle). According to Deleuze, univocity assumes three figures in Spinoza’s philosophy: univocity of the attributes, univocity of cause, and univocity of modality; they are the three important scenes of the second act. The first two, however, are particularly important in showing how Spinoza overturned the medieval theological tradition, at the price of his condemnation.

In the Middle Ages, as Heidegger says, ontology became an onto-theology: the question of the Being of beings tended to be forgotten in favour of the thought of God as the supreme (ontic) being. The Christian concept of God was the inheritor of the Platonic ‘Good’ and the neoplatonic ‘One’, which were ‘above’ or ‘beyond’ Being (*hyperousios, epikeina tes ousias*), that is, transcendent to Being. Christian theology thus oscillated between a double requirement: *immanence* (the ontological requirement that the first principle be a *being*) and *transcendence* (the more powerful requirement that the transcendence of God be maintained, as the One *beyond* Being). The ‘divine names’ tradition, in turn, was concerned with the manner in which the traditional divine attributes (e.g. goodness, love, wisdom, power, etc.) could be predicated of God – negatively or positively? As conditional affirmations, or negations marking the ablation of some privation? The Christian tradition identified two extreme (and heterodox) responses to this question: pure

transcendence would imply the equivocity of terms; pure immanence, their univocity. Between these two poles, orthodoxy developed a *via media* approach to the problem, centred in large part on the strategies of negation, eminence and analogy. These five ways – equivocity, negation, eminence, analogy, univocity – entered into historically varying combinations in Christian thought, though two general approaches assumed the status of orthodoxy: a way of negation and a way of affirmation.

The way of negation, which came to be called ‘negative theology’ (following Pseudo-Dionysius), admits that affirmations are able to designate God as cause, subject to rules of immanence, but insists that God as substance or essence can only be defined negatively, according to rules of transcendence. Meister Eckhart, for instance, prefers to say ‘God is not’ rather than ‘God is’, because ‘x is’ is a statement that is said of beings, whereas God is eminently superior to Being, beyond Being.¹⁰ This allows God to appear in his ‘supra-substantial’ or ‘supra-essential’ eminence, as far from all negation as from all affirmation. Negative theology can therefore be defined by its dynamics: one goes beyond affirmations (God is good) via negations (God is not good in the human sense of the term), and beyond both affirmations and negations to attain God’s *eminence* (God is good with an ‘incomparable’ or ‘ineffable’ goodness). By contrast, a theology with more positive ambitions, like that of Thomas Aquinas, relies on *analogy* to found new affirmative rules. Positive qualities can indeed belong to God substantially, but only insofar as they are treated ‘analogically’, either in terms of an ordered relationship between two proportions, e.g. the divine goodness is to God as human goodness is to man (analogy of proportionality); or by reference to a focal meaning or ‘prime analogate’ e.g. ‘goodness,’ which God possesses eminently and creatures only derivatively (analogy of proportion). The way of affirmation must likewise be defined by a specific dynamic: it maintains the strength of the negative and the eminent, but comprehends them within analogy.¹¹

The audacity of Spinoza’s ‘heresy’ was to have rejected both these orthodox approaches – the negative and the positive, the apophatic and kataphatic – and to have set against them the heterodox doctrine of the univocity of the divine attributes. For Spinoza, we know only two of God’s infinite attributes (thought and extension), and these attributes are common forms predicable univocally of *both* God and his creatures. Though formally distinct, the attributes are ontologically univocal. To say that the attributes are univocal means, for example, that it is in the *same* form that bodies imply extension, and that extension is an attribute of the divine substance (the position of immanence). If Spinoza radically rejects the notions of eminence, equivocity, and even analogy, it is because they imply that God possesses these perfections in a form *different* from that implied in his creatures, a ‘higher’ form (the position of transcendence). Spinoza’s genius lies in his having provided a profound explanation for his rejection of these orthodox positions: the problem they were attempting to solve, he says, was an altogether false one, and this for two reasons.

On the one hand, as Spinoza argues in the *Short Treatise*, theologians had tended to confuse God's attributes with his *propria*. Following Aristotle, Spinoza defines a *proprium* as that which belongs to a thing, *but can never explain what it is*. The attributes that have traditionally been ascribed to God are not attributes, Spinoza explains, but mere *propria*. They reveal *nothing* of the divine essence. The *Short Treatise* distinguishes three types of *propria* of God: the first type are modalities of the divine essence that must be affirmed of all God's attributes (cause of itself, infinite, perfect, immutable, eternal, necessary, etc.), or of a specific attribute (omniscience is affirmed of thought; omnipresence is affirmed of extension); the second type are those that qualify God in reference to his products or creations (cause of all things, predestination, providence); the third type, finally, do not even belong to God, but designate extrinsic determinations that merely indicate the way we imagine God, failing to comprehend his true nature (justice, charity, compassion). The basic error of theology is that it confuses God's essence with these *propria*, and this confusion pervades the entire language of eminences, negations and analogies. When *propria* are given a substantial value that they do not have, the divine substance is given an inexpressible nature that it does not have either. And this error, in turn, has compromised the whole of philosophy. Even Descartes was content to define God as infinite perfection, though perfection and infinity are merely modalities of the divine essence (*propria* of the first type).¹²

On the other hand, Spinoza offers a genetic account of this theological error in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Why was the nature of God denatured in this way? Because, Spinoza explains, his predecessors lacked a proper *historico-critical method* for interpreting Scripture. They simply presumed that God had revealed his nature in Scripture. But in fact, the aim of Scripture is to give us models of life, to make us obey, and to ground our obedience through its warnings, commandments and rules. 'Revealed theology' concerns itself exclusively with *propria* of the third type, which appeal to our imaginations to make us serve a God of whose nature we remain ignorant. As for God's true attributes (thought and extension), they are made known through the light of Nature, not revelation. The nature of God is made manifest in the order of Nature, not in the teachings of the Bible. Spinoza likes to remind us that the prophets were men with vivid imaginations but weak understandings: Adam, Abraham, and Moses were not only ignorant of the true divine attributes, but also of most of the *propria* of the first and second type.¹³ According to Harry Wolfson, the *Tractatus* overturned a long hermeneutical tradition that had been inaugurated centuries earlier by Philo: after Spinoza, Scripture could and would no longer be treated as a properly *philosophical* authority.¹⁴

The univocity of the attributes entails the absolute immanence of God and Nature, *Deus sive natura*, stripping God of any transcendence (it matters little whether this is understood as pantheism or atheism). What Deleuze finds in Spinoza, prior to Hume and Kant's critiques of theology, or even Nietzsche's 'death of God', is a quiet

and confident philosophy of immanence, the consequences of which he will pursue throughout his writings. But already, one can sense Deleuze manoeuvring between Scylla and Charybdis: univocity is as opposed to the negative eminence of the neoplatonists as to the positive analogies of the Thomists, both of which have their modern counterparts.

The second figure of univocity Deleuze finds in Spinoza is the univocity of cause: God is cause of all things *in the same sense* that he is cause of himself. Broadly speaking, medieval philosophy distinguished between three types of causes: a transitive cause, an emanative cause, and an immanent cause. A *transitive* cause is a cause that leaves itself in order to produce, and what it produces (its effect) is outside of itself. Christianity held to the idea of a real distinction between God and the world: if God created the world, and the world is exterior to God, then God must come out of himself in order to create the world; it therefore needed to see God as a purely transitive cause (creationism). An *emanative* cause, by contrast, is a cause whose effect is exterior to it, but which nonetheless remains within itself in order to produce its effect. The sun, for example, remains within itself in order to produce, but what it produces (light) comes out of it. Such metaphors of luminosity are frequent in Plotinus and the neoplatonists, who pushed an emanative conception of cause to its furthest point. An *immanent* cause, finally, is a cause that not only remains within itself in order to produce, but one whose produced effect also remains within it. This is the conception of causality developed by Spinoza.

Here again, Christian theology adopted a syncretic solution: is God a transitive cause, an emanative cause, or an immanent cause?¹⁵ Orthodoxy insisted that God is a transitive cause, transcendent to the world (creation *ex nihilo*). How then does God create the world? He would have to have a model or idea of the world in his understanding, and he would create the world, in conformity with this model, through a free act of the divine will. But this is a fully immanent causality: the model or idea must remain in God's understanding, and God must remain in himself in order to contemplate it. To reconcile these two movements, one requires the idea of an emanative causality between the model of the world in God's understanding and the real world produced in conformity with this model. Medieval thinkers consequently had to combine the three types of causality in varying permutations. The idea of an immanent causality, Deleuze suggests, functioned as a kind of internal theoretical limit for philosophers and theologians up to the Renaissance (Nicholas of Cusa, Erigena, Bruno, Eckhart) – a limit, however, that was always repulsed, out of a concern to avoid pantheism, through the doctrines of creation (by a transcendent being above his creatures) and emanation (from a transcendent One beyond Being). Spinoza was the sole thinker to take causality to this immanent limit, at the price of his condemnation.

What are the consequences of an immanent causality? In an emanative causality, the One is the cause of Being, but the cause (the One) remains beyond its effect (Being). This is the sense of Plotinus' notion of the *gift*: Being is a gift or donation

of the One, but the One necessarily remains beyond Being. Ontologically, the universe is in this way rendered hierarchical – beings having more or less reality depending on their distance from or proximity to the One as the transcendent first principle (the ‘great chain of Being’). Morally, it allows Being to be judged because there is an authority higher than Being itself (the ‘system of judgement’). The One is thus inseparable from a negative theology or a method of analogy, which are required to maintain this eminence of the cause. Heidegger seems to have remained tied to a certain conception of eminence in his famous lecture on ‘Time and Being,’ where he developed the theme of the *es gibt*, that is, the ‘gift’ (*Gabe*) of time and Being by the It.¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, in his later works, has moved towards a philosophy of transcendence, influenced by Levinas and linked to the theme of a negative theology.¹⁷

Deleuze has followed a very different path. In Spinoza’s immanent causality, not only does the cause remain in itself, but its effect remains ‘immanate’ within it, rather than emanating from it. The effect (mode) remains in its cause no less than the cause remains in itself (substance). Hence Deleuze’s fondness for the ‘expressionistic’ Renaissance notions of *complicare* and *explicare*, which he adopts for his own purposes in *Difference and Repetition*: all things are present to God, who complicates them, and God is present to all things, which ‘explicate’ and ‘implicate’ him. In an immanent ontology, Being necessarily becomes univocal: not only is Being equal in itself, it is equally and immediately present in all beings, without mediation or intermediary. There is no distant cause, no ‘chain of Being’, no hierarchy, but rather a kind of anarchy of beings within Being. The rock, the lily, the beast, the human equally sing the glory of God in a kind of crowned anarchy’.¹⁸ One must not be led astray (as Alain Badiou seems to have been) by the prefix ‘uni’ in the term ‘univocity’: a univocal ontology is by definition irreconcilable with a philosophy of the One, which necessarily entails an equivocal concept of Being.¹⁹

These then, in brief, are the three figures of univocity Deleuze identifies in Spinoza: the univocity of the attributes (the attributes are said in one and the same sense of God and his creatures), the univocity of cause (God is cause of himself in the same sense that he is cause of all things), and the univocity of modality (God is necessary in the same sense that all things are necessary). I will leave it to readers to explore the heretical consequences of the denial of free will in the third figure of univocity. Taken together, they effect what Deleuze calls a ‘pure’ ontology, that is, *an ontology in which there is nothing beyond or outside or superior to Being*. But this is only the first half of the unfolding of the concept of univocity in Deleuze.

‘Have I been understood? – Univocity versus Analogy’: such is the Nietzschean gauntlet Deleuze throws down in *Difference and Repetition*, the third and most important act in the story of univocity. *Difference and Repetition* links the project of a pure ontology, as developed by Spinoza, with the problematic of difference, as formulated by Heidegger, and in the process goes beyond both Spinoza and

Heidegger. The conversion Deleuze effects from identity to difference is as important as Spinoza's move from transcendence to immanence. According to Klossowski's thesis, the concept of God has always functioned as a guarantor of the principle of identity.²⁰ Even in Spinoza, modes are modifications of substance, and the concept of substance (or God) can still be said to maintain the rights of identity over difference. Deleuze's philosophy of difference must thus be seen as a kind of Spinozism *minus* substance, a purely modal or differential universe.²¹ *Difference and Repetition* is an experiment in metaphysics whose aim is to provide a (transcendental) description of the world from the viewpoint of a principle of difference rather than the principle of identity. 'In accordance with Heidegger's ontological intuition', Deleuze writes, 'difference must be articulation and connection in itself; *it must relate different to different without any mediation whatsoever* by the identical, the similar, the analogous or the opposed' (*DR*, p. 117). Despite his indebtedness to Heidegger, however, Deleuze never subscribed to the theme of the 'overcoming of metaphysics'. He describes himself as a 'pure metaphysician',²² a classical philosopher who sees his philosophy as a system, albeit an open and 'heterogenetic' system.²³ Though obviously indebted to such metaphysical thinkers as Spinoza, Leibniz and Bergson, Deleuze appropriates their respective systems of thought only by pushing them to their 'differential' limit, purging them of the three great terminal points (God, world, self) of traditional metaphysics. Deleuze's historical monographs, in this sense, are preliminary sketches for the great canvas of *Difference and Repetition*.

Aristotle appears as an important *dramatis persona* in *Difference and Repetition*, and for good reason. Aristotle held a famous thesis concerning difference: *different things differentiate themselves only through what they have in common*. This subordination of difference to identity can be seen in the schematisation of Aristotle's ontology known as Porphyry's Tree (Figure 1). In the middle regions of the tree, specific difference allows a genus or concept to remain the same in itself (identity) while becoming other in the opposing predicates (differences) that divide it. This process of specification in turn reaches a limit at either end of the table. At the lower end, a plurality of different individuals can be placed under a single concept only on the condition that a sensible resemblance between the individuals can be perceived. At the upper end, the differences between the highest genera or 'categories' can be related to the concept of Being only through an operation that would come to be known as analogy. Aristotle thus subordinates difference to four interrelated principles: identity in the concept and the opposition of predicates (specific difference), resemblance in perception (individual difference), and the analogy of judgement (generic difference). Readers will recognise this quadripartite structure of 'representation' as one of the recurring motifs of *Difference and Repetition*.

Being				
	Substance, etc.* (the categories)		generic difference (highest determinable concepts)	ANALOGY of judgement
Corporeal		Incorporeal	specific difference	
	Body		subaltern genus	
Animate		Inanimate	specific difference	IDENTITY in the concept
	Living thing		subaltern genus	
Sensitive		Insensitive	specific difference	
	Animal		subaltern genus	OPPOSITION of predicates
Rational		Nonrational	specific difference	
	Human		infima species (smallest determined concepts)	
Socrates	Plato	etc.	individual difference (individuals)	RESEMBLANCE in perception

*Aristotle's ten categories: substance, quality, quantity, relation, place, time, position, state, activity, passivity.

Figure 1 Porphyry's Tree

Adapted from E. M. Curley (1969) *Spinoza's Metaphysics: An Essay in Interpretation*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, p. 29.

Deleuze contrasts the 'univocity of Being' point by point with Aristotle's theory of the 'analogy of Being,' which dominated medieval philosophy prior to Spinoza. Is Being distributed among beings univocally or analogically? This question concerns a very specific problem: the relation of Being to the 'categories'. Kant defined a category as a concept that can be said of every object of possible experience (causality is a category because every object has a cause and is itself cause of other things). Aristotle's formulation amounts to the same thing: the categories are the different senses in which Being is said of beings, *they are different senses of the word Being*.²⁴ In Heidegger's formulation, the categories are the fundamental 'determinations of the Being of beings', the fundamental ontological predicates.²⁵ But what then is the relation of Being, as the most general concept, to the categories, as the highest genera? Aristotle recognised that Being cannot be a univocal genus in relation to the categories, and this for a precise reason: because *differences 'are'*. To predicate Being as an overarching genus would deny the being of difference; or rather, it would mean that the genus 'Being' would have to be predicated twice, once to its species, and once to its own differentiae.²⁶ Generic difference must therefore be of another nature than specific difference: whereas a genus in relation to its species is univocal, Being in relation to the categories is

necessarily equivocal. The categories, Aristotle concluded, must therefore be related to each other *analogically*. Every philosophy of the categories, from Aristotle through Kant and Hegel, implies an analogical ontology.

In Aristotle, the analogy of Being has two fundamental forms, both of which would be taken up theologically by later thinkers such as Aquinas. On the one hand, the concept of Being has no content in itself, but only a *distributive* content that is proportional to the formally different categories of which it is predicated (analogy of proportionality). The 'proportionality' involved here need not be understood in a strict mathematical sense (a:b:c:d), since the categories do not need to have an equal relation to Being, but only an internal relation. On the other hand, Being therefore tends to form a hierarchical series, insofar as the category of substance assumes the role of the primary category or the first sense (*pros hen*) of Being: everything that 'is' is a substance, and in turn everything that is a substance has a quality, a quantity, a place, and so on (analogy of proportion).²⁷ These two forms of analogy are what Deleuze terms, respectively, the distributive 'common sense' and the hierarchical 'good sense' (or first sense) of Being.²⁸

What is wrong with Aristotle's analogical vision of the world? Put simply, it provides an inadequate solution to the Heideggerian problematic of ontological difference. On the one hand, *it cannot posit Being as a common genus* without destroying the very reason one posits it as such, that is, the possibility of *being* for specific differences; it can conceive the universality of Being only as a quasi-identity. On the other hand, it has to relate Being to particular beings, *but it cannot say what constitutes their individuality*: it retains in the particular (the individual) only what conforms to the general (the concept). An equivocal or analogical concept of Being, in other words, can only grasp that which is univocal in beings. A true universal is lacking, no less than a true singular: Being has only a distributive common sense, and the individual has no difference except a general and reflexive one in the concept.²⁹

Deleuze's thesis in *Difference and Repetition* is that only univocity can provide us with a truly *collective* sense of Being (and not merely a distributive sense) by giving us a comprehension of the play of *individuating differences* within beings (and not mere generalities in a network of resemblances). But this brings us, precisely, to the fundamental problem of a univocal ontology. If Being is said in *one and the same sense* of everything that is, then what constitutes the difference between beings? There can be no categories in a univocal ontology: if we distinguish beings by their substance, or their form, or their generic and specific differences, then we are back in the analogical vision of the world. Yet if we say that Being is univocal, that there is no categorical difference between the senses of the word 'Being', then we seem to fall into the thought of infamy: the thought of the inessential, the formless, the non-specific, the non-generic, the non-categorical. Between God and man, plant and animal, there can be no difference of category, no difference of substance, no difference of form. This is why Deleuze insists that

univocity is such a difficult concept to *think*: how can we say that there are differences between beings, and nonetheless that Being is said in one and the same sense of everything that is?

Not surprisingly, it was Spinoza who foresaw the only possible type of solution to this problem. At this point, the only difference conceivable is difference as a *degree of power* or intensity. The power or intensity of a being is its relation to Being. Why is the idea of difference as a degree of power linked to that of the univocity of Being? Because beings that are distinguished solely by their degree of power realise *one and the same* univocal Being, except for the difference in their degree of power or its withdrawal. Difference as a degree of power is a *non-categorical* difference in that it preserves the univocal sense of Being.³⁰ Beings are no longer distinguished by a qualitative essence (analogy of Being) but by a quantifiable degree of power (univocity of Being). We no longer ask what the essence of a thing is (for instance, man as a 'rational animal' or 'featherless biped'), but rather what its affective capacities are, since the power of an existing individual is expressed in a certain capacity for being affected.

This move already marks an important practical conversion in philosophy, which Deleuze describes as a shift away from a *morality* to an *ethics*. For Deleuze, morality is fundamentally linked to the notion of essence and the analogical vision of the world. In Aristotle, man's essence is to be a rational animal. If he nonetheless acts in a irrational manner, it is because there are *accidents* that turn him away from his essential nature: man's essence is a *potentiality* that is not necessarily realised. Morality can therefore be defined as the effort to rejoin man's essence, to realise one's essence. In an ethics, by contrast, beings are related to Being, not at the level of essence, but at the level of existence. Ethics defines a person not by what they *are* in principle (their essence), but by what they *can do*, what they are *capable* of (their power). Since power is *always* effectuated – it is never a potentiality, but always in act – the question is no longer: what *must* you do in order to realise your essence?, but rather: what are you *capable* of doing by virtue of your power? As Eric Alliez has put it, if analogy is theological (onto-theology), univocity is ethical (onto-ethology).³¹ The political problem, in turn, concerns the effectuation of this power: what conditions allow one's power to be effectuated in the best fashion? Conversely, under what conditions can one actually desire to be separated from one's power? One can see clearly how these ontological questions form the basis for the ethico-political philosophy (and corresponding 'existential' notions) developed in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

We might note here that Deleuze and Emmanuel Levinas, with their respective philosophies of immanence and transcendence, represent two very different approaches to the question of ethics in contemporary thought. If the *other* is the fundamental problem of transcendence, *difference* is the fundamental problem of immanence. For Levinas, ethics *precedes* ontology because it introduces an element of transcendence (the wholly other) that is necessarily 'otherwise' than Being. For

Deleuze (and Spinoza) ethics *is* ontology because beings are immediately related to Being at the level of their existence (intensity or degree of power as the element of immanence). This is why Spinoza entitles his pure ontology an *Ethics* rather than an *Ontology*: his speculative propositions concerning univocity can only be judged practically at the level of the ethics they envelop or imply.

But these ethical concerns are derived directly from the univocal ontology developed in *Difference and Repetition*, and the solution it offers to the problem of the ontological difference. Being must not only be able to account for the external difference between beings, but also the fact that beings themselves are multiplicities marked by an ‘internal difference’; and the ontological difference must not only refer to the non-categorical difference between Being and beings, but also the internal difference of Being *from itself*. The ontological concepts developed in *Difference and Repetition* are all non-categorical notions that preserve the univocity of Being by comprehending this co-articulation of Being and difference within themselves: ‘difference in intensity, disparity in the phantasm, dissemblance in the form of time, the differential in thought: opposition, resemblance, identity, and even analogy are only effects produced by these presentations of difference’ (*DR*, p. 145).³² This is the meaning of Deleuze’s formula ‘monism = pluralism’ (univocity of Being = equivocity of difference).³³ It is true that if analogy denies Being the status of the common genus because (specific) differences ‘are’, then conversely, univocal Being is indeed common only in so far as (individuating) differences ‘are not’ and must not be. This is the second fundamental problem of a univocal ontology that Deleuze confronts and takes to its limit: the (non-)Being of difference is in fact the reality of the *virtual* or the *problematic*. Univocal being, in other words, always presents itself in a ‘problematic’ form. If one consigns ‘difference’ to the actual or the empirical, to individuals constituted in experience, one inevitably falls back into an analogical or equivocal ontology, and subordinates difference to the rights of identity and negation. A reading of Deleuze’s ontology, yet to be written, would have to focus on these two fundamental problems.

But why, finally, in the fourth and final act, does univocity disappear from Deleuze’s writings? The reason, in the end, is not difficult to discern. Other concepts, like that of the ‘simulacrum’, meet similar fates.³⁴ Deleuze used Klossowski’s concept of the ‘simulacrum’ to think through the problematic of anti-platonism; outside that context, the concept no longer held any ‘interest’ (since beings no longer ‘simulate’ anything), and was replaced, as it were, by the concept of the *agencement* or ‘assemblage’. The same is true for univocity. Univocity was an arrow first shot by Duns Scotus, and which Deleuze then picked up and aimed elsewhere, using it to interpret Spinoza’s philosophy, critique orthodox theology, and think through Heidegger’s problem of ontological difference through a confrontation with Aristotle. Once its (already considerable) work was done, Deleuze’s moved on. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, for instance, the logic of *est* (‘is’) gives way to a conjunctive logic of *et* (‘and’), which ‘overthrows ontology’, and places relations ‘outside

everything which could be determined as Being, One, or Whole' (*ATP*, p. 25; cf. p. 98).³⁵ This is not an appeal to transcendence, but rather a deepening of immanence, requiring, in later works, the invention of new concepts such as the 'plane of immanence', the 'outside', the 'interstice', and so on.³⁶ What the drama of univocity exemplifies is the dynamic nature of Deleuze's thought, which must be defined and comprehended in terms of its *movement*.

Notes

- 1 See Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* (Paris: La Différence, 1981) vol. 1, pp. 13–14, as well as Deleuze's seminar of 25 November 1980. Transcripts of Deleuze seminar sessions at Vincennes are being made available on the Web by Richard Pinhas at <http://www.imaginet.fr/deleuze>, with English translations by Timothy S. Murphy, Melissa McMahon, Charles Stivale and others. They are an invaluable resource for understanding Deleuze's thought.
- 2 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) p. 39. Hereafter referred to as *DR*. (Pages 35–42 contain Deleuze's well known analysis of the 'tradition' of univocity.) See also Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark K. Lester with Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990) pp. 177–180.
- 3 Deleuze's interpretation of Duns Scotus relies primarily on Etienne Gilson's definitive *Jean Duns Scot: Introduction à ses positions fondamentales* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1952). In English, see Gilson's historical discussions in *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955) pp. 454–71; and *Being and Some Philosophers* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952) pp. 84–95.
- 4 Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1990). Deleuze almost certainly developed the notion of univocity while researching his 'secondary' thesis on Spinoza for the Doctorat d'Etat.
- 5 Gilles Deleuze, 'Scholasticism and Spinoza', seminar of 14 January 1974, trans. Timothy S. Murphy. The seminar includes Deleuze's discussion of the Scholastic approaches to the concept of Being.
- 6 Deleuze's 1956 essay, 'Bergson's conception of difference', trans. Melissa McMahon, in John Mullarky (ed.) *The New Bergson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) for example, is a reading of Bergson through the prism of Heidegger's problematic of ontological difference. See Constantin V. Boundas' analyses in 'Deleuze-Bergsonian ontology of the virtual', in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. Paul Patton (London: Blackwell, 1996) pp. 81–106, which makes the comparison.
- 7 In the preface to *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze cites 'Heidegger's ever more pronounced orientation toward a philosophy of ontological Difference' (p. ix) as one of the factors that led him to write the book. The only direct confrontation, however, is the long footnote in chapter 1 (pp. 64–6), which concerns the notion of difference in Heidegger's thought. The note was apparently inserted at the insistence of Deleuze's

- thesis advisers, who no doubt recognised the subterranean battle lines being drawn in the book.
- 8 Michel Foucault, 'Theatrum philosophicum', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977) p. 172.
 - 9 Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988) p. 63. To my knowledge, Deleuze is the only commentator to have drawn this link between Duns Scotus and Spinoza on the question of univocity.
 - 10 See Reiner Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978) especially pp. 172–92. While recognising Eckhart's affinities with immanence (see pp. 176, 252, n56) and with an immanent causality (p. 177), Schürmann attempts to provide a qualified analogical interpretation of his teachings (p. 179).
 - 11 For Thomas Aquinas' formulations of analogy, see *Summa Theologica* 1.13.5. The way of affirmation found its greatest literary expression in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and perhaps its most important modern proponent in Charles Williams.
 - 12 See Baruch Spinoza, *Short Treatise*, in *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) pp. 65–90, as well as Deleuze's commentary in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, pp. 104–5, and *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, pp. 49–51, 55–61, 70–7.
 - 13 See Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984) particularly chapter 2.
 - 14 See Harry Austryn Wolfson, *From Philo to Spinoza: Two Studies in Religious Philosophy* (New York: Behrman House, 1977).
 - 15 On the distinction between these three types of causality, see Deleuze's seminar of 22 March 1983.
 - 16 Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).
 - 17 See in particular Jacques Derrida, *On the Name*, trans. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). John D. Caputo has analysed Derrida's theological appropriations in his book *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).
 - 18 Gilles Deleuze, 'Les plages d'immanence', in *L'art des confins: Mélanges offerts à Maurice de Gandillac*, ed. Annie Cazenave and Jean-François Lyotard (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985) p. 79.
 - 19 In his *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, trans. Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), Alain Badiou rightly notes the influence of Heidegger on Deleuze, but wrongly presents Deleuze's 'univocal ontology' as if it were a neoplatonic 'philosophy of the One'. For instance, when Badiou writes that, in Deleuze, 'the paradoxical or super-eminent One engenders, in an immanent manner, a procession of beings, whose univocal sense it distributes' (p. 26), he is giving an exact description of an *emanative* ontology, not a univocal one. In general, Badiou combines transitive,

emanative and immanent elements in his treatment of univocity, thereby seeming to confirm Deleuze's adage, cited above, that univocity is 'the strangest thought, the most difficult to think'.

- 20 See Deleuze's essay on Klossowski in the *Logic of Sense*, especially pp. 292, 294, where he contrasts the 'order of God' with the 'order of the Anti-Christ'.
- 21 See *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 40–1. Similarly, if Deleuze is Leibnizian, it is only by eliminating the idea of a God who chooses the 'best' of all possible worlds, with its pre-established harmony; in Deleuze, impossibilities and dissonances belong to one and the same world, the only world, our world.
- 22 See Deleuze's interview with Arnaud Villani in the latter's *La Guêpe et l'Orchidée: Essai sur Gilles Deleuze* (Paris: Belin, 1999) p. 130: 'Bergson says that modern science hasn't found its metaphysics, the metaphysics it would need. It is this metaphysics that interests me'.
- 23 See Gilles Deleuze, 'Lettre-préface', in Jean-Clet Martin, *Variations: La Philosophie de Gilles Deleuze* (Paris: Payot & Rivages, 1993) p. 8: 'I believe in philosophy as system. For me, the system must not only be in perpetual heterogeneity, it must be a *heterogenesis* – something which, it seems to me, has never been attempted'.
- 24 See Aristotle, *Categories*, 4, 1 b 25, and *Physics*, I, C.2, 185 a 21: 'Being is said in several senses'.
- 25 Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) p. 102; cf. p. 117.
- 26 See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III, 3, 998b, 22–7:

It is not possible that either unity or being should be a single genus of things; for the differentiae of any genus must each of them both have being and be one, but it is not possible for the genus taken apart from its species (any more than for the species of the genus) to be predicated of its proper differentiae; so that *if unity or being is a genus, no differentia will either have being or be one.*

- 27 See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV, 2, 1003 a 33–34: 'Being is said in several senses, but always with reference to a single term (*pros hen*)'.
- 28 On the relation between 'common sense' and 'good sense,' see *Difference and Repetition*, p. 269; and *Logic of Sense*, pp. 75–9.
- 29 For Deleuze's summary of his criticisms of Aristotle, see *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 269–70.
- 30 The interpretation of Spinoza's 'degree of power' in terms of the concept of intensity is another Deleuzian innovation. In *Difference and Repetition*, however, the concept of intensity is no longer linked to that of substance, as in Spinoza, but takes on an autonomous status, defined formally (following Kant) as a difference that divides into itself, an *individuating difference*, in relation to a limit where intensity = 0.
- 31 See Eric Alliez, *La Signature du monde* (Paris: Cerf, 1993) chapter 3, 'Ontoéthologiques', pp. 67–104.

- 32 One could conserve the notion of a 'category' in a univocal ontology, as does Whitehead (see *Difference and Repetition*, pp. 284–5), on the condition of defining categories in a new manner, as differential concepts. From this viewpoint, Deleuze suggests, the conclusion to *A Thousand Plateaus* could be read as a 'table of categories' (in the Whiteheadian-Deleuzian sense, not the Aristotelian-Kantian sense). The theory of the concept formulated in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell (London: Verso, 1994) is the direct result of Deleuze's rethinking of the problem of the categories. See Deleuze's comments in Villani, pp. 130–3.
- 33 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) p. 20. Hereafter referred to as *ATP*.
- 34 See Gilles Deleuze, 'Lettre-préface', in Jean-Clet Martin, *Variations: La Philosophie de Gilles Deleuze* (Paris: Payot & Rivages, 1993) p. 8: 'It seems to me that I have completely abandoned the notion of the simulacrum'.
- 35 See Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) p. 57.
- 36 See, for instance, Gilles Deleuze, *The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) p. 180: 'The whole undergoes a mutation, because it has ceased to be the One-Being, in order to become the constitutive "and" of things, the constitutive between-two [*entredeux*]'