

THE PHILOSOPHY OF GILLES DELEUZE

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Gilles Deleuze, a prominent figure in postmodern French philosophy, made significant contributions to various fields, including metaphysics, aesthetics, and literary theory. Gilles Deleuze's philosophy invites us to embrace creativity, multiplicity, and the perpetual process of becoming. His ideas continue to inspire scholars, artists, and thinkers across disciplines, bridging Western philosophy with Eastern mysticism and inviting us to question established norms

Let's delve into some key aspects of his philosophy:

Concept Creation: Deleuze conceived of philosophy as the creation of concepts. His writings take the form of precise deductions of these concepts. Unlike traditional philosophical systems, which often seek to establish universal truths, Deleuze's approach is dynamic and inventive. He engages with thinkers such as the Stoics, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Nietzsche, Spinoza, and Bergson, extracting insights and weaving them into his own unique framework.

Gilles Deleuze, a prolific philosopher, believed that philosophy is not merely about analyzing existing ideas but rather about creating new concepts. Let's explore this fascinating aspect of Deleuze's thought:

Philosophical Encounters:

Deleuze didn't approach art, literature, or cinema as mere subjects of study. Instead, he engaged in philosophical encounters with them. These encounters inspired him to develop fresh concepts, emphasizing the creative aspect of philosophical thinking.

Constructivist Stance:

Deleuze considered himself a constructivist. For him, philosophers are concept creators. Each encounter with philosophy should lead to the birth of novel ideas, expanding our understanding of the world.

Leibniz and Unusual Concepts:

Leibniz, whom Deleuze admired, exemplifies this creative approach. Leibniz's rationalist philosophy involved inventing unusual concepts. These concepts weren't pre-existing; they emerged through Leibniz's intellectual activity.

God as a Creator of Concepts:

Leibniz believed that God created the world through calculation. He used examples like tiling (arranging figures to fill space while minimizing emptiness) to illustrate his concept of creation.

In summary, Deleuze's philosophy encourages us to be active creators of concepts, just as painters create lines and colors.

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Difference and Repetition: Deleuze's magnum opus, "Difference and Repetition" (1968), explores the interplay between difference and repetition. He argues that difference is fundamental to reality, and repetition is not mere duplication but a creative force. Deleuze challenges conventional notions of identity and sameness, emphasizing the productive potential of difference.

Gilles Deleuze's "Difference and Repetition" is a seminal work that challenges traditional Western metaphysics and offers a fresh perspective on concepts like identity, repetition, and creativity. Let's explore some key ideas from this remarkable book:

Pure Difference: Deleuze argues that difference is fundamental to reality. Unlike classical philosophy that seeks universal truths, he emphasizes divergence and decentering. Each moment contains unique differences, and these differences shape our understanding of the world.

Complex Repetition: Repetition, for Deleuze, isn't mere duplication. Instead, it involves displacement and disguising. While repetition contributes to

generality and thought, it's the differences within each repetition that account for change and novelty. Concepts and things derive meaning from these differences.

Shift Away from Hegel and Marx: "Difference and Repetition" played a crucial role in shifting French thought away from Hegel and Marx toward Nietzsche and Freud. Deleuze's exploration of difference challenged established philosophical norms and paved the way for new perspectives.

The Image of Thought: Deleuze critiques the traditional "image of thought," which often relies on fixed identities and binary oppositions. Instead, he encourages us to embrace multiplicities, complexities, and the perpetual process of becoming.

Asymmetrical Synthesis of the Sensible: Deleuze introduces the concept of asymmetrical synthesis, emphasizing the interplay between perception and affect. Reality is a dynamic, ever-changing process, not a static being. Copies are never identical; they're something new.

"Difference and Repetition" invites us to rethink how we perceive reality, emphasizing creativity, multiplicity, and the constant flux of existence. Deleuze's work continues to inspire thinkers across disciplines, bridging philosophy with art, literature, and mysticism.

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Multiplicities and Becoming: Deleuze rejects fixed identities and embraces multiplicities. He sees reality as a complex web of interconnected processes, where entities are constantly becoming. His collaboration with psychoanalyst Félix Guattari resulted in the influential works "Anti-Oedipus" (1972) and "A Thousand Plateaus" (1980). These texts explore desire, capitalism, and the rhizomatic structure of thought.

Gilles Deleuze's concept of multiplicity is a fundamental departure from traditional metaphysical notions. Let's explore it in more detail:

Multiplicity Defined:

Deleuze draws upon ideas from mathematician Riemann and philosopher Bergson. Multiplicity, for him, isn't a mere combination of many elements; it's an organization intrinsic to the many itself.

Unlike the One-Many dialectic, where unity and opposition dominate, multiplicity thrives on differences within and between multiplicities.

Substance vs. Multiplicity:

Substance theory (from Aristotle to Spinoza) often reduces the world to a unity (the One) or a variety (the Many). Deleuze challenges this.

He replaces substance with multiplicity, asserting that even the One is a multiplicity. Instead of rigid oppositions, we find a rich variety of differences—difference becomes the key.

Desiring-Production and Multiplicity:

In "Anti-Oedipus," Deleuze links multiplicity to desiring-production. Desiring-production is pure multiplicity—an irreducible affirmation beyond unity.

Multiplicity accounts for the dynamic, ever-changing nature of reality, resisting fixed essences.

In summary, Deleuze's multiplicity invites us to embrace difference, complexity, and the perpetual becoming of existence. It's a departure from traditional metaphysics, opening new vistas for thought and creativity.

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Rhizome and Non-Hierarchical Thinking: Deleuze introduces the concept of the "rhizome," an alternative to hierarchical structures. Rhizomes grow horizontally, connecting diverse elements without a central point. This idea challenges traditional tree-like models of knowledge and encourages a multiplicity of connections and pathways.

The concept of rhizome in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's philosophy:

What Is a Rhizome?

A rhizome is a descriptive or epistemological model that contrasts with hierarchical structures. Unlike a tree-like system with a central root and branches, a rhizome has no fixed order or hierarchy. In a rhizome, any element can connect to any other, creating a network of multiplicities. It defies linear thinking and embraces complexity.

Non-Hierarchical Connections:

Rhizomes mark a horizontal conception where diverse elements link without respect for specific species. For instance, Deleuze and Guattari connected desire and machines, giving rise to the intriguing concept of “desiring machines”. Rather than following a predetermined path, a rhizome allows for nomadic growth and propagation. It resists chronology and organization, favoring a dynamic, interconnected system.

Rhizome vs. Tree:

While trees represent hierarchical models, rhizomes work with planar and trans-species connections. They emphasize multiplicity and interbeing. Just as water spreads across available spaces, a rhizome’s surface can be interrupted and moved, leaving no trace but seeking equilibrium.

In summary, the rhizome challenges traditional thinking, encouraging us to explore networks, multiplicities, and the perpetual middle ground between things.

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Affect and Percept: Deleuze emphasizes affect (intensity) and percept (sensory experience) over representation. He explores how affective forces shape our encounters with the world. His collaboration with Claire Parnet resulted in the captivating book “Dialogues” (1977), where he discusses these concepts in depth.

Gilles Deleuze’s concepts of affect and percept within his materialist

philosophy:

Percept:

Percepts go beyond mere perceptions. They are independent of the state of those who experience them. Unlike perceptions, percepts exist in themselves, with their validity transcending individual lived experiences. They are self-sufficient entities.

Affect:

Affects exceed ordinary feelings or affections. They possess a force that surpasses the strength of those who undergo them. Deleuze's notion of affect emphasizes intensity, vitality, and the transformative power of forces that shape our existence¹.

In summary, percepts and affects are essential components of Deleuze's philosophy, emphasizing the immanence of forces and the dynamic interplay between sensation, intensity, and lived reality

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Virtuality and Actualization: Deleuze distinguishes between the virtual and the actual. The virtual contains potentialities, while the actual represents realized states. His work on cinema, particularly the concepts of the "movement-image" and the "time-image," exemplifies this exploration of virtual and actual dimensions.

Let's delve into the fascinating concept of virtuality and actualization in Gilles Deleuze's philosophy.

Deleuze's exploration of virtuality is deeply rooted in the work of French philosopher Henri Bergson. Rather than framing it solely as a realm of mere possibilities waiting to be actualized, Deleuze considers the virtual as a dynamic and productive field. Here are some key points:

Virtual vs. Actual:

Deleuze distinguishes between the virtual and the actual. These are not opposing realms but interconnected aspects of reality. The virtual refers to

an ideal yet real dimension. It is not merely potential; it possesses full qualities of the real. The actual, on the other hand, unfolds from the virtual through processes of actualization or differentiation.

Bergson's Influence:

Deleuze credits Henri Bergson for developing the notion of the virtual to its highest degree. Bergson's concept of "duration" aligns with the virtual. Duration is inseparable from the movement of its actualization.

Example: Reflection in a Mirror: Consider a reflection in a mirror. It exists fully, regardless of whether we perceive it. The mirror image is already there, waiting for no further actualization. Yet our perception of it remains real.

Political Implications:

Brian Massumi highlights the political implications of virtuality.

The virtual is inaccessible to the senses but can be felt through its effects. Massumi uses topological figures to illustrate virtuality, emphasizing its imaginative presence. In summary, Deleuze's virtuality is not a passive waiting room for actualization; it's a vibrant force shaping our experience.

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The Topology of Deleuze: A Virtual Continuum

Deleuze's ontological categories include a virtual continuum—a dynamic interplay between pure extension and thought. This continuum, akin to Spinoza's substance, embodies two powers: the power of being and the power of thinking¹. Throughout his writings, Deleuze employs various terms to describe this continuum: "intensive spatium," "ideal or metaphysical surface," "plane of consistency," and "plane of immanence." These diverse labels emphasize different aspects of the same underlying concept.

Pre-Extensive Milieu: Deleuze characterizes this continuum as a pre-extensive, non-qualified "milieu" or "space-stratum." It envelops complexes of differential relations, pure intensities, and singularities. Unlike empirical

fields, it doesn't correlate with consciousness and its objects, nor does it dissolve into undifferentiated chaos.

Topological Model: Deleuze consistently employs a "topological model" to describe the properties of this transcendental field. He draws inspiration from Michel Serres and Merleau-Ponty, emphasizing topological categories like position, junction, and connection. In this framework, places matter more than what fills them, defining a non-extensive, pure spatium¹.

Surface and Co-Existence: Deleuze's transcendental field constitutes a surface—a topological surface. It connects internal and external spaces without regard to distance. This property echoes Simondon's argument that all organization presupposes an absolute outside and inside, leading to relative intermediary exteriorities and interiorities.

In summary, Deleuze's topology transcends traditional notions of space. It's a dynamic, pre-individual field where intensities and relations coexist, shaping our experience beyond empirical confines.