
Deleuze, Freud and the Three Syntheses

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to provide a close reading of Deleuze's complex account of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Difference and Repetition*. The first part provides a reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* itself, showing why Freud feels the need to develop a transcendental account of repetition. In the second, I show the limitations of Freud's account, drawing on the work of Weismann to argue that Freud's transcendental model mischaracterises repetition. In the third part, I show how Freud's account of the death drive is shadowed by Deleuze's own non-representational transcendental account.

Keywords: Deleuze, Freud, repetition, death drive, three syntheses, Difference and Repetition

Despite Deleuze's analysis of Freud taking up almost half of the second chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, this analysis has received very little critical attention.¹ There are two good reasons for this. First, Deleuze's reading of Freud tracks his analysis of the three syntheses of time in Kant's work earlier in the chapter, and hence has been seen as a reiteration of themes covered earlier in the text.² Second, Deleuze and Guattari's later *Anti-Oedipus* provides a much more substantial engagement with Freud's work than that of *Difference and Repetition* itself. Nonetheless, Deleuze's analysis of Freud takes up a significant portion of *Difference and Repetition*, and is itself an ingenious rereading of and critical engagement with Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Further, *Difference and Repetition* was published four years before *Anti-Oedipus*, and offers a far more transcendental

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account of Freud's thought than one finds in the latter text. The difference in the metaphysical basis between *Difference and Repetition* and *Anti-Oedipus* renders the reading offered of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* valuable in its own right, and the detailed textual engagement provides a compelling account of the limitations of Freud's thought. Finally, in tracking his prior criticisms of Kant's critical philosophy, Deleuze signals that the account he gives is not simply to be situated within the tradition of philosophical idealism. Deleuze's introduction of a discussion of Freudian biopsychic life highlights that the Kantian elements of his thought are to be understood within the context of a materialism, albeit a materialism that radically reconfigures our understanding of the nature of matter.

As we shall see, Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, at least on Deleuze's reading, shares a number of affinities with Deleuze's own project. We can begin by noting the central place of repetition in the world in both accounts. Furthermore, for both Deleuze and Freud, the form of repetition that we experience cannot adequately be explained through the law-governed structures of our representation of the physical world or of the psyche. As Deleuze notes, while we might see events repeating themselves when, for instance, the same experiment gives the same results, what we in fact have is a mere state of resemblance between two situations. We make a decision as to which factors will need to be held constant, and which are not relevant to the experimental situation. Even more importantly, in formulating the experimental situation, we actually constitute aspects of the situation that we will take to be either essential or inessential characteristics. Deleuze calls this kind of analysis in terms of laws and properties or characteristics, representation. *Difference and Repetition* begins with the claim that 'repetition is not generality' (Deleuze 1994: 1). Deleuze presents several examples of genuine repetitions that we can encounter that fall outside of generality, ranging from Kant's paradox of asymmetrical objects, to Kierkegaard's ethics of repetition, and indeed, to Freud's conception of neurosis. In all of these cases, we have a repetition that is problematic for representation, and is normally covered over.³ This first distinction between repetition and representation points to another, since the presence of repetition in the world points to the inadequacy of generality and law to fully explain our experience of the world. Deleuze's claim is that the presence of repetition within the world opens the way for a transcendental account of the origins of representation, and points to the non-representational nature of this foundation. Deleuze posits that behind this surface repetition ('bare repetition' [17]), there is a deeper

form ('profound' repetition [18]) that gives rise to it. Thus, Deleuze develops a double set of distinctions. 'We began by distinguishing generality and repetition. Then we distinguished two forms of repetition. These two distinctions are linked: the consequences of the first are unfolded only in the second' (25). In order for repetition to explain representation, it must itself differ from representation, as otherwise we risk our account being tautological.⁴ Thus, Deleuze is interested in a moment of repetition that explains the world while having a nature that differs in kind from it. It is this effort to provide an account of the conditions of experience, together with Deleuze's commitment to understanding the specificity of situations rather than the generalities of laws, that leads Deleuze to label his philosophy a transcendental empiricism.⁵

This project of using repetition to open up a transcendental basis for our representations is one Deleuze also sees in Freud. Freud recognises that the phenomenon of repetition cannot be understood purely on the basis of the subject's conscious relation to the world. Like Deleuze, Freud is interested in the conditions that make repetition possible. Freud's account of repression sets up a relation between repetition and representation that mirrors Deleuze's own:

the patient does not *remember* anything at all of what he has forgotten and repressed, but rather *acts it out*. He reproduces it not as a memory, but as an action; he *repeats* it, without of course being aware of the fact that he is repeating it. (Freud 2003c: 36)

The analyst's treatment of a patient involves helping the patient to form a representation of an initially unrepresentable memory which the patient has been repeating. Here, once again, we have a surface repetition that disrupts the subject's relationship to the world, and points to a deeper ground within it. The notion of repetition at work in the project of psychoanalysis therefore bears certain structural analogies with Deleuze's transcendental empiricism.

Nonetheless, Freud also determines his project as providing a scientific basis for psychoanalysis, and to this extent, there is the danger that despite the disruptive character of repetition, it will be reconciled with representation at a deeper level, rather than opening out onto a fundamentally non-representational basis to the world. As we shall see, this is in fact Deleuze's own reading of Freud, and one that has affinities with Deleuze's reading of other predecessors such as Kant and Plato. In Deleuze's reading of Kant's three syntheses, Deleuze presents a double structure, whereby Kant's account of three syntheses that

constitute experience is seen as a surface illusion generated by three non-representational syntheses. Deleuze presents a similar account for Freud, arguing that the three moments of Freud's account are in fact representations of the real non-representational processes that operate beneath them. Here, I will develop an account of Deleuze's reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in three parts. In the first part, I will give a reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* itself, showing why Freud feels the need to develop a transcendental account of repetition that explains the genesis of the law-governed realm of the pleasure principle. In the second, I will show the limitations of Freud's account by drawing on the work of August Weismann to argue that Freud's transcendental model is based on a mischaracterisation of repetition. In the third part, I will show how Freud's representational account of the death drive is shadowed by Deleuze's own non-representational transcendental account.

I. The Transcendental Empiricism of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

Repetition and the Pleasure Principle

Before Freud introduces the notion of repetition, he begins with the notion of pleasure. It seems to be a truism that we act in order to maximise our own pleasure (the key assumption, or at least something like it, which we find at the root of utilitarianism). As Freud points out, however, there are a number of cases where it appears that we in fact act in ways which are guaranteed to lead to unpleasure. In order to begin to explain these cases, we need some kind of definition of what pleasure amounts to. Freud's account of pleasure relates it to unannexed energy within the psychic apparatus. Essentially, we can see the psyche as a system subjected to excitations from both inside and outside. Insofar as these excitations threaten the stability of the psyche (traumas and shocks which the mind cannot adequately get to grips with), these excitations are interpreted by consciousness as 'unpleasure'. A relaxation of the psyche, which involves a reduction in energy which has not been incorporated into the psychic system, on the contrary, is seen as involving pleasure. The psyche is therefore a homeostatic system that seeks to minimise the amount of energy that could destabilise it. The principle that the psyche attempts to maximise pleasure is therefore tied to a principle of homeostasis, the constancy hypothesis:

one aspiration of the psychic apparatus is to keep the quantity of excitation present within it at the lowest possible level, or at least to keep it constant. (Freud 2003a: 47)

As such, pleasure is tied to maintaining the ordered, systematic functioning of the psyche. It is clearly the case that we do not simply experience pleasure in our lives. The question is, can the experience of unpleasure be brought into accord with the pleasure principle? Most of our experiences of unpleasure can be classified in two ways: the intervention of the reality principle, or the repression of drives. In the first case, we often have to defer pleasure in order to gain a greater amount of pleasure in the future. That is, the psyche has to take account of reality in order to preserve itself. Unpleasure in this case is simply a consequence of a process which more effectively accords with the pleasure principle in the long run. In the second, it may be the case that a part of the psychic apparatus seeks pleasure at the expense of the psyche as a whole, which can happen particularly in sexual repression. Here, one drive of the psyche is separated off from the others by the ego. When this drive seeks to get rid of an excitation (to experience pleasure), it becomes expressed through 'direct or surrogate gratification' that leads to unpleasure on the part of the ego itself. The pleasure principle is therefore still in operation in this case overall and the appearance of unpleasure is a result of the split caused by the ego.

While these cases may explain instances of unpleasure, Freud goes on to argue that these explanations in terms of the law-governed nature of the pleasure principle are insufficient to explain several cases of repetition. As such, Freud here sets up a model analogous to Deleuze's claim that repetition escapes generality. There are four cases of repetition that Freud considers.

The first of these instances is what we might call today post-traumatic stress disorder. Soldiers who suffered shocks during the Great War had a tendency to relive these experiences in dreams. Now, these shocks are essentially moments where energy is released into the psychic apparatus which cannot be contained by the psyche itself. Since shock is experienced as unpleasure, why is it the case that those who have suffered trauma repeat these experiences in contravention of the pleasure principle?

The second is the *fort-da* game. In this example, Freud introduces the case of the child in the habit of throwing a wooden reel into his cot and exclaiming 'o-o-o-o' (which Freud interprets to mean 'fort', or gone), and then pulling it back and exclaiming 'da' (there). The child repeats this action, and derives obvious pleasure from it. How are we to explain it? Freud gives a psychoanalytical reading of it in terms of the mother. In throwing away the reel and then recalling it, the child is re-enacting the departure of the mother, and the child's own ability to abnegate his drives, in that he is able to deal with her absence without

fuss. This explanation gives a good account of the child's pleasure at the mother's return (the 'da' aspect of the game), but cannot explain why the child takes pleasure in both aspects (the mother going away as well). Freud therefore brings in the parallel case of the child taking pleasure in the absence of the father (who was in the military), and the fact that the child has the mother all to himself (the game of 'go in war!'). Now, while in either of these cases, we have somewhat satisfactory explanations of specific repetitions, Freud argues that together they point to the fact that there is a general compulsion to repeat in operation in child's play.

The third instance is encountered in therapy. As neurosis involves making the patient conscious of the unconscious elements that have been repressed by him, it involves bringing to light repressed experiences (bringing them into memory). Freud notes that a repressed experience enters consciousness in two forms. On the one hand, it emerges into memory (it becomes representable), as therapy brings the experience to light. On the other, insofar as it has not been brought into consciousness, it is played out, or repeated by the subject of therapy as if it were a present experience. We can understand why the ego wants to repress the experience, since bringing it to light will lead to unpleasure. The question is, however, what is it that causes the drive to want to express itself through repetition? What is it that compels this drive itself to want to repeat itself?

Finally, we encounter repetition in everyday life regardless of neurosis. People often find themselves repeating the same situations, the same relationships, throughout their lives. In fact, the whole notion of 'character' is grounded in the fact that there is a continuity throughout one's life that expresses itself in the repetition of reactions to the same situations, even when this repetition gets in the way of satisfying the pleasure principle:

We are much more strongly affected by cases where people appear to be the *passive* victim of something which they are powerless to influence, and yet which they suffer again and again in an endless repetition of the same fate. (Freud 2003a: 60)

What Freud takes from these cases is that as well as the explanations given by the pleasure principle, we also need to give an explanation of a parallel fact: the compulsion to repeat. In order to do so, Freud claims that we have to move beyond the clinical foundation of the pleasure principle itself, and therefore to move to a speculative account of repetition. What Deleuze sees in these cases of repetition is precisely the kinds of cases of repetition that cannot be understood in terms of

strict laws and generalities. In effect, we have repetitions that seem to surpass the explanatory power of the pleasure principle. What Freud therefore requires is an enquiry into the nature of repetition prior to the law of the pleasure principle coming into play. In effect, this will be a transcendental enquiry into the origin of bare repetition, on the surface much like Deleuze's own.

The Biological Model of the Psyche

If we are going to explain the principles that operate beyond the pleasure principle, we need to have a better understanding of how the various systems of the psyche interact. Now, for Freud, pleasure is the perception of a change in the level of excitation of the psyche, and as such is a conscious experience. In order to explain what principles operate prior to the instigation of the pleasure principle, we need to therefore give an account of the genesis of consciousness itself. In what follows, Freud refers to the system responsible for perception and consciousness as the *Pcpt-Cs* system, and consciousness in particular as the *Cs*-system. I first want to go through how this system functions normally before looking at Freud's account of its genesis.

What happens when we receive some kind of excitation from the world? Well, obviously, this excitation needs to be recognised in some way (we need to be conscious that something has happened), and we also need to store the excitation in some way (we need to incorporate it into memory).⁶ Now, Freud's contention is that 'it is not possible within a given system for something both to enter consciousness and also to leave a memory trace' (Freud 2003a: 64). If traces of excitation remained in consciousness, then they would prevent the system from registering new excitations. We therefore need to see the processes of memory and consciousness as operating within two parallel systems. How is it that consciousness develops the role that it does? In order to answer this question, Freud turns to embryology, and the recapitulation theory of evolution.⁷ The central claim is that the fact that consciousness is located in the cerebral cortex, which is 'at the surface of the brain' (63), together with the recapitulation theory of evolution, can allow us to explain how the pleasure principle comes into being.

We can begin with the most primitive form of life, an 'undifferentiated vesicle of irritable matter' (Freud 2003a: 65). Now, due to the fact that a part of this organism is turned towards the world, it naturally becomes affected by various stimuli from the outside world. As it is affected by these various shocks, its nature changes so that it is able

to transmit them without its elements changing. This, therefore, is the origin of consciousness. As the system evolves, it develops protection against excessive stimulation from the outside by partially reverting to the inorganic (the skull), and, in higher creatures, by separating off the perceptual aspects further (the development of particular senses). Such a model allows Freud to explain a number of key results of psychoanalysis. It is not simply the case that all stimulation comes from outside the organism. The organism will also suffer disturbances from processes within it. Since these processes operate within the organism, the trauma produced by them cannot be reduced by the presence of a barrier, as was the case with shocks from the outside. Traumas which affect the organism from the inside therefore have a far greater role within the economy of the organism than those which affect it from the outside. We can further note that the organism will tend to interpret internal trauma as originating from the outside in order to allow its defences to be brought into play, which leads to the notion of projection.

On this level, we can explain some of the cases of repetition I discussed at the beginning of this paper. I have mentioned that what is shocking in the case of trauma is energy that is unbound moving through the psychic apparatus. We can now note that as well as unbound energy, there is also energy that forms a reservoir that can be used to deal with external threats to the psychic apparatus. Thus we can use energy to cathect, or annex free-flowing energy within the psychic system. The example Freud uses is the case of pain. If the barriers of the organism are damaged by some kind of shock, so that they no longer protect it from the influx of stimuli, then the organism can attempt to use its own inner resources to annex this free-flowing energy into a state whereby it becomes a part of the psychic system. Pain is therefore a case of this kind, where a stimulus is incorporated into the economy of the psyche, rather than simply being dissipated.

This means that the pleasure principle does not always govern the operations of the psyche. In the case of an extreme threat to the psyche as a whole, the organism may attempt to stabilise the psychic system by suspending the pleasure principle and instead annexing the free-flowing energy into the system of the psyche. Now, this process of annexing energy from the outside can explain some of the situations where it appears as if the pleasure principle has been contravened. In the case of severe trauma, the system experiences unpleasure in order to retain its overall integrity. If we return to the question of war trauma, Freud now claims that such phenomena are a retrospective attempt to master the phenomena in question, that is, to assert control over it. Now, in the

case of war trauma, this attempt to master and bind energy within the system leads to the repetition of experiences which lead to unpleasure on the part of the subject. Freud therefore claims that such compulsions to repeat simply cannot be understood according to the pleasure principle.

There are therefore two principles operative within the psyche. The first is to increase pleasure within the psychic apparatus by reducing the quantity of energy within it. This is the pleasure principle. The second is a principle that attempts to convert unbound energy into bound energy by mastering excitations.⁸ This is the compulsion to repeat, which will become the death drive. Freud's claim is that it is only once excitations have been annexed by the psyche that the pleasure principle can become operative:

This would then mean that it was the task of the higher echelons of the psychic apparatus to annex excitations originating from the drives and reaching it via the primary process. Any failure of this annexion process would bring about a dysfunction analogous to traumatic neurosis. Only when the annexion has taken place would the pleasure principle (or, once the latter has been duly modified, the reality principle) be able to assert its dominion unhindered. In the meantime, however, the psychic apparatus's other task of controlling or annexing the excitation would be very much to the fore—not, it is true, in opposition to the pleasure principle, but independently of it, and to some extent quite heedless of it. (Freud 2003a: 75)

Beyond the Pleasure Principle

At this stage, it may be worth pondering why Freud has taken this detour through the sphere of biology in order to essentially repeat a result that was already given within the first, clinical section of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. By grounding the compulsion to repeat in the original structure of the organism, Freud has opened the possibility of analysing this compulsion as a basic function of life itself. In fact, there is touch of sleight of hand at this point in Freud's account, as the compulsion to repeat is understood as a compulsion to return. While the compulsion to repeat can operate in accordance with the libido, it can also operate as a tendency of life itself to return to an earlier stage.

Freud characterises this tendency to return in the following terms:

At this point we cannot help thinking that we have managed to identify a universal attribute of drives—and perhaps of *all* organic life—that has not hitherto been clearly recognized, or at any rate not explicitly emphasized. A drive might accordingly be seen as *a powerful tendency inherent in every living organism to restore a prior state*, which prior state the organism was

compelled to relinquish due to the disruptive influence of external forces; we can see it as a kind of organic elasticity, or, if we prefer, as a manifestation of inertia in organic life. (Freud 2003a: 76)

What leads Freud to this conclusion? Central to this conception are, I think, two primary assumptions in the account we have been looking at so far. The first is that the organism is defined essentially as closed off from the world. Organic life's engagement with the world is seen as essentially traumatic and disruptive for Freud. Second, there is the belief that organisms, in their particular development, tend to repeat their development as a species. If we combine these two assumptions, then we have the claim that change (and hence, development) is traumatic, and therefore generates a move for the organism to return to a prior, less traumatic state. Now, Freud claims that this movement can be seen in the fact that fish for example, when spawning, return not simply to their own birthplace, but also 'to the previous domain of their species, which, in the course of time, they have exchanged for others' (Freud 2003a: 77). Here the second claim, the recapitulation theory of embryo development, comes into play, as each animal carries with it the history of its development from the simplest forms of life. In fact, this movement is not simply to the earliest forms of life, but to the origin of life itself as the move from the inorganic to the organic. Thus, the drive to repeat is not simply a drive to return to an earlier form of life, but in fact, a death drive. In this sense, the compulsion to repeat/return and the death drive are equivalent:

The goal of all life is death, or to express it retroactively: the inanimate existed before the animate. (Freud 2003a: 78)

The Implications of Freud's Transcendental Empiricism

Freud's account of the origin of repetition ultimately traces it back to the constitution of consciousness itself, therefore. Life can be seen as playing out the relations between two different drives. First, there is the libido, which aims at conserving life by protecting the organism from external traumas that threaten to destabilise it. This conservation of life is ultimately to be understood as simply making more complex the more fundamental drive, the death drive, which seeks to return the organism to its primal state. I want to relate this to Deleuze's criticisms of Freud in the next part of this paper, but for now, we can note a number of key features of this account.

The first is that the death of an organism is not (necessarily) something that is due to external factors, but rather something that is inherent to the organism itself. The organism seeks to return to the inanimate. The obvious question to ask about this claim is: why is it the case that life therefore exists at all if it seeks its own dissolution? Well, death is at first 'still easy for living matter; the course of life that had to be gone through was probably short, its direction determined by the newly created organism's chemical structure' (Freud 2003a: 78–9). Over time, however, the complexity of life means that more and more detours are incorporated between life and death. These drives delay the movement towards death, and so appear to be conservative. They are the 'guardians of life' in that they allow the organism to perpetuate itself, but these drives, such as the sexual drives, are ultimately subordinated to the death drive. They are determined by the fact that the organism wants to choose its own death, rather than succumb to external influences.

Second, the account of the organism that Freud has developed is essentially conservative. We can note, for instance, that life does not itself develop into more complex forms, but only increases in complexity under the influence of external circumstances, which mould the organism by chance. Life is essentially passive, therefore:

it must be the developmental history of our planet and its relationship to the sun that has left its imprint for us to behold in the development of organisms. The conservative organic drives have assimilated every one of these externally imposed modifications of the organism's life-cycle and duly preserved them in order to repeat them, and therefore inevitably give the misleading impression of being forces bent on change and progress, whereas they merely seek to achieve an old goal by new means as well as old. (Freud 2003a: 78)

Third, from the very beginning of Freud's account, we are dealing with an isolated organism. Freud's account essentially sees life as closed off from the world. The key transition, in which the organism emerges from the inorganic, is therefore something of which we are 'quite incapable of imagining' (Freud 2003a: 78). This is quite different from the kind of account we find in Deleuze, where the organism is only provisionally isolated from the world as a set of 'relations of motion and rest, of speeds and slownesses between particles' (Deleuze 1988: 123). This points to a key difference between Deleuze and Freud. For Freud, there is something like a Kantian division between the active and the passive. The drives are active principles whereas matter is passive, much as for Kant, the understanding is active and intuition is passive. As we shall see in part III, this points towards a major break between Freud and Deleuze. Whereas

for Freud, the drives are agents of synthesis, for Deleuze, it is intensity as pure becoming that constitutes itself as drive.

Finally, in spite of these differences, what Freud essentially has given us is a transcendental account of the conditions of repetition, where they are traced back to an operation outside of consciousness itself. In this regard, we can see that Deleuze's relationship to the Freudian enterprise is going to be essentially one of ambivalence. While Freud develops a transcendental account, Deleuze will argue that this ultimately serves to reinstate, rather than overturn, representation.

II. Repetition and the Death Drive

Two Forms of Repetition

Freud presents a number of cases of repetition that fall outside of our conceptual understanding: war trauma, the *fort-da* game, the repetition of the past by the patient, and the case of fate or character that we find in our lives. While (many of) these cases may be compatible with the pleasure principle, Freud notes that at the very least, the compulsion to repeat seems to be underdetermined by it. For this reason, Freud introduces the theory of the death drive in order to explain why we feel compelled to manifest this surface compulsion. Deleuze's question in this regard is as follows:

Do the disguises found in the work of dreams or symptoms—condensation, displacement, dramatisation—rediscover while attenuating a bare, brute repetition (repetition of the Same)? (Deleuze 1994: 16)

That is, given that we need to find a foundation for repetition, is this foundation going to be a kind of repetition that is different in kind from empirical repetition? A foundation for repetition that simply rests on another bare repetition will be inadequate, as rather than explaining repetition, it will presuppose it. Deleuze's claim will be that the form of repetition underlying the pleasure principle is for Freud ultimately material, rather than one that provides the grounds for material repetition:

Even beyond the pleasure principle, the form of a bare repetition persists, since Freud interprets the death instinct as a tendency to return to the state of inanimate matter, one which upholds the model of a wholly physical or material repetition. (Deleuze 1994: 17)

What is interesting about this claim is that Deleuze is not here rejecting the death instinct, but rather claiming that the error is with Freud's

interpretation of it. I want to come back to this point in part III, when we look at Deleuze's positive interpretation, but for now, we can note that Deleuze claims that there are two reasons why Freud's interpretation fails:

1. 'the persistence of a dualistic and conflictual model which inspired the whole theory of drives';
2. 'the material model which presided over the theory of repetition' (Deleuze 1994: 111).

First, the persistence of a dualistic model. In *the Ego and the Id*, Freud gives the following summary of the relation between the sexual drives and the death drive:

On this view, we need to distinguish two types of drives, one of which—the sexual drives, or Eros—is far more conspicuous, and far more accessible to our knowledge and understanding. It includes not only the uninhibited sexual drive itself and the goal-inhibited and hence sublimated drive-impulses deriving from it, but also the self-preservation drive that we perforce ascribe to the ego, and that at the very outset of our psychoanalytical work we had good reason to regard as contrasting sharply with the sexual object-drives. . . . On the basis of theoretical considerations underpinned by biology, we posited a death drive charged with the task of causing animate organisms to revert to an inanimate state, whereas Eros pursues the goal of maximizing the complexity of life—and thereby of course preserving it—by an ever more catholic combination of the particles into which living matter had been fragmented . . . According to this view, the emergence of life is therefore the cause both of the urge to carry on living and, simultaneously, of the urge for death, while life itself is a battle and constant compromise between these two urges. Considered thus, the question as to the origin of life remains a cosmological one, while the question as to the purpose and intention of life is answered in dualistic terms. (Freud 2003b: 130–1)

The difficulty with such a model is that in operating in terms of opposition, it has already accepted the logic of representation at its foundation.⁹ If such a transcendental account is going to be of explanatory value, it cannot simply presuppose elements we find already within the pleasure principle. The fact that the death drive is seen as an active force in opposition to the sexual drives can be seen in statements such as the following:

in certain lower animals death coincides with the act of procreation. Reproduction is the cause of these creatures' death in the sense that the death drive can effect its aims without let or hindrance once Eros has been removed from the picture through the act of gratification. (Freud 2003b: 137)

Rather than posit ‘a difference in kind between two forces, or ... a difference in rhythm or amplitude between two movements’ (Deleuze 1994: 113), the life drive and the death drive are moments of the same system that operate in fundamentally different manners. In both cases, it is also important to note that we do not have drives, or principles which operate on energy (desires), but rather the movement of desire itself is a manifestation of energy. Thus, for Deleuze, Thanatos is to be seen as ‘indistinguishable from the desexualisation of Eros’ (113). In other words, the life drives are seen as an expression of a transcendently prior moment that will turn out to be a field of intensity.

The second problem is the material model at the heart of Freud’s theory. At base, Freud’s explanation of the compulsion to repeat is in terms of a compulsion to return, which, due to the recapitulation theory of embryology, is a compulsion to return to the earliest stages of life, and beyond this, to the ground of life itself: the inorganic. What Freud is therefore proposing is something like an entropic principle for life. Such an entropic model is opposed by Deleuze for a number of reasons set out later in *Difference and Repetition*.¹⁰ For Freud, life wants to return to the lowest possible energy state. This is opposed to the kind of model we find in Bergson, where life is understood as affirmative and struggling against the entropic nature of matter. Here, for instance, Bergson notes that even against the apparent entropy we find in matter, life struggles to assert itself as an active and creative principle:

Let us imagine a vessel full of steam at a high pressure, and here and there in its sides a crack through which the steam is escaping in a jet. The steam thrown into the air is nearly all condensed, and this fall represents a loss of something, an interruption, a deficit. But a small part of the jet of steam subsists, uncondensed, for some seconds; it is making an effort to raise drops which are falling; it succeeds at most in retarding their fall. (Bergson 1998: 247)

The Bergsonian conception is, therefore, one of life as a force which works against the tendency of the inorganic to fall back into a low energy state, even if this process can only delay the inevitable return. Deleuze will, in fact, push this point further, and argue that the notion of entropy emerges through a transcendental illusion—we tend to see the world in terms of extension, and this is a necessary condition for the formulation of the second law of thermodynamics (Deleuze 1994: 228–9).

So this brings us to the question of whether Freud’s assumption of the death instinct as a ‘material repetition’ is correct. The question of whether representation should be understood in terms of a material

or an intensive repetition is one that is at the heart of *Difference and Repetition* as a whole, but we can bring some specific considerations to bear on the question of Freud here. We can note three factors that have to be combined in his explanation. First, there is a distinct separation between the principles of the life drives and the death drive. Second, the death drive is going to be the first drive that is developed by the organism. Finally, the death drive, since it originates from the leap from inorganic to organic, will be present in all life.

Following Keith Ansell Pearson,¹¹ I want to look at some of the final sections of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and their relation to biology. In part VI, Freud talks about the early stages of life, and introduces the biologist August Weismann into the discussion, claiming that ‘what is truly fascinating here is the unexpected similarity to the view that we arrived at by such a very different route’ (Freud 2003a: 85). Simply put, Weismann’s view of the organism divides it into two parts, soma cells and germ cells.¹² Weismann’s central claim arises from the fact that sperm and egg cells divided differently from cells in the rest of the body. Weismann’s argument was that whereas the role of soma cells was to perform one of many functions within the body (for which they contained only the information necessary for that function), the role of germ cells was solely to produce replacements of the organism itself. Thus, there is a division of labour between different cells within the organism. Now, this explains, for instance, why cutting the tail off a rat does not lead to a rat that in turn breeds tailless rats, as the germ cells and the soma cells develop in different directions too early for changes in the structure of the organism to affect the germ line (an experimental puzzle for other theories of inheritance, such as Lamarck’s). As such, Weismann is an important theorist in the development of modern evolutionary theory, and an early supporter of Darwin (Ridley 2004: 13).

We can see that this model relates to Freud’s in that the organism is governed by two separate principles, as is made explicit by Weismann’s account of the necessity of the death of the organism:

Let us imagine that one of the higher animals became immortal; it then becomes perfectly obvious it would cease to be of value to the species to which it belonged. Suppose that such an immortal individual could escape all fatal accidents, through infinite time—a supposition which is of course hardly conceivable. The individual would be nevertheless unable to avoid, from time to time, slight injuries to one or another part of its body. The injured parts could not retain their former integrity, and thus the longer the individual lived, the more defective and crippled it would become, and the less perfectly would it fulfil the purpose of its species. Individuals are injured

by the operation of external forces, and for this reason alone it is necessary that new and perfect individuals should continually arise to take their place, and this necessity would remain even if the individual possessed the power of living eternally.

From this follows, on the one hand, the necessity of reproduction, and, on the other, the utility of death. (Weismann 1889: 23–4)

In multicellular organisms, death is a necessary and natural part of the process of living, as is a drive to reproduce. In this sense, therefore, we can find in higher organisms both a death drive and a life drive. The important question is one of priority, however. Which comes first, the drive to life, or to death? Here we encounter the fundamental limitation of Freud's account, as it is not the case that simple life, such as the amoeba, has an inherent tendency to its own destruction. In fact, provided conditions are right, an amoeba would carry on living forever, and reproduce through division, whereby its own existence is multiplied, rather than replaced. In unicellular organisms, we do not have the division of labour between germ cells and soma cells, and so it is not the case that the organism can degenerate through the loss of some of its cells, but not others. The utility of death is to allow the germ cells to perpetuate themselves at the expense of the soma cells, but if we return to a point prior to this division, then there simply is only one type of cell, and so death has no utility for the organism:

Although they are certainly destroyed by other animals, there is nothing comparable to that deterioration of the body which takes place in the higher organisms. Unicellular animals are too simply constructed for this to be possible. If an infusorians is injured by the loss of some part of its body, it may often recover its former integrity, but if the injury is too great, it dies. The alternative is always either perfect integrity or complete destruction.

We may now leave this part of the subject, for it is obvious that normal death, that is to say, death which arises from internal causes, is an impossibility among these lower organisms. (Weismann 1889: 26–7)

This, therefore, presents a problem for Freud, in that it does not appear that the earliest forms of life do, in fact, exhibit the propensity to death that Freud has posited of them. Further, it is the case that for Weismann, even in higher organisms, the death of the soma cells only exists to make possible the perpetuation of the germ cells. This perpetuation has to be, on Freud's reading, simply an infinite deferment of death, an infinite extension of the circuit of the organism's return to the inorganic. Returning to the first of these points, Freud's only response is to claim that the death drive is merely implicit in lower life:

The primitive structure of these organisms may conceal from us certain features which, though present in them too, are actually *observable* only in the higher animals, where they have found morphological expression. (Freud 2003a: 88)

Given the nature of simple organic life, it seems difficult to align Freud's claim that life is entropic with the basic facts of biology. In fact, it appears to be the case that a drive to preservation and creation precedes the death drive. If that is the case, then Freud's model is thrown into doubt.

Two Conceptions of Death

How do we reconcile this claim with the fact that Deleuze maintains the principle of the death drive? For Deleuze, the retention of the death drive will be premised on a reinterpretation of what death amounts to. For Freud, death is understood in terms of a material repetition. Deleuze is instead going to understand death in terms of the other category of repetition, spiritual repetition.

We can note that Deleuze's analysis here is based upon a distinction he makes in relation to Kant's conception of synthesis between active and passive synthesis. For Kant, synthesis is 'the act of putting different representations together, and grasping what is manifold in them in one cognition' (Kant 1929: A77/B103). The classic examples of this model of synthesis would be bringing together concepts into a judgement, or bringing together perspectives into an object. In both cases, the notion of synthesis presupposes a subject who is responsible for the synthesis. This allows us to explain how a world is constituted for a subject, but makes it very difficult to explain how a subject itself is constituted. For this reason, Deleuze is interested in the notion of passive synthesis. In place of a conception of synthesis based on notions of a subject and an object (the Kantian notion of synthesis), Deleuze develops a conception of passive synthesis that constitutes centres of subjectivity rather than emanating from them. As passive synthesis is pre-predicative, it explains how subjects emerge without relying on the 'higher' form of synthesis defined by judgement. This in turn allows us to see why judgement appears to be such a successful way of characterising the world (it is a surface effect of a deeper process), while also explaining why an extra element is needed to explain why judgement or law is able to operate. Repetition therefore becomes, not the bare repetition of a

state of affairs, but rather the play of the same intensive differences in difference situations. Deleuze summarises this difference as follows:

We embark upon a transcendental critique when, having situated ourselves on a methodologically reduced plane that provides an essential certainty—a certainty of essence—we ask: how can there be a given, how can something be given to a subject, and how can the subject give something to itself? . . . The critique is empirical when, having situated ourselves in a purely immanent point of view, which makes possible a description whose rule is found in determinable hypotheses and whose model is found in physics, we ask: how is the subject constituted in the given? The construction of the given makes room for the constitution of the subject. (Deleuze 1991: 87)

Death within the Freudian model is similarly a principle that operates in relation to a synthesis of undifferentiated elements. It comes into play at the point at which these elements become organised. Death is something separate from them and active in its own right (it is a principle over and above that which it is a principle of). The death drive in Freud's terms thus operates according to an active synthesis. As with Deleuze's discussions of all active syntheses, we will find that as well as the active synthesis, there is a passive synthesis that underlies it. Thus, Deleuze writes as follows:

Blanchot rightly suggests that death has two aspects. One is personal, concerning the I or the ego, something which I can encounter in a struggle or meet at a limit, or in any case, encounter in a present which causes everything to pass. The other is strangely impersonal, with no relation to 'me', neither present nor past but always coming, the source of an incessant multiple adventure in a persistent question. (Deleuze 1994: 112)

Freud's model is clearly closer to the first of these forms of death, although the model is somewhat broader than Freud's own case. This first model of death is not simply 'the model of an indifferent inanimate matter to which the living would "return"' (Deleuze 1994: 112), and there is an open question of whether Deleuze is here making a deeper point about 'this death [that] always comes from without, even at the moment when it constitutes the most personal possibility, from the past, even at the moment when it is most present' (113). Whereas the death drive appears to be an impersonal instinct that has merely an 'extrinsic, scientific and objective definition' (111), the personal nature of death seems to relate it also to something like Hegel's *Phenomenology*.¹³ In the master–slave dialectic, Hegel claims that it is the experience of death that allows us to develop an understanding of ourselves freed from inessential determinations:

For this consciousness has been fearful, not of this or that particular thing or just at odd moments, but its whole being has been seized with dread; for it has experienced the fear of death, the absolute Lord. In that experience, it has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations. But this pure universal movement, the absolute melting away of everything stable, is the simple, essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, *pure being-for-self*, which consequently is *implicit* in this consciousness. (Hegel 1977: §194)

Deleuze would be claiming that this is once again a surface manifestation of the true nature of death.

In Deleuze's discussion of Kant, the third synthesis of time is the pure form of time: a field of intensity that constitutes the world of subjects and objects. Deleuze's discussion of Freud also sees death as 'a pure form – the empty form of time' (Deleuze 1994: 112). Death therefore refers us to the field of intensities. It is 'the state of free differences when they are no longer subject to the form imposed upon them by an *I* or an ego' (113). So, the real notion of death is in fact the collapse of a given structure in the face of some kind of pure becoming. In this sense, death is a perpetual drive that destabilises identities, and makes transition possible:

The experience of death is the most common of occurrences in the unconscious, precisely because it occurs in life and for life, in every passage or becoming, in every intensity as passage or becoming. (Deleuze and Guattari 1977: 330)

In this sense, life is characterised by death, to the extent that it is run through with experiences which destabilise the structure of the organism, and the identity of the ego. There is, therefore, for Deleuze, something equivalent to the death drive, but this does not operate according to an entropic principle in the way that we find in Freud's model. Structures are not destabilised through a drive to return to a state where there is no energy in the system, but rather through the emergence of intensities into the field of representation that disrupt our identities. In this sense, the death drive does not operate according to a principle, but simply is the manifestation of intensive difference into the realm of the unconscious ('this energy does not serve Thanatos, it constitutes him' [Deleuze 1994: 139]). This leads to a reversal of our understanding of death. Since intensive death is a part of life (the destabilising of identities), our 'death' in this sense is coextensive with life.

Deleuze's interpretation of the death drive is therefore one that replaces the fundamentally entropic model that we find in Freud's interpretation with one that opens up onto the univocal ontology of difference we find in Deleuze's early work. So the final question is: why do we repeat that which we cannot represent? Earlier, Deleuze has stated that 'the present is the repeater, the past is repetition itself, and the future is that which is repeated' (Deleuze 1994: 94). It is therefore the field of intensive difference which expresses itself in the present. Now, as this is different in kind from representation, it cannot occur within the field of representation as it is in itself. In this sense, the intensities which constitute us express themselves throughout our lives in a variety of contexts 'in disguise'. When we are dealing with intensive difference, 'the path it traces is invisible and becomes visible only in reverse, to the extent that it is travelled over and covered by the phenomena it induces within the system' (119–20). In the third part of this paper, I want to explore how this reworking of the notion of the death drive affects Deleuze's reading of the constitution of the Freudian subject more generally.

III. The Three Syntheses

The First Synthesis and the Pleasure Principle

In this part, I want to move on from looking at the structure of the death drive to working through Deleuze's analysis of the structure of Freud's account more generally. As we shall see, Deleuze's analysis of Freud mirrors his own analysis of the structure of time, apart from the final synthesis. In each case, however, Deleuze both redescribes what Freud takes to be an operation of an active synthesis in terms of passive synthesis, and also shows why Freud came to misrepresent this synthesis as active. In this way, we will find that we have two relations to the world that operate in parallel, the first in terms of actual and representational structures, but also a second, which is intensive, and governed by 'virtual' objects.

The first thing to note about Deleuze's characterisation of Freud's project is that he claims that the concern of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is not 'the exceptions to this principle, but rather to determine the conditions under which pleasure effectively becomes a principle' (Deleuze 1994: 96). This highlights an important point about Deleuze's own project. Deleuze is signalling that Freud's project, like his own, is a transcendental project, but also that such a project is not concerned with 'demolishing' the self, but rather with determining the conditions

under which the self emerges. As we saw in part I, Freud defined pleasure as the reduction in excitation of the psychic apparatus. Now, prior to the organising principle of the ego, Deleuze argues that we can see ‘biopsychical life’ as ‘a field of individuation in which differences in intensity are distributed here and there [*Ça et là*] in the form of excitations’ (96). Within such biopsychical life, we will, of course, have variations in the level of excitation of the system at various points and at various moments. In this sense, pleasure, as a process, will be operative within the system (the level of excitation will sometimes drop). In this context, Deleuze makes a rather swift (and problematic in English or German) linguistic argument to equate the ‘here and there [*Ça et là*]’ of biopsychical life with Freud’s id [*Ça*]. Now, in spite of the problematic nature of the argument, it does seem like a reasonable equation, and it allows us to raise the key question of this section, which is: how does pleasure cease to be a process, in order to become a principle that organises the life of the unconscious? Now, an answer such as ‘pleasure is pleasing’ is tautologous, and misses the point. If we try, as Freud has, to give an account of pleasure that does not already presuppose the existence of a subject who values it, then we have to be able to account for how his value gets attached to this particular biological process in the first place. That is, how a (value-neutral) process becomes a principle of organisation and action.

Deleuze points out that if pleasure is going to become a principle, there cannot simply be a free flow of excitations. There needs to be some process of binding or annexation of excitation so that excitations can have ‘systematic resolution’, rather than arbitrarily traversing the life of the organism. So some kind of integration or organisation is necessary for us to be able to relate pleasure to a principle. We have already seen Freud’s own claim that ‘only when the annexion [of excitations] has taken place would the pleasure principle (or, once the latter has been duly modified, the reality principle) be able to assert its dominion unhindered’ (Freud 2003a: 75). The pleasure principle therefore rests on the integration of excitations that are originally unbound. It is helpful to here note that there are parallels with the first synthesis of time that Deleuze introduces in relation to Kant in the opening of the chapter. There, Deleuze suggests that we initially have a flux of experience that needs to be contracted into an organised flow of anticipations. This is achieved through the contraction of habits that systematised experience prior to our representation of it (Deleuze 1994: 70–9). In that case, we could not rely on the notion of the self, as the synthesis was precisely what constituted the self. Here, in a similar manner, we have a synthesis

not performed by a subject, a passive synthesis, as we are dealing with processes of 'biopsychical life' before it has become a system capable of supporting a unified self. Furthermore, Deleuze claims that this process is actually constitutive of a subject: 'an animal forms an eye for itself by causing scattered and diffuse luminous excitations to be reproduced on a privileged surface of its body. The eye binds light, it is itself a bound light' (Deleuze 1994: 96). Deleuze's point is also that as the self that is constituted by the integration or contraction of excitations, it simply *is* these excitations. This gives us the reason why Deleuze calls these contracting egos 'narcissistic'. What they relate to is, in a sense, themselves, or an image of themselves, in the form of the excitations that they bind. The movement of binding therefore finds satisfaction in a narcissistic relation to its own image. In this sense, the fact that the egos constituted by the binding process are narcissistic parallels the way in which the selves that are contracted habits in the first synthesis of time (habit) related not to objects, but to signs. A heartbeat appears as a sign in our world that does not resemble the movement of the heart itself, and similarly, my feeling of thirst does not relate to water itself as H_2O , but rather to water as an appearance in my world. Similarly, the binding of excitations constitutes egos that do not relate directly to objects, but to images of themselves.

Just as with the notion of habit, we have a series of reversals in our understanding of binding/habit and pleasure. It is not the case that pleasure gives rise to habit, therefore, in the sense that we might talk of repeating something enjoyable, but rather it is the existence of habits that lead to pleasure. In the discussion of habit, Deleuze claims that habit was only conceived of as reproduction of prior behaviour when it was incorporated into a mathematicised 'temporal space' by the imagination. Similarly here, it is only by relating pleasure to the past and the future, and instituting the pleasure principle that we are able to see pleasure as operating prior to habit. That is, by talking about 'pleasure in general', we introduce the 'idea of pleasure' (Deleuze 1994: 97–9). In this sense, the constitutive nature of pleasure becomes represented as a law, or principle of pleasure. Once pleasure is not related to a passive synthesis, but is seen as organised in relation to a principle, we have an active synthesis that relates to an ego. The result of this is that the pleasure principle will now be seen as primary, since without some kind of external organising principle, it is impossible to explain how indifferent processes can form a coherent system, and how individual excitations can be related to one another (how habits are formed). One final thing to note is that the objects that binding and the pleasure principle relate to

are different. Binding operates on free excitations in order to transform them into something that the pleasure principle can relate together into a system.

We can here return to the question of the compulsion to repeat. When we looked at the *fort-da* game, the attempt to master an excitation was an explanation that Freud looked at, but ultimately rejected. That is, Freud considered that the child may throw the reel away and then recover it in order to master the trauma of being separated from his mother. As Deleuze writes, 'binding synthesis cannot be explained by the intention or the effort to *master* and excitation, even though it may have that effect' (Deleuze 1994: 97). Now such an explanation in terms of mastery rests on a conflation of the two levels of analysis. To the extent that binding brings an excitation within the domain of the pleasure principle, the process of binding (the passive synthesis) is a form of mastery. But insofar as we remain on this level, we do not have anything like an intention, or an effort to master, as we are prior to a self that could be the agent of this intention. These notions only come into play when we are dealing with active syntheses and the mathematical conception of time. Deleuze's account therefore explains why Freud relies on active syntheses while itself providing a non-representational basis to it.

The Second Synthesis

Is the model of the psyche as it stands adequate? At present, passive synthesis involves the binding of excitations that occur within the biopsychical system. Pleasure does operate within this system, but it is also the case that 'biopsychical systems' have some kind of relation to an outside. As Deleuze puts it, 'A child who begins to walk does not only bind excitations in a passive synthesis, even supposing these were endogenous excitations born of its own movements. No one has ever walked endogenously' (Deleuze 1994: 99). That is, our actions have an object. Now, as we might expect, given the account of the three syntheses of time, this second stage, the relation of the biopsychical system to a world of objects, is going to involve two different syntheses, an active and a passive synthesis. As the active synthesis is the most straightforward, I will begin with that.

We can start by recalling one of the central axioms of Kant's model of active synthesis, which was that the subject made the object possible and vice versa.¹⁴ If Kant is right about the interdependence of subjects and objects (and Deleuze takes him to be right, at least at the level of

representation), then a relation to an object is going to require a subject that relates to it. In this sense, Deleuze writes the following:

Active synthesis is defined by the test of reality in an 'objectal' relation, and it is precisely according to the reality principle that the 'ego' tends to 'be activated', to be actively unified, to unite all its small composing and contemplative passive egos, to be topologically distinguished from the Id. (Deleuze 1994: 98)

If we recall that pleasure relates to individual bindings, or drives within the unconscious, then it becomes apparent that the organism cannot simply function according to the pleasure principle alone. Sometimes one drive may seek satisfaction in a way which threatens the integrity of the organism as a whole. As we saw in part I, Freud therefore supplements the pleasure principle with the reality principle, which overrides the interests of the particular satisfaction of drives in favour of the pleasure (and survival) of the organism as a whole. This leads to the constitution of the represented subject:

We know that the pleasure principle belongs to a primary operational level of the psychic apparatus, and that so far as self-preservation is concerned it is never anything but useless, indeed highly dangerous, given the challenges posed by the external world. Thanks to the influence of the ego's self-preservation drive it is displaced by the *reality principle*, which, without abandoning the aim of ultimately achieving pleasure, none the less demands and procures the postponement of gratification, the rejection of sundry opportunities for such gratification, and the temporary toleration of displeasure on the long and circuitous road to pleasure. (Freud 2003a: 48)

Once we have a unified ego, then it is straightforward to see that this ego can relate, intentionally, to an object outside of itself. In fact, Deleuze is here arguing, I think, that in the Freudian analysis, in much the same way that the object is constituted by the subject, the act of unification of the ego is what allows the organism to confront a unified field of objects that it can act on.

As well as the extension of active synthesis, we also have an extension of a passive synthesis. This revolves around the notion of a virtual object:

The child constructs for itself another object, a quite different kind of object which is a *virtual* object or centre and which governs and compensates for the progresses and failures of its real activity: it puts several fingers in its mouth, and appraises the whole situation from the point of view of this virtual mother. (Deleuze 1994: 99)

Why might we need a separate conception of an object to deal with passive syntheses? Well, the first point to note is that if the child is going to continue to be able to bind excitations, then clearly he needs to relate in some way to a source for those excitations. This implies some kind of relationship to the outside (he needs to relate to some kind of object that generates excitations). Now, as we noted, binding does not relate to objects, but rather to signs—binding is an integration of excitations rather than a relation to a representation. This means that the kind of external object that allows for the generation of excitations will be different in kind from the actual objects of representation.

The notion of a virtual object as presented here is not particularly clear, but I think we can get somewhere with explaining it if we take up Keith Faulkner's definition of it as 'an image of an action that will satisfy a drive auto-erotically' (Faulkner 2006: 34). Bearing this in mind, we can understand Deleuze's claim that 'sucking occurs only in order to provide a virtual object to contemplate in the context of extending the passive synthesis' (Deleuze 1994: 99). As I said when we looked at the first synthesis, the process of binding did not rely on the nature of an external object as such, but rather operated in terms of signs (just as the heartbeat does not resemble the motion of the heart). Similarly, in sucking his thumb, the child is not interested in the actual object he is related to (the thumb), but rather in providing signs for a passive synthesis. Thus, the thumb takes the place of the mother's breast as providing excitations for the organism. Now, given that passive syntheses do not operate with representations, the child does not take the thumb to be the breast, but rather that aspect of the breast which satisfied the original binding process. This aspect is an action, or an image of an action. The thumb therefore provides a series of excitations that can be bound by a sub-representational passive synthesis.

Once we accept this account of the nature of the virtual object, we can start to piece together Deleuze's analysis of it. In fact we have two types of objects, one of which is actual, and one of which is virtual. Deleuze characterises virtual objects as 'shreds of pure past' (Deleuze 1994: 101). So how are they constituted? Deleuze gives the following description of the constitution of the virtual object:

We see both that the virtuals are deducted from the series of reals and that they are incorporated in the series of reals. This derivation implies, first, an isolation or suspension which freezes the real in order to extract a pose, an aspect or a part. This isolation, however, is qualitative: it does not consist simply in subtracting a part of the real object, since the subtracted part acquires a new nature in functioning as a virtual object. (Deleuze 1994: 100)

When we are dealing with an object of representation that we intend towards, we cannot help but think of the object as a totality. In Kantian language, when we think of a perspective on a house, for instance, we cannot help but think that if we walked around the object then we would continue to be presented with further perspectives on it. Similarly, turning to the Freudian example of excitations, when we think of a breast, we think of it as a complete object. The binding process is not concerned with the totality of the object, however, but only with those aspects of the object which are capable of generating excitations. It thus subtracts from the total object those aspects that are capable of creating excitations in it. It is only interested in a particular gesture, motion or aspect, and not for instance, the object which actually moves to create the gesture. As a representation has to be a coherent object separate from the particular perspective it is presented from, then the process of subtraction actually changes its nature into something that cannot become present to consciousness. As a representational object, a gesture without a gesturer is incoherent, for instance.

This explains why the virtual object is not to be understood in terms of actual objects, either as a full object, or as a partial object. Why does Deleuze refer to them as ‘shreds of pure past’? This is related to the further comment that virtual objects are incorporated in the series of reals. On the one hand, this is obvious, in that virtual objects have to in some sense motivate behaviour—they have to be found in the world somewhere. So when the child sucks his thumb, he is relating to a virtual object, but only on the basis that this is incorporated into an actual object. Thus every object is doubled.

There is a second reason, which is that the positing of a non-actual series paralleling the actual world allows us to explain the functioning of association. Deleuze puts the issue as follows:

The difficulties of conceptualising the process of repetition have often been emphasised. Consider the two presents, the two scenes or the two events (infantile and adult) in their reality, separated by time; how can the former present act at a distance upon the present one? How can it provide a model for it, when all its effectiveness is retrospectively received from the later present? (Deleuze 1994: 104)

Freud argues that a trauma, for instance, means that we repeat a prior experience, instead of representing it. Similarly, character involves a repetition of our relations to new situations. So for Freud, what is repeated is a prior actual state of affairs. Ultimately this understanding of repetition makes it obscure, therefore, why the past still influences

the present, and why *this* past rather than *that* is repeated. It is also the reason why we end up positing the death drive as a material process, as repetition is always repetition of an actual event.

For Deleuze, what ties together two series of events is that *the same* virtual object is at play (incorporated) in both series. This explains why a past event can still influence the present: not because of the actual events themselves, but because the same virtual object is incorporated into them both. This also explains why we can see, for instance, in someone's character, a repetition of the same relationships, or the same actions, in different situations. The subject does not reason by analogy on the basis of their past responses, but is reacting to the same event incorporated into a different state of affairs.

In this sense, we can say that what is repeated is something that has never actually been present, but rather that the same virtual object is present in disguise in the various states of affairs that make up the repetition. There is no first term to the series itself, however, as repetition takes place in response to the drives rather than the ego and its object.

The Third Synthesis

In Deleuze's discussion of the three syntheses at the beginning of chapter 2, he notes that the first two syntheses are inadequate, as they tend to orientate thought towards the actual. In his reworking of the three syntheses in terms of Freud, he makes a similar claim. Deleuze makes the claim that the virtual and actual objects:

inevitably become confused, the pure past thereby assuming the status of a former present, albeit mythical, and reconstituting the illusion it was supposed to denounce, resuscitating the illusion of an original and a derived, of an identity in the origin, and a resemblance in the derived. (Deleuze 1994: 109)

The implication, I take it, is that ultimately once again, we have a subordination of the virtual to the actual here with the formation of an illusion that repetition is to be understood purely in terms of actual states of affairs.

Deleuze's resolution to this problem is to posit a fracture within the self. First, we can note that Deleuze criticised the death drive for instituting a fundamental dualism between life drives and death drives which, as we saw in part II, Deleuze sought to overcome through the notion of intensive difference. The introduction of the narcissistic ego is supposed to show how this is possible by bringing in the notion of

a single form of libido, which is present in the death drive, but also desexualised in the life drives. If Deleuze can show that there is one form of libido that is operative in both, he can show that both drives are simply different expressions of the same intensive force. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud presents the following account of narcissism:

Where an individual is required or compelled to give up a sexual object, there is not uncommonly a compensatory process in the form of that particular ego-alteration that we can only describe as ‘erecting the object within the ego’, just as occurs in melancholia. We do not yet know the precise circumstances in which this surrogation process takes place. Perhaps the ego uses this introjection, which is a form of regression to the mechanism of the oral phase, in order to make it easier to give up the object, or even to make it possible in the first place. Perhaps this identification is the one and only condition under which the id will give up its objects.

...

When the ego adopts the features of the object, it so to speak presses itself on the id as a love-object; it seeks to make good the id’s loss by saying ‘There, you see, you can love me too—I look just like the object.’ (Freud 2003b: 120)

In this case, therefore, the ego gives up relations to the outside world in order to relate itself to the id. Now this process is essentially one of the individual abandoning its sexual goals, and its intentional relations to the outside world in order to relate directly to itself. As such, this involves a process of desexualisation of its libido:

By thus commandeering the libido of the various object-cathexes, setting itself up as sole love-object, and desexualizing or sublimating the libido of the id, it operates directly counter to the designs of Eros; it puts itself at the service of the opposing drive-impulses. (Freud 2003b: 136)

This movement presupposes the existence of what Deleuze calls ‘a neutral, displaceable energy, essentially capable of serving Thanatos’ (Deleuze 1994: 111), or in other words, of equally becoming expressed in the structures of the id or of the ego. As this is prior to habit and memory, it can be equated with the intensive difference which is actualised in both of them. Thus, at root, we have not two drives, but a single form of intensity that finds expression in both sets of drives. In this regard, the third synthesis mirrors the result of the three syntheses earlier in the chapter, where the future, as the field of pure intensive difference, becomes actualised as both the past and the present. Such a moment of pure intensity prevents the orientation of our account towards pure actuality.

IV. Conclusion

At the heart of Deleuze's account of Freud is perhaps once again the project which is central to *Difference and Repetition*: the reversal of Platonism. Chapter 1 of *Difference and Repetition* carries out this reversal in metaphysical terms, showing that behind our representations is not an atemporal realm of forms, a sedentary distribution, but rather the nomadic distribution of intensive becoming. The three syntheses of time extend and repeat this metaphysical result, showing that the transcendental conditions for the subject are not to be understood as grounded in the repetition of structures of representation at a transcendental level (Kant's three syntheses), but rather in the intensive field of the future that constitutes itself as the actual world of extensities. Here, with his analysis of Freud, the process is once again repeated, this time in terms of the psychic economy of the organism. Rather than a desire for the expenditure of energy and the return to a mechanistic conception of the inorganic, the psyche is instead seen as the expression of an intensive field that is a death drive only to a representation of the psyche that seeks to constrain it under the principles of identity and pleasure. In *Anti-Oedipus*, this orientation towards the intensive will take on a political signification that exceeds the largely metaphysical nature of *Difference and Repetition*, as well as reworking that metaphysical basis itself. As we have seen, the seeds for this political reworking of Freud are already present at the heart of Deleuze's earlier reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

Notes

1. This paper expands on an earlier account of Deleuze's reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, found in Somers-Hall 2013a: 83–96. I am grateful to Edinburgh University Press for granting permission to reuse this material.
2. See, for instance, Hughes 2009, who focuses on the first half of the chapter, providing a helpful diagram (2009: 101) of the connections between the Kantian and psychoanalytic accounts of the three syntheses. Williams 2013 similarly provides a clear, but short synopsis of the sections in order to draw out claims applicable more generally to Deleuze's account of passive synthesis, particularly in relation to Kant.
3. Deleuze notes that 'in every case repetition is difference without a concept' (Deleuze 1994: 23), as to repeat is for the *same* event to reoccur, thus implying that we cannot conceptually individuate the two events. For an extensive discussion of the notion of 'difference without a concept' and its relationship to representation, see Somers-Hall 2013b.
4. Deleuze, for instance, claims that 'Transcendental empiricism is meaningless indeed unless its conditions are specified. But the transcendental "field" must not

- be copied from the empirical, as in Kant. It must be explored on its own terms: “experienced” or “attempted” (but it is a very particular type of experience)” (Deleuze 2007b: 362).
5. Although Deleuze uses the term in *Difference and Repetition*, he does not actually define transcendental empiricism in this text. A more sustained discussion of the term can be found in Deleuze 2007a.
 6. In Deleuze 1983: 112–14, Deleuze argues that this model of the psyche can also be found in Nietzsche’s thought.
 7. The recapitulation theory, developed by Ernst Haeckel in the nineteenth century, holds that the development of the individual organism repeats the evolutionary development of the species itself (ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny). Thus, as the human embryo develops, it will recapitulate the form of its ancestors, from mono-cellular organisms through fish and reptiles to mammals. The theory has since been discredited.
 8. We can see here a parallel between the two principles Deleuze takes to be at the heart of representation: common sense and good sense. In the final chapter of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze describes common sense as positing an ideal moment of the indeterminate identity of the self that only exists when all differences are cancelled by entropy. Good sense provides a model of actual differences, but only on the basis that these differences point towards their eventual dissolution within the undifferentiated unity of common sense. Together these two principles generate a transcendental illusion that allows us to see the world as governed by the principles of entropy we find in thermodynamics. See Deleuze 1994: 226–7; Somers-Hall 2013a: 169.
 9. Deleuze describes opposition as one of the four ‘shackles’ of mediation: ‘There are four principal aspects to “reason” in so far as it is the medium of representation: identity, in the form of the undetermined concept; analogy, in the relation between ultimate determinable concepts; opposition, in the relation between determinations within concepts; resemblance, in the determined object of the concept itself. These forms are like the four heads or the four shackles of mediation. Difference is “mediated” to the extent that it is subjected to the fourfold root of identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance’ (Deleuze 1994: 29).
 10. For a discussion of the limitations of an entropic understanding of the world, see Somers-Hall 2013a: 169–71; Ansell Pearson 1999: 59–64.
 11. Weismann plays a major role throughout Ansell Pearson’s *Germinal Life* (1999), where he shows the importance of Weismann for Deleuze’s own thought. See pp. 104–4 for an account of Freud’s uptake of aspects of Weismann’s thought in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.
 12. As we shall see, Deleuze’s own criticisms of Freud have a Bergsonian aspect to them, and Bergson himself speaks approvingly of Weismann, reworking the distinction between germ cells and soma cells into a distinction between ‘genetic energy’ of life and the organism that allows this genetic energy to be expressed and perpetuated (Bergson 1998: 31–2). In doing so, Bergson anticipates Deleuze in seeing life as a process which finds expression in living organisms, rather than being those organisms themselves, and hence opens the way to reconciling Weismann’s strongly materialistic account with something more like the model of life as intensive we find in Deleuze’s work.
 13. In fact, Deleuze notes the proximity of Freud to Hegel (Deleuze 1994: 108).
 14. Kant makes this claim in the transcendental deduction (1929: B116–69). The most sympathetic reading of this claim can be found in Allison 2004: 163–78.

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